



**GAMES FOR CHANGE
STUDENT CHALLENGE**
GAME JAMS

**Tabletop
Game Jam Guide**



Table of Contents

What is a Student Challenge Tabletop Game Jam?	3
Running a Tabletop Game Jam	5
Facilitator’s Guide	7
2025 Student Challenge Social Impact Themes	10
Tabletop Game Submission Guidelines	14
Tabletop Game Judging Criteria	15
Resources	16

WHAT IS A STUDENT CHALLENGE TABLETOP GAME JAM?

A G4C Tabletop Game Jam is a 3-4 hour event where participants of all skill levels create tabletop games around social impact themes. This hands-on experience helps participants explore the basics of game design using physical materials and storytelling rather than digital tools. Students also get the opportunity to dive more deeply into the Student Challenge's impact themes.

Games created during the jam can be further developed and submitted to the [Student Challenge Competition](#). The G4C Student Challenge is an international game design competition that invites youth to create digital social impact games. The program uses youth interest in video games to develop coding and digital design skills, as well as problem solving, collaboration, creativity, and other critical STEAM skills. Winners will receive games, technology, theme-related swag, and experiential prizes. The winning team that creates the Game of the Year will receive a \$10,000 scholarship (divided amongst team members).

WHY SHOULD I LEAD A TABLETOP GAME JAM?

Whether you're an educator, community leader, or youth mentor, a tabletop game jam offers an inclusive way to engage young people with game design and provide access and an entry point for many more students into the Student Challenge. You will build community and inspire more students across your community to become impact game creators. Running a G4C-supported game jam connects participants to a global movement where games are used as tools for positive change.

WHAT TOOLS ARE USED TO DEVELOP GAMES IN THE GAME JAM?

No digital tools are required for this Game Jam, making it highly accessible.

Participants will create physical prototypes using everyday materials.

WHAT DOES AN AGENDA LOOK LIKE? (SAMPLE)

Time	Description
9:00 - 9:10AM (10 mins)	Welcome & Introductions
9:10 - 9:30AM (20 mins)	Game Modification Warm-Up
9:30 - 10:15AM (45 mins)	The Parts of a Game - Theme Activity
10:15 - 11:00AM (45 mins)	Ideation & Prototyping
11:00 - 11:30AM (30 mins)	Lunch
11:30 - 1:00PM (90 mins)	Game Making
1:00 - 1:30PM (30 mins)	Game Pitches/Share-Out

RUNNING A TABLETOP GAME JAM

SETTING UP YOUR EVENT

Where should I plan to host the Game Jam?

Choice of venue is an important consideration for a successful game jam. Consider the following:

- **Seating and Workspace:** Use available surfaces such as classroom desks, floor mats, or shared tables where students can comfortably collaborate and create.
- **Clear Work Areas:** Ensure there is enough space for students to spread out materials like paper, cards, and tokens, even if it means rotating groups for prototyping.
- **Flexible Space Use:** Maximize open space for movement and playtesting by rearranging furniture or using outdoor areas when safe and practical.
- **Multi-Purpose Areas:** If breakout rooms are unavailable, create distinct zones for brainstorming, prototyping, and testing by using seating arrangements or visual markers (e.g., tablecloths, signs).
- **Pitch Space:** Designate a shared area where teams can present their finished games. This can be as simple as gathering everyone in a circle, using a corner of the room, or even presenting games at their tables for a rotating showcase.

What type of staffing will I need?

Choice of venue is an important consideration for a successful game jam. Consider the following:

- **Lead Facilitator:** Guides the event flow, explains activities, introduces the social impact themes, and helps participants understand the basics of tabletop game design.
- **Event Coordinator:** Manages logistics such as venue setup, participant registration, and material distribution. This person ensures the event stays on schedule and helps with any challenges that arise during the jam.
- **Support Staff:** Depending on the number of participants, additional support may be needed for tasks such as:
 - Assisting with participant supervision and group dynamics.
 - Helping with material distribution and cleanup.
 - Taking photographs or documenting the event.
 - Managing snacks or meals if provided.
 - Offering encouragement and creative input during the design process.
 - Unlocking and securing the venue if necessary.

RUNNING A TABLETOP GAME JAM

SETTING UP YOUR EVENT

How should I advertise and collect invitations?

- **Create a Simple Registration Form:** If internet access is available, use free tools like Google Forms for participant sign-ups. For offline options, consider paper sign-up sheets at schools, libraries, or community centers.
- **Use Word-of-Mouth and Local Networks:** Engage local leaders, teachers, and community groups to spread the word.
- **Social Media Outreach (if applicable):** If the community has access to social media, create posts highlighting the event details and how to join. Use platforms like WhatsApp or Facebook groups where community members are active.
- **Collect Participant Contact Information:** If possible, gather basic details like names and contact numbers to follow up with participants.
- **Send a Reminder:** Provide a friendly reminder 1-2 days before the event, either through a group message, phone call, or in-person reminder at schools or community hubs.

What materials will I need?

- **Logistics:**
 - [Welcome sign](#)
 - Registration list
 - Name tags
 - Board or big screen with projector
 - A camera to take photos
 - [Participation & Media release forms](#) (1 per student)
- **Facilitation Materials:**
 - [Game Design Teacher's Guide](#) (for your reference)
 - [Parts of a Game Handout](#) (1 per student)
 - [Game Design Worksheet](#) (1 per student)
- **Design Materials** (about one "package" of each for every 15 students)
 - Cardboard or paper for creating game boards and cards.
 - Index cards, post-its for prototyping.
 - Markers, pens, and pencils for designing and decorating.
 - Dice, coins, or similar for random mechanics.
 - Scissors and glue for assembling components.
 - Recyclable or found materials for tokens, game pieces, or decorative elements.

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

TIME

duration is flexible depending on scheduling

DESCRIPTION

Welcome and Introductions (10 mins)

Introduce the Student Challenge and the goals of the Game Jam. Review the agenda, go over any logistics such as rules of the space, lunch, etc.

Game Modification Warm-Up: Parts of a Game (20 mins)

The goal is to modify a common game to be about one of the 3 themes found on the [Student Challenge website](#). You can either choose to focus your game jam on all three themes or choose just one that is important to your community. This will get students thinking creatively and become familiarized with the game design process. First, start with a simple, common game such as Tic-Tac-Toe, Thumb War, Staring Contest, Rock-Paper-Scissors or any well-known game in your region. Choose one that would match the themes well.

Students get into groups of 2-4 and follow this simple process:

1. Play the original game
2. Brainstorm an idea
3. Playtest to try it out
4. Make changes to make it more fun or thematic

For example, in a game of Rock-Paper-Scissors modified for nature preservation, the symbols could be changed to Mountains (rock) for protecting landscapes, Trees (paper) for conserving forests, and Water Drops (scissors) for water conservation. After playing, do a short reflection, either publicly or in a think-pair-share format, on the following questions: What did you change about the original game? Was it fun and theme-appropriate? How did your team collaborate?

The Parts of a Game (5m)

To get students more steeped in the language of games, introduce the 6 parts of a game, using [Parts of a Game Handout](#). Soccer is a great example to use when introducing these 6 parts of the game.

- **Space:** Where does the game take place?
- **Goal:** How do you win?
- **Challenge:** What stands between you and the goal?
- **Core Mechanics:** What actions do players take repeatedly to reach the goal?
Components: What are the things needed to play?
- **Rules:** How is play structured? What can and can't players do? Go over this list, then identify the parts of the game the group just modified. Then, invite them to identify the parts of a different game as a group.

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

TIME

duration is flexible depending on scheduling

DESCRIPTION

Theme Activity (45 mins)

On our [website](#), we have provided dozens of theme-related teaching and learning resources. For this part of your game jam, you can choose to have students focus on all three themes or just one that is essential to your school community. Once you access the resources, you can choose how you want students to dive into the theme content.

Ideation and Prototyping (45 minutes)

Agenda

5m – Introduction:

Explain the challenge and introduce ideation and prototyping by example.

10m – Brainstorm:

Explore game ideas. Use the theme activities as a source of inspiration.

15m – Prototype:

Use the materials to create a basic paper version of the digital game.

5m – Playtest:

The tester should pretend as if they are playing the game and the designer should explain how the game works.

5m – Reflect:

What did you learn?
How might you plan your game differently now?

The goal is to begin the game design process by first brainstorming ideas and creating a simple prototype. This helps students imagine the design of the game independent of the materials required to create it. This activity is for groups of 2-4. During the challenge, make available to students the paper prototyping materials, but be mindful no group monopolizes too many. By the end, the group should have created and playtested their prototype and documented the design using the Parts of a Game worksheet.

Testing a prototype should involve a tester interacting with the prototype as if it were playing a game and the designer explaining how the game works. Prototypes should focus on game concept and mechanics rather than the nitty-gritty of the gameplay.

(30 minutes)

LUNCH

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

TIME

duration is flexible depending on scheduling

DESCRIPTION

Digital Game Challenge (90 minutes)

Agenda

5m – Introduction:

Explain the challenge, prepare materials to work on the game.

5m – Brainstorm:

Think of ideas to improve the game based on the prototype playtest.

45m – Prototype:

Make the game playable, focusing on the essentials first.

10m – Playtest:

Test the game with team members and/or other jammers.

25m – Iterate:

Make more changes based on playtests.

The goal is to create a tabletop game around the theme of the day. This is the lengthiest and most challenging part of the jam, but also has the least amount of constraints. Structure the time using the game design process to keep it well-paced (see template below). This activity is for the same groups that created the prototypes.

Game Pitches/ Share-out (90 minutes)

At the end of the day, have each group pitch their game and demonstrate it to everyone else. This is an important payoff moment that allows everyone to view and appreciate the day's work. You can also use this time to encourage students to participate in the Student Challenge, directing those who are ready to submit right now to the submission page.

For large jams (10+ groups), do this "science fair" style, where students stay at their tables and pitch to visitors. For small jams (10 or less groups), do this "presentation" style, where each group comes up and presents to the whole group for 2-3 minutes each.

STUDENT CHALLENGE THEMES and SDGs

Each year Games for Change introduces social impact themes inspired by the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) by partnering with NGOs all over the world. Each theme is meant to inspire student creators to learn about a pressing social issue and design a game around their learning. Social impact themes elevate civic engagement, ignite curiosity, and inspire students to research and design original impact games. ALL competition submissions must reflect ONE of the three social impact themes.



THEME #1

PEACEFORMERS CHALLENGE



The Issue: It is more likely for a society to be a peaceful place when everyone has the resources they need to survive and thrive, such as water, shelter, electricity, access to healthy food, freedom, and access to education. Catastrophes like violence and natural disasters can make it really hard for people to have these needs met, and people in power must make difficult decisions about how to ensure their citizens have the resources they need. What would you do in that situation?

The Game Design Prompt: Design a game in an imagined world where players need to take action about how resources are shared and divided. The main goal is to keep the peace among all groups in a fair and equitable way in your game civilization.

Theme Resources can be found [HERE](#).

Which SDG is this connected to?



Supported by



<https://wpdi.org/>

THEME #2

NURTURE YOURSELF WITH NATURE



The Issue: Eco-anxiety is defined as a chronic fear of environmental doom; young people, in particular, are feeling the effects of the climate crises on their mental health, voicing their concerns about the future of planet Earth. One way to ease these worries is by nurturing a strong connection to nature, which can be achieved through these 5 pathways: sensory contact with the natural world, taking time to appreciate the beauty of nature, thinking about the meaning and signs of nature, finding an emotional bond with and love for nature, and showing compassion and care for nature. It's important to note that not everyone has equal access to nature. We must listen and learn with the communities we wish to engage as we face the challenges of climate change.

The Game Design Prompt: Imagine the powerful role nature can play in boosting the mental health and well-being of young people while also easing eco-anxiety. Your challenge? Design a game that not only educates players about their personal bond with nature but also guides them through the five pathways to deepen that connection. Get ready to inspire discovery, foster resilience, and embark on a journey that connects hearts and minds with the natural world.

Theme Resources can be found [HERE](#).

Which SDG is this connected to?



Supported by

earthwatch
EUROPE

<https://earthwatch.org.uk/>

THEME #3

OUTPLAY HUNGER



The Issue: Hunger is a big problem affecting nearly 1 in 10 people worldwide. It's not just about feeling hungry – it's also when someone doesn't have enough food to stay healthy and active. Hunger makes it hard for kids to learn in school. Many children miss classes because their families can't afford food, or they struggle to focus when their stomachs are empty. You might think hunger happens because there's not enough food, for example, because of war or natural disasters, but that's not always true. Often, it's because food isn't distributed fairly, some people can't afford nutritious food, and a lot of good food goes to waste.

Did you know that about one-fifth of all food produced worldwide is lost or wasted? Meanwhile, many people eat foods that aren't very healthy or nutritious. To solve the hunger problem, we need to improve how we produce and distribute food, learn more about healthy eating, and work together to make sure everyone has enough good food. You can help too! By learning about hunger and making smart food choices. Can you help us outplay hunger?

The Game Design Prompt: Think about two important hunger challenges: How to reduce food loss and waste, and how to achieve a healthy food diet in your school, community, or country context. Using a design tool of your choice, design a game on either of those two challenges in a way that informs and encourages your players to make a difference.

Theme Resources can be found [HERE](#).

Which SDG is this connected to?



Supported by



World Food
Program USA

<https://www.wfpusa.org/>

TABLETOP GAME SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Prompt

Design a physical game inspired by one of the G4C Student Challenge themes with materials that can be played in real life. Your game could be a card game, board game, role-playing game, or any game that involves physical components.

Student Eligibility

- Use available surfaces such as classroom desks, floor mats, or shared tables where students can comfortably collaborate and create.
- Students must be between the ages of 10-18
 - If they are ages 10-13, they will submit to the “Junior” competition categories.
 - If they are ages 14-18, they will submit to the “Senior” competition categories.
- All Students under the age of 18 must have parent/guardian/teacher consent to enter, and they will need their support in completing the online submission form.
- Students can either work on their games alone or as part of a team of 2-4 students
- If students are working as a team, only one student per team submits.
- Students or educators must have a valid email address (this is how we will let you know if you’re a Finalist!)

Game Eligibility

- Must be about one of this year’s social impact themes
- Expert judges must be able to understand the game, so please include a translation into English if the game is created in a different language.
- Must be submitted to the competition portal via PDF slideshow OR a Video.

For PDF Slideshow (can be created with Google Slides or Powerpoint) include:

- A slide with your game title and all teammates’ names
- A slide describing the rules
- A slide describing the challenge of your game
- A slide describing the goal of your game
- A slide describing the components and space of your game
- A slide describing the core mechanics of the game
- A slide describing what theme your game addresses and how your game makes the world a better place
- Photos of all of your game pieces (or playtesters playing it!) should be included throughout the presentation to help describe your game

TABLETOP GAME SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

For video include:

- Short introduction of the team members and game title
- Footage of players playtesting the game
- Explanation of the rules and game play
- Explanation of the challenge of the game
- Explanation of the goals of the game
- Explanation of the core mechanics of the game
- Explanation of how your game addresses the theme and makes the world a better place
- Explanation of the components and space of the game, with close up shots of the game components
- Video should not exceed 5 minutes

More details on the submission process you can find in [the Student Challenge Competition Handbook](#).

[Submission portal](#) is open till 18th April 2025.

TABLETOP GAME JUDGING CRITERIA

All games submitted to one of the three theme categories of the competition will be evaluated using this rubric:

Games will be assessed on these 4 criteria.	<i>Use of Theme</i>	<i>Game Play</i>	<i>Aesthetics & Use of Platform</i>	<i>Fun Factor</i>
Benchmark Statements for Judging	<i>Through game play, players engage with important content relevant to one of this year's themes.</i>	<i>The rules of the game are clear, the game is playable and provides players meaningful choices while achieving the game's goals.</i>	<i>The game is well designed, legible, and includes components that are pleasing to look at.</i>	<i>Playing the game is an enjoyable and engaging experience.</i>

RESOURCES

- **Game Jam checklist** - Step-by-step guide to run a Game Jam efficiently.
- **Media Release Form** - Permission form for sharing student photos, videos, or work.
- **Parts of a Game Handout** - Overview of game components to share with students.
- **Game Design Worksheet** - Template for organizing game ideas and design process.

1. GAME JAM CHECKLIST

• Prep Phase

- Pick event Location
- Identify staffing (before, during and after event)
- Advertise
- Collect Materials

• Arrival Phase

- Check off student names on registration list as they arrive
- Make sure each student and parent signs release form
- Encourage students to create a name tag
- Collect attendee data (head count, approx. gender ratio)
- Check the stock of the design materials

• Jam Phase

- Take LOTS of pictures
- Post to social media and tag on behalf of G4C: @g4c and #g4cstudent

• Post-Jam Phase

- Clean Up event space
- Share attendee information and photos with G4C (tatiana@gamesforchange.org)
- Share pictures with G4C via Google Drive or another file sharing system
- Tell students more about the Student Challenge competition, if possible, direct them to the [Competition Page](#) on the Student Challenge website. Encourage them to keep improving their games and submit them to the competition. Details on the submission process and criteria are in the rubric below.

2. MEDIA RELEASE FORM

[Print-ready form available on Page 17.](#)

3. PARTS OF A GAME HANDOUT

[Print-ready handout available on Page 18.](#)

4. GAME DESIGN WORKSHEET

[Print-ready worksheet available on Page 19.](#)



**MEDIA CONSENT FORM TO PHOTOGRAPH, FILM OR VIDEOTAPE
A STUDENT FOR NON-PROFIT PURPOSES**

Student Name: _____ School: _____

I hereby consent to the above named students' participation in the G4C Game Jam on _____, hosted by _____. I understand that the game jam will be hosted in person and that students will interact with other students, staff, and partners.

I also consent to the taking of photographs, video and media (such as quotes or interviews) of the Student named above by _____ and sent to the non-profit Games for Change (G4C). I understand that the media may be made available publicly through the G4C Student Challenge website (www.gamesforchange.org/studentchallenge) and on program social media channels including YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. I also grant to G4C employees the right to edit, use, and reuse said products for non-profit purposes including use in print, on the internet, and all other forms of media.

I hereby release the organization and its agents and employees from all claims, demands, and liabilities whatsoever in connection with the above.

Games for Change is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Signature of Parent/Guardian/Student: _____ Date: _____

Email Address of Parent/Guardian/Student: _____

(if student is under 18)

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Relationship to Student: _____

THE 6 PARTS OF A GAME

1. SPACE

Where does the game take place?

2. GOAL

How do you win?

3. CHALLENGE

What is between you and your goal?

4. CORE MECHANICS

What actions are you constantly repeating?

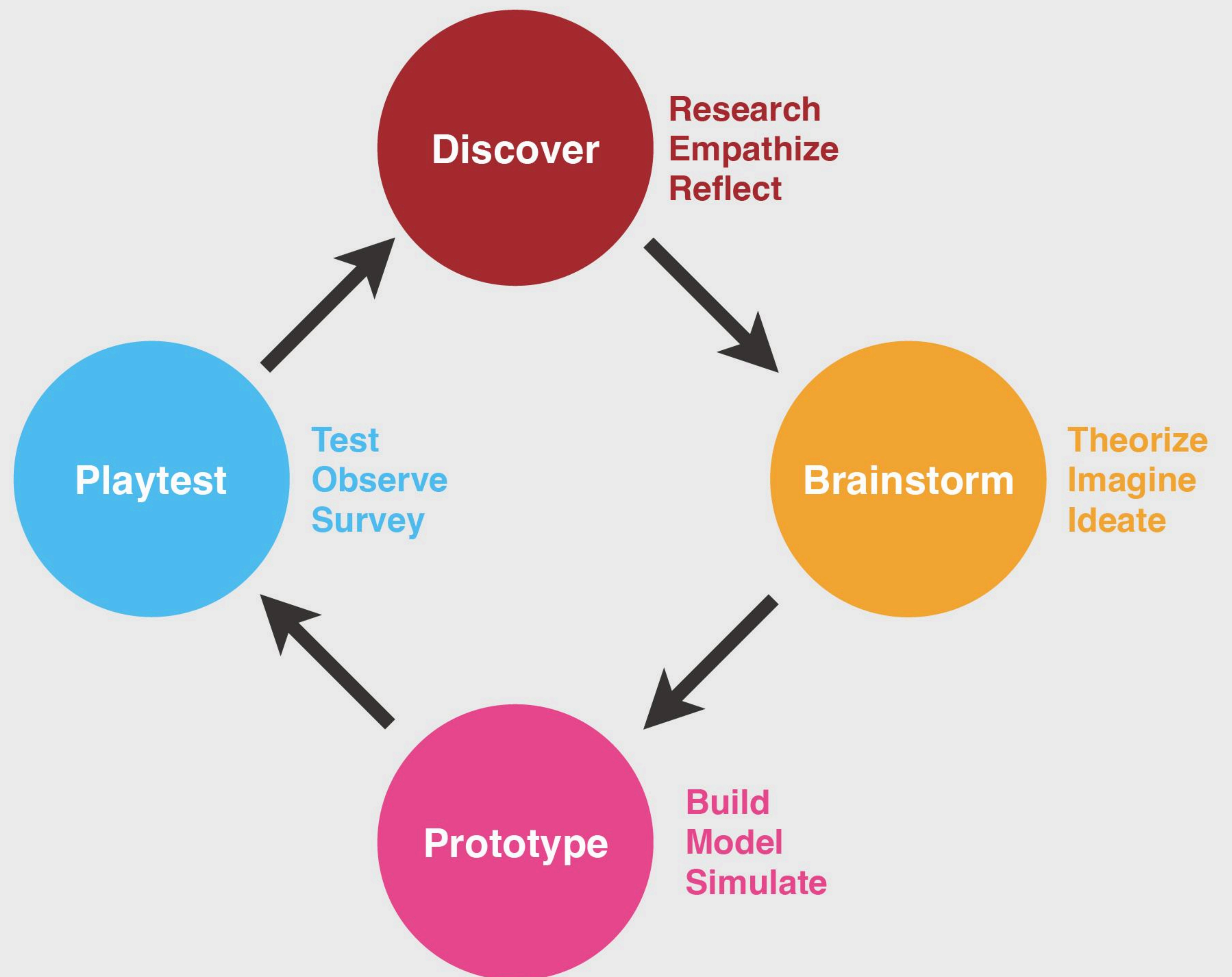
5. COMPONENTS

What are all the “pieces” necessary to play?

6. RULES

How is play structured?

THE DESIGN CYCLE



GAME TITLE:

Space (Where does your game take place?)

Goal (How do you win?)

Challenge (What stands between a player and the goal?)

Core Mechanics (What actions do players take?)

Components (What do you need to play?)

Rules (How does the game start? How is it structured? What can and can't players do?)

Keep going on the back if you need →



LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

If you have any questions, please check the [Student Challenge Competition Handbook](#) or email your question to our program coordinator at tatiana@gamesforchange.org.

