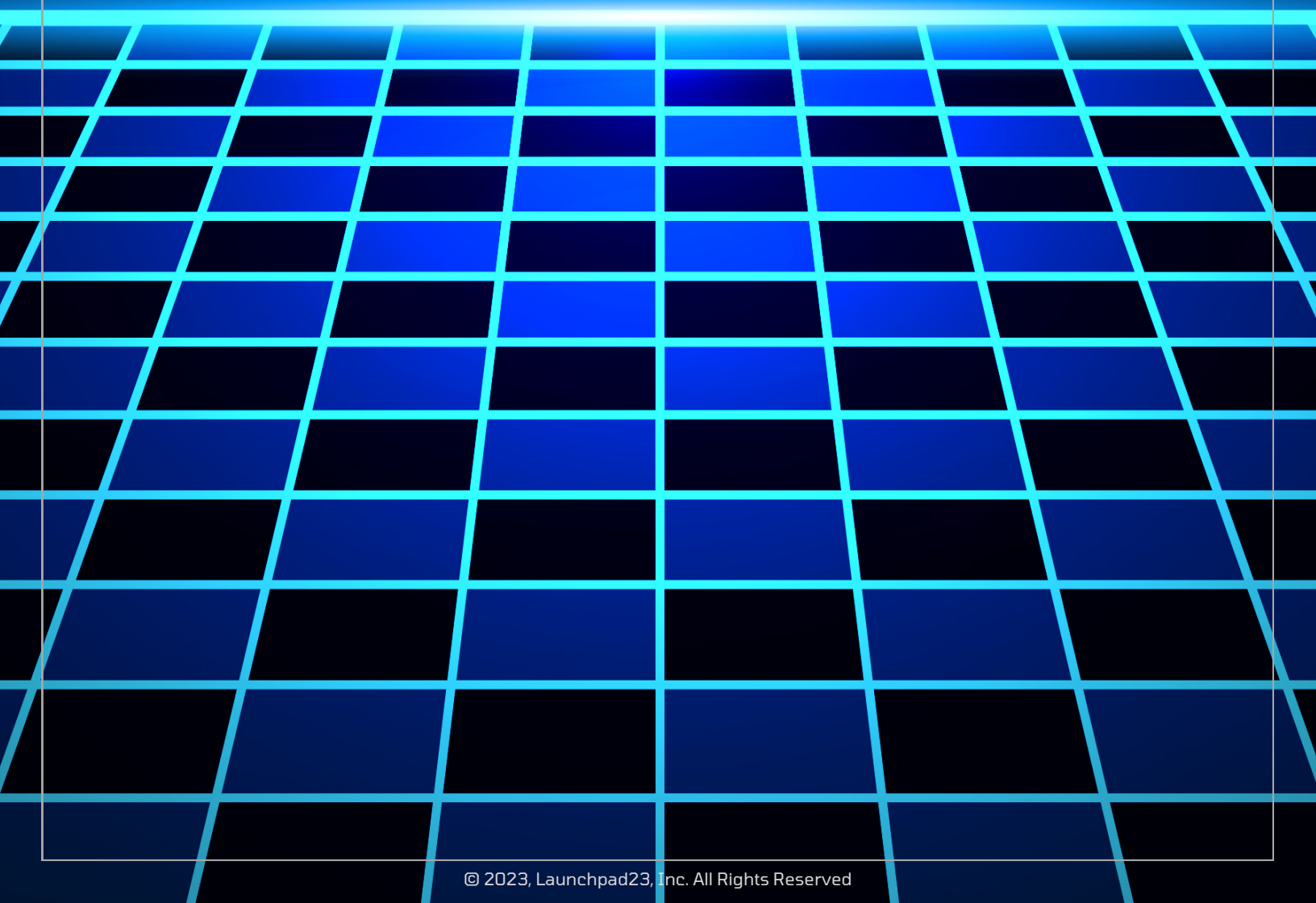


# THE GAME DESIGN CHALLENGE



# WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE?

From time immemorial, humans have played games. Yet, you always have a choice.

Will you spend your life on the well-trodden path as a player of games, or will you follow the path less-traveled, joining an elite tradition dating back to before history was recorded to become a *creator* of games?

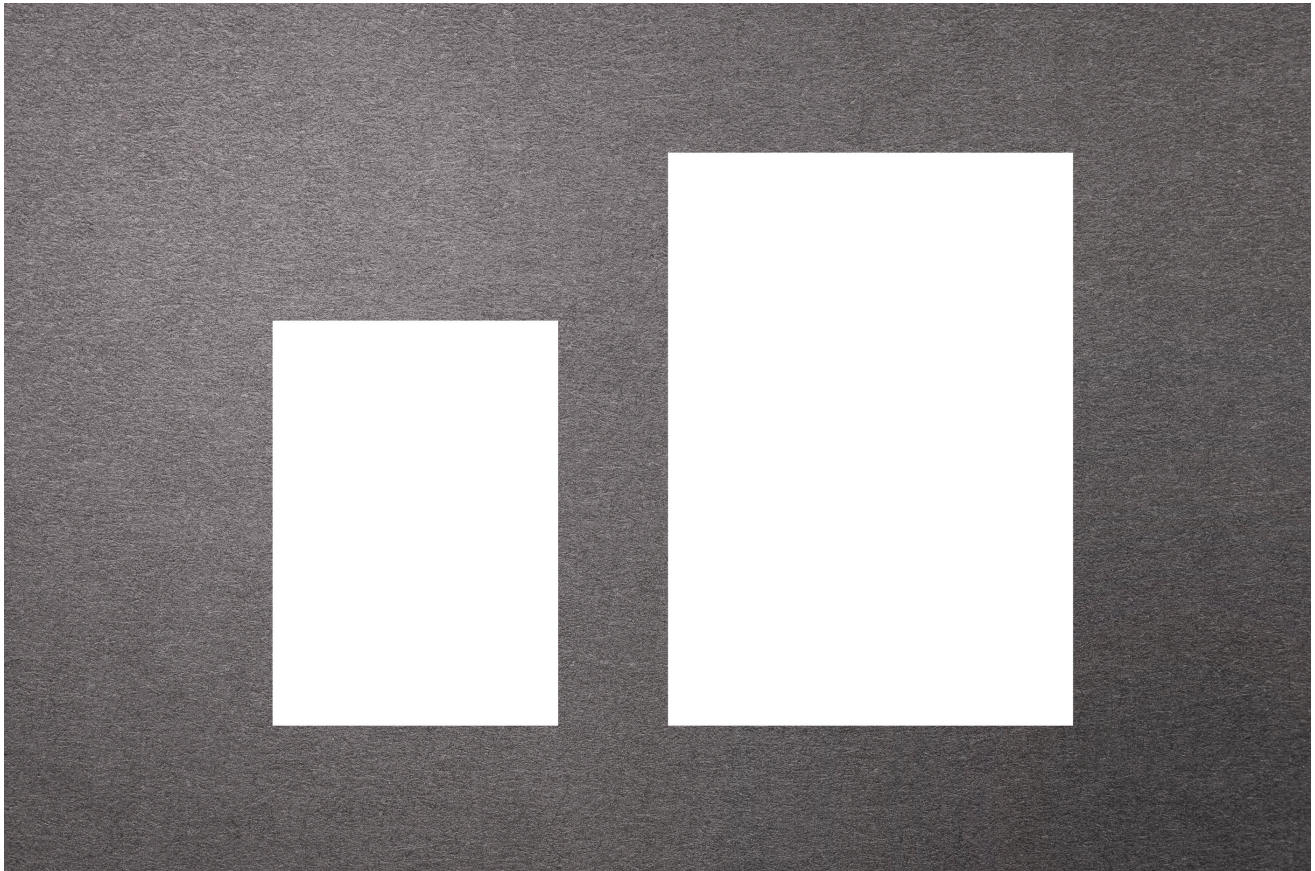
The process won't be easy, but nothing worthwhile ever is.

**Make your choice.**



Ancient Egyptian gaming board  
from 1390 to 1353 BC.  
SOURCE: Wikipedia ([LINK](#))

# AN ODE TO 11X17 PAPER



If you have it, **grab 11x17 paper**, rather than regular-sized sheets. Your ideas need space!

The great thing about 11x17 paper, also known as ledger paper, is that it has the nifty attribute of being a normal-sized page when folded in half, for easy storage of your big ideas. Grab a few sheets, and let your ideas run wild!

# OPTIONAL WARM-UPS

**What's your favorite game, and why?** Is it because you always win? Do you like how the game is played? Do you like the story? Really think about the why, because there's gold in those details!

**What makes a great game?** Think about the games you love to play, *and the games others love to play*. What do they have in common? What sets great games apart?

Brainstorm with a friend, and use a sheet of paper to group common features, and see if you can come up with at least three common attributes.

# BRAINSTORM YOUR GAME

## **Put pencil to paper, and capture all of your ideas.**

The questions below will help you think, but don't be limited by them. Answer those that are helpful, and then go beyond them, and challenge your creativity to keep up with you. Write, sketch, or whatever helps.

- **Name.** What do you call the game? Is that the title you love, or a working title ([LINK](#))?
- **Your Story.** What is the story behind the game? Does the game involve a quest, a rescue, taking over the world, or . . . ?
- **Type.** What type of game is it? This is a great time to broaden your knowledge of the various types of games ([LINK](#)). Don't be afraid to create a hybrid, or entirely new type. Also, think about how technology can take your idea to an entirely new level.
- **Format.** How many people can play at one time? Are teams involved? Is it turn-based, or does everyone play simultaneously?
- **The Role of Luck.** Is your game a purely strategy game, or is luck involved (accomplished through dice or card draws, for example)?
- **Tools of Play.** What physical tools will your game require? Cards, pieces, dice . . . or none of the above, because you want your game to be able to be played literally anywhere?
- **Victory Condition.** Is your game competitive or collaborative? How does someone win your game? Can multiple people win (a tie)?

# DESIGN YOUR TO-DO LIST

Now, let's make your to-do list. **What do you need to do to bring your game to life?** Think about:

- **Concept.** Your concept is the foundation of your game, so don't rush through the details. What aspects do you still need to flesh out?
- **Game Play.** If your concept is your foundation, the gameplay is the skyscraper you build up from that foundation. Again, don't rush it. Think through the possibilities, and look for edge cases ([LINK](#))!
- **Art / Design.** The visual element of games matters, so think through your requirements for things like a game board, cards, or die. If you aren't artistic, add to your to do list finding someone that can help!
- **Materials.** What materials do you need to bring your game to life? Do you have a means to acquire them? If not, what can you change?
- **Testing / Balancing.** This is a must! You need to play your game with as many people as you can to make sure all aspects work. If any strategy or approach wins too much, you need to fix that!
- **Marketing / Distribution.** How are you going to get your game to players? What packaging do you need? What will it look like?

Remember, to-do lists help *if you use them*. **Where can you put your to-do list to serve as a reminder?**



# A NOTE ABOUT TO-DO LISTS

**There is no right or wrong way to make a to-do list,** so long as your approach works for you. To-do lists should have a space for notes, and can be:

- Organized by when you plan to do each item, such as which day of the week;
- Organized by when you want to finish each item;
- Organized by difficulty (easy, medium, hard);
- Organized by who is responsible for each task (for group projects);
- Organized by the status of the task (such as overdue, on hold, underway); and
- Organized by the aspect of the project (for projects with several parts, such as design, game mechanics, and testing for this example).

**If an approach does not work for you, or for this particular project, grab a blank sheet of paper, and create a to-do list that does!**

# INTRODUCING TO-DO SYSTEMS

To-do lists are fine, but if you want to increase your chances of success, commit to a **to-do system**. A to-do system has two, interconnected parts:

- **WHAT** you need to do (a traditional to do list), and
- **HOW** you plan to get those items done *with specifics*, including:
  - **Who** you need help from, or can help you stay motivated;
  - **What** exactly you need to do, particularly if there are sub-tasks;
  - **When** exactly you plan to do each item, with a day and time;
  - **Where** you plan to work, and what that environment might require for you to be successful like earphones, or a binder with your materials, if you need to do work away from home;
  - **Why** this task is important, as it really helps to remind ourselves of a task's importance when we're trying to avoid hard things, or aspects of a project we don't really want to do; and
  - **How** we envision accomplishing the task, so we don't forget the details we've already thought up!

Is a to-do system more work upfront? Absolutely, but think of it as an investment whose returns will become obvious when you get the job done!



# KEEP YOUR MOMENTUM

Let's get specific about how, when, and where you are going to work on your game, and build a to-do system for your game! Be realistic, be determined, and **be ready to share your progress next week.** Think about:

- How long do you expect it to take to finish? What specifically will you get done by next week?
- When exactly do you plan to work on your game (day and time)? How are you going to remind yourself?
- Who do you trust to help keep you motivated and focused? What do you want them to do to help?
- What normally distracts you from your goals? What are you going to do to manage those distractions? What is Plan B for managing those distractions?
- What do you expect to be the hardest part? What part do you least want to do? How are you going to make sure the hard and not-as-fun parts get done?

# ONE THING CHALLENGE

Bringing your game from concept to existence is going to take work. To help you stay motivated, **bring one aspect of your game to life today**, whether a game piece, a card that will be used, or whatever can sit on your desk or nightstand to motivate, inspire, and remind you to keep moving forward!

Actually, let's focus on that last point! Grab a pair of scissors, cut out the below, and tape it somewhere that will remind you that you have friends cheering you on!

**Keep Moving  
Forward!** 

We believe in you!



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