

## Paradox Paradise Dev Diary

25<sup>th</sup> of November, 2021

Tomorrow will be the first playtesting day.

With this playtesting I want to see how the turns will play out in a regular game of Paradox Paradise, since right now we're just hoping players will be smart enough to end up playing at least once with each other per game. If this doesn't happen we'll probably have to create a turn guide or sheet that helps the players play a turn with a different person.

Aside from this, I'm not sure how long a game of Paradox Paradise will take. Right now we assumed that a round with 3 players would take approximately 15-20 minutes, and with more players, the time would slightly increase (even though they all draw at the same time). We'll have to see if time is a problem or not.

26<sup>th</sup> of November, 2021

The playtests were kind of a mixed bag, although mostly positive.

The first thing that really impressed me was the overall reception of the concept itself. Most players said that the concept was really cool, and that they could see themselves playing a game like this one if it really existed.

We had time to do 2 different games of PP, one of them with 3 players, and another one with 4 players. There were some limitations to this playtesting session, though. We didn't have individual whiteboards, so the players resorted to drawing in a big whiteboard on opposite sides. There was only space for 2 players on the whiteboard, so I wasn't able to properly test out how turns were going to work with more than 3 people, although I think I've gathered enough info about how the turns would work thanks to the actions of the players.

Thanks to this playtesting we've determined that the time it takes to complete a game was grossly underestimated. Instead of taking 15-20 minutes to finish a game with 3 people, it took around 40 minutes to get to the middle of the board. Of course, this could be due to the unusual situation we had to test the game in. Basically we didn't have the portable whiteboards, so we had to get up and go to the class whiteboard to draw; this as well as the fact that we lost a bit of time talking about the drawings themselves. We didn't finish the second game either, but even though we were drawing 2 persons at a time instead of 4 at a time, it felt like we were going faster for some reason; probably because by that time people were accustomed to the rules and to drawing on the whiteboard.

Now, even though the game with 4 people didn't have all the players drawing at once, and thus, the turns couldn't be tested properly, I've got a general idea of how that will turn out. Even though 2 people were drawing and 2 were doing nothing, it was pretty difficult to follow an order of who will go against who. For this reason, I've decided to make the turn sheet. I still have to figure out how I make a "turn sheet", and how to make it understandable and most importantly, how to stop it from scaring players away. A turn sheet can be pretty intimidating, especially for a game that doesn't take itself very seriously like this one.

To end this (very long) entry in the dev diary, I got some feedback from a player. This player suggested making every player draw the same stuff, that way there wouldn't be a lot of lost time picking cards and choosing who to go against. I've thought about this, but I believe this change would fundamentally change what Paradox Paradise is about. Having a lot of different combinations of cards in a single round is a big part of what makes PP interesting, and taking away this, alongside the "1v1" aspect of the game, would probably change some core aspects of the game. This could be applied to a "special" round after a few turns however, so I'll look into it to see if having some rounds be an "all against all", but I'm not confident about having all rounds be the same for all players.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2021

It's time to implement the feedback received from the previous playtesting session.

First, the most obvious thing to start fixing is the time it takes to finish a game. Instead of doing this now, we'll wait until the next playtesting sessions, and if it still takes too long to reach the end, even with all of the players drawing at the same time, we'll slice the amount of tiles in the board by half. I'm a bit hesitant to do this, because with larger groups maybe not all players can play with each other at least once, which would be the optimal outcome of a game of PP.

The other thing to do are the turns. We've started work on a turn-sheet to help the players follow an order in which they all play with each other at least once per game. In this turn-sheet, there's 4 different turns, one for 3-4 players, one for 5, one for 6, and one for 7-8 players. In the 6 players turn order there's one round where three players compete against each other instead of 2, but this is something necessary to make all players play with everyone at least once. The order in question is the one in this link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ww6z\\_G8bbmnmJ3-tQKeGexw3CnGhxrU/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ww6z_G8bbmnmJ3-tQKeGexw3CnGhxrU/view?usp=sharing)

To access the link, you'll need to enter with a UPC mail. In this .txt file, the number(s) on the left are the number of players in the game, the R with a number are the round that this turn order would play in (so R1 is round 1, R2 round 2, etc.). Next to the R, there's numbers in brackets. Each number inside the brackets is a player, so if the document says {1-2, 3-4}, that means that player 1 will draw against player 2, and player 3 will draw against player 4. I apologize if this document is confusing, it's mainly just something I've made to expand and clear upon later with an official turn-sheet on the regulations.

I have concerns about this turn-sheet. I'm not sure if players will understand it, or if it will be easy or intuitive enough to follow. We'll need to do some playtesting to check if it's a good idea to implement it. I think the best option right now would be to make this turn-sheet optional, and see how players play with and without it.

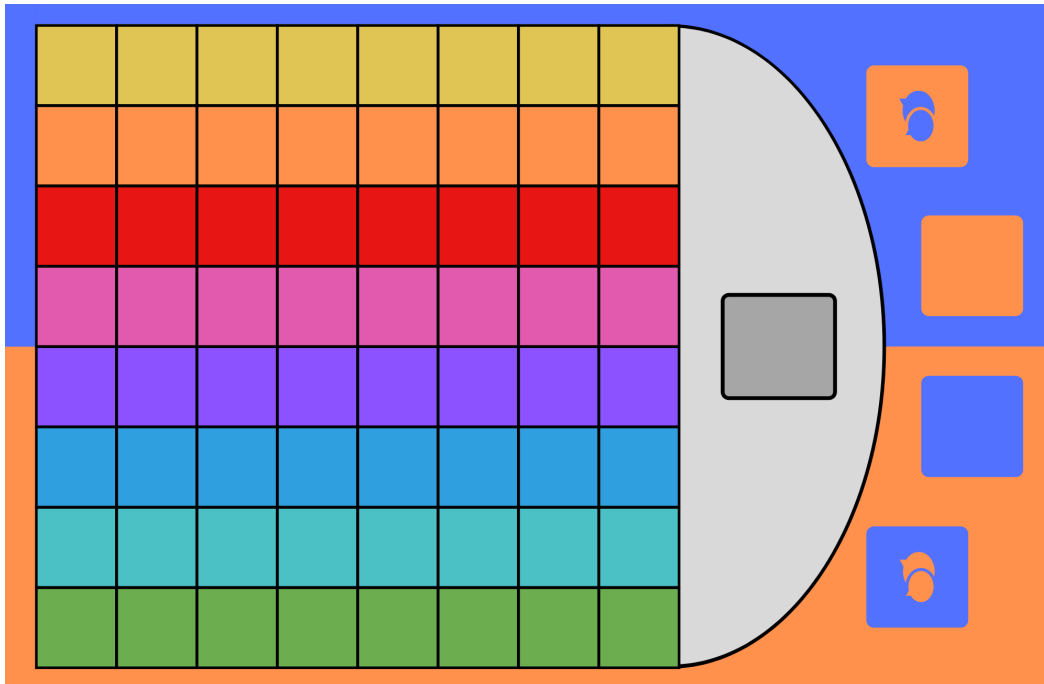
#### 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2021

This will be a very short entry, but I feel it's important to note this. I've realized there was a mistake on the turn-sheet, and there's a way to unify the 5 and 6 player turn order. Here's a link to the updated order:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uB9wtgPUDIX3lqzBv0\\_7KfzP2HCK-aAx/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uB9wtgPUDIX3lqzBv0_7KfzP2HCK-aAx/view?usp=sharing)

18<sup>th</sup> of January, 2021

Today I designed the aesthetics of our board to playtest tomorrow:



19<sup>th</sup> of January, 2021

Today is the first day we can playtest with our own whiteboards. We played 3 games of Paradox Paradise. In each session I aimed to get different results, and I think today was the most successful playsessions we've had in terms of feedback.

**Session 1:** The objective of this game was to see how players would develop by not using the turn-sheet. At the start, this session was a disaster, but that's because some players had to leave near the start. We started with 5 players, after two rounds there were 4, and after that 3. Ignoring this though, the game gave me the results that I expected.

People still talk a lot about the drawings, but I've come to realize that that's actually a good thing. Players talking a lot about each other's drawings means they're positively engaging with the game, and they're having fun. Aside from this, I also noticed that when the number of players was 5, they found it really difficult to choose a player with whom to play, and this became more and more difficult as rounds went on. The only situation where the players seemed to be agile with turns without needing to use the turnsheet was with 3 players, but that's also to be expected. This game lasted 20 minutes, and the first player on the board was halfway through.

Something new that popped up during this playtesting session is that some players didn't recognise a lot of the events or people that the cards displayed. To solve this I devised a solution on the spot, I told them that using google was allowed before a round starts. I thought that this would make the overall time of the rounds longer, but the difference between rounds without google wasn't big enough to consider, so googling characters you don't know is now allowed. Aside from this, I didn't observe anything new that wasn't already present in the last playtesting session: the rounds with 3 players are very long. The next playtesting session was focused on this issue.

**Session 2:** This game was focused on seeing how much time difference there is between a game with 3 players, and one with 4. There were 4 players during this whole game. We didn't finish it because we still needed to have the final session after this one, which was the most important one. In this playtesting session we also did what we couldn't do in the first one: we all drew at the same time.

This game proved what I thought was going to happen: with 4 players, the rounds move much faster than with 3. This is because with 4 players, 2 players move one tile per round, but with 3 only 1 player moves. We stopped when one of the players reached the middle of the board (after 5 rounds), and we did so in 12 minutes, the best time we've ever had. This being said, though... One player reaching the middle in 12 minutes isn't really the time we had in mind when we designed the game, this means that even at the fastest we've ever played, there's too many rounds.

**Session 3:** The objective of this final game is to reach the end of the board, but if we take 40 minutes or more, we'll stop the playtesting session and go home. Before starting, I told the players to go at a relatively fast pace, and told them to avoid talking too much during rounds (this way we could see how long it would take to finish the game while doing a pseudo-speedrun). During this game, 3 people will play.

The most important point of the playtesting sessions of today was made even clearer thanks to this session: the game is too long. In this game of 3 players, it took 20 minutes for the first person to reach the end. We stopped the game after 41 minutes of gameplay, and we still didn't reach the end. One player was one tile away from the end, while the two other players were 2 and 3 tiles away respectively. This game sealed the deal completely, the game board will be redesigned to have 4 tiles instead of 8. While this was the main thing I wanted to check with this specific session, I also gathered some extra feedback:

During one of the rounds, a couple of players took a time sentence card and a character answer card by mistake, creating a sentence that made sense and was funny. This is of course, something that happened by luck, since the chances of a time sentence card making sense when paired with a character card is pretty slim, but this is noteworthy because maybe it could be interesting to make both types of cards compatible. This way the amount of combinations would increase, and thus, the replayability would increase. Although it's interesting to think about, I don't think the workload of changing all 192 sentence cards is worth it for the end result. For the game we have now, our current system works, and I'm not sure a change as significant as this one could be made in the time that we have to create the prototype.

And that's all of what I've gathered from today's playtesting sessions. What I'd like to do now is analyze in-depth how our round system currently works to find out the best way to change the game board.

21<sup>st</sup> of January, 2021

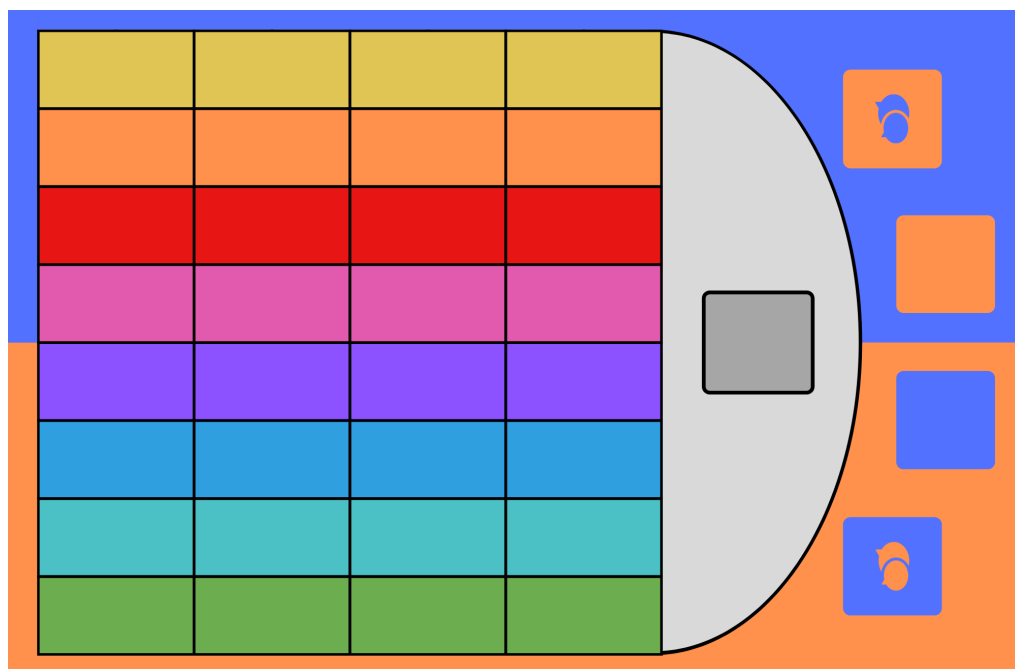
Today I've implemented some changes based on the feedback I gathered from the previous playtesting sessions.

Firstly I made a table calculating the maximum and minimum rounds it would take to win depending on the amount of players and the number of tiles. These numbers were made assuming that the players follow the turn-sheet. The table goes as follows:

Nº	8 TILES ON BOARD		4 TILES ON BOARD	
PLAYERS	MIN ROUNDS	MAX ROUNDS	MIN ROUNDS	MAX ROUNDS
3	11	24	5	12
4	8	16	4	8
5	9	18	5	10
6	8	16	4	8
7	9	18	4	8
8	8	16	4	8

Thanks to this table, I could calculate more or less what rounds would last. Being generous and assuming that each round lasts 2 minutes, the absolute minimum time a round could last with 8 tiles was 16 minutes, and the maximum was 48 minutes. Meanwhile, with 4 tiles on the board, the minimum time would be 8 min, while the maximum would be 24 min. With this new info on hand. With this, now I can design the final version of the board. Of course, we'll need to playtest it, but we've still got plenty of time to do that.

Here's what the finalized board looks like:



25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2021

Today was the (possibly) last playtest session before the physical prototype playtesting we have on the 28<sup>th</sup>. I believe this playtesting session was an absolute success! For this session, we brought the regulations, and we asked the players to read them and play following them.

We only had time for one game, and for it there were 6 players. With the updated board, the rounds flowed much faster. My concerns for the players being confused by the turn-sheet were proved wrong by this playtest, which showed how with 6 players the rhythm for changing turns was fast enough to not be a chore for the players. The game lasted around 30 minutes with 6 rounds being played in total, which means that the rounds were approximately 5 minutes each. Even though the time might not be as low as I expected it to be, I'm not worried about it. I've some players that previously played the 8-tiled version of the game what they thought about this new version, and they said that it felt much faster. Plus, from what I could tell, most of the players were engaged and having fun during rounds, so it's safe to say that the time problem is solved.

After this playtesting session I'm confident that the game is good enough for the prototype presentation. Unless a very big issue happens during the physical prototype playtesting, I'll consider that this is the final version of the game.