

Matt Floyd: Frontier of Freedom

Categoria

Categoria Initial Game Rules

Players play in teams of at least 2. There can be up to 4 teams. The goal of the game is to collect points throughout the land of **Categoria** within a set number of turns (which can be agreed upon at the start of play, but 10 turns is the suggested limit).

You will need:

- 1 Board of Categoria
- 2 (at least) Different-Colored Team Tokens
- 8 (at least) FATE Dice
- 2 (at least) of the following:
 - d4 Dice
 - d6 Dice
 - d8 Dice
 - d12 Dice
- 2 Larger d6 Dice
- 50+ Category Cards
- 12 Bonus Cards
 - 6 Challenge Cards
 - 2 Attack/Defend Cards
 - 2 Gain a Turn Cards
 - 2 You Cards
- 4 Special Cards
 - 1 “Most Challenges Won” Card
 - 1 “Most Cards” Card
 - 1 “Highest Number” Card
 - 1 “x2” Card
- 1 Pad of Paper
- 1 Pencil or Pen

At the start of play, **each team rolls the two larger d6 dice to determine who goes first.** Then, teams, in turn, roll 8 FATE dice to place the Bonus Cards on the board – the number rolled (+’s and –’s added up to absolute value) from the Start, two Pipes, and the top of Twelve Mountain (the O Space). Cards *may* be placed on top of Letter Squares (for this case of the paper prototype, gently shade in the square a light grey with pencil).

When turn begins, teams **roll their 8 FATE dice. Again, the number rolled is +’s and –’s added up to absolute value**, and then the team can move their Token that number of spaces (so teams may end up being able to move up to 8 spaces). You can move in any direction you’d like *except for*:

- When crossing the land bridge between Four Plains and Twelve Mountain, *you must move forward until you reach the other side.*
- When using the Pipes between Six Tower and the Sea of Eight, *this automatically ends your turn.*
- Two teams **may not** share the same space.

Scattered across the board are squares with letters on them.

The goal of the game is to collect points by performing category-based tasks based on the squares, AND ALSO BASED ON the area of which the squares are located. Let's explain.

When you land on any square with a letter on it, you will draw a card that has a category written on it: this can range from: Cartoon Characters, Video Games, Things that are Round, Board Games, Fictional Characters, Heroes, etc. You then roll **the type of dice that corresponds to the area that you are in.**

- Four Plains (4) – Roll a d4
- The Six Tower (6) – Roll a d6
- Sea of Eight (8) – Roll a d8
- Twelve Mountain (12) – Roll a d12

The number that comes up is **the number of categories you must come up with as a team in order to earn that specific number of points.** But this is where it gets tricky:

The letter on the square designates the kind of action you must perform with the categories you come up with, ranging from audio-only, to visuals, to acting out. This is a **Category Event.** Let's explain:

- **D Squares – Drawing** – You must draw items or things that fit within the category given to you. Use the Pad of Paper. At the end of the time limit, your teammate(s) must guess the things you drew to accumulate points.
- **C Squares – Charades** – Act out things, nonverbally but with body languages, items that fit within the category given to you, to your teammate(s). For each correct item, you get points.
- **A Squares – Audio** – You must make sounds related to items with the category given to you. You can sing, you can cry, you can make animal noises, do voices, etc. Similar to Charades, your teammates must guess the item(s) to get points.
- **S Squares – Storytelling** – This is written. Use the Pad of Paper. You can write out items within the category given to you, but you must tell a story with those items. So, if you got Cartoon Characters, write out a story about Porky Pig meeting up with Winnie the Pooh for an adventure. The number of designated items in your story earn you points. You and your teammates can work together on this and speak to each other.

There is also a time limit: each time an event like this happens, **you roll two larger d6 dice and multiply that number by 10 for the number of seconds you have to do the designated actions.** If you reach the required number in the allotted time, you get that number of points. **If you didn't reach the required number, you don't get any of your points.**

So, for example, let's say you landed on an A Square in Twelve Mountain, and then you rolled a 7. Then, you rolled a 9 with the larger d6 Time dice. Your category is Diseases. You now have 90 seconds to get your teammates to guess 7 kinds of diseases using sound-only. If you get all 7, then you get 7 points, as well as the corresponding Category Card. Hooray! If you don't get to 7, you get 0 points.

If a Bonus Card has been placed on a Letter Square, you must successfully perform the category task required in order to acquire it.

There are also specialty squares:

- **X Squares – Choose/Group Squares** – You may choose the type of action to perform with the category given – Drawing, Charades, Audio, or Storytelling. *However*, the other team can enter play on these squares as well. The first to the required number gets all the points.
- **O Squares – Opponent Squares** – You do these within your own teams, **but the *other team* may look at the upcoming Category beforehand and choose what kind of action you must perform.** If you successfully complete this task, you get a bonus: the x2 Card becomes yours (see below)

Now, let's talk about the Bonus Cards. Land on the card squares to acquire them and **place them facedown in front of you.**

- **Challenge Cards** – These allow you to challenge an opposing team to a duel, within the action of your choice. If you win this challenge, you get to STEAL points from your opponent. Of course, if they win the Challenge, they get to steal points from you, so it goes both ways. **The team that wins the most challenges over the course of game gets an extra 5 points.**
- **Gain a Turn Cards** – Exactly as it sounds. Play this card to go twice.
- **Attack/Defend Cards** – Similar to a challenge, except that if you play this card on your opponent, *they* must perform an action of *your choice* (similar to an O Square) under the given category else they lose points. You don't get their points, but they lose them. If you are being attacked, you can use this card on yourself as a Defense and nullify the challenge.
- **You Cards** – By playing this card, you roll your 8 FATE dice and throw another Bonus Card square onto the board, starting from your position (gently shade the square in and designate it as your team's – ideally this would correspond to your team color).

However, *only you may use it*. So, if your opponent lands on it, nothing happens. If you land on it, you get a Bonus Card.

Now, let's talk about the special **x2 Card**. If you successfully complete an **O Square** event, your team gets the x2 Card. If you hold this card, you have the option of rolling **TWO DICE** of the corresponding type (two d6's while on Six Tower, two d8's in the Sea of Eight, etc.) in the designated area when attempting a Category Event. The same rules apply – you must come up with the number of categories using the action given by the landed square, just now more varied. In theory, you could head to Twelve Mountain, use two dice, and roll a 24. It's possible. It's more challenging – but there is the potential for more points.

Of course, if another team successfully completes their own O Square, the x2 Card becomes theirs. It can switch hands very quickly.

When there are three turns left of the game:

- **The team that is losing receives an automatic Challenge Card.**
- **ALL CATEGORY EVENTS REQUIRE TEAMS TO USE TWO DICE. The x2 is placed onto the board to designate this.**

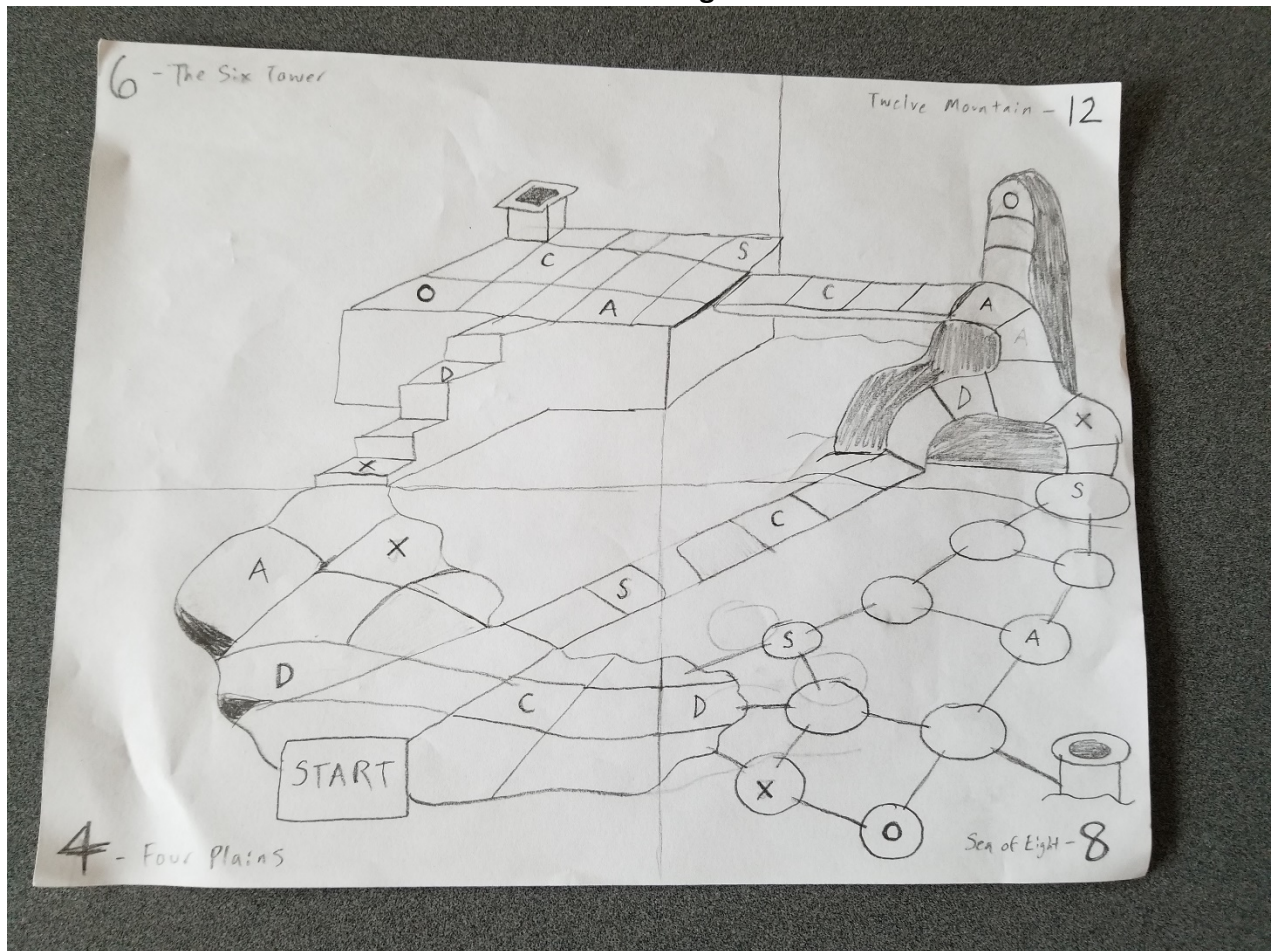
When all turns are complete, points are tallied up, along with the following bonuses:

- **Most Challenges Won** – The team that won the most challenges – **Receives 5 points**
- **Highest Number** – The team that completed the highest-numbered Category Event (maximum is 24) – **Receives 5 points**
- **Most Cards** – The team received the most Category Cards (i.e. your team could, in theory, stock up on cards in Four Plains in an attempt to receive this bonus) – **Receives 10 points**

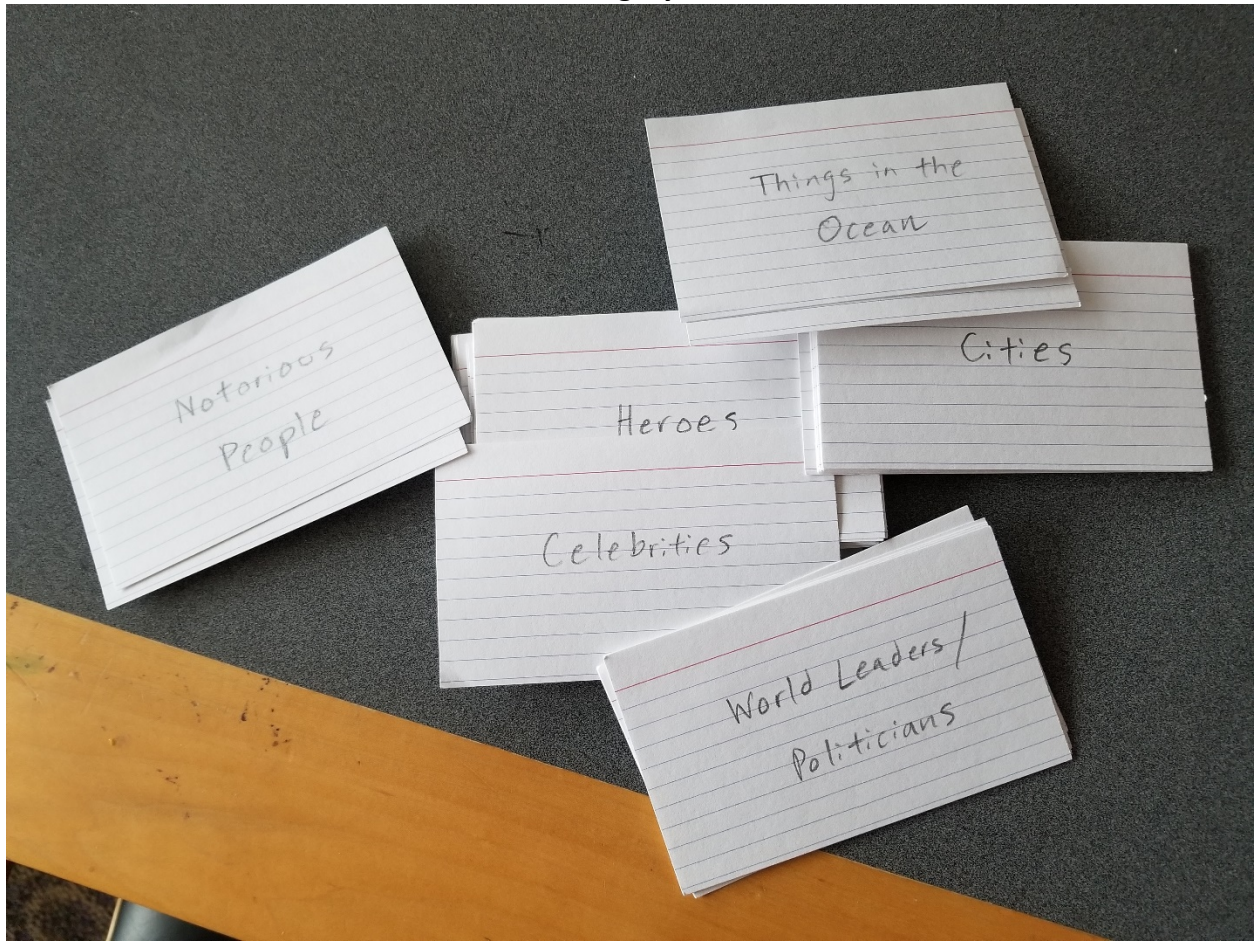
At this point, the team with the highest number of points wins.

Game Components

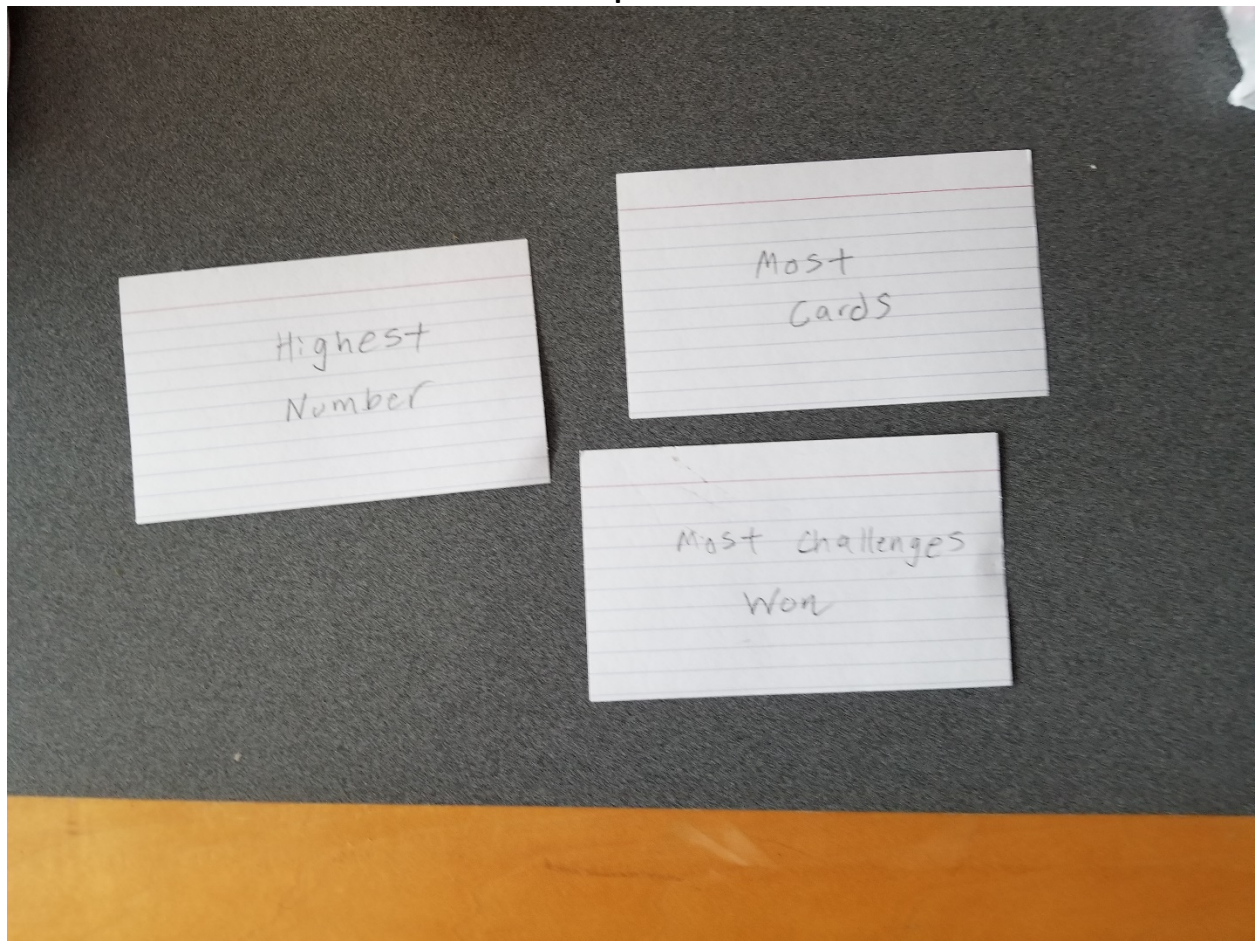
1 Board of Categoria



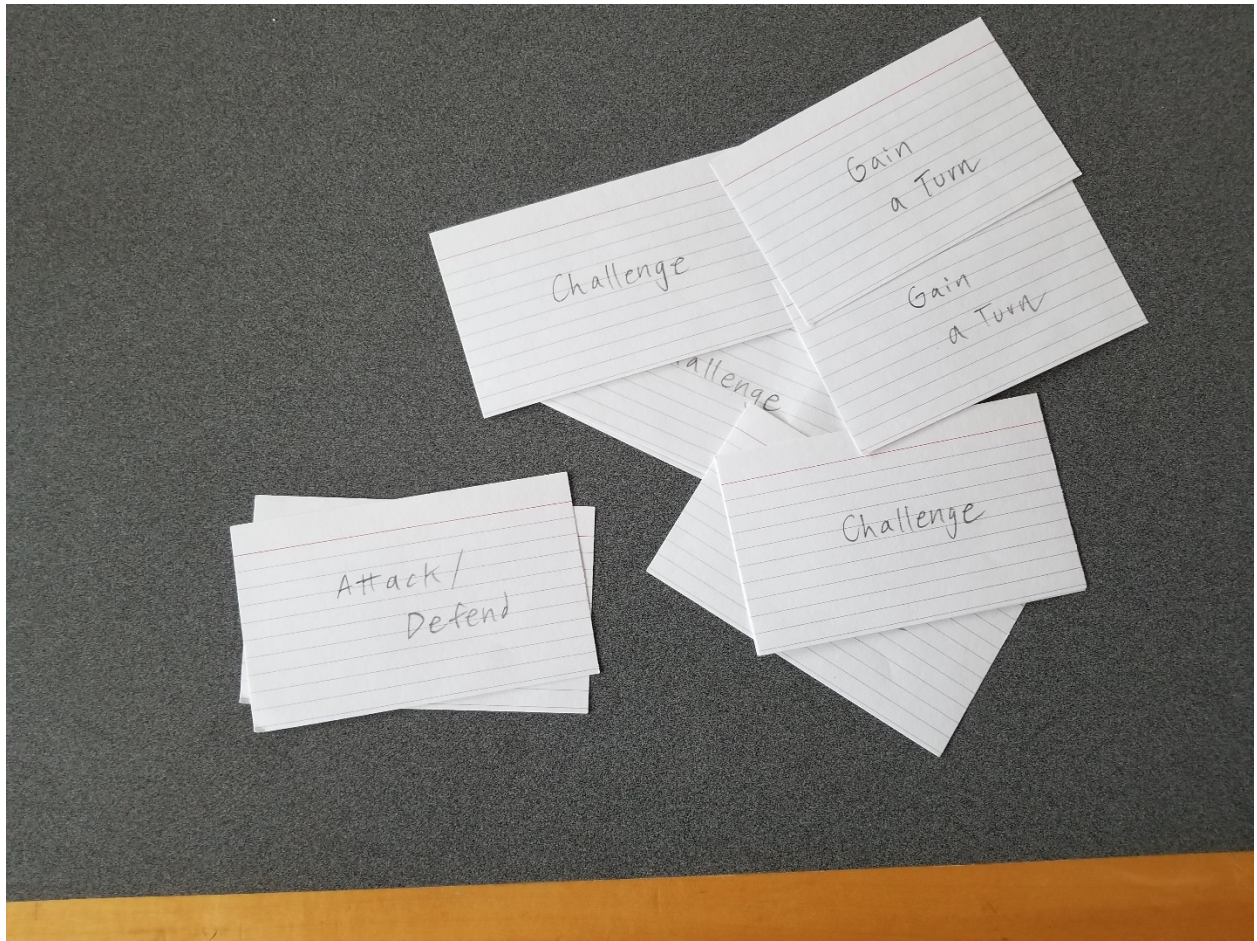
50+ Category Cards



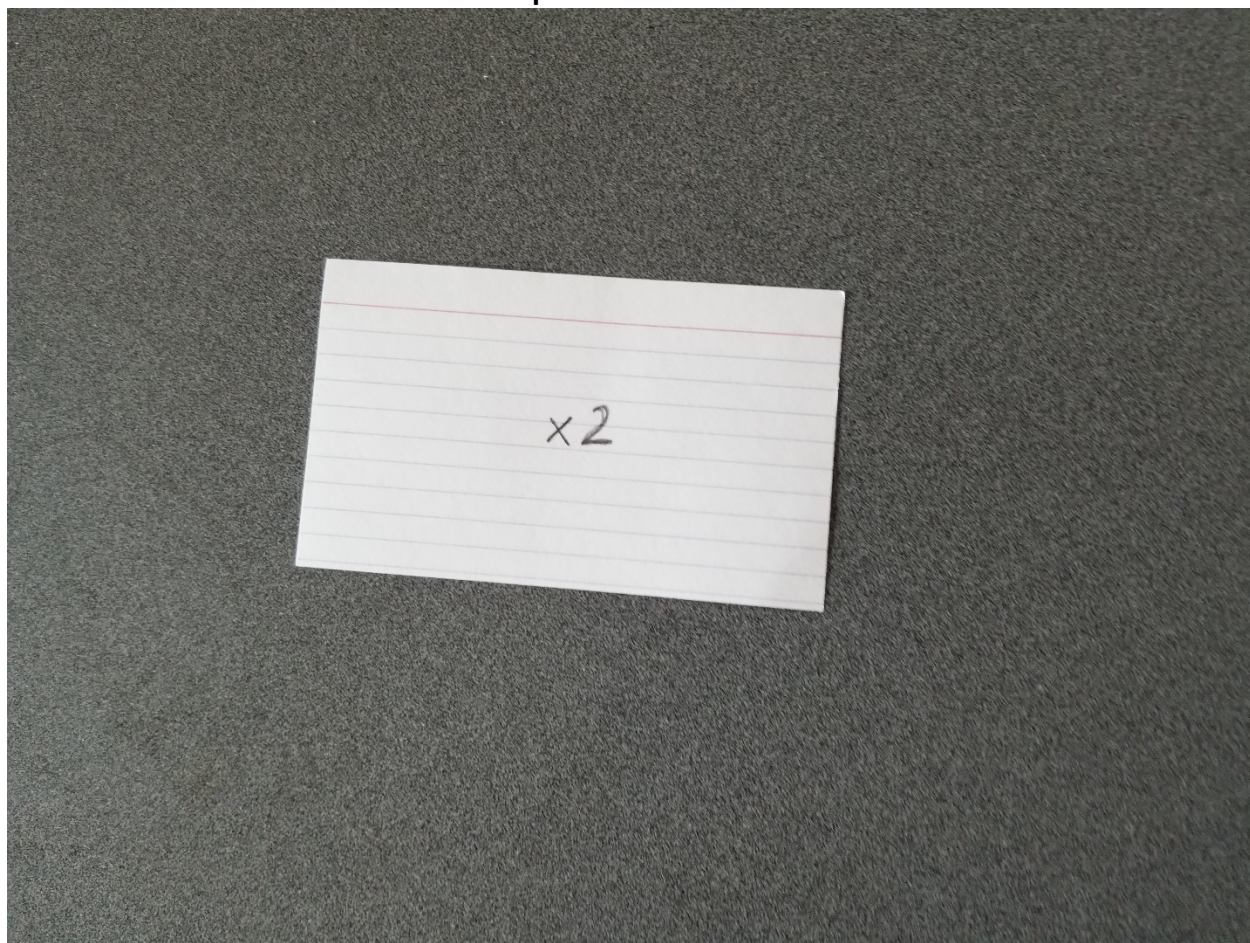
3 of the Special Cards



Bonus Cards



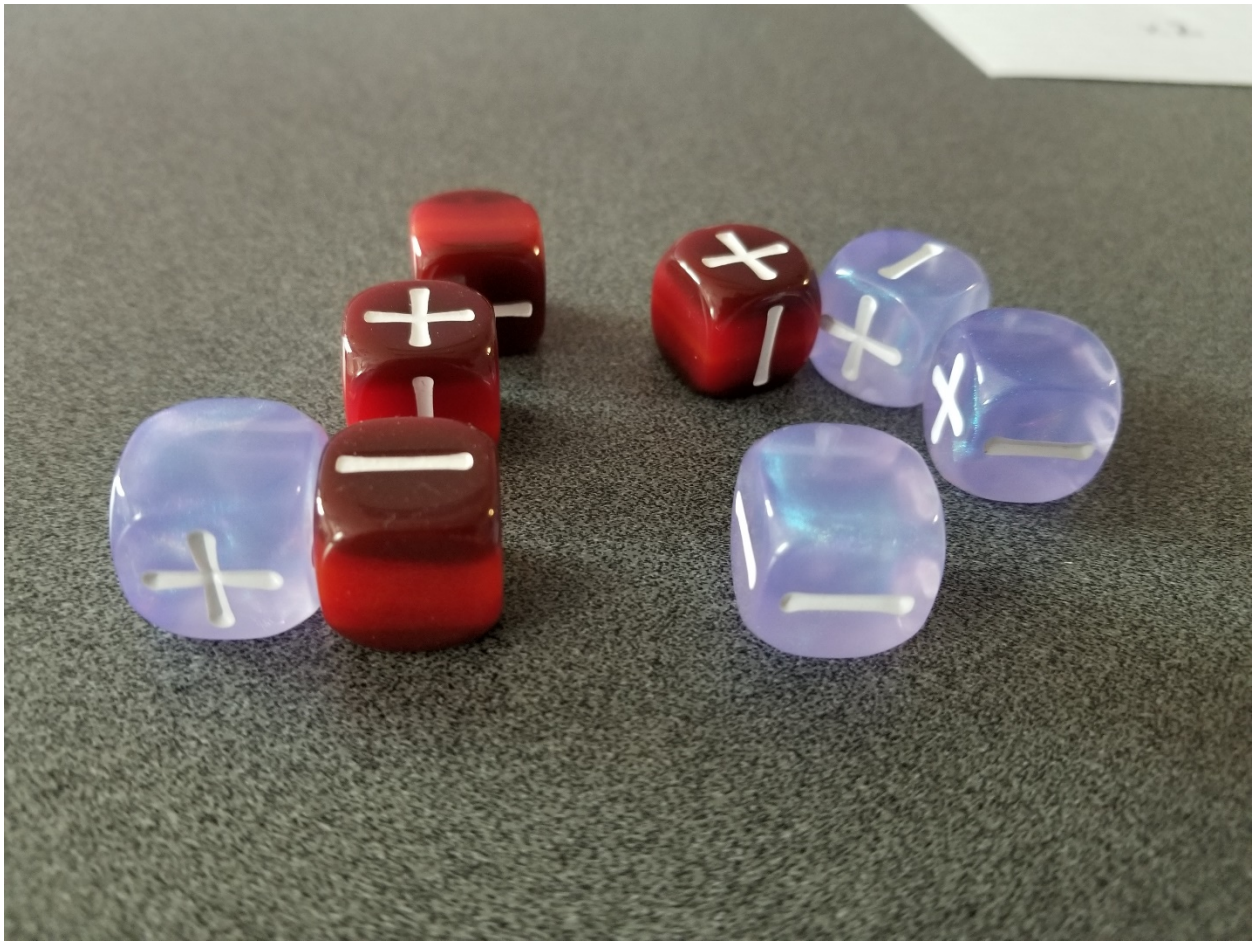
Special "x2" Card



Different-Colored Team Tokens



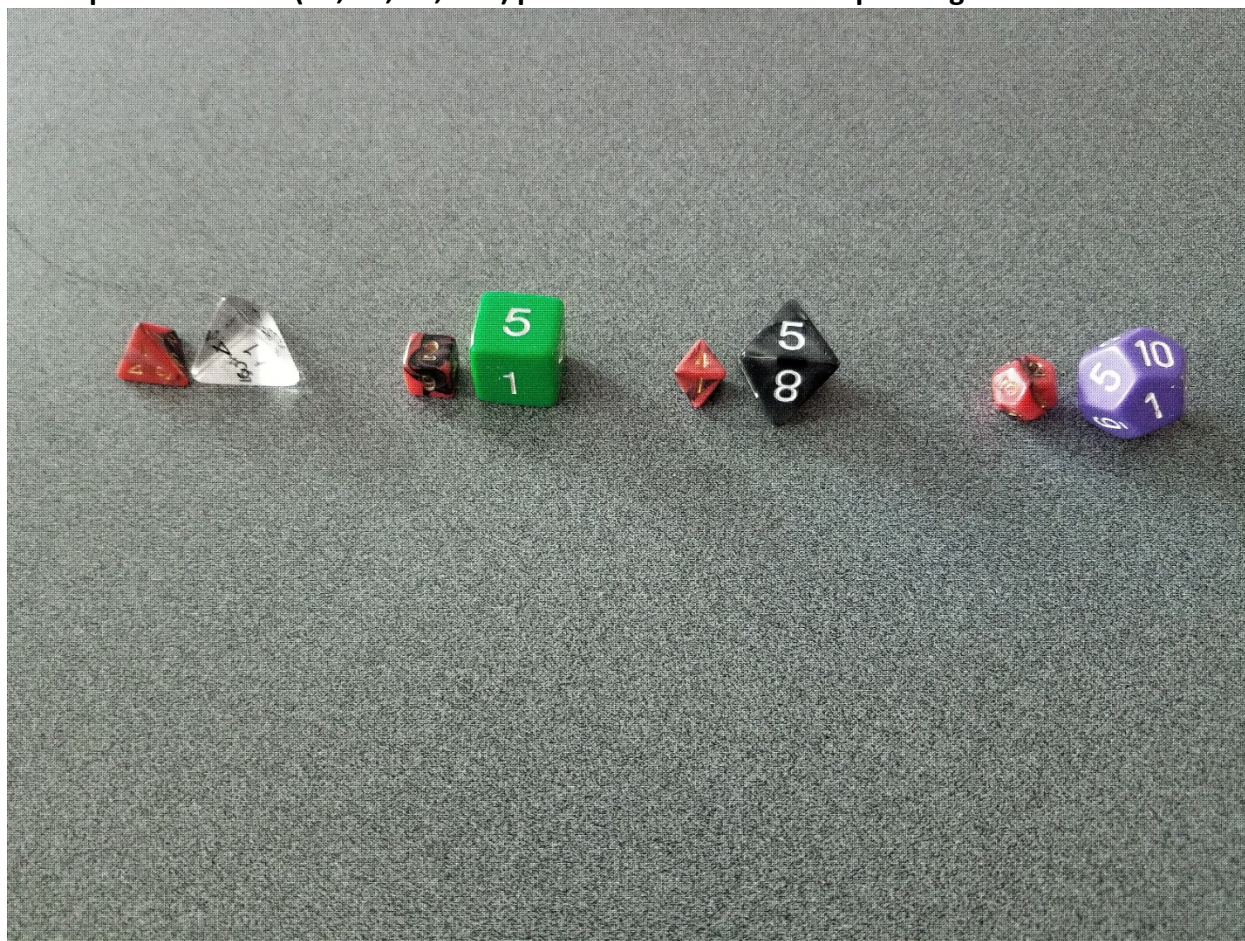
FATE Dice



Extra FATE Dice



Specialized Dice (d4, d6, d8, d12) plus the additional corresponding dice for Doubles



Larger White d6 Dice (as a Timer)



Bag of Coins (to serve as Points)



Pad of Paper (for the Storytelling Events)



1 Pencil



Playtesting Iterations

#1 - Tara Molesworth, Victoria Yom, Kevin Lee, Me

March 28th, 1:30pm

Tara points out the problem of just guessing what's in someone else's head - the category card is high-level, but what about the stuff below. How is there accountability for the words you're meant to be guessing if it's not written. One team member needs to write out his/her chosen words he/she will try to make his/her teammate guess in order for this to be true.

During play, the FATE dice kept adding up to 1's on a frequent basis, so I scratch them

From there, we start just using a single die - better

The rolling in the areas often doesn't seem to matter, unfortunately; one team in Twelve Mountain got a 3. This was later pointed out to me that the game should be less confusing with regards to all the dice.

People seemed to have fun while they were doing the guessing for drawing, and *some* of acting/noise cards depending on if the category was too difficult/broad. There was a lot of confusion, however, with the high-level rules.

Further suggestions:

- Clearer map —> bigger piece of paper
- Symbols rather than letters
- Theming around them
- Curated categories

#2 - Tara Molesworth, Victoria Yom, Me

March 28th, 2:30pm

I asked Tara and Victoria to come back just to test the Storytelling feature, which we didn't land on the first time. Turns out - it kinda sucks. Confused as to what we're guessing - are we using words within the category to guess the category? It was also weird that, up until this point, testers seemed to be inclined to guess *for* the category rather than for words within the category. Then for Storytelling to shift it around and ask *for* the category just confused everyone.

The ratings given to the game were 2.5 and 2.9.

Remember this: Clear inclination of testers to start guessing for the category

Suggestions:

- Lose the "choose your category" spaces

- Possibility of pre-designed categories (house rules?) but this also includes randomness

The biggest “Yes” was for Audio, in that making noises for things is fun and different; it was pointed out that Charades and Drawing are Standard, so what else can we do?

The basic gist was that the concept was good, but that everything working together was too complicated, and I needed to tone down some stuff.

INTERIM CHANGES – BRAINSTORMING NOTES

Make Grid (maybe with empty spaces in the middle) instead of the map

Should the goal be to guess the category, not things in the category? And the number is the number of things you can do (so higher is a better number)

Audio, Drawing, Self-Trivia, 4th category, Charades works for guessing category

Maybe the ranges are 1, 2, 3, 4 categories you have to guess in time

Each space has a purpose - Audio yes, Drawing now with guessing for the category is ok, Self-Trivia (about another team – you have to know more about the other team than they do)

→ So, grid-form, like trivial pursuit

9 spaces on each circle, 2 each of the main 4, 1 self-trivia head-to-head space in center, ask question about your partner (each), the numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) is number of head-to-heads before it goes to sudden death?

Each quadrant is 1, 2, 3, or 4 categories

Spaces leading to center are blank.

Maybe item shops are behind the head-to-head spaces, which made them harder to get. (no Victory Points here tho)

You can also buy items in the center (extra dice, custom dice, doubles (goes up to 8 categories), attack-opponent item, and of course Victory Points).

Something good happens if you get one of each category, like you can automatically go to the center or something.

Should timer be 30 seconds or a minute?

Got it – 4th category will be things in this room – adds a new element of running around that other categories don't have

NEED TO MAKE

Timer

New Board

Some New Cards

Things that are blue

Things that are green

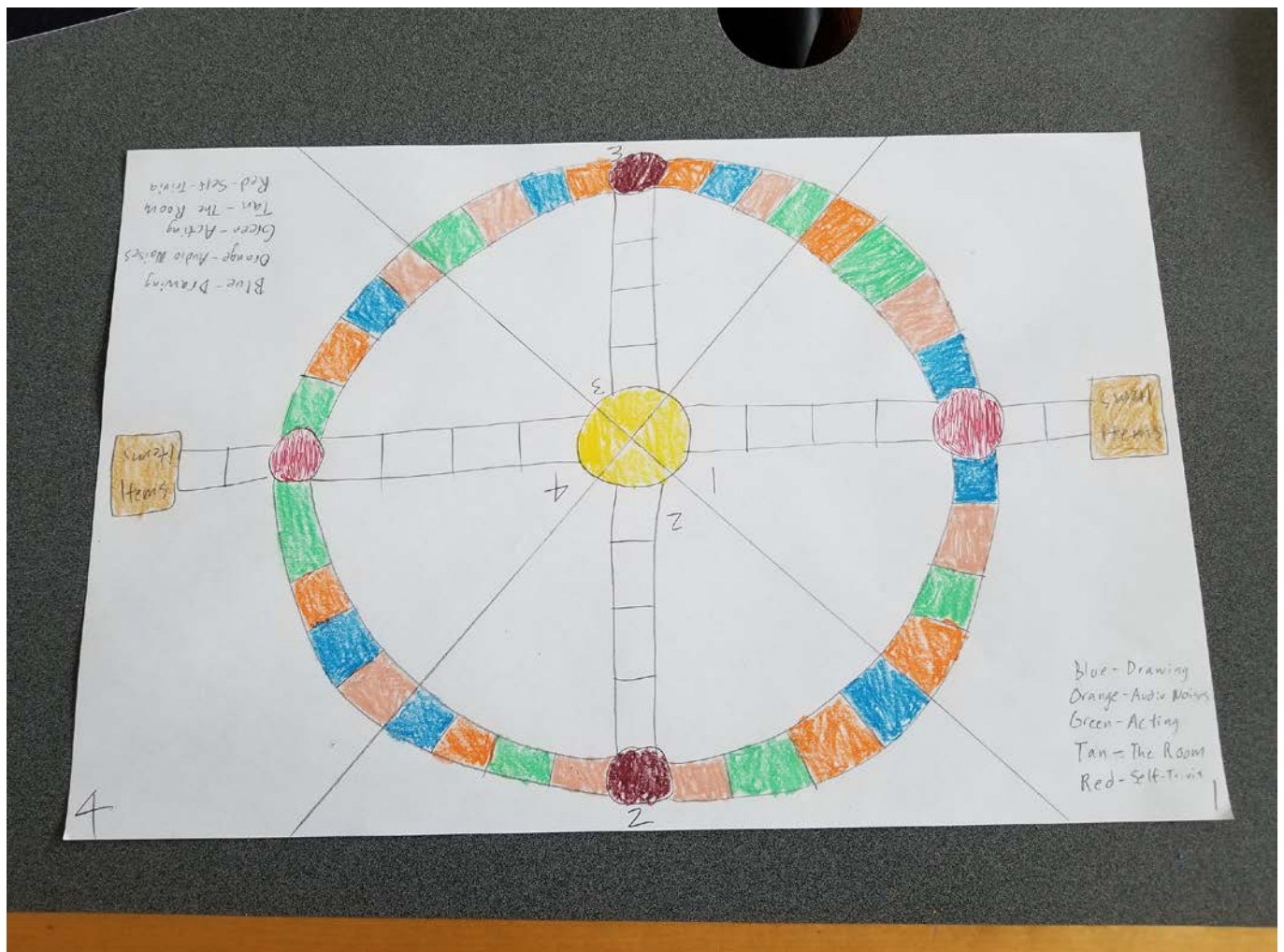
Things that are hollow

Things that are square

etc.

#3 - Bobbie Soques, Kai Kuehner, Dan Saad

April 7th, 4:00pm



Overall, people seemed to decently enjoy the game.

People enjoyed the new Room activity a lot. Bobbie gave it a 3ish rating.

However, mostly people spent the entire time in Quadrant 1.

The timer here was set at 1:00 for each, regardless of Quadrant, so even Quadrant 2 was difficult, so no one left Quadrant 1. This was done with a phone timer.

Also, no one touched the Items or ventured into the Center (we only had like 5 coins each after an hour of play). Items and Victory Points are too expensive right now.

The categories still need to be curated, as getting “Clothing for Sounds” isn’t super great.

The Self-Trivia (asking a question about the other team to get them to guess it) needs a Category Structure, as it’s too easy to just spam it and ask obscure questions, and there needs to be a tiebreaker, so SOMETHING of an incentive for the first team to land on it.

It also needs more SPECIFIC rules for “how much acting is allowed” for Noises & Room

- This playtest was done with “no gestures” for sound and it turns out that it is inherent in us to make gestures as we’re making sounds (i.e. I pretended to burn myself to do a “Things that are hot” card)

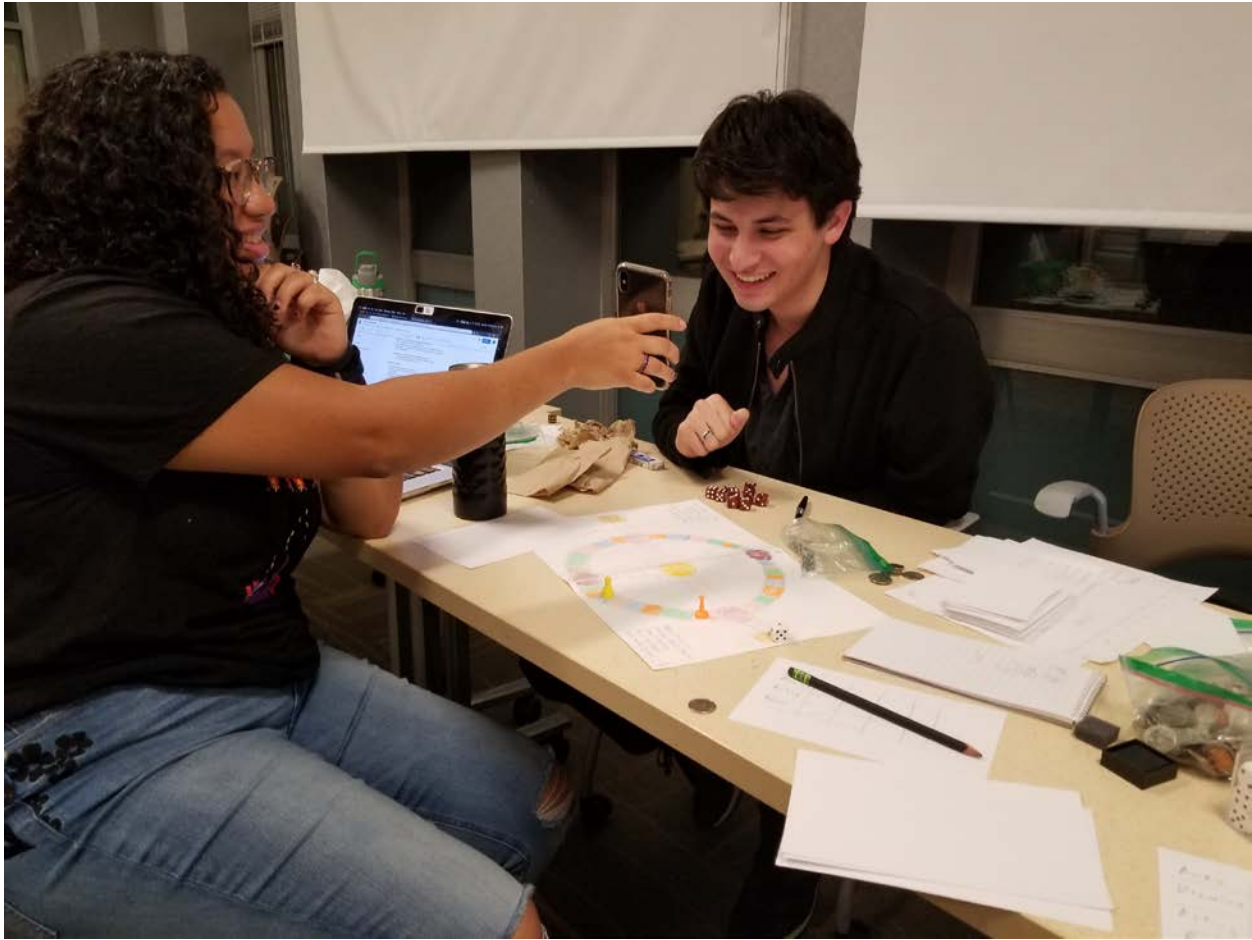
Starting to debate a “Pass” mechanism for the category guessing

Suggestions:

- a mechanic that time increases but not linearly...
- having 2 separate decks for acting/sound effects
- the game is played by people who know each other (This balance is tough), and people didn’t mind just accumulating coins over the course of the game.

#4 - Juliann Fields, Dan Saad

April 7th, 8:00pm



I played universal QB to be able to playtest for three people. We didn't play with Trivia for this playtest, mainly trying to test the non-linear time mechanic and broader game strategies.

Juliann pointed out a worry that people could start spamming the center to get Victory Points in bulk...

- Is there a way to lose coins (this would be an incentive to trade them in before there was a chance to lose them)

The rules for audio are still up for debate

The testing of non-linear time seems to work better - people ventured out more into 3/4 land

- Basically, the way it works is that Quadrant 1 still gets a minute.
- Then Quadrant 2 gets 1 min. 20 sec.
- Quadrant 3 gets 1 min. 40 sec.
- Quadrant 4 gets 2 min.

It was suggested to use Interval Timers, or IntervalTimer as an app to use. In theory, the best solution would be to program a mini-electronic doodad to include in the game (like the *Scattergories* timer) that has buttons for Quadrant 1, 2, 3, and 4 with a set time for each one.

—> Could also use YouTube videos for the timers with set limits

#5 - Me

April 8th, 2:00am

By myself, I was testing the end condition, arriving at the center to trade in victory points for coins so as not to spam it, as this mechanic hadn't been touched in playtesting yet.

The center isn't super interesting, so you want to go there minimally. So there needs to be an incentive to trade in coins, but also a risk in trading them there in bulk.

Debating to allow players to trade up to 12 coins for 3 Victory Points at once. I thought maybe extend this to 20, and then you can choose a challenge of your choice for Quadrant 1, 2, 3, or 4 that your opponent can duel you on. If you win, you can trade for 1+the Quadrant number of Victory Points. Otherwise, you can only do 1.

Losing out on this challenge, and then having to leave the center became a drag tho...

#6 - Naomi Burgess, Conor Triplett, Me

April 8th, 1:00pm

I played universal QB for three people again.

Testing new Audio rules you can say dialogue/words of characters/objects within the category, but no descriptions.

- So for the category Heroes, you can sing the Superman theme or say "with great power comes great responsibility" but you CAN'T say "I swing around and save people. I'm one of many. Blah blah"

Testing new Trivia rules - Now there are Category cards to use to ask opponents questions about themselves (*they ended up still a bit obscure*).

Also now I have timers – I was able to buy some sand timers from Games Unlimited.

Unfortunately time is increasing linearly now (30, 60, 90, 120) because timers in 15-second intervals I couldn't find. I will be testing what the game feels like with the sand timers vs. digital mobile timers to see what feels better.

However, both play testers liked this element of choosing a Quadrant with the timers, saying that it's still a challenge because you don't know if a REALLY hard card with pop up and wreck your progress in a higher Quadrant.

We played with the ability to Pass Once (so once per Category Event, so can pass a card), which seemed to make things a touch easier.

Coin accumulation was better - testers (with about 4-7 coins after 30 minutes of play) felt like that was natural

(+) Choosing Quadrants

(-) The board is bit of a bummer if you roll a 2 or something and you have to go to the same kind of space.

(+) Room is great.

Suggestion for Trivia: Teammate 1 pulls out card & asks Teammate 2 question about themselves. If right, yay!

-If not, the other team gets to guess

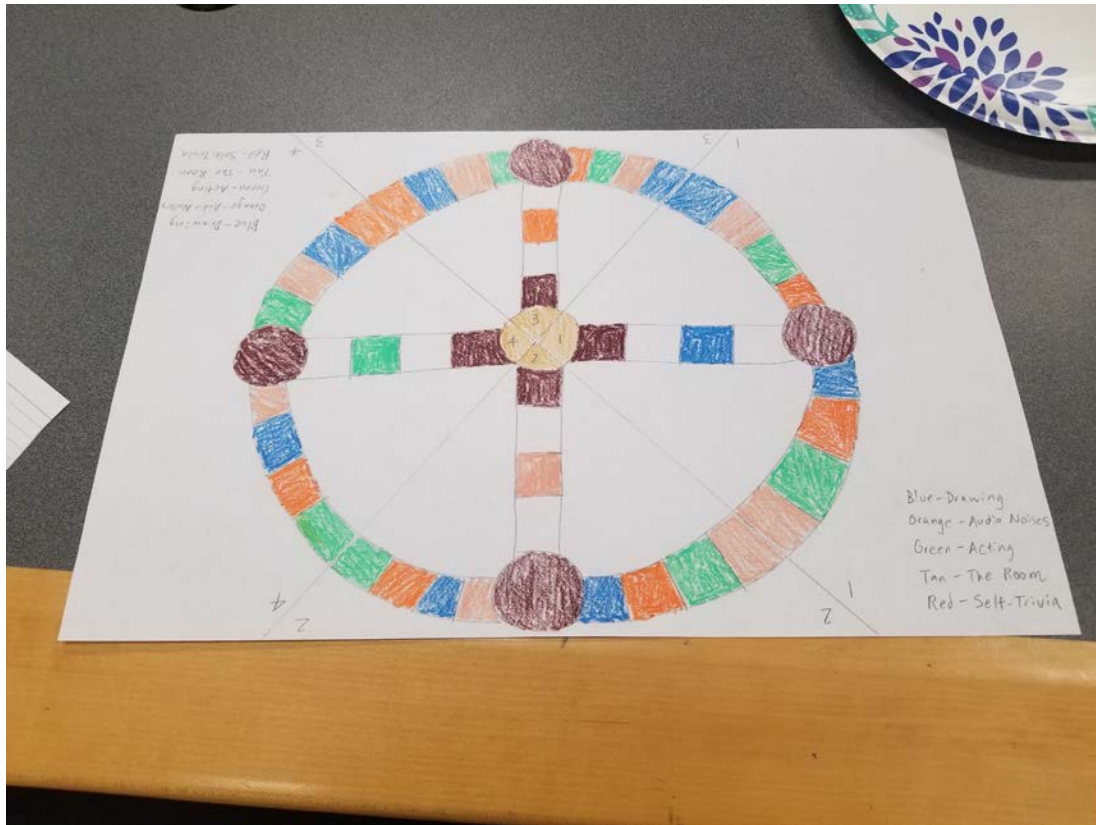
Items are still not being used, and Naomi pointed out that this feels like the "weirdest thing"

- Games like these are usually just accumulating points
- Items are vestigial from earlier map that was more exploratory - items felt "medieval."
- Now they don't really fit the abstract aesthetic.
- "Sense that I wasn't gonna go for any of the items"

Suggestions:

- Maybe keep the stealing mechanic (one of the items is the Attack item to try to steal coins) so that threat of losing coins remains, but maybe lose the others. Maybe playtest without items?
- Maybe if players land on same space, then there is a head-to-head and then attacker can steal.
- Either change the board or do the element where I can stop wherever I want depending on if I roll a high number... —> (for me, this felt like too much choice but I do want to fix the "being stuck" in the board function)

#7 - Ryan Eckert, Aakash Phadtare, Chance Lytle, Charles Parker Ramsay
April 8th, 5:30pm



Note: This playtest was run before the eight squares inside the outer circle were colored in

This was the first time playing without me in the game.

Some of the categories are still hard and clunky, but others seem to be working.

Testing:

Didn't test with pass mechanic this time, just to see how it would play out. It's a touch harder without it, but also a little frustrating to get stuck on one really hard one.

New board without items in which the spaces are different. The symmetry is on the quadrant edges, not across the Trivia space.

New trivia rules of asking teammate question - realized that then you have to write down your answer for accountability (similar to mechanic from Playtest #1 that we realized needed to be done) —> works slightly better and is less jarring because it's still inter-team. However, the categories need to be better looked at

Right now, the danger is that Teammate 1 can ask Teammate 2 an easy question. So what if the other team can answer simultaneously (by writing it down) to rebut along with the first team's answer. So... asking an easy question is thus less of an advantage.

The Room was a big hit again

The rules regarding some of the specifics of the categories were amorphous - like, how close do I have to be?

Still, people looked like they were having fun, laughing upon a successfully 4-quadrant win, and playful exacerbation when a teammate couldn't answer an easy Acting question for Weapons.

No one tried to trade in Victory Points

After the playtest, Chance said "it's like Trivial Pursuit, but better"

- Also said that "the middle is boring & and I don't want to go there"
- Stealing mechanic probably isn't needed since the board is so sparse (unless each team had their own token to create a denser feel)

Overall, people still felt like staying in the same Quadrant (difficulty comes more from the activity than the time element)

It was pointed out that:

- This is a game you want to play mindlessly w/out strategy
- If there is an inconsistency b/w strategy & fun, it can harm the experience (*so it was a good think I took out the items*)
- Imbalance for certain cards in certain categories

Charles said, with regards to the trivia, that, "I like it in concept but it's hard to balance strangers vs. friends." He suggested about maybe answering simultaneously, and maybe have a way to raise difficulty for Trivia.

- In this test, I gave out extra coins depending on the quadrant for the same "1 question of trivia" for Red Squares, and that felt weird

#8 - Kevin, Me

April 8th, 8:30pm

I added some color squares (as in the above picture), including trivia squares around the center, so the center seems less boring.

For this test, we were just going through the difficult events and testing them without the broad play (only 2 people)

We landed on trivia first, and this made the rest of the game a touch confusing because trivia has a different ruleset than the other categories - in trivia, you're using the category to come up with a question, whereas in the others you're doing activities to guess the categories.

The suggestion (outside of big shifts) was to lower the probability of trivia coming up first (in this one there's above a 1/3 chance the trivia ends up being the first one, which is an issue). If the others come up first, you get a feel of guessing for the category, and then can adjust to trivia later. It's harder the other way around.

- Also this difference between trivia and the other categories needs to be clear in the instructions

Further suggestions:

- Kevin was also pointing out that for some of the cards, I must specify that it can be anything synonymous with the desired word, especially for the more obscure ones (this came up with guessing "Things that are Hollow" for the Room, considering that Kevin guessed containers multiple times)
- Kevin understood the desire to just stick in one quadrant and try to complete a set and posed the question of "how can you traverse through quadrants quicker?". He suggested maybe having a land bridge to have an inner circle that you can move through faster.
- For the specifics for the Audio, I should make sure that players know that they can do voices for a "moment in time" within the category (Kevin pretended to be a frat boy at a party to get me to guess Colleges/Universities).
- Also suggested to bring the Pass mechanic back in, but that it should cost the team doing it. Maybe it costs a coin to pass.

We also went through all of the Trivia cards and removed some of the ones that were too general, or too separate from the self (i.e. Favorite Authors, Job Complaints, Favorite Animals) - the kinds of cards that lend themselves to asking basic questions about the category rather than asking questions about yourself.

#9 - Naomi, me

April 8th, 9:30pm

Again, we were testing individual events and testing time variation of using non-linear time like Dan suggested in Playtest #4 (using a phone/app) to make the difficulty of the upper-level Quadrants slightly harder... vs. using the tangible sand timers.

Honestly, the sand timers are better. Even though this makes time linear and makes it slightly easier to succeed in Quadrant 4, the flow is much better to just turn over a timer vs. spend a bunch of seconds searching for the right app. Even if links were in the instructions, this would still get frustrating and not in a good way.

With regards to the trivia:

- Naomi said, "I feel that as long as it's divided into Quadrants, I'm going to assume I'd get more points landing on a trivia space in Quadrant 3 vs. Quadrant 1..."
- Since the things I'm worried about is picking up multiple question category cards and it taking too long and becoming slow and boring, especially for the other team
- Maybe a solution is you can ask multiple questions about yourself within the same category from which you drew

Further suggestions and points:

- Naomi: "For the Victory Point challenge technique at the center, I'm going to always be trying to do the big ones for Victory Points... and the dominant strategy will just be to wait until the end, try to win a Quadrant 4 challenge, and get 5 VP's in bulk."
- Saying that there is still a difficulty ramp for the higher Quadrants, even if time remains linear, because there's a higher chance you'll run into an absurdly difficult Category.
- I could maybe address colors on the board for those who are color-blind
 - The non-vivid red color (the more brownish red) throws things off, and maybe change tan to yellow to make the RGB variation more distinctive
- Agree on the "Pay to Pass" rule

NOTE: Maybe be able to Pass once, but then if you still are not able to succeed, you lose the number of coins on the Quadrant.

I'm still not sure if the Stealing mechanic should be used or not.

- Maybe the duel is you both go simultaneously and the attacker accumulates how much he/she can steal, and the defender accumulates how much to defend, so the person who got landed on is at a disadvantage. It's their money on the line.
- Or should it be dueling... wage both

#10 – Me

April 9th, 2:30am



I now have curated all the categories to be in separate decks. I'm not gonna have time to run a playtest with a land bridge vs. without. So for traversing the board, a compromise is that I removed one of the squares leading to the center (so now there are 3 squares between the center and the outer circle). I also changed it so now there are two color squares leading to the center, so hopefully now it seems more interesting. Also it creates more variety in rolling, with new colors nearer to each other (gives you a choice of three options to choose from in some cases).

I also moved a trivia square out into the outer circle instead of the inner circle so that it's less probable to hit one early (although I want to at least have more trivia squares for balance - the square that it replaced is the color I moved to the center line of squares).

Now, each Quadrants has two squares of each kind of activity, except for one activity that has three squares. I tried to balance this so that the "easier" activities (which seem to be Drawing and The Room) have three squares in Quadrants 3 and 4, whereas the "harder" activities (Noises and Acting) have their three squares in Quadrants 1 and 2.

Testing: *Just going through the new set of category cards. Especially for the Noises and Acting, I wanted to test which ones still felt too broad or challenging. HOWEVER, i deliberately left four or five of those in each separate deck, so the possibility of encountering an absurdly challenging card in the higher Quadrants remains.*

(i.e. I left "TV Shows" and "Cartoon Characters" and "Famous Actors" in the Noises section, and left School Subjects in for Acting. I also added "Bad Words" to the acting deck. I

found myself miming and just pointing to my mouth and giving a thumbs down to try to make it clear.)

Closing Thoughts

Firstly, I realized how hard testing family/multiplayer games is, just getting everyone situated and engaged at the same time is challenging. The whole strangers vs. friends thing comes up because, for a game like this, you're most likely going to be playing it with a family or friend group, but us testers are mostly acquaintances, which again makes it a bit odd.

Also (I keep learning this) that the difficulty of the written question is super paramount to the fun and difficulty of the games, and the *specificity* of these questions is also important. The slightest hint of vagueness as to whether a player is on target or not leads to confusion of whether or not the player is playing right, and then this breaks the immersion. So, curating the questions is invaluable.

Also, the board itself was its own challenge. One might think, especially for a Trivial Pursuit-esque abstract-style game, that you can just throw the spaces onto the board at random, but this isn't true. Giving players the options to choose where the land based on their die rolls is rewarding, so making sure I'm not forcing my players into one particular space - yes. I realized that this was more acceptable in higher rolls, because in higher rolls it feels like you're moving and there's a sense of progress and direction. But with lower rolls, without that choice, you just feel stuck.

Also, it's interesting to not that this game started out much more random and exploratory with more strategy elements and bonus items. However, the mindset of this type of family game is less strategy and more just "let loose." People liking the Room activity so much - it was pointed out to be that this is connected to the feeling of kinetic energy in the room. And this is separate from strategy, which all mental, and pulls you away from that bouncy, jumpy mindset which party, family games are meant to encourage. So yeah, I ended up removing most of the strategy elements, and I think this was for the best.

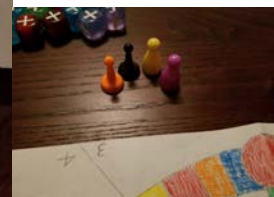
Categoria Final Game Rules

Players play in teams of at least 2. There can be up to 4 teams. The goal of the game is to collect coins along a multicolored *Trivial Pursuit*-esque board. There are different end-states within which to play the game as well.



You will need:

- 1 Categoria Game Board
- 2-4 Different-Colored Team Tokens
- 1 d6 Die
- 50+ Category Cards
 - Blue Drawing Cards
 - Orange Audio/Noise Cards
 - Green Acting Cards
 - Yellow Room Cards
 - Red Self-Trivia Cards
- 1 Victory Point Conversion Card
- Coins/Tokens to serve as Coins
- Tokens to serve as Victory Points
 - Ex: FATE Dice turned to the Plus side for this version
- 4 Timers
 - 1 Black 30-second Timer
 - 1 White 60-second Timer
 - 1 Red 90-second Timer
 - 1 Blue 120-second Timer
- 1 Set Sheet per Team
- 1 Self-Question Sheet per Team
- 1 Pad of Paper
- 1 Pencil or Pen (at least)



At the start of play, **each team rolls the d6 to determine who goes first**. Then teams begin play moving through the board using the die. Move your designated color token around the board (one token per team). You must move in one direction per turn, but you can change directions on your next turn if you choose (similar to *Trivial Pursuit*).

Scattered across the board are multi-colored spaces:

The goal of the game is to collect coins by performing activities based on the color of the squares, AND ALSO BASED ON the Quadrant of which the squares are located. Let's explain.

There are four Quadrants that make up the board: 1, 2, 3, and 4. This number designates **the number of categories you must come up with as a team in order to earn that specific number of coins**. The time limit also varies for each Quadrant (see below). So, in Quadrant 1, you have 30 seconds to get the rest of your team to guess *one category*. Whereas in Quadrant 4, you would have two minutes to get the rest of your team guess *four categories*. If you successfully did so, you would get four coins. But you got three but missed out on the last one, you'd get no coins at all. These rules hold true for all Squares, except for Red Squares, which have no time limit.

Quadrant	Time Limit	Timer Color
1	30 secs	Black
2	60 secs	White
3	90 secs	Red
4	120 secs	Blue

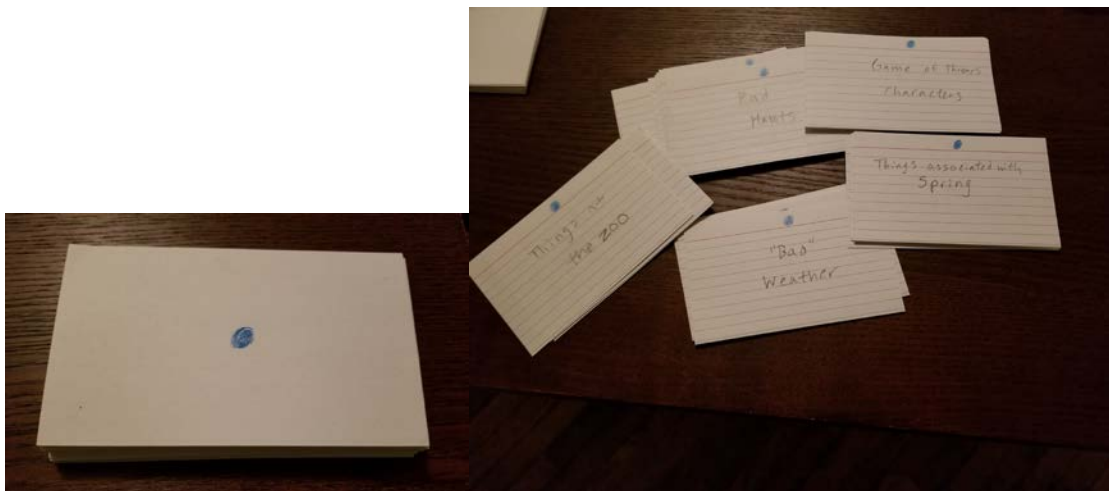


When you land on any colored square, you will draw a card (or cards) from the specifically colored card deck. So, you draw Yellow Cards on a Yellow Square and Blue Cards on a Blue Square. Each card will have a category written on it, which can range from: Heroes, Fictional Villains, Board Games, etc. Each deck has slightly different Categories in it, which will be explained in a bit.

The color of the square designates the kind of action you must perform with your team to guess the category:

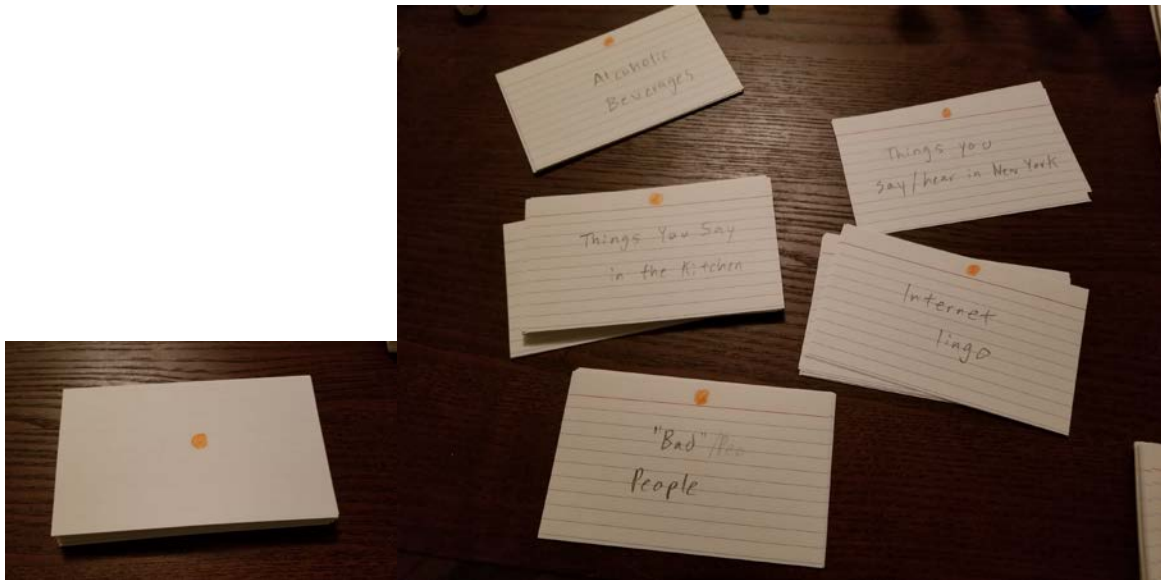
- **Blue Squares – Drawing**

- You must draw items or things that fit within the category given to you. If applicable, you can draw the Category itself. Use the Pad of Paper.
- At the end of the time limit, your teammate(s) must have guessed the Category that these things belong in.
- So, if you drew Insects, draw a bunch of bees and spiders to get your teammate(s) to guess Insects. This is similar to *Pictionary*.



- **Orange Squares – Audio Noises**

- You must make sounds related to items with the category given to you, or the category itself. You can sing songs, you can cry, you can make animal noises, or voices, etc.
- At the end of the time limit, your teammate(s) must have guessed the Category that these things belong in.
- You CANNOT describe things within the category, but you can do their dialogue.
- So, for example, if you drew Heroes, you could say, in your best Spider-Man voice, “with great power comes great responsibility” and then sing the Superman theme, but you CANNOT say “I am a friendly neighborhood who helps people.” Your sounds must be in the “slice of life” style.



- **Green Squares – Acting**

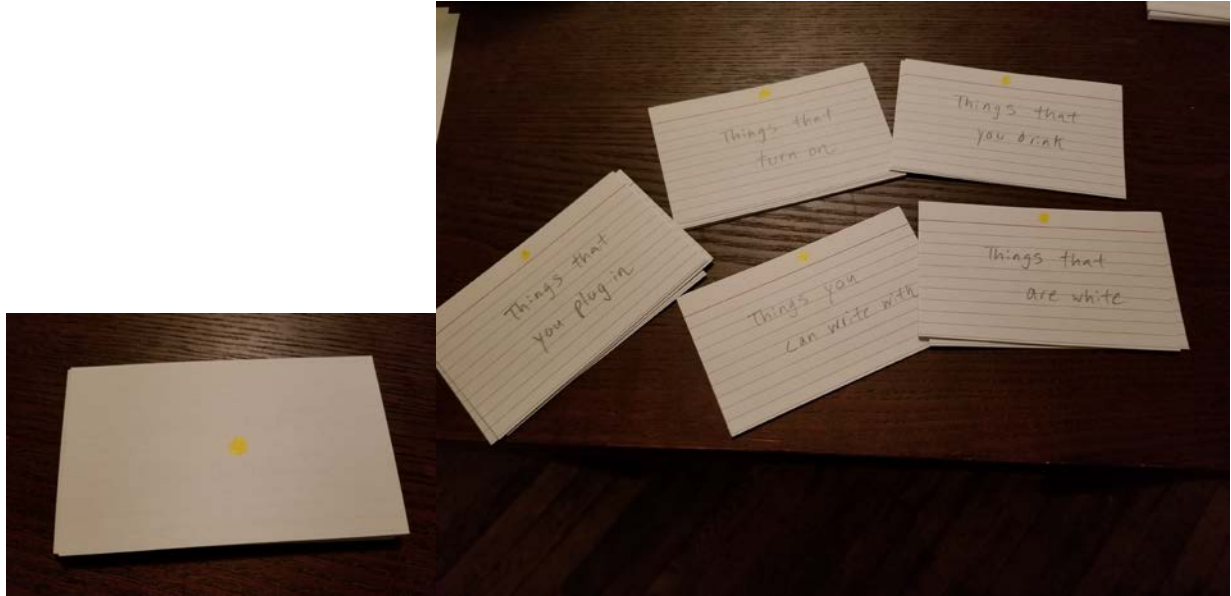
- This is similar to *Charades*. You must act out things, nonverbally but with body language, and items that fit within the category given to you, to your teammate(s).
- At the end of the time limit, your teammate(s) must have guessed the Category that these things belong in.
- So, for example, if you drew Leisure Activities, act like a person lounging on the beach, or sip a fake beer. Physical Props are not allowed.



- **Yellow Squares – The Room**

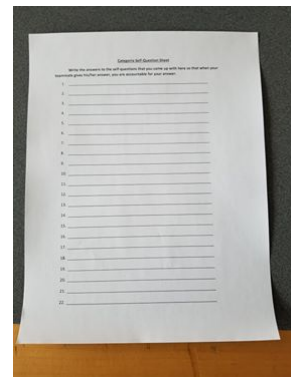
- *Room* Category cards are traditionally different from those of the other categories. You must run around the room and point at things that fit within the designated category.

- So, if you drew Things that are tall, run around and point to the huge-screen TV, or the tallest person in the room, or that lampstand that you were always looking up at, until your teammate(s) guess the correct category (within the allotted time of course).

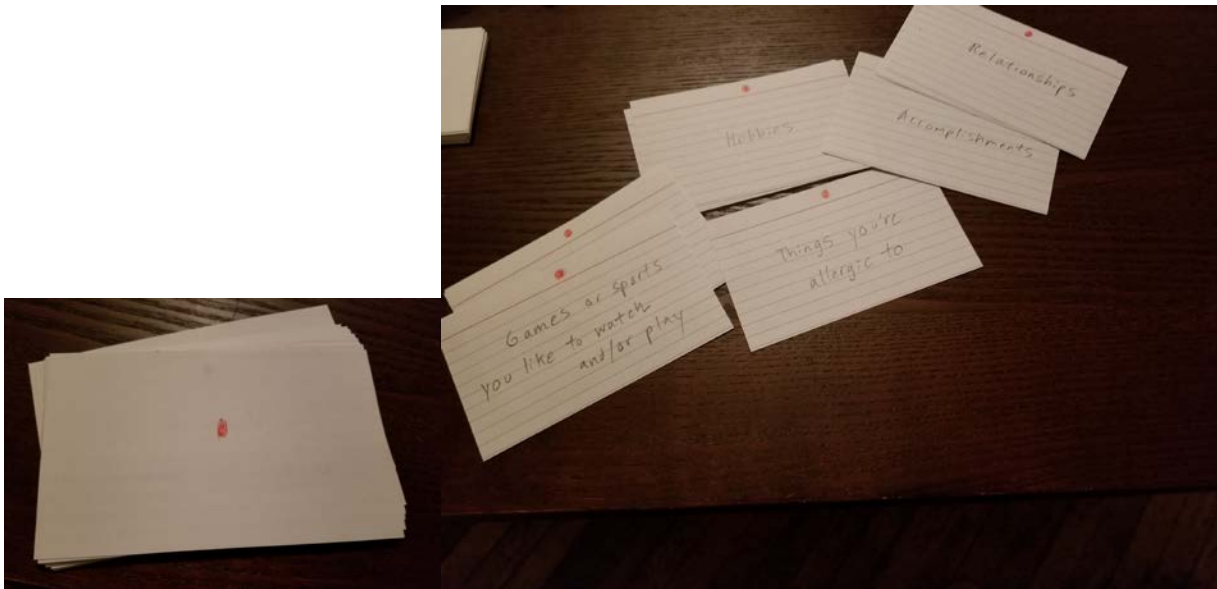


- **Red Squares – Self-Trivia**

- Different from the other categories, Self-Trivia cards have slightly different rules and no time limit. The cards in this deck are personal-related cards, such as Fears, Accomplishments, or Relationships.
- If you rolled the die, you are Teammate 1. You must come up with a series of questions *about yourself* to ask if your teammate knows. The number of questions you must come up with depends on the Quadrant (1 question for Quadrant 1, 2 questions for Quadrant 2, etc.).
- These questions must be *based on Category that you just drew*. So, this is different from the other colors. Instead of guessing the category on the card, you're using the Category on the card to come up with questions about yourself. So, for example:
 - You're in Quadrant 2. You drew Accomplishments. Come up with two questions (no time limit, but be reasonable) to ask if your teammate knows about you. Before you ask the questions, write down **your answers to them** in your Self-Question sheet for accountability. They can be:
 - "What science award did I win my senior year of college?"



- “What story that I wrote won a contest?”
- If your teammate gets the two questions right, you get two coins.
- While you are doing this, *the other team* gets to write down what they think the answer is (they should use their own Self-Question sheet to do so). If they also get the questions right, it is a push and you don’t get any coins. So, be wary of asking absurdly easy questions. See how well you and your teammate know each other. Do you know things about each other that the other team doesn’t?



For the **Blue, Orange, Green, and Yellow Squares**, you may choose to **Pass one card** if it has **really stumped you**. Doing so costs one coin.

While you are doing these **Category Events**, make sure to keep track of your successes on your Set Sheet. Once you completes a set (a successful run of each color), you automatically get a **Victory Point**.

TEAM: _____

	Categories				
Sets	Drawing	Audio	Acting	The Room	Self-Trivia
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Otherwise, take your accumulated coins back to the center circle (which counts as one space) and trade them in for **Victory Points**.



Victory Point Conversion Card

When you reach the center circle, you can choose to do a **Category Event** of the activity of your choice (i.e. any color – Drawing, Acting, etc.) in whatever Quadrant-type you want.

- If you successfully complete a Quadrant-1 or Quadrant-2 type **Category Event**, you can trade in 8 coins for 2 Victory Points.
- Complete a Quadrant-3 or Quadrant-4 type **Category Event**, and you can trade up to 12 coins in for 3 Victory Points.
- If you fail or choose not to play the **Category Event**, you can always trade in 4 coins for 1 Victory Point.
- If you fail, you must leave the center and come back if you want to keep trying.

One more mechanic to keep track of is **Stealing**:

If you land on the same space as your opponent team, you may challenge the team to a duel. **Both teams wager the number of coins depending on the Quadrant they are in (so, 3 coins for Quadrant 3, etc.). And then both teams must race to reach the Quadrant number. The team that reaches first gets all the coins wagered.**

Victory Points cannot be stolen. So once you've traded in coins for **Victory Points**, they are safe.

Lastly, there are different possible endgames:

- **First to Five:** Play until one team gets to five Victory Points. That team is declared the winner. This type of endgame can be altered to be 10 or any other number if players want to play a longer game.
- **Time Limit:** Play freely for an agreed-upon amount of time. The person with the most Victory Points at the end of that time limit wins.
- **Free Play:** Play *without Victory Points*. Simply play, collect coins until the group decides that they've exhausted the amount of fun they wanted and then count 'em up if you choose. This version focuses more on the wacky, zany nature of the game and less on the strategy of winning.

Inspired by games such as *Trivial Pursuit*, *Cranium*, *Scattergories*, *Pictionary*, and *Charades*, **Categoria** is meant to be a fun-for-the-whole-family-and-friends type of game. Have fun!



A Bag of Coins and FATE Dice serving as Victory Points

Marketing Sheet for Categoria

The market is solid right now for family fun games. More and more single players are moving to computer and video games, but the experience of sitting in a room with close friends or family is still very poignant in board game form, and the market shows this. Trivial Pursuit's listing price currently is \$24.99, and while part of this value is due to its classic nature, other games that employ similar team-on-team group styles still sell fairly well. Pictionary is currently listed at \$19.99; Scattergories is listed at \$13.99. Now, these prices are not as high as some other board games, like Risk, that have more components.

But what I'm looking at here is staying power. Trivial Pursuit was first developed in 1979, and it's still being sold at a listed price that is competitive with some of the more popular tabletop games being created today. Pandemic, rated by Gamesradar [1] as one of the best board games of the last year, can be bought on Amazon for \$27.99. And yet a board game that is 40 years old is just \$3 shy of that amount.

We're not looking for the next flashiest thing, or the biggest thing, or something that is going to launch onto the scene before it is slowly replaced by the "next" big thing. We want something that encourages that sense of nostalgia, that feeling that you can sit around a table with your family without dozens of components or pages and pages of rules, that feeling you can be with your 8-year-old cousin and your 80-year-old grandfather and still have a good time.

Games like Trivial Pursuit, Pictionary, Scattergories, Cranium, they're not going to be the big sellers in a vacuum. But the more and more groups play them, encouraging that nostalgia, the more the games stick around.

My game Categoria is a hybrid of a lot of the elements that makes these classic family fun games great. You play in teams traversing along a circular board. You land on multi-colored spaces and engage in a multitude of activities, from classic Charades and drawing, to making sound noises and dialogue, to pointing out objects in the room, to get your teammates to guess a series of categories. If you are in Quadrant 1, you do just one category at once and earn a coin, or you can venture to Quadrant 4 to do four categories at once, within the allotted time, to earn four coins.

These choices enable experienced gamers and new gamers a chance to play well.

You win by earning Victory Points through the coins you collect, and you can also earn Victory Points by completing a "set" of different activities. An experienced gamer can try to earn coins in the harder-difficulty quadrants, while a new gamer can complete sets in the easier Quadrants and still have a chance.

But at the end of the day, winning isn't the purpose. It's watching your entire family draw frantic pictures, act their way through weird and wacky categories, make funny noises and sounds and voices, run around the room pointing at stuff, etc. And, just for good measure,

there is a trivia element to the game for teammates to ask questions about each other to see how well you know each other, which encourages communication and friendship. It's more about the wacky fun and the team play than it is about winning.

Family fun games have been testing this strategy for decades, and it's still paying well decades later. I think that Categoria has these proven elements, combined together naturally, to add itself to the list of family fun games that we remember.

[1] <https://www.gamesradar.com/best-board-games/>

References and thank you to:

- [1] The game *Trivial Pursuit*, which inspired the final look of the board game
- [2] The game *Cranium*, which inspired the activities of the Drawing and Acting
- [3] The game *Scattergories*, which inspired the use of categories as a mechanic. I used their website <http://scattergorieslists18.blogspot.com/> as a heavy influence for some of my examples.
- [4] The *Mario Party* series, which inspired the collecting-coins-to-trade-them-in-for-something-more-valuable mechanic.
- [5] All of my playtesters