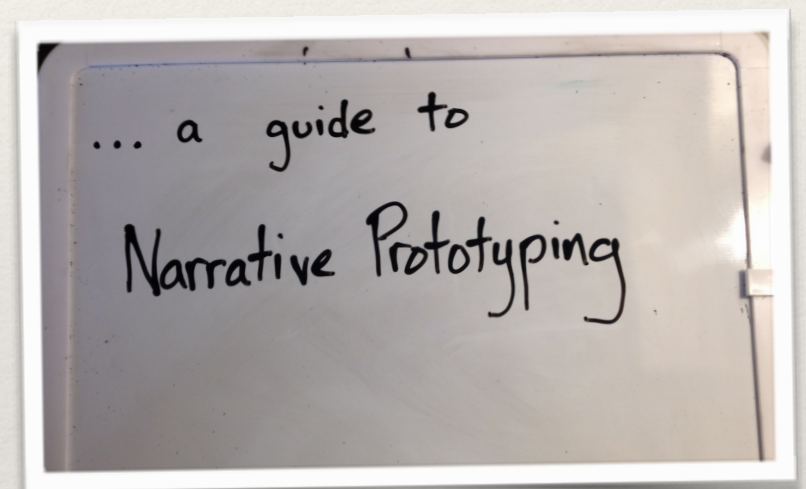


---

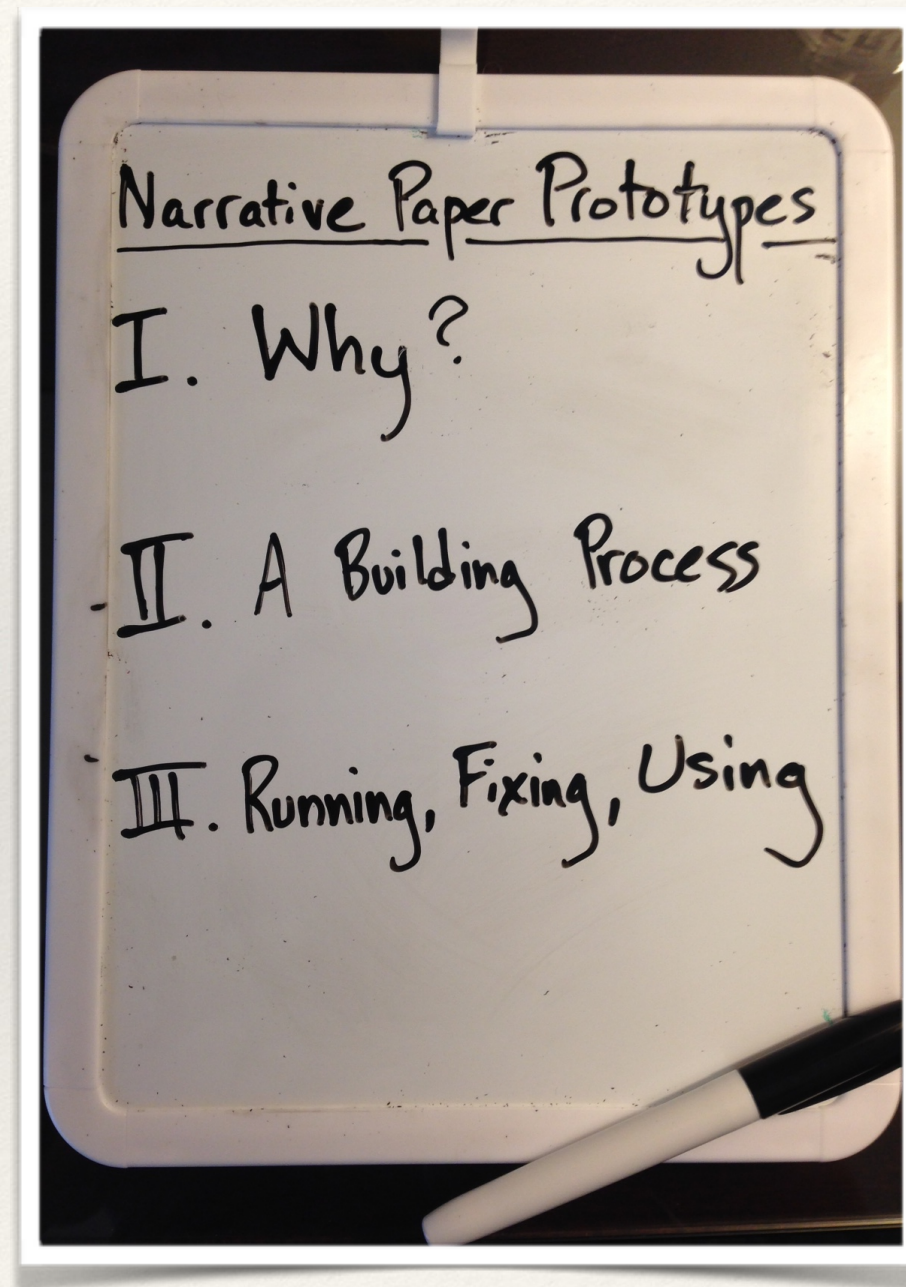
# Paper Tales

---





# Super-Brief Overview





---

# About Me

---

*Game Designer and Writer*

*Currently:*





---

# About Me

---

*Game Designer and Writer*

*I've made games that allow players to be creative with their choices...*



*(Tales 2005)*



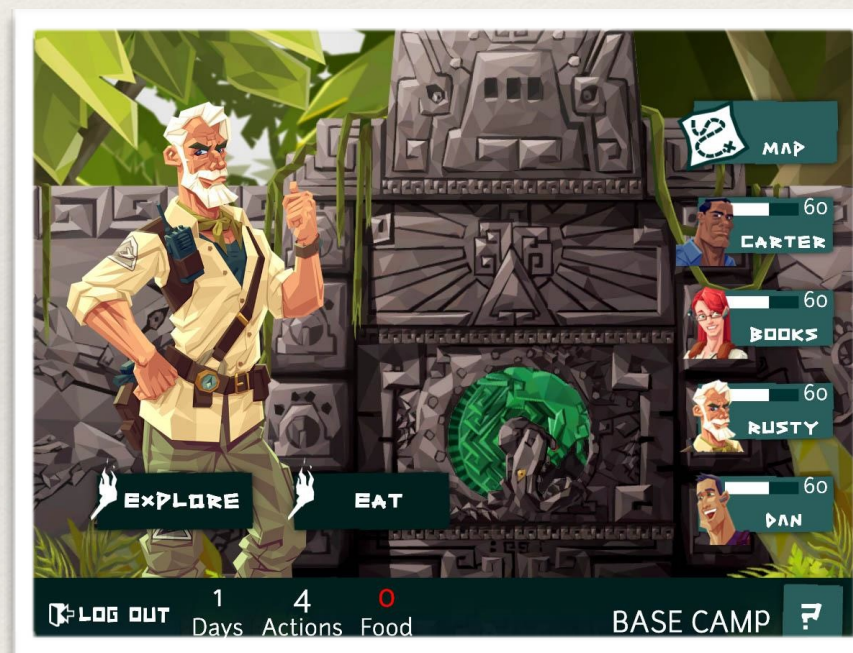
---

# About Me

---

*Game Designer and Writer*

*... games that create positive, lasting player outcomes...*



*(Treasure of Bell Island, 2013)*



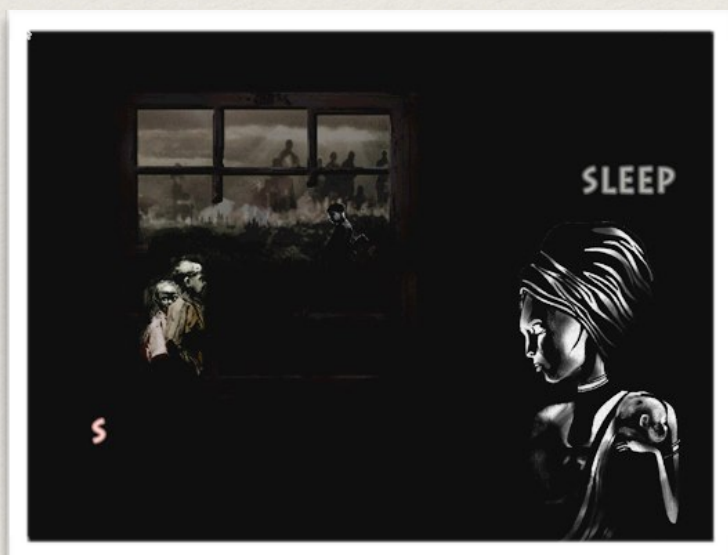
---

# About Me

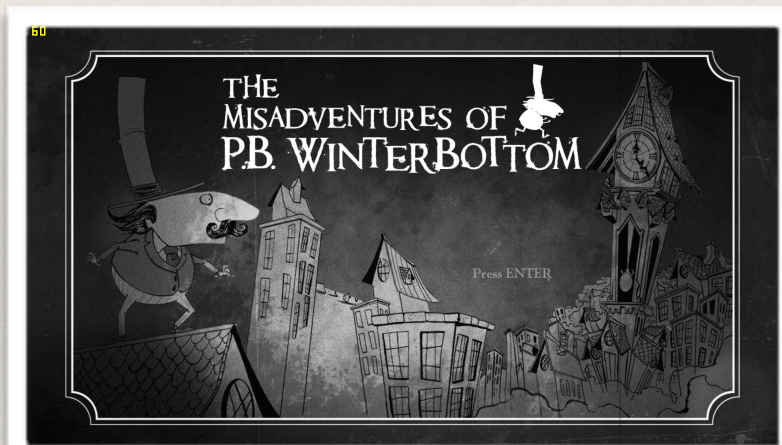
---

## *Game Designer and Writer*

*...games that generate powerful, unexpected experiences...  
...whether that is fear, delight, tranquility, sorrow or a combination...*



*(Hush, 2008),*



*(Winterbottom, 2010),*



*(p0nd, 2010)*



---

# About Me

---

*Game Designer and Writer*

*... and games that connect players with story in new ways.*



*(Spectre, 2009),*



*Wayward Manor (Coming soon)*

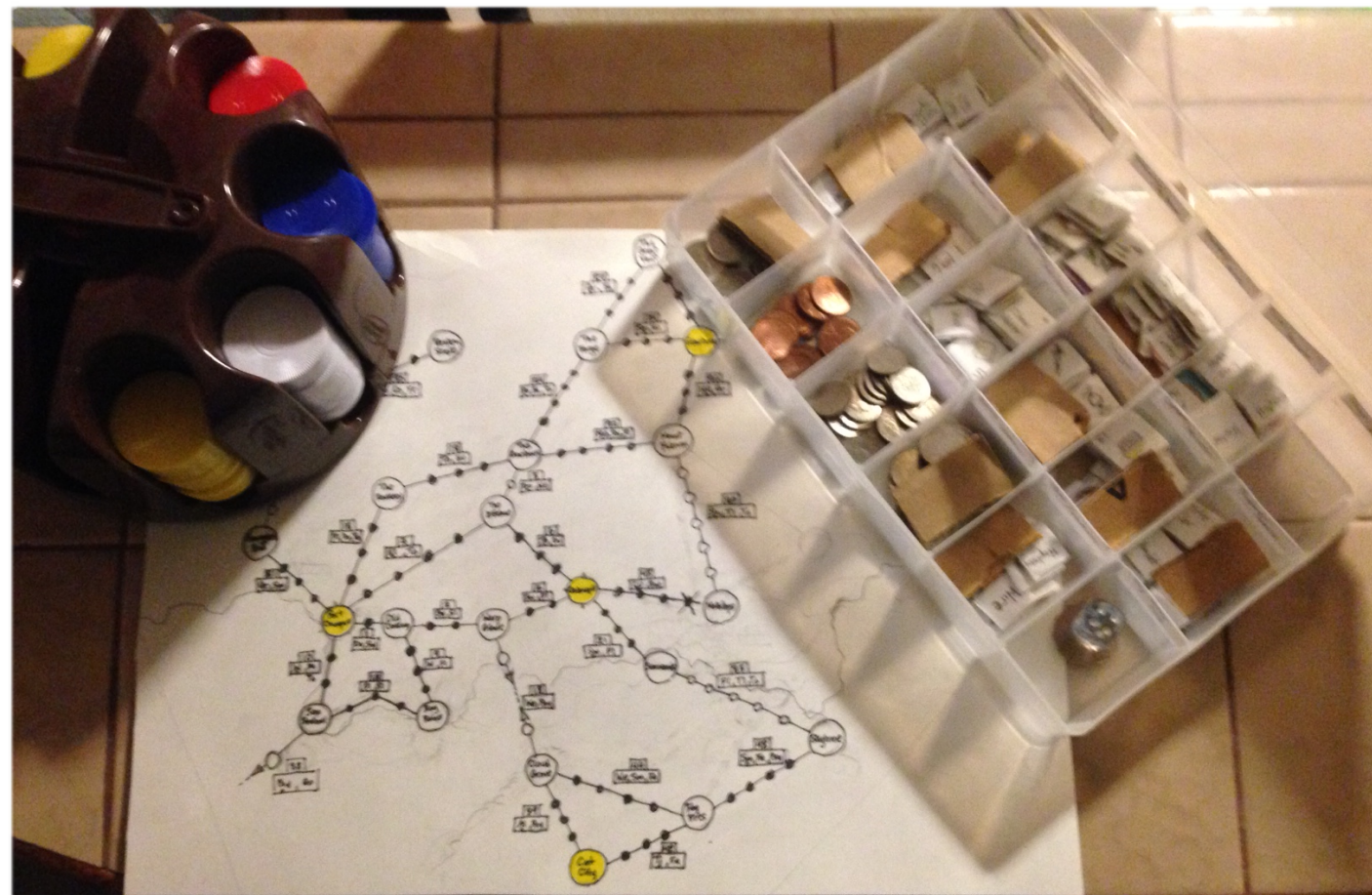


---

# About Me

---

*Avid Paper Prototyper*





# What's a Prototype?

---

*A Prototype Is:*



*A mockup, or DRAFT, of a potential game.*



# What's a Prototype?

---

*A Prototype Is Usually:*

- ***Focused** on a core aspect of the experience*
- ***Playable***
- *Made **quickly***
- *A disposable **practice** run of a grander project*





# The Digital Sandbox

- Often the *only* prototype
- Showcases controls
- Asks and answers:  
    *“Is this immediately enjoyable?”*





# The Digital Sandbox

- *A single moment: First contact*
- *Goal-free, context-free*
- *Doesn't address the larger experience, the premise, progression, choices... the game's **narrative***





# What's a Game Narrative?

---

## Traditional Narrative:

The hero is called to **action** through a series of **events**, and strives to overcome **challenges** to achieve their **goal**.

## Game Narrative:

The player is performing **actions** that influence **events**, and learns to master the **system/rules**(challenge) to achieve their **goal**.

The **player** is the hero.





# What's a Game Narrative?

*Once more, with feeling:  
The **Player** is the **Hero***





# Narrative Prototyping Practices

## *Across Storytelling Media*

### *Books*

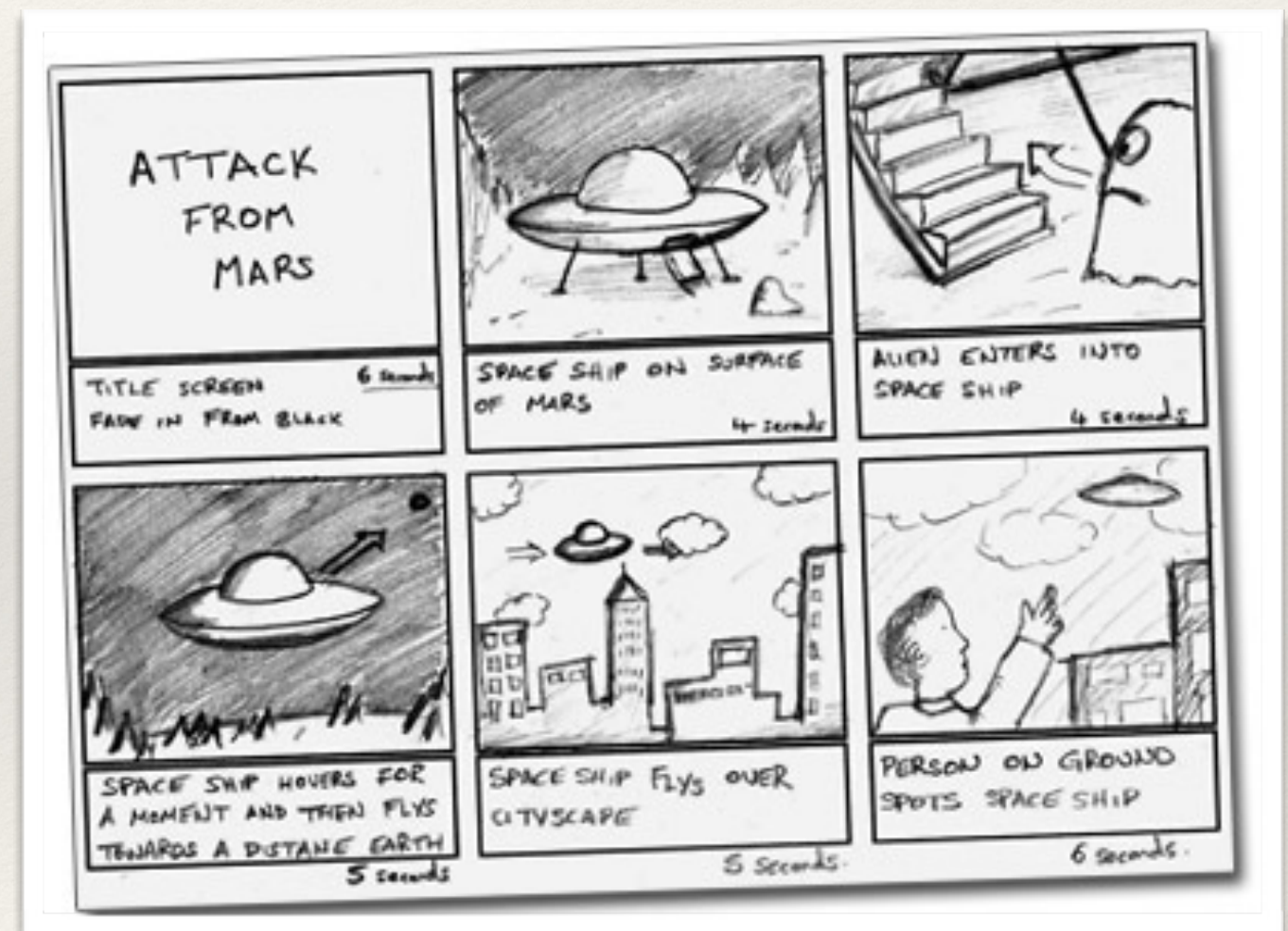
*Notes, Outlines, Drafts*

### *Film/TV*

*Script, Storyboard, Read-Throughs*

### *Animated Film*

*Script, Storyboard, Animatic, Pre-Vis*





---

# Narrative Prototypes

---

*Save **Time** and **Money**  
By Reducing the Risk  
That Your Elaborate Ideas  
Only Make Sense In Your Head*





---

# Games as a Narrative Medium

---



*Undeniably  
Complex*



---

# Risk in Games:

---

*The biggest **risk/unknown** in games is the **player**.*

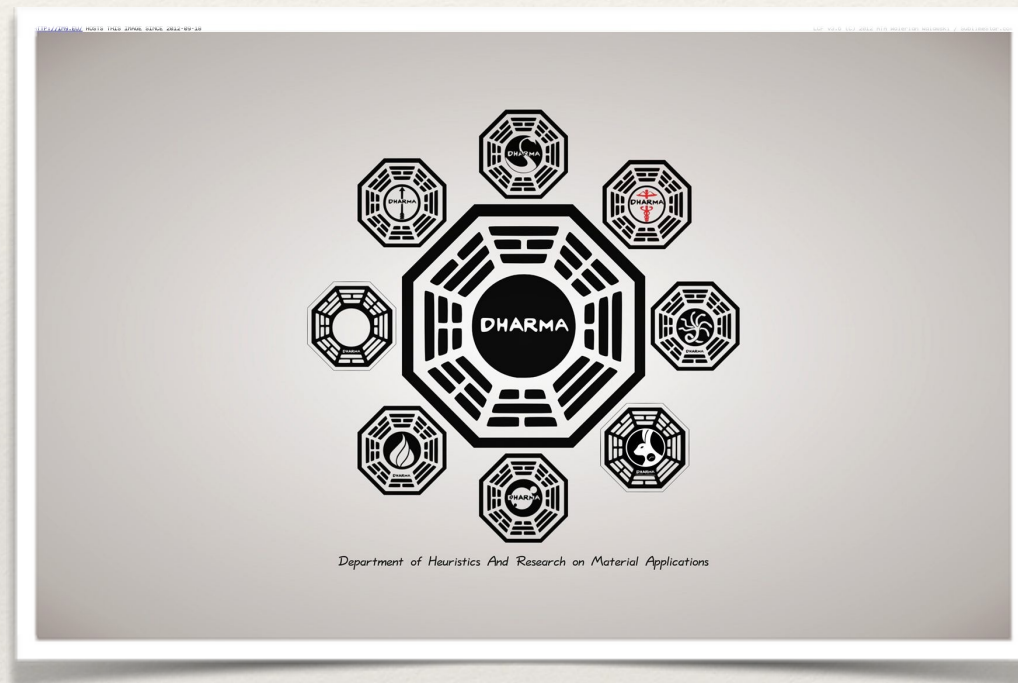


*Let's put the hero into the narrative,  
as cheaply as possible,  
as early as we can.*



# Narrative Game Prototype

*A playable, flexible outline of the premise, rules, events and choices,  
built to answer these questions:*



*What is the “hero’s journey” for the player?  
Do these pieces fit together into a compelling experience?  
Does it all make sense?*



# That's A Bit Overwhelming, Bro

*A narrative prototype sounds really ambitious...*



*...and I remain irrevocably human.*

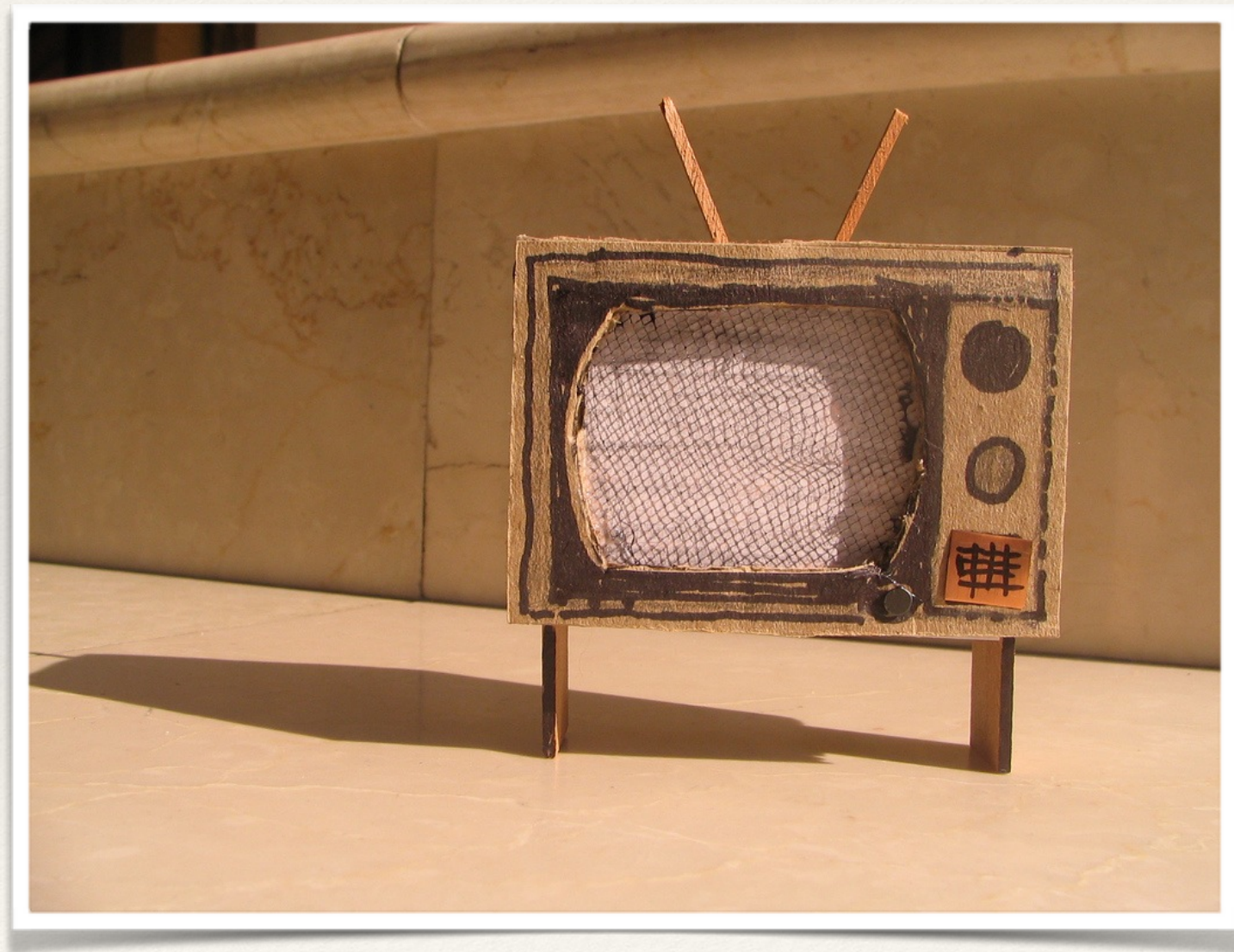


---

# The Power of Paper

---

*Clear Reception, No Load Times, Always Compiles*





---

# The Power of Paper

---

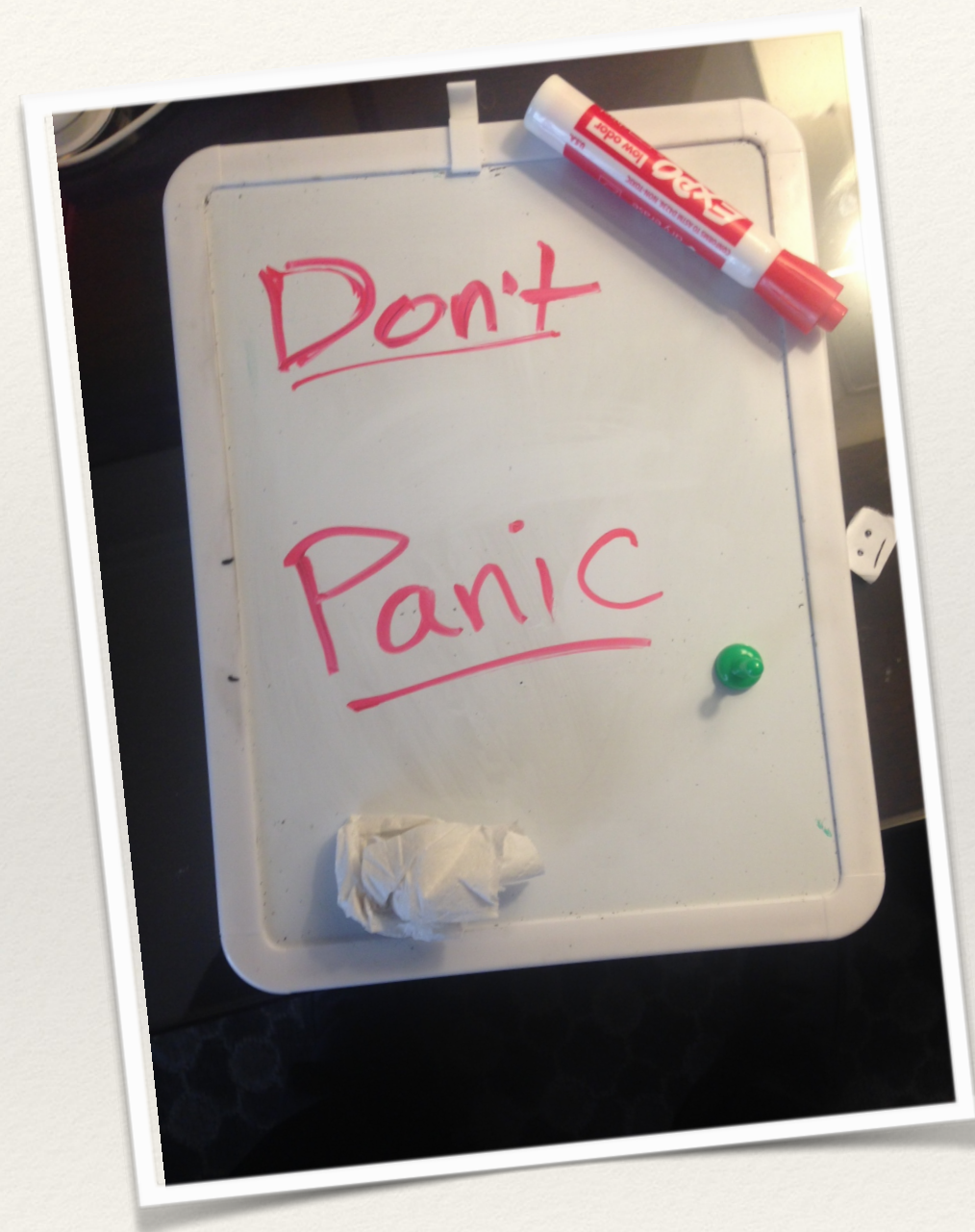
*Make a Narrative Outline as a Board Game*





# Making the Narrative Prototype

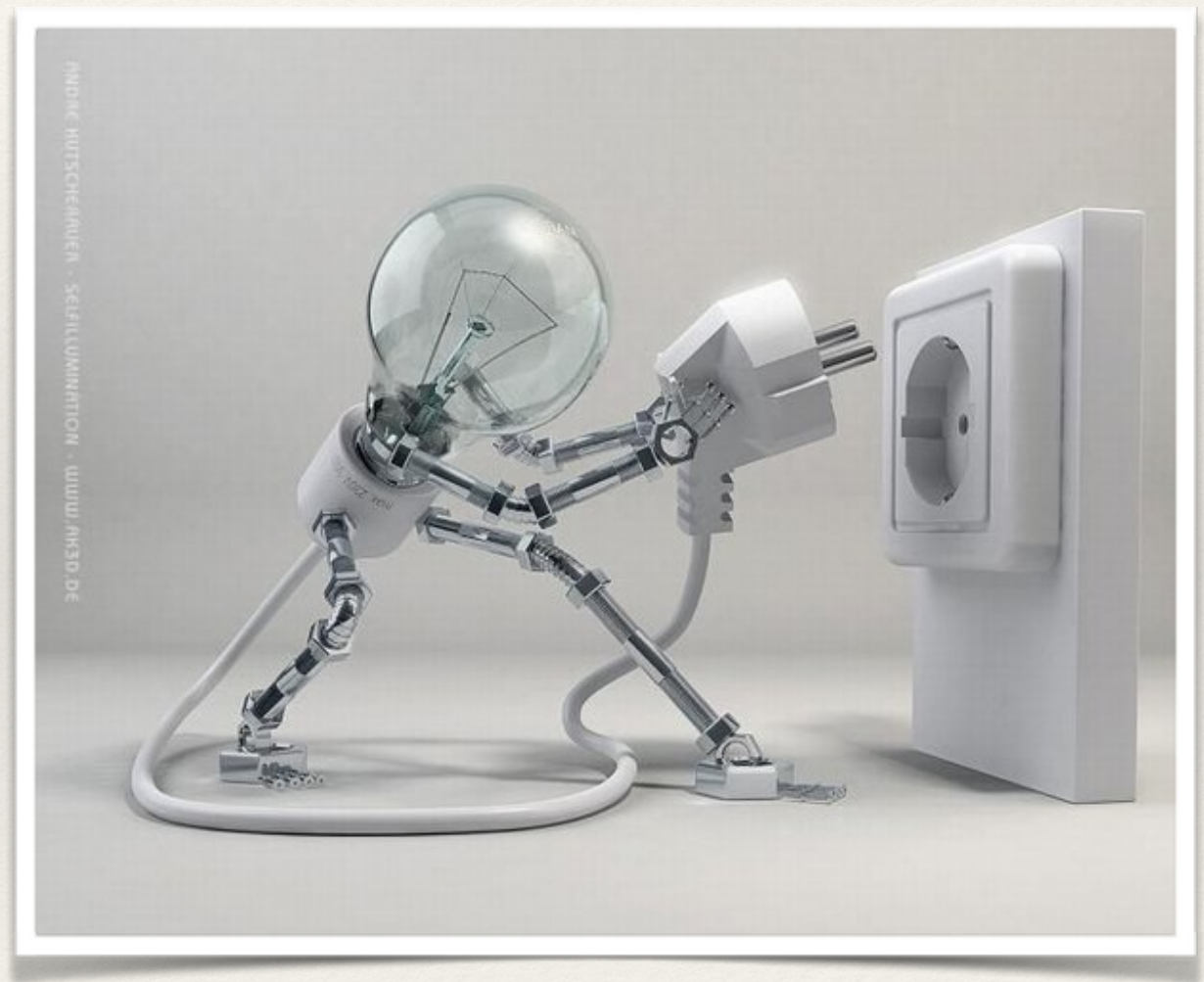
- *Prototyping Toolbox*
- *Initial Write-Up*
- *Build the Story*
- *Draft Your Rules*
- *Gather Your Materials*
- *Make Your Board*





# Your Prototyping Toolbox

- *An **idea**... and a willingness to expand it into something tangible.*
- *A deadline.*
- *Willing prototypers.*
- *Some simple supplies.*
- *Narrative reference points.*
- *A personal storytelling experience.*
- *A focus.*





# Your Prototyping Toolbox

- *An idea.*
- *A **deadline** for first proto... at most 3 days, or 1/100th of your total timeframe.*
- *Willing prototypers.*
- *Some simple supplies.*
- *Narrative reference points.*
- *A personal storytelling experience.*
- *A focus.*





# Your Prototyping Toolbox

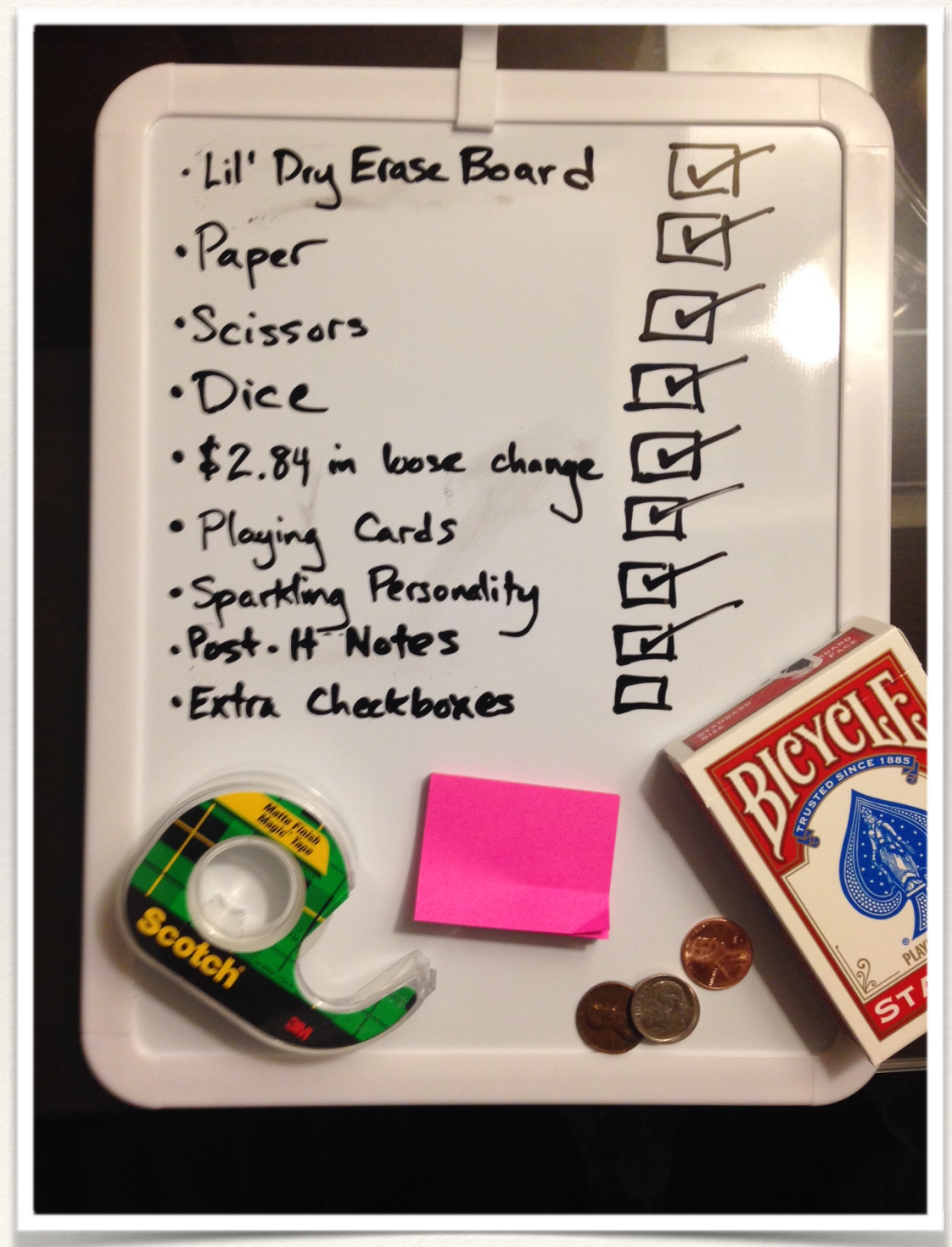
- *An idea.*
- *A deadline.*
- *Willing **prototypers**... one, at most two people.*
- *Some simple supplies.*
- *Narrative reference points.*
- *A personal storytelling experience.*
- *A focus.*





# Your Prototyping Toolbox

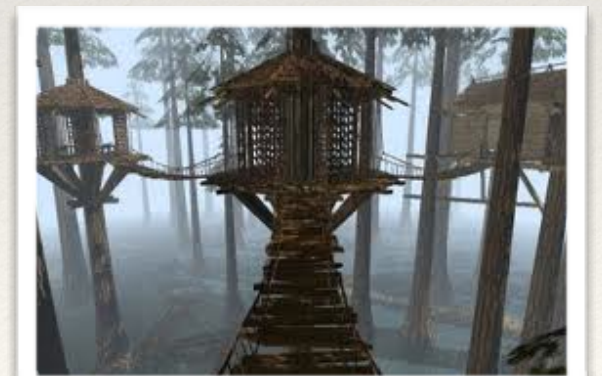
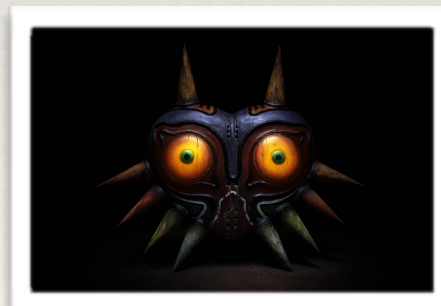
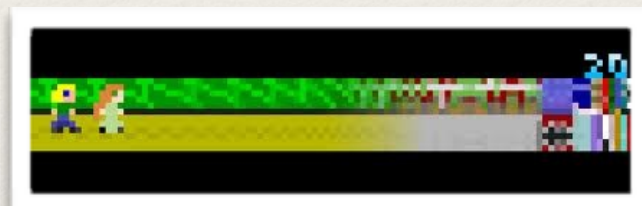
- *An idea.*
- *A deadline.*
- *Willing prototypers.*
- *Some simple supplies... all optional.*
- *Narrative reference points.*
- *A personal storytelling experience.*
- *A focus.*





# Your Prototyping Toolbox

- *An idea.*
- *A deadline.*
- *Willing prototypers.*
- *Some simple supplies.*
- *Narrative **reference** points... at least one game that has similarities to your idea, and thoughts about its player narrative.*
- *A personal storytelling experience.*
- *A focus.*





---

# Your Prototyping Toolbox

---

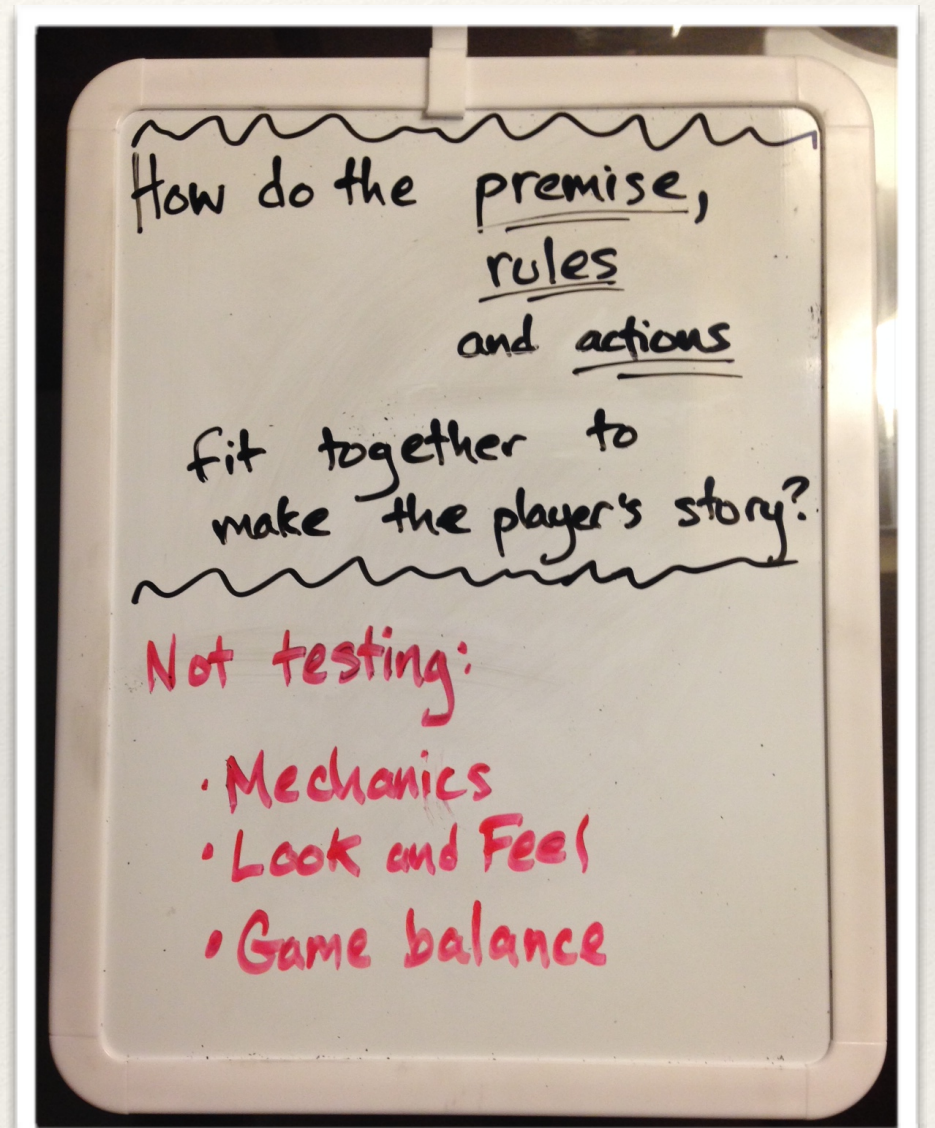
- *An idea.*
- *A deadline.*
- *Willing prototypers.*
- *Some simple supplies.*
- *Narrative reference points.*
- *A **personal storytelling** experience... a time when you felt **engaged** and **empowered** as a storyteller.*
- *A focus.*





# Your Prototyping Toolbox

- *An idea.*
- *A deadline.*
- *Willing prototypers.*
- *Some simple supplies.*
- *Narrative reference points.*
- *A personal storytelling experience.*
- *A **focus** on the central question of game narrative.*



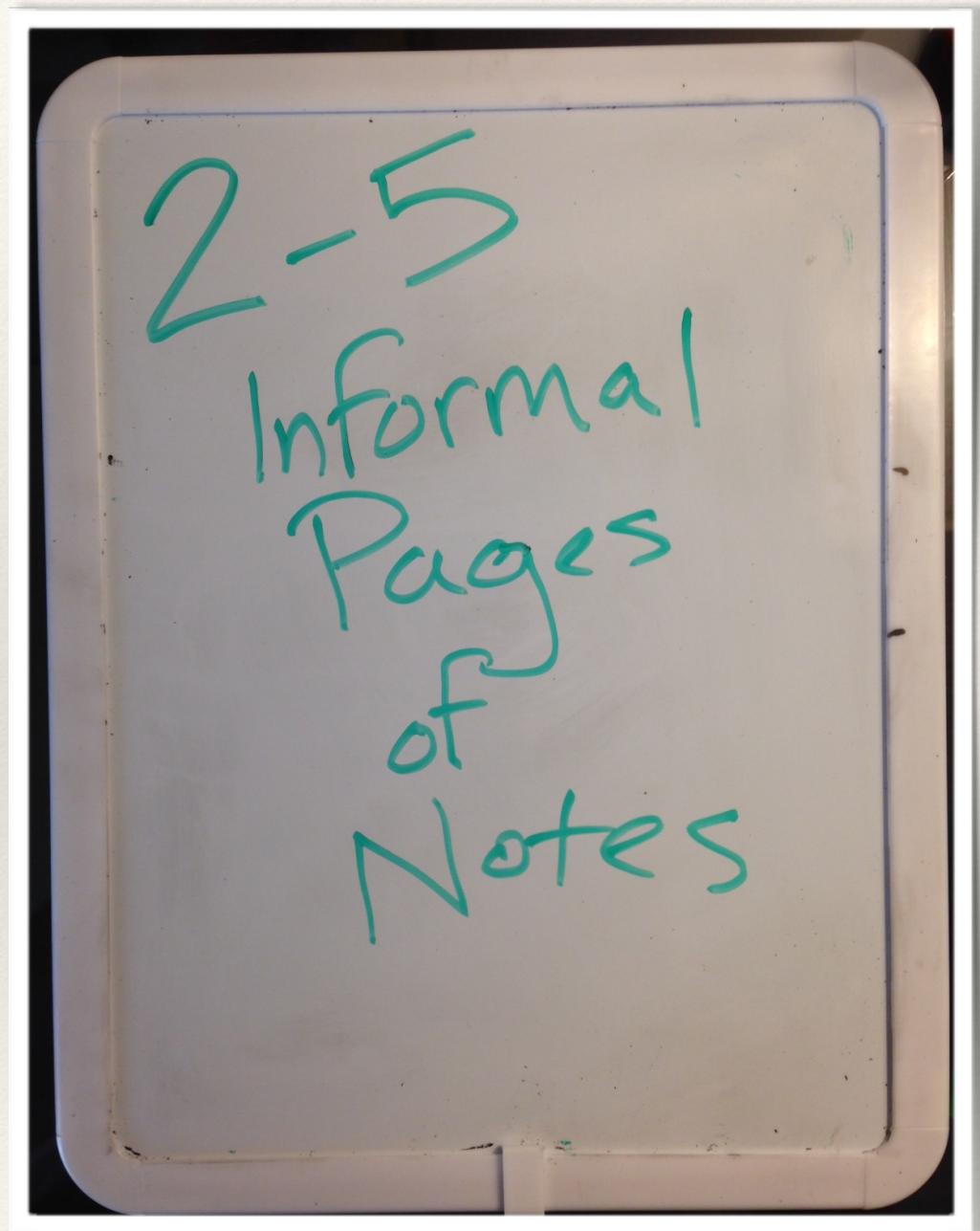


---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*  
*Player Role ->*  
*Player Goals ->*  
*Player Conflict ->*  
*Player Choices ->*  
*Player Actions ->*  
*Resources ->*  
*Game Events*





---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*  
*Player Role ->*  
*Player Goals ->*  
*Player Conflict ->*  
*Player Choices ->*  
*Player Actions ->*  
*Resources ->*  
*Game Events*



*Go nuts.*  
*For about ten minutes.*



---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*

*Player Role ->*

*Player Goals ->*

*Player Conflict ->*

*Player Choices ->*

*Player Actions ->*

*Resources ->*

*Game Events*



*Is the player supposed to “be” a **character**?*



# Initial Write-Up

*Premise ->*

*Player Role ->*

***Player Goals** ->*

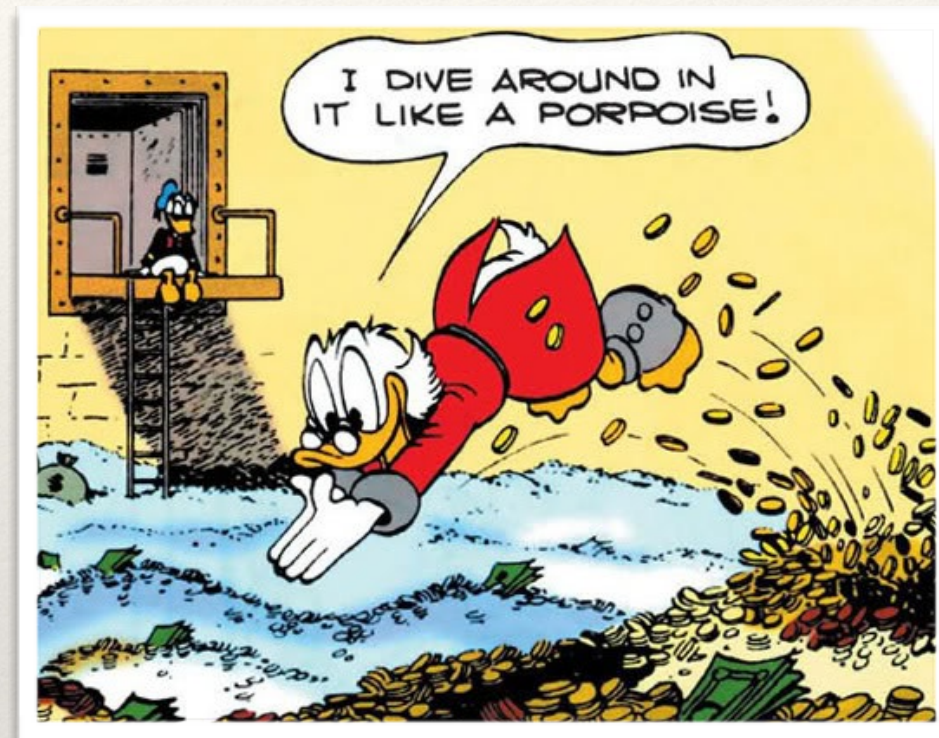
*Player Conflict ->*

*Player Choices ->*

*Player Actions ->*

*Resources ->*

*Game Events*



*Simple and Relatable*



---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*

*Player Role ->*

*Player Goals ->*

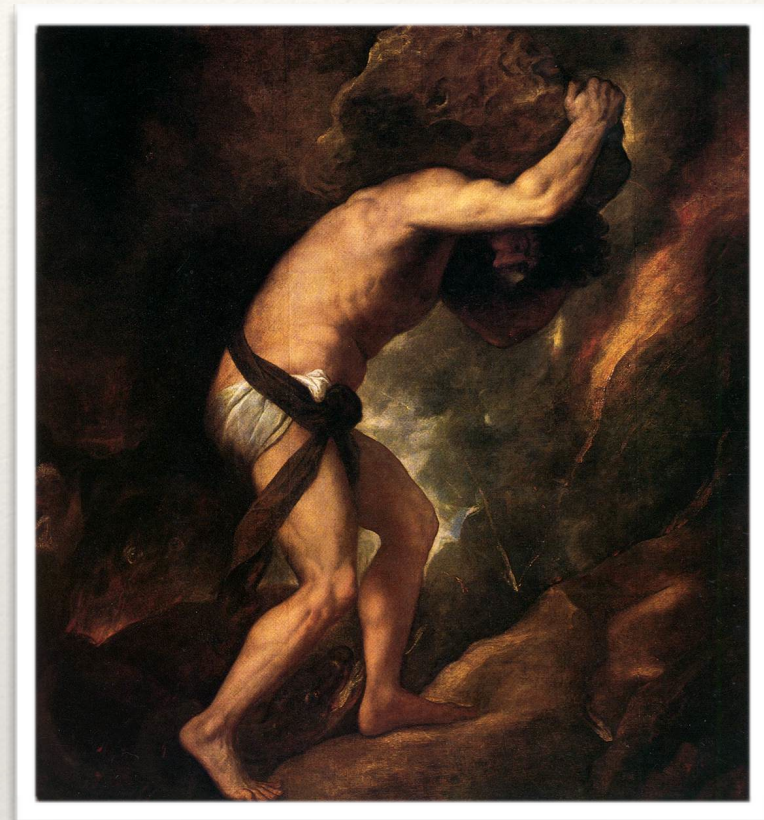
***Player Conflict ->***

*Player Choices ->*

*Player Actions ->*

*Resources ->*

*Game Events*



*What obstacles are in the player's way?  
What are the barriers to (efficient) victory?*



---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*

*Player Role ->*

*Player Goals ->*

*Player Conflict ->*

***Player Choices ->***

*Player Actions ->*

*Resources ->*

*Game Events*



*Tough? Meaningful? Strategic? Tactical?*



---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*

*Player Role ->*

*Player Goals ->*

*Player Conflict ->*

*Player Choices ->*

***Player Actions ->***

*Resources ->*

*Game Events*



*What are the player's regular verbs?*



---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*  
*Player Role ->*  
*Player Goals ->*  
*Player Conflict ->*  
*Player Choices ->*  
*Player Actions ->*  
***Resources ->***  
*Game Events*



*What in the world can the player use?*

*Simple to understand, but elegant...*

*A good resource gives opportunity, information, challenge*



---

# Initial Write-Up

---

*Premise ->*

*Player Role ->*

*Player Goals ->*

*Player Conflict ->*

*Player Choices ->*

*Player Actions ->*

*Resources ->*

***Game Events***



*What sorts of changes take place?*

*Are these changes scheduled, or big milestones?*

*Is there an end?*



---

# Building the Story

---



- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning to the Rules*
- *Use Characters as Resources, Events and Conflict*
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



---

# Building the Story

---



- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning to the Rules*
- *Use Characters as Resources, Events and Conflict*
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



---

# Building the Story

---



- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning to the Rules*
- *Use **Characters** as Goals, Resources and Conflict*
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



---

# Building the Story

---



- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning to the Rules*
- *Use Characters as **Goals**, Resources and Conflict*
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



---

# Building the Story

---



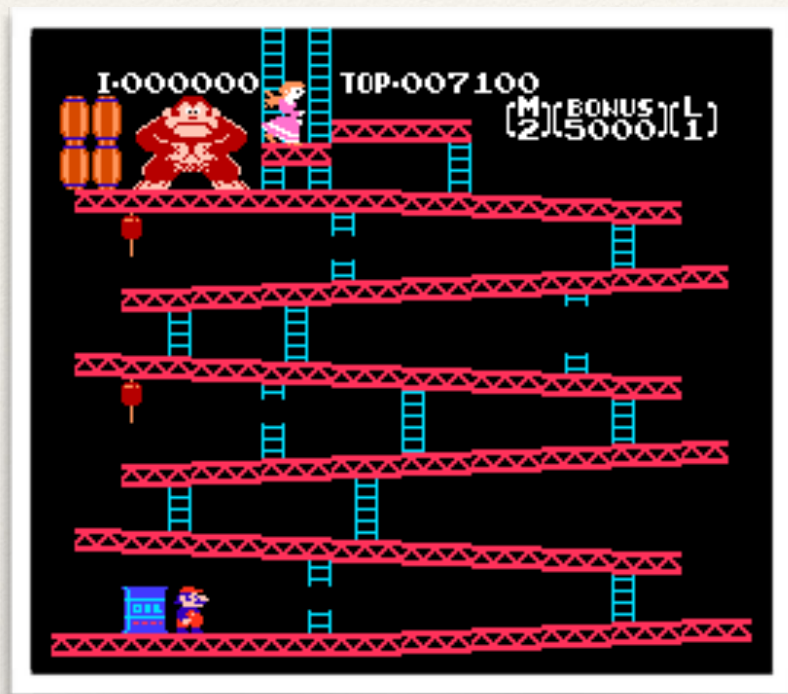
- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning to the Rules*
- *Use Characters as Goals, **Resources** and Conflict*
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



---

# Building the Story

---



- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning the Rules*
- *Use Characters as Goals, Resources and **Conflict***
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



---

# Building the Story

---



- *Show the Player their Goal*
- *Give Meaning the Rules*
- *Use Characters as Resources, Events and Conflict*
- *Grow the Story Events Around the Action*



# Cut Story Points That Don't:

- Reinforce or showcase **goals**.
- Call the player to **action**.
- Give the player **feedback** on their choices.
- Provide a **break/reward** after heavy action.

Form 2413  
December 1923

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

**CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION UNDER EXECUTIVE ORDER, SEPT. 4, 1924**  
(APPLICANT MUST FILL IN DOTTED LINES BELOW TO HEAVY LINE)

Richard M. Wilson  
(Name)  
2704 E. 14th St. Berkeley, Calif.  
(Post office address)  
Male  
(Sex)  
Jan. 9, 1913  
(Date of birth)  
What examination did you take? Federal Bureau of Investigation  
In what Department and Bureau are you to be employed? Dept. of Justice, F.B.I.  
In what City or Town are you to be employed? Washington, D.C.

(PHYSICIAN SHOULD FILL IN THE FOLLOWING)

69 1/2 inches. 162 pounds.  
(Height, without shoes) (Weight, in clothing) (Weight, without clothing)  
Males, without clothing; females, clothed but without wrap or hat.  
Items checked (✓) were examined and found normal. Deviations from normal are noted. (See instructions on back of sheet)

1. Eyes: For distance: Without glasses: Right 20 Left 20 With glasses if worn: Right 20 Left 20  
(Near vision must be reported in space provided)  
Evidence of disease or injury: Right None Left None  
Color vision Normal Method of testing color vision None

2. Ears: (Consider denominators indicated here as normal. Record as numerators the actual distance heard.) Ordinary conversation: Right ear 20 ft. Left ear 20 ft.  
Evidence of disease or injury: Right ear None Left ear None

3. Nose None

4. Mouth None

5. Throat None

6. Thyroid (especially in women) None

7. Heart None If organic heart disease is present, is it fully compensated? Yes

8. Lungs: Right None Left None If history of tuberculosis, None

9. Inguinal rings (men only): Right None Left None If truss worn? None

10. Varicose veins None (If "Yes", state location and degree) Varicocoele None

11. Flat foot None (If "Yes", state extent of impairment of function)

12. Deformities, atrophies, and other abnormalities, diseases, or defects not included above None

13. Scars of serious injury or disease None

14. Nervous system (give symptoms and history) None

15. Urinalysis (see over) None Venereal disease None

16. Has applicant ever received compensation, allowance, retired pay, or training because of disability received while in military or naval service? None If "Yes", describe disability and state whether present now None

17. In my opinion, applicant is capable of performing duties involving None physical exertion.

54 Wilcox Building, Los Angeles, Calif.  
(Place of examination)  
7/13/27  
(Date of examination)

The examining physician must be in the Federal service

as Surgeon, U. S. Public Health Service  
(Name of examining physician)  
(Title, and branch of Federal medical service)

\*For males, to be taken only upon special written request of the official ordering examination.  
This report is to be returned to the official of the U. S. Civil Service Commission requesting the examination

16-1065

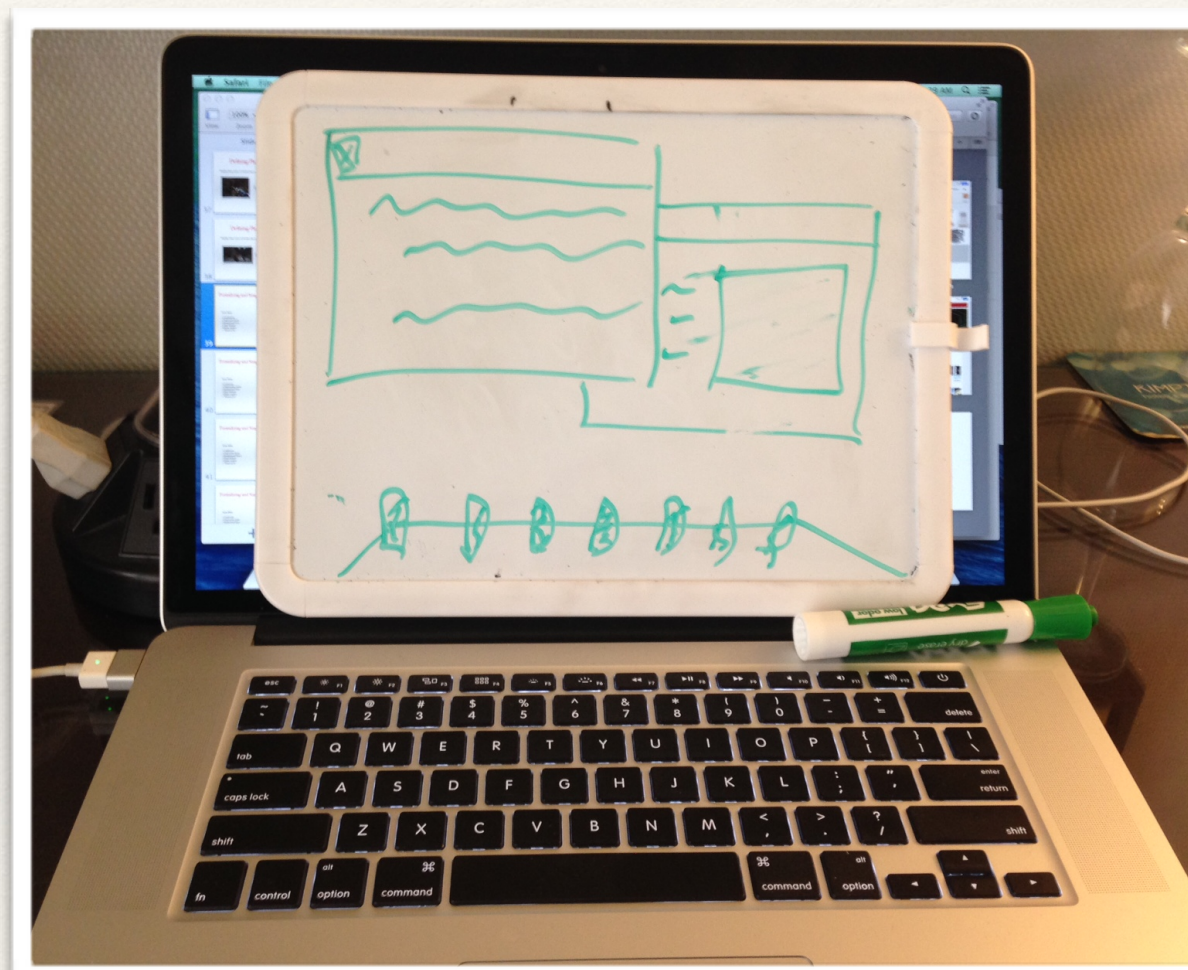


---

# Drafting the Rules

---

*You're playing as the computer.*



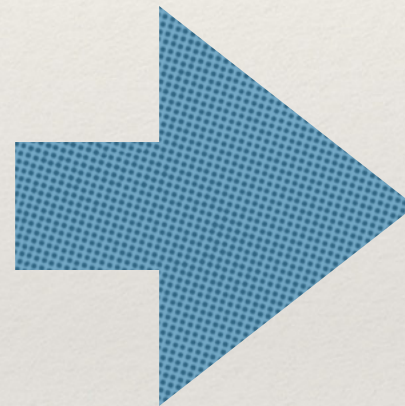
*So start with simple rules*



---

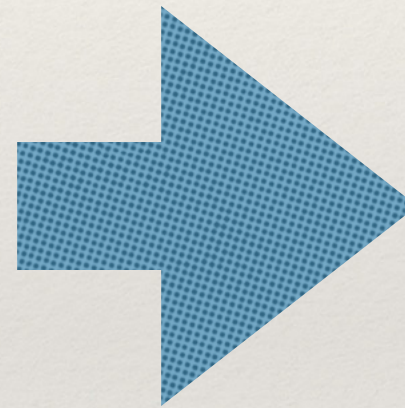
# Simplify Actions

---





# Simplify Actions





# Identify Choice Points



*And figure out what's behind both doors.*



---

# Choosing the Pieces

---

*These are the player's (and your) resources*

- Use *simple, familiar materials*:

- Coins
- Poker Chips
- Playing cards
- Board Game Pieces
- Legos

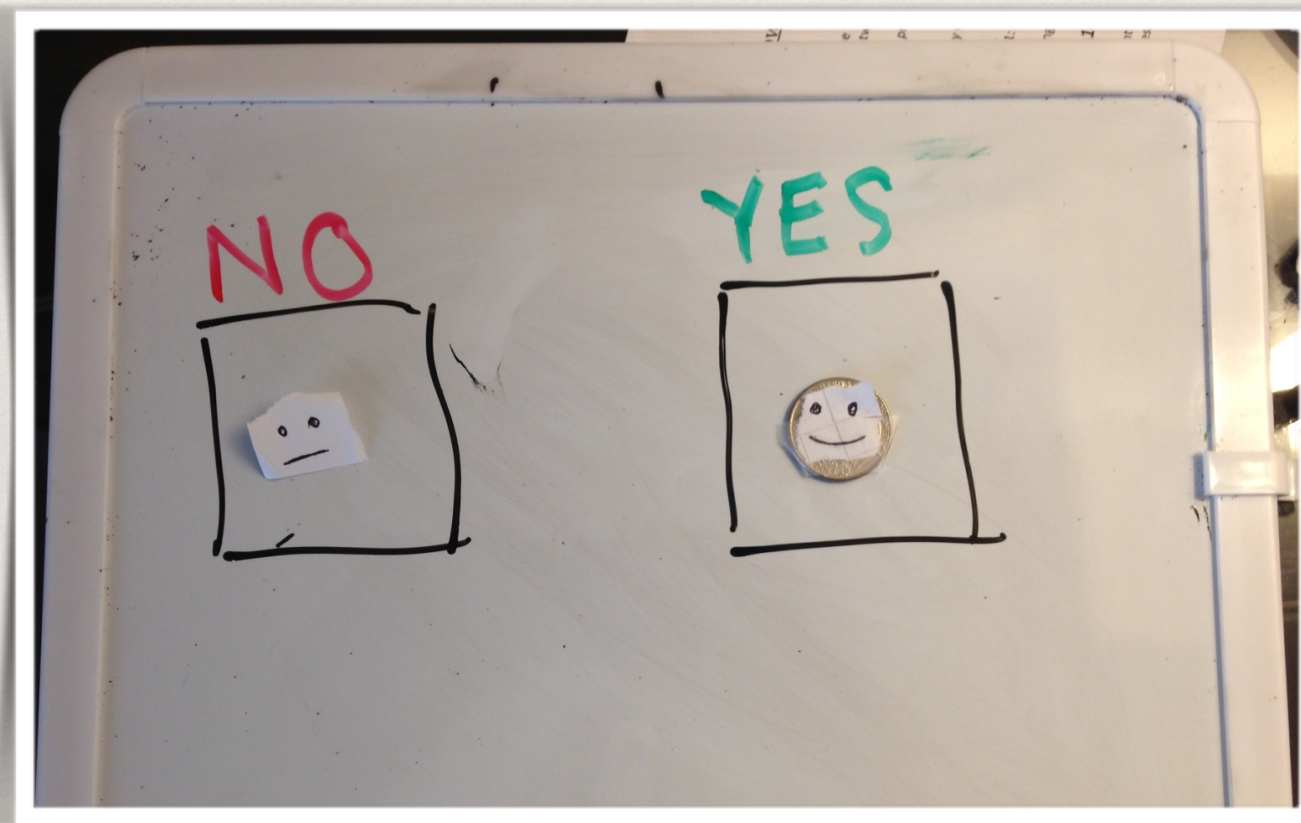




# Choosing the Pieces

*These are the players (and your) resources*

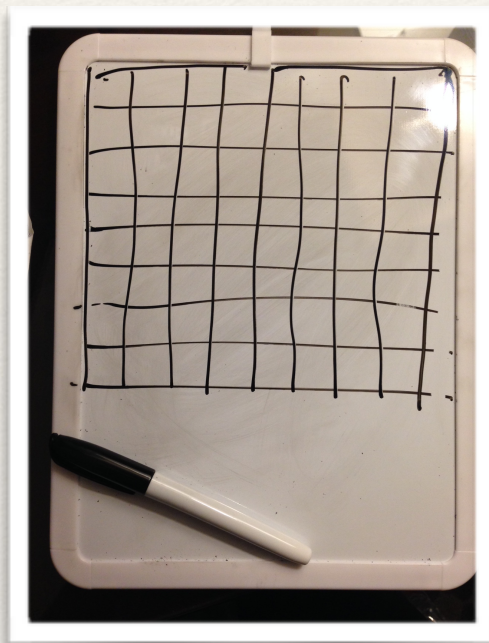
- *Nothing too light! You'll lose it, or scatter it.*





# Making the Board

*The Board = The Game Screen*



=



=



- *Weight*
- *Flexibility*
- *Stickiness*
- *Space To Maneuver Pieces*
- *Simplicity and Focus*



---

# Prototype Checklist

---

*We now have:*

A ***premise*** ready to be delivered to the player(s),

A ***goal*** that's reinforced by the premise,

A ***board*** to play on,

***Resources*** the player(s) can use to achieve their goals.

Clear ***choices*** and appropriate ***actions*** for the player(s) to take,

***Rules*** that create ***conflict*** and ***opportunities***

***Events*** that affect and inform play.

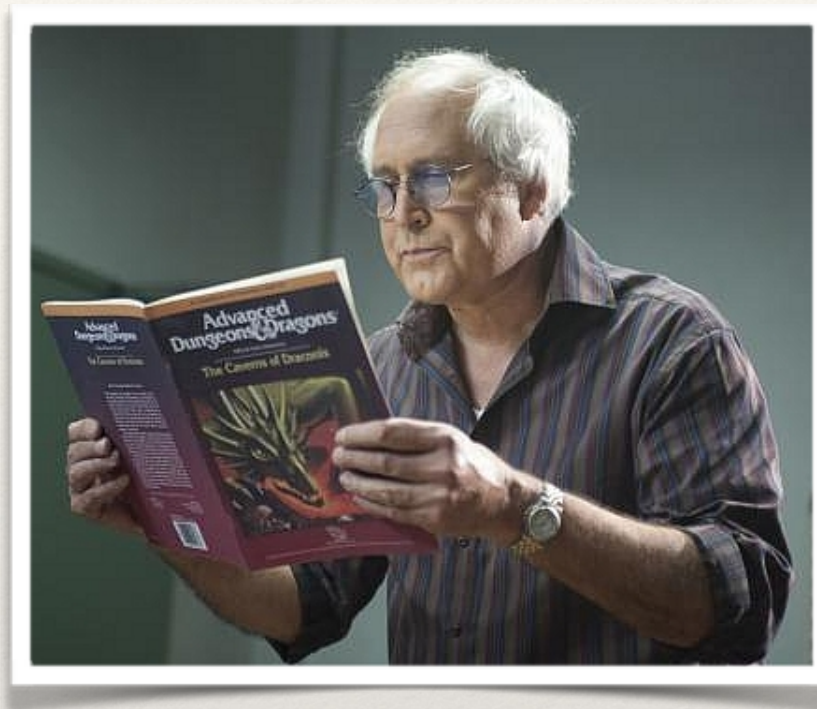


---

# Finalizing Your Prototype

---

*Build Out Your Presentation*



*In Your Storytelling Style*



---

# Rehearsing Your Prototype

---

## *Phase One: Dancing With Yourself*



Complete *one successful* solo run.

Imagine a strange game developer invited you to play, and *you know nothing*.

*Talk it through*, out loud.

Optimize, strategize, *fix mistakes*.

*Expect imperfection.*



---

# Rehearsing Your Prototype

---

## *Phase Two: Judgement-Free Rehearsal*



*Use someone who will love you even if you mess up horribly.*

*Leverage their **patience**  
to work out the big kinks in your **presentation**.*



---

# Rehearsing Your Prototype

---

## *Phase Three: Conspirators*



*Listen to their **feedback** (It matters)  
Ask them what they **enjoyed**,  
what's **fun**,  
what's **frustrating**,  
what's **boring**,  
what's **unclear**.  
**Adjust** accordingly.*



---

# Preparing for Playtesting

---

*Write down a few questions you want to ask your players beforehand.*



*(You'll be too tired to think of them when you're done)*



---

# Recording the Playtest

---

*Audio is good, video is better.*



*Get permission.*

*If you want to improve your presentation, train the camera on yourself.*

*If you want to improve your game, train the camera on them.*



# Playtesting Your Prototype



*Pull from your target audience.*

*Strangers are ideal.*

*Keep it casual and fun.*

*Explain what a prototype is beforehand.*

*Don't explain your focus on narrative... until afterwards*



---

# Playtesting Your Prototype

---



## *Improvise*

*Listen for the choices players want to make.*

*Allow them to skip things you believe they could skip in game.*

*If they have a smart suggestion or idea... incorporate it.*

*If you come upon a choice that feels wrong, change it on the fly...*

*But note whatever you've changed*



---

# Getting Feedback

---

*People Are Polite*



*And that Sucks For You.*

*If you can, have a third party ask questions.*



---

# Responding to Feedback

---

*Set aside the time to review your playtest,  
within the week.*



*(Even better, have your collaborators review it.)*



---

# The Next Iteration

---

Figure out the *biggest problems* with your prototype. Is it...



...an *unclear goal* for the player?

...*too hard* to win?

...rewarding choices that *aren't fun*?

...rewarding *short-term choices* that lead towards bad long-term results?

...*dead ends* in gameplay?

...just not that cool?



---

# The Next Iteration

---

*Remember - This prototype is disposable.*



*Save a copy of your rules,  
then figure out some bold solutions to your problems...  
even if it means discarding some beloved ideas.*

*Try again.*



---

# When you achieve “Success”:

---

## ***Expand the Prototype***

*Add more content, open it up to additional sessions.*

## ***Generalize the Prototype***

*Get someone to “run it” on you*

## ***Look Towards Production***

*Mark up the prototype into an asset list*

## ***Assess the Strengths***

*Are there things in your prototype that will be a challenge to reproduce in digital?*

## ***Shift your focus***

*and prototype for the next big question.*



---

# Q: Why Do I Do All This?

---

*A: Because a narrative paper prototype will help me:*

*Save **time and money***

*See if my premise, rules and choices are **compelling***

*Make sure the pieces fit together **coherently***

*Form a **shared vision** of the game with my collaborators*

*See the **player's perspective** on the experience as soon as possible*

*Turn early development into a **fun and empowering** experience.*



---

# Thanks!

---



*Jamie Antonisse*

*hantonisse [at] gmail dot com*



---

# Thanks!

---

*Narrative Paper Proto Example*



[www.jamieantonisse.com](http://www.jamieantonisse.com)

(Coming soon)