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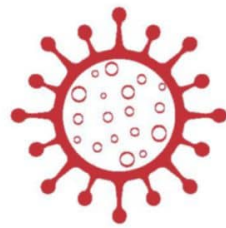
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Founded in 2009, Stratus Games publishes quality casual and party games like *Eruption*, *Gold Mine*, and *Off Your Rocker*. They are also the creative minds behind *Casual Game Revolution* and *Casual Game Insider*.

StratusGames.com

FLIPPING OUT OVER SILVER COIN™

Game series don't come along all that often. Expansions, sure, but not an actual series of stand-alone games. *Silver* is both a series of games (*Silver Coin* is the third of at least seven planned entries) and a collection of expansions, with each game being both stand-alone as well as an expansion for the previous titles. Even weirder is the notion that the two previous games in the series—*Silver* and *Silver Bullet*—serve as expansions to *Silver Coin*.



Ted Alspach

Designer, *Silver Coin*

The *Silver* series consists of stand-alone games with the same basic set of rules: the difference is that every single card of every single game (14 unique cards per game) has a unique ability, and these abilities totally change how the game is played.

Silver Coin's focus is on flipping cards over; nine of the cards either provide special abilities

when face up in your village or let you turn cards face-up (or face-down). This provides even more interesting choices on your turn. Instead of just “should I keep this card” each time you draw, you'll be considering the impact of how you can use the drawn card, what cards you and your opponents have face up, and even the impact of the card you'll be discarding (which becomes a face-up card as soon as it hits the discard pile).



Silver Coin has two cards that affect scoring, including the Regifter (0), which introduces scoring round gameplay choices. If you have a face-up Regifter when a round ends, you may give one of your cards to any other player. This is *after* everyone has flipped their cards face-up, so you can make an educated choice as to who should be the recipient of some much-needed pointage at the end of the round. This could be the difference between winning a round (or the entire game) and losing.

The other card that affects scoring is the Wolfman (13) which, if face up at the end of a round, changes your score at the end of the round to 0 points...if the sum of your other cards is less than 13.

Both of these scoring cards are fun to use by themselves, but they also interact in a way that ratchets up the tension each round: end of round scoring cards are resolved in numerical order, with the Regifter (0) happening before the Wolfman (13). So before your opponent can mark 0 down due to their face-up Wolfman, you can use the power of your Regifter to push them over the 13-point limit. Not only does this prevent them from scoring 0, but it also adds the 13 points of their Wolfman to their score!



This is only one of the many ways that *Silver Coin* cards provide additional interaction and strategic choices, especially because so many cards let you flip cards up or down in both your village and other players' villages. And of course, you can mix those *Silver Coin* cards with the cards in *Silver* and *Silver Bullet* to create exactly the game of *Silver* you want to play! ☺



Pandemic

Taking a Gaming Break from the Outbreak



Dann Albright
Freelance Journalist and
Lifelong Board Gamer

Much of the world has been shut down by a recently discovered virus. Governments are scrambling to catch up. Companies are shutting down. Millions of people are getting sick — and the death toll is rising.

Sound like an interesting premise for a board game?

It's not — it's life as I write this article. The novel coronavirus pandemic has hit the world at full speed, and no one knows when it's going to let up.

Most of the world has been encouraged to stay home and to exercise caution as our society gradually reopens. That's the best thing we can do right now to minimize the spread of the virus while we wait for it to burn itself out or someone to come up with some sort of vaccine.

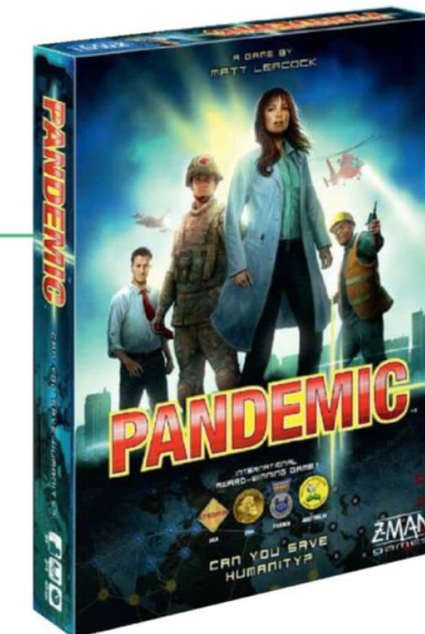
As board gamers, though, we have another option: tackle the virus head-on. By racing around the world to hotspots. Researching and deploying cures. Delivering supplies and help where they're needed. On the table, of course.

You have already guessed that I'm talking about *Pandemic*. Even though it's only 12 years old, it has quickly become a modern classic and developed a huge following. It has spawned a range of follow-ups, both standalone editions and expansions.

Do you want to do something more than following a stay-at-home order? *Pandemic* is your chance. It's a perfect time to play a co-op game about saving the world.

Pandemic

2008 | 2–4 players | 45 minutes



Even with all of the expansions and sequels, it's tough to beat the original *Pandemic*. Two-to-four players jet around the world to research four diseases and treat outbreaks. If they succeed, they'll stay ahead of the contagions and find cures before the planet is overwhelmed.

It's a mechanically-simple game with only four actions for players to choose from: travel, treat, discover a cure, or build a research station. But everyone takes on a specific role — dispatcher, ops expert, medic, researcher, or scientist — and is most effective when they play to their strengths.

A deck of cards controls the spread of the virus, and things can (and often do) get out of hand quickly. This combination

of varied roles and random outbreaks makes every game unique and tense.

The original *Pandemic* still shines without the bells and whistles of its descendants. It's easy to learn but presents a challenge, which is why many consider it a great gateway game for people new to the hobby. It escalates quickly and encourages players to work together to have any hope of saving the world.

And with a playtime of 45 minutes, you can make it happen — or suffer defeat — several times in a single game night.

Pandemic Legacy: Season 1

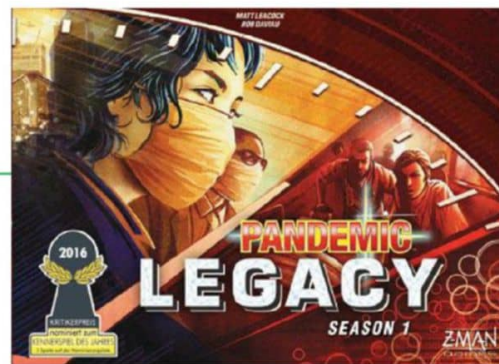
2015 | 2–4 players | 60 minutes

Legacy games tell a story over multiple play sessions with changing board conditions, updated decks of cards, and lots of flavor text to set the mood. *Pandemic Legacy* is no different. What makes it stand out is that it's just so good.

As I write this, it's ranked #2 on Board Game Geek among every other board game out there. And it held the #1 spot for a long time. It's a phenomenal game.

You'll play between 12 and 24 sessions depending on how you fare in each one to progress the story. In the early stages, it's very much like *Pandemic* — you travel around the world, treating diseases and trying to research a cure before an apocalyptic outbreak consumes the globe.

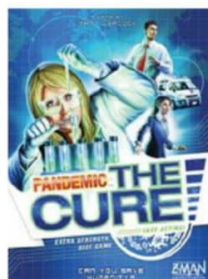
But as the game progresses, new rules and components are added and layers of the story are revealed. You'll rip up cards, write on other cards, put stickers on components, and completely lose characters. It's an adventure that takes place not just throughout the world, like the original game, but through time, too.



And if you love it, you can continue on to the sequel, *Pandemic Legacy: Season 2*.

Pandemic: The Cure

2014 | 2–5 players | 30 minutes



Pandemic: The Cure takes the high-tension, addictive original *Pandemic* and turns it into a dice game. The actions you can take are dependent on what you roll.

Each role in *The Cure* has a different set of dice that determine what they can do. You'll also roll infection dice to see how the disease progresses around the world. Like every *Pandemic* game, you'll need to travel quickly (in this case, by air and sea) to stay ahead of the outbreaks.

There's an addictive element of pushing your luck in *The Cure*. You can reroll your dice as many times as you'd like to get the actions you want...but with every roll, the chances of the next outbreak increase. It adds new tension to an already taut game.

Another bonus of this version of the game is that it only takes about half an hour. If 45 minutes of thinking about a global epidemic sounds too stressful right now (I don't blame you), this could be a good solution.



Build an imperial garden by creating the landscape and placing the scenery in a Zen-like euro game. Play solo or up to four players.

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Pandemic: Iberia

2016 | 2–5 players | 45 minutes

If the previous versions of *Pandemic* are a little too real right now — and like I said, I don't blame you — why not try going into the past? *Pandemic: Iberia* takes place in 1848 on the Iberian Peninsula (modern day Spain and Portugal).

Instead of flying from city to city, you'll be taking carriages, trains, and boats. And there were no infectious disease scientists or quarantine specialists in the 19th century, so you'll be taking on the role of nurse, railway man, doctor, sailor, and other jobs of the time.

To get even further into the 19th-century mood, you can add the Historical Diseases variant included in the box. Instead of fighting diseases that only have colors ("blue disease" never sounded all that intimidating), you'll take on cholera, yellow fever, malaria, and other contagions that have wreaked real-world havoc throughout history — each with its own special powers.



You can also add the Influx of Patients variant, which requires that you manage hospitals, powerful sources of healing that can be overrun by people who need help.



Pandemic: Rapid Response

2019 | 2–4 players | 20 minutes



As the COVID-19 epidemic has made clear, doctors and nurses aren't the only heroes in the face of a medical crisis. And *Pandemic: Rapid Response* pays homage to the other people who are needed to keep the world running.

Instead of researching and treating the disease, players deliver supplies to people in need. You might be dropping off vaccines in Los Angeles, water in Mexico, and food in Tokyo. Use your special powers to make the most of your resources and save as many people as you can.

But don't think it'll be any easier — this is a real-time game, so you'll be working against a clock that's constantly ticking down. If you've never played a real-time game, you'll be amazed at how stressful (in a good way, mostly) it can be. There's nothing quite like it in board gaming.

One of the best parts about *Rapid Response* is that it's a great two-player game. You can play with up to four, but two is a great number for this one.



Pandemic in the Time of . . . Pandemic



"That's all great," you might be saying, "but how am I supposed to play *Pandemic* when I can't have anyone over?" (That is, of course, assuming that your area is still in lockdown. It might not be. But let's just assume it is for the moment.)

There are a few good options.

First, *Rapid Response* is good for two players. So you can play with your spouse, your significant other, your kid, or anyone else who already lives with you.

Second, two *Pandemic* games that weren't mentioned above have solo modes: *Reign of Cthulhu* and *Fall of Rome*. *Reign* sees you trying to stop the ascendance of Elder Gods by sealing portals. *Rome* requires that you stop invading hordes of Huns, Goths, Vandals, and Anglo-Saxons. They don't have the disease-fighting qualities of the other options, but they channel the same gameplay.

If you already have the base game of *Pandemic*, you can also play the *In the Lab* expansion solo.

Finally, you can resort to the official Asmodee *Pandemic* app. It doesn't have online multiplayer support (Asmodee is rather behind when it comes to game apps), but you can play local multiplayer and solo versions of the game. It's only \$5, but be warned that it has some pretty terrible reviews. It's not the best way to get your *Pandemic* fix, but it'll work for lockdown.



Save the World: Stay in and Play Games!

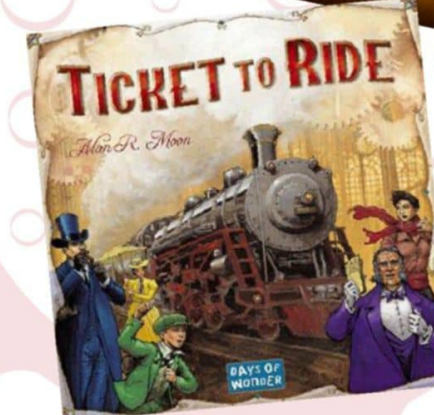
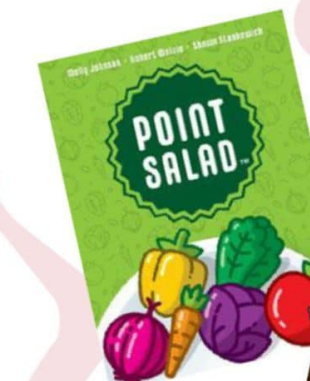


During the novel coronavirus pandemic, the best thing you can do to help the world get back on track is to stay home. And if you can use that time to play board games, even better. Gamers are on track to save the world right now!

In all seriousness, *Pandemic* might feel a little too real at the moment. And that's okay. If watching a contagion spread across the world is going to stress you out, play something else. We have tons of great casual games with light themes in our issues and on our website.

Want something light and goofy and very non-disease-related? Try *Point Salad*, where you collect vegetable cards to score points. Or *The Mind*, in which you have to mind-meld with your teammates to play cards at the right time. Or the always-classic *Ticket to Ride*, a favorite at my house, to plan train routes.

In short, play whatever will make you happy. Dive into the epidemic theme or avoid it all costs. Whatever you do, stay safe, stay healthy, and play lots of games 🎲.



BOARD GAME ROCK STARS: 5 Game Designers Who Changed the World



Jesse Tannous
Writer, Gamer, Editor,
and Professional Nerd

If there were a Hall of Fame for board game designers, the five individuals showcased in this feature would, hands down, be inducted into it. While there are many others who would also be worthy of this list, it is hard to deny the standout status of these particular designers. Our chosen individuals were selected based on the overall impact their games have had on the gaming industry, while also acknowledging outstanding personal achievements. We were particularly focused on those we thought helped gaming break into mainstream culture.

These extraordinarily talented individuals, each in their own right, deserve to be considered as “rock stars” of board game design.

#1 Klaus Teuber



DON'T SETTLE FOR AVERAGE — One of the top contenders goes to Klaus Teuber, the creator of *Catan* (formerly titled *The Settlers of Catan*). This is the board game that makes it possible for players to compete at establishing the most successful colony on a fictional island called *Catan*.

Today, *Catan* has turned into a family business. Teuber, reportedly alongside his sons Guido and Benjamin, each holds the title of managing director of CATAN GmbH and help guide the evergreen series.

Over the years, *Catan* has been so popularized that some have said it could even replace the notoriety of the game *Monopoly*. And when you take into account that *Catan* has sold more than 18 million copies worldwide since its publication in 1995 — it's feasible.

Guido's daughter is not formally involved in the project (she is an actress) but often serves as a game tester for the family. And Teuber's wife Claudia is also involved in the family business as the bookkeeper and tester. *Catan* is so popular that *Catan*-related swag has reached global appeal. The game itself has been translated into 30 or so different languages and several digital versions of the game have been released. You can also find everything from T-shirts, socks, custom-designed card tables, and special edition *Catan* cards.

Teuber created *The Settlers of Catan* in his basement during the eighties while he was escaping from a profession that he had become increasingly disillusioned with.

The CEO of former *Catan* publisher Mayfair Games said in one article featuring Teuber and his game, “Our volume of sales will be such that, over time, *Catan* could, in terms of gross revenue, be the biggest game brand in the world.” In *Monopoly* terms — Teuber has pretty much dominated the market.

Teuber dreamed that his board game might someday make him enough money to support his family while doing what he loved to do.

Catan did that, and more.



Klaus Teuber Photo by Rogi Lensing on Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY 3.0.

Catan has its critics, though.

While recently visiting some forums that were discussing this very topic, we discovered that some board game enthusiasts are just "over it" — *Catan*, to some, is just outdated and stiff.

Still, even in the various criticisms of *Catan*, most recognize that the game was the "go-to" designer game of its time — namely, the nineties — and that it has managed longevity. Others have found that the rhythm of *Catan* is too slow and that it tends to trudge along...a lot like *Monopoly*. In another parallel, *Catan* has also been described as the kind of game you pull out for nostalgia — or for board game beginners who are just now discovering the hobby.

Yet even with their critiques, they credit *Catan* with introducing the concept of bringing personal creativity to a board game, as well as making the hobby a bit more socially acceptable. One hobbyist shared that they would defend *Catan* and "love it until the day I die." Teuber more than deserves a top spot and the most ink in this showcase of rock star game designers.

Think of Teuber as the Madonna of game design — age has only enhanced the original creativity and long-standing performance of *Catan*.



#2 Matt Leacock

PANDEMIC! AT THE DISCO — In an ironic twist of art imitating life, Matt Leacock's *Pandemic* — the popular board game released in 2008 — has burst into the limelight once again during the COVID-19 crisis.



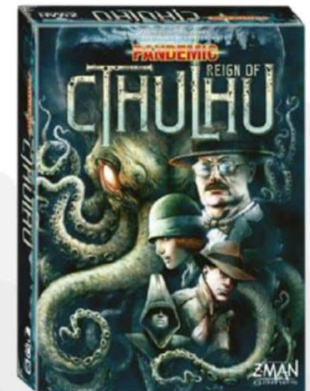
Pandemic. He couldn't have predicted that, 16 years later, a truly insidious outbreak like the novel coronavirus would supply the real-life pandemic material that had been foreshadowed in his *Pandemic* game creation.

Leacock recently recounted in a New York Times article that he originally designed *Pandemic* so that he and his wife could play a game together.

"I imagined viruses would be the perfect antagonists for players to confront. Viruses are uncaring, relentless, and frightening," Leacock said in the same New York Times article.

Leacock says that while he began designing his first cooperative game in 2004, it was around that same time that the SARS epidemic gained global attention, which became the catalyst for his theme in the game

Fast forward to today, and it's no surprise that Leacock's *Pandemic* series is among the most sought-after games right now. With players assuming the roles of different



medical and field experts that need to work together to combat an ever-escalating outbreak, many see the game as a cathartic way to confront and even console one another during the current crisis.

But it's not just the chillingly-relevant timing that makes a Leacock-designed game like *Pandemic* unique and fun.

Leacock's been designing games with the ultimate experience of the player in mind for years. With a former day job as a user experience designer for companies like Sococo, Yahoo, AOL, and Apple, he has become adept at creating reality in a game experience.

Another reason why Leacock deserves a place in the hypothetical game designer Hall of Fame is the handling of the *Pandemic* series as a whole. The expansions not only ramp up the intensity (*Pandemic: On the Brink*) but branch off in new directions including the fantastical (*Pandemic: Reign of Cthulhu*) and even historical (*Pandemic: Iberia*). The blending of theme and setting with new mechanics brings a familiar-yet-new experience to returning players.



Draw cards. Then draw a path through your dungeon. For 1-4 doodlers (or more!)

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By Sam Mitchell and Raley Schumacher. Illustrated by Kate Cook.

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#3 Richard Garfield

MAGIC KINGDOM — What can you say about Richard Garfield and *Magic: The Gathering* that hasn't already been said?

As one of the most recognizable and successful trading and collectible card games to date, *Magic: The Gathering* continues to bring new and returning players back into the fold like, well, magic. But the TCG is more than a game to players, with many speaking about it akin to recalling one's first love.

It has beauty, it has fantasy, and it is indeed magical. It is a place you want to visit and revisit — not all the time, but it is just comforting to know that it is there. (Yes, this writer is a huge fan.)

Magic offers some of the most incredible artwork ever assembled, the themes and ever-expanding narratives



Richard Garfield photo by Sonja Pieper on Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.



are fascinating, and it has remained relevant since its release in 1993.

With approximately 20 million *Magic* cards in circulation, the game continues to grow in popularity as they continue to release new sets, mechanics, and formats; its latest digital platform, *Arena*, has also been well received.

Adults keep coming back to "the gathering" because *Magic* represents their youth. Cards are kept to be passed down to their children, while many collectors search for the rare cards as they become more and more coveted. What's more, *Magic* isn't the only noteworthy game that would lead Garfield to be nominated to a board game Hall of Fame.

For the casual gamers out there, IELLO's *King of Tokyo* and *King of New York* are both very popular gateway games into the hobby, while *Bunny Kingdom* also hit the scene with a few expansions as well. For those looking for more head-to-head competition, Garfield lends his name to *Android: Netrunner* and *Keyforge: Call of the Archons* in a more familiar format.

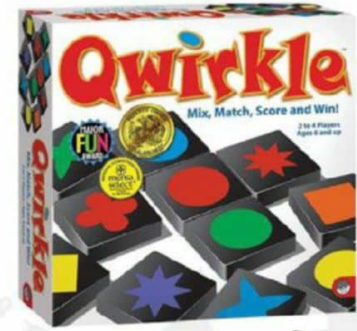


#4 Susan McKinley Ross

QWIRKY GAME NIGHTS — Susan McKinley Ross, the designer of the popular game *Qwirkle* quickly emerged onto the board game radar with her innovative and player-friendly creation consisting of 108 wooden tiles displaying various colors and shapes. This family-friendly game also had the added benefit of pushing her to become the only (you read that right) female winner of the coveted Spiel des Jahres award.

Ross is an accomplished professional product designer in the toy and game industry who began her career in the non-profit industry — but wanted to be creative as well.

She also saw this as an opportunity to share enjoyment and fun with others, and reportedly credits her ability to design for families out of the fond memories she had growing up and playing board games with her family.



Susan McKinley Ross photo by Laszlo Molnar (Lacxox on BGG). Used with permission.

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The idea of *Qwirkle* is simple in theory, but challenging enough in practice, to be fun for every member of the family. Finding that perfect balance is something all designers strive for in the casual game industry, and *Qwirkle* has since sold more than 4 million copies around the world, received numerous awards for its widespread appeal, and is available in more than 34 countries.

It also received mention as "One of the Cool New Toys" at the 2007 Toy Fair and shows up on many "top board game" lists from popular media outlets such as Slate, Thrillist, and Better Homes & Gardens.

Bringing her passion and knowledge to the table to create a tabletop crossroads for all ages, Ross deserves a nomination.

#5 Antoine Bauza



NO WONDER — If we credit Ross with introducing gaming to kids and families alike, and Teuber and Leacock with helping people get into the hobby, then Antoine Bauza would be the designer that showed players what comes next.

Games like *7 Wonders* and *Ghost Stories* appeal to those who crave that bridge between "casual" and "hardcore" in their game preference. Bauza is a French designer who not only creates board games, but also role-playing games (*Exil*) and video games (*World of Warcraft*) as well as authoring children's books.

Bauza reportedly fell in love with role-playing as a teenager, which grew into all types of gaming. But it wasn't until 2010 that Bauza came onto the board game scene with *7 Wonders*. His design became an international hit that received many awards including the Kennerspiel des Jahres and the Meeples' Choice Award.

In its card sharing strategy, *7 Wonders* mixes military battles with fantasy, architecture, and enterprise all while traveling through ancient civilizations as players evolve through three "Ages." *7 Wonders* is one of the highest-rated games on discussion websites focused on board games and is highly regarded by other leading designers. It is easy to pick up while offering a depth of strategy and multiple ways to win. *7 Wonders: Duel* streamlined the gameplay for players going head-to-head.

Bauza's list of board game credits reads like a veritable checklist for casual gamers. Other award-winning and well-received titles such as *Hanabi* (2013 Spiel des Jahres), *Takenoko*, and *Tokaido* are all noteworthy games commonly found in personal game libraries around the world. If you're looking for a rock star board game designer that deserves a coveted spot in a board game Hall of Fame, then Bauza, and the rest of the above entries, are nominees worth mentioning. 🎲



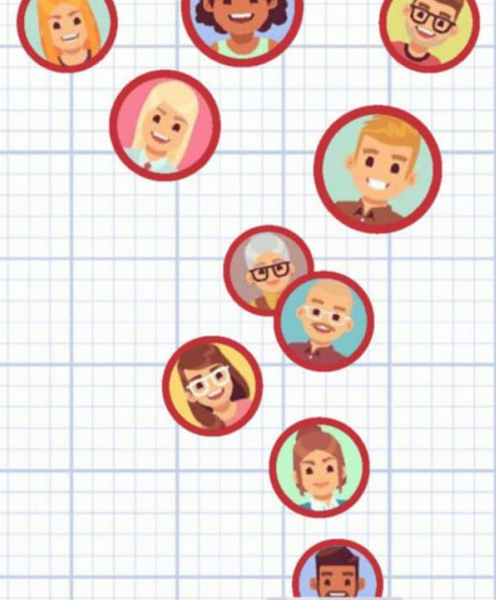
Antoine Bauza photo by Niccolò Caranti on Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

BRING THE MAGIC TO YOUR TABLE THIS SUMMER

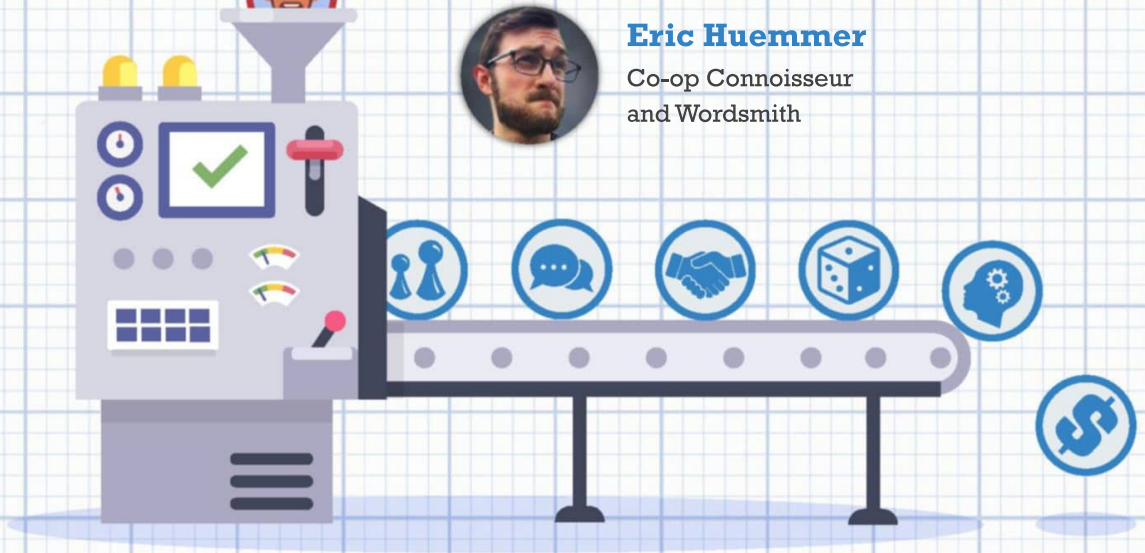


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What Kind of Board Gamer Are You?



Eric Huemmer
Co-op Connoisseur
and Wordsmith



IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT WE ALL PLAY BOARD GAMES BECAUSE WE ARE LOOKING TO ENJOY OURSELVES. BUT WHAT KIND OF FUN WE'RE LOOKING FOR CAN DIFFER FROM GAMER TO GAMER. SOME OF US PREFER GAMES THAT INCLUDE EVERYONE AT FAMILY GAME NIGHT. OTHERS SEARCH FOR NEW WAYS TO CHALLENGE THEMSELVES AND TEST THEIR STRATEGIC ACUMEN AGAINST LIKE-MINDED OPPONENTS (OR THEIR LONG-SUFFERING SIGNIFICANT OTHERS). AND THERE ARE OTHERS STILL THAT ARE JUST LOOKING FOR THE CHANCE TO INTRODUCE THEIR FRIENDS TO BOARD GAMES.

WHILE BOARD GAMES BRING US ALL TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY, WHICH GAME WE'RE HOPING TO PLAY AT GAME NIGHT BEGINS TO DEFINE WHAT KIND OF BOARD GAMER WE ARE. INTERESTED IN SEEING WHICH KIND OF BOARD GAMER YOU ARE? WE'LL BREAK DOWN THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF BOARD GAMERS OUT THERE, DISCUSS WHAT MIGHT MAKE THEM TICK, AS WELL AS INCLUDE EXAMPLES OF BOARD GAMES THAT THEY'D BE BRINGING TO THE TABLE. BUT BEFORE WE DIVE IN, LET'S GET THE OBVIOUS STUFF OUT OF THE WAY...

THESE ARE BROAD CATEGORIES

Yes, the categories are going to be a little bit arbitrary. There is a staggering amount of board game genres and subgenres, with a varying intensity of followers. If we were to attempt to identify every combination of niche subgenre gamers, it would quickly get out of hand. And though I am certain there are "Solo Euro Enthusiasts" out there, we have to narrow the number of categories down for everyone's sake.

This article will only be exploring board gaming, specifically. Adding in trading card games, role-playing games, or tabletop miniatures games would only complicate (and extend) the article even further.

NOT A LINEAR PROGRESSION

It would be very convenient if every board gamer started with simple family games before being introduced to a

few gateway games, progressed to heavier games, and so on. Instead, everyone is introduced to the hobby at different times and in different ways. Furthermore, no category of gamer is going to be more "advanced" or have more mature taste in board games than others. You can absolutely be an Extreme Hobbyist and still enjoy a casual board game!

SURVEY SAYS...

Each of the below categories will include some board games that can act as a point of reference, as well as be a possible recommendation for that type of gamer. Some games may fit with multiple categories, depending on the gamer. It's all a matter of perspective.

All right, enough chit-chat. Let's dive into the different types of board gamers and see where you fit in.

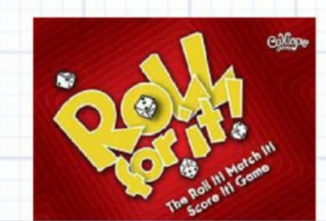
THE FAMILY GAMER

For a few of you out there, it was a Family Gamer who first introduced you to the hobby — your parents. Whether it's gathering around the table for some silly *Apples to Apples* action, or pulling out *Uno* while waiting in long lines, board games were a great way to either pass or spend time together. Board games are often used as a fun way to teach children about rules, practice arithmetic, and encourage cooperation.

have to include them in it. But it's almost universal that Family Gamers are excited to introduce their children to board games, just as their parents did for them.

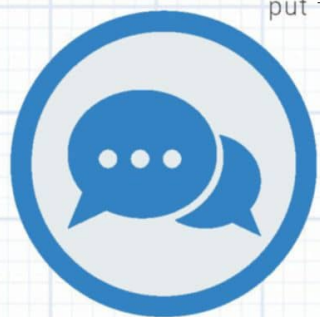


Board Game Recommendations: Family Gamers tend to tailor their board game selection around the age of their children. For those with young kids, they prefer board games that are easy to teach, and that might teach the players in the process (disguised as fun): *Apples to Apples*, *Bananagrams*, and *Roll For It!* Family Gamers with older children prefer games that make everyone laugh while staying family-friendly, or titles that offer more of a challenge: *Cranium*, *Nut So Fast*, and *Speak Out*.



THE SOCIAL GAMER

Board games are fun for everyone. For Social Gamers, board games are fun *with* everyone. What's interesting about Social Gamers is that there are two distinct groups of Social Gamers: The **Social Gamer** and The **Social Gamer**. Those that emphasize the social aspect might have board games on hand for when they're hosting family or friends, with games leaning more towards silly party games. Those that emphasize the gamer aspect prefer board games that require large groups such as social deduction games or games that put two teams head-to-head.



What Brings Them to the Table: Social Gamers either use board games to lure friends over for a party, or host parties to lure friends over to play board games.



Board Game Recommendations: The socialites in the group prefer games that are light on rules and offer the chance to laugh and socialize: *Wavelength*, *Say Anything*, and *Telestrations*. Meanwhile, the game-driven Social Gamers crave larger groups for social deduction games or tough team challenges: *Ultimate Werewolf*, *Secret Hitler*, and *Codenames*.

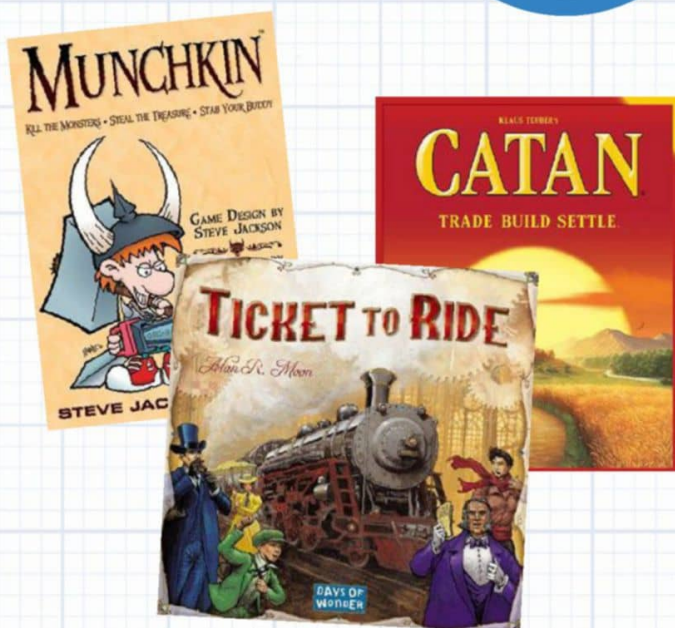
THE GATEWAY GAMER

Let's admit it: getting into the board game hobby can be overwhelming at first. There are so many games, types of games, and expansions of games out there that it's hard to know where to start. Gateway Gamers regularly pick up the games that either introduced them to the hobby, or the games that are considered classics. A few take it a step further, actively seeking out additional games that hit that evergreen status. If you find that your game library mostly consists of evergreen titles that get a lot of play time, then you might be a Gateway Gamer.

What Brings Them to the Table: Gateway Gamers are usually looking for a familiar experience with a game they already know inside and out (perhaps with many expansions included). They are often hoping to introduce others to board gaming with one of the classics.

Board Game Recommendations: Anything that's considered a "modern-day classic" or which got others

into the hobby: *Settlers of Catan*, *Ticket to Ride*, *Munchkin*, and *Betrayal at House on the Hill* are all valid gateways.



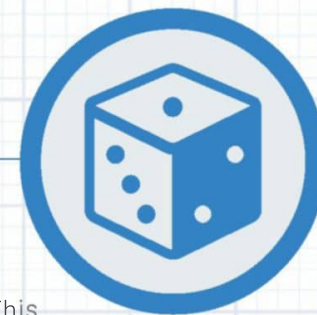
THE CASUAL GAMER

If you're reading this, you should already have a good inkling of what a casual board game is. Casual Gamers find themselves drawn to casual games that are easy to learn, have shorter set-up and playing times, and are not too abstract or heavy. That doesn't mean that the games themselves can't be challenging — you will often find casual board games seem simple but offer way more depth and strategy than at first glance. The key here is the relatively low commitment required to learn (or relearn) and play a game. Variety is also a plus — you won't find many Casual Gamers strictly focused on a specific style or genre, but they are open to playing all kinds of games. Some of these Casual Gamers take it a step further. These avid Casual Gamers actively seek out the latest titles to hit the market, amassing a collection far beyond the evergreens of the Gateway Gamer. (Not so "casual", huh?)

What Brings Them to the Table: If they're sitting down for a game night, the casual gamer is hoping to play at least three or four games before the night is over. They're comfortable learning new games as long as the game can be explained

in under 10 minutes, and they're hoping to enjoy themselves.

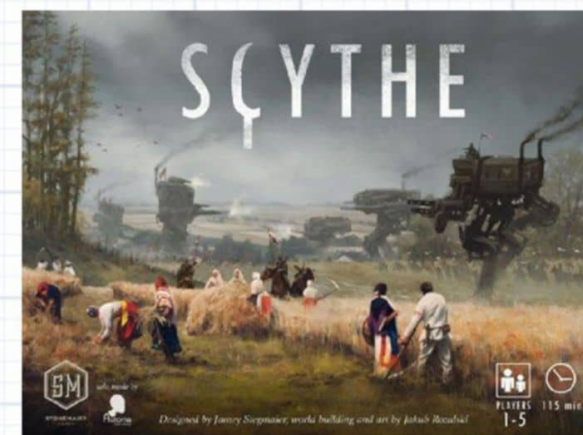
Recommended Board Games: This category tends to have the broadest appeal and definition, but as long as you can learn it relatively easily and it doesn't last much longer than 45 minutes, then you can typically count on the Casual Gamer. These games can include *Camel Up*, *Machi Koro*, *Gravwell*, and *King of Tokyo* — or any other game reviewed in Casual Game Insider over the years. Many of the games from the previous categories can also fall under this umbrella.



THE HARDCORE GAMER

Some gamers are looking for a bit more complexity when it comes to board games. Hardcore Gamers are willing to pour over longer rulebooks and spend more than a few minutes getting the game all set up. Often, these games will feature asymmetrical gameplay, allowing each player to have a unique approach and strategy. Hardcore Gamers are all about wrapping their heads around complex game mechanics and exploring detailed narratives, sometimes focusing on a particular style or mechanism that scratches their gaming itch the best.

What Brings Them to the Table: This might be the easiest category to determine what's driving them to sit down with a game: Hardcore Gamers want to challenge themselves. Whether it's staying three steps ahead of their opponents or making tough decisions to progress a story, these gamers aren't necessarily looking for a leisurely evening.



Recommended Board Games: Hardcore Gamers embrace board games that bring the challenge. They can be difficult and might take several playthroughs to understand exactly how everything works. But once you get it, they are often regarded as some of the best games in the hobby. A few titles include *Scythe*, *Wingspan*, and *Spirit Island*.



THE EXTREME HOBBYIST

There's still one more category beyond Hardcore Gamer that remains distinct enough to have its own category. Extreme Hobbyists are board gamers who are looking for the heaviest, longest, most-complex board games that exist on the market; these board games often come with a hefty price tag and an actual heft to them. A few board game genres often find themselves falling under this category, including Euro-style board games (also known as project management simulators). Take those existing Hardcore Games and turn the dial to 11. That's not to say that these board games are not worth the hassle — but it does take serious dedication.

What Brings Them to the Table: Extreme Hobbyists are looking for the chance to bring their board games to the table and expect to be in it for the long-haul. It's also a matter of wanting to show off what games they were able to get their hands on.

Recommended Board Games: Most Extreme Hobbyists seek out the board games that are known for being,

well, extreme. This could be based on complexity and depth (*Trismegistus: The Ultimate Formula*), narrative exploration (*Gloomhaven*), length of gameplay (*Twilight Imperium*), or all of those things wrapped up with an egregious price tag (*Kingdom Death: Monster*).



The board game community is as vast as it is diverse, so it's hard to find yourself strictly in one category or the other. It could even shift and change from night to night. Others "move up" through the categories as they continue to seek out more complexity, only to find themselves "back" to being a Family Gamer as the years roll on.

What brings us to the table differs from gamer to gamer, and we all will have our own preferences. But the one category that matters most is Board Gamer — and all of us who belong to this category can equally agree that we have the best hobby in the world. 🎲



A COMPLETE GAME FOR YOU TO PLAY & ENJOY!
COURTESY OF: D. DI MAGGIO

CGI
+PNP

Rolling Village

Designed by D. Di Maggio
Art by Josh Huf
bit.ly/rollingvillage

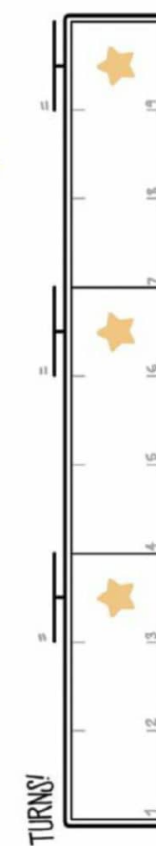
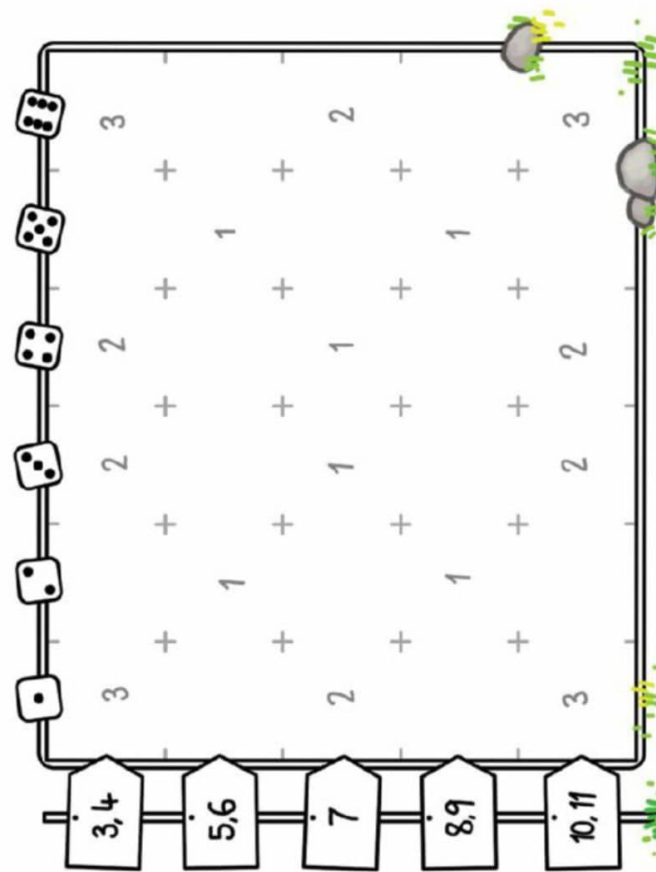


Rolling Village!



MAYOR:

SCORE!

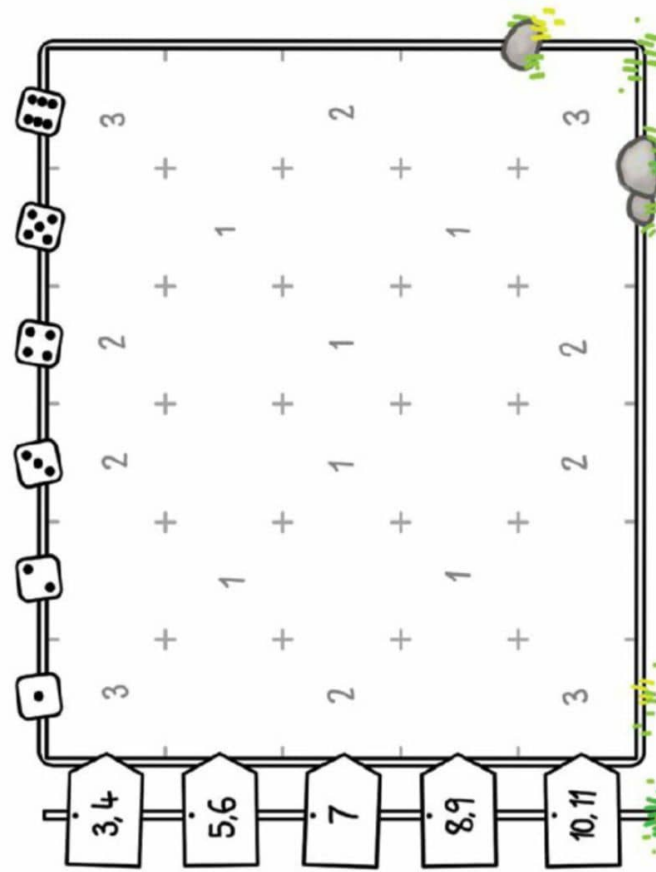


Rolling Village!



MAYOR:

SCORE!



Rolling Village!

Designed by D. Di Maggio E-mail CRVCRT@gmail.com

Artworks by Josh Huf

Players: 1-12 Duration: 10 minutes Age: 8+

*Welcome Mayor!
Design the best village possible with paper, pen and a bit of luck!*

Components needed:

- ❖ Two standard d6 dice shared by all the players.
- ❖ A Village Sheet and a pen for each player.

Objective of the game:

Players fill their Village Sheet building **Projects (House, Forest, Lake and Square)** and score points at the end of each turn then add them up for the final score. The player with the highest score after the 9th turn is the winner.

Preparation:

Before starting the game, one player random rolls two dice for everyone. Each player draws two Projects, one for each column indicated by the dice in any row they wish. You must draw two different Projects, **Square cannot be drawn and no points will be scored during the preparation.**

How to play:

At the beginning of each turn, **one player random rolls two dice for everyone.**

Players now simultaneously take their turn in this sequence:

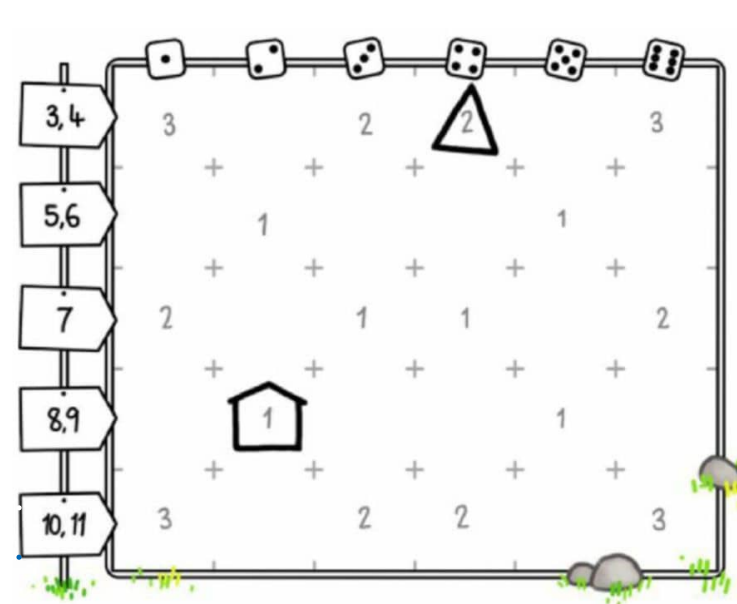
◆ BUILDING PHASE

Using the faces shown on the dice and the Project Legend, **each player must draw two projects** as explained below:



- draw the **Project type** indicated by the **first die** in any empty space in the **column** indicated by the **second die**;
- draw the **Project type** indicated by the **second die** in any empty space in the **column** indicated by the **first die**.

Players can choose freely which one to draw first but two Projects must be drawn during this phase.



EXAMPLE. Rolling at the beginning of the turn, each player must draw an House Project in column 2 in any empty space and a Forest Project in column 4 in any empty space.

If a column indicated by a die is already filled up, draw the corresponding Project in an empty space of your choice in the nearest column (left or right) with more empty space, if the columns have the same quantity of empty space, you choose.

If the dice have the same faces, draw only one Project type in any empty space in the column indicated by the dice but in addition **draw a Square in an empty space of your choice in the Village.** This special symbol will not be considered during the Scoring Phase but **only at the end of the game,** if it will be adjacent to an house, lake and forest (not diagonally), the player will score 10 extra points.

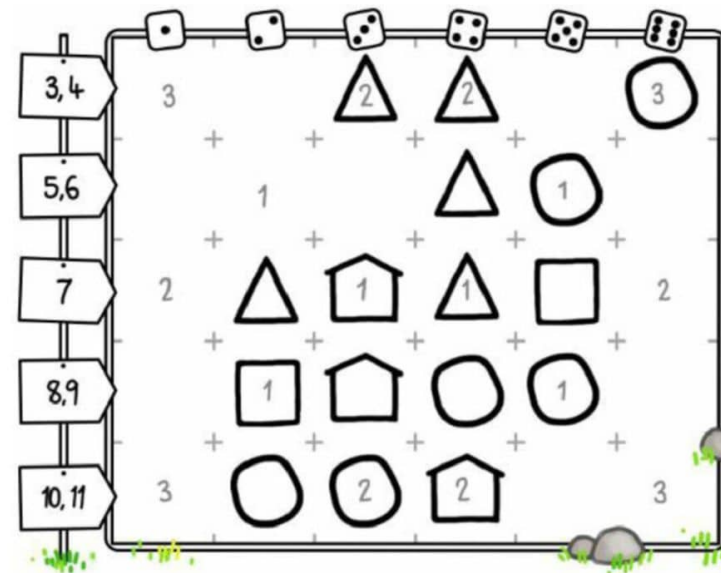
◆ BONUS PHASE (only Turns 3, 6 and 9)

During turns 3, 6 and 9, after the Building Phase, each player must draw an additional Project at will in any empty space of the Village; then mark the corresponding "Bonus!" icon on the Projects Legend. You cannot draw a type of Project if you already marked the corresponding "Bonus!" icon during any previous Bonus Phase.

◆ SCORING PHASE

At the end of each turn, the **sum of the two dice** rolled will define the **Avenue** (a row of the Village) that is active for scoring. Each player must check the Projects drawn on that specific row and consider them for scoring (except the Square Project).

Check for any group of Projects in your Village: a group is defined by adjacent Projects of the same type (not diagonally). A group of Projects will score points at the end of the turn only if it does have at least one Project in the active row (except for the Square). That group will score all the points depicted on the spaces where you have drawn a Project of that type.



If the sum of the two dice is 2 or 12, each player can choose any **Avenue** for himself for scoring.

EXAMPLE. If, at the end of the turn, Avenue [5-6] is active for scoring, the player will score 6 points; if Avenue [7] is turned on, the score will be 6 points. If Avenue [8-9] is turned on, the score will be just 2 points.

After all players have written their score on the turn tracker another turn begin or the game will end.

Tip: Players can fill their partial score above spot 3, 6 and 9 of the turn tracker for helping calculating the final score.

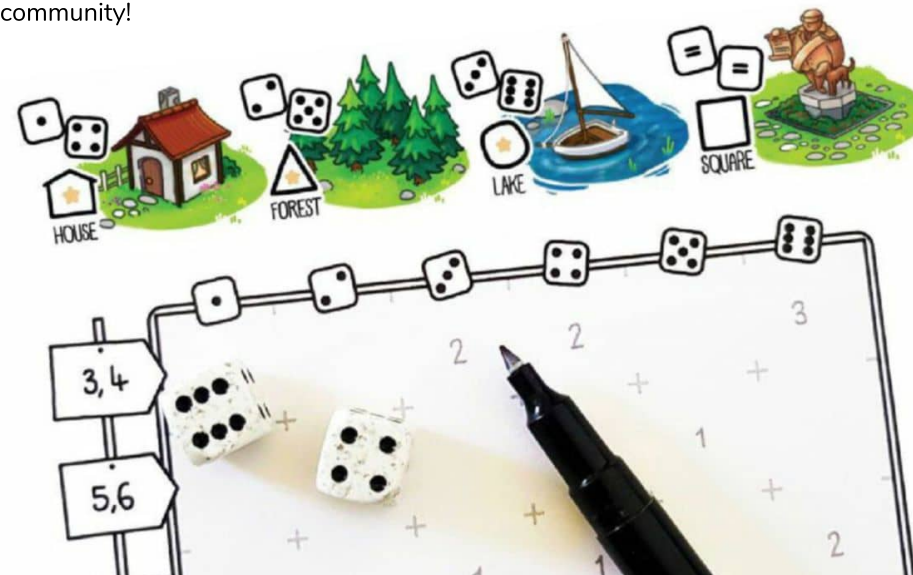
End of the game:

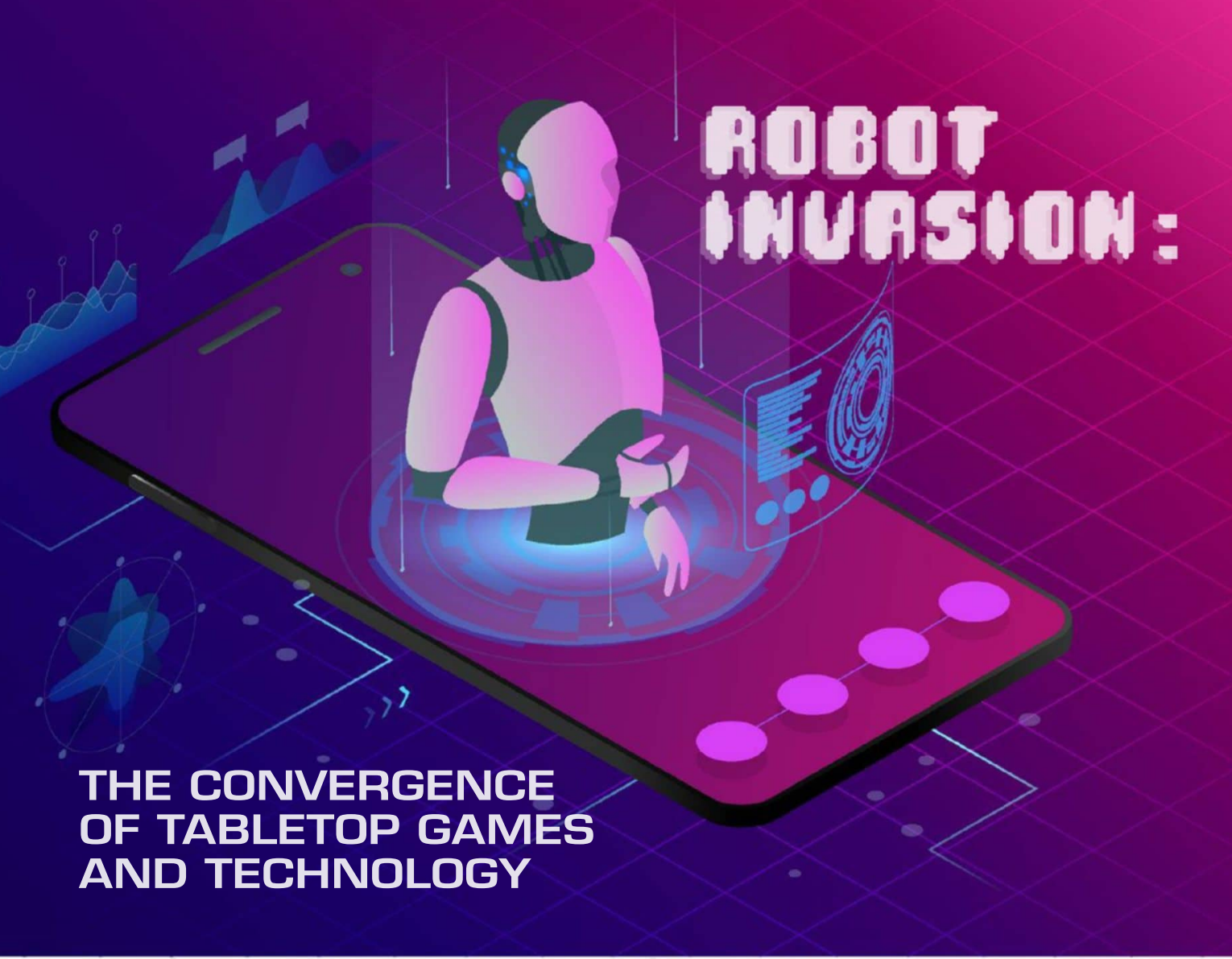
After the 9th turn, each player sum all the points scored during the game, determining their final score. In addition sum 10 points for each Square adjacent to an house, forest and lake. The player with the highest score is the winner.

Solo Mode:

Just beat your own score but remember that, if you score less than **60 points** your will not be reelected for sure...

Special Thanks to Marta Ciaccasassi, Jonathan Fashena, Gav Scott
...and all the BGG community!





THE CONVERGENCE OF TABLETOP GAMES AND TECHNOLOGY



Teale Fristoe
 Designer of *Corporate America*,
Birds of a Feather, and *Trellis*

It will be a surprise to absolutely no one that technology is slowly creeping into the world of tabletop games, just as it has in every other facet of life. What might actually be surprising is how slowly the creep is. Especially considering the wild success of mobile games and the ubiquity of smartphones, you might expect more tabletop games supplemented with apps. So why are tabletop games lagging behind when we embrace technology in other areas without looking back?

In this article, I'm going to discuss how digital technology fits into tabletop games. I'll look at what's currently holding it back and where I expect it will go once the floodgates finally do open.

Stuck in the Age of Cardboard

With digital technology rapidly being adopted in nearly every part of modern life, why are tabletop games slow to embrace it? I believe there are a number of reasons.

But before that, it is worth noting that digital technology is beginning to make an impact in the hobby. I'll go over a few examples later, but perhaps the most significant way digital technology makes an appearance

in the industry is through digitized versions of tabletop games. Games such as *Carcassonne* and *Star Realms* have extremely successful digital versions, and while players don't combine them with the actual tabletop experience, they serve an important complementary role for the tabletop games — helping to teach the games as well as advertising them.



Many players have enjoyed Carcassonne through the app, but the digital and non-digital versions do not work together.

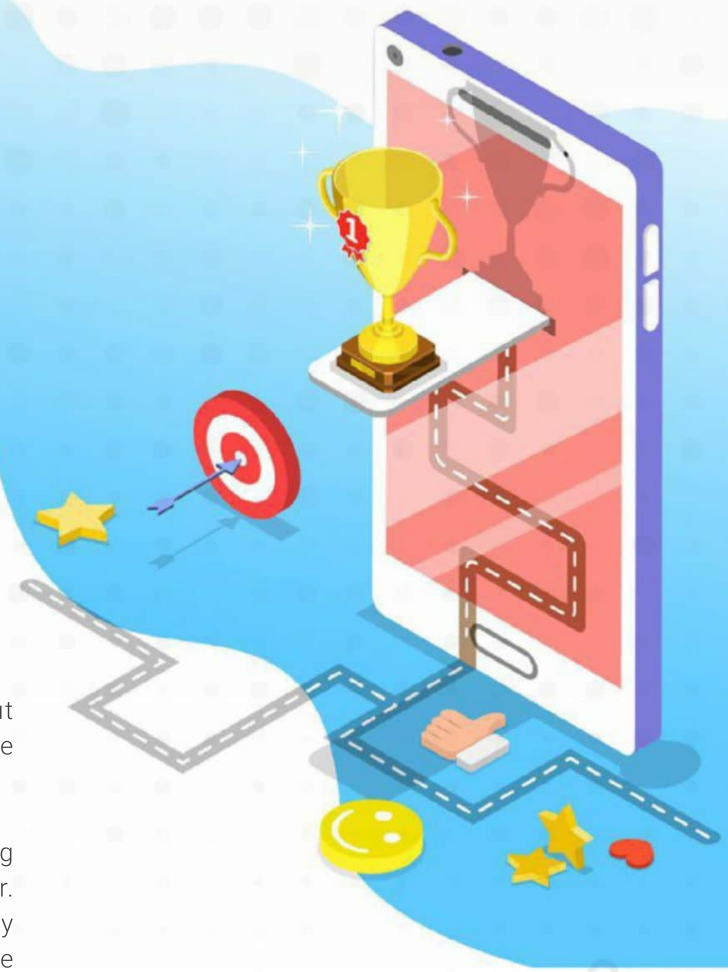
So, what's keeping digital technology from being integrated into the tabletop experience?

Luddites

You probably know a few people who are opposed to using new technology. Gamers are a surprisingly conservative bunch. For many gamers, the tabletop is a sacred space where digital distractions are not welcome. Mentioning that a board game includes a support app will quickly derail the community into anti-app rants. Games such as *Birds of a Feather*

faced immediate resistance to an app, even though the experience of using it is extremely similar to using a score sheet and it actively prevented smartphone distractions while being used. The very idea of an app is enough to inspire a grumpy and negative reaction.

Honestly, you can't blame these luddites. Digital technology has infiltrated much of our lives, and many people have to use it all day for work whether they want to or not. Tabletop games are an escape for these people, so it's easy to understand why they'd want to defend that escape.



Will this change? Definitely. But it may take a shift of generations. Kids that grow up today cherishing their smartphones will be happy to incorporate them into their tabletop games, and once they have become the dominant consumer force in the industry, publishers will be much more willing to release a game with a digital component.

Unreliability

Phones have gotten a lot better over the years, but they're still less reliable than cardboard in a couple of ways.

First off, even though smartphones seem to keep getting more expensive, their battery life seems to get shorter. This is a huge turn off for a lot of people. It's very frustrating when you're in the middle of an exciting game when, all of a sudden, some real-world inconvenience like a low battery warning interrupts your experience.

Second, digital infrastructure is constantly changing and splintering. Theoretically, it's always improving. But in practice, it's frequently obsoleting old software. For well-funded, fast-moving software companies, that's not an issue. But for slow-moving tabletop publishers, that often means that apps that used to work well suddenly stop working for months or possibly permanently. How frustrating is it when you want to play an old favorite, only to discover that the steady march of technological progress is preventing you?

Cost

In some ways, apps are cheap. You don't have to manufacture them or pay to ship them around the globe. But in other ways, they're expensive. They require expertise that many tabletop publishers lack, and they take a lot of time to produce well. Perhaps most significantly, apps require maintenance as software evolves and new devices are released. Compare this

to cardboard, which costs very little to maintain after it has been produced in the first place. Given the extra costs and the lukewarm reception by many gamers, it's no surprise that publishers are apprehensive to develop games that have supplementary apps.

Design

When mobile devices first became widespread, many designers simply tried to port existing games to the new platform. This led to awkward games. It took time for designers to understand how to make use of the new platform, to make games that worked well with the constraints and affordances of the new medium.

The same is true for tabletop games that make use of digital technology. Obvious ways of combining them may not work particularly well, but the possibilities are nearly limitless. It will take time for people to discover effective ways to use new technology.

CUT AND PLAY

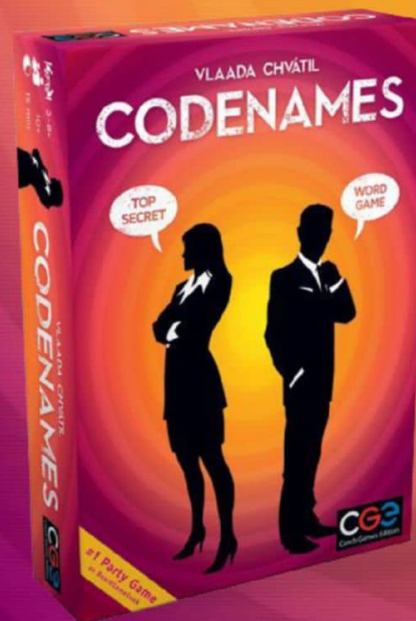
Can you find 3 words connected to the word Queen?

QUEEN: 3

DOCTOR	MOUTH	HOTEL	HELICOPTER	POINT
ALASKA	STRING	LONDON	DOG	BED
CAT	RULER	WIND	BANK	HORSE
HEART	CARD	STAR	MERCURY	WIND
GRASS	HIMALAYAS	MICROSCOPE	CARROT	KANGAROO

YOU CAN PLAY NOW!

Download FREE Codenames Gadget, the grid generator enabling great replayability with words you have.



ANDROID APP ON Google Play

Available on the App Store

cge.as/cngadget



Game Rules



In a Future Age

There are obstacles to digital technology being integrated into tabletop games, but they are not insurmountable, and I believe that we'll see more and more games incorporating digital technology. Here are a few of the ways it's being used effectively today.



Alchemists

Czech Games Edition

Perhaps the most famous example of a supplemental app is *Alchemists*. In *Alchemists*, players combine different ingredients to unlock the secrets of alchemy. The app helps in two ways. First, there are countless possible ingredient combinations, and the app will instantly look up and report the results of any particular combination. Second, the results of combinations are randomized each game to help keep the game fresh each play. So the app acts as a giant lookup table and randomizer. If players don't use the app, a sucker (sorry, I meant "player") will need to look up all of the combinations for the other players.

One Night Ultimate Werewolf

Bezier Games

Anyone who has played hidden identity games knows that someone has to GM the whole experience, especially the beginning when certain players learn about the identities of other players. And that GM better know what they're doing, because any minor slip up could spoil the entire game and force the large group to restart the whole experience. The supplemental app for *One Night Ultimate Werewolf* takes care of this, narrating the game and stepping the players through the setup. This app is useful because it automates a lot of the monotonous and finicky setup of the game, which is especially important for a game with many possible identity combinations where remembering the order for them all is quite a chore for a human.



Birds of a Feather

Nothing Sacred Games

My bird watching card game, *Birds of a Feather*, plays like a trick-taker with a few important differences. One of those differences is that multiple players can score off of the same card. This means that players can't use the cards themselves to keep track of the score. Instead, players use a score sheet... or an app. The app works just like a score sheet by keeping track of the cards you've scored and doing a little math for you. Don't let the fact that we call it a score sheet replacement confuse you — the app for *Birds of a Feather* is a memory aid more than anything, keeping track of the game state so the players don't have to remember it themselves.



Based on these successful apps, what do I predict for future apps? A few things.

Optional

The first thing is that, at least in the near future, apps need to be optional. Requiring an app will just turn off too many players. If players can play the game without the app, then try the app and realize it will make the play experience smoother, the game has a much better chance at being successful. This may not be a requirement in the distant future (say ten years), but for the time being, I would advise not requiring an app to play your game.

Computational

Years ago, I wrote about the advantages a computer has over a human in terms of running games. For an app to be useful, it needs to make use of at least one of those advantages. All of the apps I described above harness such advantages: they assist in memory, or they automate monotonous tasks, or they internalize rules that are difficult for a human to enact. If an app doesn't do something similar, it's unlikely it will contribute enough to be widely adopted.

Forward . . . to the Future!

I'm excited to see how tabletop games embrace digital technology moving forward. I believe it is inevitable that there will be more and more overlap, and I'm proud that *Birds of a Feather* is helping take the industry in that direction, even if it has inspired negative reactions from

Easy to use

If an app is inconvenient, it's not going to be used. Whatever it does, it needs to cure more headaches than it causes. Good UI and a focused purpose are both important for this. Don't get tempted to bloat an app with lots of features if it makes it more difficult to use.

One area I believe will really improve ease of use is computer vision. If players can simply point their phone at the game components of interest, they are far more likely to use an app than if they have to manually enter information.

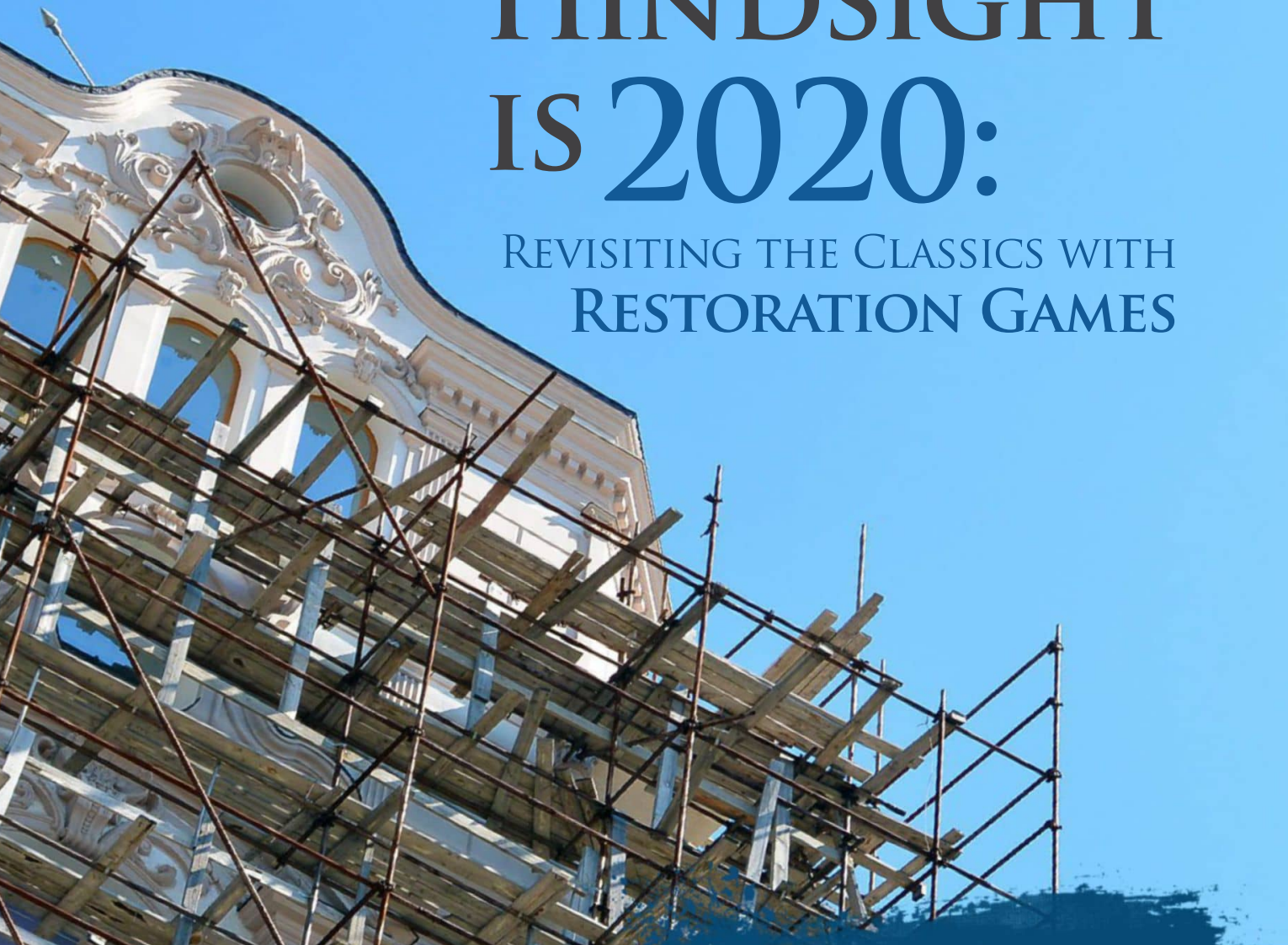
Focused on non-digital fun

When people think "app" in tabletop games, they usually think "gimmick." While there is room for some gimmicky uses of apps, I think that ultimately apps will fit more of a supplementary role, supporting the aspects of board games that are traditionally fun. If the app is the real centerpiece, you have to ask yourself: why have the non-digital component at all?

some people. While some obstacles to tabletop integration of technology are outside of our control, as designers and publishers we can still push the envelope by taking chances and experimenting with the unknown. ☑

HINDSIGHT IS 2020:

REVISITING THE CLASSICS WITH RESTORATION GAMES



EVERY GAME DESERVES ANOTHER TURN



Justin Spicer
Music Journalist and Board Game Experimenter

There is mounting evidence that the board gaming industry boom is not going away. People of all ages are flocking to board gaming as a means of entertainment, fun, and connecting with others in variable settings. Conventions devoted to promoting the latest games continue to swell, with anticipation of the latest hotness working thousands into a frenzy.

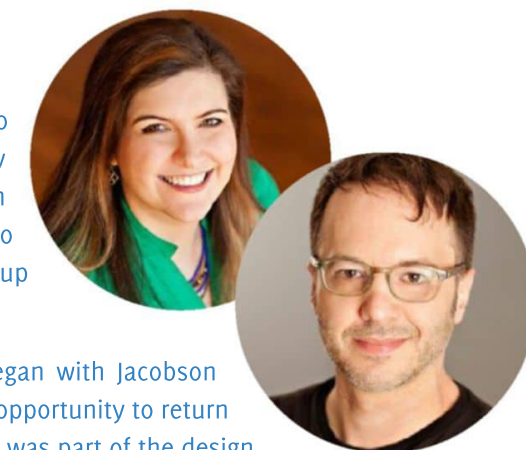
As the industry grows, an older generation is emerging as historians of a time when board gaming was rudimentary and sometimes even clumsy. A host of games well past their prime fill people with wonderful feelings of nostalgia, even as newer gaming mechanics, themes, and interactions leave them agape in excitement and amazement. Yet, the path to the types of board games hitting the market now begins with those older titles.



Enter Restoration Games, the brainchild of lawyer-cum-publisher Justin Jacobson. “I’ve always been an avid gamer,” Jacobson begins. “I played all sorts of games when I was a kid, from the earliest editions of *Dungeons & Dragons* to the first wave of Euros to make it across the Atlantic.” Jacobson’s introduction to the industry side of things began with some *D&D* self-publishing.



However, it would be his frequent trips to Gen Con to offer legal advice to publishers and designers in question-and-answer seminars that coincidentally led to the formation of Restoration Games. “One year, a nice young woman came up to me and said that her husband was getting ready to leave Hasbro and had some questions. That was Lindsay Daviau...and that dinner ended up changing my life.”



Jacobson and Lindsay’s husband, Rob Daviau, began a relationship that began with Jacobson becoming Rob’s lawyer. From there, Jacobson saw the rise of Kickstarter as his opportunity to return to the world of publishing by reprinting *Star Wars: The Queen’s Gambit* (Daviau was part of the design team of the game). “That one wasn’t feasible, but we started throwing the idea back and forth [of] what older games could do with an update,” describes Jacobson. “Ultimately, it was an idea that just wouldn’t let go.”

OLD SCHOOL COOL

This eventuality led to Restoration Games and its public debut in 2017. Jacobson points out, “We like looking at long-forgotten games that have some really memorable element we can leverage for an interesting, modern game.”

The company began with three games that fit this description, *Stop Thief*, *Downforce*, and *Indulgence*,

updating the mechanics and art for a modern audience. As Jacobson and Daviau’s idea became a reality, they found they were not the only ones who found solace in older games. “[W]e get recommendations from fans all the time — thousands of them — so, it’s easy to see which ones are popular.”

Public demand is not the sole determining factor Restoration Games relies upon when deciding to move forward with a game. Jacobson summarizes: “We try to identify the ‘soul’ of the game. What is that compelling element? We focus on that, inject it with steroids, put a spotlight on it, and then build a modern game around it that supports it.”

But sometimes a game’s great soul does not carry it to market. “We’ve had a couple [games] that have gotten near the finish line but just didn’t quite meet our standards. They were perfectly fine, but we’re not going to put out a game we think is just fine.”



Restoration must also account for the fond memories gamers have of playing these games in their original incarnations. “Working on them now as I do, it’s hard to miss their flaws as well, so I think the ‘nostalgia’ has largely dissipated,” begins Jacobson.

“But that’s something we’re always mindful of when we tackle a restoration. Folks who remember a game fondly are only going to remember the good qualities. In fact, they don’t even remember those accurately.” Jacobson jokes, “Ask someone how tall the original Dark Tower was, and they’re liable to tell you it was two-feet tall and played 42 different songs. [...] The ones that linger often have some unique aspect or toyetic feature that makes them memorable.”



RULES AND RESTORATIONS

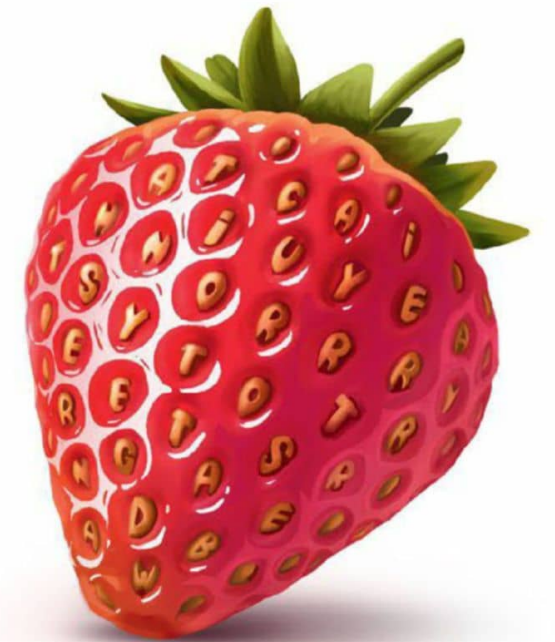
Of course, reworking a classic game is more than just deciding what works outside the rose-tinted glasses and exciting-toy factor of childhood fondness. Jacobson’s background as an attorney comes into consideration when Restoration pursues the rights to rework and publish a game. “Sometimes it’s very clear and held by a single person who’s still around and active. More often, it’s murkier; whether it’s unclear who holds the rights, or we have trouble tracking down the likely rightsholder.”

Jacobson continues: “Sometimes we’re dealing with a big publisher; sometimes it’s just a single person. Sometimes we can get some of the rights but not others, such as the rights to the game but not the rights to the art. We’ve always made it a point to secure authority from the original designer regardless of whether it was legally required. For me, as an attorney, it’s incredibly interesting and, in a lot of ways, fun to work my way through all of that.”

Despite these hurdles, Jacobson notes, “Ultimately, our games strive to satisfy that yearning for the game you remember from your childhood while also offering a modern play experience. As we’ve done more and more of them, I think we’ve gotten better at it.”



Letter Jam

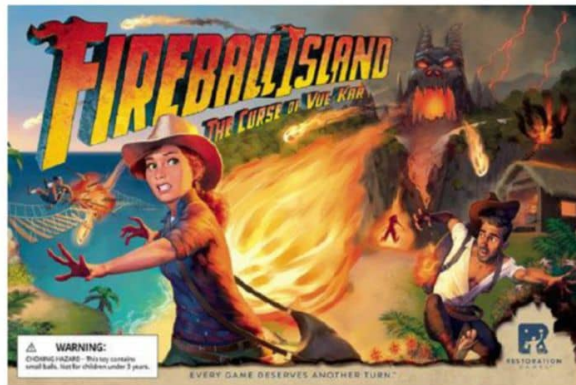


A COOPERATIVE WORD GAME

GUESS YOUR LETTER



This has carried over to the biggest offerings of Restoration Games to date. In 2018, the company offered a reworked version of *Fireball Island* on Kickstarter to great success. And recently, the company just launched one of the most



Fireball Island: The Curse of Vul-Kar and *Return to Dark Tower* have both amassed millions of dollars in funding on Kickstarter.

successful board gaming Kickstarters to date: a reworked version of the classic board game *Dark Tower*, now known as *Return to Dark Tower*, which finds Daviau teaming up with *Gloomhaven* and *Frosthaven* designer, Isaac Childres.



SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Despite the company's successes with Kickstarter, Jacobson notes that Restoration wants to limit their usage of the popular platform. "Running a major Kickstarter campaign is like running a whole other company. And it starts well before launch and lingers on long after it funds. It can let you do something that would otherwise be impossible. *Return to Dark Tower* has a development budget more akin to a major computer game release. We couldn't have even considered it without Kickstarter."

It's the growth Restoration has experienced in other areas that Jacobson is proudest of. "We've grown from just Rob and me to a team of eight. We've grown our reputation. We have designers reaching out to us now to bring back old designs. Mostly, we've built our brand. People recognize us and know what to expect when they pick up one of our games. Still a long way to go, of course, and we're constantly working."

And what work lies ahead for Restoration Games? "I still feel like we're just maturing as a game company. We haven't really

explored out-licensing opportunities, digital implementations, foreign-language editions, and direct sales. We're trying to make our website more robust and develop a more cohesive marketing strategy. Those are all areas we're looking to expand aggressively this year," stresses Jacobson.

"And, of course, we've still got some big titles in the hopper that we're excited to deliver to gamers." 🎮



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Breaking Games AN ADMAGIC COMPANY

FLICK WARS

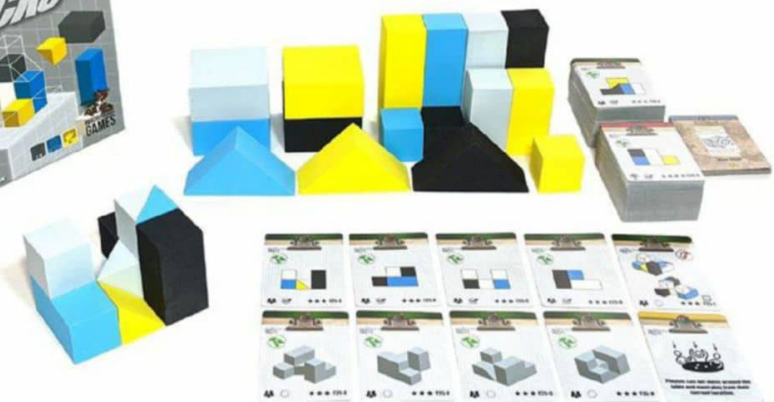
> TACTICAL COMBAT
> 1-6 PLAYERS
> 3D TERRAIN!

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PRINT & PLAY AN ADMAGIC COMPANY



Mental Blocks is a cooperative puzzle game in which each player is dealt a card that shows one perspective for the block tower they are building.



Naomi Laeuchli
Game Reviewer and
Casual Game Groupie

to freely talk about their perspective and restriction cards, move around the table, and work together to build the block tower. If the majority of players vote that they believe the structure is correct, they reveal the answer card and check if their tower has the correct shapes and colors forming the correct structure. If they are right, they win the game. If they are wrong or run out of time, they lose. There is also an optional hidden traitor variant in which one player secretly knows the correct structure. In this game mode, the traitor wins if the time runs out, the wrong player is accused of being the traitor, or the block tower is not successfully built. The other players win if they correctly build the tower or if they vote on the traitor and correctly identify them.

Mental Blocks is a unique game that has players thinking along new lines that aren't often called for in gaming. The challenge of working together, trying to figure out how your perspective fits in with everyone else's, while also being aware of the ticking clock, can be difficult, exciting, and even humorous at times. It's also a game that will likely have you moving around, checking the tower from different angles — so, while it is very much a game of logic and puzzles, it still has some movement and action weaved into it.

We found that the fully cooperative gameplay offers a fun challenge on its own, without the need to introduce the traitor variant. The overall concept can be difficult to teach and is something you have to play to learn. But with several ways to tweak the difficulty, a nice range in player count, and excellent component quality, *Mental Blocks* is a unique and well-produced party game that is worth checking out.

Mental Blocks

By Jonathan Gilmour, Micah Sawyer

Grow your tribe, expand your cave, and become the chief of chiefs in a game of cavemen and cube towers.



A tower is set in the middle of the table along with four location boxes. Each player starts the game with four meeples and a small cave. On your turn, you choose one of three actions. You may send out a clan member by placing one or two of your meeples into one or two of the four boxes. You may spend resources to build an invention card from your hand or from the table, to expand your cave so that you can hold more invention cards in hand and hold more resources, to add an invention card to your hand, or to build a spear or drum (you may only have one of each at any time). Or you can call back clan members.

When calling back clan members, you choose one of the boxes and take all the meeples that are in it and drop them into the tower. Not all of them may come out that turn. For each meeple that does come out, the player who owns the meeple takes a resource (the resource type depends on the box that was chosen).

If a player's meeple does not fall out of the tower and he has a drum, he may discard the drum to tap the tower wall with the drumstick in an attempt to jostle it out. Some boxes also have dangerous animal meeples. When one of them falls out of the tower it eats one meeple belonging to each player who had a meeple come out of the tower. You can save your meeple in this situation by discarding a spear.

Players earn points by completing invention cards, which also grant special abilities, so the game has a

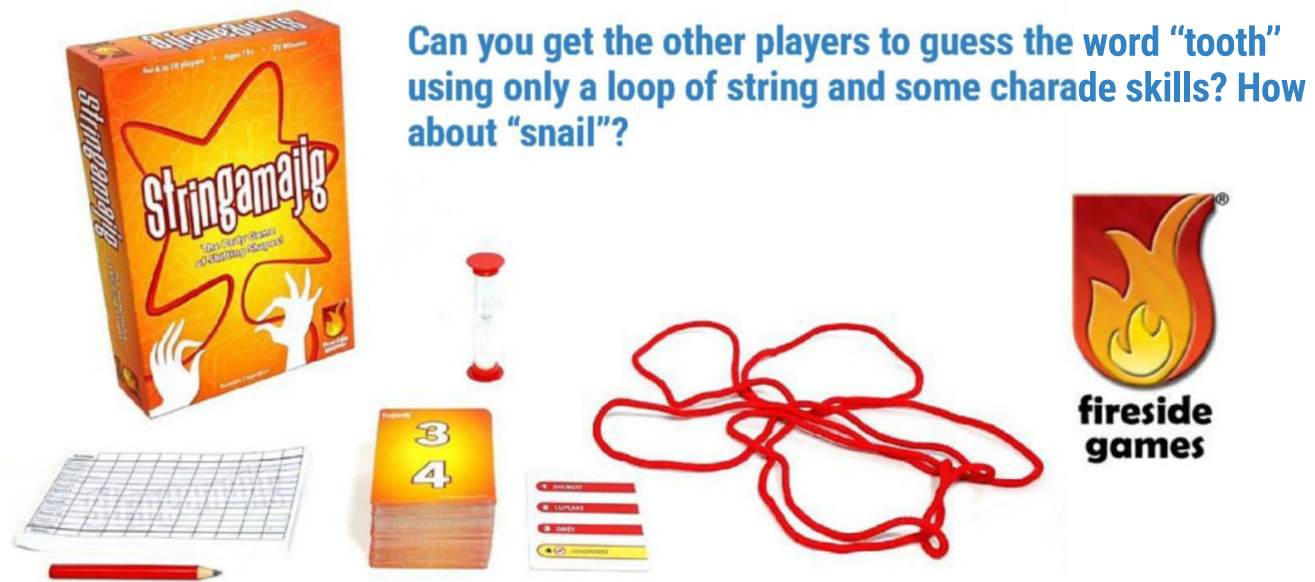
solid escalation in the later stages. The first player to reach ten points wins the game.

Age of Dirt is a thoroughly fun and enjoyable game. From dropping the meeples into the tower to the amusing artwork, everything about it is designed to be a good, silly time. You won't find a whole lot of strategy here, but that's not what it's trying to be. You still have to adapt your plans based on what falls from the tower and when, as well as the cards you complete and the abilities you gain. The components are excellent, especially the tower — it's always fun to see what comes out.

Overall, it's a very endearing, joyful game that plays at a nice brisk pace, will keep you entertained, and will leave you wishing cube towers would appear more often in board games.

Age of Dirt

By Johannes Krenner



Can you get the other players to guess the word “tooth” using only a loop of string and some charade skills? How about “snail”?



Stringamajig is a party game in which players use a loop of string to draw words. You start by shuffling the deck of word cards, with each card having four words on it. On your turn, you draw a card and then look at the back of the card that is now on top of the deck. This tells you which word you will use from your card; sometimes it will allow you to choose between several.

Once you have your word, the timer starts. You have sixty seconds to get the other players to guess as many words as possible. You are always allowed to skip a word with no penalty. You must attempt to draw each with the use of the string. You can also interact with your drawing, but the string must be integral to the drawing and can never entirely leave the table or floor.

You get one point for each word that is correctly guessed (two if it is a challenge word), and the first player to guess each word earns a point. A correct guess just has to

include the right word; corkscrew, for example, would be correct for the word “screw.”

Some words are challenges. These include the don't look challenge (you must do your drawing with your eyes closed), the forbidden word challenge (if any players say a specific word, you must discard your word card and draw a new one), and the two-player challenge (the string must not touch the table and you and another player work together to draw the word; the other player also earns a point if it is guessed).

Play continues until everyone has had two chances to draw (or once if there are seven-to-ten players), and the player with the most points wins.

Some of the elements of *Stringamajig* you will find familiar, but it pushes you to think outside the box. It's fascinating to see how players slowly become more comfortable drawing with the string, and you'll be surprised by how much you can do with it.

The challenge words are especially fun as they force you to adapt to the various types of challenges. The two-player challenge is particularly enjoyable, as it's fun to work together on the words.

Like similar party games, the scoring doesn't matter much at the end of the day. It's more about the experience and the gameplay in the moment. If you have a group that enjoys games that require creativity, this one will be a hit!

Stringamajig

Designed by Romain Caterdjian

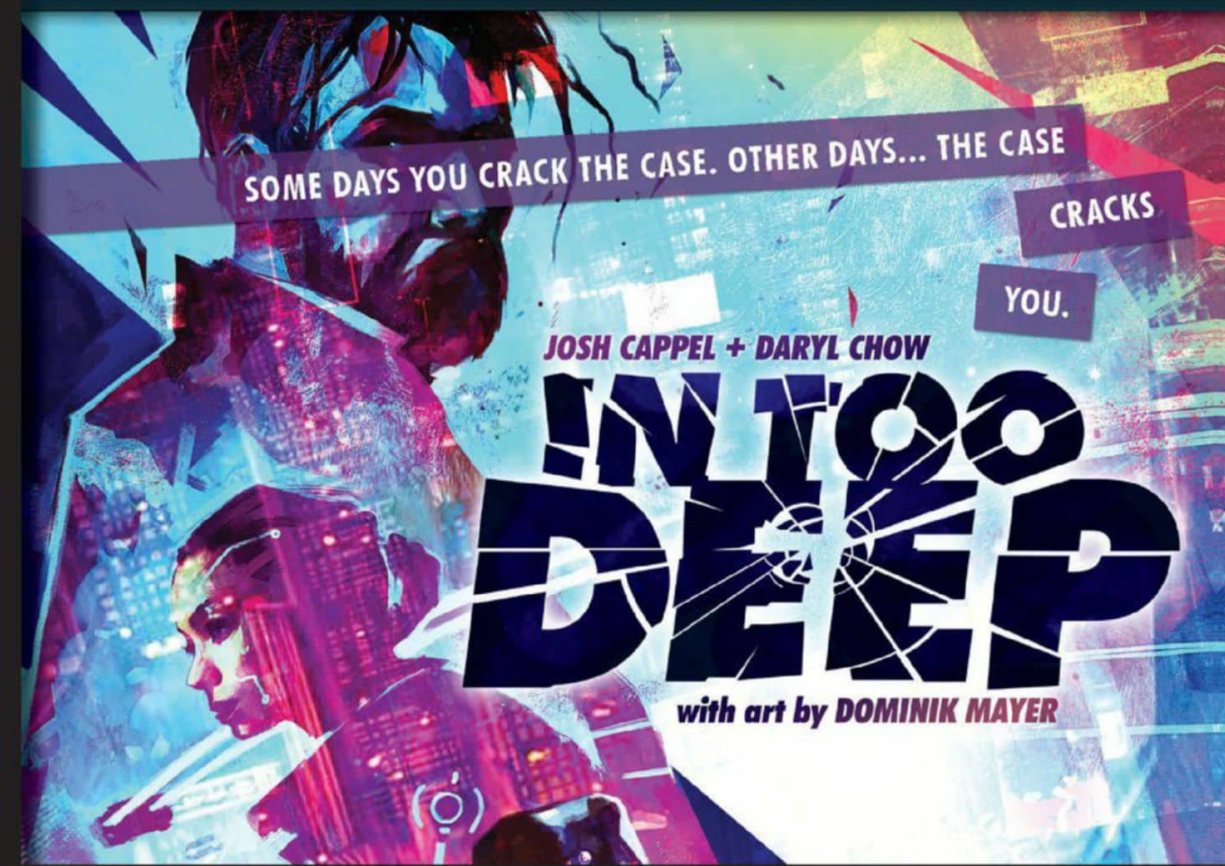
4-10 PLAYERS | 20 MINS | AGES 13+ | \$20 MSRP

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INTO TOO DEEP

with art by DOMINIK MAYER

Line up the boats to plan the perfect move, as you jump from boat to boat to claim the perfect wedding gifts – sometimes literally out from under your opponents!



In *Dragon Market*, each player places their pawn on a matching-colored pontoon in the corners of the board. Boats are also placed on the board in different locations. Each boat has a sailor in one of its three spaces, and two matching merchandise tokens are placed in each of the other two spaces. There are ten boats in total. Each player is also given an objective card that lists four types of merchandise. The first player to complete two objective cards wins the game.

On your turn, you roll two dice (which contain only threes and fours) add them together to get your total number of actions for that turn. You may spend action points to move a boat forward or backward any number of squares (it cannot move over other boats); to turn a boat 90 degrees (when a

boat turns, its sailor is the center of rotation); and to move your pawn. When moving, you must spend one point for each space, and you may only move onto your pontoon or onto a boat space. You can move through other players but not through sailors. When moving on or through a boat space with a merchandise token that is on your objective card, you may take the merchandise token with you (this does not require extra action points). You may spend your action points in any order you wish, and you earn one coin for each point you do not use. You may also spend up to two coins to add extra actions during your turn. When you obtain all the merchandise that's listed on your card, return to your pontoon to complete it and draw a new one.

There is an advanced variant in which players must complete three objective cards, with each completed one granting players a special ability. The cards are kept face-down, and when drawing a new one, you draw two and choose which to keep. This adds even further depth to the game's puzzle and gives a solid escalation to the game as you go along.

Dragon Market blends puzzles and logistics as you try to navigate your way around the board, planning the shortest route to all the tokens you need, while also trying to maneuver your opponents into positions that will slow them down. The quality of the components is fantastic, with nice sturdy boats and sailors. The variants make it a good fit for families, and you always feel involved as you watch the board evolve during each player's turn.

Dragon Market

Designed by Marco Teubner

2-4 PLAYERS
 45 MINS
 AGES 7+
 \$33 MSRP

LUCK
 STRATEGY
 INTERACTIVE
 INDEPENDENT

Can you work together to throw the best house party ever? Be careful to avoid any awkward situations, and be prepared for any surprises that might come your way!



Meeple Party is a cooperative puzzle game. You begin by setting up the house. You need to use a minimum of eight tiles, including a few that are required, but otherwise players are free to build it as they wish, making the game easier or harder based on layout. You then choose how many photos you need to take to win the game (from 12 to 24). Each player is also dealt two photo cards. Each photo card lists the requirements to complete it: a certain combination of meeple colors in a specific or general room.

On your turn, you draw a meeple guest from the bag and place it in any room in the house, then perform its action. Each of the five meeple colors represents a different type of guest with its own unique action. A blue meeple, for example, is a cool guest that draws two meeple from adjacent rooms. A green meeple is a jerk that pushes a meeple two rooms away. If you draw a white meeple, you get a surprise visitor! In this case, draw a surprise card instead of placing the meeple. Surprise cards can move meeple around, remove or add them to the board, and increase players' stress level. If all players ever have a stress level of three, they lose the game.

Next, you must move one meeple to an adjacent room and then activate its ability. You then check the disaster cards in play. Depending on the difficulty level, you check your individual disaster card and/or the communal one. If you have a certain combination of meeple colors in a certain room, the disaster triggers and everyone gains a stress level. You then check to see if one or both of your photo card requirements have been met. If so, you move the

party clock forward and trigger an event (such as adding another guest or drawing a surprise card) then draw a new photo card. Disaster cards that have been triggered are replaced; they are also replaced periodically by the party clock events.

Meeple Party is a fun brain teaser. The artwork is cartoony and amusing. The freedom you have in house setup, as well as the difficulty adjustments, gives the game extra replay value. The puzzle keeps evolving and changing as the clock moves, as well as when you draw new cards that change your requirements and restraints. There is the danger of one player taking over, but with the right group, it's an engaging puzzle that's satisfying to solve, with some extra item and animal variants included to mix things up even further.

Meeple Party

Designed by Heather O'Neill

1-5 PLAYERS
 45-60 MINS
 AGES 13+
 \$40 MSRP

LUCK
 STRATEGY
 INTERACTIVE
 INDEPENDENT

The detectives have gathered. But one among you is a conspirator and another their informer. Can you spot the liar?



Each round of *Detective Club*, a new player takes on the informer role. You play until everyone has played this role twice (or once in a six-to-eight player game). Everyone draws a hand of six evidence cards, each showing a fanciful picture. Whenever you play a card, you immediately draw a new one.

At the start of the round, the informer looks at their cards and chooses a word they believe fits two of their cards. This player writes that word on all but one of the game's notepads, shuffles them, and hands them out to each player face-down. The player who receives the blank pad is the conspirator. The informer then plays one of their cards face-up on the table, hoping it will convey some idea of the word they chose to the conspirator. Going around the table, each player then plays one card they believe relates to the word. The conspirator must attempt to guess (based on the cards they see) what card from

their own hand would best fit with the unknown word. Everyone, including the informer, then plays a second card.

Next, the informer reveals the word and explains their logic for the two cards they played. Going around the table, each player then explains why they played the cards they did. All of the players (except the informer) then vote on who they believe the conspirator is. Each player who guessed correctly earns three points. If only one person or no one guessed correctly, the informer wins four points and the conspirator five.

Detective Club hits some similar notes to other party games while keeping the mechanics streamlined. It avoids giving too much time to the discussion phase, which some players can find overwhelming or too heated, keeps moving the roles around, and works with a large player count.

The artwork is gorgeous and a treat to behold. The phase when people explain their reasoning is both fascinating and fun, particularly if you're the conspirator and have to scramble to make something fit. (It's even more satisfying when you've managed to pull it off successfully!) The role of the informer is also enjoyable, as you're not bound by word cards but can come up with any single word on your own. There is even a clever variant suggested where players pick a theme for their words before beginning the game and allowing you to tailor the experience to your group.

Detective Club

Designed by Oleksandr Nevskiy

4-8 PLAYERS | 45 MINS | AGES 8+ | MSRP \$35

INTERACTIVE | INDEPENDENT

Cabo features beautifully whimsical artwork with a blend of memory elements and lightly strategic gameplay.



Each player is dealt four cards face-down, peeking at two of them at the beginning of the round. On your turn, you may draw a card from the deck or discard pile. If you're drawing from the deck, you may discard it and use its ability if there is one, such as peeking at a card or swapping a card with an opponent. Alternatively, you may replace one or more of your cards with it (placing the new card face-down in front of you if it was from the draw pile and face-up if it was from the discard pile). If you choose to replace more than one card, they all must have matching values. If you accidentally indicate cards that do not match each other, then you do not discard them but still add the new card to your line of cards as a penalty.

Alternatively, you may call Cabo on your turn, which ends the round after all other players have taken one final turn. (The round also ends if the draw deck runs out.) Players then reveal their cards and score points based on the combined value of their cards. If you called Cabo and had the lowest score, you don't earn any points. If you didn't have the lowest score, you would add ten points on top of your total card value. The game ends once someone reaches 100 points or more, and the player with the fewest points wins. There are also ways to "shoot the moon" if you're far behind or just willing to take some extra risks.

Cabo is beautifully simplistic in its design. There is plenty of player interaction and card swapping, and choosing the perfect moment to call Cabo is satisfying. If you're looking for a bit more depth, the newer *Silver* line of games offers similar gameplay with added actions and rule variations. But as an elegantly simple alternative that can be taught in a snap, *Cabo: Deluxe Edition* fits the bill perfectly. 🎲

Cabo

Designed by Mandy Henning, Melissa Limes

2-4 PLAYERS | 45 MINS | AGES 8+ | MSRP \$20

LUCK | STRATEGY | INTERACTIVE | INDEPENDENT

OTHER RECOMMENDED GAMES

For a complete list, visit CasualGameRevolution.com/games



Pictures is Major Fun!

The Concept

A game of *Pictures* starts with a simple premise: you don't have to be the next Van Gogh or Kahlo to discover there's a little artistry in each of us.

There's no drawing and painting involved. Instead, you'll use blocks and rocks and sticks and symbols and shoelaces and tiny colored cubes to create your version of a picture. Will others be able to find your picture when it's hanging in a gallery with others?

The Components

At first glance, *Pictures* might look like someone has emptied the random contents of a desk drawer into the box. There are five sets of art objects:

- 6 chunky wooden blocks in different shapes
- 24 colored wooden cubes with a frame card
- 19 icon cards
- A long shoelace and a short shoelace
- A set of 4 sticks and 4 rocks (yes, actual rocks)

The Mechanics

Each turn has two phases in *Pictures* — a creation phase and a guessing phase. The creation phase begins with each player selecting a coordinate token from the bag. This token identifies which picture in the grid is yours. Keep this secret from everyone else.

Now, you're set. Try your best to make a representation of your picture using the art materials at your disposal. There are no restrictions on how you may use the materials, with two exceptions:



Included with this odd assortment you'll find a deck of 91 picture cards and a set of coordinate tokens with a drawstring bag. The picture cards run the gamut of animals, landscapes, objects, vehicles, wide vistas, and close-ups.

To play, deal out 16 picture cards in a four-by-four grid. Place coordinate tokens along the rows and columns. Once each player selects a set of art materials, you are ready to begin!

With the colored cubes, all the cubes must fit within the frame, meaning you may only use 9 of the 24 cubes in your picture. With the icon cards, you may only use 2–5 cards to represent your picture.

There is no formal time limit to the creation phase, so don't stress out if you need a moment to come up with a plan. This is not a game about making masterpieces. It's a game about doing the best you can with what you're given.

When all the creations are ready, the guessing phase begins. Look at all the other creations and note down the picture coordinates that you think match each one on your scoresheet. Then, each artist will reveal the correct match. If you guessed correctly, you score a point and the artist scores one point for each correct guess.

Next round, shift each set of art materials to another player. Play until each person has had a chance to use each set of materials. High score wins the game.

What Sets This Game Apart?

Freedom and variety set *Pictures* apart. You have the freedom to envision and use the materials in a variety of ways. With the blocks, you could stack them or arrange them in a mini-diorama. With the shoelaces, you can create squiggly line drawings. The rocks and sticks could be a combination of any of these methods or something else entirely.

Your freedom extends to another important decision each round. You must decide what parts of the picture are the most important to depict. Given the crazy materials and the limited quantity, there's no possible way for you to include every detail in any picture you see. Therefore, you must make important decisions about what to include and what to leave out.

Each picture may have a focal piece, but when put in context with the other pictures in the grid, that one item alone may not set it apart. The trick in *Pictures* is often deciding what smaller details to include.

In some rounds, the picture and the materials may come together and an idea just leaps out at you. Other combinations may have you laughing and scratching your head on what to do. You may develop favorites or grudges against certain sets of materials. But don't worry — any sets you struggle with initially, you can learn new methods by seeing how others use them.



This convergence of freedom and variety ensures that every round of the game will be new and different. And because each round is so quick, each combination of picture and materials seems like an opportunity for fun, not an obstacle to it.

We certainly love the game as presented, but we've added an extra layer of variety and freedom to our house rules that you might want to try as well. Instead of leaving the same cards in the grid each round, any card that was used is replaced. This means the grid of pictures changes each turn and prevents copycat artists from re-using the same depiction on a later round.

Final Thoughts

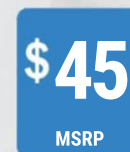
Pictures is a game of mastery and therefore it may not be for everyone. It may not include any paintbrushes, but it is a game about broad strokes. Can you, with the most basic of materials, somehow, somehow, get people to see a more complex picture? The tools are simple, but the replay is constantly fresh and fun and laughs that *Pictures* creates is just Major Fun!

Stephen Conway
on duty as Major Fun
and host of The Panel



Pictures

Designed by Daniela and Christian Stöhr



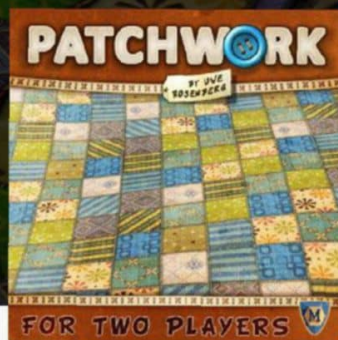
Your Turn!

A Spotlight on the Gaming Community **CGI**

What is your favorite board game to play online or remotely?

"Patchwork. I really enjoy the game, but find playing it in person somewhat tedious — online removes the physical piece manipulation that gets so tiresome."

— Meg A.



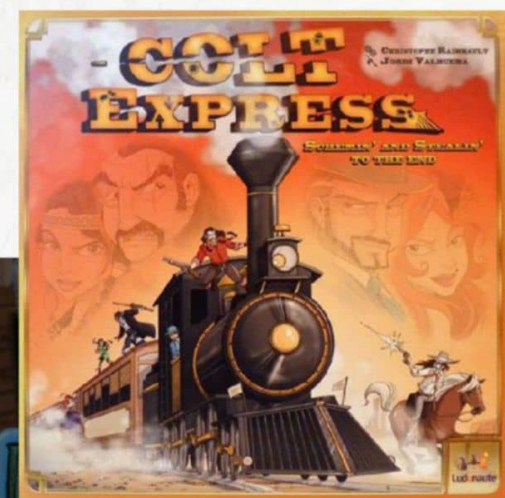
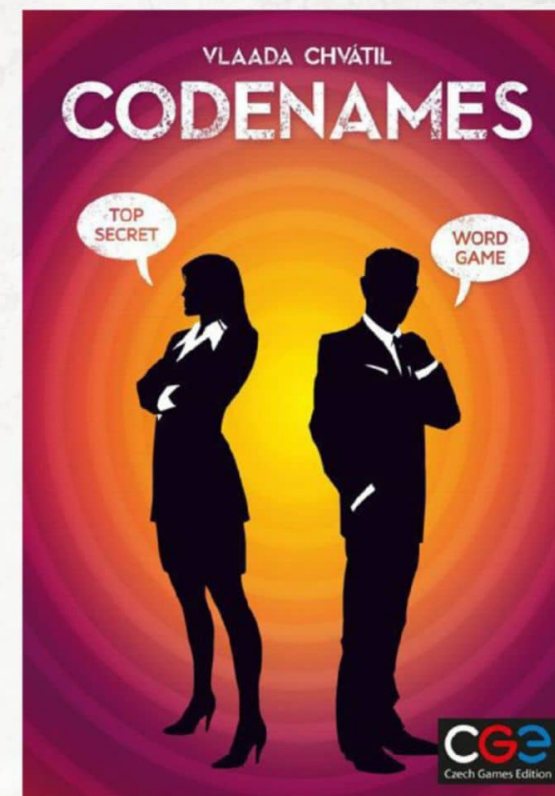
"Codenames; mostly because it's the only one I can get people to play."

— Roger A.



"Codenames! Works well online, surprisingly."

— Chris R.

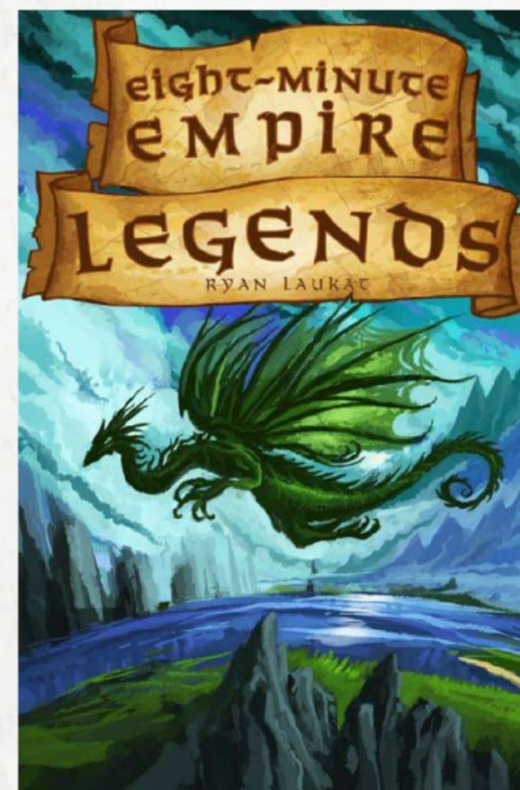


"Colt Express. A fun, light game that works well remotely due to programmed movement."

— Robert F.

"Right now, Colt Express. Our family enjoys sabotaging each other and going for the briefcase."

— Max O.



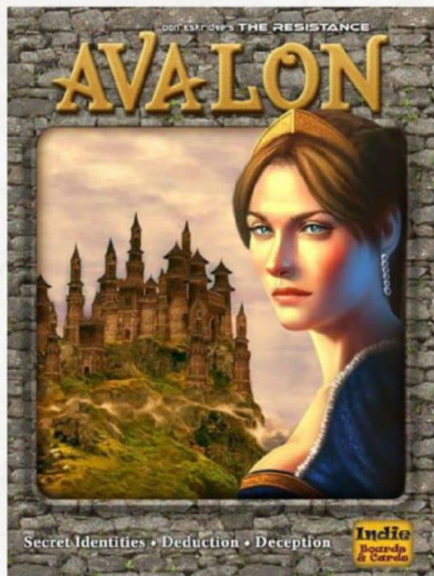
"Eight Minute Empire: Legends. It's like Risk in 10 minutes!"

— Max A.



“Scrabble/Words with Friends. It reminds me of my nightly games with Mom...and it works well asynchronously.”

— Mary C.



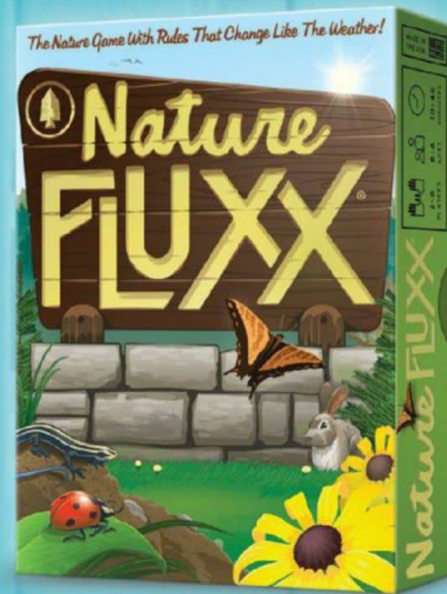
“Just tried out Avalon and it was really fun. I liked it because we could play with 10 people and it is always fun bluffing my friends.”

— Darren G.



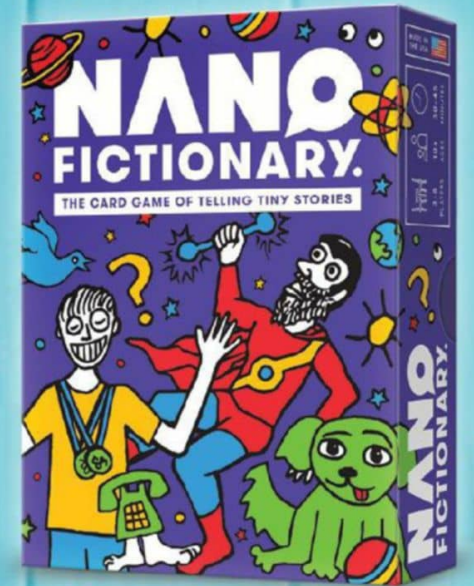
“Evolution. Making your own animals and getting them to adapt against your opponents is a lot of fun. It is also fun to test new strategies and trait combos against friends.”

— Nicholas C.



KEEP THE KIDS BUSY
LEARNING AND HAVING FUN
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Looney Labs games are silly, creative, and never the same twice!



Card games small enough to travel
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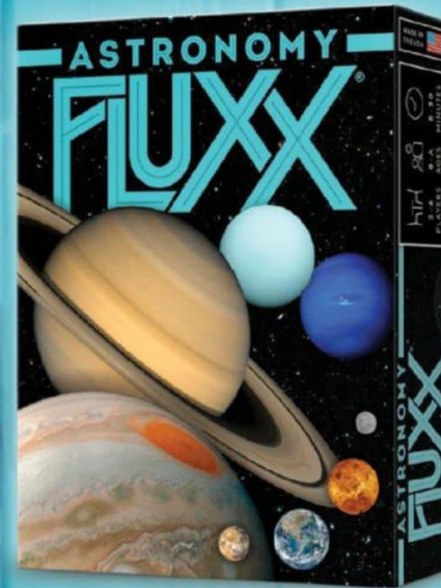
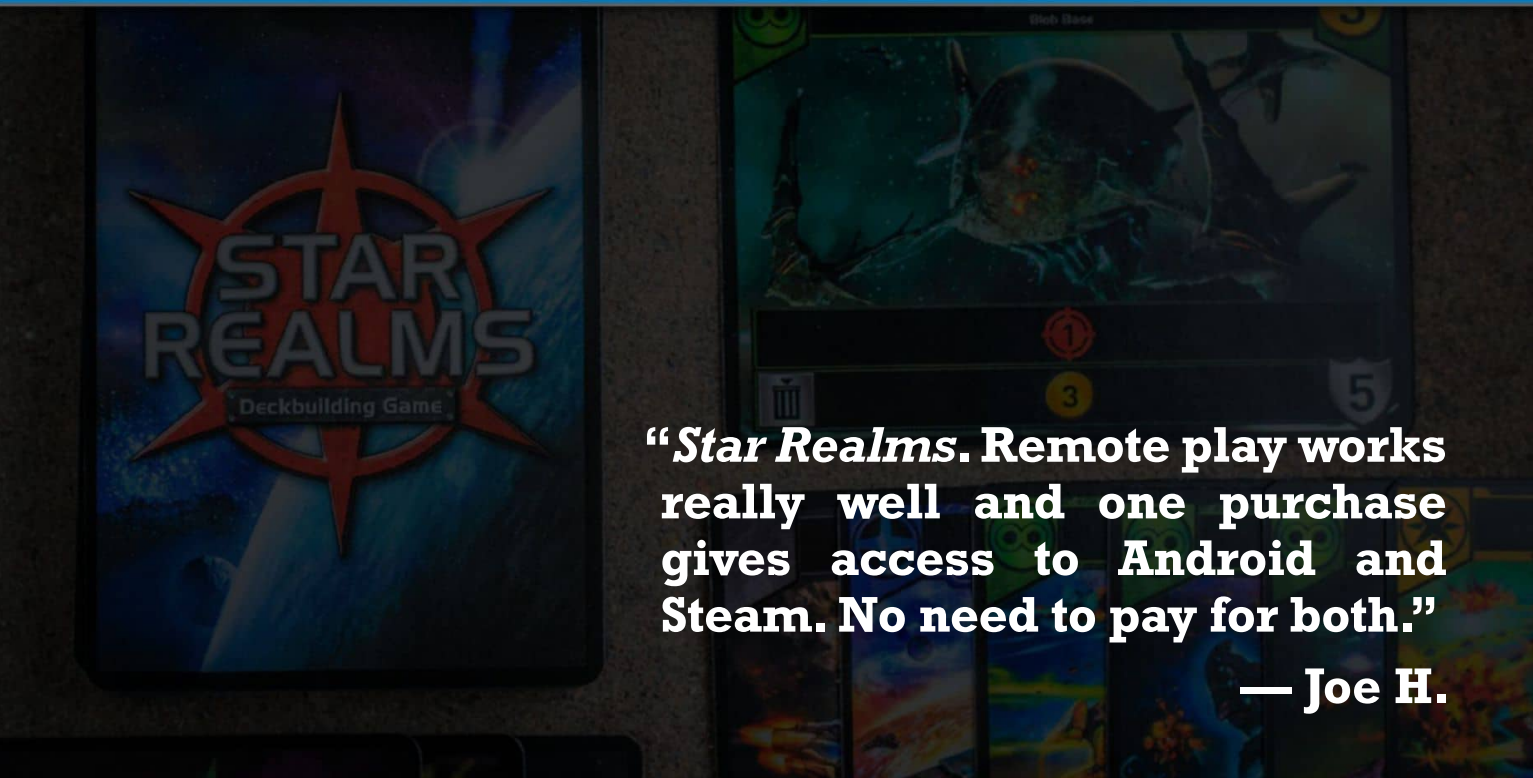


Image: Freepik.com



“Star Realms. Remote play works really well and one purchase gives access to Android and Steam. No need to pay for both.”
— Joe H.

“Chess. Because oftentimes each move can take quite a bit of thought and the game can be very time-consuming. Playing online notifies each player once the other has made their move and keeps the board safe from accidents that could otherwise spoil the game.”

— Josh C.



- 2
- 8+
- 20min

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Next Issue: What are your unique gaming traditions?

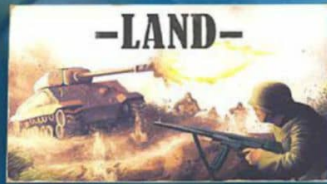
Send your ideas and photos to: editor@CasualGameRevolution.com

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AIR, LAND, & SEA

In *Air, Land, & Sea*, two players battle for control over each "theater" of war by playing Battle cards and strategically utilizing their special abilities to gain the advantage. Whoever controls the most theaters, thus claiming the most victory points, wins the war!



1 ST PLAYER	
WINS TIED THEATERS	
CARDS LEFT IN YOUR HAND	POINTS OPPONENT SCORES IF YOU SURRENDER
4-6	2
3-2	3
1	4
0	6



2 ND PLAYER	
LOSES TIED THEATERS	
CARDS LEFT IN YOUR HAND	POINTS OPPONENT SCORES IF YOU SURRENDER
5-6	2
3-4	3
2	4
0-1	6



"Not since Love Letter has a game done so much with so few cards."
- Quintin Smith



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