

## THE PIGEON'S TEN-STEP GAME DESIGN CHECKLIST

- 1. **Objectives:** what is/are the specific goal(s) of your game?
- 2. **Research:** lay out the topics and in-game concepts.
- 3. **Rules & Design:**
  - Win conditions:** how the game ends. Can be competitive (zero-sum), cooperative (non-zero sum), or semi-cooperative (one winner, but all teams must work together. Games in which all teams can win are still challenging). Also includes mechanisms for players to advance or retreat based on performance.  
**Cooperative example:** [The Grizzled](#)  
**Semi-cooperative example:** [Castle Panic](#)
  - Number of players and/or teams:** conceptualize the game size and boundaries.
  - Chance versus skill:** too much chance makes it hard for players to develop strategies; too much skill gives experts an advantage over amateurs. Lean towards skill, but always include chance.
  - Accuracy versus simplicity:** abstract to elaborate setting. Increased detail improves conceptual accuracy but requires significantly more time to develop and play--not that abstract games are necessarily easier to design!  
**Abstract example:** [Settlers of Catan](#)  
**Elaborate example:** [The Campaign for North Africa](#)
  - System versus seminar game:** a system game depends more on rules, calculation and pieces (think board games), while a seminar game focuses more on narrative, discussion, and arbitration (roleplaying or matrix games).
  - Measurement:** scoring the game. Can be qualitative (e.g. area of controlled space) or quantitative (number of points). Also influences your data collection plan.
  - Map and scale:** visual display of the gameplay area, and if the game requires length and volume measurement. Example: each map hex or square equals 1/6 of a mile.
  - Encounter resolution:** determining outcome of players interaction during play.
  - Course-of-play:** documenting every step for running a game from start to finish. This will be the most detailed portion of the game.
  - Inventory:** documenting all required pieces and parts to play the game. Be exhaustive, even down to number of spare rulebooks and pencils.
  - Glossary:** define all key terms.
- 4. **Prototype game:** crafting a draft mockup of the game using simple parts (pennies, index cards, graph paper, etc.). Make sure the game is *functional*--aesthetics and art come later!
- 5. **Playtest:** play the game over multiple iterations to identify major game-breaking mechanics; run as many playtests as time permits.
- 6. **Preparation:** brief objectives and rules to the players; establish expectations; conduct a thorough questions and answers; pay a demonstration round if possible.
- 7. **Execution:** Set up the room and game; referee and adjudicate; iterate multi-day games based on daily feedback; data collection; clean up.
- 8. **Debrief:** Daily review--incorporate feedback into the next day's play (if a multi-day game); Final review--debrief of participants for data collection and feedback.
- 9. **Assess:** grade students based on post-game reflection essay, not in-game performance.
- 10. **Revise:** update the game based on student feedback and your own observations.

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### DESIGN AND HOST SOFTWARE

- Foundry. <https://foundryvt.com/>
- Roll20 (free and paid versions). <https://roll20.net/>
- VASSAL (free). <http://www.vassalengine.org/>
- Tabletop Simulator. [https://store.steampowered.com/app/286160/Tabletop\\_Simulator/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/286160/Tabletop_Simulator/)
- Tabletopia (free and paid versions). <https://tabletopia.com/>

### GAMES FOR LEARNING A WIDE RANGE OF DESIGN MECHANICS—AND HAVING FUN, TOO!

- A Distant Plain
- Agricola
- Bolt Action
- Call to Adventure
- Carcassonne
- Castle Panic
- Cosmic Encounter
- Descent: Journeys in the Dark
- Dixit
- Dominion

- Dragonwood
- Dune
- Dungeons & Dragons
- Everdell
- Fate Core System
- Freedom Squadron
- Hero Realms (also, Star Realms)
- Kodama
- Lotus
- Magic: The Gathering
- Memoir '44
- Mice & Mystics
- One Deck Dungeon
- Pandemic
- Pathfinder (both the card game and the roleplaying game; also, Starfinder)
- Persian Incursion
- Prowlers & Paragons: Ultimate Edition
- Root
- Rory's Story Cubes
- Savage Worlds
- Scythe
- Settlers of Catan
- Splendor
- Stuffed Fables
- Terraforming Mars
- The Fox in the Forest (and the sequel, Fox in the Forest: Duet)
- The Grizzled
- The Red Dragon Inn
- Ticket to Ride
- Tiny Epic series
- Twilight Struggle
- Warhammer (miniatures and roleplaying game; also, Warhammer 40K)
- Wingspan

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