

WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN?

A GAME FOR GROWING IDEAS INTO GAMES

BY JOE BISZ

GAME RULES (Version 1.81)

Audience: For innovative Educators (all levels), Presenters, Training Managers, and Designers (Instructional, Content, or Game)

Length: 20-25 minutes

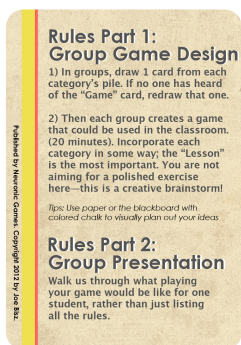
Players: Solo, or groups of 2-8 players. One game can handle 4 groups max (so up to 32 players)

**If you have more than 32 players, you'll need another copy of the game.*

**Teachers like to use this game with their students (Ages 11+) or in teacher workshops.*

Description: What does the lesson "Finding Citations," the game "Trivial Pursuit," and the mechanic "Bluffing" all have in common? WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN? is a brainstorming card game that works by the power of group collaboration. Your task is to enhance a traditional exercise with the mechanics of popular board games in only 20 minutes. If you're an educator, manager, or instructional designer, you will learn how to create quick non-digital learning games or training simulations, whether you're teaching the rules of citation or the rules of interviewing. If you're a game designer, you can generate ideas for any new game (whether educational or not).

Number of Players Per Group: WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN? works best with at least 4 players in a group if the players are highly experienced with game design. If most players in a group have not had this experience, 6 people is the minimum. Up to 8 people per group is fine. Respect these numbers for an optimal experience. *Note: The strength of this game is in group collaboration, so much of its depth will be lost playing it alone, especially if you have little experience with designing instructional games. Find some colleagues!*

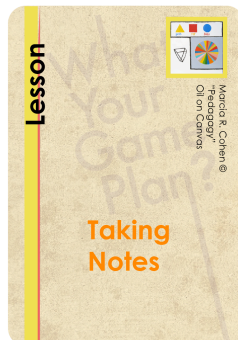


Quick Setup

- 1) **Supplies:** Get some paper and a pen!
- 2) **Prepare Piles:** If your game came with 4 green rule cards, assign one to each group of players. (The rule cards are unnecessary and were eventually removed from printing). Arrange the rest of the deck in 4 piles; from left to right, these should be one pile of Lessons, one pile of Games, one pile of Mechanics, and one pile of Actions. Turn each pile face-down so the cartoon die figure is on top, then shuffle each pile.

A Note to Game Designers: *If you're a professional game designer who is NOT making an educational game, do not use the Lesson cards. Instead, think about your general theme. Then draw TWO cards from the Mechanics pile in Step 5, and use BOTH of them. Some game designers tell me they find the Game card too constraining (but others appreciate it); if the Game card feels too restrictive, replace it with an additional Action or Mechanic.*

- 3) **Do You Need an Example?:** If most people haven't played, skip to the **Example of How to Play** below, find the cards mentioned there so everyone can see them, and read the example aloud. Then go back to Step 4.



- 4) **Ask for a Lesson:** Before you draw cards, you should ask if someone in your group can think of a lesson he or she teaches and would love to see turned into a game. Maybe something that students or employees find boring or difficult. Or a learning outcome of your organization, since the lesson can be any training objective. If so, use that idea as your group's lesson and do NOT draw a Lesson card in Step 5. The real value behind WHAT'S YOUR GAME PLAN? is in creating a game that will directly benefit you or your organization!
- 5) **Draw Cards:** Starting with the Lesson pile, flip over one card from left to right, four cards total. Each group needs to do this, so that each group has their own unique set of 4 cards in front of them.
- 6) **Make Game:** Set a timer; you have 20 minutes to make a game! With more than one group, everyone presents their game at the end.

Example of How to Play

- ◆ From the Lesson pile, I flip over the card “Taking Notes.” This means my goal is to create a game that will teach my students (or employees) how to take good notes.
- ◆ From the Game pile, I flip over “Trivial Pursuit,” and read the description. Whew; that’s one I actually know. (If I didn’t, I should pick a new Game card.)
- ◆ From the Mechanic pile, I flip over “Movement/Sport,” and read the description.
- ◆ From the Action pile, I flip over “Investigating.” (*Note: If this card did not come in your game, use “Trading.”*)

So I start thinking quickly. I remember that Trivial Pursuit has categories of information like History, Sports, etc. What can I add to my lesson “Taking Notes” that involves categories? Maybe the students are trying to assemble categories of information that represent different “methods” for taking notes (like quoting, or commenting in margins). I could assign each team of students a different text (ex. book, video lecture) to take notes on. Not bad; but so far I only incorporated the Game card into my Lesson. What about the Mechanic card “Movement/Sport”? Oh! The class pretends to be a relay team, and like the pie pieces in Trivial Pursuit, students have certain colored uniforms, or badges. Every few minutes I’ll say “Race!” and one student must run a copy of their most important note to another group, as long as that group has a note in a category that the student still needs. So it’s partly a cooperative game; the different student groups are trying to trade for the “best notes,” one from each category, and I will score them.

I take notes myself, and try to come up with at least one idea from each card. After 20 minutes, I stop. If what I wrote seems promising, I can expand it later, when I’m fresh. Better yet: run my idea by some interested colleagues.

After It’s Over: At the end of only 20 minutes, your game will probably feel wild and unfinished. **WHAT’S YOUR GAME PLAN?** is meant to be a fast-paced creative brainstorm. It shows you the possibilities of using game-based learning to enhance your ideas. A fully fleshed-out game takes collaboration, testing with your players or students, and countless revisions--just like an amazing exercise!



Don’t Feel Too Limited by the Category Cards: Note that the Game card you draw is just meant to inspire you. In my example above, I did not try to make my new game exactly like *Trivial Pursuit*. I did not even use a game board; I only had my students walk around the room. Borrow whatever concepts from the Game (and Mechanic and Action) card that you like. If you spent a few minutes honestly trying to incorporate a card, but it doesn’t seem to work, then draw ONE more card to replace it. Use at least one idea from each card, since it is the constraints that make the game. It is NOT a good idea to draw a second card from one category, then try and decide between the two, because this creates too much delay and overthinking. (Unless you are a real Game Designer, in which case you can decide between two cards of a category, but never three or more.) If you’d like longer definitions of the Game cards, visit my site below for a printable document.

For Organizations other than Schools: You may find that a few Lesson cards don’t really fit your organization, since they were designed with research-based organizations (like schools) in mind. You should interpret the Lessons broadly. For example, in school settings the Lesson “Finding Sources” refers to a student’s need to gather citations for a research paper. For non-schools, you might interpret this card as searching for articles that give you marketing leads, or gathering internal data for a needed report. If you can think of a better way to describe some of the key instructional objectives of your organization, then print (or handwrite) your new Lesson(s) on a label, and adhere that label to an unused Lesson card. But of course, the Lesson cards are only a warm-up. The best solution is to ask your group for a lesson.

Running the Game in a Workshop With Multiple Groups: A workshop is an excellent idea, and that is how Joe and the CUNY Games Network do it! Download the special files I made to assist you on my website’s “Facilitators” section. If you are paid a speaking fee when using this game, you are legally obliged to follow the additional instructions there.

About WHAT’S YOUR GAME PLAN? (www.joebisz.com/whatsyourgameplan): As of July 2015, this game has been featured at 50+ conferences and workshops. It has evolved, with expansions underway. At my website you can purchase the game and related supplies, get on my contact list, or read feedback from schools and companies on how they use it.

About the Designer... and Finding More Educational Games Resources: Dr. Joe Bisz is a game designer, writer, and Professor of English at the City University of New York. He has led nearly 100 workshops to faculty, staff, and businesspeople on using game-based learning. **WHAT’S YOUR GAME PLAN?** makes for an incredible team-building or professional development workshop. To invite Joe to speak at your school or company and to see what kinds of interactive presentations or consulting he can do for you, visit joebisz.com. You’ll also find the best board games by discipline, recommended readings, and one-click Amazon buying lists that I’ve organized to save you time (featuring game design components like blank game boards and cards, and supplies for any conference/workshop you’re running).