



# ADHD SERIOUS GAME

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**When I started getting into this project, I thought there would be three clear stages: research, design, and test-play plus tweaking. Turns out game designing is a lot messier than that - and it's a lot of fun.**

Our game is centred around ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder), and how to make neurotypical people experience first-hand what that life with that disorder is like. I know more about ADHD than the average person, mostly through osmosis thanks to several of my friends who have it; but I have never had the occasion to do more in-depth research about it. This project gave me a good opportunity to do so. I was also lucky to be working with Nicky, and to get feedback from one of my flatmates, both of whom have ADHD.

Research also meant drawing from my past experience with board games, thankfully rather extensive.

Once that was done, Nicky and I started brainstorming. Our first idea was a rather plain monopoly-style board, where we were trying to cram in every aspect of ADHD life. In the end, we focused on a specific aspect of ADHD, ie task management and distractions, while keeping in mind other aspects to use for additional game dynamics. The general idea is a recreation of any random person's day with a to-do list, and it's the smaller game mechanics that serve to simulate aspects of life with ADHD.

In our second iteration, we came up with a web-like board, where you could move in any direction, in order to complete a list of "tasks", with certain obstacles and helps along the way. Event cards create distractions (a fascinating Wikipedia article), challenges (your car broke down), additional tasks (your mom called and needs help with groceries), or advantages (hyper-focusing on a fun task), and you end up having to juggle with a planning that gets increasingly complicated, even though from the outside it looks like a couple of simple tasks.

This is the final shape of the game that we kept, and every other iteration has served to make adjustments to the gameplay.

As it turns out, we did the most of the game designing while playing, and not before. That is also something I noticed last time I developed a board game (as a personal project). There is no way to account for every situation and case while preparing the game, so we did a lot of adjustments while playing, as those situations arose. For example, we had implemented event cards that gave you an “urgent” additional task, that you had to complete before anything else. No sooner than two rounds into the game, one of our players had two of those “urgent” tasks and didn’t know which one to prioritize. We explored possible variations of the rules and goal, added positive elements, made the board more interactive... Having input from an ADHD tester also allowed us to make our game more accurate in regard to the ADHD experience, by adapting the effect of certain events, correcting some aesthetic-level choices, etc.

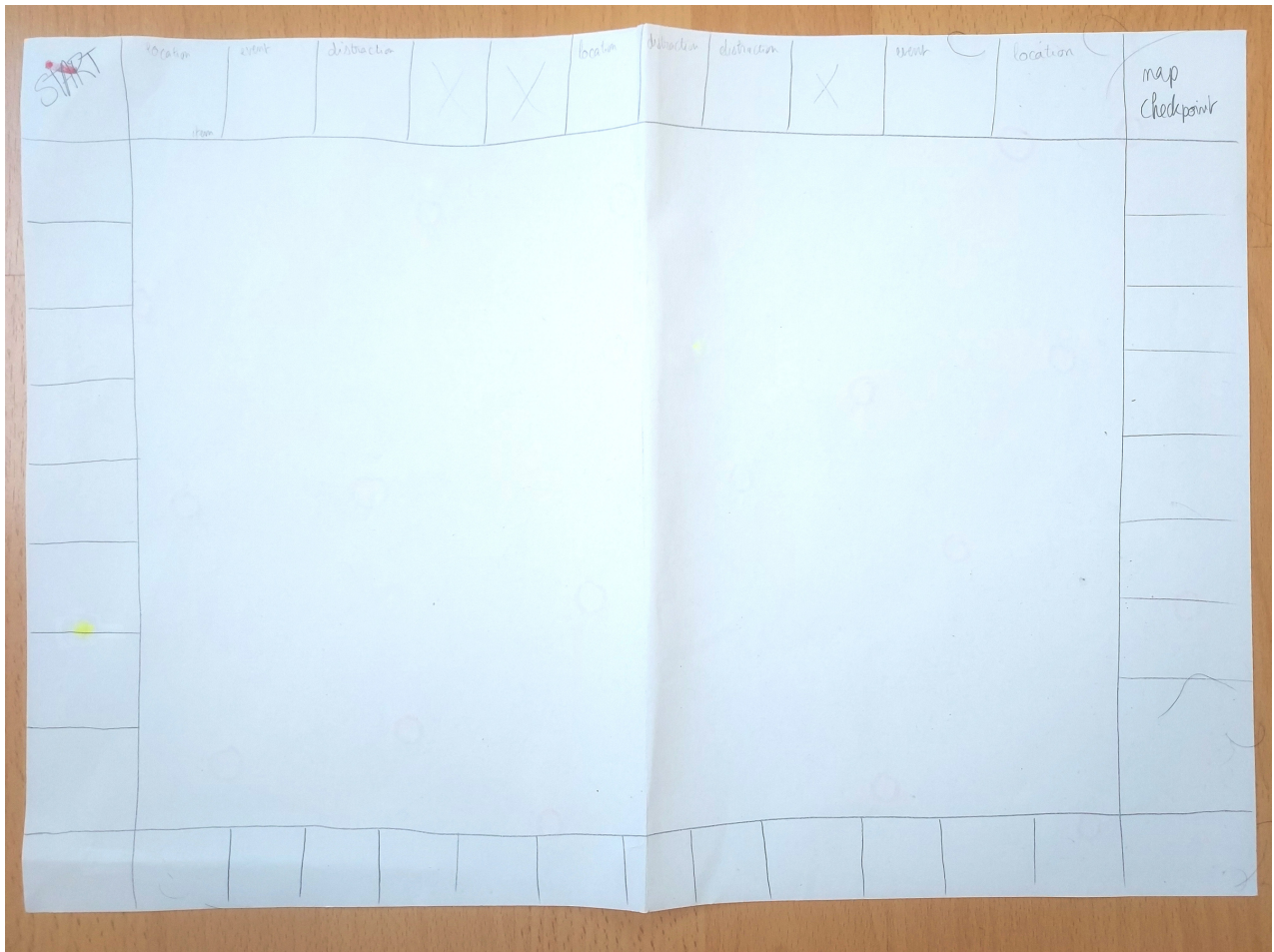
So far, we have only made three test runs (once with just Nicky and I, one with my flatmates, and one in class), and have made new modifications every time. It is likely the game would need more test runs and more development before it could hypothetically be published. We would like to make the game more complex and more interactive, so that no two rounds are the same. Possible additions would include game variants with different goals; character stat cards so that every player has unique advantages and disadvantages; more diverse event cards; extensions with additional rules; and anything else that might come up while playing.

We still need to develop the aesthetic level – both the graphic design of the board and cards, and the story-telling of each card. That aspect was the least of our priorities while developing, but is an important addition to a complete game. However, we did put a lot of effort into the story-telling aspect: justifying every rule and event with “real life” equivalents, to really give the feeling of a real-life day with a list of chores. We would also like to have it tested by a more diverse array of people with ADHD, in order to have the game better reflect a diverse population. While a lot of aspects of ADHD are common, every person experiences their life differently. A partnership with associations and doctors would be very valuable.

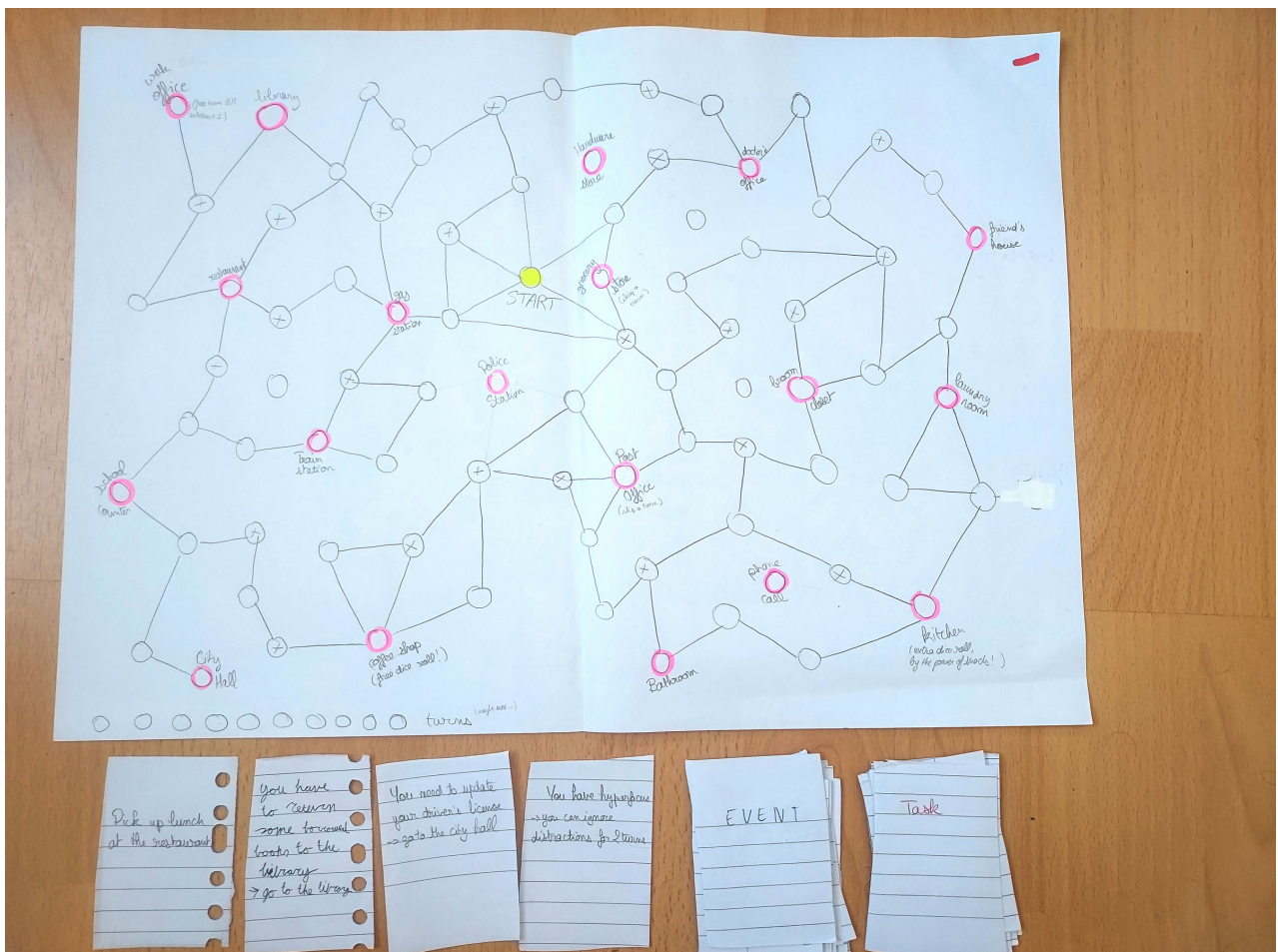
In conclusion, this project was a very interesting window into the world of game-designing, unfortunately too short to go really in-depth into a game that could be a lot more complex and interesting. However, it gave me an overview of the process, and invaluable tools for potential future projects – whether that is designing an entire board game, or using game mechanics in other contexts.



## Iteration 1 - board prototype

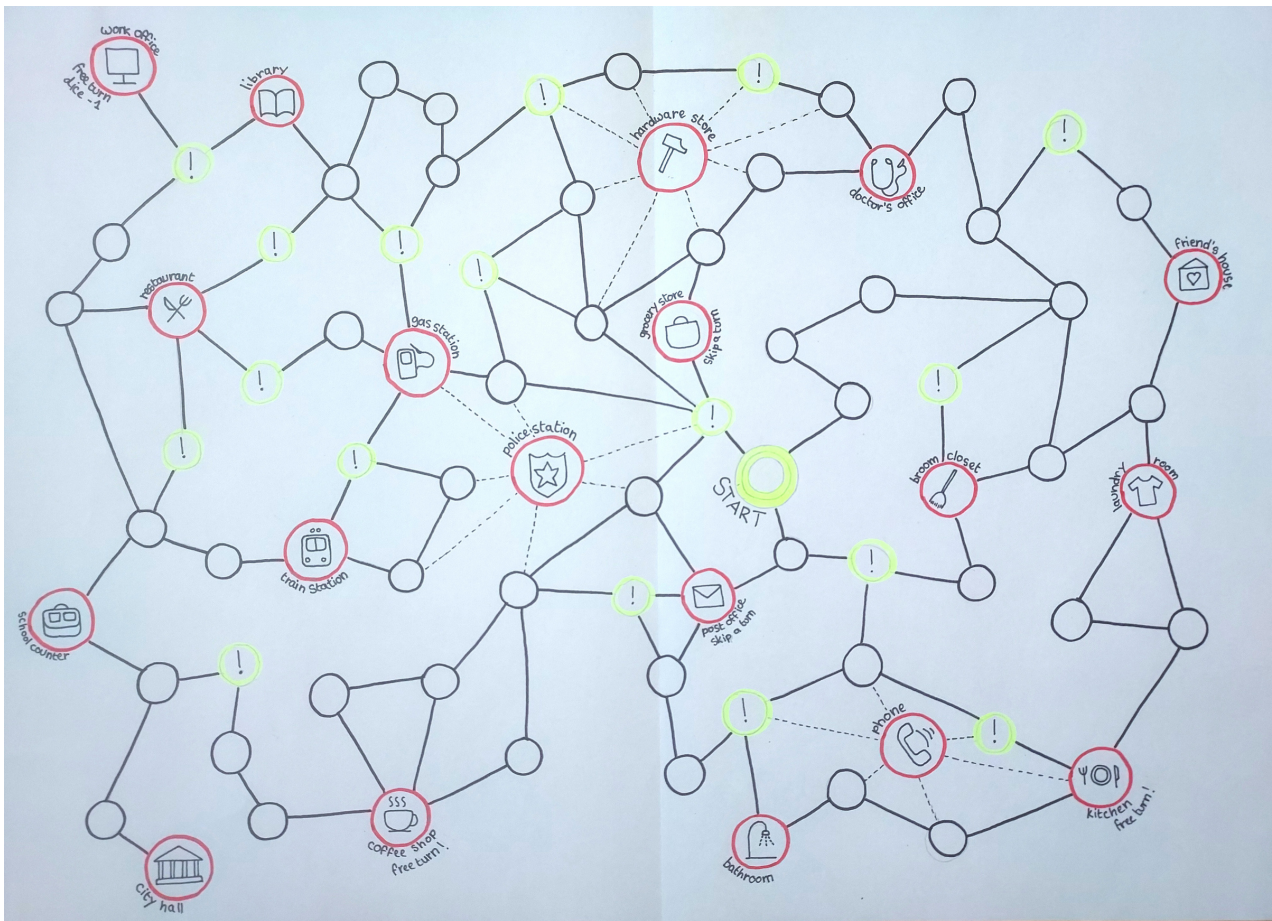


## Iteration 2 - board and cards prototypes





### Iteration 3 - final board and cards



You had an awkward encounter with a vague acquaintance.  
→ skip one turn

You're hyper-focused!  
→ pick a random task in your To-Do list, and do that one before anything else. On the way there, add 2 to all dice rolls, and ignore all distractions.

You need to get dinner for later.  
→ go to the Restaurant

You meet your friend for a coffee!  
→ go to the Coffee Shop

EVENT

TASK

# RULEBOOK (LATEST VERSION)

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## CONTENTS:

1 playing board

Pile of 28 "Task" cards

Pile of 21 "Event" cards

Pawns

1 dice

## SET-UP:

Each player puts their pawn on the Start circle on the board. They all draw three Task cards from the pile, and add them to their To-Do List. More Tasks will be added to the To-Do Lists later on in the game.

## GOAL:

Your goal is to complete as many of your Tasks as possible before the end of the game. You complete a Task by visiting the Location that is associated with it. They can be completed in any order (unless specified otherwise).

## GAME PLAY:

The game ends when the Tasks pile is empty, AND someone has completed all the Tasks in their To-Do List. The winner is the person who has the best score of completed-minus-uncompleted Tasks; the second place is the second-best score, etc.

The youngest player starts, and turns happen clockwise.

At the beginning of a turn, you may draw one additional Task from the pile and add it to your To-Do List. Once you draw a new Task card, you can't put it back! You must always have at least three Tasks in your To-Do list, unless the Tasks pile is empty.

Regardless of whether you drew new Tasks, you then roll a dice, and move the according number of circles, or less, in any direction or pattern you want.

- If you land on an Event circle, you draw an Event card, read it out loud, and follow the card's instructions.
  - Motivation Event cards may be kept until needed. Each Motivation card only works once.
  - Extra Task cards are added to the player's to-do list, and count as a completed task once done.
  - At the end of the turn, you return any completed/used Event card to the discard pile (except the Extra Task cards, which go to your completed Tasks pile).
- If you land on a Location circle corresponding to one of the Tasks on your To-Do List, you automatically complete that Task (or part of it, in the case of Multi-Location Tasks). Then you flip the Task card over and count it as a completed Task.
- If you land on a Location circle not corresponding to any of your Tasks, but with a certain property, that property applies to you.
- If you end on a Location circle not corresponding to any of your Tasks and with no property, or on an empty circle, nothing happens.

#### Special cases:

- If you have two Tasks to complete at the same Location, you complete one upon arrival, and you skip a turn and stay in that Location to complete another (skip one turn per additional Task).
- If you draw several "Do this first" Tasks, do them in the order you drew them. If one has a modifier (ad/subtract to dice roll, ignore distractions...) those modifiers only apply to the travel to that Location.
- You can land on the same circle as someone else. When that happens, you can decide to trade some of your Task cards with that person. That includes Extra Tasks Event cards, and Multi-Location Tasks that you had already half-completed.
- You can't have more than 2 "needs extra motivation" Tasks in your To-Do List. If you draw a third one, put it back in the pile, shuffle the pile, and draw a different Task.

All cards have the instructions written on them; just in case, here is a recap of the special/unusual ones.

- Multi-Location Task: some Tasks require you to visit multiple Locations. You do not need to visit both Locations one after the other, you can complete other Tasks in between. They can be traded even if you have already started completing them.

- Motivation Burst (Event card): some of the locations on the board are linked to the surrounding circles with dotted lines, making them inaccessible. To complete the corresponding Task, you need extra motivation: the Motivation Burst Event cards. To use it, you can jump to the Location along a dotted line. If you draw a Motivation Burst card, you can keep it until you need it (to access the corresponding circle, and to exit it, going back to the same circle you made the jump from). Once it is used, you put it away on the discard pile. Motivation Burst cards cannot be traded.
- Extra Task (Event card): they count as Task cards; you add them to your To-Do List and then move them to your completed tasks. They count in the final score. Some of them are urgent, and specifically require you to complete them before you do anything else.
- “You got side-tracked and are now standing in [room]” Distraction (Event card): no matter where you were previously on the board, your pawn gets teleported to the room in question.
- Hyper-focus (Event card): these cards give priority to one of your existing Tasks, and allow you to move faster and disregard Distraction Event cards in the process. It overrides any urgent Task you may have in your To-Do List. You may keep the Hyper-focus card until you’ve completed the Task it applies to, then discard it.
- Executive dysfunction (Event card): there is only one in the whole game. When you get it, you skip three turns. Each turn you’re allowed to make a dice roll; if you roll a 6, you can start playing again on this turn, roll a dice again for your turn.

Some Locations on the map have special properties:

The property is activated if you end your turn on that circle (regardless if you have a task to do there).

- The Work Office: there are too many people here, it’s draining and you want to leave as fast as possible. Get a free new turn at the end of your turn, but subtract 1 to that dice roll.
- The Grocery Store: doing the groceries is long and draining. Skip a turn.
- The Post Office: there is a long waiting line. Skip a turn.
- The Coffee Shop: you got a snack and some extra sugar in your blood! Get a free new turn.
- The Kitchen: you got a snack and some extra sugar in your blood! Get a free new turn.



## SHORT ESSAY

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Gamification is everywhere. Or at least, everywhere where someone wants to make engaging, interesting, addictive content. While outright games are where these mechanics are the most prevalent, gamification can be applied to nearly every kind of situation, if you're creative enough. And it is the best tool to keep your audience engaged on the long term.

In communication and marketing, engaging the audience through gamification is a great way to make your message be remembered, and create a positive association in the audience's minds. It may be harder to get people into the "magic circle" in a context other than games, because they didn't sign up for it and they're not completely conscious of being in a gamified environment. But once they are there, games mechanics apply in the same way. It will most of the time be simpler: including only one or two elements of fun, only catering to one type of players, having blurry borders between mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics... (often forgoing aesthetics entirely). In short, implementing only one or two game mechanics rather than an entire system. But the effects are the same, albeit to a lesser extent.

Very simple examples include reward systems like fidelity points, a well-known method used by retail brands, restaurants, cafes... Whereas some companies will develop an entire game (much simpler than, say, Legend of Zelda, but a game nonetheless) as part of a marketing campaign, like Chipotle's "Love Story" memory game.

Overall, gamification is something which marketers can draw from to make their messages more impactful, by making their audience want to stay, but more importantly, to come back.