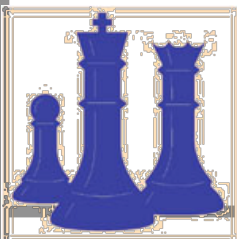
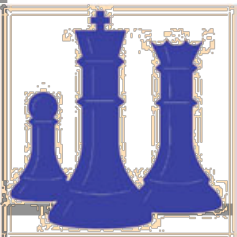
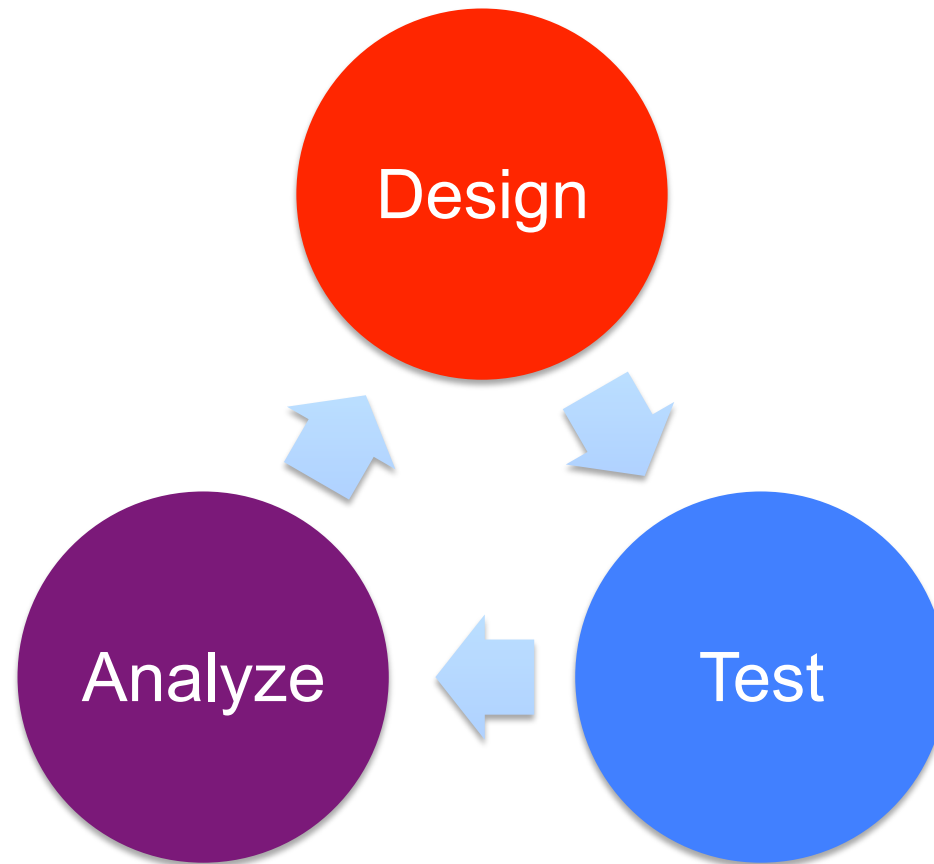


Playtesting

Bernie Dodge, PhD
San Diego State University
EDTEC 670

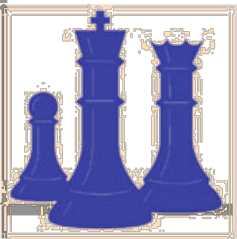


Iterative Design



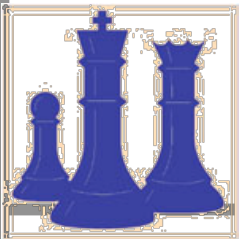
What is Playtesting?

- Formative evaluation of a game at any stage prior to its final form.



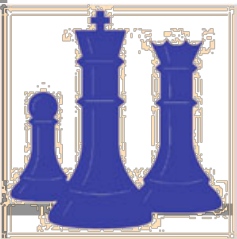
Goal of Playtesting

- To identify problems early on and fix them.



Requirements

- Rough prototype materials
- Enough done to play through at least 5 turns
- Rules printed out
- Playtesters



Reflections Across the Board

A blog featuring commentary on board games and board game design. -by Mike Compton

Monday, June 25, 2007

Game Design: Game Evaluation Criteria

I recently created a tool that can be used to help make feedback more efficient and effective following a playtest session for a game. Here is a link to a PDF of that tool (you will have to rotate it clockwise as I created this document with a landscape format but the PDF is a portrait format).

http://comp205.tripod.com/BoardGames:/Game_Evaluation_Criteria.pdf

When giving a score from 1 to 7 on the points listed, it is not enough to just give a number. The idea is that the playtester will give the game a score and then briefly explain why they felt the game should be given that score.

After every playtester has had their say using this tool, then a more organic discussion can ensue. Having gone through the points on this tool before starting that discussion helps make that discussion more effective as all of the important talking points can be brought up first. Thus, the conversation will have a more focused direction.

Posted by Mike Compton at [1:04 PM](#) 

Welcome

ReflectionsAcrossTheBoard.com

[A Quick Introduction](#)

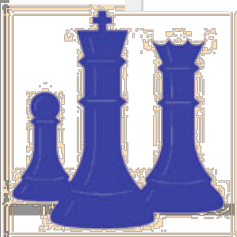
Blog Archive

▼ 2008 (21)

▼ September (3)



[ies](#)



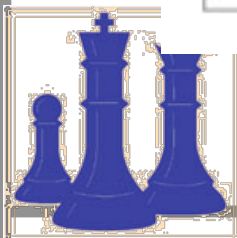
Game Evaluation Criteria (5 Minutes or Less)

Category Biases:

1. Identify the Game's General Category: (Eurogame / Wargame / Amerigame / Card Game / Dexterity / Abstract Strategy / Party Game / Trivia / Other)
2. State Personal Biases Towards That Category: (Whether you tend to like games in that category or not.)

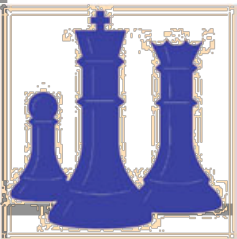
1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 6 → 7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Clarity	Very cumbersome board design / Hard for the players to see what is going on in the game / Rules are very unclear and difficult to understand.	Somewhat cumbersome layout / Rules are somewhat unclear and difficult to understand.	Somewhat streamlined layout / Rules are somewhat clear and easy to understand.	Somewhat streamlined layout / Rules are somewhat clear and easy to understand.	Very streamlined layout / The players can easily see what is going on in all areas of the game / Rules are very clear and easy to understand (no areas of ambiguity).		
Flow	Lots of unnecessary procedures / Lots of fiddliness / Lots of cumbersome exceptions to rules / Needs lots of streamlining.	Several unnecessary procedures / Several areas of fiddliness / Several cumbersome exceptions to rules.	Few unnecessary procedures / Few areas of fiddliness / Few exceptions to rules / Mostly streamlined but with a few exceptions.	Few unnecessary procedures / Few areas of fiddliness / Few exceptions to rules / Mostly streamlined but with a few exceptions.	No unnecessary procedures / Minimal to no fiddliness / Very few if any exceptions to rules / Very streamlined.		
Balance	Very imbalanced / Broken / Run-away leader problem / The impact of luck is much too significant for the game to be fair.	More imbalanced than balanced / A few areas work but many have strategic loopholes / Many of the luck elements are too significant but a few are appropriate.	More balanced than imbalanced / Has some small areas with loopholes that need fixing / Many of the luck elements are appropriate but a few are still too significant.	More balanced than imbalanced / Has some small areas with loopholes that need fixing / Many of the luck elements are appropriate but a few are still too significant.	Very balanced game that is fair for all players / No strategic loopholes / Any and all elements of luck in the game are appropriate in their significance.		
Length	The game is extremely too short or too long for what it offers.	The game is mostly too short or too long for what it offers.	The game's length is somewhat too short or too long for what it offers.	The game's length is somewhat too short or too long for what it offers.	The game's length is appropriate for what it offers.		
Integration	The mechanics and the theme are extremely mismatched / The different mechanical elements of the game do not compliment each other or "fit" together at all.	The mechanics and the theme are somewhat mismatched / Several of the mechanics do not "fit" into the greater whole of the game.	The mechanics and the theme are a fairly good match / A few elements of the game do not "fit" well but most of them do.	The mechanics and the theme are a fairly good match / A few elements of the game do not "fit" well but most of them do.	The mechanics and the theme strongly compliment each other / The various elements strongly integrate to create a unified game.		
Fun	Complete lack of emotional connection or tension throughout the game / Lots of "downtime" / No interesting decisions offered / Very uninteresting theme / The game was not fun to play at all.	Very few moments of emotional connection or tension during the game / Somewhat uninteresting theme / The moments of fun were rare occurrences.	Some moments of emotional connection or tension during the game / Somewhat interesting theme / The game was somewhat fun to play but still had a few areas that were lacking.	Some moments of emotional connection or tension during the game / Somewhat interesting theme / The game was somewhat fun to play but still had a few areas that were lacking.	Consistent emotional connection or tension throughout the game / Very interesting theme that strongly engages the imagination of the players / The game was very fun to play.		



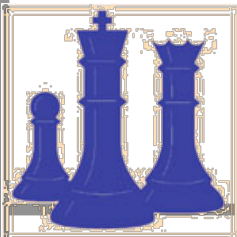
Game Evaluation Criteria

- Clarity
- Length
- Flow
- Integration
- Balance
- Fun



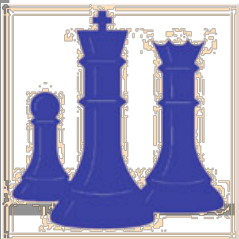
Clarity

- A game is CLEAR when...
 - Rules are unambiguous
 - Players know what's happening



Flow

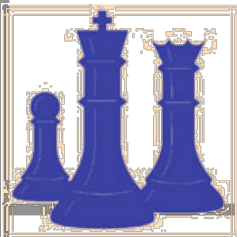
- A game FLOWS when...
 - Every rule carries its weight
 - No unneeded procedures or parts



Balance

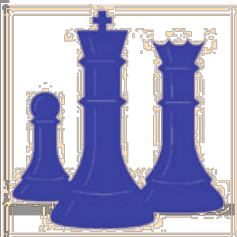
- A game is **BALANCED** when...

- The play is fair to all players
- Chance plays an appropriate part



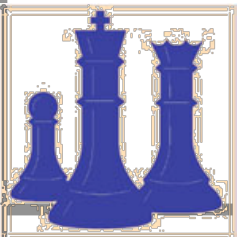
Integration

- A game is INTEGRATED when...
 - The mechanics and theme mesh together and reinforce each other
 - Nothing seems out of place



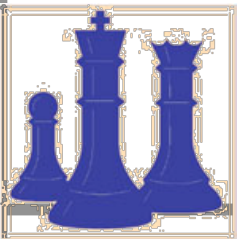
Fun

- A game is FUN when....
 - There is emotional engagement and tension throughout the game
 - There is no downtime or waiting



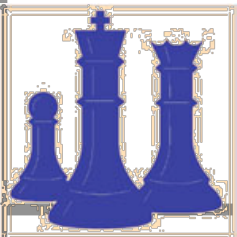
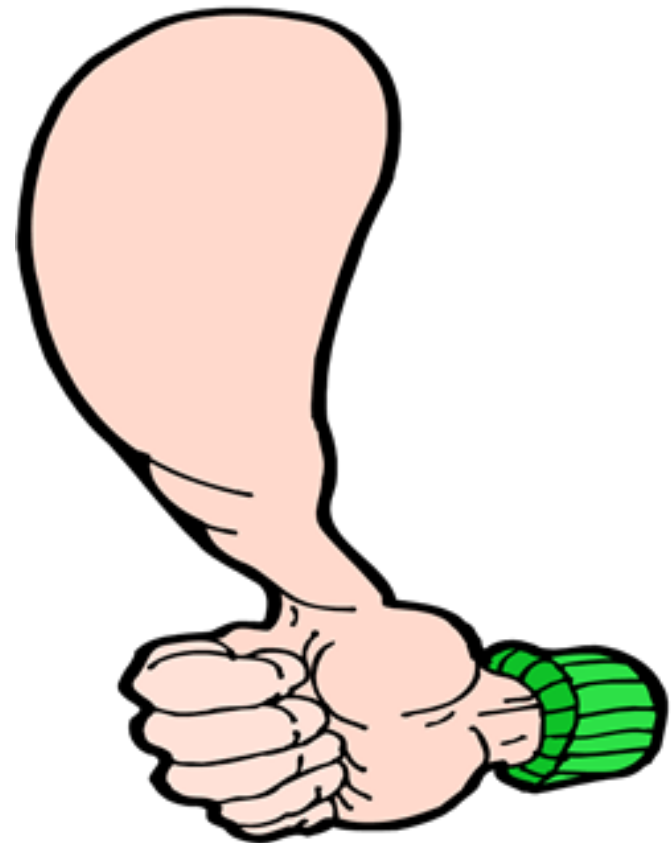
Other Questions

- Strongest point?
- Weakest point?
- One change?



Rules of Thumb

- Be unobtrusive
- Don't talk
- Only intervene when testers are stumped
- Take notes
- Ask questions afterward



Playtesting

Bernie Dodge, PhD
San Diego State University
EDTEC 670

