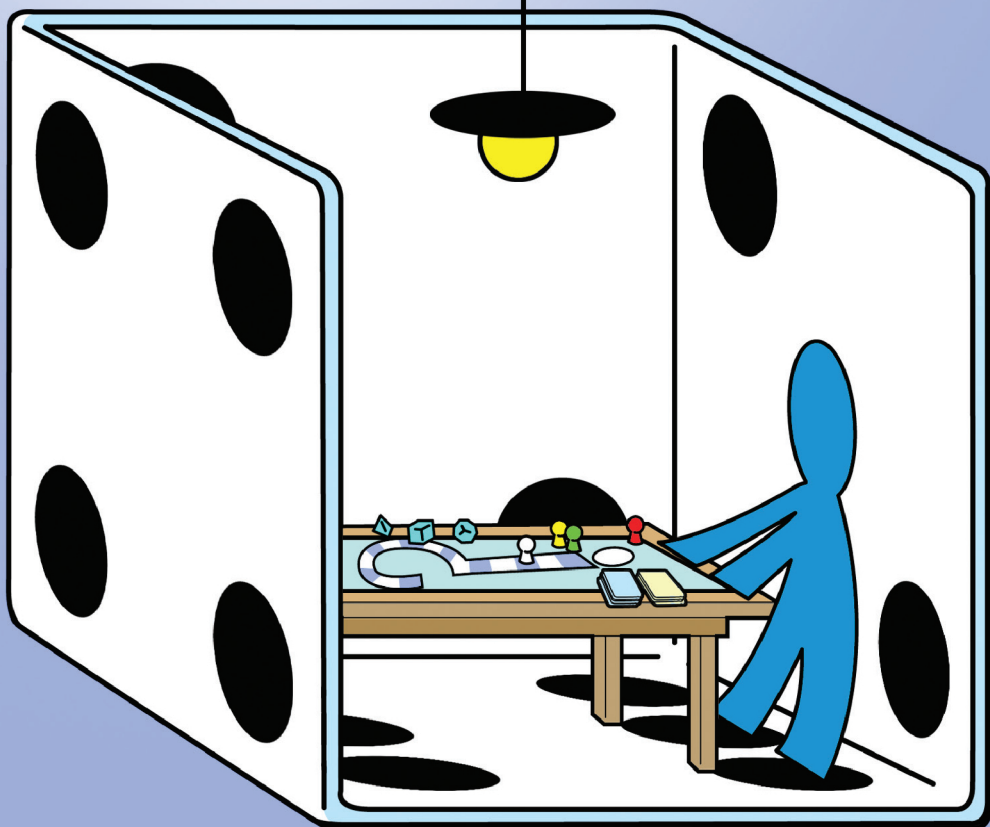


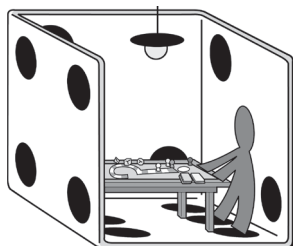
OPEN DESIGN presents

The **KOBOLD** guide to
**BOARD
GAME
DESIGN**

by Mike Selinker
with James Ernest,
Richard Garfield,
Steve Jackson
and a dozen more of the
world's best game designers



*"I wish I had a book like this twenty years ago."
- Bruno Faidutti, designer of Citadels*



The Kobold Guide to

BOARD GAME DESIGN

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with James Ernest, Richard Garfield,
Steve Jackson, and a dozen more of the
world's best designers

OPEN DESIGN™

Credits

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Foreword

We settled into Noodle Boat for a nice Thai meal. Around the table, everyone placed their orders. Asked what level of spice they wanted, the other five people each said some number of stars between one and three. The waitress then asked me.

“How many stars do you have?” I asked.

“Twenty-five,” she said, earning the gasps of all present.

“Okay, I’ll go with eight.”

Immediately I was besieged. “Eight?!” my teammates demanded. “Why, you need to have a minimum of twelve or thirteen. Be at least half a man!”

“I don’t see any of you changing your orders,” I said.

“But how,” the cacophony continued, “could you pick eight?”

Because I’m a *game designer*, I thought to myself. The scale that my colleagues had chosen from was, at least for pasty-faced Pacific Northwesterners, built on a scale from one to four. Everyone who walked in that door knew that scale: one was mild, four was hot. The restaurant knew that if one and four were both varieties of mild, half their customers would never return. In that game of “guess how much spice is in your food”—because, really, that’s the game you play when you try a new Thai restaurant—one was low and four was high. My strategy is always the same in that game: go for high.

What I had done was expose the existence of a different game, in which four was still high but twenty-five was unimaginably high. The existence of that game did not invalidate the first game. In this new game, I played conservatively. And let me tell you, eight was *hot*. Many Scovilles died to make that meal. Because I had a very spicy dinner that still had flavor and nuance, I won that game.

The people who you’ll find in the pages of this book know how to play and win games such as this. That’s because they design them. In here you’ll find the designers of many of your favorite games, and a few whose games you might not have heard of, but should, because they’re awesome. They also can write, which is not a given with game designers. They know whereof they speak.

By the end of this book, you will also know whereof they speak. That’s because they’re all willing to tell you how they work. If you want a career like theirs, you could do a lot worse than following their leads. I’ve collaborated with all of them in one capacity or another. If you’re lucky, you will too.

In the course of these essays, we’ll cover many subjects. Some are more philosophical—how to think, how to prepare, how to evaluate. Some are more practical—how to playtest, how to balance, how to prototype. But wherever they fall on that axis, all matter. If you take the time at each step of your

design process to consider each writer's words, by your last step you will have done everything better.

The Kobold-in-Chief, Wolfgang Baur, wanted a selection of designers with wildly differing experiences and voices. Some are mass market and some are hobby. Some have stayed within one field and others have done a little bit of everything. They often disagree with each other. You might wonder how you will choose between the advice of one and the advice of another. You're smart. You'll figure it out.

But enough promises. Let's get to work.

Mike Selinker
Seattle, Washington

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PULL UP A CHAIR AND SEE HOW THE WORLD'S TOP GAME DESIGNERS ROLL.

You want your games to be many things: Creative. Innovative. Playable. Fun. If you're a designer, add "published" to that list.

So where do you go to find out what makes board games tick? It's not like there's a graduate-level course in board game design, right?

Guess what? You're holding it in your hands.

The Kobold Guide to Board Game Design gives you an insider's view on how to make a game that people will want to play again and again. Fifteen of the world's most talented and experienced game designers share their secrets on game conception, design, development, and presentation. In these pages, you'll learn about storyboarding, balancing, prototyping, and playtesting from the best in the business.

Whether you're a game enthusiast who wants a deeper understanding of the hobby, an aspiring designer looking to break into the industry, or a seasoned pro who knows there's always more to learn, there's something for you in

The Kobold Guide to Board Game Design

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