



Hopscotch level design (whole group)

Type: Icebreaker / design activity (20–25 mins)

Overview

Learners use the playground game ‘hopscotch’ to explore how **level design** and the balance between difficulty and success influence how fun a game feels. They begin by playing traditional layouts, then add challenges, and finally redesign the hopscotch grid themselves. An optional extension activity introduces **mechanics design**, where new rules are layered onto the game.

This activity shows that small changes in design can make a game easier, harder, or more fun — just like in video game design.

Key concepts

- **Level design:** Changing the arrangement of spaces changes difficulty
- **Mechanics design:** Adding new rules changes how the game is played
- **Balancing fun:** Too easy = boring, too hard = frustrating — the fun lies in the middle

Materials

- Chalk (outdoors) or tape/paper (indoors) to mark hopscotch grids
- Small markers to throw (stones, beanbags, or similar)
- Optional: Traffic-light cards (green/amber/red) for group rating

Roles

- **Leader:** Explains rules, manages progression through the stages, prompts reflection
- **Learners:** Take turns playing, then redesign levels and mechanics
- **Observers (optional):** Note which designs seem too easy, too hard, or fun

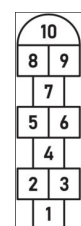


How to play hopscotch

1. Throw your stone onto the hopscotch board
2. Hop through the course, not touching the square with the stone
3. If two squares are side by side, you must land on both feet
4. Turn at the top, hop back, and pick up the stone on the way
5. If you miss, fall, or step on a line, your turn ends

Stage 1: Learn the base course

- Draw the beginner level: traditional 1-2-1-2-1-2 pattern
- Don't throw a marker, just hop through to learn the rhythm

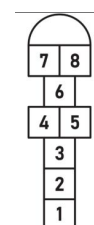


Stage 2: Add the marker

- Same layout, but toss a marker onto one square
- Rule: don't touch the marker square
- Play a few rounds and discuss how this changes the challenge

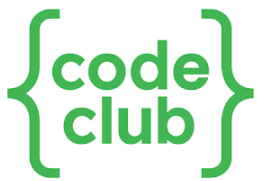
Stage 3: Change the layout

- Layout: use a 1-1-1-2-1-2 pattern.
- Play using the marker.
- Compare this layout with stage 1. Easier? Harder?



Stage 4: Redesign the level (small groups)

- In small groups, learners invent their own hopscotch grid patterns
- They choose how many singles/doubles and how long the grid is
- Squares don't have to touch — they can be spaced apart, arranged in strange shapes, or appear in unusual orders
- Playtest each group's design
 - After each, reflect: was it fun, too easy, or too hard?
 - Use the **traffic-light rating system**:
 - **Green** = fun/just right
 - **Yellow** = okay/maybe too easy
 - **Red** = frustrating/too hard



Leader tips

- Keep turns quick to give everyone multiple tries
- Encourage creativity in new layouts, but ensure they are still playable
- Remind learners that squares can be arranged in unusual ways: spaced apart, oddly shaped, or out of sequence
- Guide learners toward recognising that fun usually lies between boring and impossible

Core lesson

“Level designers balance difficulty and success. Changing layouts changes how players feel. The best designs are challenging enough to be interesting, but not so hard that players give up.”

Extension activity: Mechanics design

Once learners understand level design, introduce **mechanics design**: adding new rules to increase challenge and variety.

Examples of extra mechanics:

- Skip **two squares in a row** instead of one
- Spin once before landing
- Clap before jumping onto doubles
- Land on doubles with a specific combination (e.g. left foot only)
- Throw **two markers** and skip two challenge squares in the same run
- Complete the course **backwards**

Wrap-up: *“Levels and mechanics are two tools designers use to make games engaging. Both need balancing to keep the game fun.”*