

# CISC 3667: Game Design and Development

## In-Class Activity 1: Is it a Game?

**Assigned:** Thursday, September 3

**Submission:** Brightspace by 11:59 PM (Individual Submission)

### Objective

In this activity, you will explore the question:

### **What makes something a game?**

You will first examine different activities using four definitions of a game.

Then, you will **redesign an ordinary activity into a game** by adding game elements.

The goal is not to find one "correct" definition of a game. Instead, you will see how different definitions can lead to different conclusions, and how game designers can use goals, rules, challenges, feedback, and interaction to transform an activity into a game.

### Part 1: Is It a Game?

**Step 1: With your group of 4-5 students, choose 3 activities from the following:**

- Walking to class
- Doing homework
- Cleaning your room
- Cooking a meal
- Shopping
- Studying for an exam
- Exercising
- Waiting in line
- Drawing
- Playing with LEGO
- Solving a crossword puzzle
- Watching a movie
- Watching a sports game
- Using social media
- Rock, Paper, Scissors
- Tag
- A scavenger hunt
- A slot machine
- Make-believe

Some of these are clearly games, while others are intentionally **debatable**.

## Step 2: Discuss Your Activity

For each activity, discuss:

- Is this a game? Why or why not?
- What characteristics make it feel like a game?
- What characteristics might prevent it from being considered a game?

There may not be one correct answer. Focus on **supporting your reasoning**.

## Part 2: Apply the Four Definitions

- **Kevin Maroney:** A game is a form of play with goals and structure.
- **Jane McGonigal:** A game includes:
  - i. A goal
  - ii. Rules
  - iii. A feedback system
  - iv. Voluntary participation
- **Jesse Schell:** A game is a problem-solving activity approached with a playful attitude.
- **Chris Crawford:** A game is an interactive, goal-oriented activity in which players or active agents can interfere with one another.

Analyze each activity by completing the following table:

**Activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

| Definition | Does it qualify as a game?                                                              | Why or why not? |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Maroney    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |
| McGonigal  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |
| Schell     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |
| Crawford   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |

## Part 3: Turn an Activity Into a Game

Now you will become the **game designer**.

Choose **one activity that your group believes is not clearly a game**, or that does not satisfy one or more of the definitions, and **turn the activity into a game**.

You may add, remove, or change elements of the activity as needed.

Modify your activity so that it **qualifies as a game under one or more of the four definitions**, as clearly as possible.

## Part 4: Design Your Game

Create a short description of your redesigned game. Your group should answer the following:

- **Original Activity:** What activity did you start with?
- **What Was Missing?:** Why did the original activity not clearly qualify as a game under your chosen definition(s)?
- **Your Changes:** What did you add or change to turn it into a game?
- **Your New Game:** Give your game a name and briefly describe how it is played.

## Part 5: Test Your New Game Based on All Definitions

Now apply the four definitions to your **redesigned game**.

| Definition | Does it qualify as a game?                                                              | Why or why not? |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Maroney    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |
| McGonigal  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |
| Schell     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |
| Crawford   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe |                 |

Compare this table with your original activity.

## Part 6: Submission

**Each student must submit their own copy of the completed activity to Brightspace by 11:59 PM on Thursday, September 3.**

Your submission should include:

- **Your name**
- **Your group members' names**
- Your completed responses for **Parts 1-5**
- Your group's analysis of the selected activities
- Your redesigned game and its description
- Your completed comparison of the four game definitions

**Important:** This is a **group activity**, but the submission is **individual**. Each student must submit their own copy to Brightspace. Group members may submit the same group work, but **each student is responsible for submitting their own assignment**.

## Final Discussion

After the activity, consider:

- Can an activity be a game under one definition but not another?
- **What elements are essential to making something a game?**

**There is no single universal definition of a game.**

Different definitions emphasize different aspects of what games are and how they work.

As game designers, we can use these ideas to think critically about the experiences we create and the ways players engage with them. Understanding what makes something a game is only the beginning. The next question is: **what makes playing it enjoyable?**