

Game Modification

The Dice Game: Add & Call

For two or more players who enjoy friendly competition.

GAME 601, FALL 2023

Di Yang

American University, MFA in Games and Interactive Media

I. The Modified Dice Game: Add and Call

Materials:

A six-sided dice or a rolling app.

Instruments to record points.

Recommended Setting:

Comfortable, Relaxing atmosphere.

A minimum of two players who enjoy friendly competition.

General Rules:

Before the game starts, players should choose a two-digit target number that each player or team will aim to reach during the game. For a two-player set, 24 is recommended as the target point. A larger group of players may consider increasing the target number to 36. The player or team that first achieves exactly the target number wins.

After setting the target point, players must decide an order to roll and stay with the order. For example, "from A to D" or "from left to right".

The order can only be changed when a player rolls 6 and chooses to "Call" under a setting with a minimum of 3 players. For details of the "call" function, please refer to Special rules for a setting with more than two players.

Each player will roll once using a six-sided dice in their turn and record the point. The recorded point will be added to an "add-up" point, which is pre-chosen between 1 and 6 by the immediate next player. The final point of the player who rolls is the sum of the two numbers. If the total point is smaller than the target point, the final point will be the base point for the next player. If the total point is greater than the target number, the target point will be subtracted from the total point, leaving the remaining point as the base number for the next player. If the total point equals the target point, the player rolled wins.

The sum of the base point and the chosen add-up point cannot exceed the target point prior to rolling. However, if the the sum euqals the target point, base point would be reset to 0.

Here is an example.

In a two-player setting where Player A rolls first, Player B must choose an "add-up" number before Player A rolls the dice. If Player B chose to add 1, and Player A rolled 4, then the final point for Player A would be $1+4=5$, where Player B then starts from. Next is Player B's turn to roll. If Player A chose to add 6, and Player B rolled 3, then the final point for Player B would be $5+6+3=14$, which will be the base point for the next turn, Player A's turn.

If the base point reached 19, and the target point was set at 24, players can no longer choose to add 6 as $19+6=25$, which would be greater than 24. At this moment, players can only add 1 to their opponent's base point.

Once the total number, for instance 27, exceeds the target number, 24, the next player, assuming it's Player A, should start with a base number that equals $27-24=3$. If Player B chose to add 6 and Player A rolled 2, the total point for the turn would be $3+6+2=11$. Player B will then start with a base number of 11.

Group Rules:

If there are more than two players, players will choose the add-up number for the Player who rolls immediately before them. For example, if the dice went from Player A, Player B, and Player C, Player B would choose an add-up number for Player A, Player C would choose an add-up number for Player B, and Player A would choose the add-up number for Player C's turn.

A party of a minimum of 4 players can be played in equally divided teams. Each player will still roll once in their turn; however, each team cannot roll more than 3 times in a row. The add-up number for each player can be decided by the opponent teams collectively.

Special Rules for a setting with more than two players:

Players who rolled six have the option to "Call", reversing the order to roll from the Player's position. Call can be skipped, but the Player who chose to call cannot roll again immediately.

For example, if a game went from Player A to Player D (A-B-C-D-A), Player D rolled 6. If Player D then decided to Call, the order to roll would be instantly reversed from D(call, no reroll)-A-B-C-D to D(call, no reroll)-C-B-A-D. Player C would move next instead of Player A, and Player B would roll after Player C.

II. The Modification Process

The Dice Game: Original

Rules: roll a die, add the number to your total, and pass it to your left – the first player to 20 points wins.

Even though the original dice game is designed to be played by multiple players, it does not offer the experience of either cooperation or confrontation that a multiplayer game should ideally offer. For a game involving wins and losses, I think two things would make it playful: 1) trying to win and 2) trying to not let the counterparty win. Keeping in mind that this is a relatively simple game that may not need aggressive strategies, my goal is to only add some friendly competition to the game.

Before making any modifications, I first played a couple rounds of the original dice game, trying to find out the reasons causing the game to be "broken", and found two significant aspects that I dislike about the game: randomness and the lack of interactivity.

Randomness. Randomness can indeed bring surprises and a certain level of joy to a game. However, despite the rare techniques to control a physical dice, the original game is dependent on 100% randomness, leaving the players only the tedious, repetitive duty of rolling while hoping good numbers would show up. In other words, players do not have any control over the game they are playing. As a result, there is no real player involvement.

And the lack of interactivity. This is a multiplayer game, and a main part of the fun of a multiplayer game comes from the cooperative or competitive features, which the original dice game does not provide. As the dice game seems to be no more than a fair examination of luck, the interactivity between players can only rely on their relationship or their socialization skills. But if people can enjoy their time without giving the minimum attention to the game, what's the point of playing it? At least some level of interactivity among players needs to be added, which could be either cooperation or competition.

To lower the substance of randomness and improve the interactive features, I decided to offer the players some control over their game score, not by giving such control to themselves but to their opponents. That is the add-up number feature, which will allow players not rolling to make attempts to make the base point near the target point in their turn. Originally, the add-up numbers can be chosen from 1 to 6. However, As I tested the feature by playing the modified game, I discovered the fact that players tend to lose interest in thinking when they are given too many choices that do not make huge differences. At first, players hesitated to give an add-up number but only threw out

random numbers after a while. The only exception was the moment that the total points were near the target point when players would just choose to add 6, trying to exceed the target point. To fix the situation, I limited the add-up numbers to only 1 and 6 and limited the use of the add-up numbers when players were near the target point.

That is not the end.

Since the game is designed for two or more players, I tested it within a larger setting and found that with the newly added functions, players could achieve near the target point (20) too soon, too easily, and too often, making the game process tedious in another way. To fix this issue, I decide to have a flexible target point for a larger group, for example, using 36 instead of 24. Dividing players into teams, I added a bonus rule for team playing -- the "Call" function. The "Call" function gives the game a little flavor when a player rolls 6 by allowing the player to reverse the order of rolling. In a larger group setting, same team players are recommended to roll consecutively, at least no more than 3 same team players in a row, so that the bonus function would have an impact to the progress. With "Call", even though a player did not reach the target point successfully, he or she could still help their teammates have another chance or prevent the opponents from winning.

Through two major modifications, the regular "add-up" function and the bonus "call" function, the modified game remains relatively simple but rely less on randomness, allowing players to make judgments during the process of playing without authorizing direct control of winning. The modified game does not eliminate randomness in the process of playing completely, as the primary tool of the game, the dice, is a mechanism of uncontrollable possibilities. Yet the unknown could certainly be enjoyable, especially when players corporate under the bonus rule, which makes unsucces less painful. During the game, players need to think and communicate in order to win. Since the participation is not intensive, the game can still be played in a relaxing manner. With improved intractability features, the modified game, however, will be best played not by two but in teams, which leaves more room for friendly competition and, more importantly, the opportunities to cooperate.

