

Serious Game Playtest Questionnaire

This document is designed to guide playtesting for **serious games**—games whose primary purpose is learning, training, awareness, or behavior change.

It includes **general questions** applicable to all serious games, followed by **digital-only** and **board-game-only** sections.

General Playtest Questions (All Serious Games)

1. Learning Objectives

- Does the game clearly communicate its educational or serious purpose?
- Can you identify what you were supposed to learn or achieve after playing?
- Did the game reinforce the intended concepts effectively?
- Did the game help you understand *why* the learning objectives matter?

2. Target Audience Fit

- Did the game feel appropriate for your age, background knowledge, and skill level?
- Was the difficulty level suitable for the intended audience?
- Could someone with less experience understand the content and mechanics?
- Did you need prior knowledge the game didn't explain?

3. Engagement & Motivation

- Was the game enjoyable and engaging enough to maintain your attention?
- Did the challenges feel meaningful rather than repetitive or frustrating?
- Did you feel motivated to continue playing and complete the objectives?
- Did the game balance fun and learning effectively?

4. Integration of Learning & Gameplay

- Did the educational content feel naturally integrated into gameplay?
- Did game mechanics support the learning goals rather than distract from them?
- Did learning activities feel organic (not like a separate quiz or worksheet)?
- Did any part of the game feel disconnected from the topic?

5. Cognitive Load & Complexity

- Did you ever feel overwhelmed by too much information or too many steps?
- Was the amount of information presented manageable while still challenging?
- Were new concepts introduced at a comfortable pace?
- Did you need frequent reminders about rules or instructions?

6. Feedback, Progress & Learning Assessment

- Did the game provide clear feedback on your actions and decisions?
- Were success and failure states easy to understand?
- Did you feel a sense of accomplishment when completing tasks?
- Did the game help you check your understanding or track your learning?
- Could you recall or explain what you learned after playing?

7. Real-World Relevance & Transfer of Learning

- Did the game content feel relevant to real-world scenarios or the subject being taught?
- Could you apply what you learned outside the game?
- Did gameplay encourage critical thinking or problem-solving related to the topic?
- Did the game prompt reflection on the real-world issue or skill?

8. Emotional Impact & Tone

- Did the game evoke emotions that supported its serious purpose (e.g., empathy, awareness, urgency, curiosity)?
- Was the tone appropriate for the topic and the audience?
- Did any part of the game feel emotionally uncomfortable in a way that hindered learning?

9. Accuracy, Credibility & Content Quality

- Did the information presented feel accurate, trustworthy, and current?
- Did the game avoid oversimplifying the topic in misleading ways?
- Were examples, characters, or scenarios realistic and appropriate?
- Did the game avoid stereotypes, bias, or insensitive portrayals?

10. Replayability & Depth

- Would you want to play the game again? Why or why not?
- Did the game offer enough depth or variety to remain interesting in multiple sessions?
- Did replaying help reinforce or expand your learning?

11. Overall Serious Game Experience

- Did the game feel cohesive, polished, and intentional in its design?
- How well did the game balance engagement, challenge, and educational value?
- Did the serious purpose enhance the experience rather than detract from it?
- What aspects most strongly supported (or weakened) the learning experience?

Serious Game Playtest Questions (Digital-Only)

1. Interface, Controls & Navigation

- Were the controls intuitive, even on your first attempt?
- Did movement, interaction, or input methods feel natural for the type of game?
- Was the user interface (UI) clean, readable, and appropriately sized?
- Could you easily find menus, settings, or important information?
- Did you ever feel lost navigating between screens or levels?
- Was the tutorial (if present) helpful and paced appropriately?

2. Technical Performance & Stability

- Did the game run smoothly on your device (framerate, loading times, responsiveness)?
- Did you experience any bugs, crashes, freezes, broken logic, or visual glitches?
- Were audio cues synced properly with gameplay events?
- Did transitions, animations, or cutscenes load correctly and feel polished?
- If online features were included, did latency or connectivity issues affect gameplay?

3. Digital Feedback Systems

(Unique to digital games: UI signals, VFX, SFX, etc.)

- Did the game clearly show whether your actions were correct, incorrect, or incomplete?
- Were sound effects, animations, or highlights used effectively to guide your understanding?
- Did notifications, pop-ups, or dialogue boxes appear at the right times—without interrupting flow?
- Did the game provide scaffolding or error correction when you struggled?
- Was progress tracking (XP, meters, achievements, checklists) helpful or motivating?

4. Learning Tools & Support Systems

- Did the game offer optional help (tooltips, hover explanations, hotkeys, repeats of instructions)?
- Did in-game tutorials or onboarding explain the mechanics AND the learning purpose?
- Did the hints or scaffolds appear when needed—or were they intrusive or insufficient?
- Did the game include a glossary, reference panel, or context explanations for the subject matter?
- Did the learning tools blend smoothly into the gameplay, or feel like separate add-ons?

5. User Experience (UX) & Information Design

- Was important information visible at the moment you needed it?
- Did icons, colors, and symbols make sense without explanation?
- Did any part of the screen feel cluttered, overwhelming, or visually confusing?
- Were text boxes, tutorial prompts, or dialogue easy to read (font size, contrast, pacing)?
- Did the game prevent information overload by introducing concepts at a reasonable pace?

6. Audio, Visuals & Thematic Consistency

- Did the art style support the game's educational or serious purpose?
- Were visuals polished and consistent across menus, gameplay, and pop-ups?
- Did the audio (music, voiceover, SFX) enhance engagement without becoming distracting?
- Did the tone of the visuals and sound align with the subject matter (e.g., sensitive topics)?
- Did the aesthetic contribute positively to comprehension, mood, or immersion?

7. Accessibility in Digital Environments

- Did the game include common accessibility options (subtitles, colorblind modes, adjustable text size)?
- Could you remap controls or adjust sensitivity if needed?
- Was the game playable for someone unfamiliar with typical gaming conventions?
- Did visual, auditory, or motor challenges create barriers that could be addressed?
- Were instructions offered in multiple formats (text + audio + visuals)?

8. Digital Interaction & Systems Complexity

(Important for digital serious games with simulations, branching narratives, physics, or complex logic)

- Did the systems behave in ways that felt fair and predictable?
- Did your decisions cause visible consequences in the game world?
- Were automated systems (AI, pathfinding, simulation logic) clear and comprehensible?
- Did the game make it easy to experiment and see the outcome of your choices?
- Were digital complexities (menus, stats, options) overwhelming or appropriate?

9. Data, Metrics & Tracking

- Did the game track your performance or learning progress meaningfully?
- Were analytics or dashboards (if present) clear and helpful?
- Did the game provide insights, summaries, or reports on what you accomplished or learned?
- Did tracking feel encouraging, neutral, or intimidating?
- Did the game save your progress reliably?

Serious Game Playtest Questions (Board Game Only)

1. Rules, Clarity & Learnability

- Were the rules clearly written and easy to learn without outside explanation?
- Did the rules match the gameplay experience, or were there contradictions or ambiguities?
- Could players begin playing after a brief explanation, or did it require lengthy instruction?
- Did the rulebook include clear examples, diagrams, turn summaries, or reference sheets?
- When confusion arose, did the rules offer quick answers—or did players need to guess or improvise?
- Did the game introduce mechanics gradually, or all at once?

2. Setup, Components & Physical Usability

- Was the game easy to set up, or did setup feel long or complicated?
- Were the components (cards, board, dice, tokens, trackers) high quality and easy to manipulate?
- Was the printed information (text, symbols, icons, diagrams) readable from across the table?
- Did the physical layout of the board support gameplay, or did it feel cramped/confusing?
- Did components ever get mixed up, lost, or misinterpreted during play?
- Were the materials thematically appropriate for the subject or learning goal?

3. Player Interaction & Social Dynamics

(Essential for serious board games where discussion, cooperation, or negotiation may be part of the learning objective.)

- Did the game promote meaningful interaction between players?

- Did conversation, debate, collaboration, or competition contribute to the learning goals?
- Did any player dominate the experience (e.g., quarterbacking in co-op games)?
- Were all player roles or responsibilities balanced in terms of influence and engagement?
- Did players feel included, or were there long periods of downtime?
- Did the social dynamics enhance, distract from, or conflict with the educational purpose?

4. Flow, Pacing & Timing

- Did turns move at a reasonable pace, or were they too slow or too fast?
- Did players spend more time actively engaged or waiting for others?
- Were there bottlenecks (points in the game where progress slows down because players are waiting, stuck, or the system creates delays) that consistently slowed the game?
- Was the total playtime appropriate for the game's intended setting (classroom, workshop, training session)?
- Did the phases of play (setup → core play → endgame) feel smooth and logical?
- Was the end of the game predictable and satisfying, or abrupt and confusing?

5. Mechanics, Decision-Making & Strategy

- Did players feel they had meaningful choices rather than random or forced actions?
- Were decisions connected to the learning objectives or serious purpose?
- Did mechanics encourage strategic thinking, planning, or problem-solving?
- Was there a reasonable balance between skill, luck, and cooperation?
- Did randomness contribute to learning and engagement, or cause frustration?
- Did the mechanics reinforce or conflict with the intended educational message?
- Were any mechanics overly complicated or unnecessarily abstract?

6. Representation, Theme & Real-World Relevance

- Did the game's theme effectively convey the serious or educational topic?
- Did the actions players took in the game reflect realistic concepts or models?
- Did the representation feel respectful and appropriate to the subject matter?
- Was the theme integrated with the mechanics, or did they feel disconnected?
- Could players connect what they learned in the game to real-world application or reflection?

7. Cooperative/Competitive Balance (if applicable)

- If cooperative: Did teamwork feel necessary, engaging, and well-supported?
- If competitive: Did competition enhance learning without overshadowing it?
- If semi-cooperative: Did mixed incentives create interesting or confusing dynamics?
- Did win/loss conditions feel fair and understandable?

8. Cognitive Load & Player Accessibility

- Did the game overwhelm players with too many rules, steps, or components?
- Were instructions broken down into digestible parts?
- Did players with different skill/expertise levels have equitable experiences?
- Were symbols, colors, and iconography intuitive and consistent?
- Could players recall rules and mechanics without constantly revisiting the rulebook?

9. Feedback, Scoring & Reflection

- Did players clearly understand how to track their progress or performance?
- Were scoring, rewards, or penalties transparent and fair?
- Did the game encourage reflection on decisions and outcomes?

- Did the endgame summary or results reinforce what players were supposed to learn?
- Did players feel a sense of closure or accomplishment at the end of the game?

10. Overall Board Game Experience

- Did the game feel cohesive, polished, and intentional in design?
- Did the board game format enhance learning compared to a digital version?
- Did anything feel unnecessary, overly complex, or underdeveloped?
- How well did the game balance fun, engagement, and educational impact?