# BOARD GAME CLUBS: A HOW-TO GUIDE

## Selecting Board Games

When selecting board games for a club meeting make sure to take student ability level and effort level into consideration. These are general guidelines and should be adjusted to meet the specific needs, abilities, and desires of students in your club.

### Ability Level

This chart can be used to get a general idea of the types of games you should select for the ability level for students of different grade levels.

| Grade Level | Games with... |
| --- | --- |
| Early Elementary (K-2) | little to no reading, basic rules |
| Late Elementary (3-5) | some reading, basic rules |
| Middle School (6-8) | moderate reading, somewhat complex rules |
| High School (9-12) | complex reading, complex rules |

### Effort Level

Whether students are able to play more complicated games or not, the amount of effort that students are willing to put into learning or playing a game needs to be taken into consideration. For some students the "2-min" rule is a good way to judge ability level. The "2-min" rule is that if a game takes longer than 2 minutes to explain and start playing then it's too complicated. Some students will be willing to spend a whole hour to learn a game in order to play it in future meetings. It all depends on the amount of effort level students are willing to put in.

## Adjusting for Students

### Effort Level vs. Ability Level

Students with a low effort level will still enjoy simpler games. Alternatively, students with a high effort level are able to play games above their ability level with a little help since they're determined to learn how to play the really cool game.

### Changing the Rules

It is ok to adjust the rules of a game to make it simpler or more difficult!   As long as everyone is aware of the change and all players are playing with the same rules, it is alright to change or adjust rules that don't work for your students. This can even allow for some creative thinking if students want to explore making new or different rules for a game to see how it changes the experience.

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## Classroom Management

There are a few things to consider with classroom management when hosting a board game club with students. Each of these suggestions should be used and adjusted with the knowledge of the participating students in mind.

### Respect & Kindness

*Be Kind & Helpful* - Make sure students understand that if they're not kind and helpful while playing games, people may not want to play that game in the future. This doesn't mean helping other players win, but it could mean helping someone who is struggling so they can enjoy the game more.

*Rules Disagreements* - Teach students to call over the club leader if there is a disagreement about the rules. A neutral, third-party helps prevent frustration and emotional blow-ups. Club leaders should use their discretion about rules enforcement, but they should generally reference the printed rulebook for clarification.

- If the group has decided to use alternative rules, <u>any changes to printed rules need to be clearly stated before the game begins</u>.

*Respecting the Games* - Help teach students to respect the game pieces. This includes checking the floor for dropped game components and making sure pieces are carefully put back into the box and not just tossed in. Most games have specific storage places for each game component. Stacking game pieces neatly help prevent damage and loss.

### Pace of Play

Make sure that players understand the importance of not taking too long on their turns, but also the need to be patient and polite if a player needs a little bit longer on a turn.

- Some turns just take longer than others, but consistently long turns while others wait is inconsiderate.
- Ways to help with slow play is narrowing/suggesting options for the player or reminding them about the need for a good pace of play.

### Club Leaders Playing Games

Whenever playing games with students make sure to sit where you can see other gaming tables and maintain active supervision by getting up and checking on other tables periodically.

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## Types of Meetings

There are a few different ways to structure a board game club meeting. You should select these based on the types of members in your club and your comfort and experience with board games.

### First Meeting

The first meeting of a board game club is best served setting expectations and learning what students want. Use this meeting to find out what kind of board games club members play (if any) and try to get a sense of the different skill levels of students.

### Game of the Week

Choose a specific game and have multiple copies of the game. Start with a mini-lesson talking about the specific type of game mechanics in that game and good strategies to use. If you aren't familiar or comfortable with leading this discussion, find a short YouTube video that goes over the same topic. Searching "strategies for _____" generally finds a variety of videos. Always make sure to screen videos for appropriateness before sharing with students.

- **Student-Led Game of the Week** – Alternatively, invite students to bring in their favorite board games to teach to the club.

### Open Gaming

Have your board game library for students to self-select and game. This is good for students who know a variety of games. If you are comfortable with it, allow students to bring in their own board games to share.

### Tournament - sometimes multiple meetings

Select a board game that all of your students know and that you have enough copies for everyone to play at the same time. Randomly group everyone into equal sized groups depending on the game requirements. Have each group play a full game. When done, switch groups. Play three rounds of the same game with different groups.

If the game awards points, keep track of those points for each round. If the game does not award points, give 4 points to 1st place, 3 points to 2nd, 2 points to 3rd, and 1 point to 4th for each round. At the end of 3 rounds add up all points earned and crown your champion!

### Other

There are many other ways to host a board game club meeting, don't be afraid to experiment. Maybe even make it a game and get ideas from students!