

My game design notebook

A place to plan, sketch, test, and improve your own game.

Scout name and troop

Game title and date started

Merit badge counselor

How to use this notebook

Start with your new game on pages 2–17. Use page 18 for Requirement 8. Preparation worksheets for Requirements 1–4 begin on page 19. Keep extra sketches, screenshots, rule versions, and test notes with these pages.

Date your work and label each version. For a team project, explain your own work. Use the extra notes page or attach more paper whenever you need it. The lines and boxes are space to write, not limits on your answers.

Approval before prototyping

Your counselor must approve your concept before you begin creating the prototype for Requirement 6. Record that approval on page 6. Approval records and checkboxes here are organizational aids, not additional badge requirements.

This notebook follows the supplied Game Design Merit Badge Requirements document. It is a working aid, not an official completion record. Complete the required activities and discussions with your counselor; filling in pages alone does not earn the badge.

My game concept

Design a new game. Any medium or combination of mediums is acceptable.

Working title and date

Vision statement — what game do I want to create?

Medium and player format — how is it played, and by whom?

Objectives — what are players trying to accomplish?

Theme

The experience I want to create

Setting, story, and characters, if suitable for my game

Why would someone want to play my game?

The play experience I want players to have — use this during testing

Rules and resources

Make a preliminary list of rules and define the resources used in your game.

Preliminary rules — number them so I can track later changes

Resources — what players use, gain, manage, or spend

Draw my game elements

Draw and label the game elements. Add more sketch sheets if needed.

Board, screen, pieces, cards, spaces, or other game elements



Labels and notes explaining my drawings

Concept approval before prototyping

STOP: Get your counselor's approval of your concept before creating the prototype.

Concept or version shared with my counselor

Counselor feedback and changes to the concept

Approval received from and date received

Record when approval was received. A signature on this sheet is optional; the supplied requirement calls for approval, not a particular form.

Prototype start date — after approval

My plan for beginning the approved prototype

Build my first prototype

Prototype the game from Requirement 5 and record the work here.

Date, version, and what I built or changed

Materials, equipment, tools, or files used

Player safety through rules and equipment, if applicable

What I demonstrated to my counselor about safety, or why not applicable

Playtest cycle 1 — test and diagnose

Complete the entire test, change, and retest cycle. Three cycles are required in total.

Date, game version, player format, and number of test players

Test with enough other people to meet the player format. Record observations without needing players' full names.

What happened during play?

How did the experience compare with my reasons to play in 5(b)?

Unclear rules, holes, dead ends, or obvious rule exploits to correct

Playtest cycle 1 — change and retest

Corrections and at least one rule, mechanic, or objective I changed

Why I made the change and what effect I expected

Retest date, version, and number of players

What happened when we played again?

Did the change have the expected effect? Explain the result.

Playtest cycle 2 — test and diagnose

Complete the entire test, change, and retest cycle. Three cycles are required in total.

Date, game version, player format, and number of test players

Test with enough other people to meet the player format. Record observations without needing players' full names.

What happened during play?

How did the experience compare with my reasons to play in 5(b)?

Unclear rules, holes, dead ends, or obvious rule exploits to correct

Playtest cycle 2 — change and retest

Corrections and at least one rule, mechanic, or objective I changed

Why I made the change and what effect I expected

Retest date, version, and number of players

What happened when we played again?

Did the change have the expected effect? Explain the result.

Playtest cycle 3 — test and diagnose

Complete the entire test, change, and retest cycle. Three cycles are required in total.

Date, game version, player format, and number of test players

Test with enough other people to meet the player format. Record observations without needing players' full names.

What happened during play?

How did the experience compare with my reasons to play in 5(b)?

Unclear rules, holes, dead ends, or obvious rule exploits to correct

Playtest cycle 3 — change and retest

Corrections and at least one rule, mechanic, or objective I changed

Why I made the change and what effect I expected

Retest date, version, and number of players

What happened when we played again?

Did the change have the expected effect? Explain the result.

Player instructions — setup and goals

Give this sheet and the next page to your blind-test players. Include every detail needed to play; attach extra instructions if needed.

Game name, version, and number of players

Game objectives

Components and materials needed

How to set up the game

Player instructions — play and ending

Keep these instructions with the setup sheet. Players must be able to use them without coaching.

How to play — turn sequence, actions, rules, and important exceptions

How the game ends and how the outcome is determined

Blind-test observations and feedback

Use the prototype from Requirement 6. Choose a group that has neither played it nor witnessed any previous playtest. Give them your instructions and physical components. Watch without providing instruction.

Date, version, player count, and how I confirmed the group qualifies

What players did — where they understood, hesitated, or got stuck

Player feedback — comments, questions, and reactions

Reflect with my counselor

Share your game design notebook with your counselor and discuss your testing.

Player reactions to my project

What I learned about the game design process

What I like most about my game, based on testing

One or more changes I suggest

Counselor discussion date and notes

Meet a professional

8(a): With parent or guardian permission AND counselor approval, visit a game-industry professional. Ask about their job and how it fits into the overall development process.

8(b): Meet a professional in game-development education. Discuss the skills they emphasize in the classroom.

My chosen option, professional's name, role, and meeting date

For 8(a): parent or guardian permission and counselor approval received

Questions I prepared for my chosen option

What I learned about the job and process OR classroom skills

Follow-up notes

Game analysis 1 of 4

Choose four games you have played, each from a different medium. Use the chart on page 23 to compare them.

Game name, medium, and player format

Objectives and rules

Resources and theme, if relevant

Play experience — what I enjoy and dislike

Counselor discussion date and notes

Game analysis 2 of 4

Choose four games you have played, each from a different medium. Use the chart on page 23 to compare them.

Game name, medium, and player format

Objectives and rules

Resources and theme, if relevant

Play experience — what I enjoy and dislike

Counselor discussion date and notes

Game analysis 3 of 4

Choose four games you have played, each from a different medium. Use the chart on page 23 to compare them.

Game name, medium, and player format

Objectives and rules

Resources and theme, if relevant

Play experience — what I enjoy and dislike

Counselor discussion date and notes

Game analysis 4 of 4

Choose four games you have played, each from a different medium. Use the chart on page 23 to compare them.

Game name, medium, and player format

Objectives and rules

Resources and theme, if relevant

Play experience — what I enjoy and dislike

Counselor discussion date and notes

Compare and contrast four games

Use your four game analyses to complete this comparison chart. Write short notes in each box; attach a larger chart if needed.

Compare	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Game 4
Name and medium				
Player format				
Objectives				
Rules				
Resources and theme				
Enjoy / dislike				

Most important similarities and differences

Play value

Describe four types of play value and give an example game built around each. Discuss other reasons people play games with your counselor.

Type 1 — description and example game

Type 2 — description and example game

Type 3 — description and example game

Type 4 — description and example game

Other reasons people play games and counselor discussion notes

Game design terms — first three

Choose FIVE terms from the list. Discuss each with your counselor and explain how it relates to a specific game.

Choose from: story; setting; characters; play sequence; level design; interface design; difficulty; balance; depth; pace; replay value; age appropriateness; single-player vs. multiplayer; cooperative vs. competitive; turn-based vs. real-time; strategy vs. reflex vs. chance; abstract vs. thematic.

Term 1 — meaning, specific game, and how the term applies

Term 2 — meaning, specific game, and how the term applies

Term 3 — meaning, specific game, and how the term applies

Game design terms — final two

Term 4 — meaning, specific game, and how the term applies

Term 5 — meaning, specific game, and how the term applies

Counselor discussion date and notes for all five terms

Intellectual property

What intellectual property means

Types associated with the game design industry

How intellectual property is protected and why protection is needed

Licensed property — definition and an example

Change a familiar game — baseline

Choose a game whose rules or objectives players can change. Play it normally first. Then propose changes and predict their effects before testing them.

Game chosen and normal play date

Standard rules and objectives

What happened during the normal playthrough?

Use the next three pages for three separate trials, each with one rule or objective change. Record predictions before playing and compare them with the results afterward.

Initial ideas for changes

Rule-change trial 1 of 3

Play with one rule or objective change in this trial. Use two other changes for the other trials.

Rule or objective change and predicted effect on gameplay

Date played and what happened

How the change affected players' actions

How the change affected players' emotional experiences

Prediction accuracy and counselor discussion notes

Rule-change trial 2 of 3

Play with one rule or objective change in this trial. Use two other changes for the other trials.

Rule or objective change and predicted effect on gameplay

Date played and what happened

How the change affected players' actions

How the change affected players' emotional experiences

Prediction accuracy and counselor discussion notes

Rule-change trial 3 of 3

Play with one rule or objective change in this trial. Use two other changes for the other trials.

Rule or objective change and predicted effect on gameplay

Date played and what happened

How the change affected players' actions

How the change affected players' emotional experiences

Prediction accuracy and counselor discussion notes

Extra notes and sketches

Date, requirement, and game version

Notes, observations, or additional answers

Sketch or attach supporting work