

Scrabbleship: Working With Game Mechanics

Assignment #3 – CMS.301: Spring 2016

Summary: This is an exercise in identifying and working with game mechanics to create a “mashup” of two existing board games.

Learning Goals: Understand how to use game mechanics in the design process, how they interact, and how they relate to experience outcomes.

Key Dates

- Session 5: Exercise presented in class, teams formed, in-class time for learning the games and beginning the analysis.
- Session 6: Completed playable game prototype due. The prototypes will be peer evaluated through play and critique. Submit a PDF on the course website with the name and rules of the scrabbleship and a list of the game mechanics indicating from which parent game the mechanics come from. (One document per group.)

Assignment Description

This group assignment (3-4 students) has three phases: an in-class play and analysis session, the creation of a playable board game prototype, and an in-class evaluation through play and criticism.

First, the students learn and play a board game and identify the mechanics that make the game experience work. New groups are formed so that the group collectively has knowledge of two of the games. A new game is then created using a mix of the mechanics and components from both games.

The idea is that anybody who owns the two origin games should be able to play the new game, so no additional parts or pieces can be added. (Exceptions can be made for things that can be expected to be available in any home such as pen, paper, dice, and coins.) Since two groups share the two origin games, the groups have to divide all the available pieces between them. Both games must be playable concurrently!

The new game must be playable by 3-4 players and should take as long to play as the parent games. The new game should maintain mechanics traceable to both origin games (aim for an even mix), but also feel like a new and unique experience. The new game will also have mechanics that don't come from either parent game. The game has to be tested on other people than the designers during the development process. It will most likely take a few iterations of the design before the game is reasonably well balanced, elegant, and fun.

After Session 6, the students and instructors will play the new games and evaluate them with a focus on the mechanics. Since one of the designers will stay with each game, no printed rules are necessary.

A good Scrabbleship is characterized by:

- Meets intended experience goals.
- Traceable and balanced influences from both parent games.
- Clear individual identity.
- A name that well represents the new design.
- Elegant design solutions.

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