

Workshop by John Passfield

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What You Won't Learn From This Master Class

You won't be given a list of rules and game design theories in this class. There are plenty of books that do that well. Here are a few of my favorites, which you can order from Amazon.com.

- **Game Design: Theory and Practice**, Richard Rouse III
- **Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams on Game Design**, Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams
- **Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals**, Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman

One thing I will tell you is that you need to know your games. Play them. Play different types. If you love RTS games play every one you can. Think about what they do well and what they don't do well. Try and articulate that. Can you clearly say what it is that game is about and what you spend 90% of the time doing in the game. Is that 90% of the time fun?

Okay, now play other games. Play platformers, shooters, sim games. The more you play, the more cool ideas that you can apply to your own game design, even if you're designing a sports game and the idea came from a puzzle game.

And of course, look outside the industry for inspiration. Movies, books (both fiction and non-fiction), comics, art and real life. The strangest ideas can come from anywhere.

What You Will Learn From This Master Class

That the "Magic of Creativity" is something you can channel.

Some people believe that creativity is a magical process that comes from some unknown place. Well, for some people that may be true, but some of the most interesting and compelling ideas are riffs on stuff that already exists.

Take a dash of Flash Gordon, throw in some Dune, add in some Japanese inspired imagery, a little bit of Kurosawa and lift the ending of Dam Busters and you have the basis for Star Wars.

Maybe you could take Skateboarding, add in a combo system and mix it with the Mario 64 "one level play it 5 different ways" design and you have Tony Hawke's Pro Skater.

Thinking Outside The Box

And a lot of people have a great story that would make an excellent novel. Or an idea for a cool movie.

With games, it's usually a one line description, like "Imagine Grand Theft Auto in war torn Middle East", or "It's like Tony Hawke's Pro Skater but with Pogo Sticks" or "It's a WWII shooter but with vampires."

Okay, it doesn't sound very imaginative, and words are cheap, but if you try implementing those ideas, you might just find something that works.

What we're going to do today is take a well known paper game, apply some lateral thinking and hopefully come up with an interesting game idea that stands on its own.

The thought processes demonstrated here will help you come up with some new takes on old games and maybe even introduce some innovative elements into some stale genres.

Some Tips On How To Be Creative

There's a theory that a new idea is simply the combination of two existing ideas, either by accident or on purpose.

So, if you're stuck for an idea, try exposing yourself to some random stimulus.

This can be in the form of pictures, words, random web sites or mistyped or misheard words. Any of these can trigger a new take on what you're working on.

If you're designing a futuristic war game and need some ideas on military equipment, flip open a book on Africa and be inspired by the architecture, traditional art and animals. What if you used a hippo as the basis for a tank, or an eagle as the basis of a new missile? Maybe the enemy armor could have an African mask motif? Do a random google search on war themes and see what comes up. When trying to think of new ideas, we tend to revisit the same grounds. Forcing ourselves to look at something new by using random techniques can be very useful.

For some more creative thinking techniques, check out this web site:
<http://www.brainstorming.co.uk/tutorials/creativethinkingcontents.html>

Exercise

Take an existing classic game, mix with a new genre, and add some new rules.

Battleship

Players: 2

Game Style: Game of luck

Equipment: Pencil and paper

Genre: World War II

Scenario: Two enemy fleets are facing off in the worst storm of the war. With damaged radar and thick fog, they have to take pot shots in order to destroy the enemy fleet.

Rules

1. Draw two 10 x 10 grid, numbering squares across the top from A to J, squares down on the left from 1 to 10. Each player uses one grid for their 'home fleet' the other is for their 'enemy fleet' (which stays blank for the moment).
2. Each player has a fleet consisting of:
 - One battleship (four squares)
 - Two cruisers (three squares each)
 - Three destroyers (two squares each)
 - Four submarines (one square each)
3. Each player now places the individual ships of their home fleet on their home grid, shading in the squares or using B for battleship, C for cruiser, D for destroyer and S for submarine. The squares that make up each vessel must touch each other and do so either horizontally or vertically. No two vessels can ever touch each other, even by a corner. Once all ships are placed, a coin is tossed to see who starts.
4. Each player takes it in turns to try and hit the enemy by calling out a reference for the square in which they think the vessel is located. Each player marks his blank enemy grid with a cross for misses, and adds the letter of the vessel for a hit. If an enemy is hit, they must tell you the type of vessel that was hit.
5. The winner is the first player to destroy the enemy fleet by guessing each position and marking them off on their 'enemy' grid.

Form A Team

Join forces with another player. Together you are going to re-invent Battleship.

Pick A Genre

Each team will pick a genre from the list below.

Using the theme, brainstorm some ideas on how to modify the traditional Battleships scenario to suit this genre. Modify the scenario by coming up with a storyline that introduces the conflict.

1. Horror.
2. Medical.
3. Sci-fi.
4. Wild West.
5. Romance.
6. Law and order.

Change The Rules

Okay, we've created a theme and adapted the Battleship scenario to suit it. Now it's time to introduce a fresh new element.

It's up to you to create a new rule.

For example, you may introduce SEA MINES. Each player can place 3 Sea Mines on the grid. If the other player hits a sea mine they take damage to one of their ships. They can elect which ship and must give the coordinate location and ship type to the other player.

Feel free to introduce chance. You may want to use a dice, or flip a coin. Whatever, it doesn't matter. Don't feel hampered by the existing game design, but just remember this one piece of advice:

***Anyone can make the simple complicated.
Creativity is making the complicated simple.***
- Charles Mingus (jazz musician)

Whatever the rule is, play test it to see if it makes the game fun. If it isn't, try and work out why and modify it.

A copy of this talk is available at: www.passfieldgames.com

Me

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										

The Enemy

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										

Game Design Master Class

Game Title

Genre

Scenario

New Rule