# Game Mechanic Reference

## FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

### Progression

How players advance their status in the game. This may be indicated through levels, experience points, item acquisition, or other status indicators.

### Reward

Rewards are real or virtual recognition of accomplishment. They serve as motivators for completing certain actions or reaching a certain level of skill. They may have practical and/or ceremonial value.

### Status

Status marks a personal quality in a player's relation to the game. This may be within the game's context (e.g., a knight, a level, health, ailment, etc.) or relative to their skill playing the game (e.g., a Grand Master, Top 10, noob, etc.)

### Achievements

A virtual or physical representation of having accomplished something. Achievements are often considered "locked" until you have met the series of tasks that are required to "unlock" the Achievement

## PLAY MECHANISMS

### Acting

Games with the Acting mechanic require players to use some form of mime or mimicry to communicate with the other players.

*Charades is probably the poster child for this mechanic, where one member of a team must use non-verbal clues to allow the other members to guess the solution.*

### Action Point Allowance System

In Action Point (AP) Allowance System games, each player is allotted a certain amount of points per round. These points can be spent on available actions, until the player does not have enough remaining to "purchase" any more actions. This method grants the player greater freedom over how to execute his or her options. Pandemic is an example of a game that uses this mechanic. In Pandemic, players are given 4 action points to be allocated between several actions: Movement, Air Travel, Special Action, and Special Ability.

### Action / Movement Programming

In programming, every player must secretly choose the next 'n' turns, and then each player plays their turns out according to the choices made. A game has the programming mechanic if it provides choice of actions, preferably several, with a mechanism of executing those actions such that things could go spectacularly or amusingly wrong, because the status of the game changed in ways one did not anticipate, or hoped would not happen, before the action is executed.

### Appointments

Game dynamics in which at a predetermined times/place a user must attend or participate in game for positive effect.

### Area Control / Area Influence / Area Enclosure

The Area Control mechanic typically awards control of an area to the player that has the majority of units or influence in that area. As such, it can be viewed as a sub-category of Auction/Bidding in that players can up their "bids" for specific areas through the placement of units or meeples.

In Area Enclosure games, players place or move pieces to surround as much area as possible with their pieces.

### Area-Impulse

Players subdivide turns into impulses alternating between players which repeat until both players pass (or in some cases a sunset die roll ends the impulses catching one or both players off guard). In those impulses, a group of units is once activated or gets to act collectively before being marked spent. However instead of the activated units being grouped by a certain radius from a leader the units activated are in an area (and thus the need for the impulse system to have areas, not hexes). The areas exist to define scope of activation on an impulse (as well as restrict what can be done on that impulse with respect to attack and movement range). Thus, each of a player’s groups of units each act once by means of small alternating impulses instead of the traditional all my units then all your units. Finally, before the next turn of impulses spent units are reset regaining the ability to act.

### Area Movement

Area movement means that the game board is divided into areas *of varying size* which can be moved out of or into in any direction if the areas are adjacent or connected. A classic example being Axis & Allies, in which land and water are divided into variable areas and boundaries that define connectivity between various areas.

*Area movement is one way to handle movement on a game board. Two other commonly used ways are Grid Movement and Point to Point Movement. However, Area Movement is arguably just a form of Point to Point Movement, in which areas act as "points" with implicit "lines" connecting each area to all adjacent areas, as in Risk, which directly uses point-to-point movement for overwater movement.*

### Auction/Bidding

This mechanic requires you to place a bid, usually monetary, on items in an auction of goods in order to enhance your position in the game. These goods allow players future actions or improve a position. The auction consists of taking turns placing bids on a given item until one winner is established, allowing the winner to take control of the item being bid on. Usually there is a game rule that helps drop the price of the items being bid on if no players are interested in the item at its current price. In most games, once a winner for one item is done, if there are more items to be bid upon, another auction is held for those items. The process repeats until a game condition is met or items are exhausted in the auction phase of the game. This is similar to *Worker Placement,* but workers can be kicked off spots by bidding higher.

### Betting/Wagering

Betting/Wagering games are games that encourage or require players to bet money (real or in-game) on certain outcomes within the game. The betting itself becomes part of the game. This mechanic is most commonly associated with Poker.

*The Commodity Speculation mechanic is also a type of betting, in which in-game money is bet on different commodities in hope that that particular commodity will become the most valuable as the game progresses. Often the values of the commodities are continually changing throughout the game, and the players buy and sell the commodities to make money off their investment.*

### Card Drafting

Card drafting games are games where players pick cards from a limited subset, such as a common pool, to gain some advantage (immediate or long-term) or to assemble hands of cards that are used to meet objectives within the game. Ticket to Ride is a well-known card drafting game.

Games where cards are simply drawn from a pile are NOT card drafting games - drafting implies that players have some sort of CHOICE. In Ticket to Ride, players can choose to draw random cards. If they could only draw random cards however, it wouldn't be drafting.

### Chit-Pull System

Used in war games to address the problem of simulating simultaneous action on the battlefield and issues of command and control. In such a system, the current player randomly draws a chit or counter identifying a group of units which may now be moved. Schemes include moving any units commanded by a particular leader, moving units of a particular quality or activating units not for movement but for fighting.

### Cooperative Play

Co-operative play encourages or requires players to work together to beat the game. There is little or no competition between players. Either the players win the game by reaching a pre-determined objective, or all players lose the game, often by not reaching the objective before a certain event happens.

*Though note that that the definition still defines as co-operative play one that may have one or more "traitors" who along with the game system itself may win or lose.*

### Dice

Dice rolling is a game by itself, but as a game mechanic dice rolling in a game can be used for many things, randomness being the most obvious. Dice can also be used as counters; start at 6 (for a normal die: singular for dice) and turn it to 5 at the end of a round, single player's turn etc. The dice themselves can be unique and varied sizes, shapes and colors to represent different things.

### Hand Management

Hand management games are games with cards in them that reward players for playing the cards in certain sequences or groups. The optimal sequence/grouping may vary, depending on board position, cards held and cards played by opponents. Managing your hand means gaining the most value out of available cards under given circumstances. Cards often have multiple uses in the game, further obfuscating an "optimal" sequence.

### Campaign / Battle Card Driven

The Campaign/Battle Card Driven mechanic is a relatively recent development in wargames that focuses the players' actions on cards they have in their hand. The very basic idea is that performing a single action uses a single card. Games where cards are used to determine the outcome of battles do not use this mechanic.

### Deck Building

Deck / Pool Building is a mechanism in which players start the game with a pre-determined set of cards / player pieces and add and change those pieces over the course of the game. Many deck-building games provide the players with a currency that they use to "buy" new items that are integrated into the deck or pool. These new resources generally expand the capabilities of the player and allow the player to build an "engine" to drive their future plays during the game.

This mechanism describes something that happens in play during the game as a function of the game, not customization of the game from a body of cards prior to play.

### Grid Movement

The Grid Movement occurs when pawns move on the grid in many directions. Usually the grid is square (like in Chess) or hexagonal (Abalone).

*In a game, there can be many pawns (like in Chess or Checkers) or only one (like the bishop in Fresco).*

### Hex and Counter

Classic wargame mechanic, played with 'Counters' on a map with a Hexagonal grid allowing to move the counters in more directions (6) as opposed to a square grid with only four directions.

### Line Drawing | Crayon Rail System

The Crayon Rail System is a subcategory of Route/Network Building. Types of these games use crayon or other non-permanent methods of making connecting lines on a board, often erasable. The most popular Crayon Rail games are part of the Empire Builder system.

*Games using the line drawing mechanic involve the drawing of lines in one way or another. Lines may be used to connect objects as in Sprouts, to isolate objects, or to create areas as in the classic Dots and Dashes, also known as Square-itself*

### Memory

Games that use the Memory mechanic require players to recall previous game events or information to reach an objective.

### Modular Board

Play occurs upon a modular board that is composed of multiple pieces, often tiles or cards.

In many games, board placement is randomized, leading to different possibilities for strategy and exploration.

Some games in this category have multiple boards which are not used simultaneously, preserving table space. Unused boards remain out of play until they are required.

### Paper-and-Pencil

Games that use the Memory mechanic require players to recall previous game events or information to reach an objective.

### Pattern Building

Pattern Building is a system where players place game components in specific patterns to gain specific or variable game results. For example: placing chips on 2, 4, 6, 8 on a board gets the player an action card they can use later in the game.

### Partnerships

Games with partnerships offer players a set of rules for alliances and teams. Partners are often able to win as a team, or penalties are enforced for not respecting alliances.

*Variations:*

* *initial teams that cannot be changed midgame.*
* *additional rules regarding alliances and the breaking of them.*

### Pattern Recognition

Markers, usually with a color or pattern, are placed or added on different random or pre-determined locations relative to a board or the markers themselves. As the markers move during play the player must recognize a known pattern created by the markers to gain a good, points or win the game.

### Pick-up and Deliver

This mechanic usually requires players to pick up an item or good at one location on the playing board and bring it to another location on the playing board. Initial placement of the item can be either predetermined or random. The delivery of the good usually gives the player money to do more actions with. In most cases, there is a game rule or another mechanic that determines where the item needs to go.

### Point to Point Movement

On a board of a game with point-to-point movement, there are certain spots that can be occupied by markers or figurines, e. g. cities on a map. These points are connected by lines, and movement can only happen along these lines. It is not enough that two points are next to or close to each other; if there is no connecting line between them, a player cannot move his or her piece from one to the other.

With point-to-point movement, you do not have a division of the board into areas which can be moved out of or into freely (like with Axis & Allies). Neither do you have a board completely covered in squares (like with Chess) or hexagons (like with Tide of Iron) that allow unrestricted or nearly unrestricted movement in any direction and to any square or hex.

Unlike these counterexamples, point-to-point movement arbitrarily restricts areas on the board that markers or figurines can occupy, and it also arbitrarily restricts the ways that these points may be reached. Oftentimes, this allows for interesting strategies.

*Non-intuitive example for point-to-point movement: Risk. While Risk appears to be an Area Movement game like Axis & Allies, it is actually a point-to-point movement game, due to impassible water areas requiring overwater line connections (e.g. Japan, Brazil, Australia).*

### Player Elimination

Player elimination occurs in multiple-player games (>2) when a player can be eliminated from the game and play continues without the eliminated player. The typical examples of games that provides elimination are Diplomacy or Risk (where a player may be defeated) or Monopoly (where a player may go bankrupt and thus be eliminated). There are also games where achieving the win condition will eliminate you from the game and the last person remaining is the loser.

*Player elimination does not include two-player-only games where the goal is to defeat the opponent, e.g., Chess.*

### Press Your Luck

Games where you repeat an action (or part of an action) until you decide to stop due to increased (or not) risk of losing points or your turn. Press Your Luck games include both Risk Management and Risk Valuation games, in which risk is driven by the game mechanisms and valuing how much other players value what you also want, respectively.

### Questing

Quests are optional engagements in which players participate in targeted, or specific undertakings as part or in addition to the larger game. For example, players choosing to explore an abandoned house on their way to fight a dragon.

### Role Playing

Some board games incorporate elements of role playing. It can be that players control a character that improves over time. It can also be a game that encourages or inspires Storytelling. This mechanic can be viewed as an extension of *Variable Player Powers.*

### Rock-Paper-Scissors

Rock-Paper-Scissors’ defining feature is that there is a circular, non-transitive hierarchy for which pieces win against or capture others. That is, while A might beat B, and B beat C, C beats A.

*The name derives from the well-known children's game where*

* *Scissors cuts Paper*
* *Paper covers Rock*
* *Rock crushes Scissors*

### Route/Network Building

Route/Network Building games feature network(s) (interconnected lines with nodes) using owned, partially owned or neutral pieces, with an emphasis on building the longest chain and/or connecting to new areas. Although arguably a separate group, Connection games, in which players connect fixed points on the board, are also included among Route/Network Building games.

### Roll / Spin and Move

Roll / Spin and move games are games where players roll dice or spin spinners and move playing pieces in accordance with the roll.

*This term is often used derogatorily to imply that there is no thought involved. Roll and move games like Backgammon, however, contain tactical elements.*

### Set Collection

The primary goal of a set collection mechanic is to encourage a player to collect a set of items. For example, players collect and harvest different types of beans in Bohnanza, and they collect Monuments in Ra.

### Secret Unit Deployment

Secret unit deployment games are games that contain hidden information. Only the player controlling certain playing pieces has perfect information about the nature (or even the whereabouts) of those pieces. This mechanic is often used in wargames to simulate "fog of war".

### Simultaneous Action Selection

The simultaneous action selection mechanic lets players secretly choose their actions. After they are revealed, the actions resolve following the ruleset of the game.

### Simulation

Simulation games are games that attempt to model actual events or situations.

### Stock Holding

Stock holding is a subcategory of Commodity Speculation, in which instead of purchasing or selling an entire commodity, players purchase and sell (or hold) a share in a given company, commodity or nation.

*Notable examples include Acquire, where players can purchase shares of companies, and benefit if those companies grow before being bought out, and Imperial, where players are purchasing bonds in European nations which grant not only a dividend and points at the end of the game but also the right to control that nation's actions for as long as you are the majority bondholder.*

### Singing

Games that use a Singing mechanic require players to hum or sing familiar songs to fulfill certain game requirements.

### Storytelling

Players are provided with conceptual, written, or pictorial stimuli which must be incorporated into a story of the players' creation. Some versions prompt players to pitch a product, which frequently takes the form of a brief story or vignette.

In other versions, players don't create their own stories. Instead experience a story from the inside as one of the participants. Games along those lines might present players with a particular narrative situation, after which the player will make a choice that affects which end to the narrative is told.

### Tile Placement

Tile Placement games feature placing a piece to score with the amount often based on adjacent pieces or pieces in the same group/cluster, and keying off non-spatial properties like color, "feature completion", cluster size etc.

**Time Track**

A time track mechanism is a variable player-turn order mechanism by which the player who is last on the time track goes next. The function of this mechanism can allow a player to have multiple sequential turns due to being last after each one. The basic premise is that you can choose to do a longer, slower task in the game, but in the meantime, a player taking shorter, quicker actions might change the "landscape" of the playfield. It is arguably a derivative of "action point" systems, except in the case of time tracks, the player doesn't have a fixed number of points she can or must use on her turn.

### Trade

In games with a trading mechanic, the players can exchange game items between each other.

### Trick Taking

Each player plays in turn order one card (or, in some games, a series, such as a pair or straight) from their hand face up onto the table; the group of cards played is named a "trick". According with the rules of the game, one player wins the trick and captures all the cards in the trick. The object of most trick taking games is to capture tricks or point scoring cards in tricks or occasionally avoid winning tricks.

The most common way to win a trick is by having the card with highest value of the suit that was led, but many classical card games use the "trump" system (where the certain cards, usually those of a designated suit, will win the trick if they are played.) Occasionally there is a round of bidding to determine this trump suit

### Variable Phase Order / Static Game Order

*Variable Phase Orde*r implies that turns may not be played the same way as before and / or after. *Static Phase Orde****r*** implies that each turn is played in a predictable manner.

### Variable Player Power

Variable Player Powers is a mechanic that grants different abilities and/or paths to victory to the players.

### Voting

Voting allows players to influence the outcome of certain events within the game. The vote may be all or nothing, choosing a target for an effect, or to determine the results of certain situations. Players’ votes may not have equal weight, and blocking a player from voting can be a valid tactic.

### Worker Placement

Actions are commonly drafted by the placement of game pieces or tokens on the selected actions. Each player usually has a limited number of pieces with which to participate in the process. Some games achieve the same effect in reverse: the turn begins with action spaces filled by markers, which are claimed by players for some cost.

### Sources

BoardGameGeek.com

<https://boardgamegeek.com/browse/boardgamemechanic>

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