

# **We Could All Use a Little Change**

**Jocelyn Wagner | GAME-601**

“Penny for Your Thoughts” is a party game of some skill and some chance. The game is played by flipping pennies onto the opponent’s side of the field that are then either returned to the player or given to the opponent based on which side of the coin lands face up, and continues until one player is out of coins. This game modified the “matching pennies” game in an attempt to raise the stakes and add a layer of agency in order to increase playability and generate a more tangible objective and outcome for the game. I decided to modify this game because I thought it would be challenging and rewarding to modify a game with a large element of chance. I determined that the added agency and additional element of chance would sufficiently balance the game and increase player’s investment, thus creating a more satisfying conclusion.

## **Adding Strategy:**

The game formerly known as “Penny For Your Thoughts” had to be reconstructed in order to add strategy and give meaningful choices to the players. In addition, the name had to change since the game no longer used pennies (but still utilized the heads/tails function of the original game and still used coins). Players seek to gain points by drafting coins based on value, and then throwing those coins into targeted point zones on the opponent’s side of the board. If a coin lands tails-up, the player is also given an obstacle in order to decrease difficulty. The game lasts 3 rounds, and the person with the most points wins. I modified the initial gam “Penny For Your Thoughts” with the addition of denominations of coins, a coin draft, and a series of obstacle-cards in order to increase difficulty and add risk/reward and trade-off decisions. The game was thus renamed “We Could All Use a Little Change”.

## **Game Rules (Updated)**

Players: 2

Objective: To gain the most points through a combination of skill, chance, and risk management.

Materials needed:

- 20 quarters, 10 nickels, 6 dimes
- Table
- String or other such instrument to demarcate the table

Rules:

1. Players begin by dividing the table in half using string or another object. The table should be divided equally in half on the shorter axis.
2. Players draft coins. Each player has 10 “points” to spend. Quarters are worth 1 point, nickels are worth 2, and dimes are worth 3.
3. Once the players have drafted their coins, they alternate turns throwing their coins to the opponent’s side of the playing field. Points are calculated as follows: quarters earn 1 point, nickels earn 3, and dimes earn 5. This is multiplied by the scored zone the coins land in (1, 2, and 3).
4. If a coin lands tails-up, a player must draw a “tails” card, thus providing an obstacle to their next turn.
5. Play continues until both players are out of coins. If one player has more coins than another, they take their turns consecutively when their opponent runs out.
6. At the end of the round, points are tallied and the draft begins anew. The game lasts three rounds total, and the player with the most points wins.

## **Design Process Statement (On Adding Strategy)**

It's clear that the previous iteration of "Penny for Your Thoughts" needed some serious reconstruction in order to add a strategic element. In order to increase strategic play, I decided to make some tweaks to how the game is played, all the while maintaining a) the core tenets of heads or tails (in which the value of heads and tails provide differing outcomes), b) the mechanics of flipping, and the skill element of tossing the coins into a targeted area. I decided to apply trade-offs to the game process in order to make the game a bit more interesting and to add an element of strategy. I added a points system, a zoned playing field, a set of obstacles to play (in the event that the player's coin lands tails side up), and a drafting system at the beginning of the game in which the player chooses different coins based on their ascribed values and the amount they have to spend.

The process would start with a coin draft: each player has a value of 10 "points" which they can spend on different delineations of coins based on the amount of points a coin is worth (with quarters costing one point, nickel costing two, and dimes costing three; pennies, ironically, are eliminated from this version of the game). Players can draft coins based on different strategies—for instance, a player with 10 quarters has more turns and better chance of landing in the intended area (since they are a bit heavier), but a player with dimes has a better chance of getting more points if they land in a higher scoring area. Since the values of the coins are 1, 3, and 5 in terms of descending size, it's possible to gain more points with nickels and dimes, but they are harder to throw. Likewise, the potential loss of points (in the event the coin lands tails-up) is greater since the higher the coin value, the less coins a player has, thus creating a risk/reward scenario.

While players get the number of points a coin is worth x the number of points in the scored zones when it lands heads-up, tails-up coins come with some drawbacks. The tails coins (potential obstacles) that are drawn at random when a player lands tails-up are intended to give a handicap of sorts to the player who was unlucky enough to land tails up. Each specified action lasts one turn (or the following turn, if the action is to take place during play), while point additions/deductions immediately affect the score. The tails cards are as follows:

- Opponent throws from player's side of the table
- Player must throw over the shoulder
- Player loses 1 point
- Opponent gains 1 point
- Player throws underhand
- Player throws overhand
- Turn is played 5 steps from the field
- Opponent receives 1 coin from player's stash
- Opponent can move one coin of their choice
- Turn is played with eyes closed
- Player must trade highest value coin with opponent's lowest value coin

- Player flips coin rather than throws

After playtesting, we found that it was better to give points to the player even if the coin landed tails-up, since most of the “tails” cards basically have the player throw away their turn thus giving them a double setback. So the new rules stipulate that heads or tails, a player gets the value of the coin x the scored zone they landed in, while tails-up coins also provide an obstacle.

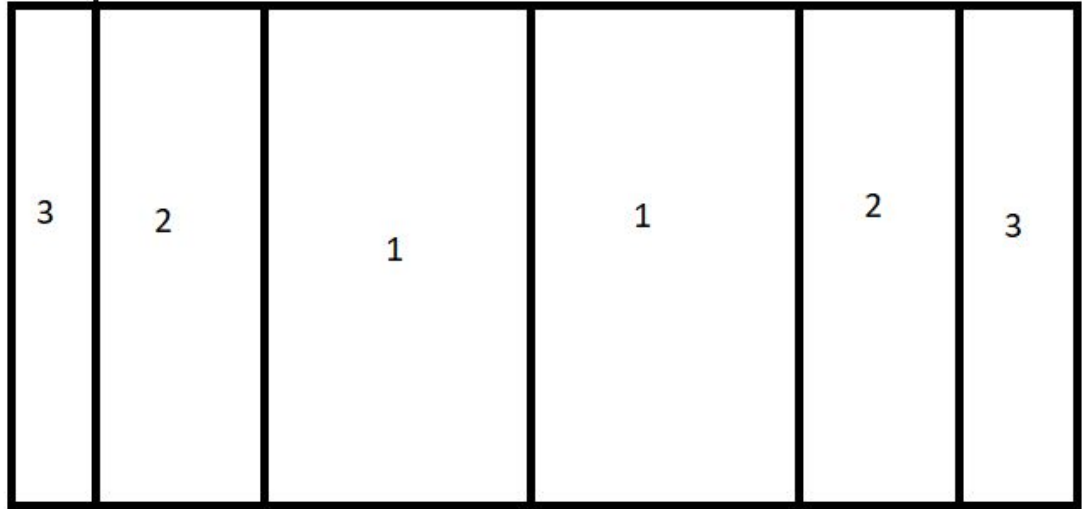


Figure 1: Board set up for game