



Zoo Frenzy

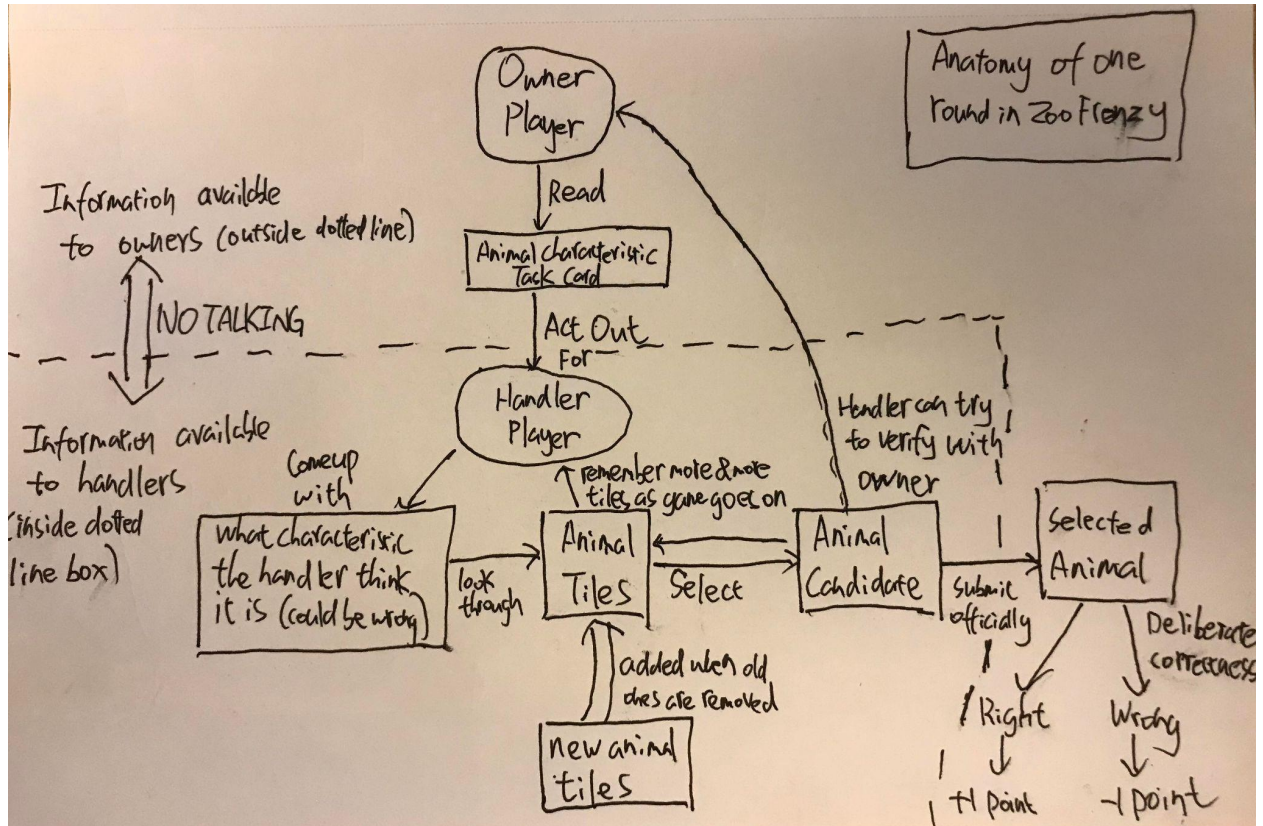
Artist's statement (~200 words of your intention for the game)

Zoo Frenzy is a physical party game full of cute animals and wacky animal characteristics for 4 to 8 players of any age. In one sentence, *Zoo Frenzy* is animal *Codenames* meet *Charades*, inspired by *Twister*, with a sprinkle of memorization thrown in. Portable, easy to set up, and straightforward to play, It can be enjoyed on any occasion, from family board game nights with young children, to cocktail mixers filled with working professionals.

The game is round-based, and played with teams of 2 competing with each other. One team member is the owner, who needs to read a task card and act out some animal characteristics on the card (e.g. has tails) without speaking. The other member is the handler, who has to find an animal from a grid of face-down animal tiles that fits the characteristics before the other teams. Be careful though, because if you are wrong, your team will lose a point! First team to win 3 rounds wins the game. With 25 animals and 30 unique tasks to choose from, no two games of *Zoo Frenzy* will be the same. You can even add your favorite animal that is not in the game or create your own task cards with animal characteristics!

Do you have what it takes to curate a zoo for eccentric owners? Play *Zoo Frenzy* and find out. You might even learn some new facts about animals along the way!

Concept map of the game system:



Initial decisions about formal elements and values of your game

Initially, we quickly decided that we wanted to make a multilateral team competition game that rewarded teamwork. We were also interested in creating the specific fun of fellowship, as seen in *Twister*, that only comes from players playing together in the same physical space. We also loved the chaos and fun of non-verbal communication as seen in *Charades*. Based on this, we created *Escape from Alpha Centauri*.



Escape from Alpha Centauri (V1.0)

Theme: Escaping a doomed star system by collecting parts from different planets.

Players: Multilateral competition between teams of 2 for 4-8 people. Each team has a commander and an explorer. The commander can see the task cards, but must stay out of the playing field. The explorer can move freely within the playing field.

Resources:

- 16 tiles (planets), each with a color and a suit.
- 32 task cards that also contain a color and a suit. For each tile, there were 2 matching task cards.

Objective: Race - Team who is able to get through their tasks correctly and fastest wins.

Procedure:

- At start, place 16 tiles face down in a 4x4 grid. Shuffle the task cards and deal 5 to each commander face-down.
- When the game starts, the commander needs to flip their top task card, and describe what they see non-verbally to the explorer. They can point to things in the room to help them.
- The explorer needs to find the corresponding tile by flipping over and checking the tiles on the ground one at a time. Once they think they have found the right tile, they take the task card from their commander, place it under the tile, and move on to the next task.

Once a team exhausts all their task cards, the game is over and players move on to the scoring phase.

- In the scoring phase, each team gets 1 point for a correctly executed task and -1 point for an incorrect task. Incomplete tasks are worth 0. Team with the most points wins.

Types of Fun - Goals

The main types of fun we were targeting were **fellowship**, **challenge**, and **expression**. We wanted to generate fellowship on two levels: first, between the members of a team, communicating with each other via silly charades. Second, between the two teams, as friendly competition. The challenge also came from two sources: first, the challenge of successfully communicating with the restriction of strictly non-verbal communication. Second, from competing in a race with the other team. Finally, we wanted to leave room for expression - by forcing the players to think outside of the box when communicating, we wanted to have them think creatively about how to express themselves to one another.

Maintaining all these different types of fun required a delicate balancing act, which we had to refine via playtesting. For example, although we wanted players to be directly competing, and challenging one another, we also wanted to make sure that that competition was lighthearted and sociable. In order to make communication challenging, we wanted to restrict how players could communicate, but we had to make sure to do so in a way that encouraged them to experiment and find interesting ways to express themselves. Although the core mechanics stayed largely the same, we ended up changing a lot of the specific procedures, as well as the theme, to achieve these goals.

Playtest #1 - April 12, 2022, end of lecture



Players: For our first playtest we just played with our team members.

Questions we wanted answered: Since this was our first playtest, we were mainly concerned with big-picture questions:

- Does the non-verbal communication needed for tasks work at all?
- Do the different teams have meaningful interactions between each other?

Notes:

- We thought the core game was fun and it had potential.
- We didn't like the play pattern of explorers flipping over tile cards, and waiting for the commander to give thumbs up/down on whether it is correct
- Communication worked! Both teams were able to make significant progress.
- There were basically no interactions between the two teams.

Conclusion:

The play pattern of flipping over tile cards to verify is not something we intended, and it is a simple rule fix. Non-verbal communication worked and was somewhat fun. The lack of interactions between two teams was a huge issue that we knew we needed to fix, but we didn't have a solution yet.

Changes:

Since we only had about 30 minutes before the next playtest, we did not have time to make any changes. We also wanted to make sure that people outside of our team also saw the same issues we did.

Playtest #2 - April 12, 2022, during section

Players: CS 247G students from Jean's section.

Questions we wanted answered: Same as above due to the short timeframe

- Does the non-verbal communication needed for tasks work at all?
- Do the different teams have meaningful interactions between each other?

Notes:

- Player weren't sure when the game would end
- Explorer players were initially confused about whether it was allowed, then assumed it was and proceeded to fully flipped over their tiles to show to their commanders
- Commanders did not talk verbally but explorers spoke to the commanders verbally. Basically, explorers were talking for both of them.
- Confusion around duplicate task cards.
- Still no interaction between two teams.
- Idea from player: charades except for matching

Conclusion:

The feedback we got revolved around confusion about the rules - explorers talked back verbally to their commanders, which was not our intention. As a result, they weren't playing the game as we intended and missing some of the fun. We knew clarifying the rules was our top priority.

We also knew that our game as it was simply did not support interactions between teams. We came up with an additional procedure to reward explorers for correctly finding the tile their competitor is currently looking for, and we hoped it would incentivize players to pay more attention to the other teams.

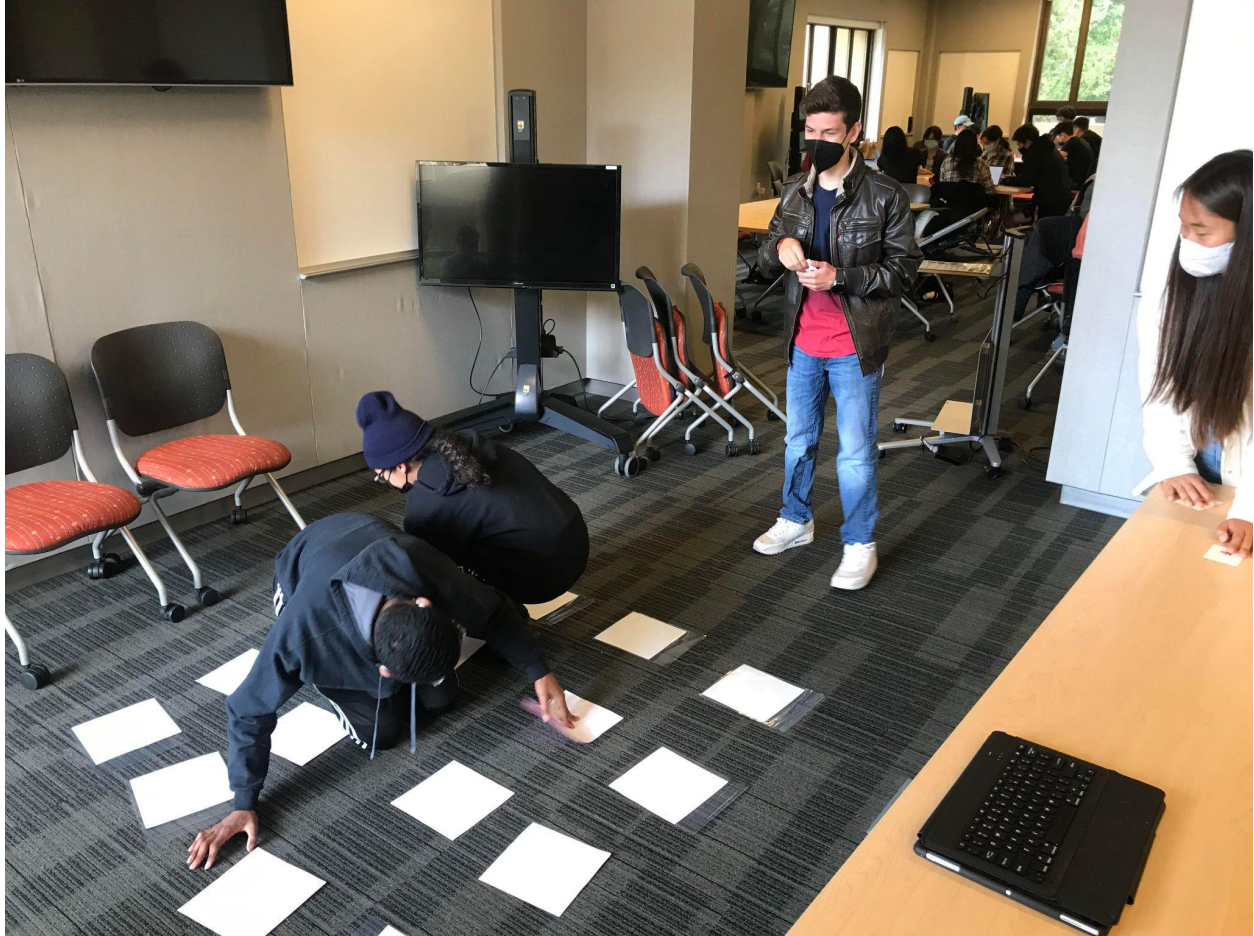
As an aside, one of the players suggested we lean more into the charades part of the game by having the players describe more complicated objects or concepts, which was a really great idea for our second iteration of the game.

Changes: Added following rules:

- Both teammates must communicate non-verbally.
- Tiles must remain face down at all times, except when being actively looked at by an explorer.

Added procedure: During play, if an explorer thinks they have found a tile another team is correctly looking for, they may exclaim so. The game is paused and the tile is verified. If the player is correct, and the tile was indeed one being looked for by another team, then that team must discard the task card and draw two new ones. If the player is wrong, and the tile did not fit the current tasks of any other team, then the player's team must draw a new task card as punishment.

Playtest #3 - April 14, 2022, during lecture



Players: CS 247G students. Forgot to write their names down...

Questions we wanted answered:

- Are the updated rules clear enough?
- Now that we know non-verbal communication works, is it fun? Is it too hard/too easy?
- After our procedure change, are there meaningful interactions between teams now?
- Is the physical aspect of the game meaningful?

Notes:

- Players had fun overall!
- No more rule confusions. Yay!
- Players loved the charades element! But they thought communicating the tasks was too easy because there were only 4 symbols and communicating colors was trivialized by pointing.
- Some explorers liked the fact that as the game went on, they memorized more and more of what each tile was. Other explorers thought this made the game too easy at the end.
- Sadly, teams did not use the new procedure of slowing down other teams at all. Teams did not pay attention to other teams at all.
- Some players really liked the physical elements of the game. They liked the fact that the tiles were physical, that they were laid out in space, and that they had to be manually flipped over.
- Scoring phase was confusing because teams forgot which task cards were theirs.

Conclusion:

This was a very important playtest for us, as it was the first time the game was played as intended by new players. There were lots of positives: players had fun, especially with the non-verbal communication. Players liked the hidden information aspect of face-down tiles, and they liked the physical portion. This gave us reinsurance that our core gameplay ideas worked.

On the other hand, we also knew there were fundamental issues with the game such that we needed to redesign it instead of just tweaking it. Based on all the playtests so far, we identified the following design goals:

1. Keep the core structure the same - multilateral team competition rewarding teamwork, physical tiles with some memorization element, non-verbal communication.
2. Players are too busy playing the game to pay attention to the other team. We need to find interactions in other ways. We were inspired by *Codenames*, where teams don't directly interact with each other but end up inadvertently doing so because of shared resources. We also liked the round-based structure of *Codenames*, which meant teams had more downtime to be able to observe and interact with other teams.
3. Increase complexity of non-verbal communication by leveraging charades with more difficult objects/concepts.
4. Improve and simplify scoring all around so completing a task is easier, the scoring phase at the end is easier, and the ending condition of the game is clearer.

Changes: Version 2 of our game, *Zoo Frenzy* was created. New meaningful changes are highlighted in red.

Zoo Frenzy (V2.0)

Theme: Curate a zoo for an eccentric owner.

Players: **Unchanged except renaming.** Multilateral competition between teams of 2 for 4-8 people. Each team has an owner and a handler. The owner can see the task cards, but must stay out of the playing field. The handler can move freely within the playing field.

Resources:

- 25+ animal tiles
- 30+ task cards that each contain a characteristic.

Objective: **Game is now round-based, and the team with the most points at the end wins.**

Procedure:

- At start, place 16 tiles face down in a 4x4 grid. Shuffle the task cards and deal 5 **to all the owners (so they share the same 5 tasks instead of having separate ones). Each task represents a round of play, so there are 5 rounds in the game.**
- At the start of each round, the owner needs to describe the animal characteristics shown on task cards non-verbally to their handler. They can point to things in the room to help them.
- The explorer needs to find the corresponding tile by flipping over and checking the animal tiles on the ground one at a time. Once they think they have found the right tile, **they need to quickly hand it to the owner. The first team to do so ends the current round. If that team was correct, then that team gains 1 point. Otherwise, they lose 1 point. The tile is not replaced, and the game continues until all the task cards have been exhausted.**

Rules:

- Both teammates must communicate non-verbally.
- Animal tiles must remain face down at all times and cannot be shown to any owner.

Playtest #4, April 19, 2022, during class

Players: Laviv, Tristan, Karina, Jack

Questions we wanted answered: Generated based on our design goals above

- Does the round-based structure work?
- Are there now more opportunities for interactions?
- Is acting out animal characteristics and matching them to animals complex enough? Is it more fun?
- Did we succeed at making scoring easier?

Notes:

- Players were visibly having lots of fun. People were cheering and laughing.
- "It was really fun, good social game"
- Rule clarification needed: multiple animals fit one attribute
- Players thought animal tiles should be replaced by a new one, we playtested it, it was great.
- Players again loved being rewarded for memorizing the animal tiles as the game went on.
- Players loved the expanded charades elements.
- Lots of interaction between teams now that they are all looking for the same characteristic. Explorers were physically racing each other to grab tiles, looking at other owners when stuck.
- Round-based play was great - teams had time to discuss and laugh about the results between rounds.
- When there were conflicts about whether an animal fits a certain characteristic, we did not consider that in the rules. Players naturally started judging among themselves and it was fun.
- Players thought the attributes were too general and easy to find.

Conclusion:

We were very satisfied with the results of the playtest, and we knew we just had some tuning to do. All of the changes we made to the game worked well. We were especially happy with how much interaction we are seeing now. Round-based structure worked great, and made the game more of a party game where people are laughing and chatting regularly, rather than silent play as we observed in previous playtests. Players loved the animal theme and acting out animal characteristics, and it was adequately challenging.

We noticed that the objective/ending condition could be streamlined even further by just saying "first to 3 wins". This is functionally identical to "best of 5 between 2 teams", but has the advantage of supporting more players directly and handling some edge cases. We wanted to implement the players' feedback of adding more challenging animal characteristics that fit just a few animals, but now we run the risk of having a board that is bereft of any animal tile that fits the characteristic. To address this and other scenarios where all the teams are stuck, we decided to add a timer to each round.

Finally, the playtesters came up with some great additions to the game to fix issues we missed (disagreement on characteristic fitting animals), or improve the game (replacing tiles makes the endgame more engaging since now there aren't just 4 less tiles to look at).

Changes:

Updated animals and characteristics to include more difficult characteristics.

Updated objective: First team to complete 3 tasks successfully wins.

Updated procedures:

- After a tile is removed during every round, it is replaced by a new random tile from the unused ones.
- Instead of drawing 5 task cards at the start, task cards are drawn one at a time and players keep playing until one team successfully completes 3 tasks.
- If there are disagreements as to whether an animal fits a certain characteristic, players may deliberate among themselves. If a consensus cannot be reached, then no team wins the round and a new task is drawn.

Updated rules:

- There is now a time limit for every round. If no team completed the task when time is up, a new task card is drawn and the previous one is discarded.
- Explicitly state that multiple animals can fit one description.

Playtest #5, April 19, 2022, 1047 Campus Drive

Video:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cNkzuA7RS77Bg_TSVraO0HrLuoC37FSr/view?usp=sharing

Players: Tristan, Diana, Steven, Jacob, Bobby, Francis

Questions we wanted answered:

Since we knew this would be the final playtest before submission, and we would not have had to time iterate on major changes, we wanted to focus the playtest on making sure our new rules and procedures made sense and worked as intended, they worked for more than 4 players, and catch anything we might have missed.

Notes:

- Need better labels
- Adding an answer key
- Specify in the rules that only handlers flip the cards
- Specify all the owners look at the same task card
- Quick, frantic, and fun!
- Watching acting was fun!
- The owner players on different teams collaborated ad-hoc to act out pack-based animals and it was cool to see.

Conclusion:

This was another great playtest. Despite some minor rule confusions, which we address mid-play, games played out as we imagined and players had lots of fun. Seeing teams collaborate temporarily was not something we planned for, but it ended up being really refreshing to see. The tile grid worked well for 6 players.

Changes:

Only rule text updates. For details, please see changes from Game Rules 2.0

(https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1I9Opcfb0ECwN0c4s0ofFqSZwpNJ_NMJayxQvIvRQWGs/edit?usp=sharing) to Game Rules 2.2

(<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1DzTqlc22jdyfAxy-4WPKqa3a4hIfXGZz6DbneCVweG0/edit?usp=sharing>)

Zoo Frenzy (V2.1)

Theme: Curate a zoo for an eccentric owner.

Players: Multilateral competition between teams of 2 for 4-8 people. Each team has an owner and a handler. The owner can see the task cards, but must stay out of the playing field. The handler can move freely within the playing field.

Resources:

- 25+ animal tiles
- 30+ task cards that each contain a characteristic.

Objective: First team to complete 3 tasks successfully wins.

Procedure:

- At start, place 16 animal tiles face down in a 4x4 grid. Shuffle the task cards.
- At the start of each round, the top task card is flipped, and the owners need to describe the animal characteristics shown on task cards non-verbally to their handler. They can point to things in the room to help them.
- The explorer needs to find the corresponding tile by flipping over and checking the animal tiles on the ground one at a time. Once they think they have found the right tile, they need to quickly hand it to the owner. The first team to do so ends the current round. If that team was correct, then that team gains 1 point. Otherwise, they lose 1 point. The tile is replaced, and the game continues until the first team gets 3 points.
- If there are disagreements as to whether an animal fits a certain characteristic, players may deliberate among themselves. If a consensus cannot be reached, then no team wins the round and a new task is drawn.

Rules:

- Both teammates must communicate non-verbally.
- Animal tiles must remain face down at all times and cannot be shown to any owner.
- Multiple animals can fit one task.
- There is now a time limit for every round. If no team completed the task when time is up, a new task card is drawn and the previous one is discarded.

Types of Fun - Final Version

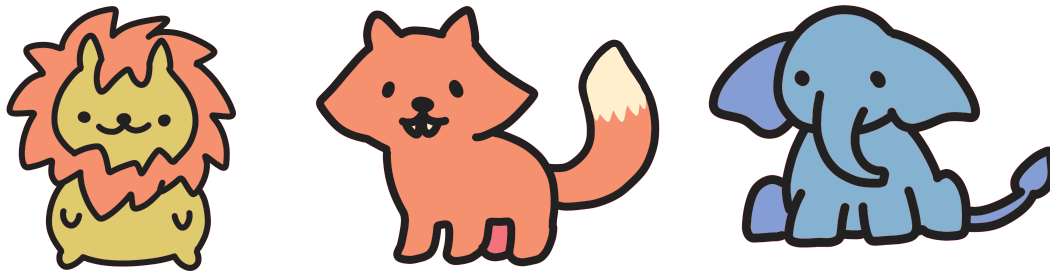
Recall that the types of fun we were targeting were **fellowship, challenge** and **expression**.

From the first prototype, we captured fellowship between teammates effectively. In the final version, the large range of possible charades for different animals and traits fed into the feeling of comradery and shared silliness.

This change - having a range of animals, instead of just colors and symbols - on the tiles also made it more challenging, since there was a wider range of more difficult concepts to express via charades, and players couldn't just mime a small set of options. This also led to more expression - in our final playtest people used a huge variety of actions to try and capture different concepts and animals, and we found that different people often used different pantomimes to capture the same concepts.

The one thing we would still like to improve in future versions is the feeling of fellowship between teams. Although the two teams were competing, they didn't always compete as directly as we would have liked. Encouraging teams to actively engage with each other more could help make the game feel like a more collective experience than it does now - although it's already fairly successful!

Final Designs:



For our game, we drew and colored 28 different animal tiles for the game, designed task cards, and created the rules, role cards and the box itself. We've added some examples in this document, as well as links to the Google Slides with all of the designs.

Important note on extensibility and educational outcomes

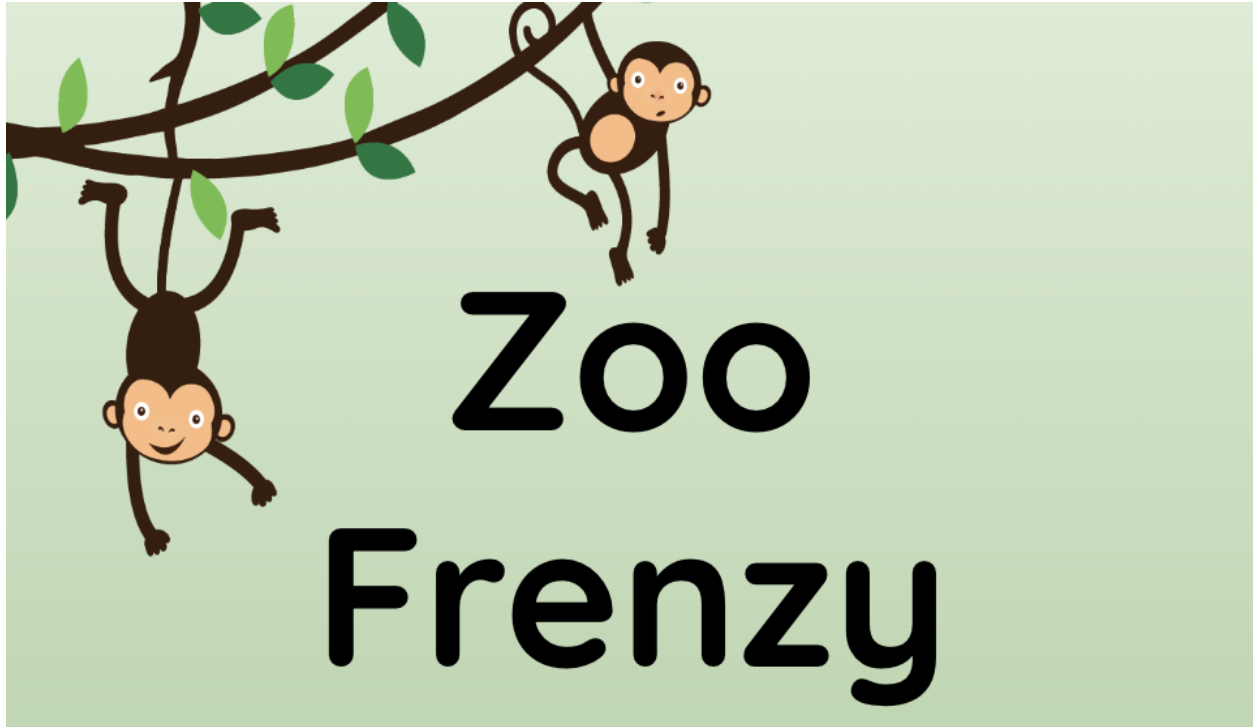
Something we are very excited about is how easily the game can be customized by the players, via writing on the blank animal tile cards and task cards provided, and also how easily it can be adapted to other topics. *Zoo Frenzy* is already an educational game, teaching about animals and animal characteristics. The structure of matching characteristics to objects can be easily extended to topics such as geography, astronomy, or history. The possibilities are endless!

Print and Play

[All Cards and Tiles](#)

[Rules](#)

Individual Links:



[Rules](#)

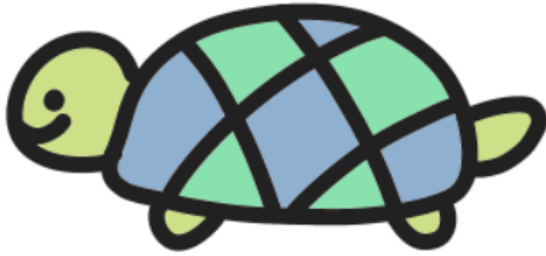
KEEPER

- Your team's zoo owner will be acting out some animal characteristic.
- You're racing with the other keepers in the field to find an animal that has the expressed characteristic.
- Once the owners say so, you can flip the tiles on the floor to look at them but you **cannot** show them to any owner.
- Once you find an animal with that characteristic, give it to your owner as quickly as possible.

OWNER

- Draw one card for all the owners to look at.
- When ready flip the hourglass and all owners begin acting out the characteristic **without speaking**.
- The owner who is holding an animal tile first is judged.
- If all the players can agree that the animal on the tile has the characteristic on the task card, that team wins that round and gets that animal tile. If all the players don't agree, then that team loses a point.

[Role Cards](#)






Turtle



Platypus

[Animal Tiles](#)

<p>Find an animal that is</p> <p>Terrestrial (land-based)</p> <p> Task</p>	<p>Find an animal that</p> <p>Has Fur</p> <p> Task</p>	<p>Find an animal that is</p> <p>Aquatic</p> <p> Task</p>
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[Task Cards](#)

Raw playtest notes:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zf0wslwBXqEljoZJiAhS82tm28SDae7urxKwmi0-fE8/edit?usp=sharing>

Initial brainstorming:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A9lpF2KW0tgoAqj2Quabn7inOameeZvMO2fAgabwFE/edit?usp=sharing>

Rules:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aXALPQMk44mv8r2u5OKZbv2Qrq3A5EKu?usp=sharing>

Packaging: TODO