

Restricted Parlour Games:

# **Choice, Randomness and Interaction.**

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# Introduction

Parlour games, board games and card games exist as a series of rules that determine how they function. The rules as written restrict a player's and the systems actions within the game just as the laws of physics restrict actions in the Universe.

Creating an arbitrary set of rules allows for the game to be comprehensible to the players giving them guidance to explore some of the game's possible states, i.e. the position, location, knowledge and ownership of components and actions. The way the players move from one state to another state, navigating the possibility space, creates play.

There are three major rule types visible in these types of games: **choice**, **randomness** and **interaction**.

Each of these three aspects is explored individually in more detail, with example rules for games specifically excluding the other two aspects. Creating these short experimental games shows the three core elements in isolation and aims to create understanding of the types of play they create.

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# Choice in Games

Choices give players control over the navigation of a game's possibility space. By selecting which state to move to next, the player governs play, they are in charge.

There are two ways to present choice to a player. First, they can choose whether to **do or do not**, secondly they may be given a list of **multiple** options to select from. The difference between the two is small but can drastically affect the way the game is experienced.

As the game progresses and new states are reached, these choice rules may be **variable** or **consistent**. Consistent choices do not change with state and remain the same throughout the game. Variable choice can change with the current state of the game. Often these types of choices are clustered next to each other so it becomes difficult to distinguish between them.

Two short games have been designed to explore choices in games...

# Race Track

Choice (multiple, variable)

## Players

1

## Components

1 board

1 starting line tile

9 corner tiles

9 straight tiles

5 double corner tiles

5 bridge tiles

## Setup

Place the starting line tile any where on the board, such that the track does not run of the edge of the board.

## Play

Select a tile and place it on the board in any remaining space.

## Finish

When the track forms a complete loop or there are no more spaces on the board; score points as follows.

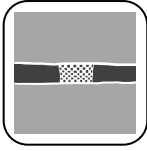
Score 1 point for each piece of track that is connected to the starting line tile.

Score 3 points for each straight section of track that is three straight or bridge tiles long.

Minus 1 point for each piece of track that does not connect to the starting line tile.

Minus 10 points if it the track does not form a loop with the starting line tile.





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# Letter Spaghetti

Choice (do or do not, consistent)

## Players

1

## Components

74 letter cards

## Setup

Place the cards face down in a stack such that the lowest number card is on the top and the highest is on the bottom, and the cards in between follow sequence.

## Play

Turn over the top card of the deck.

You may choose to start a new word by placing this card in a new space. Otherwise place this letter card next to the right of the last card played.

## Finish

For each completed word that is contained in an English Dictionary you score points.

Score 1 point for words with 5 or fewer letters.

Score 2 points for words with 6 or more letters.

C O L O S S U S P E

N D O T H E R M I C

O G R A I L L U S T

R A T E A M E T H Y

S T R I N G E S T U

R E A L A B E L I E

V E R A N D A M B I

T I O N

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# Randomness in Games

Randomness in games removes control from the players. By moving through the game's probability space in unknown ways, unexpected situations can occur.

Randomness will follow one of two methods. The first is **isolated** random events; these events do not change the odds when the same event happens again. Think of rolling a dice, it does not matter how many times you roll it, the odds are always the same. Compare this to drawing a card from a deck, or removing a coloured ball from a bag, both these examples have a **recursive** effect, they change the distributions of objects, changing the odds.

When random events occur in a game they are either **shared** by all players or only affect an **individual**. In order to keep a game balanced it is important to consider how random events are constructed and what their possible effects can be.

Two short games have being design to explore randomness in games...

# Lucky Chef

Random (isolated, shared)

## Players

1-4

## Components

13 recipe cards

3 ingredient dice

## Setup

Distribute the ingredient cards, such that each player has an equal amount.

Each player should place their ingredient cards face up in front of them.

## Play

Starting with the player who most recently ate.

Each player takes a turn to roll the three ingredient dice.





































After each roll of the dice, all players check to see if all the ingredients for their recipes are available.



















If all the ingredients are face up on the dice, then the player can turn over their corresponding recipe card.

When the re-roll symbol appear, the current player should re-roll all three of the dice.

## Finish

The first player to turn over all their recipe cards by collecting the required ingredients wins.

|   |  |  |  |
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| <p><b>Bolognaise</b></p>  Pasta<br> Beef<br> Tomato  | <p><b>Omelette</b></p>  Potato<br> Egg<br> Vegetables     | <p><b>Burger</b></p>  Bread<br> Beef<br> Cheese         | <p><b>Roast Dinner</b></p>  Potato<br> Chicken<br> Vegetables |
| <p><b>Fish Pie</b></p>  Potato<br> Fish<br> Milk     | <p><b>Fry-up</b></p>  Bread<br> Pork<br> Egg              | <p><b>Tikka Masala</b></p>  Rice<br> Chicken<br> Spices | <p><b>Kofta Kebab</b></p>  Bread<br> Lamb<br> Spices          |
| <p><b>Chow Mein</b></p>  Noodles<br> Pork<br> Spices | <p><b>Fish Supper</b></p>  Potato<br> Fish<br> Vegetables | <p><b>Sushi</b></p>  Rice<br> Fish<br> Vegetables       | <p><b>Schezwan</b></p>  Noodles<br> Chicken<br> Spices        |

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# The Longest Cow

Random (recursive, individual)

## Players

1

## Components

1 head card

1 tail card

20 body cards

## Setup

Place the head card on the table.

Shuffle all the body cards and the tail card together.

## Play

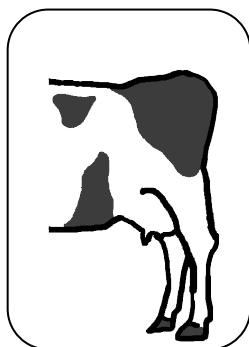
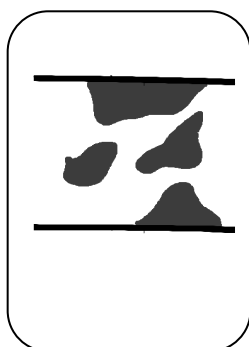
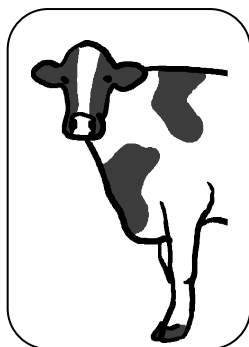
Play each card one at a time adding it to the head of the cow, creating a cow of ever increasing length.

## Finish

Once the tail of the cow is added, stop turning over cards.

Add up the total length of your cow including the head and tail cards.

This is your final score.



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# Interaction in Games

Interaction in games draws the players together into a shared experience. By interacting with each other the players navigate the possibility space together, pushing and pulling on each other changing the outcomes for everyone.

Interaction can be divided into two types, which are related with the perception of ownership. In a game, components, objects, points may be seen as belonging to a specific player, multiple players or no player at all. **Direct** interaction changes the states of objects that belong to another player. **Indirect** interaction changes items that do not yet belong to a player but could potentially in the future.

It is common for interaction to be **non-verbal** the movement of the components expresses what has happened. But in some instances the interaction is **verbal**, the players may talk and persuade each other, or pass information between each other.

Two short games which explore interaction have being designed...

# Hear Say

Interaction (direct, verbal)

## Players

4

## Components

4 circular cards

## Setup

Give each player a list card.

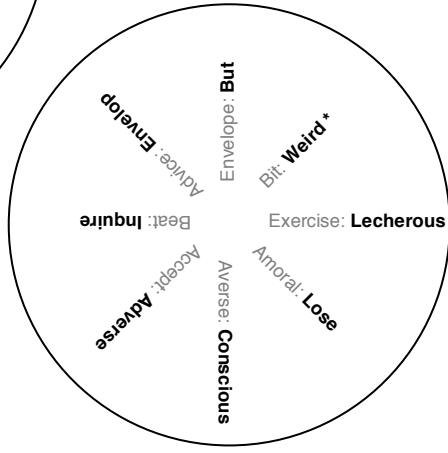
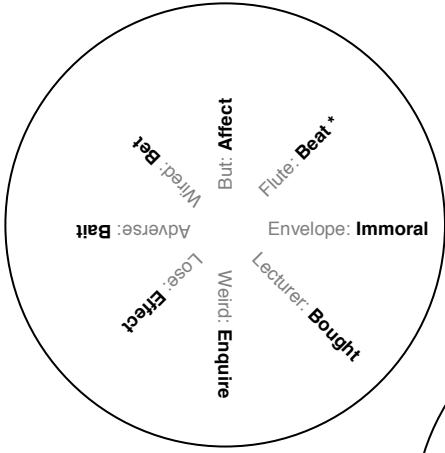
## Play

The boldest player reads their start word on their card, marked with an \*.

Players check their card, if the word they heard is on their card written in grey, they read aloud the word in **bold** next to it.

## Finish

Play ends when the starting player says their start word again.



# Tower

Interaction (indirect, non-verbal)

## Players

2-4

## Components

12 floor disks

1 baseboard with angled foundation

## Setup

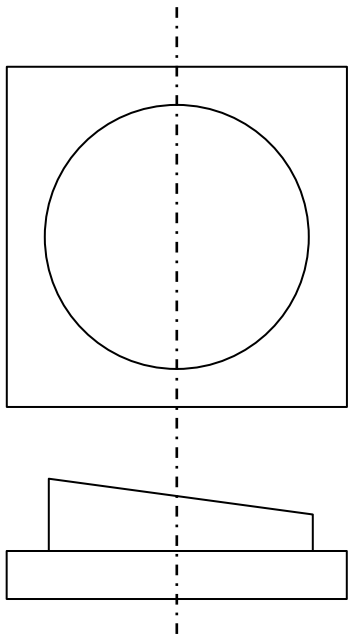
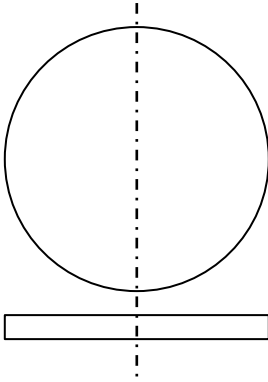
Distribute the floor disks equally amongst the players, and place the baseboard on a flat surface so that everyone can reach it.

## Play

Starting with the tallest player, each player takes a turn adding a floor to the ever-growing tower.

## Finish

All players win the game when the 12 disks are stacked onto the baseboard creating a magnificent tower.





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# Conclusion

By isolating each of the three core aspects of parlour, board, and card games and creating short games it was possible to gain deeper understanding of **choice**, **randomness** and **interaction** and their potential uses when combined.

In the first two games, **Race Track** and **Letter Spaghetti**, only choice aspects were utilised. With the absence of randomness and interaction between players, it was only possible to create solitaire style experiences that functioned like puzzles. The weakness in this type of game is that once an optimal solution is found the game stops being engaging.

Both **Lucky Chef** and **The Longest Cow** utilised only randomness. Games like this take the control from the player but do provide a sense of surprise or mystery, which has potential to create interesting unforeseen events. The issue is the lack of agency given to the player that without careful foresight could create a shallow experience.

Finally two interaction only games are included, **Hear Say** and **Tower**. When interaction is used by itself there is no deviation occurring, creating a feeling of a well rehearsed theatrical play. There is a sense of action moving throughout the players, each player committing their own performance.