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## Homework 5 - Game Night Prototype

This document is a synopsis of the prototype testing for the added abilities for the redesigned and now virtual board game, Blokus.

### What I made

For the prototype I used the classic board game with the new abilities added as cards that each player held, and a die to pick which pieces they had access to each turn, played with my roommates Amanda and Cassidy. I gave each player 2 notecards labeled "mirror" and "wild card" with a 7x7 grid and the point totals on them. The blunt pair of scissors was a mistake. When a player chose to use an ability, they'd cut out the card into the shape of the new piece.

This worked somewhat though was slow and a source of frustration. Bomb was a random playing card that was turned into the discard pile after being used. A d20 was used to choose which piece, referenced off the third image. The remaining piece, piece 21, we decided had to be the first piece used to save time.

At the end is the paper prototype I used at the beginning of the game night. It was not well received.

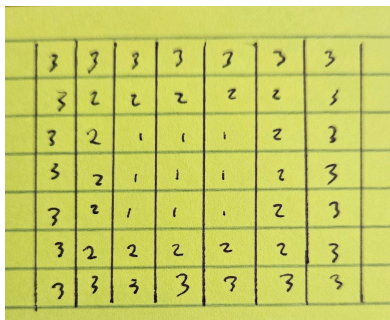


Image 1:  
Example of an ability card  
for the prototype  
runthrough.

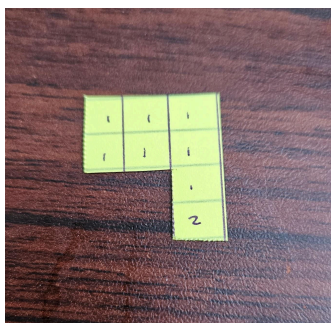


Image 2:  
Example of a cutout for the  
wildcard for the prototype  
runthrough.

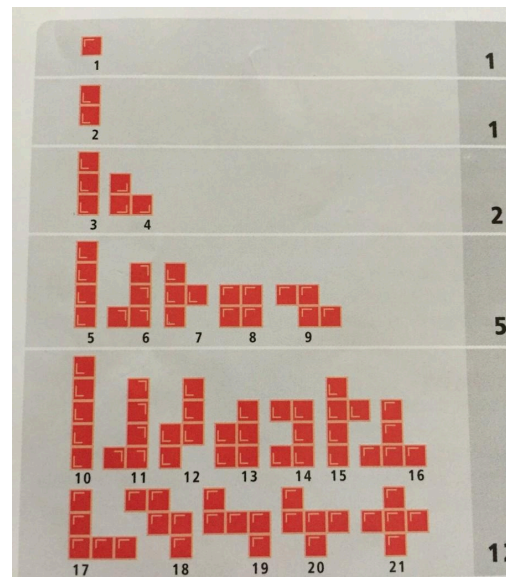


Image 3:  
Blokus Pieces official. Used for  
randomizing pieces available.

Quick reminder on the rules of Blokus: on your turn you have to place one of your remaining pieces on the board, touching a corner of one of your own previously placed pieces.

A brief recap of the new abilities:

- **Bomb** the bomb removes a 3x3 area from the board and players are returned any pieces that touch this area.
- **Mirror** copies a piece already placed (enemies or self)
- **Wild Place** players can design and place their own 3x3 piece.

## How it went

My players, for the most part, did enjoy the abilities but they all complained about the slowness of having to cut out their own pieces. After the first time we just placed blocks from the fourth color. The mirror and wildcards didn't seem to affect the game in any meaningful way. I showed them my drawn mockup which was really just the gameboard with a piece of paper labeled "available pieces."

I focused on asking my players three questions:

1. Tell me what you thought of the abilities?
2. What would make the abilities more fun?
3. What changes would you expect if this was a computer game?

Amanda said the following:

1. "The bomb ability was the best. I wanted to use it more often."  
"I don't like mirror. Why would you want more pieces when the board is already full?"  
"[Wild Card] was too slow and I just used it to fill gaps."
2. More bombs!
3. Explosions.

Cassidy said the following:

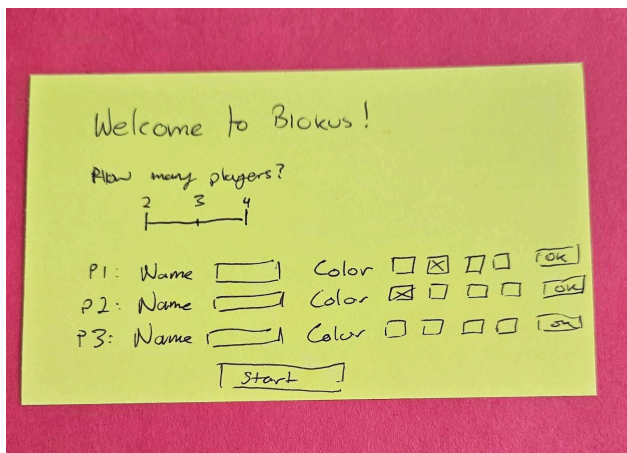
1. "I like the bomb best. The other abilities did not make a difference to how it usually goes. Maybe if they could remove other pieces or change them? Maybe? I'm not sure how you'd make that work though."  
"Really the make your own was way too complicated. Having to math in a first grader game? That was too much."
2. Remove the cost or hide it in your actual game. Maybe make players HAVE to use the mirror one or it'd cost against them. And it shouldn't be used for a single block.
3. The whole thing should be faster. It took way longer than usual. I do like the idea of the pieces not all being available all the time because it made me think more than usual about which pieces I had left.

## Takeaways

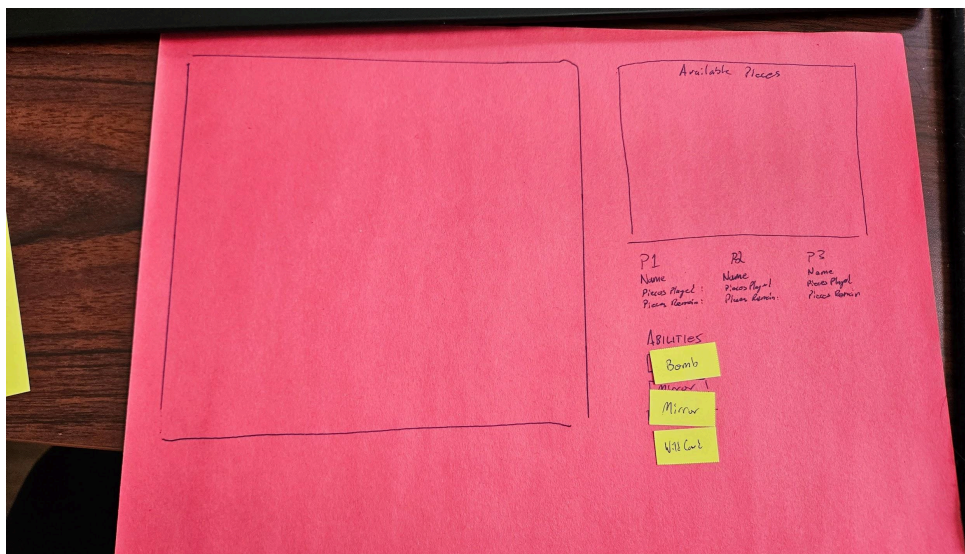
- Using die to play a board game that is inherently a quick-placing game slows it down too much and over complicates it.
- I need to remove the math from the foreground of players' minds so that the program automatically accounts for the cost of creating pieces.
- The available pieces should be displayed quickly.
- Abilities should have a cost associated with their use or lack of use. For instance, if a player ends the game with no pieces remaining but still have their mirror and wild cards, those should count as remaining pieces.
- There should be clear limits to what Wild Cards and Mirror may make—at least three spaces and use less than five.

Following is the paper prototype I made that was tossed out after explaining the button placement. There were no complaints though I did like the idea that whoever's turn it is changes the background color to their color.

## Paper Prototype



This is the introduction screen.



This is the screen upon loading. Note that the abilities grey out after use.

