

LESSON 6

Make your own Board Game

45 minutes

Unplugged Adventures

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

In this lesson, students will reflect on board games they have played before, discuss key elements like rules and instructions, then design and create their own board game complete with a custom board and an instruction manual. They will test their games and refine the rules for clarity.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- This is mostly an unplugged lesson: pupils work with paper and coloured pencils in groups, so have plenty of both ready.
- The demo game in steps 3 and 4 runs as an on-screen interactive. Open it on your board beforehand, click Fullscreen and check it loads and responds.
- Group pupils in advance into pairs or threes, and have one blank sheet for the board and one for the instruction sheet per group.
- Have dice and counters ready: one die and two or three counters per group, so groups can play-test their own game in steps 6 and 7.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Reflect on Favourite Board Games

Key Elements of a Board Game

Demo Game

Practice Game

Brainstorm Your New Game Idea

Create the Board and Manual

Test, Play, and Refine

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Reflect on Favourite Board Games. Take two or three quick examples, then steer the talk fast to one question: has unclear rules ever spoiled a game for them? Their own frustration is the hook for the whole lesson.
- 2. Key Elements of a Board Game. Write the four headings before pupils speak, then fill them live using Snakes and Ladders. Say the if-then rules aloud as full sentences so pupils hear the condition and the result clearly.
- 3. Demo Game. Read the modified rules aloud with the class before playing. Stress that the colours change the move, so this game is not quite Snakes and Ladders even though it looks similar.
- 4. Practice Game. Play Teacher versus Class on the board in Fullscreen. On each roll, ask a pupil to name the colour and say the if-then rule out loud before you move the counter.
- 5. Brainstorm Your New Game Idea. Hold groups to the time box: theme in under a minute, then straight to sketching. Insist every board has a clear Start and Finish before any special spaces get added.
- 6. Create the Board and Manual. Push the instruction sheet as hard as the board. Get each group to write turns as a fixed sequence: roll, move, check space, apply rule, pass. Every symbol needs its own listed rule.
- 7. Test, Play, and Refine. Make groups play their own game before swapping. Frame peer feedback around one question: which rule was unclear? Link vague rules back to instructions a computer could not follow.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils write rules they can play from memory but that a stranger could not follow, assuming the reader will just know what they meant. The peer swap exposes this. Point out that the other group only has the sheet, just like a computer only has the code, so anything unwritten simply does not happen.
- Groups design a board with no clear way to win, or with special spaces that make the game impossible to finish. Before they write rules, ask each group to point to Start, Finish and how a player reaches it. Check that forward and back rules still let someone win.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Give a ready theme and a printed or sketched blank path so they design rules rather than starting from an empty page. Let them copy the roll, move, check, apply, pass sequence directly and just fill in their own colours and effects.
- Developing: Prompt them to read their own instruction sheet aloud while a partner acts it out, catching any step that cannot be followed.
- Proficient: Challenge them to add a rule that depends on two conditions, or to balance their board so neither player is far more likely to win. Ask them to be the testers for another group and write precise feedback naming which rule failed and why.