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Fluxx: The Board Game

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1 Concept

Fluxx in its original form is a card game noted for being very easy to pick up and play, both in the sense that the rules are simple and presented unambiguously on the relevant cards, and that the game is small, portable, and allows for a varying number of players even within a single iteration of the game. The card types include Rules, which determine the current “rules of play”; Actions, which have an effect when played and then are discarded; and Keepers and Goals, which determine the winner(s) of the game. The winning conditions are dictated on each Goal card and typically feature some combination of Keeper cards. The only meta-rules are that when a player enters the game, he draws three cards and adds himself to the circle of players (this applies both to starting the game and to adding a player in mid-game), that play occurs in a turn-based fashion proceeding around the circle of players, and that a player’s turn is composed of first Drawing, then Playing.

Our adaptation of Fluxx as a board game aimed to preserve the fluid nature of the game as much as possible. The idiomatic “Draw 1 Play 1” changed to “Draw 1 Place 1 Move 1.” The game now requires a board and tokens. Instead of Playing cards so that they immediately have effect, cards are Placed onto the board. Then, in order to activate an Action card, a token must land on or be moved over it. Similarly, a player is considered to be in possession of a Keeper only when he has a token on it. Note that this means that multiple players can be in possession of a Keeper, or that a single player can own multiple instances of the same Keeper. If a Goal is met by multiple players, then all those players win.

Our board game version of Fluxx differs from the original primarily through the additional layer of strategy provided by the physical layout of the cards and the availability of Placed Action cards to any player. Whereas in the Fluxx card game, Action cards are Played by one player immediately from their hand, our board game version both delays the effects of Action cards and makes them available to all players within reach once Placed. Board game Fluxx also leaves you more vulnerable to retaliation or blocked movement if the “None Shall Pass” rule is in play. Players can decide the order they use their Place and Move options, allowing them some measure of immediate effect from Actions placed. Players will generally Place beneficial Actions in the path of their tokens. However, players can also hinder opponents by Moving first and Placing offensive Actions in their trail to discourage pursuers. Furthermore, as players are forced to show their strategy by laying out Action cards on the board, opponents have the potential to pre-empt those strategies, if the number of Moves available to the Placing player is less than the number of cards the player wishes to activate. In general, the board game version of Fluxx allows for spatial strategy and more interaction amongst players than the card version.

Since our game was designed to give the experience of playing Fluxx in a board game, most of the design centered around recreating the the aesthetic experience of the original Fluxx card game. We tried to create gameplay mechanics that fit in with the original game’s feeling of constant change. As a result we made the

board change as cards are placed onto it. The mechanics were largely created to match the aesthetics of the original game. The token limit was added to add an analogy to the Keeper limit and several other cards were added almost directly from the original Fluxx game. In order to add our own bit of personality to the game without compromising the feel of the card game, we changed to Keepers and Goals to be more relevant to our lives. We later had to adjust the mechanics to balance the game and match the strategies in the original Fluxx game, but overall our goal was to create mechanics that created an environment that felt the same as the Fluxx card game.

2 First Iteration

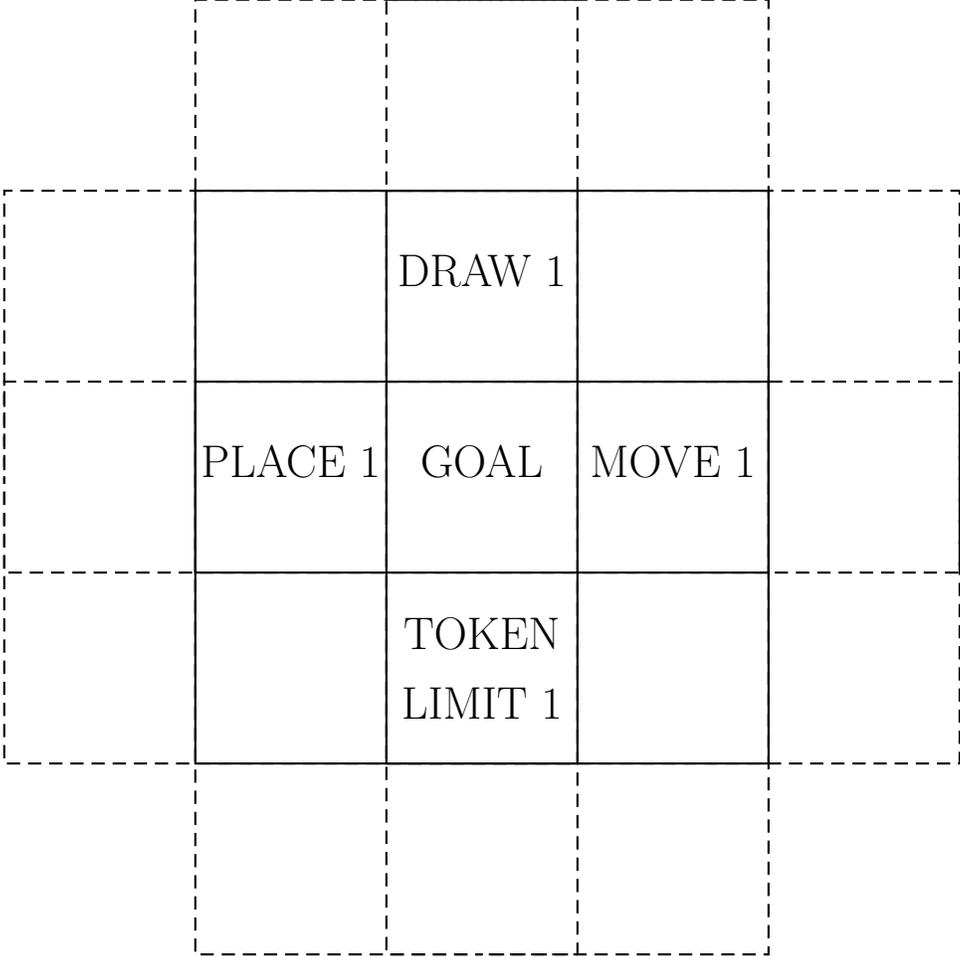


Figure 1: The Central Nine “Seed” Squares.

To keep with the general concept of Fluxx, we allowed the shape and size of the board to change during play. At the beginning of the game, the board consisted of only nine “seed” squares (Figure 1). The board could be expanded by playing Actions and Keepers to locations adjacent to existing tiles. To limit board growth, each player could only Place Actions adjacent to his own tokens; consequentially, tokens could only move to parts of the board that had already been created by Placing and “blanking” cards. We also considered the possibility of destroying portions of the board. Action cards designed for this purpose drew a distinction between erasing a tile, which removed the Keeper or Action residing in a location but left a blank tile there; and deleting a

tile, which removed the tile itself and any cards or tokens occupying that location. We were focused more on mechanics this game, so we played with the Keepers and Goals defined in normal Fluxx. We also used most of the Rules and Actions therein, but some of them had to be modified to fit with the idiom of the board game¹. For example, Keeper Limit cards were changed to Token Limit cards, thus imposing a hard limit on the number of Keepers a player could possess, but in a different manner. We also added cards that allowed for token creation and deletion.

Generally speaking, the biggest shortcoming of this iteration was the lack of interaction between player’s tokens. Players would still use Actions to swap hands, or create chains of drawing and placing, as they would have in normal Fluxx. However, the unlimited growth of the board led players to separate from one another; after six or seven turns, each player would create his own branch of tiles and remain isolated there (Figure 2). Basically, players grew to be too far apart from each other, and there was very little they could do to each other beyond the hand manipulation that original Fluxx featured. To remedy this, we limited the size of the board to 11 by 11, and introduced more offensive cards to the deck.

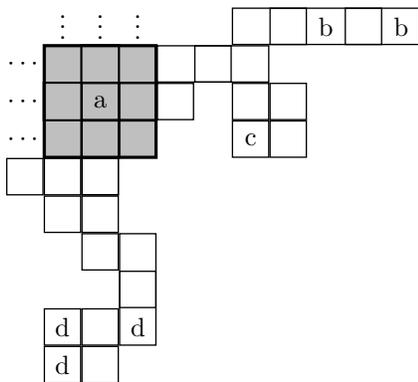


Figure 2: Branching and Player Isolation in Iteration One.

3 Second Iteration

For this iteration, the board size was fixed to 11 by 11. The center of the board was arranged as before, but all squares started the game as blank. Deletion cards were changed so that they differed from erasure only in that they also destroyed any tokens occupying the target tile. We changed the rules so that cards could now be placed anywhere on the board since we no longer had to worry about players placing infinite distances away from other units. Three Rules were added to the deck: Move 1d6, No Token Bonus (in the same vein as the No Hand Bonus), and Jump. “Land Mine” was changed to “Blight” to better describe its effect on the surrounding tiles. We changed the three-of-each-Action distribution of cards to promote those cards that encouraged token interactions and Drawing (everyone likes drawing!). We added Actions like Destroy This Token and Aversion that actually harmed the player that landed on them. This was to allow players to engage in a territory-based game without resulting in the sort of isolation in the previous iteration (Figure 3). We replaced the original Fluxx set of Keepers with 10 Keepers and 14 Goals of our own making. The Goals were themed toward MIT jokes (e.g. Mens Et Manus, own the Mind and Hand Keepers to win), and also toward using mechanics that were not present in the original Fluxx deck (e.g. Time Paradox, remove the Time Keeper from under a token to win).

Playtests for this iteration had a lot of action. Players enjoyed chaining large numbers of Actions, in some cases

¹Fluxx Decklist from <http://www.ee0r.com/fluxx/decklist.html>

for multiple turns. However, there were not enough Keepers – they only comprise 1/17 of the deck – and victory stayed out of reach for so long that we called a halt to the game. The fact that the edges of the board were very rarely used, even with four players putting as many cards on the board as they possibly could, suggested that the board was still too large.

4 Third Iteration

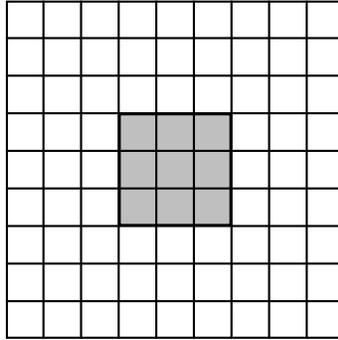
Our third iteration only addressed the issue of Keeper shortage, since having a sufficient number could potentially resolve the issue of board size. We played on an 11 by 11 board, and added 5 Keepers and 11 Goals to the deck. We changed “Liberate A Keeper” to “Obliterate A Keeper” to avoid the extraneous political joke, and “King of the Hill” to “None Shall Pass” to better convey the primary function of that Rule.

This iteration still had too few Keepers – Keepers showed up more frequently than before, but now had the large supply of Keeper-destroying Actions to contend with. It also became apparent in this iteration that our Draw, Move, Play, and Token Limit were set too high; after $X = X + 1$, Draw 5, Place 4, and Move 6 came into play, dealing with long chains of Actions became more tedious than fun. In playtesting, we included players who not only had never played our game, but had also never played Fluxx. This highlighted the necessity of rewording descriptions on some of the cards (especially the Jump card). It also brought up the implicit rule assumed by all Fluxx veterans – that one should Draw first, then Place, then Move. Because the rules did not prevent it, our new player used a strategy in which he staggered Placing and Moving, leading to more immediate effects from Placed Action cards.

We rebalanced the Action quantities to more strongly favor token-manipulation cards and disfavor Keeper-destruction cards. We eliminated the highest-quantity Draw, Move, and Place Rules to alleviate the tedium of regularly dealing with extraordinarily long moves. We reduced our 11x11 board to a 9x9 grid for the reasons cited in previous iterations: to encourage territory battles and to allow cards to be resized to a more playable size without drastically increasing board size. Our attention was also drawn to the unexpected effects of the $X = X + 1$ Rule on some cards, which unbalanced Actions and Rules and led to tediously long player turns. We clarified the meta-rule for when a player has no tokens remaining on the board to allow the player to spawn one new token on the center square of the board at the beginning of his/her turn. We eliminated the Move 1d6 rule, as it was the only card to use dice and required awkward phrasing to avoid application of $X = X+1$.

We also realized only after playtesting this iteration that we had been following an implicit meta-rule to Place all cards before Moving was allowed. When we realized that it was never stated we decided in favor of removing it altogether since it was an unnecessary meta-rule that led to play different from original Fluxx. Since Goal and Rule cards are “activated” as soon as they were Placed, players did not have the option to use Action cards before them, even if using that Goal card could cause someone else to win. The simplest example of this is if a player has a token right next to a Trash a Keeper square but is forced to Place a Goal that gives someone else the victory for one of the keepers they have. The more immediate effect of Action cards allowed for defensive strategies that had been impossible with the earlier Place-then-Move meta-rule.

5 Final Iteration



Our final version of this game is played on a 9 by 9 board, with the Goal tile at the center surrounded by Draw 1, Place 1, Move 1, and Token Limit 6. These four rules are not reset by Rules Reset.

The deck composition is as follows:

- Rules (1 each): Token Limit 1 - 6; Hand Limit 0 - 3; Draw 2 - 4; Move 2 - 4; Place 2 - 4; Place All; None Shall Pass; Reverse Play Order; No Hand Bonus; No Token Bonus; First Play Random; Double Agenda; $X = X + 1$; Borders Bonus; Jump
- 6 of Place A Token, Destroy This Token
- 4 of Use What You Take, Desertion, Mitosis, Aversion, Mind Control, Cut the Brakes
- 3 of Draw 2 and Place Them, Taxation, Everybody Gets 1, Discard and Draw, Draw 3 Place 2, Remove A Token
- 2 of Teleport, Reset Rules, Scramble Keepers, Trade hands, Go Fish, Trash A Keeper, Obliterate A Keeper, Let's Do That Again, Remove A Square, Rotate hands, Let's Simplify, Take Another Turn, Exchange Keepers, Trash A Rule, Empty the Trash, No Limits, I Need A Goal, Move 1 More, Move 3 More
- 1 of Trash All Keepers, Blight
- Keepers (1 each): The Net, The Surfboard, Sleep, R R, The Book, The Sun, The Mind, The Hand, Time, Games, The Tool, The Top, The Table, The Hat, The Trick
- Goals (1 each): Information Superhighway, Catch Some Z's, Barrel Roll, Summer Vacation, Ride the Waves, Time Paradox, Procrastination, Mens Et Manus, Board Games, MIT, Mind Games, Handbook, Daydreaming, Punt, Tooltime, Engineering, Dungeons & Dragons, Bowler, La Grange, Thinking Cap, Hat Trick, Hack, Itinerary, Prestidigitation, Bridge

In playtesting, we found that the deck still seemed to be short on Keepers. However, the fighting between players and finding clever ways to use Actions was fun. It would be difficult to add more Keepers (and therefore more Goals), without making the deck more unwieldy than it already is. We therefore feel this game is finished; it successfully incorporates board game mechanics into Fluxx while preserving its thematic rule fluctuations.