

# Introduction

The Grow-a-Game Expert Deck is a design tool for serious game developers. This deck can help creative minds imagine radically innovative games.

Grow-a-Game will help you invent unique mechanics that express thought-provoking ideas. And since they're by game designers, for game designers, the cards are also fun to use and can help you ratchet up your creative process.

Grow-a-Game was developed by research from Values At Play, an initiative to investigate how games communicate ideas.

# Card Types

**Challenges:** Social, political, and economic problems to incorporate into game designs.

**Atmosphere:** Use these moods or settings to set a specific ambiance for the game world.

**Values:** Values cards have principles and beliefs that can be expressed through games.

**Verbs:** These cards have actions that can serve as game mechanics.

**Note:** Every card category has blank wildcards for you to customize the deck.

# Play Styles

Grow-a-Game cards can be used in a number of different ways. Any mix of the four card categories can be used to analyze existing games, or imagine new ones.

Suggested card combinations are included, but once you're familiar with the deck you'll discover which categories and play styles are most useful for you.

Play Style  
**One Card**

1-10 players  
10-30 minutes

1. Shuffle the blue values deck.
2. Each player chooses a values card.
3. Each player thinks of an existing game that expresses or requires the concept on the card.

Example: If someone drew the 'accountability' values card, games like The Sims, or Fable could be discussed as games that express that value. In both games, a player's actions have long term, irreversible consequences.

Play Style  
**Two Card**

**3-8 players, or teams of 3-8 players**  
**20-40 minutes**

1. Shuffle the values and atmosphere card sets separately.
2. Each player or team draws one card from each of these sets.
3. Brainstorm for 10 minutes. Each player or group develops a game idea that is inspired by the atmosphere card, and expresses the chosen values card.
4. When time runs out, each player or group pitches the game idea.

May the best designer win!

Play Style

## Three Card

Teams of 3-8 players

30-60 minutes

1. Shuffle the categories separately. Each team draws one of each: values, atmosphere, and verbs card.
2. The teams then have 20-40 minutes to develop a game idea.
3. The design should involve the concept on the atmosphere card, use the verb as the core mechanic, and express the new value.
4. When time runs out, a representative from each group can present the team's design.

Super fun!