I've Got a Feeling: By Gregory Cartagena, Maddie Cain, Nischal Bhandari, and Neil Borja

Design Process

Our initial idea for *I've Got a Feeling* arose from our first concept brainstorming session. The prompt for this session was "alternative skills", and the specific skill that sparked this idea was "blindfolded touch". Our team had to decide between this idea, an idea about encryption and teamwork, and an idea about storytelling and taking pictures. After receiving feedback in class, it seemed like our initial idea for a touch based game seemed most novel, so we unanimously agreed to taking it further. The first set of rules had only one person building, one hidden token for each other player, and the goal was for players to find their own token. We initially tested amongst ourselves using paper as the building material. During this test, the main thing we noticed was that the structures built would move around a lot, resulting in a game more about listening for movement than exploring a space blindfolded. We decided to use Legos instead, since they don't move around much once connected together. We were worried at first that Legos wouldn't let players be as creative as paper, but after testing more amongst ourselves we found that Legos still allowed a good deal of creativity in building.

At this point, we felt we were in a good position to run a playtest on other people. We tested on people taking a different game design class. From this playtest, we noticed two very big flaws in our design. First, the wait times for players in the game were too long. We had one person building and hiding while everyone else was waiting, then we had one person waiting while everyone else was finding. Second, the game lacked a lot of depth, and seemed like it would become unfun after only a few rounds. We chose to focus on fixing the second issue first, thinking it would be simple to fix. In actuality, it took a lot of effort to add depth to the game. We tried many different additions and changes, including using set collection mechanics, team play, elimination gameplay, capture the flag style gameplay, and even toyed around with the idea of designing a social deduction game in the style of Mafia that utilized our alternative mechanics. The most difficult part of this process was trying to arrive at a solution that would add depth to our game, but not detract from the core mechanics we were investigating. After spending about 4 hours attempting to solve the issue and being nowhere near a solution, we decided it would be best if we split up and each fleshed out a design that kept the positive aspects of our initial prototype but added depth to the game. This approach worked much better, and we arrived at a solution that utilized currency and objectives to add depth.

To solve the issue of long wait times, we decided to split the responsibility of hiding and constructing the game board to all players. Rather than having a "Master Builder" role, everyone would be involved at all phases of the game. We effectively removed all the wait times that had plagued us before. With both issues from the previous playtest fixed, we went forward with another playtest, this time using classmates in the other section. During this playtest, we noticed two new issues arise. The first was that with every player involved in every phase of the game, it was difficult to manage the time-limited rounds of the game when all players had their eyes closed. The second issue was that the game felt too frantic (because we had reduced all wait times).

We managed to create a solution that solved both issues. We reintroduced the Master Builder role we initially had, but modified it to suit the other additions we had made. The role would still be involved in the building and hiding phases of the game, but not during the finding phase. This introduced a one minute wait for a single player at a time. We also delegated timing responsibilities to the Master Builder role. The most difficult part of this process was making sure the Master Builder role fit into the

game. During the final playtest, we noticed that the Master Builder role didn't seem like a "good" or "bad" role, but one that was different enough to be interesting to play as.

FINAL PLAYTEST REPORT

Changes from previous Playtest:

· We removed power-ups from the game because we decided that they were an extra feature that added an extra layer of unnecessary complexity to the game

· Players could also spend tokens to steal two Legos from opponents instead of gaining 4

· We gave players an additional 30 seconds to build during Build Phase

· We re-instated the master builder so the game could run without a permanent moderator. In this version, MB participates in all phases of the game except for the find phase and has the advantage of hiding pieces with his or her eyes open.

· To make players more excited for their turn as MB, we added bounty and robber pieces that the MB hide in addition to his or her normal pieces. These pieces give the MB the opportunity to gain a lot of pieces via a betting system if they strategize and hide those pieces well (this system is best explained in the Rules of the Game section)

· We re-valued the entire point system to accurately reflect the difficulty of the objectives and also wrote an entirely new set of objective cards that better suited the current pace of the game (objectives now are typically completed from 2-5 turns vs the 1 or 8 turn extremes we experienced in the last playtest)

What are the goals/ questions to answer in this focus test?

· What strategies do players tend to implement in order to both complete objectives and hide their tokens? Did players tend to build more heavily with objectives in mind? With hiding in mind? A combination of both?

· Do players look forward to their turn as Master Builder under the new advantages of playing with their eyes open and the addition of "special" pieces?

· Did building , touch, and dexterity remain the center-piece/driving force of the game?

· What emotions and moods did our alternative skills promote in players while they were playing the game? Are these the emotions we were hoping to promote?

What script did we use?

"The goal of this game is to collect 10 victory points. You collect points by completing objective cards. There are two types of objective cards: building objectives (creating buildings of certain shapes and colors) and collection objectives (collecting certain combinations of tokens). Gameplay is split into 4 phases: First, all players build during a building round for two minutes. Aim is to build a structure to hide tokens in that also fulfills objectives. Then, you will all place your own structure on your side of the board and hide five pieces (master builder does this with eyes open) on your corner while blindfolded (one minute).   Lastly, everyone but Master Builder finds pieces while blindfolded on other buildings and bring them back to their side. At the end of the round, you may buy things with your tokens. You can purchase four Legos for one token, and an objective card for one token. Each round is run by a Master Builder which rotates clockwise (explain MB's specific abilities and jobs)**.** Points are also lost by breaking structures while hiding or finding."

Who were the playtesters?

Ben: Big time video game player (sophomore Senior House)
Alex: Casual Gamer (like Smash Bros)
Ingrid: League of Legends Fanatic
Fernando: Doesn't play games that much anymore

What spoken feedback did we receive?

· Breaking stuff was fun- you knew you did it but no one else did

· Frustrating to have no frame of reference to find: maybe

allow players to look for 5 seconds before find phase

·   Couldn't tell the difference between tokens and broken Legos

·   "I didn't realize how bad I would be at being blind!"—enthused play tester who showed excitement at exploring alternative skill

·   Create a Score Card for MB to keep track of Victory Points and Penalties

Summary of Results

·   Objectives were fair and were completed in the timeframe we intended them to

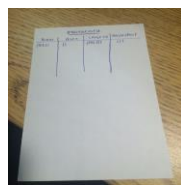·   Players were very quick to spend tokens to steal opponents Legos (sense of sabotage seemed extremely appealing to them

·   The penalty for breaking other players' structure was too extreme for even when players were careful they still broke structures. The current penalty was losing 3 victory points (as a result players were losing more points than they were gaining)

·   ***Players' building, hiding and finding strategies continually changed over time. This was a surprising result for we assumed each player would start with their own strategy and adapt to follow a singular strategy that was proven to work. However, the unexpected twist was that once a strategy worked, all other players were aware of it so it would not work the next round. This finding is extremely interesting because it adds a deeper layer to the game and causes a mental "tug of war" as players constantly need to build new structures and update hiding strategy from previous rounds. This mental game is an indirect result of our alternative skill of touch since the "mental gymnastics" that players perform occur while they are blindfolded and hiding and finding tokens

·   The primary skills humbled players by removing their ability to rely on sight to find pieces and caused a light hearted-atmosphere that wasn't extremely competitive

·   Although players were all keen on completing objectives (this is where the flow of the game stems from), the fun in the game comes from exploring new structures and the satisfaction of figuring out your opponent's hiding strategy while only using your sense of touch, spatial reasoning, and wit!

Intended Actions / Changes to Design

·   <u>Penalties:</u> Since structures will inevitably break, we plan on reducing the penalty to -1 token for every time your break a structure. We believe this penalty will still discourage players for breaking structures to find tokens because they won't be able to purchase more objectives/Legos if they lose their tokens so it is detrimental to break structures however not detrimental enough that it could mentally take you out of the game

·   <u>Better Objective Variation:</u> There were many objectives that were too similar to others

·   <u>Objective Card Choices:</u> Give players option to spend extra token to see 3 random objectives and pick one to keep. Hope is players would avoid objectives that contradict/are too similar/boring to repeat).

Components

Piece	Image	Description
Green Lego Baseplate (4)		Each baseplate marks the territory of a player. The baseplates are build upon and act as a game board
Assorted square/rectangle Legos		General building materials, four Legos cost one token

Door Pieces (2)		Used to build houses and other structures mentioned in Objective Cards
Objective Cards (50)		Can be completed to earn Victory Points. Includes set collection and building objectives
Tokens		Each player has 5 tokens of a specific color that they hide on their territory. Tokens are used as currency
Bounty Piece		Hidden by the *Master Builder* on his/her board. The player who finds it acquires 1-3 extra dollars to spend during the purchasing phase.
Robber Piece		Hidden by the *Master Builder* on his/her board and allows him/her to steal 1-3 pieces from the player that ends the finding phase with the Robber Piece (depending on the value bet)
Digital Timer/Stopwatch		Used by the *Master Builder* to time the building, hiding, and finding phases
Scorecard		The *Master Builder* will tally up the Victory Points earned during each round and keep track of penalties when players break other structures

Game Rules

Setup

      Four players are needed to play "I've Got a Feeling". The players should take all four flat green Lego baseplates and connect them into a larger square. Each player will be in control of one corner of

the square, which they may build on. Additionally, each player gets five square tokens of the same color. Then, players should all choose 15 lego pieces out of the box. These pieces will be used to build during the first round.

Goal

The first player to earn 10 victory points wins the game. Victory points are earned by completing objective cards.

Gameplay

The game is divided into building, hiding, finding, and purchasing phases.

Building Phase:
1. Using the Legos that they have, each player gets to build on their corner of the map. Players may not remove pieces that they have placed in previous rounds, they may only add on to what they have built. Players should build structures that can have tokens hidden in and around them. This phase lasts 2 minutes (2 timer durations). The Master Builder (mentioned directly below) is in charge of using his or her phone to time this phase.

Hiding Phase:
1. One player is designated as the *Master Builder*, and gets to keep their eyes open during this phase. The player with the worst eyesight (or who is color-blind) gets to be the first *Master Builder*. This role rotates clockwise to each player after each round.
2. Players who are not the *Master Builder* must hide all of their pieces on their corner of the map while blindfolded. If a player destroys one of their own structures during this phase, they lose three tokens at the end of the round. This hiding phase lasts 1 minute (1 timer duration). The *Master Builder* is in charge of timing this phase, and must announce when only ten seconds are left.
3. The *Master Builder* is not blindfolded during the hiding phase and gets to hide a "bounty" piece and a "robber" piece in addition to their regular pieces on his/her territory. The bounty piece is a green token, and the robber piece is a black token. At the start of the hiding phase, he/she must declare how much they are "betting". The *Master Builder* is allowed to bet a number from 1 to 3. If a player finds the green piece, then they earn extra tokens equal to how much the master builder bet. If a player finds the black piece, the *Master Builder* steals tokens of their choice from that player equal to how much they bet. If no player finds the bounty piece, the master builder earns money equal to how much they bet. Nothing happens if no player finds the bad piece.

Finding Phase:
1. The *Master Builder* keeps their eyes open during this phase as well, and is in charge of making sure that other players stop in time. They do not search for pieces. This phase lasts 1 minute (1 timer duration). The *Master Builder* must announce when only ten seconds remain. The Master Builder must call out any rule violations, including making note if a player knocks down a structure.
2. During this time, the other players must find hidden tokens on the game board. Players are only allowed to have one token in a hand at a time. Players should try to find tokens in other corners of the map and bring them to their corner of the map. Players should try to hide the tokens that they find, so that other players cannot steal them back.
3. If a player destroys someone else's structures during this phase, that player loses a token for each structure they break. The player whose structure was broken can reuse the broken off pieces as additional building material during the next building phase.
4. At the end of this phase, players tally how many tokens are on their corner of the map. Each token is worth $1, and must be used during the purchasing phase.
5. Player's should be able to remove any token they hid on their part of the map without destroying or removing any building pieces. If they are unable to remove a token this way, that token is not worth anything for the following purchasing phase.

Purchasing Phase:
1. Going clockwise, starting from the *Master Builder*, each player will have a turn to purchase objectives or Legos with the tokens they have collected. Each token is worth one dollar. There is no time limit to each person's purchasing turn.
2. Objectives can be purchased for one token. A player may have a maximum of four objectives at one time. Objectives should be kept hidden from other players, face down. During the purchasing phase, a player should also announce when they have completed an objective and redeem the victory points for that objective.
3. Four Legos can be purchased with one token. There is no limit on the number of Legos that can be bought during one round. These Legos can be used to build structures during the building phase.
4. Stealing: During the purchasing phase, players can spend one token of an opponent's color to steal two Legos from that opponent's existing structures.
5. Players must spend all of their earned tokens and cannot save any. Tokens are redistributed so that each player has five tokens to hide at the end of the purchasing phase. The building phase then starts again with a different *Master Builder*.
6. At the end of the purchasing phase, the *Master Builder* should tally up the victory points earned by each player as they redeem objective cards.

Final Prototype Summary

Our final prototype includes the building, hiding, and finding phases we developed in early prototypes. Players are given two minutes to build structures on their corner using a set amount of Legos. Players then have one minute to hide five tokens on and within their structure while blindfolded. If they break their own structure while hiding tokens, they are penalized three tokens. For the next minute, players feel around the board and race to take tokens from their opponent's structures, then rehide those tokens on their own territory. At the end of the minute, players collect their tokens. Then, they may spend their tokens in a variety of ways. They may use one token to buy four Legos, one token to buy an Objective Card, or another player's token that they have collected to steal two Legos from that opponent's structures. Players complete building and set collection objectives to earn Victory Points. This preserves the game's core building and finding mechanics while proving an overarching goal for players to strive for.

Each round, one player is assigned to be the *Master Builder*. The role for *Master Builder* rotates each round. The *Master Builder* is in charge of timing the rounds and calling out violations (e.g. if one player breaks another player's structure). The *Master Builder* is also in charge of tallying Victory Points at the end of the purchasing phase. The *Master Builder* also participates in hiding pieces, although does not find pieces. Details on the specialized pieces and betting process for the *Master Builder* can be found in the rules section.

Findings and Reflections

Given that its primary play mechanic involves the use of a sense that is not often used in modern tabletop games, *I've Got A Feelin'* yielded many lessons into both game and experience design. Both the development process and qualitative observations from playtesting showed how players could both learn from and enjoy the novel experience of using their sense of touch instead of sight. Further lessons are possibly waiting within observations of more gameplay testing and observation, and the further development of the game, of which its lessons can be used both in designing more interesting and compelling games, and design of objects and architectures that people interact with on a day-to-day basis.

Games that deprive players of common skills could also be leveraged to help them get a small taste of the difficulty of navigating a visually impaired daily life. Players of *I've Got A Feelin'* often noted how much more difficult than expected it was to find objects, navigate and explore an unfamiliar area, and do all of the above without breaking things. Developing games like ours could avoid the pitfalls of many

"political" and "edutainment" games through its deeper and more complex gameplay and more genuinely entertaining mechanics.

The primary game mechanic of blindness had the effect of humbling players and letting their guards down, as they were competing using skills that they knew that neither they or their opponents were well versed in, creating a light-hearted atmosphere. Conversely, depriving players of their primary sense of sight compounded the boredom of waiting when they had no designated task in the game compounded boredom with a feeling of helplessness.

Gameplay design that emphasizes on non-traditional skills can also be used in the design of other, more utilitarian experiences. For example, player behavior from the touch-based navigation of our game could be used to better design rooms and living spaces to be more easily navigated by touch, whether it is during emergency power outagesß or simply getting a glass of water at night in the dark. Additionally, games like ours can be used to study how to best design public spaces so that they are more easy to explore and navigate by blind and visually impaired people who are unfamiliar with the space.

Given that many researchers are already aware that games have an extremely high, untapped potential for teaching, it should be no surprise that games like *I've Got A Feelin'* also have the potential for use in training players to improve spacial reasoning and manual dexterity. Within the limited play time that testers had, they demonstrated an impressive array of different, lateral-thinking strategies, hinting at the game's ability to foster creative thinking and cultivate new ways of approaching problems given a set of unusual constraints.

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