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**ON THE
COVER**

Battle for control of the
ultimate fairy tale

**WORD
GAMES**

10 new word games for
fans of *Scrabble*

**SPRING
CLEANING**

Tips for tidying up your
game collection

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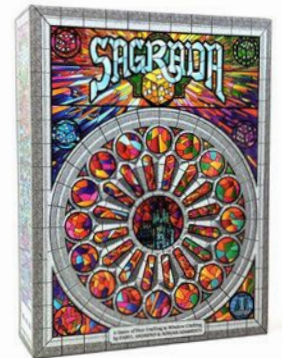
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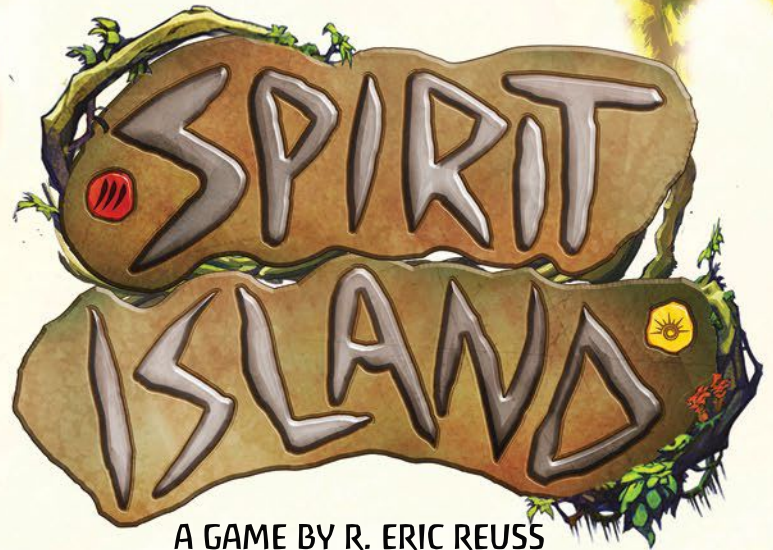
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The logo for the board game Spirit Island is presented on two weathered, brown stone tablets. The top tablet features the word "SPIRIT" in a stylized, grey, blocky font with a red flame-like symbol to its left. The bottom tablet features the word "ISLAND" in the same font, with a yellow sun-like symbol to its right. The tablets are adorned with green vines and leaves, suggesting a jungle or island setting.

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Cheapass Games is a small, delightfully snarky game company based out of Seattle. Led by game design legend James Ernest, they specialize in casual, quirky titles and pub games. Learn more about Cheapass Games and download a free game or two at cheapass.com.

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Greater Than Games, LLC is a leading tabletop game developer and publisher based out of St. Louis, Missouri. Established in 2011, Greater Than Games is well-known for delivering engaging, richly-themed, highly-replayable card and board games.

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Looney Labs was founded in 1996 by Kristin and Andrew Looney. Our mission is to create fun! We publish *Fluxx*, *Just Desserts*, *Loonacy*, and games for *Looney Pyramids*.

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Gate Keeper Games exists to actualize epic game ideas, bring others joy, and treat every guest like they are our dear friend. GKG's John Wrot! is the creative mind behind *Half-sies Dice*, *A.D.A.P.T.* and *The King's Army*.

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GGG publishes *Unreal Estate* and *Stroop*, and the upcoming *Pocket Ops*. We began with smaller titles, but are excited to add *Endeavor 2nd Edition* to the roster of bigger games.

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dV Giochi is an Italian card game and board game publisher, founded in 2001. Its games are distributed worldwide, winning great recognition in Italy and abroad.

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BezierGames.com



At Druid City Games we strive to make board games that cultivate social skills, build critical thinking, and above all else, are fun to play!

DruidCityGames.com



Calliope Games publishes family-friendly tabletop games, including *Tsuro* and *Roll For It!*. Calliope games are carefully crafted so kids and adults can play on equal footing – fun and affordable for folks of all ages!

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ThamesAndKosmos.com



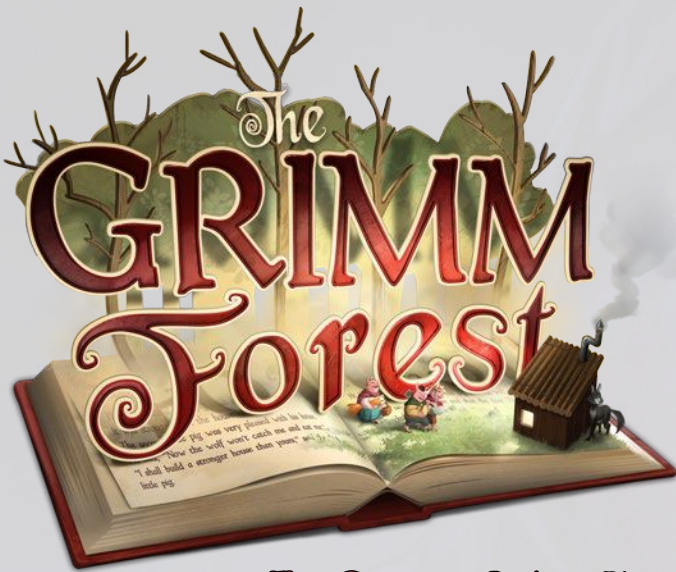
Here at the Wild East Game Company we believe that good clean fun builds good clean friendships and it's our mission to help build those friendships through family friendly games.

WildEastGames.com



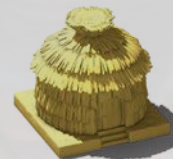
Founded in 2009, Stratus Games publishes quality casual and party games like *Eruption*, *Gold Mine*, and *Off Your Rocker*. They are also the creative minds behind *Casual Game Revolution* and *Casual Game Insider*.

StratusGames.com



A Fairy Tale Game of Friend and Foe

Welcome to *The Grimm Forest* – where family members of the legendary Three Little Pigs are having an epic house building competition. But this is no ordinary competition. Who will benefit most from the cunning of Robin Hood, the beauty of Snow White, the bountiful gifts of the Golden Goose, or the dark witchcraft of the Evil Queen? Venture forth into the forest and find out!



The Grimm Forest, the newest title from Druid City Games, highlights the fairy tales of our childhood. Weaving together friends and fables, the game offers gamers of all ages a unique, surprising twist on the beloved Grimm fairy tales.

In *The Grimm Forest*, players take on the role of a niece or nephew of the acclaimed Three Little Pigs, competing to be the first to build three houses of either straw, wood, or brick. But beware! Gathering these resources may come at great risk, as your opponents are seeking to gather from the same fields, brickyards, market, and even the dark-and-deadly Grimm Forest itself. Can you outwit your friends and build three houses before anyone else? Seek help from legendary fairy tale characters and avoid the cunning creatures that lurk in the forest to claim the title of Royal Builder!



During the game, players secretly play location cards that allow them to attempt to gather resources from various locations. Players may utilize one fable card from their hand to increase their resource yield or thwart the plans of their opponents. Players will need to hone their deduction skills to make the most of their own actions!



After collecting their resources for the turn, players can then use them to build their straw, wood, or brick houses. Whenever a player builds a wall section on one of their houses, a helpful Friend from the nearby forest comes to lend a hand. Players may choose to accept the help of that Friend, but occasionally, it makes more sense to send that Friend to a different player, sometimes discarding their current Friend in the process. Becoming the Royal Builder will require players to use their wits, and a few devious tricks, throughout the game. Players will call upon the aid of famous fairy tale friends for help, but also the foul monsters and villains of the land to enact evil plans.



**SKYBOUND
GAMES**

Who will brave the dangers and avoid treachery to bring home the victory? There is only one way to find out — get ready to journey into and bring to life... *The Grimm Forest!* 🎲

“*The Grimm Forest* is my favorite type of game. It is easy to learn, has immense player interaction, and is full of fun surprises. The complexity is not in the rules or the mechanics but is in the people at the table with you. Like poker, it can be played as a game of luck and whimsy, but it also can be played as a game of deep strategy, risk evaluation, and bluffing.”

— *Tim Eisner, Designer*





THE ANIMAL IN YOU

DIAGNOSING YOUR GAME
ACQUISITION DISORDER



Written by:



Danica Enyart

Board Game Enthusiast and
Seasoned Volunteer (1976-2017)

Illustrated by:



Sergi Marcet

Veteran Board Game Artist and
Aspiring Game Designer



If you are a tabletop gamer, you might suffer from what I like to call an acquisition disorder. Maybe you have no impulse control when it comes to buying a board game that catches your eye, or it could be you have an abject refusal to part with anything from your collection. Yes, it is a thing, and we all seem to have this incurable little addiction in one form or another. So how can we describe our affliction to others in a way that can help them understand? Let's go off on a lark and explore our possible collection personalities as equated with animal species, shall we?

MONKEYS

Some gamers are simple monkey game collectors – monkey-see, monkey-do! They see everyone playing a good game and they simply must have it. These collectors have all the solid favorites from 2012 forward and are constantly purchasing more shelves to overflow.



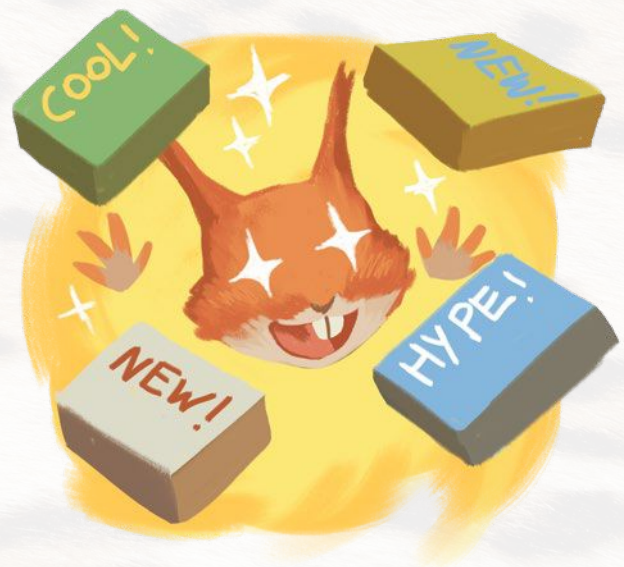
BEARS

Others are more like bears — they are curmudgeons that can last on the same set of favorite titles all winter, year after year. Don't tempt a bear with something from the cult of the new, they might grumble about those upstart games with no respect for the games that forged the market before gaming was mainstream!



SQUIRRELS

We all know a squirrel — they are hoarders with short attention spans that cannot resist a new game within reach. Their collections might not be played more than once, but their shelves are loaded with variety and random artwork!



RACCOONS

These collectors only buy during sales or pick up second-hand steals. They exalt in those rare finds, provided they did not pay anywhere close to full retail price for them.



RAVENS

Board gamers under the sign of raven can be distinguished by their small-yet-beautiful collection, proud of their precious board games that adorn their shelves. They jealously guard their treasures and take offense at even the slightest discouraging comment about their preferred game titles.

SEALS

These community members are easy to distinguish on game night. While they do not have an acquisition disorder, seals have a “play” disorder. To find a seal, listen for the loud, carefree laughter and watch for spontaneous clapping over games. Seals tend to enjoy every game they play and are a roar to have at the table. They might not own a single game, but seals are willing to join any table for the love of play.



DRAGONS

I am a dragon, for better or worse. The label fits my approach from how I acquire new games to the taste of my gamer palette. I want pretty games like the raven, but in hoards to fill multiple-layered shelves along my walls at home. Yet beautiful games aren't enough to satisfy my gaming appetite. I want quality in my collection with treasures to enrich my selection. I will always upgrade components to enhance gameplay (like metal coins in *Viticulture/Tuscany*). I prowl around Kickstarter for new interests and gems to add to the shelves.

Disney A WRINKLE IN TIME

A DARING ADVENTURE GAME

Disney's *A Wrinkle In Time Daring Adventure Game* is a cooperative game that captures the epic journey of the new film as players take on the role of the story's main characters: Meg, Charles Wallace and Calvin. Players will work together to solve mathematical puzzles, decode secret messages and tesser to new locations to rescue Mr. Murry and get home.

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- Encourages teamwork and social interaction
- Appeals to tweens and families

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8 Dice



Each die represents a character from the movie



Location cards feature scenes from the movie

Game Board with Father Cards, Location Cards and Darkness Tokens



Journey through the universe as Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin

Mrs. Who's Quizzing Glasses



Decode secret messages with Mrs. Who's Quizzing Glasses

First Player, Darkness, and Range Adjustment Tokens

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AGES 8+



30-45 MIN



1-3 PLAYERS

Games in my collection can vary, but many will appeal to my dragon senses. I want meaty games to crunch on and challenging games above classic roll-and-move. I want games that bring my friends to the table like banner-waving knights that I can defeat for entering the cave. Games must amuse me or be forgotten. The joy of the hunt is essential in that games should have little downtime between turns or tell a story. Above all, my dragon collector persona craves to be envied. While I am a baby dragon with close to 240 titles, I am rapidly building my treasure trove!

Gaming groups and the tabletop community at large, when put together in this sense, can form a veritable zoo of personalities — monkeys bringing out the latest hit to the table, the seals clapping with anticipation, while the bears begrudgingly go along with the choice. Now, when you're trying to explain your acquisition disorder to others who are trying to understand it, just explain you're more of a Raven than a Squirrel — sure, they won't understand what you're talking about, but the look on their face will be priceless! 🐼

Danica Joan Enyart (October 7, 1976 – April 12, 2017)

by James “Allen” Enyart



Danica J. Enyart (Glasgow) grew up in Anchorage, Alaska. She loved the outdoors and the mountain views Alaska had to offer. It was in Anchorage that Danica met the love of her life; he was stationed at Fort Richardson, just outside of Anchorage. Just like many military wives,

Danica selflessly uprooted from Alaska to be at the whim of the military. Danica was very family-oriented and was responsible for the lives of three wonderful children, often acting as the sole parent during long deployments. She was strong, caring, and loving. Danica had a way of endearing herself to most everyone and was very quick to make friends with strangers. She found beauty in everyone and complimented everyone as if she had known them for years. Danica and the rest of the Enyart family began board gaming in the middle of 2011 with the introduction of *Settlers of Catan* to the household. *Catan* was simply a springboard into her love affair with cardboard, which grew as quickly as her game collection. The biggest accelerant to this cardboard addiction was the family's friendship with the organizers of the Dice Tower Convention and subsequent volunteering at the convention.

Danica was very proud to be a founding member of the SUP Guild and a co-organizer of the first Prototype Con. Danica was very active in the design, playtesting, and promotion of new games, and was always

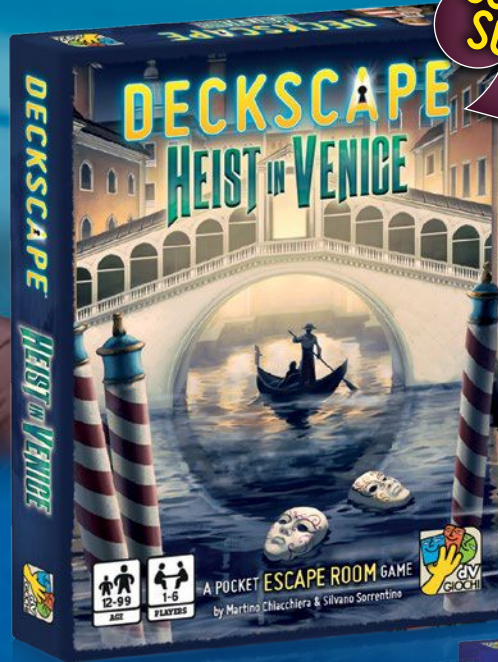
willing to play someone's game, regardless of what stage in the process. She was enthusiastic about every aspect of the community and it showed. Danica's twitter (@Dee49th) read like a who's who of the board gaming world, and encouraged everyone to put their ideas out there. Danica's friendly influence spanned the globe, having playtested for designers from coast to coast, the UK, Malaysia, and New Zealand. One of Danica's favorite moments was the time she wrote for *Casual Game Insider* ("Helping Hands: Volunteering in the Gaming Community," Summer 2016 issue) and being featured on an episode of the *Cardboard Architects* podcast. Danica has been thanked in many a rulebook for her contributions to the promotion of someone's Kickstarter campaign or simply for the friendly encouragement to make something great. Danica loved developing games and worked closely with the owner of Quick Simple Fun Games on several projects. Danica's dream was to create and design games. She was a bright-burning star of enthusiasm and encouragement that the world is sure to miss. 🐼



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10 NEW WORD GAMES FOR SCRABBLE LOVERS (OR HATERS)



Dann Albright

Freelance Journalist and
Lifelong Board Gamer

Since 1948, *Scrabble* has been synonymous with word games. The rules are simple, the strategy is deep, and games are intense. You pit your vocabulary and spelling skills against other players in a pure battle of word wizardry.

BUT IT'S TIME FOR SOMETHING NEW.

Don't get me wrong; *Scrabble* is a classic for a reason. But there's an entire world of fun word games out there. Some introduce new concepts, others are more competitive (or even cooperative), and a neighbor genre includes fantastic party word games. There's a word game for everyone.



Ready to validate your voracious vernacular? These ten word games are some of the best that have come out since *Scrabble* made its debut.



L E T T E R T Y C O O N

2–5 players, 30 minutes

Like most word games, *Letter Tycoon* by Breaking Games sees players trying to spell words using the letters available to them in their hands. But instead of simply rewarding more points for longer words, this game lets players develop passive income by investing in letter patents. When another player uses a letter that you've patented, you get paid! Using the seven cards in your hand as well as three on the table, you'll create the most valuable words possible. The points you earn from these words can be spent on new patents, which are worth money and may have special powers. At the end of the game, whoever has built the greatest letter empire wins.

It's a fun twist on a classic formula, and adds an interesting strategic element that you won't find in many other word games.

B U Y W O R D

1–4 Players, 45 minutes

If you like the idea of an economic word game, but don't want to go to the level of *Letter Tycoon* (or you want to play with some younger players), *Buyword* by Eagle-Gryphon Games is worth a try. It's a lot like *Scrabble*; you draw tiles and play them for points. But you have to buy those tiles first.

You get the opportunity to buy tiles each round, and you have the option of playing a word or saving the letters for later. When you play a word, you earn back your money and, ideally, make a profit. The goal of the game is make as much profit as possible, which means you'll need to make efficient purchases that let you play much bigger words later. It takes planning to manage your money, and a good enough vocabulary to use your most valuable tiles when you get the chance.

By crafting words that earn you as much profit as possible, you'll win the game. The game's simplicity makes it easy to teach and fun for all ages.





1-5 players, 45-90 minutes

The sequel to the great deck-building word game *Paperback*, this Victorian-themed card game from Fowers Games packs a lot of fun art and interesting mechanics into a relatively small box. You'll need to use the cards in your hand to craft the next great novel – but there are some caveats. For example, you can use any card in your hand as a wild. And you can use “Timeless Classic” cards played by your opponents in your own words.

Hardback's most unique feature, however, is ink. You can buy ink and spend it to draw extra cards in the hope of spelling an even better word. But if you can't use an inked letter, you'll forfeit your turn.



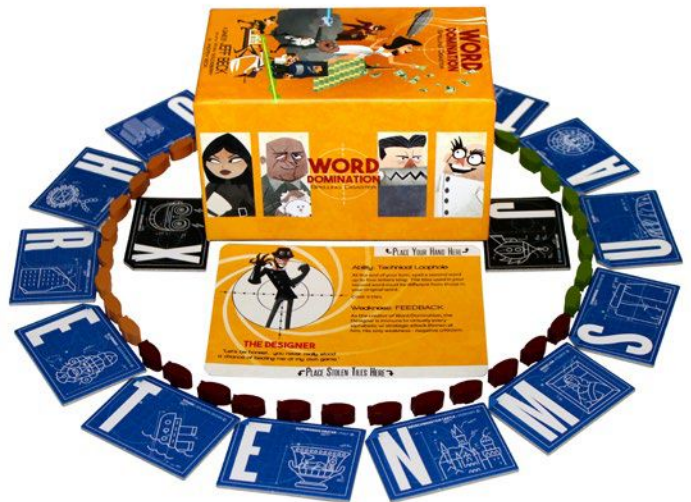
To win requires a delicate balance between a good vocabulary, strategic use of card bonuses, and some risk-taking with ink. Combined with the stellar and playful art, this balancing act makes *Hardback* a word game you'll come back to over and over.



2-4 players, 20-45 minutes

Not all word games are won by the largest vocabulary. In *Word Domination* by Uproarious Games, players take on the role of diabolical evildoers competing to steal valuable equipment and riches in the form of letters. To win, you'll need more than spelling skills – you'll also need to plan your attacks and fend off your nefarious opponents.

If you use a letter on the board, you get to claim it. If another player uses it the next turn, they get to claim it. But if no one claims it and you use it again, you get to steal it off the board and add it to your collection. At the end of the game, it's the most valuable hoard that wins it all. But you'll need to plan ahead, because grouped letters are worth more.



A healthy dose of humor combined with a spatial element that you won't see in many other word games makes *Word Domination* stand out from the rest. And with fun letter and supervillain abilities (and weaknesses!), you'll have plenty of variety to come back for more.



2-4 players, 60-120 minutes



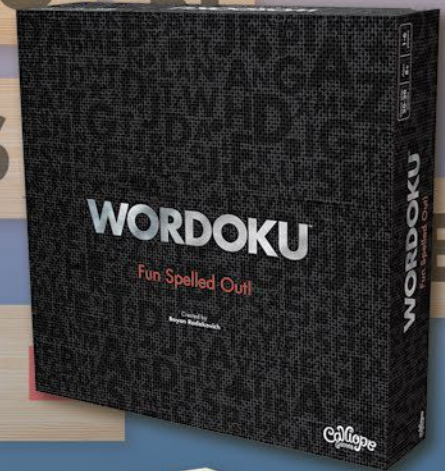
A steampunk-themed word game? Yes, it's a thing – and it's C.O.G. by Dr. Finn's Games. The game combines words with worker placement, making it a unique combination of mechanisms. As you place your workers to take different actions, you'll spell words on your player board to gain resources. Those resources are worth points at the end of the game.

There's not much spelling going on, and speed doesn't play into it, either. This game is all about efficiently using workers, dice, and other resources to spell as many words as possible before the end of the game.

Though the game takes a little longer than your average word game, if you like steampunk, aren't looking for a game that lets you spell "jabberwocks" or "portmanteau," and want a bit of Euro-style strategy thrown in the mix, give C.O.G. a try.



www.CalliopeGames.com



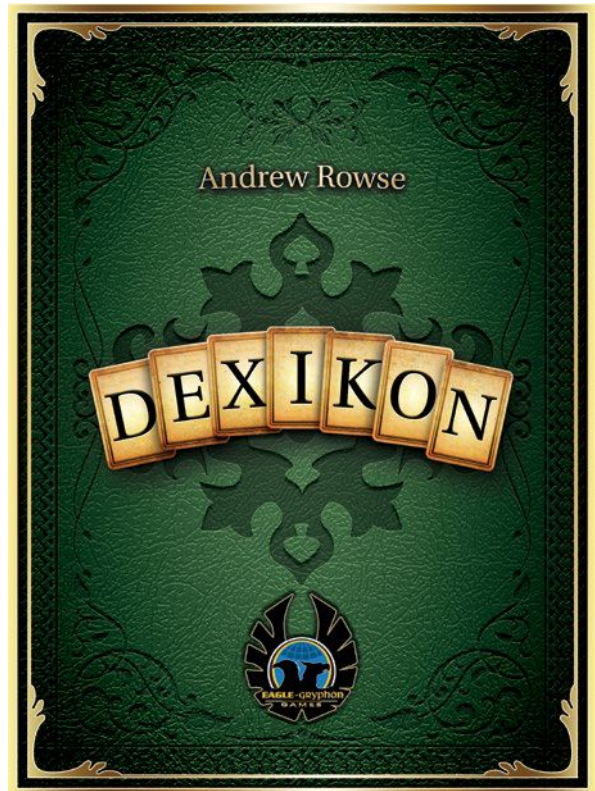
Perfect games for friends and family! Share in the fun!

D E X I K O N

1-5 players, 45 minutes

Most word games are semi-interactive; your placement and word choice affect your opponents, but it's largely a race to see who can get the best words the fastest. *Dexikon* by Eagle-Gryphon Games adds another element of interaction: confrontation. This deck-building game includes a plethora of attack cards with unique abilities, some which add penalties to your opponent's deck, thus decreasing their score at the end of the game.

So when you're approaching the end of the game, you'll need to think carefully about whether to score more points for yourself or try to get rid of penalties from your deck. It's more adversarial than most word games out there, and the right combination of plays could spell disaster. You'll also have to choose between spending the currency earned from your words and banking it for your end-game score. There are a lot of choices in this one, and while it draws comparisons to *Paperback*, it has a different feel that more competitive players will love.



W O R D O N T H E S T R E E T

2-10 players, 20 minutes

If you don't like to spell words with random letters, but prefer to spell them with whichever letters you want, *Word on the Street* by Out of the Box Publishing is a great choice. Seventeen consonants are placed down the median of a street, and players are tasked with spelling words from certain categories, like "something a player is wearing."

When a player or team comes up with an answer, the letters used are moved toward their side of the board. If a letter crosses both "lanes" on a player's side, they get to keep the letter. The first to obtain eight letters wins.

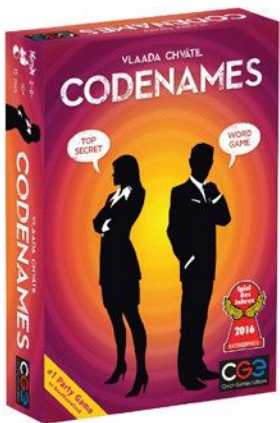
It sounds simple, but you'll need to be judicious in your choice of words to keep your opponents from taking letters!



C O D E N A M E S

2-8 players, 15 minutes

Of course, not all word games are about spelling. *Codenames* from Czech Games Edition is about getting your teammates to guess the words you want them to amongst 25 different options. But it's not like charades. Spymasters give their teammates one-word clues in the hopes of assisting them in identifying the correct words placed on the board. Identifying the right words gets the team closer to winning, but choosing the wrong ones could aid the opposing team, or worse – it could end the game if they choose the Assassin. It's a fantastic word-association game of hint-giving, luck-pushing, and inference-making. As a party game, it stands out as both especially fun and hilariously unforgiving.



And if you find that you like *Codenames*, there are tons of sequels, including *Codenames: Pictures*, *Codenames: Marvel*, *Codenames: Disney Family Edition*, the adults-only *Codenames: Deep Undercover*, and *Codenames Duet*, which is optimized for two players (the others are best with four or more).



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WEREWORDS

4-10 players, 10 minutes

Like *Codenames*, *Werewords* by Bezier Games is all about social deduction – but in this game, players will be working against each other in secret. Players ask yes-or-no questions in an effort to figure out a secret word. One player takes on the role of the werewolf, who knows the word and actively works against the players. But if the players identify the werewolf, they win, so the wolf needs to be stealthy.

The Seer knows the word as well, and can help the players; but if the werewolf identifies the seer, the game is up. So it's a clever balancing act of guessing, helping, and hindering, and makes for a blast of a party game.

And with hundreds of words on the iOS/Android app, you'll have more than enough variety to keep coming back to.



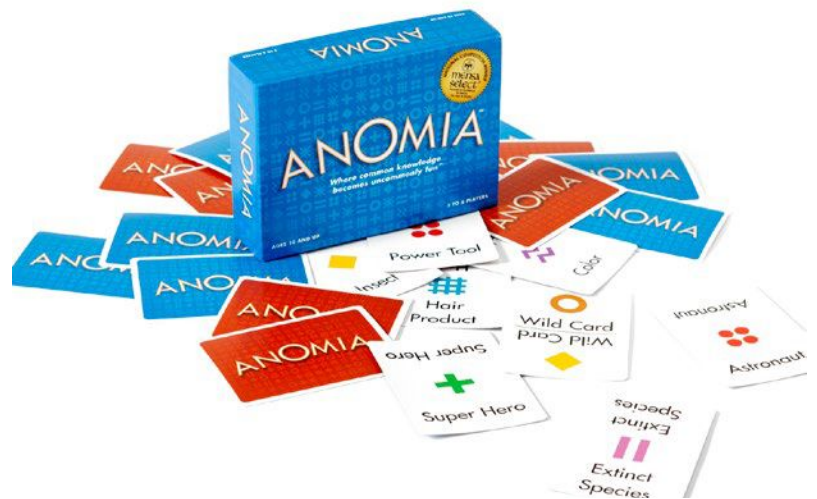
ANOMIA

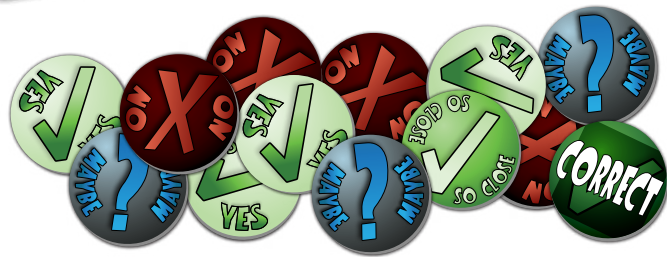
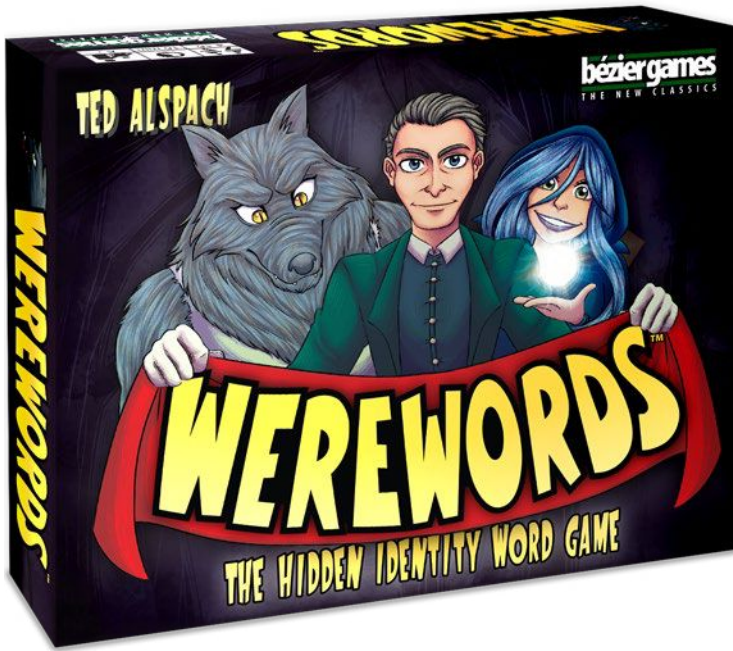
3-6 players, 30 minutes

If you love thinking quickly, *Anomia* by Anomia Press is the word game for you. Players draw cards with categories on them (like “Shampoo Brand” or “Aircraft”), and when two players have matching symbols on their cards, they both need to come up with an example of that type of thing – whoever does so first wins.

Some of the categories, however, will tax your brain; how quickly can you name a fairy tale character or a rock opera? What about an astronaut? When was the last time you thought of different sculptors?

Players take cards when they win, which reveals a new card underneath and can set off a chain reaction of speed-naming that will tax every player's brain. This is a game that rewards quick thinking and a lot of seemingly useless knowledge. (There's also a party edition with many more cards to keep you guessing.)



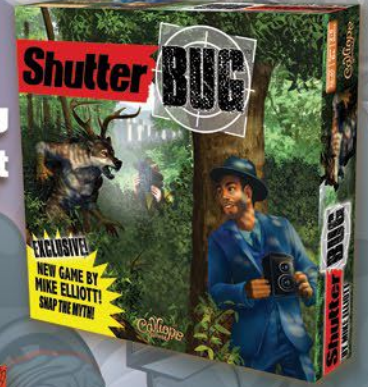


There are many other great word games out there, including more deck-builders, social deduction games, quick-spelling games, and other classics like *Balderdash*, *Boggle*, and *Bananagrams* (and more games still that don't start with the letter "B"). No matter what you're looking for in a word game, there are exciting titles out there that will appeal to you.

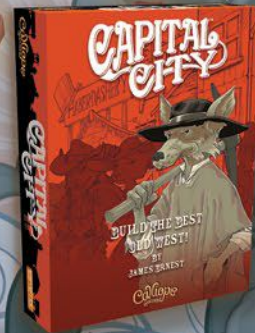
These games have taken the principles of *Scrabble* forward in new ways. They may never replace the venerable tile-speller, but they can add variety for fans of word games and introduce people who aren't historically *Scrabble* fans to the genre. They might even help you sharpen your word skills for your next *Scrabble* competition!



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Spring Cleaning

Tidying Up Your Game Collection



Andrew Birkett

Freelance Journalist and Chief
Storyteller of Atheris Games





Has this Happened to You?

You enter a room with board games surrounding you from wall-to-wall, but you're not in a game store – the room and games belong to you. As you look around, mystified by the beautiful cardboard collection that surrounds you, there is a slight jolt of pain in your heart when you see the dust that's gathered on several games that haven't hit the table in quite some time. Just as you're inclined to dust off the old titles, you consider that it might be time to do a little bit of spring cleaning, both literally with the dust and figuratively with the games.

Though entire rooms dedicated to board games may not be commonplace, this situation is all too real for the collections of board game hobbyists, as gamers tend to be collectors and find that small collections don't stay small. Though there might be nothing particularly wrong with collecting games, what should one do when they feel like they have too many games and not enough time or interest to play them all? Which games should they get rid of, and what could they do with games when they no longer want them?

When is it Time to Declutter?

The first step in many self-improvement programs is admission – in this case, admit that you own games that you no longer play, and that it might be time to consider cleaning up your game collection. But why would you possibly want to get rid of games; why not simply hold on to everything? For Jack Eddy, proprietor of The Cardboard Herald – a board game podcast that interviews creative leaders and designers – his two common reasons are lack of available shelf space and finding that a title no longer makes it into the regular rotation with his gaming group. If you're not interested in bringing the game to the table or feel obligated to play it, then it doesn't do you, or anyone else for that matter, any good.



Eddy says he likes to “dive into games, to become familiar with them, experiment with strategies, so I want to make sure that the games I own are the ones that I want to play again and again, and they can also hit the table with my current gaming lifestyle.”

Daniel Zayas, US Sales Manager at LongPack Games and owner of the Daniel Zayas Company, also believes the best way to know which games to cull from your collection are ones that no longer see regular play time. Zayas says, “If I don't use them for some amount of time, usually a year, then it is time for gifting!”

For Eddy, that's not too far off the mark. “Tracking plays through BGG [BoardGameGeek.com] is a great tool for this. If I haven't played a game in over a year, I must have a compelling reason to keep it, otherwise it really needs to go to a good home that will appreciate it more....But it's important to not be too rigid; for example, I still have my copy of *Heroquest*, prominently displayed on top of my main board game shelf. I haven't played it in a few years now, but the game is part of my history, and I will forever cherish it. Not to mention the cover art is practically wall art on its own, so it looks super cool.”



Cleaning List

As you think about all the titles you own, you might already be able to identify some that you can easily clear off your shelf. But not every title is going to be an easy decision. Here are some questions to think through to help decide which games will no longer make the cut:



Time Table



When was the last time you actually brought the game to the table? Was it a fun, positive experience? How long ago was it?

Purchase Decision



Why did you purchase the game? Was it a gift? Did you buy it because it was on sale? Do you love the designer/publisher and follow all of their work? Did the game look interesting?

Gaming Group



Do they like the game's mechanics, theme, or gameplay style? Is it a game that others in the group will request or simply begrudgingly agree to play?

Other Groups



When you have guests over that aren't part of your regular gaming group, is this a title that you would feel comfortable bringing to the table?

Other Games



Is the game similar to another game on your shelf? Has this game been replaced with something your group enjoys more? Do you have too many of this genre of games? For example, you already have enough deck-builders that this specific one might not be played since the others are more popular within your group.

Happiness Factor



If the game was lost or stolen would you miss it? Does the box art simply look fabulous on your shelf? Do you love the miniatures or some other game component?

Sentimental Value



Does the game hold any sentimental value? Do you have any reasons to keep it other than playing it often or enjoying it? Maybe this is the game that got you into the hobby, or you remember playing it with someone who is dear to your heart, maybe you were gifted the game by a close friend.

There are some games that might need to be re-evaluated after gaming groups or preferences change. However, sometimes gamers have certain games that they'll never part with when using the above questions, which is great! Those are your keepers, so put those back on the shelf. (Maybe dust them off first before putting them back – regular spring cleaning is also good!)

One concern spring cleaners typically have is that they will remove a game from their collection, only to regret the decision later and have to repurchase it. But if you go through the above questions, you'll likely have no issues. For Jack Eddy, it hasn't been a problem. When asked about this, he confirmed he has never cleared out a game that he later repurchased. Once he makes peace with the decision to remove a game from his collection, he doesn't have any reason to get it again.

An illustration showing several hands in various colored sleeves (purple, blue, pink) reaching over a wooden table. The hands are positioned over a card game board, with some cards visible. The background is a gradient of teal and green. The title 'Get the MacGuffin' is written in large white letters, with 'MacGuffin' having a trademark symbol. Below the title, it says 'a card game by Andrew Looney'. To the right, the question 'Who will be eliminated next?' is written in white. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo for 'LOONEY LABS' featuring a stylized white shape with a red starburst pattern.

Get the MacGuffin™

a card game by Andrew Looney

Who will be
eliminated next?



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Once you know that you're going to part with a game, then it is time to decide how you're going to dispose of it. Unlike the unrecognizable leftovers you find in the back of your fridge weeks later, tossing out games from your game collection is not always your best option. Instead, there are some other great options for parting with your games – whether it be selling, trading, gifting, or even donating.

The obvious option is selling a board game. You can do this either online or at board game conventions. You can also consider trading them away – you can find people to trade with on BoardGameGeek.com or various Facebook groups. You can even trade your used games for used or new games on sites like CheapCheapGames.com or BoardGameCo.com. However, there are also plenty of other creative ideas to part ways with your games while bringing happiness to others.

Zayas doesn't follow the typical paths of selling or trading games away. "I do a funny thing where I often take games I don't play often, and leave them at someone's house who I know doesn't game. It is



Websites like Board Game Geek and Cheap Cheap Games offer opportunities to sell or trade games.

my secret mission to grow the gaming hobby. I think that is more important than owning things I don't use myself."

The act of gifting games gives him immense pleasure and he is hopeful the receiver will enjoy the game as much as he enjoyed the act of gifting it to them.

The Gift of Giving

In addition to the methods we've already discussed (selling, trading, and gifting) there are plenty of places to donate games to be enjoyed by others. New or used games can be donated to homeless shelters, where most residents don't have a multitude of possessions or other entertainment options. Libraries are also beginning to rent out board games, though most don't have extensive collections yet. Additionally, overseas military bases typically have large groups of soldiers stationed there without many opportunities to leave base.

Donating games to these military bases gives hours of fun to soldiers who otherwise wouldn't have much to do with their time off.

Another often-overlooked place to donate games are prisons and hospitals. Prisons are limited with the activities available, and games can become a positive outlet and potential avenue for social interaction and



Soldiers on a military base enjoying a game of Spartacus: A Game of Blood & Treachery

rehabilitation. Prisons and hospitals will both likely face some restrictions on components, as hospitals need sanitation and prisons typically limit the amount of foreign objects allowed. If you're looking to donate

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to a prison or hospital, first check with their requirements to make sure that it is something they can use.

Finally, the board game industry also has several charity raffles. Dice Tower Con has a great annual charity raffle that supports the Jack Vasel Memorial Fund (which helps people in the gaming community who have suffered personal hardship).

These are just some of the possibilities for donating games, but more opportunities abound. Be creative, keep your eyes open, and you'll find plenty of other amazing places to donate games that would provide great experiences and fun for others who might not have been able to purchase the game themselves. 🎲



The Jack Vasel Memorial Fund is dedicated to easing hardship within the gaming community.

What are your experiences with tidying up your collection? Are there any games you would never let go? Where do you donate your games? Join the discussion by tweeting to Andrew @AtherisAndrew on Twitter with the hashtag #CGISpringCleaning

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Level Up!

Video Games as Board Games



Justin Spicer

Music Journalist and
Board Game Experimenter





In my youth, I spent many an hour situated behind the cabinets at the local arcade. After tiring of watching my measly stack of quarters being devoured by the hungry machines, I retreated to watch the best players battle the fighting and endurance gaming legends these massive cabinets had to offer. Soon the age of the arcade slowly faded, and console gaming picked up steam, as did a deeper set of gaming opportunities. Many gamers found their love of RPGs and storyline-driven games being fulfilled in single-player campaigns in the privacy of their own homes. During the rise of the console, there were simply no similarities between video games and board games. There was nuance, strategy, and intimacy as console gaming switched from 2D platformers to 3D daydreams.

Of course, any lifelong board gamer will tell you that with just a bit of imagination and simple gaming pieces, these experiences could have been at the fingertips of anyone for decades prior.

David Freeman, author and advocate for emotion-based gameplay, has spoken to the cognitive and emotional boost video games provide those who immerse themselves into the digital hobby. But this is not news to lifelong board gamers. Not only do board games provide benefits in cognitive skills such as problem-solving and abstraction, board games were well ahead of the gaming curve in promoting teamwork and collaboration.

These are still new elements to video games as online gaming has exploded, and though many flash to images of trash-talking teens with the biggest headsets and loudest mouths they can don, video game communities have begun to rally around the idea of community and

togetherness in recent years thanks to platforms like Reddit, Twitch, and Mixer.

The same is happening in board gaming, where the popularity explosion of Meetups, Friendly Local Game Stores (FLGS), and board-game-centric conventions has found the often tabled option of board gaming moving to the forefront. Some have grown tired of buggy game releases and microtransactions that have turned video games into little more than another monthly bill they would rather not pay.

Make no mistake, the video game industry isn't hurting overall. In fact, 2017 was a record year for video game publishers according to Entertainment Software Association (ESA). The ESA reports upwards of \$36 billion being earned by the industry during last year. Though 2017 figures haven't been released as of the time of writing, ICv2 has noted continued gains for the hobby board gaming industry as well – with approximately \$1.4 billion earned in 2016.



NEW PLATFORMS FOR PLATFORMERS

So, it comes as no surprise that the worlds of video and board gaming are further colliding, as both industries continue to boom as other entertainment industries (TV, film, and music) find revenue slowly trending downward. If you've gone to recent gaming conventions, you'd find video and board games co-existing. Penny Arcade recently launched a successful board-game-centric version of its PAX expositions. Popular North American board gaming conventions such as Origins and Gen Con were also littered with the latest releases from publishers that further blur the delineation between video and board games. There's even been small steps in the direction of virtual reality (VR) board games.

Board game publishers have long chased prized intellectual properties (IPs), largely focused on comic books, manga, anime, and film. There are games for commercial smashes (Star Wars, Harry Potter, DC, and Marvel) and even cult favorites (*Big Trouble in Little China*). Board game publishers are not immune to trends, and now it seems we have entered the dawn of the video game/board game mash-up.

At last year's Gen Con, lines were backed up for aisles as people awaited the chance to see Fantasy Flight's attempt at creating *Fallout* and *Sid Meier's Civilization: The Board Game*. Likewise, nestled quaintly in between larger publishers, Modiphius

CARDBOARD CROSSROADS

On one level, this is not a strange marriage between video and board games. As new technology has emerged alongside a larger consumer base, there are plenty of marketing and money reasons for board game publishers to license a popular video gaming IP. However, this is no longer the wild west of a designer coming up with a feckless mechanic in need of a hook a video game skinning would provide. Modiphius is using *Fallout* and its recognizable characters to create new variants on two-player war games. Fantasy Flight, on the other hand, utilizes the expanse of the wasteland to tap into the fun of exploration while relying on the oldest trick in both industries' playbook: RPG-style mechanics.



Entertainment had a tiny table showcasing their own two-player wargame *Fallout: Wasteland Warfare* based on the titular *Fallout* franchise. The convention crowd was going crazy over USAopoly's *Super Mario: Level Up!* The *Dark Souls* series has also made its way to the table top with *Dark Souls: The Board Game* from Steamforged Games Ltd. as well as its successor *Bloodborne: The Card Game* from CMON Limited, both of which were well-received. IDW Games was showcasing their first release in a series of retro-styled, Atari-themed titles with *Atari's Centipede* (the next in the series, *Missile Command*, is due this year).



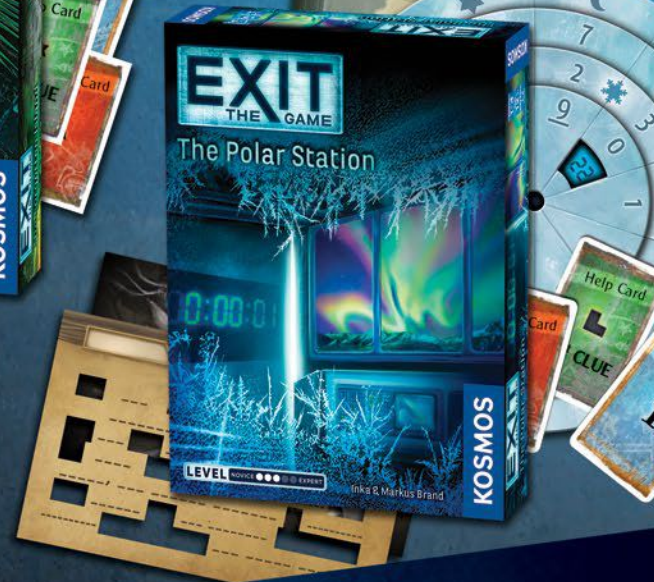
It is also an interesting exploration of how popular IPs like *Super Mario*, *Fallout*, *Portal*, and beyond handle their licensing. Now companies are keeping their popular lines and IPs relevant by embracing all

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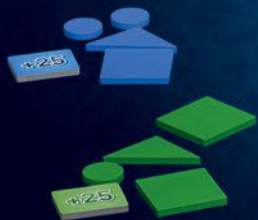
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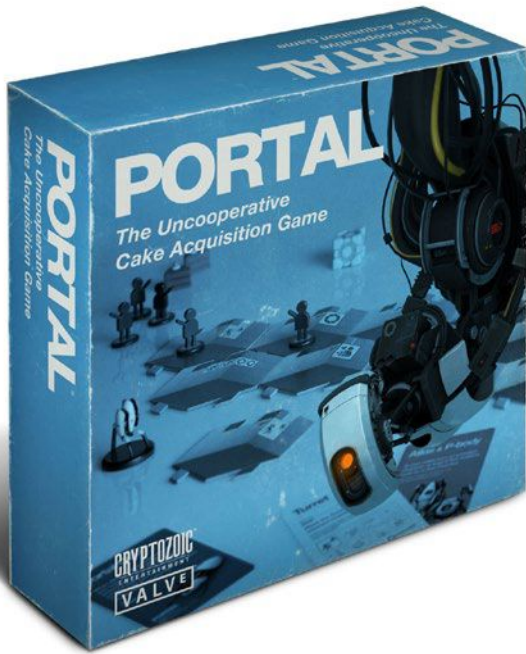


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Board games with video game themes like *Portal* and *Super Mario* give fans of these franchises opportunities to explore these worlds in new ways.

platforms and mediums. Why limit *X-Com* to video games, when you can either create new content and games off an existing world and, most importantly, an existing fan base? If a gamer is a fan of the *Fallout* series, then there's a good chance they're going to check out *Fallout: Wasteland Warfare*, continuing their experience outside the screen and on the table top.

Tony Serebriany, Director of New Product Development & Inventor Relations at USAopoly, reinforces this as one of the main reasons why video games and board games are a perfect fit: "We like giving video game fans an opportunity to experience something they're passionate about outside of playing the game itself..."

REVISITING THE CLASSICS

And it's not just new IPs that tickle the fancy of board gamers. IDW's licensing of classic Atari games could be a gamble among an industry whose latest boom is being driven by Millennials embracing exciting group dynamics which board games provide. Video game designer and author Jane McGonigal has long championed games (particularly video games, but board games as well) because they have become

these games give fans a chance to extend the story of their favorite video games offline."

Board games allow niche elements of video games to be further explored in tactile forms. Sure, you can navigate the wastelands and traverse warp pipes, but often those encounters become exploitable and predictive due to a set algorithm. Yet, you may never play the same version of the *Fallout* board game twice because you'll never know what will turn up when you turn over a tile – the creatures, dice roll, and scenarios will all be different each time. Card games offer countless combinations that can be designed to re-enact the difficulty curve of *Dark Souls*.

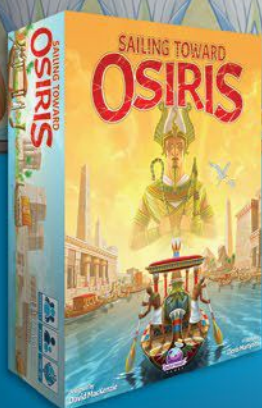
the intimate environment young gamers are flocking toward to create strong ties and happy memories.

IDW's Atari line, despite seeming to aim for a more nostalgic audience, harks back to the halcyon days of the arcade, where kids huddled together in the shared goal of beating the game. And identifiable, quantifiable, and relatable iconography keep gamers

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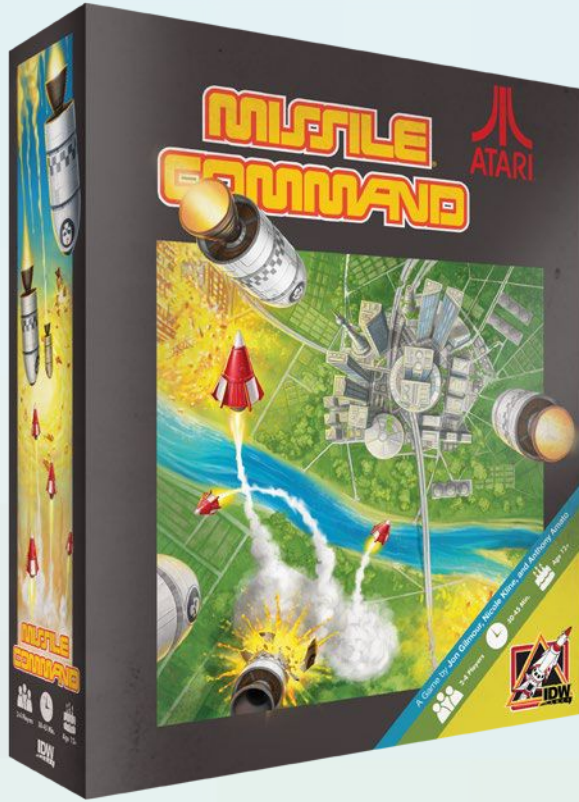
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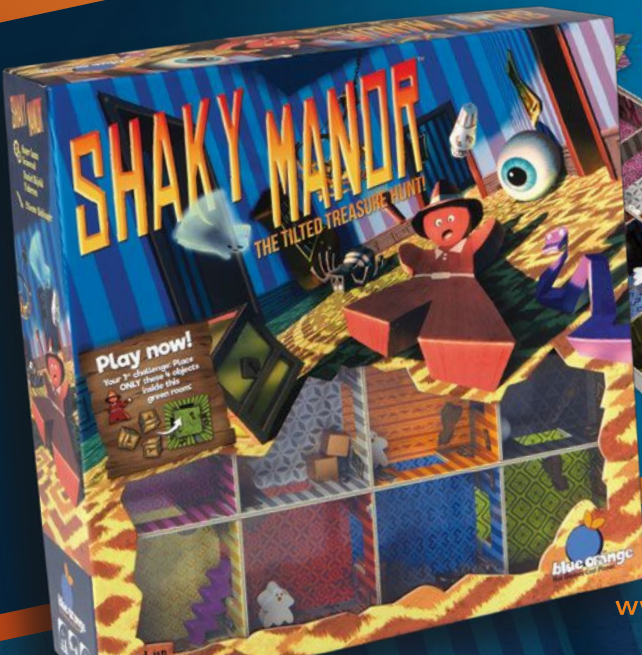


returning to game boards as it does their PCs and consoles. As Serebriany explains, “With *Super Mario: Level Up!* the better you are, the more chances you have to level up a character. We also wanted to incorporate the ‘? Blocks’ as they are an important part of the video games.”

But time and time again, the reason popular video game characters and franchises are finding success as board games comes down to clever design that brings friends, family, and gaming groups to the table to play in person. Nothing can replicate interpersonal contact, not even a headset. And though we may never see another arcade boom, there is a board gaming explosion happening across the world.

Next time you think about picking up a controller or booting up Steam, instead swing by your FLGS and give the board game equivalent a try. It could be your new favorite of an old favorite. 🎲

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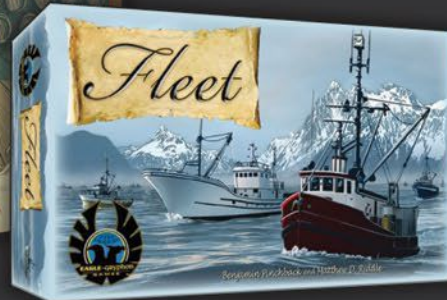




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SMIRK & DAGGER:

How to Make Friends and Backstab People



John L. Carkeet IV

Producer, LimpingFrog Productions and
Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Army Reserve



Schadenfreude (scha·den·freu·de), *noun*: the experience of pleasure, joy, or self-satisfaction that comes from learning of or witnessing the troubles, failure, or humiliation of another.

Adopted directly from German, this single word captures the imagination of countless creative minds powering the tabletop gaming community. From classic titles such as *Diplomacy* and *Shogun* to modern hits like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Cutthroat Caverns*, the prolific application of the art of the backstab in board games would have brought tears of joy to Machiavelli himself.

Although many publishers and designers have at least one backstabbing title, only a precious few pit their futures and fortunes on the theme. Of those, one company has carved out a niche in this cutthroat industry with more than a dozen deceptively

delightful titles, the majority of which materialized from the brilliant (but perhaps a little twisted) and gentle (and maybe a bit bleeding) heart: Curt Covert, founder and chief instigator of Smirk & Dagger Games.

“Smirk & Dagger is a passion, a family, a source of pride and a promise of a more interesting tomorrow,” said Covert, a loving husband and father who simultaneously managed a marketing firm while designing games during his “spare” time. “It is a culmination of my firm belief that games are more fun when you can stab your friend in the back.”

From Dragons to Starships

Covert’s fascination in backstabbing games was forged during his early days playing *Dungeons & Dragons*.

“I had an unusual *D&D* group in high school,” Covert reminisced. “It consisted of six or seven women and me. Our campaigns were very altruistic. If you found a magic weapon, you would give it to the player who would wield it best.”

These Tolkien-like teachings abruptly terminated when Covert entered college.

“I was suddenly swept by horror,” Covert confessed. “No matter what the Dungeon Master did, I was more afraid of what these other players would potentially do to me!”



Beautiful...but Boring

After spending several years enhancing his favorite titles at no charge, Covert gathered the creative courage to design his own game with assistance from Brunetto.

“If Curt were Captain Picard, I was his Number One,” said Brunetto. “We spent a lot of nights and weekends brainstorming and banging stuff together.”

Such episodes would later lay the foundation for Smirk & Dagger. In the meantime, Covert’s passion for design soared through the final frontier.

“Curt loved the game *Star Trek: Red Alert*, a collectable disc game from the early 2000s that shares many similarities to *Star Wars: X-Wing*,” recalled Justin Brunetto, a former co-worker and close friend of Covert. “The game never got an official expansion due to licensing issues between the publisher and Paramount [Pictures], so Curt spent two years making expansions of his own.”

Covert applied his graphic design skills to produce professional quality artwork online so *Red Alert* fans could download and print them. Most applauded his masterful craftsmanship that made his components nearly indistinguishable from the original release.

“Curt even impressed *Red Alert*’s designers,” said Brunetto. “This high praise inspired him to make additional expansions and variants for other games Curt loved to play.”

In the ensuing years, Covert and Brunetto, who would earn the title “Uber Instigator,” developed ideas that nearly locked lucrative contracts with Hasbro and Mattel and, perhaps more importantly, propelled Covert to found Smirk & Dagger Games. But first, Covert needed to learn how to make a game from scratch...and fail spectacularly doing so.

“Curt’s first game was *Mad Impulse*,” said Brunetto. “It had a cool story and beautiful components, but the game — played on a 20 by 20 inch board and 400 square spaces — didn’t play out what Curt had envisioned.”

Hex Marks the Spot

Covert’s failure from his otherwise beautiful early title did not deter him from pursuing his passion to bring excitement to the gaming table. Inspired by Tom Jolly’s *Wiz War*, a beer-and-pretzels fantasy board game that pits treasure hunting wizards against one another in a twisted maze, Covert contemplated the direction of his next (and arguably most influential) title.

“I loved *Wiz War* for its tit-for-tat theme,” said Covert. “It begged the question, ‘What is the nastiest, backstabbing game you can think of?’ For me, the answer was *Hex Hex*.”

“*Hex Hex* breathed life into Smirk & Dagger,” said Brunetto. “It was far superior yet simpler than his first game. He showcased it at work and local conventions, and the people just loved it.”

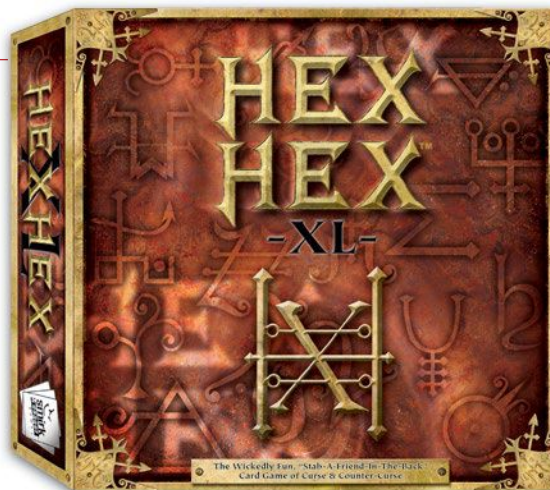
This love reached a fever pitch in the summer of 2003 when a retail manager asked if she could demo the game at her store’s booth during Gen Con.

“She explained to Curt that half the games she planned to sell were unavailable,” said Brunetto. “He went to his local copy center and printed 100 copies of the game on parchment paper.”

“I had no banner, no publicity and no one knew me,” said Covert. “All I had was a card table and a small sign that read, ‘Come play *Hex Hex*.’”

The minimal marketing and Spartan accommodations did not reduce the frantic fun of this “*Magic-meets-Hot-Potato*” title. Covert sold 73 copies during Gen Con. His initial success convinced him to pull a second mortgage — with the blessing of his supportive wife — to finance 5,000 professionally designed and printed copies. Everything was going according to plan until Covert came to a frightening realization moments after he secured his shipment in a warehouse.

“It was like four-player solitaire,” Covert admitted. “It confused anyone who played it and bored the hell out of me.”



“I didn’t have a distributor,” Covert exclaimed. “All my meticulous research and planning only got me to the point where I received all 5,000 copies.”

With the next major convention months away, Covert started making cold calls to local retailers. His frantic tenacity led to a one-on-one conversation with the senior buyer at Spencer’s Gifts. “She asked me to send a copy [of *Hex Hex*] so she could take a look at it,” said Covert. The next thing I knew, she submitted an order for 2,500 copies. Half my inventory went out the door in three months...Spencer’s saved us.”

Spencer’s epic order brought Smirk & Dagger to the break-even point, but Covert sorely needed a dedicated distributor to generate a profit. Expecting countless nights seeking out a partner to help get the game onto retail store shelves, another savior in the shape of a sales, shipping, and warehousing company swooped onto the scene.

“Aldo Ghiozzi, owner of Impressions Advertising and Marketing, called me because he didn’t recognize my name on the list of retailers appearing at the Gama Trade Show,” Covert recalled. “That phone call led to a terrific 14-year partnership that listed *Hex Hex* and future Smirk & Dagger titles in the catalogs of one of the largest and longest-running consolidators in the hobby game industry.”



Of Cutthroats and Cookies

After the success of *Hex Hex*, Covert's next major milestone materialized in 2007 with the development of *Cutthroat Caverns*.

"*Cutthroat Caverns* is very near and dear to me," Covert declared. "It evokes the same reactions I had playing *Dungeons & Dragons*. It's exactly the kind of game I wanted to build, and delivers exactly the kind of experience I was looking for."

The visceral experience also evokes strong emotions and fond memories for Brunetto and Jonathan Lavalley, one of the leading members of Covert's Instigator Family.

"It's my favorite game," said Brunetto. "It rewards cooperation, but the only way to win is to backstab. It doesn't take long for new players to realize that the monsters are bad but their friends are worse."

"Every game [of *Cutthroat Caverns*] plays like a dark fantasy book," Lavalley explained. "It offers a primeval feeling of working together until you see the opportunity to take the lead by killing the leader."

Lavalley, a designer in his own right having founded Firestorm Ink in 2003, loved *Cutthroat Caverns* so much that he created *Death Incarnate*, the game's fifth expansion.

"*Death Incarnate* is the best thing I've designed," said Lavalley. "It pushes the boundaries of encounters by making them extremely cruel without being overly complicated. I would totally introduce this expansion to new players."

Though *Death Incarnate* stands as Lavalley's crowning achievement, his claim to fame rests squarely on ripping the limbs off of gingerbread men.

A Smirk Without the Dagger

While Covert finds delight in seeing his creations inspire vile taunts and maniacal laughter in even the most placid players, he acknowledges that the future of his company hinges on expanding beyond its backstabbing beginnings.

"Some players love 'take that' games and buy every title in the Smirk & Dagger line," said Covert. "However, some players hate those kinds of titles. As the company grows, I need to appeal to a wider audience."

This need became abundantly clear with the release of *Sutakku*, a dice stacking game, in 2011.



"While helping Curt run the Smirk & Dagger booth at Gen Con, I hosted a *Run for Your Life Candyman* tournament," Lavalley explained. "The game is basically the *Candyland* we played as children, but with brutal combat as players shoot and tear off limbs from their fellow players' candyman characters."

Lavalley revels in hosting this midnight tournament hosted exclusively at Gen Con. His hilarious antics, boisterous hecklings and silly songs have attracted dozens of convention guests to join the chant, "Rip it off! Rip it off! Rip it off!"

"The tournament has become a staple," Covert said. "It includes a mascot, real cookies and tubes of frosting...people go nuts."

"We were so loud one year that security came three times to make sure we were OK," Lavalley admitted, a hint of pride creeping up the corners of his mouth.





“*Sutakku* is a great push-your-luck dice game driven by ‘screw yourself’ mechanics,” Covert explained. “Players and retailers recognized the smirky bravado, but they quickly pointed out that the dagger was nowhere to be found.”

“The game was already out the door when Curt made a subset of cards to add the backstab element,” Brunetto recalled. “It was a Band-Aid to a title that didn’t quite make the cut as an authentic Smirk & Dagger title, but it opened our eyes to the limits we could push the creative envelope without changing what the brand represented.”

The solution to broadening the playing style pallet without diluting the company’s sweet taste for revenge took shape with last year’s announcement of the Smirk & Laughter line.

“The only major difference between Smirk & Dagger and Smirk & Laughter is that the latter eliminates the backstab,” said Covert. “The Smirk & Laughter series remains true to what I believe makes a great game, yet it opens the door to a whole new range of emotions, experiences and playing styles.”

Smirk & Laughter debuted in March, with the release of *Nut So Fast*. The next title in the series, *Before There Were Stars*, will follow in August.

“These are critical titles,” Covert claimed. “I want both games to shock someone who didn’t hear the news that I am expanding the company.”



Above, top to bottom: Curt Covert with Justin Brunetto; Curt Covert; Jonathan Lavallee; Curt and Jonathan teach *The Tower of Madness* to a fan; Instigators getting ready for dinner; Instigators at the Smirk & Dagger booth



SUTAKKU			
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Curt	24	36	60
Justin	0	25	25

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Nut So Fast is the company's first foray into the party game genre. Wild and frenetic, this boisterous title aims to evoke laughter through silly faces.

"The game's humor derives from players consistently making mistakes as they flip cards and match pictures," said Lavallee. "They are penalized by striking 'nutty' poses."

While *Nut So Fast* shows the slapstick side of Smirk & Laughter, *Before There Were Stars* explores the ancient art of storytelling by gazing at the heavens.

Madness Awaits

As Covert continues to collaborate with designers to sculpt the Smirk & Laughter legacy, he remains faithful to the core of his company's cutthroat philosophy with *The Tower of Madness*, the latest title in the Smirk & Dagger line.

"This is my design three years in the making," said Covert. "I spent most of that time developing ways to pull the cost below \$100 without sacrificing the quality of the components, particularly the foot-tall, three-dimensional clock tower."

As the title suggests, the tower — complete with tentacles holding up 30 marbles — shapes the dramatic tension as players push their luck to reveal marbles that will either bring them one step closer to saving the world or slipping into insanity.

"You can't avoid the tower because you want victory points that come in the form of blue marbles," Covert explained. "Red marbles represent madness. If a player collects four of them, then his or her investigation is over as he or she spends the

A Family with a Future

Since 2003, Covert has armed players with figurative daggers while devising fiendish ways to (temporarily) turn friends into enemies. His decision to make Smirk & Dagger a full time enterprise, coupled with the promising launch of Smirk & Laughter, demonstrates Covert's boundless energy, contagious enthusiasm and abundant patience.

"It's one of the most emotionally rewarding titles I've ever played," declared Covert. "It connects players from all walks of life as they weave a tale of creation through constellation cards."

Although the culturally-inclusive creation stories draw players to the story, the game's lasting appeal stems from its unique scoring system.

"The best storyteller doesn't necessarily win the game," Covert declared. "Scoring is based on the best moment in a player's story. No one knows who's winning until the end because each player awards one point to the player he or she deemed to have the best moment. Rarely will every player, or even two players, award the same point for the same moment. By the end of the game, everyone is recognized for their creativity."



rest of the game seeking ways to collect three gray dice that will summon Cthulhu."

"*Tower of Madness* has all the elements of a Smirk & Dagger title," said Brunetto. "It creates chaos as players pull tentacles, cast spells, switch sides...Curt loves chaos."

"For 14 years, I made one game a year. Now, I'm looking to be an overnight success," Covert claimed. "I want to offer *the* game that everyone must have."

"The company's ultimate goal is to develop a legendary, mainstream title such as *Munchkin*, *Apples to Apples*, or *Cards Against Humanity*," Brunetto revealed. "We'll get there. It's just a matter of time."

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"I don't think there has been a game that has successfully pulled off that RTS aspect in a board game yet... I think this one has!"
- Tom Vasel



*Figures do not come painted.



Despite his seemingly limitless supply of creativity, Covert knows he can't do it alone.

"There are only so many games I can come up with," Covert admitted. "Fortunately, I regularly hear from fellow game designers who believe their idea for a great game should have the Smirk & Dagger or Smirk & Laughter logo. *Dread Curse*, *Dead Last*, and *Paramedics: Clear!* are a few such titles that have met the company's smirky-and-backstabby standards."

Long before the board gaming world became acquainted with *Hex Hex*, the graphic designer turned marketing executive turned game designer has consistently sought support from his Instigator Family.

"At Gen Con, we have a 20 by 20 foot booth filled with people who, for 13 years, have volunteered their time and talent to help Curt bring his passion to the game table," said Lavallee. "Such devotion comes from caring. We care for our games, we care for each other, and Curt cares about us."

For Covert, the feeling is mutual.

"I'm a one-man company, but I've never been a one-man show," said Curt. "It takes a nice person to make a mean game. I'm honored that some of the nicest people I've ever met have helped me make Smirk & Dagger create memorable experiences that draw players back to the table again and again...even if it means making a frenemy or two along the way." 🎲



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The winner of our first annual Best of the Year award, *Sagrada* is both visually arresting and mechanically satisfying. It blends puzzle elements with set collection into an elegantly balanced dice game.



Naomi Laeuchli
Game Reviewer and
Casual Game Groupie

Players are attempting to build beautiful stained glass windows. Each player starts the game with a window frame, each of which has a four-by-five grid of slots for dice. Each player is then dealt two double-sided window pattern cards, selects one, and slots it beneath the grid on their frame. Each pattern card contains some colors and some numbers on it,

indicating that only dice matching the color or number may be placed on those spots. Each pattern also has a difficulty rating, ranging from three to six; the difficulty of the pattern you choose is the number of favor tokens you start the game with.

Three objective cards are laid out in the middle of the table. These will score you points at the end of the game. They award points for things like sets of ones and twos in your window, or for each set of dice colors. Each player also has a private objective which will score them points equal to the sum of values of a particular color of die. Finally, three tool cards are placed on the table. Players can spend favor tokens on their turns to use tools. Tools allow you to do things such as move dice in your window or alter the number of a die you draft. If a particular tool has not yet been used during the game, it only costs one favor token to use it, otherwise it costs two.

MSRP: \$40
Designers: Adrian Adamescu,
Daryl Andrews
Publisher: Floodgate Games
1-4 players, ages 13+, 30-45 mins.





Each game of *Sagrada* takes place over ten rounds. At the beginning of a round, the starting player for that round draws dice from the dice bag (twice as many dice as there are players, plus one). The start player then rolls the dice and players take turns drafting a die, placing it in one of their window slots until each player has chosen one die. Players then each draft another die, but in reverse order. You can always choose to skip drafting and not take a die when it is your turn.

When you first place a die in your window, it must be in one of the slots around the edge. Subsequent dice must be placed adjacent (either diagonally or orthogonally) to a previously placed die, and can never be placed orthogonally to a die that is the same color or showing the same value (for example, two sixes cannot be placed next to each other, nor can two purples). If it is ever discovered that a die has been misplaced in your window, you correct it by discarding dice, so be careful! At the end of the ten rounds, points are calculated according to the objectives, with bonus points for favor tokens not used and points lost for empty spaces in your window. The player with the highest score wins.

A game about creating beautiful works of art should look lovely, and *Sagrada* delivers. The window frames already look amazing and as you start to fill them with multicolored dice they just become more and more attractive.

The player interaction in this game is mostly indirect, as you attempt to draft dice that may be valuable to your opponents. But what really makes this game so dazzling is its unique and engaging puzzle element as you work with the window pattern you chose, balanced with both public and private objectives. Even when faced with unlucky dice draws or rolls, it only makes the puzzle element more fun and engaging. The favor tokens are also a clever addition, as the tools are much more useful later in the game, but also cost more as other players use them first.

With short turns, fast gameplay, and colorful components, *Sagrada* hits each note elegantly in an experience that both casual and non-casual gamers can enjoy.



On a mysterious island full of deadly penguins, you must race to collect treasure and make it out alive before your time runs out!

Pingo Pingo is played against a soundtrack CD that comes with the game. From the sounds of the CD you know when it's day and when it's night, and every thirty seconds or so there is a cry of "Pingo! Pingo!" Each player starts with seven heart cards for health. The Adventure Deck is divided between all players. Finally, you set the five cardboard standees around the play area, about six-to-ten feet from the table. These include a stone penguin, a pirate ship, two suspension bridges, and a bear-riding penguin.

MSRP: \$28
Designer: Roberto Fraga
Publisher: IELLO
2-5 players, ages 6+, 15 mins.

When the CD starts, the game starts. Players take turns flipping over the top card of their adventure deck. You are supposed to flip over cards as quickly as possible, with minimal pauses between players. There are treasure cards in these decks. If you are the first player to correctly slap a treasure card, you place it in your treasure pile. However, some of them are day cards and some are night cards, and you can only slap a card when the CD's soundtrack is at the right time of day. Cards will remain on the table if unclaimed, so if you can't slap a night card now, you might have another

chance when the soundtrack switches to daytime. Some treasure cards are also trapped, showing spiders or snakes. These can never be slapped. If you ever slap a card incorrectly, you flip over one of your heart cards. There are also camp cards which allow you to steal other players' treasure cards.

Finally, there are five event cards. One of them will restore one life point to the player who slaps it first. Others will have you doing things such as running to touch one of the standees, grabbing the dart gun to shoot a standee, or sometimes both! But you have to do it before the CD cries "Pingo! Pingo!" or you lose a life point. Sometimes this leads to just plain bad luck on timing, but that's part of the fun.

There's a lot a chaos in *Pingo Pingo*, and the soundtrack sets the perfect backdrop for a frantic, stressful dash to a standee. The traps on the treasure cards blend in nicely, so you need to be fast, but you also need to keep a sharp eye out. The game takes a lot of room for the standees and some people might simply not have the space for it. But if you have the room, you'll have a blast with this game. Fast, hectic, and filled with angry penguins!



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Sometimes you see a game and fall in love at first sight: it looks gorgeous, unique, and creative. *Photosynthesis* is exactly such a game.

Each player will be growing their own trees. There are small, medium, and large trees, as well as seeds. On your turn you can spend the light points you have earned to plant seeds, or to grow trees from one size to another. The bigger a tree is growing, the more light points it costs. At the beginning of each round, players earn light points based on the size of their trees on the board, with bigger trees earning more points. However, the sun moves into a new position around the board at the end of each round, and trees will be blocked by bigger trees that stand between them and the sun if they are close enough. The bigger the tree, the more spaces on the board it will block. If your tree is in another tree's shadow, it will have to wait until the sun moves in order to score light points.

On your turn, you may buy trees, with the more trees you already own of a particular size increasing the cost of buying more. You may also buy seeds or retire

trees once they reach the biggest size. When a tree is retired, you take a scoring tile from one of the four piles, depending on how close to the center of the board the tree was. The closer to the center, the more points it can earn. The top tiles of each pile are also worth the most points, so scoring trees early will earn you more points. However, the tree is then taken off the board and will no longer be earning you light points, so there is a balance between when you retire them and how long you keep them to earn light.

After the sun has gone around the board three times, the game ends and the player with the most points wins.

Figuring out which trees are being blocked and calculating the light points each player earns can get a bit clunky, but the game itself is quite easy to learn and teach. At the same time, there is a high level of strategy in every decision you make, from the placement of your trees to when you choose to grow them. The theme of growing trees is refreshing and the components mesmerizing. The game feels delightful while sacrificing nothing in gameplay or mechanics.

MSRP: \$45

Designer: Hjalmar Hach

Publisher: Blue Orange Games

2-4 players, ages 8+, 45-60 mins.





In *Paramedics: Clear!* you manage your own ambulance as you race against the clock to save your patients and deliver them to the hospital!

Each player selects an ambulance player mat. You draw two patient cards, place one in your main gurney and place the other in an opponent's backup gurney. The patient cards are all different, with quirky accidents befalling them and clever artwork. Then draw five cards from the supply deck, set out five more face up on the table, and turn on the game's companion app.

MSRP: \$40

Designer: Gary Kagan

Publisher: Smirk & Dagger Games

1-4 players, ages 14+, 30-40 mins.

On your turn, you hit the start button on the app and call out your ambulance's call sign (there are several moments where you will have to shout something out as you perform an action). Throughout the game you are trying to treat your patients. Each patient card has a list of supplies needed to treat it. If at least one supply is played on it, that patient is considered sustained. Sustaining only lasts until the end of the turn. If a patient is not sustained or at the hospital by the time your turn ends, the patient dies. Once a patient card has all the supplies it needs, it is delivered to the hospital. If the patient was in your main gurney, you must immediately draw two new patient cards, place one in your ambulance and, if possible, place the other in an open backup gurney on another player's board.

You create new supplies by playing specific supply cards. If you don't have all the cards you want, you can switch the cards in your hand with those that are spread out on the table or ask to trade with another player (who gets an extra supply card in return). New supplies can either go directly to a patient or into an empty supply cabinet. You can also set aside supply cards of matching colors to upgrade your ambulance, such as creating more supply cabinets, increasing your hand size, or getting a one-use-only medivac which will automatically transport one of your patients to the hospital.

There are three rounds in the game, with each round ending after the supply deck is depleted once. During the first round turns last sixty seconds, during the second they are only forty-five seconds, and finally in the third round you only have thirty seconds per turn!

During your turn in *Paramedics: Clear!* you're very much off in your own little world – but each turn is short and downtime is minimal. On your opponents' turns, you can enjoy watching them scramble to beat the clock or be a responsible paramedic by taking some time to plan out your next turn. It's easy to learn the rules, but the second that timer starts ticking, you start panicking and the excitement and exhilaration quickly flow.



The gods are placing the constellations in the sky, but a mortal has snuck in among them. Can you find the mortal and create the heavenly vision for the stars?

In *Dreams*, players play multiple rounds. At the beginning of each round, four images are placed on the table. Three of them are false; the fourth is the image the gods are trying to turn into a constellation. Tokens are randomly distributed to each player and looked at secretly. The tokens will tell the gods (all but one player) which image is the true vision, and will inform the remaining player that they are the mortal. Each player is also given one transparent star, one grey, and one black.

Players take turns placing one star at a time onto the playing mat to create a constellation. The star can be placed anywhere on the mat and you can use any of your three stars, but once a star has been placed it cannot be moved. Players keep taking turns placing a star until all stars have been placed. Players then secretly make a guess. The gods must guess who the mortal is and the mortal must guess which image the constellation is meant to represent. The guesses are all revealed at the same time and points are tallied.

The mortal earns two points for guessing the correct image, and three additional points if no one suspected they were the intruder. Each god player earns two points for guessing the mortal correctly and one point if no one thought they were the intruder. New rounds continue until one or more players reach sixteen points, at which time the player with the most points wins.

Dreams succeeds admirably at mixing the party game aspect of constellation building with social deduction elements. God players want to clue in the other gods that they know the correct image, but can't be too obvious about it or the mortal will figure it out easily. The mortal must pretend to know what's going on and elude suspicion by either choosing the correct image to represent or placing stars in vague locations. The point system adds an intriguing dynamic, since you must keep in mind the score track over multiple rounds, with roles changing each time.

There is a huge variety of image cards and the game looks beautiful – from the playing mat that represents the sky to the artwork on the cards. It looks dreamy and fantastical and beautifully sets the tone for the game.



MSRP: \$38

Designer: Olivier Grégoire

Publisher: Zoch Verlag

3-6 players, ages 10+, 30 mins.

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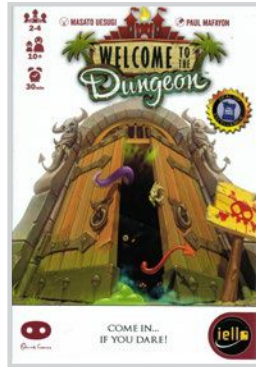
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MSRP: \$15
Designer: Masato Uesugi
Publisher: IELLO
2-4 players, ages 10+, 30 mins.

the hero loses all of his or her health, the player fails. If the hero survives all the monsters in the dungeon, the player succeeds. Then a new round begins. Succeed through two dungeons, and you win the game – but if a hero dies twice, you're eliminated.

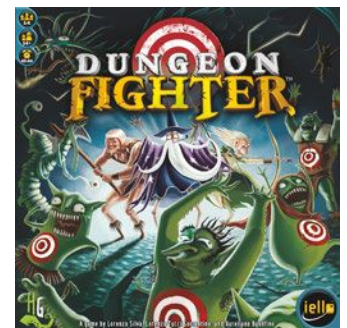
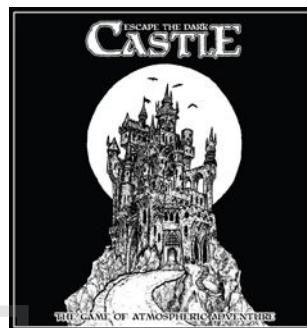
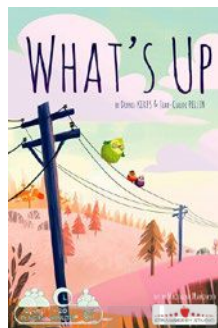
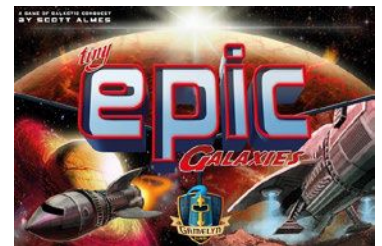
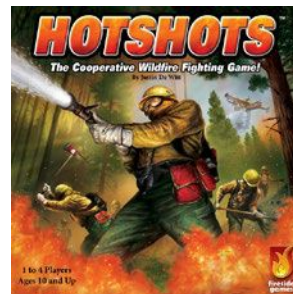
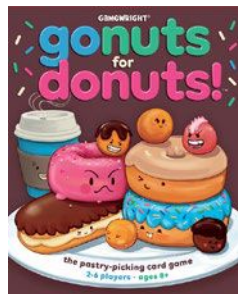
There's a nice variety to the equipment, from some that give extra health to others that kill particular monsters. It's a great combination of bluffing, push-your-luck, and a game of chicken. How many fearsome beasts can you pack into the dungeon while being careful not to be left with an unbeatable one? 🎲



The remaining player reveals the monster cards in the dungeon one by one. Each monster has a number of hit points. If a monster is undefeated by equipment, it deals damage to the hero equal to the number on its card. If

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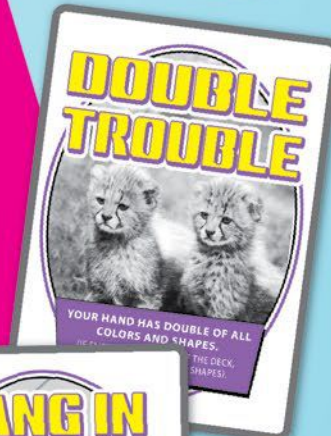
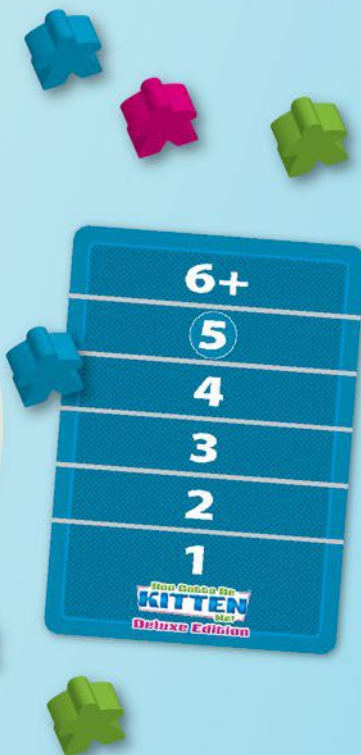
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