

# Family board games – so much more than Monopoly!

By JENNIFER COLTON

Few things can liven up a family night and bring out the friendly rivalry like a board game, and the options aren't just limited to Monopoly and Life. The list below only includes a couple recommendations for each age range, and this doesn't even scratch the surface. Visit BoardGameGeek.com for more information on ratings, recommendations and reviews from other players.

## *Age Range: Preschool (under 5)*

We won't delve into the preschool games much here, but this is where it's still okay to pull out some of the favorites you remember: Hi-Ho! Cherry-O, Candyland and Chutes and Ladders rely mostly on luck but still appeal to young players. For some variety, try Silly Shenanigans, Spooky Castle, or Dragon Quest.

## *Age range: Primary (age 5-9)*

**Dixit:** 3-6 players

Time to play: 30 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.3 (of 10)

Dixit is a game of storytelling, creativity and full-color art that can appeal to children and adults alike. Each turn, one player is the storyteller and selects a card from his or her hand. The storyteller makes up a sentence and says it out loud, without showing the other players. The other players select a card from their own hands they think best match the sentence and play them. All cards are shuffled and placed face up on the table, and players earn points for selecting the storyteller's card – or for fooling others with their own. The game is as varied as the stories a family can tell.

**Tsuro:** 2-8 players

Time to play: 15 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 6.7

In Tsuro, each player controls a dragon token and places lined tiles to guide their token on a "quest for enlightenment." The game is easy to learn, even for young children, as you place tiles and work to keep your token on the board the longest. If you run into another token or run your path off the board, you're out.

**Coconuts:** 2-4 players

Time to play: 20 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.1

Coconuts is a dexterity game based on Chinese mythology. Players use monkey-shaped catapults to launch plastic coconuts toward cups in the middle of the playing area. Add in power-up cards to throw off your opponents by requiring them to wear a blindfold or other tricks, and it is a quick, fun game for the whole family.

*Other suggested games:* Buccaneer

Bones, Hoot Owl Hoot, Suspend, Spot It, Sorry!, Little Drop of Poison

## *Age range: Elementary (age 8-12)*

**Coup:** 2-6 players

Time to play: 15-20 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.1

Be the player with the most influence in the game by bluffing your way through actions, assassinations, and the final coup on your opponents. Each player starts the game with two coins and influence over two hidden characters, and they work to be the last player with hidden influence.

**Hanabi:** 2-5 players

Time to play: 25 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.2

For a twist on the typical board or card game, try Hanabi – a game where everyone else at the table sees your cards, but you can't know your own. Players take the role of inept pyrotechnicians, trying to put on a fireworks show without running out of time or lighting a fuse too early. Help others play their cards in the right order while figuring out what cards you have.

**Ticket to Ride:** 2-5 players

Time to play: 30-60 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.5

In Ticket to Ride, each player draws train tickets and works to complete their designated route across North America. The longer the route, the more points, and players work to complete as many Destination Tickets as possible and build the longest continuous route. The game combines strategy, set building, and a little bit of luck to become one of the "new classics" every gaming family should take for a spin.

**Carcassonne:** 2-5 players

Time to play: 30-45 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.4

Practice strategies while working to build a kingdom with fields, lands, cities and farms. The pieces have to line up to keep your kingdom prospering, and it's a game where strategies grow as players become more familiar with the game. Because players place tiles, it's a new board every time.

*Other suggested games:* Takenoko, King of Tokyo, Control, Scuttle, Clue, Timeline, Love Letter

## *Age range: Middle school and up*

**Plague Inc:** 1-4 players

Time to play: 45-60 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.9

If you've ever had the urge to destroy, say, Argentina, or prevent your family members from taking out Portugal, this might be the game for you. Each player takes the role of a disease bent on infecting – and then wiping out – the world. Mutate and earn DNA points to raise your disease's abilities to spread across the globe and then up your mortality to bring a swift end.

**Dark Gothic:** 2-6 players

Time to play: 45 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 7.0

Dark Gothic is a deck-building game where each player takes the role of a monster-hunting hero who has to gather cards and abilities to defeat three monsters. This game is semi-cooperative: All heroes lose if the villains aren't defeated. Once all three villains are defeated, count up card point totals and see who takes home the bragging rights of best villain-slayer in this colonial-themed strategy game.

**House of Borgia:** 2-6 players

Time to Play: 30-40 minutes

BoardGameGeek rating: 6.8

It is 1492, and the church is without a pope. You have influence over one of the cardinals and need to make sure your cardinal becomes the next pope: without tipping off the other candidates. This dice-rolling game combines bluffing, strategy, and a bit of luck.

*Other suggested games:* Book of Madness, Papa Paolo, Il Vecchio, Hoplomachus, Family Plot, Gloom.

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