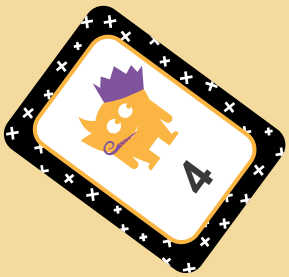
# The Dark Imp's Family Design Challenge



**"This isn't just six games. It's an inspiring toolkit."**

**Nick Welford - Board, Deck & Dice**

## Anyone can be a board game designer.

Age and lack of experience is no barrier. Just play and see where it takes you. It's experimental, it's inventive and best of all, it's fun.

The aim of this booklet is to **help to get you started in game design**. The components in the box of Cracker Games give you a neat little kit with which to experiment.

Game design combines and develops lots of different skills including **logical reasoning, mathematical creativity and communication skills**. It is an iterative process: some things you try will work, others won't. Keep playing and keep tweaking to improve your games.

Your games could involve bidding, acting, luck, memory, trading, alliances, bluffing, flicking, negotiation… maybe even singing. There's a world of possibilities.

You may already be bursting with ideas for games you'd like to create. If so, go ahead and get stuck in. If you're not sure where to start, don't worry! **That's what this booklet is for.**

Over the next twelve pages **you'll find tips, ideas and challenges** that will give you a direction and help you get started with your own games.

Ideas come from lots of different directions, so we've asked **thirteen game designers to contribute their ideas and challenges to this booklet**. Some designers have lots of published games, others are earlier in their careers and are as yet unpublished. But we know that inspiration doesn't just come from people who have had commercial success. There's also a bonus **challenge from The Dark Imp** on each page.

When you've created a game you love, submit them using the link below so we can share them with others.

**www.thedarkimp.com/your-cracker-games**

# ON THE FIRST DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Games need clear aims, like 'get more points than anyone else'. Games need obvious end conditions, like 'running out of cards'. One way to meet both requirements at once is to create a race game. I challenge you to create an unusual track and work out how you move along it. Then race, and let the best player win.

**Sebastian Bleasdale**
Designer of *Keyflower*, *Key Flow*, *On The Underground*, *Black Fleet* and *Lemminge*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game in which the win condition is the player who manages to lose all their cards or components before the others.

# ON THE SECOND DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Make a game for two players or teams, where one team uses the cards and the other uses the wooden components.
Think about whether you want the two teams to work against each other or cooperatively to achieve a goal. Are they allowed to talk openly or just communicate using the components?

**Rob Harper**
Designer of *March Hares* and *Egg on Thine Face*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game called IMPossible, where players are encouraged to challenge each other's moves by exclaiming IMPossible!

# ON THE THIRD DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Design a game in which the imps are mixed in the bag and a player pulls some out. Which player's imps get drawn, or the order in which they get drawn must be important.

**Mandela Fernández-Grandon**
Designer of *Glasgow*
and *Overstocked*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game in which each player holds their hand of cards face-out so that they can't see their own cards, but all other players can.

# ON THE FOURTH DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Can you adapt any of Cracker Games so that they can be played by one player? Think about how players interact with one another. How can you recreate the feeling of playing against someone else? What can you use to help make your opponent make decisions? If your opponent isn't clever enough, think about how they need to 'cheat'.

**David Digby**
Designer of *Chocolate Factory*, *Swatch*, *Scrumpy: Card Cider* and *Eternal Palace*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game which starts with all the cards face-up on the table and ends with all the cards face-down on the table.

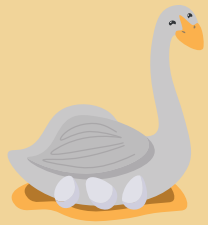
# ON THE FIFTH DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Players like to imagine stories and worlds. Make a game where you try to be the first to collect 10 cubes and bring them home. You each have one Imp and a screen for your home. What is the story? Are you gathering berries in the woods? Did your chickens escape from your farms? Create your game and your world!

**Barbara Burfoot**
Designer of *Damask*
and *Happy Forest*

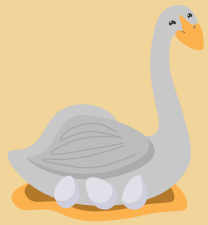
**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game that could be played over Zoom and which uses the cards in some way.

# ON THE SIXTH DAY...



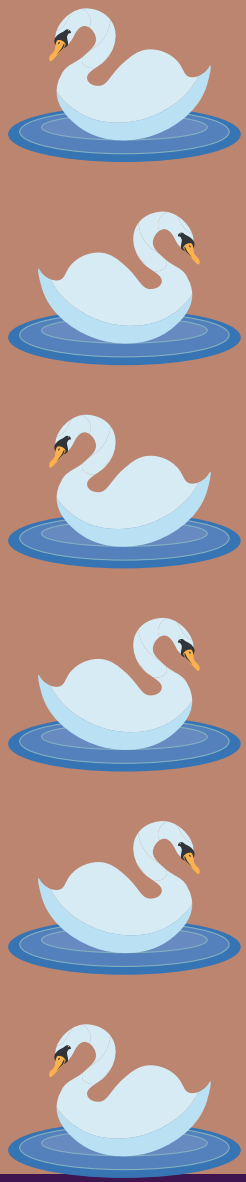
**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Pick exactly two component types (imps, cards, cubes, screens) and create a game. Think about all the things you can do with a component: where it can go; who can see it; does it spin, stack or flick? How can the two different components interact? Identify what feels fun to do and make your game about that.

**David King**
Designer of *Tiny Islands*



**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game in which bluffing or negotiation is an important element.

# ON THE SEVENTH DAY...



## DESIGNER CHALLENGE:

Create a new game by choosing an existing game, then adding or removing one component.
Use existing games for inspiration. What do the screens do in IMPassive? Why is the bag used in IMPatient? How does IMPetuous work with only one component? Thinking about these things should help give you ideas for how best to modify your chosen game.

**Kieran Symington**
Designer of *Heroes of Troy* and *A War of Spirit*

## THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:

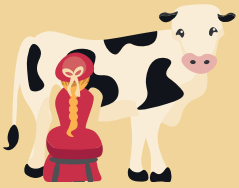
Design a fantasy storytelling game revolving around the lives of six imps.

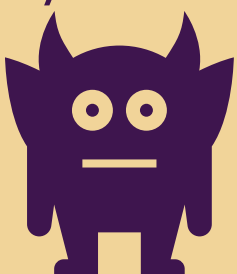
# ON THE EIGHTH DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Set up a random sequence of the six numbers (by shuffling the screens) or of the six colours (by drawing imps out of the bag). Create a game in which play progresses or cycles through this sequence, round by round (or faster, or slower). How might the "current" number or colour influence what players do?

**Paul Mansfield**
Designer of *Lightbox*, *Nessie*, *Unfinishabell* and *Brink City*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game in which turn order is decided in an unusual way.





# ON THE NINTH DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Make a game using 'pick and pass' drafting. In a pick-and-pass game, everyone gets a few cards, picks one, and then passes the rest on. This continues until all cards have been 'drafted'. To make this work, some cards should be better for you. Maybe you're trying to make sets/runs? Or the cards let you take cubes? Whatever ideas you have, try them out and have fun!

**Behrooz 'Bez' Shahriari**
Designer of *Yogi*, *Yogi Guru*, *Kitty Cataclysm*, *+*, and a whole bunch of games for the *ELL* deck

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a cooperative game in which you're working together to try to discover some hidden information.

# ON THE TENTH DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Giving cards multiple uses in a game can help create agonising yet interesting choices for a player. For example, cards can be spent as resources, played into your tableau for ongoing effects or removed from the game for a super-strong one-off power. I challenge you to create a game in which the cards form a shared deck, but each card has at least three uses.

**Denholm Spurr**
Designer of *Dice Cruise*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game which includes some element of dexterity, e.g. stacking, balancing, flicking...

# ON THE ELEVENTH DAY...

## DESIGNER CHALLENGE:

In an Auction Game, players compete for ownership of things. It is more interesting if the things they bid on are worth different amounts to different players. You could use the cubes as money to buy new cards, or to buy cards from other players. Auctions can make set collection games even more challenging. Can you add an auction to another game you have invented? Or create a whole new game with an auction?

**Ian Brocklebank**
Designer of *Protection Racket* and *Sheepdogs*

## THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:

Design a game in which you can choose to spend points you've earned in order to gain an advantage.

# ON THE TWELFTH DAY...

**DESIGNER CHALLENGE:**
Randomly remove one of the 36 Imp cards secretly (so that no-one sees it) and see if you can figure out what that card must be before anyone else by revealing other cards. Perhaps give the cards to everyone (like Cluedo) and ask questions, or lay them out in a grid and gradually uncover them.

**David Brain**
Designer of *SimpliCity*, *Key Market*, *5X*, *Gloriana* and *Burghers*

**THE DARK IMP'S CHALLENGE:**
Design a game that can be played without a table so you can play while you lounge on the sofa.

# BONUS CHALLENGE

Try to design a game where each player has to do something different to win. Players could collect different things, make different sets, or maybe they might each have different special ability to help them to their goal (e.g. getting an extra go, looking at another player's hand, swapping a card they don't like... the possibilities are endless).

**James Wallis**
Designer of *The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, co-designer of *Once Upon a Time* and co-author of the book *Board Games In 100 Moves*

THE DARK IMP

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