

DAGWOOD DOGS

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BCM300 - GAME MAKING

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OVERVIEW

THEME: NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING

“You’re a connoisseur of Dagwood Dogs from around the world. You hunger to find the world’s best Dagwood Dog, the “Pronto Pup” and will do anything to make sure you get your hands on it. The Dagwood Dog Division of the World has announced that there are seven marvellous creations hidden around the world that must be found, the person who collects five of these doggos first will win the ultimate prize, the “Pronto Pup.”

However, you are not alone in this journey to collect the Dagwood Dogs, there are other connoisseurs who will do anything to taste and devour the “Pronto Pup” before you do, undermining your progress at every turn. There will be delicious consequences along this journey as you conspire with and against these saboteurs to be the master of the “Pronto Pup” and taste sweet victory.”

BACKGROUND

GAME GENRE

Dagwood Dogs is an Ameritrash (boardgamegeek, 2019) style hobby game bearing the attributes of a family game through the art style and simple rules. This card collecting game, where “the magic circle” (Huizinga, 1955) is demanded through the degree of abstraction utilised, demands sabotage and selfishness in a game world where morality and fairness are unknown (Sutton-Smith, 1997). Dagwood Dogs in this way, teaches people, on a philosophical level, to manipulate, steal and be selfish to win the game (Moore, 2019)

Dagwood Dogs employs a hybrid of Caillios’ (1958) division of games being both *agon* and *alea*, a ludic game of competition with aspects of chance riddled throughout.

COMPARABLE GAMES

Dagwood Dogs is reminiscent of classic family games such as *UNO* with an artistic style aesthetic and cheeky Machiavellian gameplay like Exploding Kittens. Unstable Unicorns is a very similar style game with comparable themes and aesthetic. To ensure differentiation between Dagwood Dogs and these games, a degree of asymmetry in mechanics has been utilised to separate correlation (Knox, 2017).



[Source.](#)

MARKETING & PRODUCTION COSTS

Dagwood Dogs will be employing smaller, standardised rectangular box arrangements along with cardboard player mats in the shape of a kennel for players to put their kennelled dogs in, cutting down on costs. The box will include a folded leaflet for rules to save on costs as this game does not require a plethora of rules as cards have majority of rules and mechanics on them (Rollins, 2017).

Average costs within the competing and comparable market ranges from \$15-\$25, with these cards being high quality and materiality of employing cardboard mats within the first box. The estimated costs from Cardtamundi (2019) are \$12.17 AU for each game, therefore the best price to sell this game for would be from \$20-\$25, while remaining competitive.

Along with the starting set of the game, Dagwood Dogs will be retailing and selling separate expansion packs correlating to specific regions, along with playmats with unique art. These playmats will retail for \$20-25 AU. When comparing to other marketed products and expansion packs, like Cards Against Humanity, it would make sense for Dagwood Dogs expansion pack to be \$20 with 50 extra cards to add and arrange the deck. The overall expansion of this game could be glorious with cultures from around the world having their own specific editions (Asia, Europe) with different breeds of dogs and hot-dog like foods.

PUBLISHERS

Australia's main physical board game retailer, Good Games, also publish. Utilising this retailer to target hobby gamers and children alike would be effective in narrowing down the target market. In an outward expansion internationally, instead of competing with games like Unstable Unicorns and Exploding Kittens, it would be beneficial to align with the same publishers as our competition. TeeTurtle is a publisher which not only has Unstable Unicorns but stocks a plethora of other cute titles (TeeTurtle, 2019). Breaking Games would also be a suitable publisher with many card-based games (BreakingGames, 2019). A family style publisher such as Hasbro would not be a good fit with the target of Dagwood Dogs, as it is too niche for their brand.

RULES

Rules can be accessed [here](#).

KEY MECHANICS

The core algorithm here is for players to use the game mechanics to manoeuvre themselves into favourable positions with their action cards in an attempt to hinder their opponents from collecting dogs while simultaneously collecting Dagwood Dogs for themselves to win the game.

Throughout playtesting, I found the mechanics to be more important than the theme, just as Halcomb (2017) refers to, the remediation of mechanics and theme “comes during development if your design starts to break down. When you discover parts of your game that don't work and you need to make changes, you have to decide which is more important: the story you have been telling, or the mechanics of play.”

Below are the key mechanics of Dagwood Dogs:

- There are 101 cards in the deck (101 Dalmatians)
 - o 49 of these cards are Dagwood Dogs which are collected.
 - There are 7 cards representing each dog which can be collected.
 - o The other 52 are action cards which can be played.
- Five Dagwood Dogs must be collected.
 - o These dogs are represented by different colours and have a hotdog icon in their left/right hand corner.
- Players are dealt 7 cards at the start of the game.
 - o At the start of each players turn, 1 card is drawn. If the player has less than 2 cards in their hand, they pick up 2 cards instead of 1.

- Only 1 action card can be played per turn (with the exception of “Cowardly Dog” which can be played multiple times during a turn by any player).
- Only 1 Dagwood Dog can be kennelled per turn.
- Dagwood cards, Action cards and the Kennel.
 - Dagwood: Seven different doggos inspired by food from around the world. These cards can either be put into your kennel or be played as an action card. You need the seven different doggos in your kennel to win the game.
 - JaleDoggo:
 - Mexican- hotdog in a taco (chihuahua).
 - Makes someone discard a random card
 - Corgi’s Crumpets:
 - UK - Crumpet Corgi
 - Skip someone’s turn.
 - Action: These cards will either help you by giving you an advantage or by sabotaging your opponents.
 - Inu-Bath
 - The player next to you misses a turn.
 - Cowardly Dog
 - Chihuahua who is scared or doggo in a cow costume.
 - This action card can be played during another person’s turn. Cancels the action card being used.
- Kennel: The kennel is a safe bank mechanic that is inspired by the card game “Gin Rummy”.
- When a player is asked to “discard” this card goes on the bottom of the deck.

CORE GAMEPLAY LOOP

The core algorithm of this game forces players to use their cards against their opponents to gain more advantages positions to win. A turn in Dagwood Dog is made up of these three phases, in order:

1. Draw phase (player draws a card).
2. Action phase (player uses an action card and then puts it in the played pile- only one action card can be played per turn. “Cowardly Dog” is unaffected by this rule).
3. Kennel phase (player can put a Dagwood Dog from their hand into their kennel - only one dog can be placed in the kennel per turn turn).

The only time that these phases may not be fulfilled in each “round” or loop is if an ability card such as a skip (“Inu-Bath”) is played.

THREE ACT STRUCTURE

- First Act: Set up, shuffling, dealing cards and formulating strategies with the cards in each players hand.
- Second Act: Collection of your own Dagwood Dogs and the sabotage of your opponents to stop them from winning.
- Third Act: A player has the chance of winning, players may unite to take them down. It is at this point where everyone is a threat, and someone will win shortly.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

IDEATION

Dagwood Dogs came to me in a food coma. It was after I had come home from the Easter Show, in Sydney, feeling extremely ill after having one of those disgracefully delicious Dagwood Dogs. It felt like a punch in the gut (because I was literally having cramps from all the horrific food that I ate) but I decided that I would create a new theme which surrounded Pronto Pups and Dagwood Dogs. I have a love for kawaii aesthetics, dogs and food, why not combine all three and make a game which is reminiscent of exploding kittens and unstable unicorns.

The end goal for this game was to have a loveable aesthetic which correlated to a children's game with a devilish twist and backstabbing like the game *UNO*. Material components would be high-quality cards, a kennel piece (the size of monopoly pieces) to signify who's turn it is and cardboard playmats with similar art to that of the cards being played.

PLAYTESTING

Throughout playtests I played with a variety of different people to gain opinions from individuals from different backgrounds and groups.

Playtest 1 - Length: 22 minutes.

10th May - 2 & 4 Players

My first playtest included 2 players in the first round and 4 players in the second round.

With 2 players:

Positives	Aspects that need to be addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Pretty fun, I loved the sabotaging elements."- The game ran smoothly, no bugs or elements that needed to be fixed, just a lot of cards that we didn't get to play through.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Game finished quite quickly.

With 4 players:

Positives	Aspects that need to be addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“The looping effect of cowardly dog on top of cowardly dogs is really really fun.”</i> - The entire game play element was different with four people as it felt like there was more at stake with choosing who to sabotage with specific cards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Found that there was a lack of drawing power as people could put down multiple Dagwood Dogs at a time. <i>The mechanic of drawing two instead of one when down to 2 cards was then implemented and it worked well.</i>

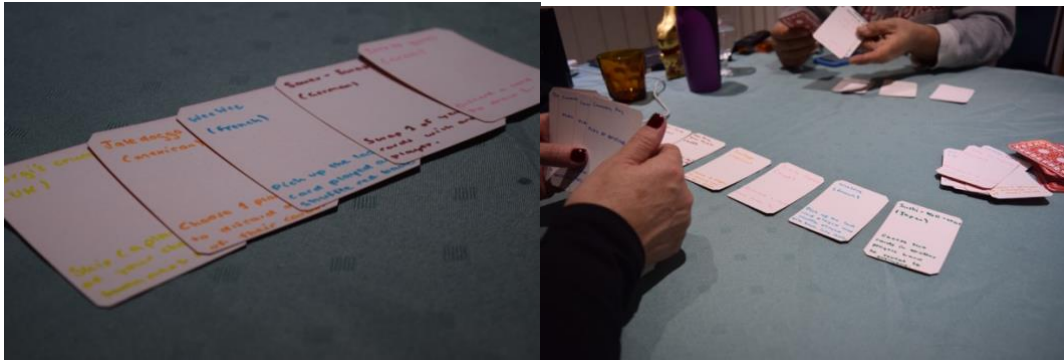
Playtest 2 - Length: 31 minutes

15th May - 4 Players

- *“There was no pazzaz or wow factor, winning seemed like it was very luck based.”*
- *“There’s no really fun card to use apart from a cowardly dog loop, like how there’s draw 4’s in UNO, there no card that screws someone over badly and I was wanting to screw over other people so bad.”*

I gathered from my play testers that they felt there was a lack of strategy and weren’t enjoying the gameplay due to this. It also felt like people could sweep the game in very few turns with the ability to put down multiple dogs at once. Therefore, the decision was made to use a three-act structure for a turn. This being:

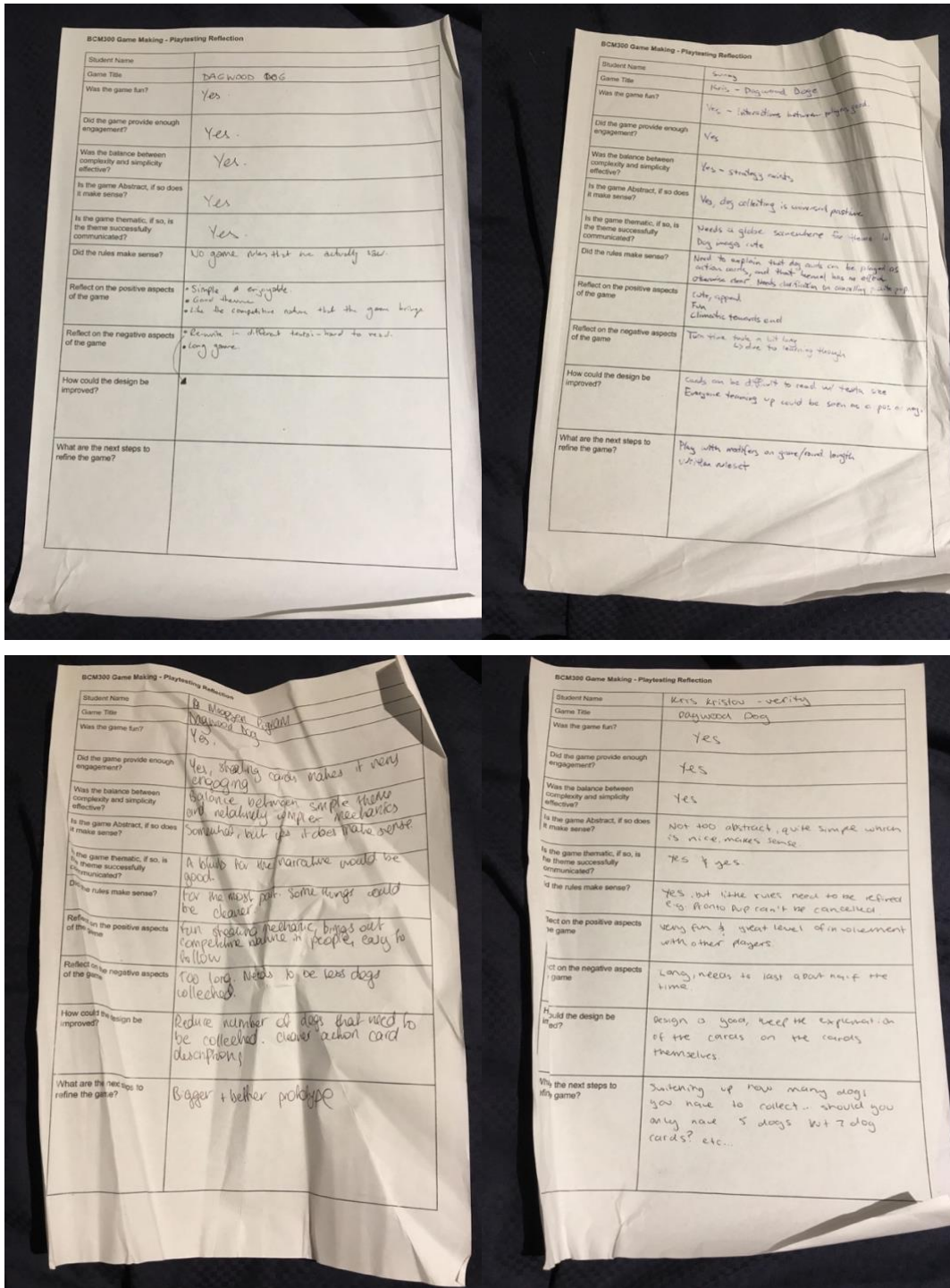
1. Draw.
 2. Action card.
 3. Kennel dogs.
- To add more character and an element to “screw over” your opponents, I decided to make another card and change a few cards/mechanics to balance the game.
 - o “Who let the dogs out” - one player plays this card and can put three of another players kennelled dogs back into the deck - if another player needs these hounds there is a chance, they can get them, if someone is going to win this can be played.
 - o Can only put one dog in your kennel each turn.
 - o Changing double scoop to triple scoop - there isn’t enough drawing power in this game. When a player puts
 - o Pronto pup conception to make the game more climatic and less predictable.



Playtest 3 - Length: 52 minutes

17th May - 5 Players

- The new “Who let the dogs out” card made for some hilarious and fun interactions between players, however, it made the game for way to long. I had to implement a change to my mechanics, game rules and change/add cards to balance out the game’s length with fun and different abilities.



Summary of feedback:

Positives	Aspects that need to be addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stealing cards is a great mechanic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Can we make more cards with this ability instead? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The game took to long x4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Fewer dogs to collect, less powerful abilities, balancing is important here.

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Should there be a cost for this ability to balance?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brings out competitiveness with a rush at the end to collect for the climax. Great level of involvement and engagement with other players. - Simple rules to follow, complex card abilities and rules. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Keeping the descriptions on the cards is better than trying to go to a rulebook to find them.</i> - Collecting is rewarding/satisfying. - Need some physical attributes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A dog kennel, a world globe. - Everyone teaming up on one person can be seen as a positive or a negative, depends on players, amount of people playing, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Change from 7 dogs to collect to 5. - Discard pile had to be made clear. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Was it a separate pile? o Worked well as we placed them on the bottom of the deck. - Cleaner action card descriptions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Employ iconography. o Make art for the cards. - Rules of abilities MUST be refined. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Pronto Pup unable to be cancelled. Is this fair? Must be made known in the rulebook.</i> -
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Playtest 4: Length 15 minutes

24th May - 4 Players

Hello fellow sabotee!

Here is your feedback thingy from your game:

Was the game fun? Yes! Any game where you can sabotage another player from winning always is (isn't that right Kris? 😊)

Engagement? Definitely. Each ability card offers enough engagement with other players which make it more fun using against others

Complexity & Simplicity? For a dumb dumb like me, was confusing at the start but with easily a few rounds it came nice and easy to play, though still having to think and play your cards strategically

Abstract? No, everything understood nicely!

Thematic? Yeah, bloody DOGGOS!!! Title of game and play cards all doggo themed, which was communicated prior to starting the game
YEWWW BOIII

Rules? I think make very simple and detailed rule book for your next step and see if people can play it without you having to explain XXX

Positive aspects? Game is fun and engaging for audience as it offers people to work strategically on what cards to play. I like the pluto pup (i think thats what the card was called?) where you NEED that card in order to actually win. Cards seemed like they were strategically and mathematically made as it seems correct amount of cards were used!

Negative? No negative aspects AS I WON AND BEAT YOUUUUUU

Game design? Maybe include some doggo picture for the kennels. Paw prints on cards etc. Distinct colours separating breeds of dogs is a good idea like you did!

Next steps? Can't think of an ways to modify your game- well played!
GOOD JOB BUDDY XXOXO



Positives	Aspects that need to be addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Length was shortened compared to last play test after changes were implemented.- Playtesters liked the aesthetics of the game and sabotaging mechanics.- Physical ability cards are fun.<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Hands to the sky, if people know them then they are prepared, makes the game fun and rewarding if you know it and engaging if you don't.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Attempted to play with 6 dogs being the winning amount, was still to long. Had the same problems as last time. <i>Changed the game to 5 instead and the game ran a lot quicker and retained the "fun" factor.</i>

Playtest 5: Length 24 minutes

25th May - 4 Players

This playtest involved playing with alcohol to identify if Dagwood Dogs was a versatile game.

Positives	Aspects that need to be addressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- "It made me hate people, so it was a good game."- "I want pictures." - loved the aesthetic of the game and wanted more cards to be produced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The descriptions of the cards were still hard to understand from a new players point of view: <i>Change "who" discards and who looks at the card (when you choose a card to discard, is it random? - clearer descriptions).</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">o "Choose randomly from another players hand. A card to discard.-

Playtest 6: Length 12 minutes

31st May - 3 Players

- Game worked perfectly, no feedback.



ITERATION

Conception

From the conception of this game we had seven different doggos that you had to collect to win the game. You could put down as many Dagwood Dogs as you wanted to in your turn along with one ability card. Once you had all seven, you won the game.

In this conception, I did not realise the immediate flaws I would come to within my playtesting.

Iteration 1

This iteration was in-between playtests 1 & 2. As I found there was nothing making the game exciting, I attempted to implement cards that could take away from players collecting and adding to the sabotage factor of the game (Who Let The Dogs Out). This is when I decided that the mechanics of the game could be tweaked to make the game more complex.

Utilising a turn structure also worked for the better, made turns less chaotic and shorter as there was less to think about but added a complex layer of strategy as players had to choose whether to put a Dagwood Dog down as an ability or kennel it.

At this point, the end goal of the game was clear, and the finish line could be reached within a suitable time limit with varying degrees of complexity.

Iteration 2

This iteration stage underwent the most changes. After adding “Who Let The Dogs Out” into Dagwood Dogs it made the collection and card stealing effects from other cards a lot more exciting, adding weight to what we utilised in our turns. In this iteration, I also added the card “Pronto Pup” as a condition to win the game (when this card is played, and you have seven dogs in your kennel you win the game). However, with a plethora of new cards adds an abundant layer of complexity meaning more time spent playing. During Playtest 3, the game went for 52 minutes which is the longest it has ever run. The majority of my feedback was to make the game shorter but keep the stealing cards as it made the game dynamic.

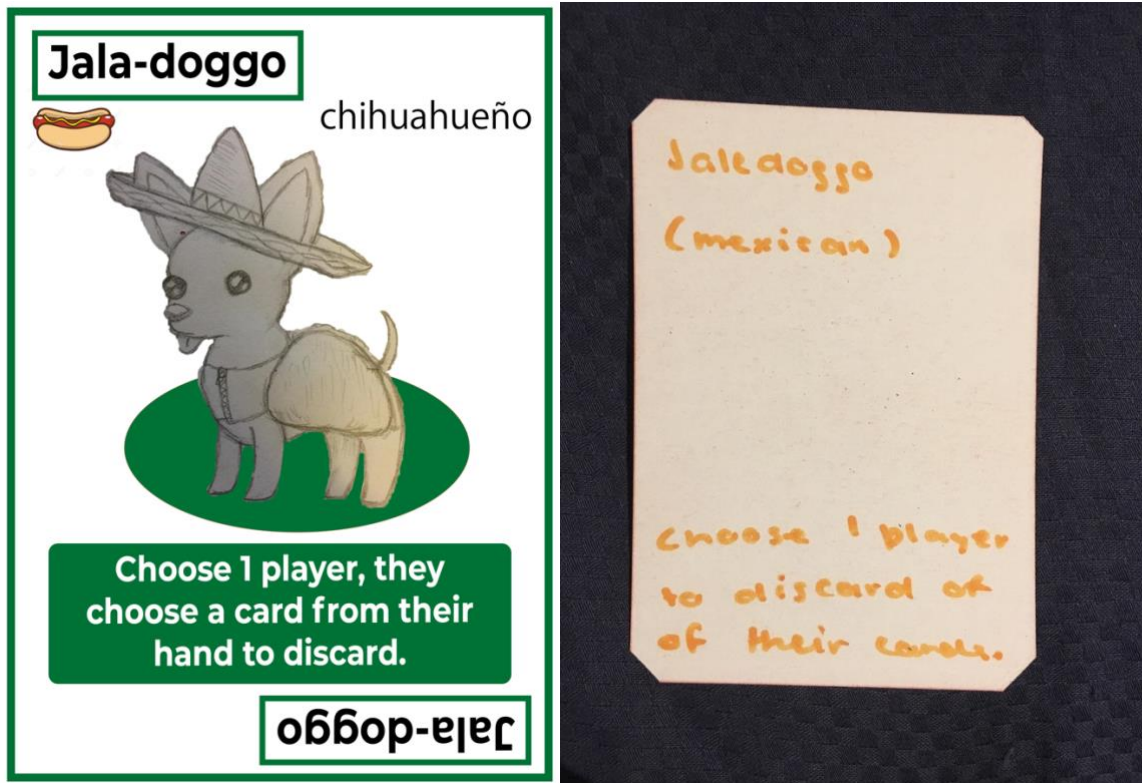
Another aspect that needed to be changed is that there was no art on the cards, playtesters mentioned that the theme needed these “characters.” I also received the feedback that card abilities were not identified and described properly with the wording being confusing. One such example was the *Jala-doggo*. I decided I would have to change the wording around to make it more understandable, especially for a younger demographic, and address some of these aspects in the rules such as “*discarded cards go on the bottom of the deck.*”

Jala-doggo Original Action: Choose a player to discard one of their cards.

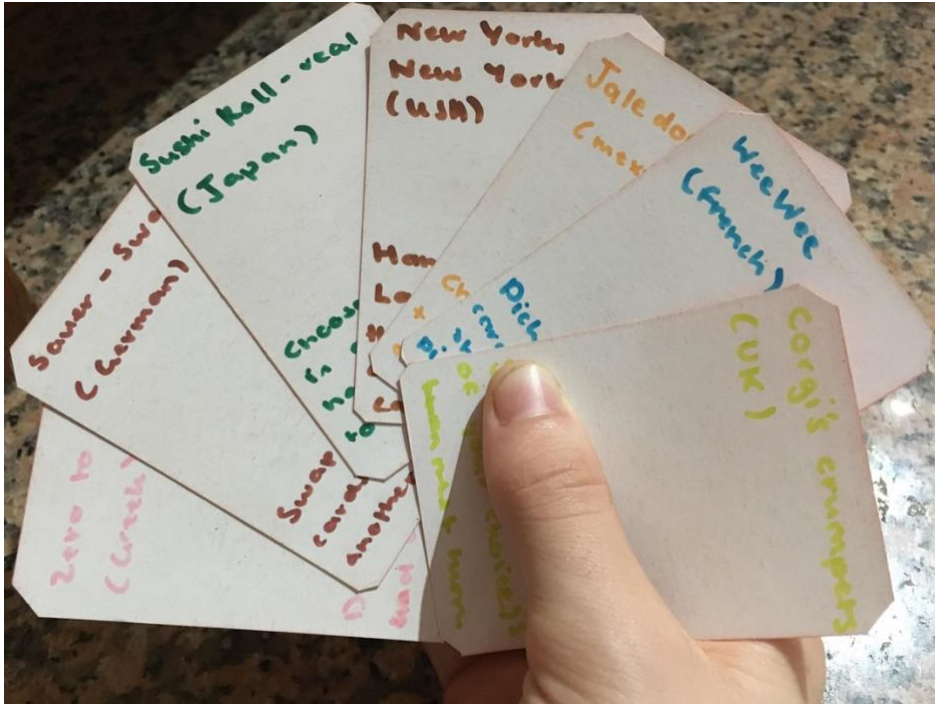
Jala-doggo New Action: *Choose 1 player, they choose a card from their hand to discard.*

Iteration 3

In the first part of this iteration, I changed the card aesthetics and description as displayed below:



Within this iteration it was decided that I would have to put aside my narrative to fix the mechanics of my game changing the story arc of collecting the seven wonders of the Dagwood Dog world to five instead of the original seven. This worked like an absolute dream bringing the play time back down to 15 minutes in Playtest 4 and still being fun and dynamic from the feedback I received.



There were still card description problems where by players would ask if they got to see another players hand when prompted to choose another player to switch cards with them.

Iteration 4

Previously (referring to Playtest 5), players had problems understanding the abilities of the cards in the context of revealing other players hands. In the rules, it is now stated that “when a player chooses another players card to be discarded or swapped or revealed, the player using the action chooses at random, without seeing the other players hand.”

Final Thoughts

Dagwood Dogs is a game that I would play in my own spare time. I believe it is both charming, satirical, Machiavellian and has just the right amount of unfairness to keep me coming back to find the glory in winning it all.

The final version of this game would look very similar to Unstable Unicorns with a familiar *kawaii* cartoon aesthetic. Below are some uncompleted concepts for what I would have liked to of created. I wanted to implement iconography through the action cards having a sword and the Dagwood Dogs having a hot-dog to appeal to younger players. I also wanted to implement accessibility to a colour-blind audience with block colours and word descriptions purely over colours and icons.



I am extremely happy with the concept art that was created, they can all be accessed on my blog, [here](#). If I could change anything about the current design, it would be to make all of the beta type cards to appear like the ones pictured above and have them in colour as I believe that is the most enticing aspect of the game, without the theme it really wouldn't be all that enjoyable in my own opinion.

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Learning Assessment Task Three: Project Dossier

Marking Criteria

You will be assessed on:

- 1) The evidence of planning, prototyping, playtesting, iteration, and response to feedback.

- 2) The quality and depth of the research and the degree to which the final game is justified in the supporting documentation through a mix of academic and industry sources, primary investigation and practical examples.

- 3) The extent of the documentation and/or depth of the details of the dossier.

- 4) The quality and sophistication of the presentation of the dossier.

- 5) The degree of conformity with the learning assessment task instructions.