# Mechanics and Meaning – GDC 2017

AA –2016-02-21

## Next Pages: Base Game Mechanics for the Activity

I’ve modified a bunch of game theory games such that they:

* Are 2-player games
* Are played quickly
* Have easily discoverable optimal strategies.
* Make use of ‘Action’ cards that can be easily labeled
* Result in a maximum ‘score’ of 12 white poker chips

## Activity Instructions:

**Step 1: Form teams and play the games. (15 mins)**

Form 4-player teams. Each team gets a game packet from this list.

Play the game in the packet to understand the dynamics. See if you can find the ‘dominant’ strategy: the strategy that gets each player the most chips.

**Step 2: Re-skin the simple games. (10 mins)**

Label the cards such that the fiction of the game changes the behavior of the players. Create a ‘story’ when you explain the game.

**Step 3: Play-testing with fresh players. (10 mins)**

Test with players who have NOT played the game before (Kleenex Testing).

Split each team into ‘home’ and ‘away’ groups. ‘Home’ team stays to teach the game to new players. ‘Away’ team moves to play another group’s game.

Keep a data log of the moves played and the results of each game.

**Step 4: Iterate (as time permits)**

Iterate, test, Iterate, test. Push the change in dynamic further.

**Step 5: Competitive Challenge (30-45 minutes)**

Have the teams switch roles: ‘Away’ becomes ‘Home’ and ‘Home’ becomes ‘Away’ so that there are new fresh players.

‘Away’ players get score sheets, and try to play ALL the other games. The player from each team with the highest score is the winner!

# Game Mechanic #1:

## Components

* 2 sets of three white cards:
  + Card with a red box that says “This red box beats the yellow box”
  + Card with a yellow dot that says “This yellow box beats the blue box”
  + Card with a blue dot that says “This blue box beats the red box”
* 12 Poker Chips

## Rules

2 Players each start with 4 poker chips and a set of white cards.

The other 4 poker chips are placed on the table to be won.

Play 4 rounds.

Each round, the players can discuss their intended play.

Each player secretly chooses a card, then simultaneously reveals it.

PAYOUT TABLE

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Winner** | **Loser** | **Ties** |
| Wins 2 chips from the table. | Loses 1 chip to the table. | **Both** win one chip from the table. |

Scores from 0 to 12 poker chips to each player.

**This RED box beats the YELLOW box.**

**This RED box beats the YELLOW box.**

**This BLUE box beats the RED box.**

**This BLUE box beats the RED box.**

**This YELLOW box beats the BLUE box.**

**This YELLOW box beats the BLUE box.**

# Game Mechanic #2:

## Components

* 3 sets of two white cards:
  + Card with a red box.
  + Card with a blue box.
* 20 Poker Chips

## Rules

2 players – a ‘Red’ player and a ‘Blue’ player. Each given a set of two white cards – a ‘red’ card and a ‘blue’ card.

Play 4 rounds.

Each round, the players can discuss their intended play.

Each player secretly chooses a card, then simultaneously reveals it.

PAYOUT TABLE

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **RED PLAYER** |  |
|  |  | Red Card | Blue Card |
| **BLUE PLAYER** | Red Card | Red player gains 3 chips; Blue player gains 2 chips. | BOTH players gain 1 chip. |
|  | Blue Card | BOTH players gain 1 chip. | Blue player gains 3 chips; Red player gains 2 chips. |

(Underlying rule: Playing the same card as your opponent played is worth 2 Chips; playing your own color is worth +1 chips.)

Scores from 0 to 12 poker chips

**RED**

**RED**

**RED**

**PLAYER**

**BLUE**

**BLUE**

**BLUE**

**PLAYER**

# Game Mechanic #3:

## Components

* 2 sets of two white cards:
  + 1 card that say “Later”.
  + 1 card that says “Now”.
* 18 Poker Chips

## Rules

2 players are each given a set of two white cards: a ‘Now’ and a ‘Later’ card.

There are 2 piles of poker chips on the table: a stack of 4 chips and a stack of 2 chips. The remaining chips are set aside for subsequent rounds.

Play up to 3 rounds.

Each round, the players can discuss their intended play.

Each player secretly chooses a card, then simultaneously reveals it.

PAYOUT TABLE

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | PLAYER B |  |
|  |  | “Now” Card | “Later” Card |
| PLAYER A | “Now” Card | Players A and B split the larger stack of chips evenly. No-one wins the smaller stack. Game Over. | Player A wins the larger stack, player B wins the smaller stack.  Game Over. |
|  | “Later” Card | Player B wins the larger stack, player A wins the smaller stack.  Game Over. | Add 4 chips to the larger stack and 2 chips to the smaller stack.  Play continues to the next round,  If 3 rounds have been played, players split both stacks evenly. |

Scores 1 to 12 poker chips.

NOW LATER

NOW LATER

# Game Mechanic #4:

## Components

* 2 sets of 3 white cards, numbered 1-3
* 24 white Poker Chips

## Rules

* 2 Players are each given a set of cards. The poker chips are set aside to pay out each round.
* Play 3 rounds.
* Each round, the players can discuss their intended play.
* Each player secretly chooses a card, then simultaneously reveals it.
* Compare total of both cards to Payout Table; each player takes (or discards) chips.

PAYOUT TABLE

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total on Cards:** | **BOTH Players…** | **Then the player who played the higher card…** |
| 2 | GAIN 3 chips | n/a |
| 3 | GAIN 2 chips | GAINS 2 chips |
| 4 | GAIN 1 chip | LOSES 1 chip |
| 5 | Gain NOTHING | GAINS 4 chips |
| 6 | LOSE 1 chip | n/a |

* Scores between 0 and 12 white chips.

1 2 3

1 2 3

# Game Mechanic #5:

## Components

* 1 sets of 4 white cards for Player 1, labelled:
  + 0 for me, 3 for you.
  + 1 for me, 2 for you.
  + 2 for me, 1 for you.
  + 3 for me, 0 for you.
* 1 set of 2 white cards for Player 2, labelled “Accept” and “Reject”.
* 12 white Poker Chips

## Rules

* 2 players each take a set of cards, randomly selecting ‘Player 1’ and ‘Player 2’.
* Make four stacks of 3 chips, one stack for each of 4 rounds of play.
* Each round, set a stack of 3 chips in front of Player 1.
* Player 1 plays one of the 4 cards describing the distribution of these chips.
* Player 2 then plays either “Accept” or “Reject”
  + If Player 2 chooses “Accept”, the chips are paid out according to Player 1’s card.
  + If Player 2 chooses “Reject”, then NO CHIPS are awarded to either player.
* Players switch roles (and cards) between rounds so that.
* Scores between 0 and 12 white chips.

**Player 1:**

**2 for me,**

**1 for you.**

**Player 1:**

**0 for me,**

**3 for you.**

**Player 2:**

**ACCEPT**

**Player 1:**

**3 for me,**

**0 for you.**

**Player 1:**

**1 for me,**

**2 for you.**

**Player 2:**

**REJECT**

# Game Mechanic #6:

## Components

* 2 sets of 2 white cards
  + 1 card that has a blue box
  + 1 card that has a red box
* 16 white Poker Chips

## Rules

2 Players, each gets a set of the white cards.

Play 3 rounds.

Each round, the players may discuss their intended play,

Each player secretly selects a card to play, then both simultaneously reveal.

PAYOUT TABLE

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | PLAYER B |  |
|  |  | plays Red | plays Blue |
| PLAYER A | plays Red | Both players gain 2 chips. | Player A gains 4 chips. |
|  | plays Blue | Player B gains 4 chips. | Both Players gain 1 chip. |

Scores between 0 and 12 white chips.

**RED**

**RED**

**BLUE**

**BLUE**

# Game Mechanic #7:

## Components

* 2 sets of 4 white cards, numbered 0-3.
* 24 white Poker Chips

## Rules

2 Players, each gets a set of the white cards and 6 poker chips. The remaining chips are set to one side.

Play 3 rounds

Each round, players may discuss their play,

Then each player secretly selects one their white cards to play. (The number on the card represents how many of their poker chips they will add to the ‘pot’.)

Players simultaneously reveal their cards and add that many poker chips to create a ‘pot’ between them.

* If there are 0 chips in the pot at this point (both players played ‘0’), the game ends immediately.
* If there are an odd number of chips in the pot, add an additional poker chip from the pool to make the pot even.
* Each player takes half of the poker chips in the pool.

Scores between 6 and 12 white chips.

0 1 2 3

0 1 2 3

# Game Mechanic #8:

## Components

* 2 sets of 3 white cards, numbered 1-3.
* 24 white Poker Chips

## Rules

* 2 players each take a set of cards. The poker chips are set to one side.
* Play 4 rounds.
* Each round, the players may discuss their intended play, then each player secretly selects a card to play.
* Players simultaneously reveal their cards. Players are given chips depending on these rules:
  + If the cards are of the SAME VALUE, each player earns chips = number on the card they played,
  + If the cards are of DIFFERENT VALUES:
    - Player with the LOWEST card earns 3 chips.
    - Player with the HIGHEST card earns 0 chips.
* Scores between 0 and 12 white chips.

1 2 3

1 2 3

# Game Mechanic #9:

## Components

* 2 sets of 3 white cards; numbered 1-3.
* 20 Poker Chips

## Rules

* 2 players each take a set of cards. The poker chips are to one side.
* Play 4 rounds.
* Each round, the players may discuss their intended play, then each player secretly selects a card to play.
* Players simultaneously reveal their cards.
* Players are given chips depending on these rules:
  + If the cards are of the SAME VALUE, each player earns 1 chip.
  + If the cards are of DIFFERENT VALUES:
    - Player with the LOWEST card earns 2 chips.
    - Player with the HIGHEST card earns 3 chips.
* Scores between 0 and 12 white chips.

1 2 3

1 2 3