

CMSC425 Spring 2019

Activity 1: Race to the End

Credits to Brenda Garno Brathwaite for exercise

Supplies:

Board	Crayons	(Use your own pencils/pens)
Dice	Jewel pieces	
Index cards	Sheet of paper for rules	

Exercise: Create a “Race to the End” Game

As a team construct a Race to the End game using your pieces.

Step 1

Understand the pattern. We have all played race to the end games. Think Candy Land or The Game of Life. Basically, you start at point A and get to point B. That is all you need to know. Draw a straight line on a long sheet of paper. You are now over 1/4 of the way finished. You can make the line squiggly if you want, but it probably won't affect gameplay.

Step 2

Find a narrative. What are you racing toward or what are you racing from? You can go as simple as Candy Land and say, “We're racing to get to the end first” or something a bit thicker like:

- A bank heist (catch the robbers or get away if you are the robbers)
- To freedom from X
- To the pot of gold
- Toward the partner of your dreams
- Toward the top of the corporate ladder

The first one there wins. There are about a zillion more ideas from real world races to any contest in which one person tries to excel above another. If you cannot think of a narrative, pick one here or just keep going without one.

Step 3

How do you race? What's the game mechanic that allows you to move forward? You could use an element of chance (dice, random draw or whatever) or you can use an element of strategy (though this takes it out of the easiest design exercise ever) or skill (i.e. one point per foot a person can jump... though that would just be weird). Keep it easy and go with dice.

Step 4

Add conflict. The easy as toast version of “adding conflict” is as follows. As a designer, you need to figure out a way to make the race interesting:

- Speed people up
- Slow people down
- Make people change places
- Make people lose a turn
- Give people an extra turn

Once you figure out how you will do this, let players do this to each other. So, I get to make you miss your turn. I get to change spots with you, etc. Add a few players so they have to decide who to affect or who to reward. The simplest way to do this is to put spaces on the board that force these actions. A modified version of this uses spaces where a player gets to draw a card. They may use the card on themselves or on another when they choose. So, I draw a “Skip a turn” card, and I play it on you or someone else whenever I want to.

Step 5

You’re done. Will it win awards? Never, but you will have actually created a game, and the process will be satisfying enough that you just might want to make something else a bit more complex.

When done, return the pieces to the plastic bag, and staple everything together. We'll exchange and play games next period.