

Playtesting with Plex Cards: Idea Generation with Players

Try this within your design team to generate many ideas fast, or ask for participants outside of your team to do the exercise while you observe. Perhaps they will generate surprising new ideas. By having multiple people play with the same set of cards, you may find trends that your design team wants to explore or clichés that you want to avoid.

Method One: Brainstorming

1. Split into pairs.
2. Each pair randomly draws a Plex card and faces it heads up. This is the seed card. (You might pre-select the seed card, if you know that there is a particular type of playfulness that you want to explore.)
3. Each player draws three more cards and keeps them in their hand.
4. Player 1: start exploring an idea based on the seed card: What kind of games or experiences come to mind? Do you have a particularly memorable experience with this type of play? What kind of game would you like to see with this type of playfulness? Describe your idea.
5. Player 2: listen and consider the cards in your hand. When you feel like you can contribute to player 1's idea, select a card from your hand and place it face-up on the table. Continue expounding upon the idea, incorporating this new type of playfulness. Explain how the initial idea is changed or evolved.
6. Player 1: When you are ready, select a card from your hand and display it face up. Build on the idea of player 2, incorporating this new type of playfulness. Explain how the initial idea is changed or evolved.
7. Write down your idea(s).
8. Have each group share their ideas. Make note of the group's responses and the questions that these ideas generate.
9. Shuffle the deck, draw new cards and play again.

Method Two: Scenarios

1. Split into pairs.
2. Select three Plex cards that you want to explore (these might be pulled from your composition box).
3. Create a scenario, if your experience is narrative, explore the narrative of the world. Otherwise create a "use story" where the characters are the users of your experience, imagine how they experience playfulness and how this affects them. Decide in which order to place the cards.
 - a. Card 1: use this card to trigger a 'use story' or an action
 - b. Card 2: steer the story in a new direction.
 - c. Card 3: bring the story to a close.
4. A template on the following page steps through the scenarios. You may write out your scenario, sketch a storyboard, or perform a series of live tableaux, whatever fits your project.
5. Share your scenarios with the group. Make note of the group's responses and the questions that the scenario generates.



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This is a draft handout from an early iteration of the workshop.

Method Three: Mind Map

1. One person will be the facilitator. You can decide whether to test this with one player at a time or with a small group. If you are testing with one player, that player can write down their own responses. If you are testing with a small group of people, it will probably be easier if you, or someone on your team be the scribe.
2. Select a Plex Card (from your Composition Box). This word will be the center of your mind map.
3. Draw spokes out from this central word.
4. Show your players an example of a mind map, if you feel it useful.
5. Ask your players a series of questions and write (or have them write) their responses in the mind map. Add connecting lines and vary the spatial relationship between words as it best seems to reflect the discussion and organize thoughts. You may want to switch colors to distinguish between questions or groups of questions.
 - a. Sample Questions:
 - i. FREE ASSOCIATION: “What come to mind when you hear the word _____?”
 - ii. COMPARATIVE: “What kind of games or experiences (or stories, TV shows...etc) come to mind?”
 - iii. EVOCATIVE: “What feelings do you associate with _____?”
 - iv. MOTIVATION/PURPOSE: “Why do people engage in _____?”
 - v. IMPACT/RESULT: “What happens when people engage in _____?”
 - b. Add an another layer if you want to map the intersection of multiple ideas:
 - i. ADD THEME: “What comes to mind when you think of __(Plex Card)__ through the lens of __(theme)___?” (for example, “competition” and “love”)
 - ii. ADD SETTING: “What if you were engaged with __(Plex Card/theme)__ in __(setting)___?”
 - iii. ADD ACTION/MECHANIC: “What comes to mind when you think of __(Plex Card)__ and __(mechanic)___?”
 - iv. ADD 2ND PLEX CARD: “How about if we add _____ to the concept of _____? How does that change things?”
6. Generate several mind maps using the same set of prompts. Compare the mind maps. Make note of useful or unexpected connections and patterns across maps.



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