Game Modification - Matching Pennies

By Molly Bridges

This modified version of matching pennies is a fast-paced game that combines strategy, speed, and luck as two players race to acquire the most points before the timer goes off. Rather than simply flipping one coin, both players flip coins, either in their hands or into a box in the center of the room, and receive points based on the results of their flip. The player with the most points at the end of the round wins!

Game Rules

Points System

Coin flipped IN HAND	Coin flipped INTO BOX
Heads: 2 points	Heads: 4 points
Tails: 0 points	Tails: -1 point

Coins that land on the floor or on the table around the box will receive 0 points.

- Players are encouraged to flip their coins simultaneously; this is not a turn-based game.
- Players must stand at least three feet away from the box as they toss in order to receive points.
- The coin does not need to be flipped in the traditional way; any toss in which the coin spins in the air is accepted.
- After one minute, the final scores will be tallied. The person with the most points is the winner.

First playtest: Devised and refined the point system.

Second playtest: Refined gameplay technique; adapted materials for smaller spaces.

Design Process Statement

     As I was adapting Matching Pennies, I attempted to find the parts of the game that were successful, and in my adaptation, I brought those elements into as many parts of the game as I could. One of the most integral parts of Matching Pennies is the anticipation; there is tension when the coin has been flipped, but not revealed, and catharsis when the players learn the result. In my project, it was my goal to take that feeling of anticipation and spread it across all facets of the game, from pacing and timing to the number of flips. In addition to the anticipation, I also felt that the element of luck was important. In its original form, Matching Pennies is purely a game of chance. I wanted to honor that feeling of chance by creating risks and rewards in my final version, as evidenced by the possibility of losing points or receiving zero points.

     As I adapted my game, one of the greatest challenges I found was in creating a system that rewarded multiple gameplay strategies. The point system went through several rounds of editing as I playtested this game. In its first iteration, the point system made it much more rewarding to flip the coin as quickly as possible in your own hand; in the second, flipping in the box was much more rewarding, even with the possibility of losing points. The final version combines both a point adjustment and a distance requirement to make the different strategies more balanced.

In addition to refining the point system, I also found it difficult to make this a fair game in terms of skill. Not everyone can flip a coin off of their thumb, and not everyone can catch a small object like a coin with ease. In addition, when you flip a coin off your thumb, it becomes difficult to apply directionality to your toss, making it significantly harder to get into the box. By allowing all types of revolving tosses to count as coin flips, the player is given more opportunities to use multiple strategies, rather than just the one that they feel the most physically capable of doing. Adding the option for a box also ended up making this game easier to master; for some playtesters, the box was the easier target, while some felt more comfortable flipping in their hand.

Overall, I found this project to be very successful. My adaptation of Matching Pennies combines luck and strategy to deliver a fast-paced game that is both fun to play and fun to watch. If I were to take this game further, I would love to add more coin flipping strategies and point systems, including trick shots, but for now, I am proud that this game is easy to learn and fun to play in its original form.