

Recommended Board Games

Listed below is a selection of games for a variety of ages. Note, however, that the ages are approximate and many of the games are quite fun for adults as well as children.

Ages 2-4

- **Floor Orchard (HABA).** This large game provides an immersive tactile experience while building color recognition, turn taking, and a cooperative approach to problem solving. The children work together gathering large wooden fruit from the orchard trees, trying to collect them all before the raven puzzle in the center of the board is completed. Also available as Orchard for tabletop gaming and My First Orchard, with larger pieces for younger players.



- **Froggy Boogie (Blue Orange Games).** A great example of how the "bits" in a game affect the experience, Froggy Boogie features chunky, two-toned wooden frogs with large, googly eyes that generate curiosity and draw children to the table. Players are trying to be the first to get their baby frog around the pond without being seen by the adult frogs in the middle. On their turn, the children roll two colored dice and pick one eye to pluck out of the corresponding colored frog. If the eye is blank, they can move forward, but if there is a froggy, their turn is over. Froggy Boogie prompts multicolor matching, and the game play has the youngest players learning to organize information for later use.

- **Go Away Monster! (Gamewright).** A great game for beginning players aged two and up where the children pull tiles from a bag hoping to find all the missing pieces from their room. Mixed in among the different pieces is a host of silly monsters trying to sneak in too. Players use their sensory skills to pull out the appropriately shaped pieces and match them up with the spaces on their board. Whenever a monster gets pulled, players yell out "Go Away Monster!" and throw the piece away (my daughter prefers across the room). If a player already has a piece on his board, he can share that piece with another player to help her complete her room.

Ages 5-7

- **Geistertreppe or Spooky Stairs (Drei Magier Spiele).** This wonderful spin on memory games introduces basic counting skills with sudden switcheroos that leave young

players hoping they remember whose pawn is whose! On their turn, players roll a die, trying to move their pawn up the staircase to spook the ghost at the top. If a ghost is rolled on the die,



one of the pawns is covered with a ghost sheet, and once all of the pawns are covered, any subsequent ghost rolls allow players to swap any two pawns on the board. The game ends when one pawn makes it to the top; with some good information tracking and a little luck, it will belong to the player who moved it.

- **Castle Knights (HABA).** The three Cs: communication, coordination, and cooperation are at the heart of this fun dexterity game. Two to four children work together



using an elastic tool to pick up and stack a variety of wooden blocks and figures in an effort to build towers in preparation for the king's arrival. For an added challenge, the task can be timed,

turning up the pressure and challenging the most skilled players.

- **Dancing Eggs (HABA).** The silliest game on the list. Children try to collect and hold as many eggs as they can before one is dropped. Eggs are sturdy life-sized rubber replicas that will be bounced and dropped as students grasp, cluck, and race around the table claiming new ones. Included in the game are two wooden dice—one tells how an egg is collected while the other indicates where the egg must be kept for the duration of play (under the chin, in the crook of the arm, between the knees). A raucous, fun time for all!



Ages 8-10

- **Snorta (Mattel).** Originally an Out of the Box title (the company that first published Apples to Apples), this card game of barnyard matching raises a cacophony of laughter as children rush to make the noise of animals hidden in the other players' barn when matches are made. As players successfully out-hoot, -moo, and -neigh each other, they give away their face-up cards until one player runs out and wins the game. Snorta

Recommended Board Games, *cont.*

is a great exercise in informational skills as players work with multiple sources of information, mentally organizing it for easy retrieval while disregarding extraneous information present in the game.

- **Tsuro (WizKids).** A visually beautiful game of survival, winding paths, and occasionally . . . no winners. Played on a grid, children start their player stone on a separate path at the edge of the board. At each turn, they play a card which extends their path into the playing area, sliding their stone as far along the path as it can go. Players try to keep their stones on the board as long as they can, hoping to avoid collision or being sent off the edge. Besides strengthening spatial relation skills, Tsuro presents an opportunity for young players to see the interaction of player choices as the board and the pieces come together.



- **Wits and Wagers Family (North Star Games).** A completely different take on the familiar trivia genre. All of the questions are obscure, number-based facts such as, "How many stairs are in the Leaning Tower of Pisa?" or "What is the longest celery stalk on record?" Players aren't expected to know answers, but instead offer up guesses which are then arranged in order on the table. Looking at the answers, the children then make an educated guess, placing two scoring meeples (wooden pawns shaped like people) out on the answer or answers they think might be closest without going over. Wits and Wagers Family is a great game for large groups and teams and lends itself well to self-created questions focused on areas of special interest.

Ages 10-13

- **Giant Blokus (Educational Insights/Mattel).** This takes a familiar abstract game and provides a unique experience by allowing the children to play on a giant version of the board. Players take turns placing Tetris-



like pieces on a square grid following very simple rules. Game play continues until no one can place any more of their pieces, and the player with the fewest remaining squares wins. The game is very easy to learn, but features high replayability as game play evolves from the placement of other players. Giant Blokus helps children develop a critical eye for details as they actively seek out the best possible placement for their pieces each turn.

- **Word on the Street (Out of the Box).** This team-based word game is a tactile tug-of-war with letters played across four lanes of traffic. Each team tries to pull as many consonants to their side of the street by working together to select and spell words for a given topic each round before time runs out. Every time a letter appears in a word, it moves one spot closer to the team, so word choice becomes important as the letters start moving back and forth across the board. Also available as a junior version tailored for ages eight and up.



- **Hive (Gen Four Two).** Similar in strategy to chess, but compact, portable, and with bugs. The goal in this two-player game is to surround your opponent's queen bee on all sides by any combination of tiles, either yours or your opponents. Each player has a set of tiles consisting of several different types of bugs, each of which behaves differently—ants scurry, beetles pin down, grasshoppers leap across, and spiders pivot. A much faster game than chess, Hive allows repeated opportunities for children to play with and refine their ability to evaluate information, explore possible outcomes, and think strategically.



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