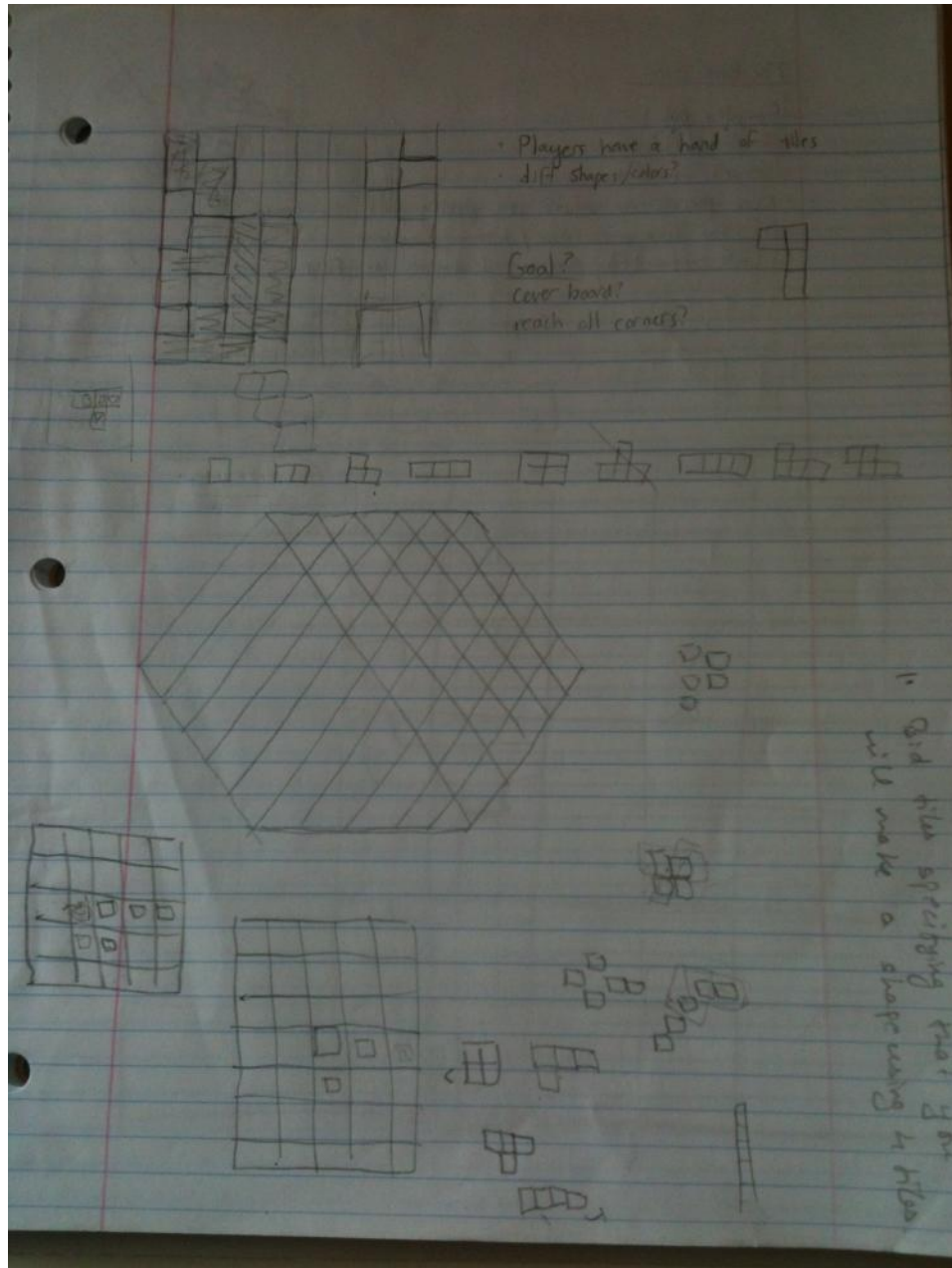


## Shapes in Space - Design Process

The Team: Josh DiGiovanni, Yang Sun, Vaibhav Agarwal, Adam Smith

### Week 1

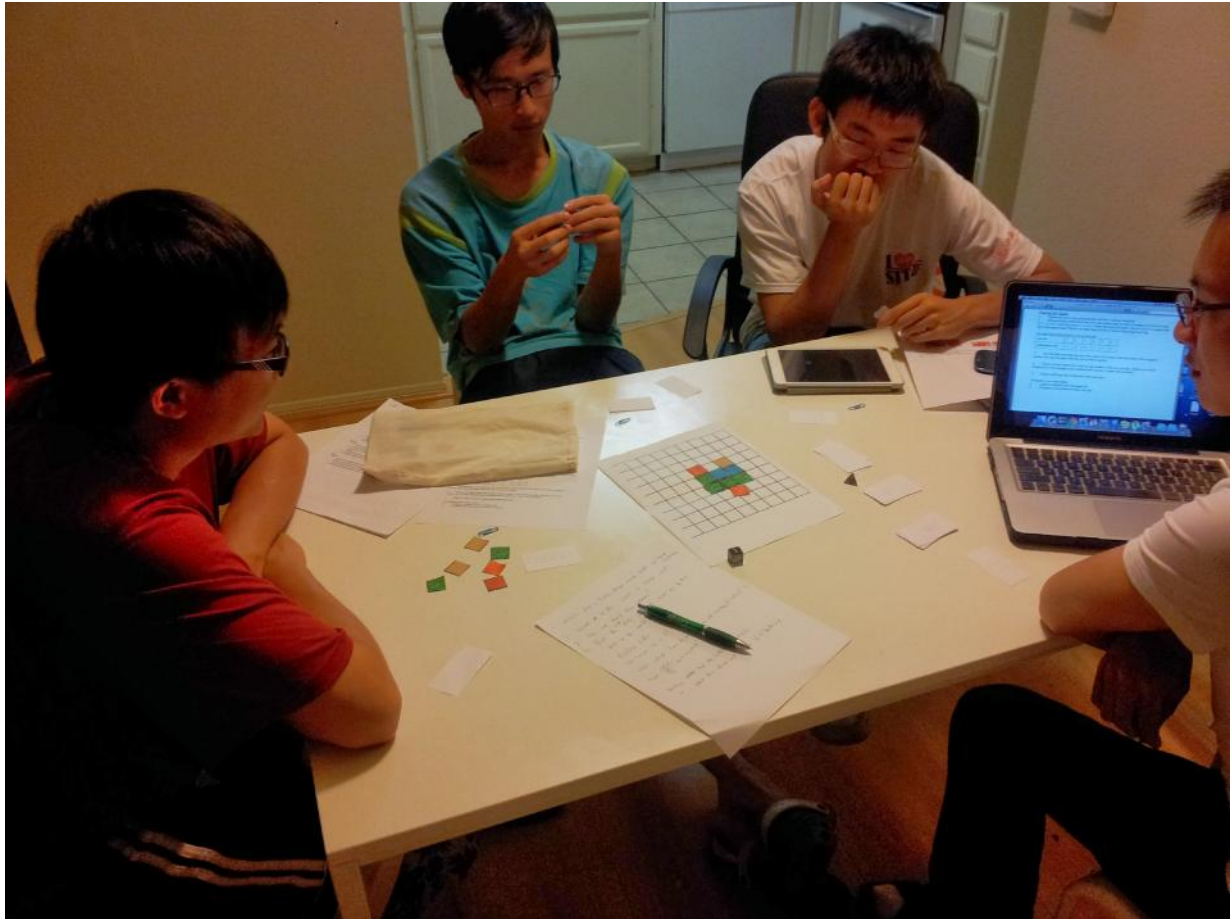
We were given the task of creating a building game that involves wagering and four player competition. Our initial train of thought did involve a shaped-building tile-based game. Our very first prototype of the game had players creating shapes of their choosing, but we soon discovered that this allowed far too much freedom to the players. We also had to find a way to incorporate wagering, so we decided to assign points to each shape created and players would wager an amount of points that they would win if they completed their shape on the next turn.



Initial concept notes. We first considered the idea of players placing Tetris-block shapes on the board to try to reach the other side, but we found that building shapes from individual tiles would work better.

## First Series of Playtests - Sept 9, 2013

During our first lab playtest, we discovered that the rules were too complex, and so players took a long time to figure out how to play the game and spent very little time actually playing it. There were a lot of small rules that players didn't get since there was a lot going on (placing tiles, scoring, indicator tiles). The wagering, which was supposed to be a major component of our game, wasn't even used.



There was a lot of thinking involved and a lot for players to remember in the initial playtests.

## Week 1 Playtests Feedback

	Input from playtesters	Resolution
<b>Formal</b>	The rules about using one color to build players' shape are not clear enough. They don't know they can make use of other players' tiles.	Add some explanations and hints to guarantee a better understanding
	The four-sided die gives too little chance to replace the tiles on the board (only rolling a 4 allows you to replace a tile), which makes blocking behaviors more easy	Use a six-sided die in order to provide more chances to replace tiles (1-3 adds tiles and 4-6 replaces tiles)
	Some of the shapes are too hard to make, and playtesters suggested they should have a chance to change their shape	This would make the game more complicated, so we will not take this advice
	Too many restrictions on pieces. When a player finishes a block of a certain color, nobody can use that color until another 2 shapes of different colors are completed	Get rid of this limitation
	Shape color restrictions resulted in large pools of same-color tiles which were "discarded" onto the board	Remove the limitation on shape color
<b>Dramatic</b>	None (no dramatic elements yet)	
<b>Dynamic</b>	Players seldom wager, because they don't think it's meaningful	Change the wager system by removing points entirely
	When a player found his final shape impossible to build, he just started to block other players until the grid was filled with tiles, which made the game boring	Enlarge the board to 9x9
	Players lose placement options on the board and lose focus. Players tended not to branch out, instead staying compact in the middle of the board.	Remove limitation on shape color
<b>Presentation/clarity</b>	Paper tiles are not easy to place/replace on the board	Use smaller tiles and enlarge the grid
	The color of paper tiles could be seen from behind, which could lead to cheating	Put all the tiles in a bag
<b>Other comments</b>	Too many rules	Cut back on the rules

## Week 2 / Second Lab Playtest - Sept 16, 2013

After the feedback we received from our first lab playtest, we decided to make the game simpler by scrapping completely some of the game's mechanics - including points, the wagering system, and the restriction on what color shape the player can make. Instead of wagering points, we decided to allow the players to make a 50/50 bet (using a 4-sided die) - if they roll an even number they double the amount of tiles they can place/replace, but if they roll an odd number they skip their turn. We also enlarged the board size to 9x9 and used more appealing plastic circular tiles instead of square paper ones.

These changes made the game much more of a success in our next lab playtest. While some of the rules were still unclear, players basically got the hang of what they were supposed to do, and by then the dynamics of the game really started to take effect. We also noticed that with this new wagering system, players were inclined to wager much more often because it allowed them a chance to speed the game up and complete their shapes more easily.



Our second lab playtest went much more smoothly. Players had fun with the game's mechanics after they got the hang of the rules, and they thought the tiles looked cool!

## Week 2 Playtests Feedback

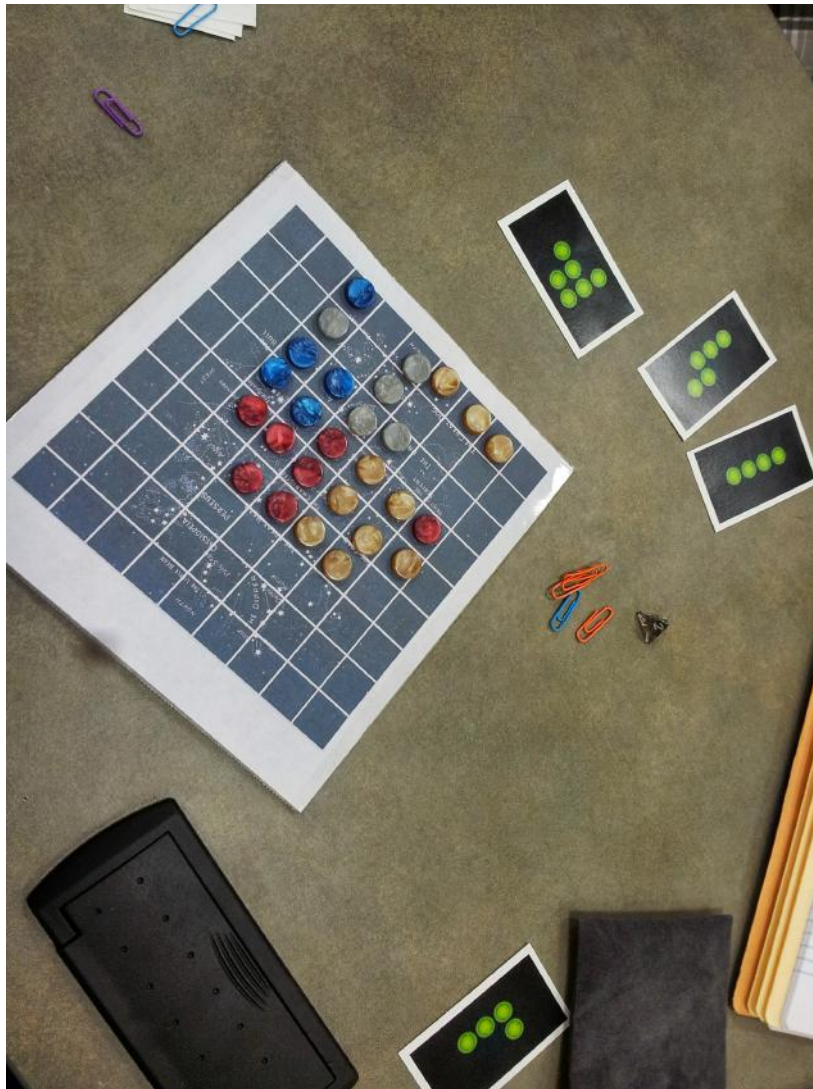
	Input from playtesters	Resolution
<b>Formal</b>	Tiles are easily lost	A tile holder may be needed
	The 6-blocks-in-a-row shape is difficult to make	Remove this shape entirely
<b>Dramatic</b>	None (no dramatic elements yet)	
<b>Dynamic</b>	Players didn't feel the need to hide their tiles	Use tiler holder
	Mirror image blocks are hard to recognize (ie. the Z-shape blocks)	Mirror shape blocks add to difficulty
	Some players take too much time to make movements. A timer element could make it more fun.	Added a 1 minute timer
	People are more willing to wager when they find it's possible to make their shape easily	This is good. The wagering mechanic is being utilized.
	When they can't make up their mind which movement they should make, players will also wager	Getting a 0 can help if you don't want to place tiles
<b>Presentation/clarity</b>	Other players block cards are hard to see	We redesigned the cards to have black backgrounds and bright green blocks
	Because we shortened the rules, some rules are missing, which still lead to some misunderstanding	We still need to clarify some rules, especially the swapping mechanic (we must emphasize that the tiles replaced can be put into the bag or kept in hand)
<b>Other comments</b>		



### Week 3 / Third Lab Playtest - Sept 23, 2013

This week, since we didn't seem to have many problems with the game mechanics based on the playtests from the previous lab, we started to focus on what dramatic elements we could apply to the game. We decided that the abstract idea of building Tetris-block shapes from circles would work well with the concept of making constellations from individual stars (the colors of the tiles also conveniently represent the colors of flames as they grow hotter and hotter). Each of the players is a divine being competing to create the most constellations in the night sky. We also started making the rules more clear and added a timer to make gameplay move faster.

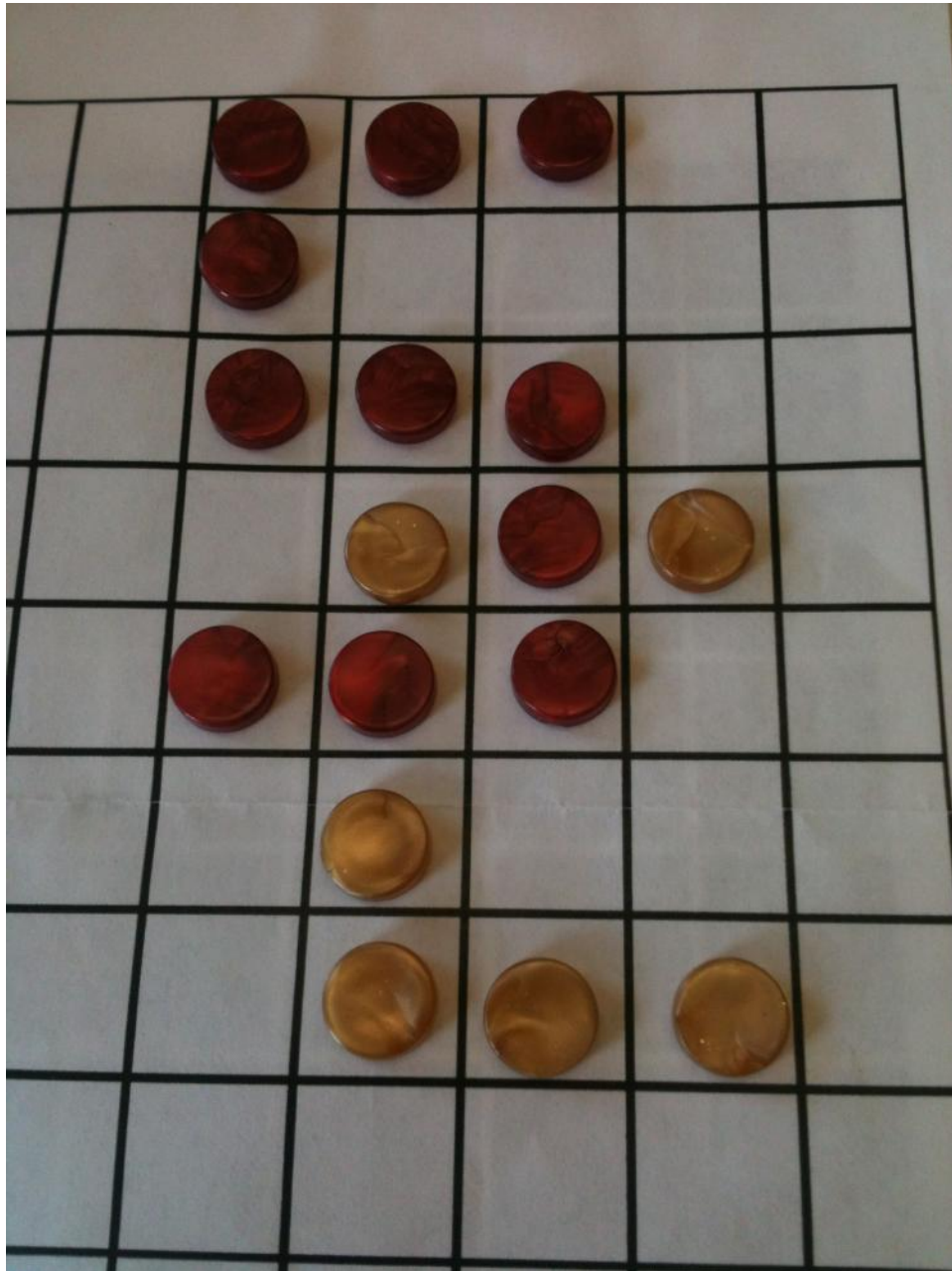
With very little changes made to the gameplay itself, our game was still well-received during the last day of lab playtesting. The timer was an improvement, as it made the game more fast-paced and put more pressure on the players, resulting in some interesting strategies. Some of the rules were still difficult to understand or even missed completely, as players did not bother to look thoroughly through the rulebook.



The dramatic elements of the game start to take shape, and players are utilizing the formal elements to create different strategies for winning.

### Week 3 Playtests Feedback

	<b>Input from playtesters</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>Formal</b>	Players were not sure if they could only swap tiles with tiles they placed on the board, or if they could swap with any tiles	Make this more clear in the rules
	Rules are easily learned after one round. Second round was easier to understand and play through.	This is what we were trying to accomplish
<b>Dramatic</b>	Amusing back story, a pretty good fit to the gameplay mechanics. Maybe you can talk about how the dice rolls, etc. fit into the story as well.	Incorporate these into the rules.
<b>Dynamic</b>	Players asked if their tiles should be hidden	This was clarified in the rules
	Players asked if their block cards should be visible	This was in the rules, but overlooked by the player
	Players developed strategies against other players such as hindering others' progress	Nothing to resolve. This was an element that we wanted players to start doing.
<b>Presentation/clarity</b>		
<b>Other comments</b>	Players were not introduced to the story until after the first game on this day. They liked our story about the god-like beings and having to replace the stars. Players thought it meshed well with the game mechanics.	Nothing to resolve



We even had some fun without playing the game!