Tabletop game Redesign

W O R K B O O K

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Play, Redesign & Learn Lab

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Introduction

We have developed the "Game Redesign Workbook" to better support educators and learners in implementing tabletop game redesign projects.

The workbook includes guiding questions on each of the main activities of the project including playing the chosen game to be redesigned, critiquing the chosen game and imagining new design possibilities, brainstorming on the aspects of redesigning the game and incorporating the learning topics, creating game drafts and playtesting the redesigned games.
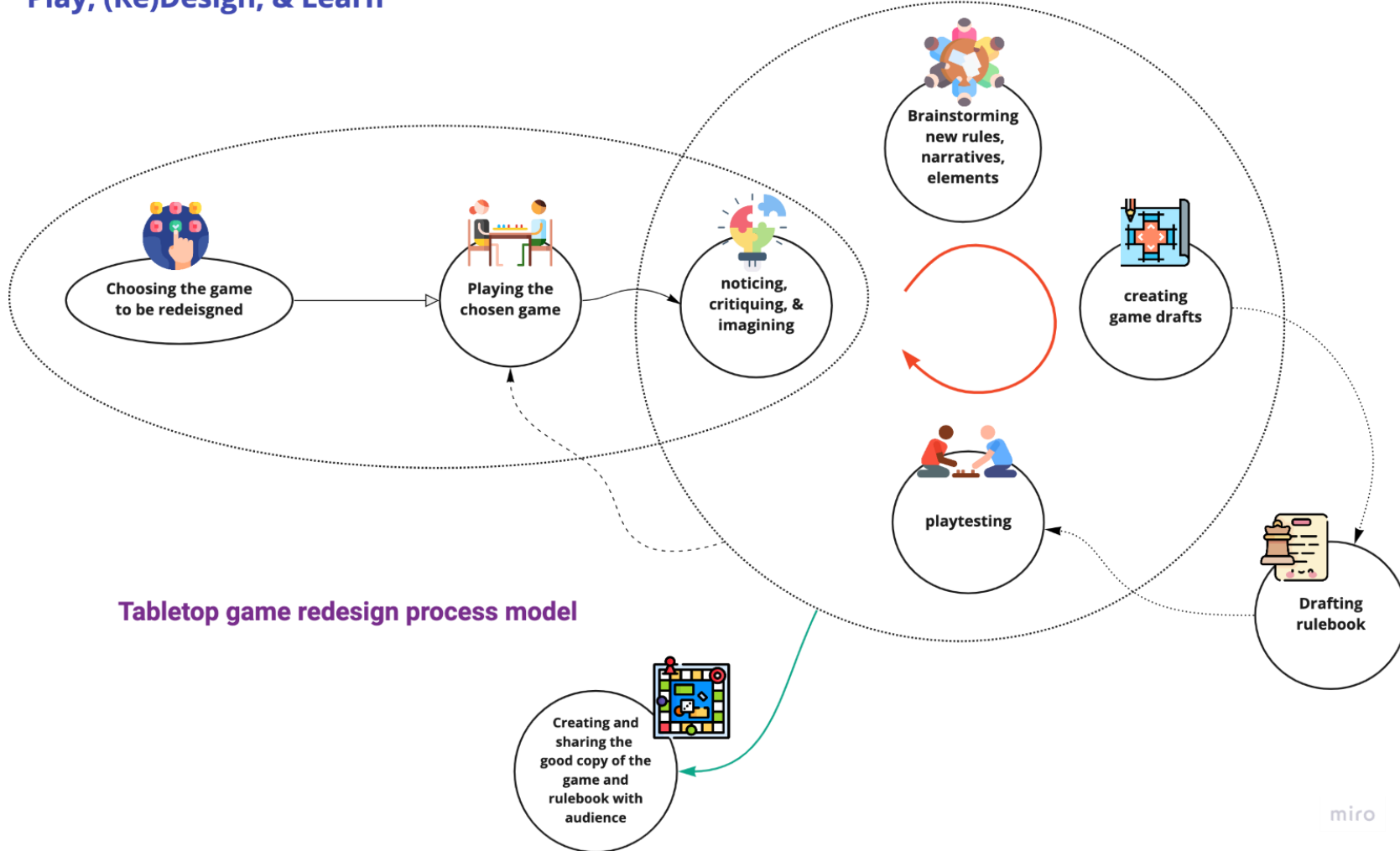
We suggest this workbook to educators and researchers who seek to engage students in hands-on, design-based learning and help them develop critical thinking, systems thinking and problem-solving skills, and support them to use the learning topics in creating the systems of their interest (i.e., games).

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Bastani, R., Kim, B., & Clyde, J. (2023). *Tabletop game redesign workbook.* https://www.playredesignlearn.com/tools.

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Tabletop game redesign process model

Brainstorming
new rules,
narratives,
elements

Choosing the game
to be redeisgned

Playing the
chosen game

noticing,
critiquing, &
imagining

creating
game drafts

playtesting

Drafting
rulebook

Creating and
sharing the
good copy of the
game and
rulebook with
audience

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Model informed by the described process in
Jaques, S., Kim, B., Shyleyko-Kostas, A., & Takeuchi, M. A. (2019). "I Just won against myself!": Fostering early numeracy through boardgame play and redesign. *Early Childhood Education*, *26* (1), 22-29. http://hdl.handle.net/1880/111252
*Icons' source: https://www.flaticon.com/free-icons

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Game Redesign Iterative Process

Tabletop game redesign is an iterative process that involves multiple activities, where each builds upon the previous one. This process is not linear, not followed in a strict sequence. It is a flexible and adaptable approach that allows for exploration, experimentation, and continuous improvement.

- **Play the Chosen Game:** Begin by playing the tabletop game you wish to redesign. This activity serves as the foundation of the redesign process. It allows you to understand the existing game mechanics, rules, and overall gameplay experience.

- **Critique and Imagine:** After playing the game, critically analyze its strengths and weaknesses. Explore the ideas integrated in the game theme and mechanics. Imagine new design possibilities. Consider how the game can be different in terms of gameplay flow, balance, engagement, and theme.

- **Brainstorm and Incorporate Learning Topics:** Brainstorm to generate innovative ideas for redesigning the game using your own ideas and interests. Explore different possibilities for incorporating specific learning topics, if relevant to your redesign goals.

- **Create Game Drafts:** Transform your ideas into tangible drafts or prototypes. Experiment with various mechanics, rules, components, and themes. These drafts are initial versions that will undergo refinement and iteration.

- **Playtest the Redesigned Games:** Playtest your game with diverse players. Allow them to experience and provide feedback. Observe how they interact with the new mechanics, rules, and components. Their feedback will highlight areas for improvement and guide further iterations.

- **Iterate and Refine:** Based on the feedback received, iterate and refine your game design. Address any issues or opportunities for improvement. Adjust the mechanics, rules, components, and overall game experience. Repeat the playtesting process with each iteration to ensure continuous enhancement.

- **Repeat the Process:** Recognize that tabletop game redesign is an ongoing and cyclical process. Repeat the activities above as many times as necessary to refine and polish your game design. Each iteration brings you closer to a more engaging and enjoyable game experience, incorporating feedback, insights, and new ideas.

By embracing the iterative nature of the process, you allow yourself the freedom to explore new possibilities, learn from playtesting, and continuously refine your design to create a more fun and immersive gaming experience.

Things to consider during the gameplay

1. How are the game's rules unique or interesting to you?

2. What are possible winning strategies?

3. See if your strategies change in the rounds of playing the game.

4. Try finding connections between the learning topics and the game rules and story?

5. What parts of gameplay is based on luck? What parts of gameplay is based on strategies?

6. What rules are difficult to understand?

7. In your gameplay, were there occasions that other players' strategies surprized you? If the game is cooperative, how your collective strategies were similar or different from your initial ideas?

8. How does the game's story, gameplay, and presentation (e.g., words, items, visuals) show common ways of being in the world?

Playing the Selected Game

How you experienced the gameplay

1. What are the original game's noticeable/unique rules?

2. What was the winning' strategies of your group?

3. What parts of gameplay is based on luck? What parts of gameplay is based on strategies?

4. What connections can you find between the learning topics and the game rules and story?

Noticing and Critiquing

Questions to consider

1. What did you like about the game (game play, rules or story)? What didn't you like about the game?

2. What skills, interests, or previous gameplay helped you in understanding the game and deciding your strategies?

3. How is the game play different from how things work in the real world? OR When playing what evidence can you see that the game designer has a different view (e.g., *of the world)* than you?

4. What visuals, symbols, or metaphors did you notice the game designer use? What are some do these communicate? What are some of the benefits and the challenges of these symbols?

Imagining

Questions to consider

1. What would you change in the game to make it more interesting, relevant, or reflective of your values/ideas about ideal/unique/different ways of being in the world?

2. How the topics we studied are similar or different from the game? What similar/different elements would you consider for your game?

3. How will you use different representations (words, items, visuals) to convey to the player how to proceed the game and to present elements of risks, decision-making, and winning?

4. What locations/spaces have meaning for you and our learning topics? In what ways are they meaningful and how can you reflect that in your game?

5. How could your game explore different possibilities of interacting with the world? (e.g., different ways of doing science or being human)

Questions to consider

Brainstorming

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1. Your new game's theme:

2. Players' goal:

3. What is interesting to you about your game story and goal?
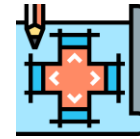
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4. Backstory of the game:

5. Rules that need to be changed:

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6. The components of the original game that can be used:

7. New components needed:

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8. The learning topics relevant to your game theme and rules:

9. The topics that you want to focus:

Drafting

Questions to consider

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1. List the materials from the original game you will use in your draft.

For the rules:

For various game components:

For overall game design (or backstory):

Others:

2.List the materials and tools could be used for game drafts.

For changing rules:

For changing components:

For changing backstory:

Others:

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3. The learning topics and objectives to use in designing your game rules and story:

Topic 1:
a.
b.
c.

Topic 2:
a.
b.
c.

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4. Short-term plans: Date, details, persons leading it

Creating backstory:

Writing rules:

Preparing components:

Others:

Playtesting (I)

Questions to consider

1. Time it took to finish the game
Play 1:   Play 2:   Play 3:

2. Rules – list things you notice (difficult parts of the rules, rules that do not work with other rules/themes, etc.) and suggestions for improvements:

3. Game play strategies
Times you could predict what would happen in the game:

Surprises during the play (i.e., how it was different from your expectation):

What did you like about your game?

4. The chance vs. decision-making opportunities
The parts of the game that are based on luck (chance):

The options you had for decision-making and using strategies:

Any difficulties with luck or strategies:

Ideas for making luck or strategies more fun and engaging:

5. Balance of the game play
Observe and list the power imbalance (e.g., between different player options, or against the game):

Explain how you won or lost the game:

Ideas for rules/components to make the game more power-balanced:

Playtesting (II)

Questions to consider

6. Learning topics	7. Other things noticed to make improvements:
The learning topics/objectives you used & how it worked: a. b. c. d. The learning topics that were not well used: a. b. c. d. Ideas for other ways to use the learning topics:	

Questions to consider

Drafting the Rulebook

Suggestion: Use the original game's rulebook to structure your own rulebook

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1. What is your game backstory?

In the beginning, briefly explain the backstory of your game and the roles in the game and the final goal of them.

Questions to consider:
- What's the overall goal of the game?
- How could players achieve their goals? (e.g., compete, cooperate, use their special powers, use game resources,…)
- How do players progress and end the story through play?

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2. What are your game components?
Briefly describe your game pieces and indicate the number of each component. (Add pictures of your game pieces)

3. Explain how players should set up the game. Use pictures of a setup table (a game ready to be played)

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4. How to play the game (add pictures when possible)
Things to consider:
- More detailed explanation of how the game works, and rounds of gameplay
- What actions players take each turn

5. How to win the game:

6. The conditions that end the game and could cause players to lose:

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7. Can others use your rulebook to play the game without your help?

You could ask your friends to read the rulebook and try to play your game. You could observe them while they play.

Could your friends understand the rules?

Which parts were confusing to them? How could you revise those parts?

Reflecting on the game redesign process

Questions to consider while reflection on the process

1. What problems did you have while making the game and how did you solve them?

2. How did you choose the theme and goal of your game?

3. How did you use things you learned in Humanities and Science classes in your game?

4. What did you learn from sharing your game with other groups?

5. How did your group work together while making the game?

6. How did you make sure the game was balanced and fair for everyone to play?

7. How did you test your game and what did you change after testing?

8. What did other groups say about your game? Did you change it using their feedback?

9. What would you do differently in terms of your group work if you made the game again? What would you change in your game if you want to improve your game in the future?

Presenting and sharing the game's final version

You could consider these suggestions for presenting your game :

1. What's the game about?

2. How do you play the game?

3. What makes your game special?

4. Can you show others some pictures or videos of how the game is played?

5. Did you have any trouble making the game? How did you solve it?

6. Do players compete or cooperate in your game?

7. Are there any parts of the game you want to change or make better?

8. Are there any questions you want to ask the class about the game?

9. Be excited and tell the class how much fun your game is!