

# Board Game Rulebook Template

1. **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **General Administrative Details**
  - How many players can play the game?
  - What are the suggested ages for players of this game?
  - On average, how long does it take to play a single game?
3. **Introduction**
  - What is the background story or theme?
  - What can you say that will draw the players into the game world?
4. **Summary of the game system and objectives**
  - In GENERAL terms, how is the game played?
  - In GENERAL terms, what is the objective of the game?
5. **Components of the Game**
  - In GENERAL terms, what are the game pieces and what do they represent?
  - What game specific vocabulary do players need to know?
6. **Set-Up**
  - How do you set-up the game board at the beginning of the game?
  - What components do each of the players need to start the game?
7. **Basic Game Structure**
  - In what order does a turn/round/phase/etc. occur?
8. **Specific Game Structure**
  - Step by step, what happens on a turn? Explain concepts as they occur during a turn.
  - Would it be helpful to give an example?
  - Are there any special cases with circumstance specific rules?
9. **Ending the Game**
  - How do you know when the game is over?
  - How do you know who won the game?
10. **Appendix**
  - Is there any extra information that would be helpful or fun for players to know even if it's not necessarily a part of the rule system?

## Board Game Rulebook Rubric

Each of the following categories will be graded on a 0 – 4 scale as follows:

*0 – Nearly non-existent*

*1 – Needs significant improvement*

*2 – Does the bare minimum to meet expectations; still could be improved*

*3 – Is better than average; just needs minor improvements*

*4 – Excellent*

\_\_\_ **Theme** – Do the game purpose, mechanics, and structure complement the theme as written in the rulebook? Does the intro demonstrate a firm understanding of the theme?

\_\_\_ **Intro** – Does the introduction hook the reader’s interest in playing the game?

\_\_\_ **Exposition(x 4)** – Are the rules easily understood? Can the average person follow the rules without the game’s creator verbally explaining or demonstrating how to do it?

\_\_\_ **Visual Aides** – Do the game components (pieces, board, etc.) complement the theme and match the rulebook writing? Do illustrations in the rulebook make the rules more easily understood?

\_\_\_ **Organization** – Does the rulebook follow the given format or a similar logically organized format? Do the rules and examples move from general to specific?

\_\_\_ **Word Choice** – Are precise and succinct words and phrases used? Are all game specific vocab words defined?

\_\_\_ **Voice/Sentence Fluency** – Do the rules give succinct explanations without sounding choppy?

\_\_\_ **Conventions** – Is the rulebook free of grammar and spelling errors?

**Total score: \_\_\_\_\_ + 56 = Final Grade**

## 7 Rulebook Writing Tips

- 1) Use plain, conversational language and short, simple sentences whenever possible.
- 2) Assume your reader knows nothing about your game, but don't over explain things that are obvious. Just be careful when deciding whether something is obvious or not. Many things you think are obvious really are not. Err on the side of explaining more.
- 3) If something is difficult to explain, take particular care to word those steps clearly and unambiguously. That means make sure that your sentences cannot be interpreted any other way.
- 4) Be willing to change a rule to make it easier to play and explain. That's fine as long as the game maintains its balance.
- 5) Be consistent when using game terms. If you call a game piece the Lion in one section, don't call it the Cowardly Lion later in the rules. Especially be careful with terms like "phase" or "turn."
- 6) Use examples whenever the rules might not be clear. Italicize examples or use different sized margins so that it looks different from the actual rules.
- 7) Playtest the game by having someone else read the rules and play the game. If they don't understand how to do something without you verbally explaining or physically showing them, your rules aren't clear enough. Remember that people need to be able to pick up the game and play it out of the box.

*"Good rules are as concise and consistent as possible. Each sentence should be lean and not contain a single word that is unnecessary or can imply a rule you don't wish to imply. It sounds silly, but I like to think 'how would this work on Twitter' when writing rules, as it forces me to focus." – Grant Rodiek, Grant Rodiek Games*

*"Find an English major to read your rules over. They'll be able to tighten your writing, clarify any poorly-constructed sentences and check your grammar. If an English major's not available, any fresh set of eyes will help." – Cory Anotado, Paclude Games*

*"Play test, play test, play test! Then, if two or more people give the same suggestion... seriously consider it." –Jeremy Southard, Wastex Games*

## 7 Game Design Tips

Think about what would make a player want to play this game. Ultimately players should have fun, but what makes your game fun? Consider the following:

- 1) Does your game have an interesting theme?
  - a. Sometimes it helps to think like a story. Does your game have a clear protagonist(s) and antagonist(s)? Does it have rising tension? Is there a climactic point of the game (probably near the end)? You don't want a clear winner emerging too early in the game. Otherwise, there is no point in continuing to play.
- 2) Is your game easily playable? It shouldn't take too long to learn how to play or to set-up.
- 3) Is your game balanced? Does each player have a basically equal chance of winning?
  - a. Is your game challenging? If it's too easy to win, it's no fun.
- 4) Does your game reward players who use good strategies?
- 5) What sort of board would make the game rules the most interesting?
  - a. How does your game environment/theme interact with the players?
- 6) Should your game be cooperative or competitive?
  - a. How do players affect one another and interact in your game?
- 7) What is the replay value of your game? If players played again, would the same scenario at the end of the game happen or would a different result occur?
  - a. What parts of your game are based on chance? Random chance helps to give you new and interesting outcomes when playing the game multiple times. Chance can be introduced through the use of dice or through cards.
  - b. What parts of your game are based on choice? Many players prefer to be responsible for their own destiny by making choices. It's not always fun to roll seventeen ones in a row on a die if all you need is a six.