

6 Steps of Game Design

1. HAVE AN IDEA

Your idea may be based on an interesting theme, mechanic, funny phrase, or an experience. Ideas can come from anywhere. Whatever inspires you, run with it!



2. EXPAND THE CONCEPT

Once you have a core idea, expand it into a full game. This may mean writing out rules, grabbing sample components and testing out mechanics, or creating flowcharts. Everyone works differently, so do whatever works for you. Remember, a game is about an experience. Think about what experience you want to provide. An interesting game has meaningful choices that help shape the experience.

3. PLAYTEST, UPDATE, REPEAT



Once you have your idea worked out, you'll need to play your game. Start with cheap, easily replaceable or changeable components, like index cards, coins, cardboard, and parts of other games.

Make changes as you learn what works and what doesn't. Start with solo playtests, where you take on the role of all players yourself, then introduce the game to friends and family. Refine the rules and gameplay as you continue to playtest, and keep past versions if you need to roll back changes.

4. IMPROVE COMPONENTS

Once the game is more stable you may want to improve the components. Don't spend money on artwork; you can find free graphics online. For a more refined look and feel, use print services like **The Game Crafter**.



5. BROADER PLAYTESTING

As your game progresses you'll want to get playtesting from a wider audience. This is also a great time to get feedback from other designers at events like **Protospiel**. Eventually you may also want to conduct blind playtesting, where players read your rules and play your game without your involvement. This will ensure your rules are clear, consistent, and easily understood.

6. PUBLICATION

Not everyone wants their game published, but if you do there are two main paths to choose from.



- Self-publishing requires that you raise money (usually through crowdfunding like Kickstarter) and handle all the business aspects of publishing, like marketing, dealing with manufacturers, etc. This is a lot of work and involves personal risk, but the benefits are more creative control and the opportunity to start your own business.
- You can also pitch your game to existing publishers. Different publishers have different submission processes, but usually you'll start by creating a sell sheet for your game. You can pitch to publishers in person at conventions and designer/publisher speed dating events, or through online submissions. Pitching games can be stressful, but it allows you to focus on game design rather than all the business aspects of publishing.

Special Thanks to:



The Game Crafter – TheGameCrafter.com



DriveThru Cards – DriveThruCards.com



Atlas Games – AtlasGames.com



Indie Game Alliance – IndieGameAlliance.com



GJJ Games – GeorgelJaros.com/GJJGames

BOARD GAME DESIGN

From Your Head to the Table



Board Game Design Resources

There are literally hundreds of resources available both online and offline to help you in your journey to creating a board game. Below is just a sampling of some places you can go to learn more, get components, and network with other designers. There are tons more resources as well, but this should get you started on the path.

Board Game Design Groups & Websites

- **Board Game Geek** – The top website for everything board game related, including tons of designer resources, community design contests, and more. boardgamegeek.com
- **Board Game Designer's Forum** – Forums specifically focused around board game design topics. bgdf.com
- **Tabletop Generation** – A site for sharing information and progress on game designs. tabletopgeneration.com
- **Facebook Groups** – Card & Board Game Designers Guild, STARTUP Board & Card Game Designers, Game Maker's Lab, Board Game Design Lab Community, Midwest Tabletop Game Design, Chicagoland Tabletop Game Design Group, and many others.

Design Conventions

- **Protospiel** – These events are popping up all around the country and are great for designers to meet, play each other's games, and provide feedback. Locally there is Chicago in September, Madison in November, Milwaukee in April, and Indianapolis in May. protospiel.org
- **UnPub** – This is an annual event (plus a number of mini events) great for getting playtesting feedback from the general public. They are also great for marketing your game prior to publication or pitching your game to publishers. unpub.net
- **Other Game Conventions** – Most game conventions have locations or opportunities to playtest prototype games or to have your prototype games played.



Printing & Components

- **The Game Crafter** – The top name in print-on-demand prototype creation. They have tons of choices for printable components, non-printable components, and a great support community. They also sponsor a ton of design related events around the country and are physically located in nearby Madison, WI. thegamecrafter.com
- **Component Studio** – A service of The Game Crafter, Component Studio can be used to generate cards, tiles, and other components quickly and easily, then import them into The Game Crafter for high quality printing! component.studio
- **DriveThru Cards** – Part of the DriveThru family (DriveThru RPG and DriveThru Comics), they excel at printed cards and books, but don't have any other gaming components. They're an excellent choice to have card games printed at. drivethrucards.com
- **Print & Play Games by Ad Magic** – Print & Play Games has lots of components and can print things like cards, tiles, and game boards. printplaygames.com
- **Local Printers** – Local printers are usually more expensive, but faster for quick turnarounds of basic printed components. You'll have to cut your own cards, tokens, and boards though, and double-sided printing is often misaligned. I find it best to print cards without backs and put them into sleeves after cutting, or print fronts and backs separately and sleeve them together in clear sleeves. officedepot.com – staples.com
- **Local Libraries** – Many local libraries have 3D printing, laser cutting, craft cutters, computers, printers, and more that can be used to create game components.
- **Hobby Stores** – Hobby stores like Michael's or Hobby Lobby often have great little bits that can be used for components in your games.
- **Second Hand** – Thrift stores like Goodwill or even garage sales are great places to get old games to use for components. Cover an old Monopoly board with new graphics!



Support Services

- **Indie Game Alliance** – A group dedicated to promoting games from independent designers and publishers. indiegamealliance.com
- **Double Exposure** – A group that not only runs conventions, but also organizes events for designers to showcase their games. dexposure.com

Icons and Graphics

- **Game Icons** – Free icons game-icons.net
- **The Noun Project** – Free icons thenounproject.com
- **Flaticon** – Free icons flaticon.com
- **Pixabay** – Free photos and graphics pixabay.com
- **Morguefile** – Free photos and graphics morguefile.com

Blogs

- **GJJ Games** – GeorgeJaros.com/GJJGames
- **James Mathe** – jamesmathe.com/so-you-want-to-be-a-tabletop-game-designer
- **Jamey Stegmaier** – stonemaiergames.com/blog
- **League of Gamemakers** – leagueofgamemakers.com

Podcasts

- **Meeple Syrup Show** – meeple syrupshow.com
- **The Game Design Roundtable** – thegamedesignroundtable.com
- **The Game Crafter Official Podcast** – thegamecrafter.libsyn.com
- **Board Game Design Lab** – boardgamedesignlab.com

Books & Kits

- **The White Box** by Atlas Games atlas-games.com/product_tables/AG2903.php
- **GameTek: The Math and Science of Gaming** by Geoff Engelstein <http://a.co/d/78rFWrO>
- **The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses** by Jesse Schell <http://a.co/d/hvYplBS>

See this list of resources, and more, online at:
GeorgeJaros.com/GameDesignResources

