# Space Race

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| **Players:** 4-8 (ideally 6). The facilitator can choose to play a character. |
| **Total runtime:** 1 hour 30 min |
| **Preparation time:** 40 min |
| **Supplies provided:**   * Character sheets * Deck of acceleration cards (70 cards total)   + 10 Zero (0)   + 18 One (1)   + 18 Two (2)   + 12 Minus One (-1)   + 12 Minus two (-2) * Tweak cards * The playing board * Board Game Rules   **Supplies needed:**   * Player tokens * Optional but highly recommended: Game tokens to be used as happiness and speed tokens * Table and chairs * Pen and paper for each player, if you do not use happiness and speed tokens |
| **Keywords:** Play, Game, Player motivations, Cheating |
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## Summary

In this scenario, you will play aliens competing in ‘The Space Race’: an intergalactic racing competition with representatives from planets across the universe. Each alien character is different from the next; with different motivations, customs and goals they wish to achieve during the competition.

The scenario combines a board game race with role-playing, and nobody plays according to the exact same rules.

## Background

While we typically manage to play well together, the reasons for and ways in which we engage in play actually vary widely. The purpose of this scenario is to enable a deeper reflection on different ways in which people interact socially in game and play. The scenario also represents a range of design options and strategies that are available in game design.

The scenario is meant to be used by teams designing for games and play in museums. These will meet with a wide range of social play behaviour. It is most well-suited for projects targeting older children and adults, as children below (approximately) ten have not yet developed uniform strategies for social play.

**Aims and goals:**

Understand core concepts in game design

* Understand more about different player motivations
* Explore different types of social interactions in play and game
* Reflect on cheating and transgressing play
* Reflect on different ways in which players redesign their game and play activity

# Roles in the scenario

Each player plays a character from a different planet.

## Preparation

*Before the participants arrive (40 min)*

* Print out all the necessary material
* Cut out the Tweak and Acceleration cards (print double sided or tape together)
* Find 6 different objects (i.e. buttons, rubbers, paperclips) to use as player tokens
* Optional but highly recommended: Use additional game tokens that can be used as Happiness and speed tokens
* Else, give each player a pen and a sheet of paper.

**SET UP**

1. Place the board on a table. Place the Speed cards beside the board.
2. The facilitator decides on a start position for each race.
3. Each player chooses one token to represent them and places it on the start line.
4. Each player is dealt five cards from the Speed pile.
5. All characters start with speed zero and happiness 4. Deal four happiness tokens to each player
6. *If you do not have tokens for Happiness and speed*, each player needs a pen and paper to keep track of their happiness and speed. Ask players to note down their starting happiness and speed if you do not use speed tokens.

The remaining Happiness and speed tokens are placed to the side of the board. Players take from this pile unless instructed to take directly from other players. There should be sufficient happiness tokens to never run out.

## Introduction (20 minutes)

### Present the scenario

* **Premise:** The participants play aliens competing in ‘The Space Race’: an intergalactic racing competition consisting of several races, and representatives from planets across the universe. The aliens are very different and have different motivations, customs, and goals they wish to achieve during the race.
* **Methods:** This scenario uses both a board game (like monopoly) and role-playing (like improvisational theatre).
* **The board game** is used to represent what happens during the races. We are not interested in playing the board game in itself. It is a tool to create the situations we want to experience and observe. Winning, or playing “well”, is therefore of no relevance.
* **The role-playing represents** the aliens interacting with each other. We role-play to distance ourselves from the behaviour and actions we are exploring together. The characters create an alibi for this behaviour, that is not our own. No one is expected to be a fantastic actor or comedian. Like the board game, the characters are yet another tool we are using to experience and observe.
* **Schedule:** We will do short scenes as our characters in between races. After the play session has ended we will do a debrief where we discuss the theories underlying the scenario.
* **Time:** The whole scenario can take up to two hours.

### Teach the board game

* Show the board game and explain the rules (see Board Game Rules print out).
* Play a few rounds until the players understand how it works.

### Role play - How you do it

If your participants have previous experience of role-playing, this can be omitted.

1. They will play different roles
2. Their roles will have different agencies and wishes, express them as if they were your own.
3. You do not represent your own opinions, you express the opinions of your role.
4. Play your character in all scenes, also when playing the board game.
5. The game master will indicate clearly when the role play starts and ends.

### Present the characters

* **How to play:** Each character represents only one aspect of a real person's many different motivations. They are archetypes and not well-rounded individuals. Play your character as silly and over the top as you like.
* **Hand out characters:** Always use Bib Bopbop and Gess Gumber. The other can be arbitrarily chosen. Hand the characters out randomly; if a player is unhappy with their character they choose a new one.
* **(Optional) Change your clothing or add an accessory** that you will wear as your character. Small changes help; like putting your hair up.
* **Character introductions:** Do a second round of introductions, introducing your characters. Try speaking and acting as your character when you do this.

## Scene 1 (5 min)

1. Ask the participants to re-read their character’s personal goal.
2. Read the introduction text out loud.

*“Close your eyes and imagine your character in the following situation.*

*You have come from all over the galaxy to participate in this intergalactic space race. Each of you is a proud representative of your home planet. This is the first time you’ll meet the other competitors. For most of you it’s the first time you meet any of these strange alien creatures with customs and ways so different from your own. The guide from the intergalactic space station leads you into a large glass dome and points you in the direction of the other racers.*

*The scene will end when you hear me knock three times.”*

1. Give a warning 1 minute before ending the scene.
2. End the scene after 5 minutes.

# Race 1

1. Ask the players to re-read their special rules for the race.
2. Tell the players to keep track of their speed and happiness scores.
3. Tell the players to continue playing their characters, reflecting their happiness scores.
4. Knock 3 times to end the game after 15 min, regardless of how far the participants have come in the race.
5. When the race is cut, the first 3 characters closest to the finish line are now 1st, 2nd and 3rd are now leading the race. This order now represents the final outcome after several weeks of racing. (This does not affect the happiness scores.)

# Scene 2

1. Remind the players about the characters’ personal goals. Most will still be pursuing them (if they haven’t changed their mind).
2. Remind players to play on their happiness scores.
3. Read the scenes opening text out loud.

*“Close your eyes and imagine your character in the following situation.*

*You have all gathered in the VIP lounge of the intergalactic space station. Weeks of racing are drawing to an end; tomorrow is the big finale. It has been a more intense experience than any of you had expected. As public interest rose, pressure mounted. Across the galaxy injustices, prejudices and conflicts, both old and ongoing, have surfaced. Regardless of personal feelings it is clear to you all that this is no longer an average race, with average stakes. And tomorrow, with the whole universe watching, the ultimate victor will be decided.*

*The scene will end when you hear me knock three times.”*

1. Give a warning 1 minute before ending the scene.
2. End the scene after 5 minutes, or earlier if all the participants have completed their goals.

# Race 2

1. Instruct the players to play all acceleration cards *face down* in this round.
2. Add one more rule that applies to all.
3. Hand out the Tweak cards by letting people choose from the back side.
4. Knock 3 times to begin the race.
5. End the game after 15 min, with this text

*“At the height of the race, a number of audience space-ships just happen do drift a bit too close to a moon. NN and NN (randomly chose one or two of the characters who are in a curve) detect them to late when rounding the moon. They manage a narrow escape through a space jump, but the gravity well sucks the audience ships into an inescapable fall. 300 aliens from two planets crash into the surface of the moon. The race is immediately aborted. There will be no winner this time.”*

# Scene 3

1. Continue immediately by reading the following:

*“You gather in the hotel after the aborted race. The race has taken lives - and not those of the daring drivers, but innocent bystanders. You realise that the races have gone too far… You all agree to petition for a rule change, but can you agree on what that change should be?*

*The scene will end when you hear me knock three times again.”*

1. Give a warning 1 minute before ending the scene.
2. End the scene after 5 minutes, or earlier if the characters have agreed on a rule change.

# Debrief (30 min)

1. Remind participants that gaining most Happiness was the real goal for each character, and not winning!
2. (If desired by the players) Explain some of the core concepts underlying the design.
   * Collaborative and Competitive play
   * Race versus Battle
   * Core mechanics
   * Role play and characters
   * Sandbox play, Competition, vs Railroaded narrative
3. Present Nick Yee’s study of player motivations and the characteristics that Yee describes.

Bopbop – Community

Gumbers – Competition

Megamets – Power

Addimp – Completion

Bricors – Design

Repper – Discovery

Belli – Strategy

Atio – Challenge

Sienis – Story

Ficturs – Fantasy

Teritus – Destruction

Conmo - Excitement

1. Explain the theories on cheating and transgressive play related to the Tweak cards.

**Discussion**

Suggestions for discussion topics:

* How do you feel about your character? How do you feel about the other characters?
* Can you recognize these motivations from everyday life? When do you meet people who are driven by them?
* What do you think was the driving force behind the Tweak card? Can you recognise this attitude in yourself or others?
* Under what circumstances do people accept transgressive play? When should it be designed for and when against?
* What happened in the final scene? How can people with different personal goals agree on rules?

# Do you want to know more?

This scenario is based on studies of social play in games. The studies underlying the scenario have primarily focussed on adults and on their engagement with computer games, but these forms of engagement can be observed in a wide range of play activities. Children learn to master social play in games around the age of eleven - twelve.

The characters are based on a player characterisation framework for on-line roleplaying games, that was developed by Nick Yee. The preferences expressed by the different characters match broad categories of players in online multiplayer role-playing games: their reasons for playing and their different playstyles. Yee emphasised that the different motivations are not mutually exclusive: for example, the same player may very well be motivated both by competition and socialising. On-line role-playing games offer a very varied range of engagements, why we can expect these to match most (but not all) motivations to play in a range of gaming situations, however, not all of them may work in one and the same game.

There is also a much older and more well-known player typology developed by Richard Bartle (Players who suit mud), but Yee has showed that it is not entirely consistent with empirical data. Don’t fall for it!

The perspectives on cheating that are introduced in the second round come from a variety of sources. The distinction between ‘cheaters’ and ‘spoilsports’ was originally proposed by Bernard Suits. Where the ‘cheater’ tries to win, the ‘spoilsport’ doesn’t care about the rules OR about winning. But Suits did not take into account that players do not just break rules to win; quite a lot of cheating constitutes ways to make the game more playable or more interesting. Such forms of transgressive play have been studied by Mia Consalvo. Creating open-ended and more playful designs is one way to allow players to co-create their game through negotiating what constitutes a cheat, and what is a change of rules.

A couple of good introductions books to game design exist, most of them focus on computer games. In the context of designing games for museums, we recommend Tracy Fullerton’s “Game design workshop” book as it is based on iterative and empirical methods that are fairly straightforward to apply to a range of design contexts. The book ‘Larp Design’ edited by Johanna Koljonen is a good resource for designing role-playing games, but it is unfortunately very hard to come by.

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# BOARD GAME RULES

The person who had their birthday most recently starts the first round. Someone else starts the second round. Rounds go clock-wise around the table.

**BASIC RULES**

1. On your turn, you can play as many acceleration cards as you want from your hand EXCEPT you cannot play plus and minus cards at the same time.
2. Keep track of your speed (use play tokens or note it down). Your new speed is your old speed plus the sum of the cards played.
3. Move your token as many steps as your speed, forwards for positive and backwards for negative speed.
4. Place the used cards in a joint discard pile. Re-shuffle the discard pile if the speed card pile runs empty.
5. End your turn by drawing so you have a full hand (5 cards).

**CRASHING**

If a character passes through or lands on a curve with a speed restriction, their speed must not be higher than the restriction. If their speed is too high, they crash.

If a character crashes, they lose their hand and their speed is set to zero. Depending on their special rules, they may also lose happiness. They do not draw a new hand at the end of their turn. In their next turn, they must stay in place but they can use their special rules if they apply. They end that turn by drawing a new hand.

**CHARACTER-SPECIFIC RULES**

Each character has special abilities that both affect how they move, and when they gain or lose happiness. Rules can trigger both during the character’s turn and during other’s turns. When a rule triggers, the player should state this clearly by uttering their ‘catch phrase’ (or some inspired variation of it).

When the order matters, special rules triggers *after* the character has moved. The current players’ special rules trigger before those of other players.

**TWEAK CARDS**

Are used in a second round. Tweak card rules trigger in the same way as special rules.

In this round, acceleration cards are played *face down*. If a character wants to call another out for cheating, they turn those cards up.

* If the player was cheating, they are thrown out of the race and lose 5 happiness.
* If there was no cheat, the character that called out the cheat loses 2 happiness.

# TWEAK CARDS

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| I don’t care about the race or who is winning. | Sometimes the game is just too hard. Can’t we just all agree to make it easier? | I’ve had a streak of bad luck. I need to even out my chances. |
| THE SPOILSPORT  Tweak: Your happiness points are not affected by your position in the game, or if you crash.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: You don’t care, so you don’t call it out. | TWEAKING THE GAME  Tweak: When you or somebody else is in a tight spot, suggest a new rule that would help. If accepted, everyone gets to do the same the rest of the game.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: Invent a new rule that would make this play OK, and suggest this to the other players. | COMPENSATE FOR  BAD LUCK  Tweak: When not in lead or second, you will lie about the value of your cards to optimise your play.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: Call it out. |

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| It’s no fun when somebody is so far behind that they have no chance of winning. | I think NN should win the race. | I play according to the rules. |
| CHEATING AS A HANDICAP SYSTEM  Tweak:  If you or anyone else is far behind the others, try to create a distraction, and move that player token forwards when nobody notices.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: You will call it out if they are ahead of other players. | KINGMAKING  Tweak: Find reasons move NN forward or pass cards to them, openly or secretly. If your character has suitable abilities, use them in favour of NN.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: You will always call it out if they are ahead of NN. | FAIR PLAY  Tweaking: You play with the same rules as in the previous race. You never lie about the value of your cards.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: You will always call it out. |

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| I cheat as much as I need in order to win. | Rules are important, but sometimes the game needs just a little bit of a spice. | I play fair as long as everyone else does, but I’m not stupid. |
| CHEATER  Tweaking:  You will use any cheat to win! Lie about card values, try to pick up extra cards, ignore rules about crashing, accidentally move an extra space...  Suspecting somebody else cheating: Call it out when you think it will give you an advantage. | MAKE THE GAME MORE INTERESTING  Cheating: Try to move your own token, or others, to create more interesting situations.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: Call it out only if it makes the game boring. | CHEATING BECAUSE OTHERS ARE CHEATING  Tweaking:  You play according to the rules. But if you suspect that somebody else is cheating, you will also start to cheat (to get even). If that person is thrown out of the game, you play according to the rules again.  Suspecting somebody else cheating: You do not call it out. |