

The Game Kit

Eleanor Pester
Project Director

Debbie Willis
Assistant Project Director



American Printing House
for the Blind, Inc.
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Most children enjoy playing games with their family and friends and will play them over and over again. As children play games, they learn social processes and skills of educational value. Now young visually impaired children can play games, too. Their sighted friends and family can play games with them. The Game Kit, designed by the American Printing House for the Blind, can be used by players 5 years old and up, not only to have fun, but to learn too.

The Game Kit is a collection of game parts which can be used for many different games. These parts can be used to adapt commercial games or to create new games that include whatever subject matter that is desired.

The Game Kit includes the following parts:

1. Cards
2. Card Holders
3. Dice and Dice Shaker
4. Discard/Draw Rack
5. Game Boards
6. Game Book
7. Playing Pieces
8. Spinner and Overlays
9. Storage Box with Lid for Rolling Dice

Each of the game parts from the Game Kit will be described, and its use will be explained briefly. Then some suggestions will be given for the adaptation and creation of games using these parts.

Cards

Cards can be used in a number of ways for playing games. Cards can be used to indicate the number of spaces to be moved as an alternative to using a spinner or dice. Numerals, shapes, or textures can be put on cards, and the cards can be shuffled and drawn. Shapes or textures can be used instead of colors for games like Milton Bradley Company's *Candy Land*, and players who do not yet know how to read can play and learn. If shapes or textures are used, they should also be put on the spaces of the game board. Then as a shape or texture card is drawn, a player can advance his or her playing piece to the next shape or texture like it on the board.

Simple directions such as "take an extra turn," "lose a turn," or "take your normal turn," can be put on cards. These cards can be drawn whenever they are indicated on the game board or spinner to add variety to play.

Cards can be used for reading vocabulary, for simple math problems, or for questions or facts to be reviewed. Players can be asked to read a word, do a problem, or answer a question on a card before taking their normal turn in the game. Naturally, if an incorrect answer is given, the turn is missed. This technique is similar to that used on television quiz shows and probably works best with rather simple games.

Index cards are readily available in a variety of colors and can be used in a variety of ways for games. Different colors can be used for different games or for different purposes within the same game.

If several cards are to be held in the hand, try to put

braille or small tactile symbols in the upper left-hand corner of the cards. This makes it easy for players to fan out their cards and read them. If the cards are turned upside down and the same braille or tactile symbol is also put in the new upper left-hand corner, the braille or tactile symbol will always be right side up. This is the way print playing cards are made. This procedure eliminates the need of finding the top of the card since there are now two tops which can be used.

Some cards have symbols or braille which are too large to put on both the top and bottom of the cards. Cutting off the upper right-hand corner of such cards with a definite top will help the visually impaired players keep the cards right side up. This is especially important when working with braille since a braille symbol may have a different meaning when it is upside down.

When the cards are not being used, they can be stored in the discard/draw rack or in the storage box as desired.

Card Holders

A set of four hand-held card holders is included in each Game Kit. Each card holder consists of two plastic disks between which cards can be inserted and held. As many as twenty or thirty cards can be placed in each holder. By using the holders, young players can learn to hold and read their cards easily. Later, players need to learn how to hold their cards in their hands without holders and to read them without showing the cards to other players.

Dice and Dice Shaker

Rolling dice is a method of determining the number of spaces to be moved during a turn. For this purpose, two sets of dice have been included in the kit. One set consists

of two white dice with black embossed spots. The other set has two traditional white dice with black incised spots. For players who function tactually, the embossed dice will be the easiest to use. After these dice have been mastered, they may want to try the incised dice. The number of dice to be rolled at a time for a turn – one or two – depends upon the game and the ability of the players to deal with larger numbers.

A dice shaker has been included in the Game Kit for ease in rolling the dice. Players should also learn how to shake the dice in their hands and roll them without using the shaker.

Discard/Draw Rack

The discard/draw rack is designed to accommodate cards as large as 3" x 5". The rack is divided into two sections, one for cards being discards and the other for cards being drawn. Slots cut from three sides of the draw section permit players to reach cards in the bottom of the rack easily. Only two slots are cut in the smaller sides of the discard rack. This permits players to pick up discarded cards as required in some games and yet makes the two sections distinguishable.

Game Boards

Three open-ended tactile game boards have been provided in the Game Kit to introduce players to board games and tactile displays. These boards can be used to create a variety of games. Arrow-shaped spaces with circular indentations into which the playing pieces fit help the players to relocate their playing pieces without upsetting the other players' pieces and to determine the correct direction in which to move. Because there is only room for one playing piece on each spot, players will have to decide what to do if a

player's move takes him or her to an occupied space. To solve this problem, the player could decide either to go forward or to go back to the next unoccupied space.

The straight line game board is probably the simplest kind of board. It has eleven arrow-shaped spaces arranged in a straight line. This board can be used either horizontally or vertically. Players can start at the same end and see who can reach the other end first (as in climbing a ladder or running a race), or players can start at opposite ends of the board and see who can reach the other end first (as in football). If players start at the opposite ends of the board, one player or team will be going with the arrows and the other team will be going away from the arrows. Beginning players will probably find this kind of play to be confusing and so should avoid it.

The square game board is another fairly simply board included in the Game Kit. Thirty-nine arrow-shaped spaces are arranged around the four edges of the game board to form a square. These arrow-shaped spaces indicate the direction in which the players are going to move. This is especially helpful for beginning players. Each players starts at a designated space, such as the right-hand corner nearest each player or a space marked start, and advances around the outside of the board until another designated space or some other goal such as the accumulation of a certain number of cards or certain amount of play money, as in *Monopoly*, is reached. Some spaces can be labeled "chance" or the like and if landed on, players can be given the chance to accumulate cards, points, or money by answering a question, doing a problem, or reading a word correctly, and spinning or rolling a dice to determine the amount to be earned. Other spaces can be labeled "take

a card," "take another turn," "go back to start," "miss a turn," and so forth to add interest to the game.

The irregular maze game board is the most complicated board included in the kit. Unlike the other two game boards, the path is not the same shape as the board. Instead, forty-one arrow-shaped spaces are used to form an irregularly shaped path which includes one shortcut, a starting area with room for six playing pieces, and a stopping area with room for six playing pieces. By using this board, players should learn to examine and use a more complicated tactile display which does not follow the shape of the board. In addition to marking some of the spaces as described for the square game board, props, such as a pond made from foil and some small rocks to depict as park or some buildings made from small boxes to represent a town, could be put on the board to add interest. Care should be taken to keep props small enough so that they won't interfere with play as students move around the board.

Game Book

Included in each Game Kit is a copy of the book *Educational Games for Visually Impaired and Sighted Children* by Patricia A. Gallagher. This book describes how to play approximately 100 educational games designed especially for visually handicapped children. Each game includes a stated educational purpose, a list of materials needed, a suggested level for pupil players, and a brief step-by-step directions. Instructions are included for making materials needed for the game; however, many of the materials in the Game Kit are suitable for use with the games in this book. The book can also be used to inspire the creation of other educational games.

Playing Pieces

A set of six tactually and visually distinguishable playing pieces for use with board games is included in the kit. Each playing piece has a distinctly shaped top and a weighted bottom. Playing pieces fit into circular indentions in the space on the open-ended game boards. Because of the weighted playing pieces and the indentations in the game boards, children should not upset markers on the board while tactually searching the board.

Commercial board games that have not been adapted for blind children need only raised lines to indicate spaces. Raised lines can be formed with such things as glue, string and glue, or spaghetti which has been softened and then allowed to dry on the boards. If playing pieces are upset on such a board, their design prevents them from rolling very far.

Spinner and Overlays

The spinner is used to determine the number of spaces to be moved during one turn. Spinner overlays are divided with raised lines into 4, 6, 7, and 8 parts or segments. The overlay to be used on the spinner board should be chosen based on the requirements of the game being played or on the abilities of the players.

Textures, shapes, numerals, and words can be places on the segments of the overlays. Textures or shapes can be glued on with rubber cement and used instead of colors on both spinners and boards. Braille numerals can be put on the overlays with DYMO® Tape. Print numerals can be written with a grease pencil. For reading practice, words such as "bonus," "take your normal turn," "skip a turn," "take an extra turn," "chance" "draw a card," or "roll the

dice,” can be used along with numerals on the spinner or along with dice or cards.

Overlays for the spinner can be stored on the spinner base when not in use, or can be placed in the storage box. They should not be bent. The chosen overlay is placed on the spinner base with the holes on the overlay lined up with the knobs used for spinning.

To spin, beginners may want to locate the round knob near the outer edge of the spinner and just give it a big push. Older players will probably prefer to use their thumbs and pointer fingers with the two center knobs to spin the spinner.

Raised pointers are located on four sides of the spinner. The player located the pointer on the spinner nearest to her or him, lines it up directly in front of her or him, spins, listens for the spinner to stop, and then reads whatever is on the segment to which this pointer is pointing. The spinner is designed this way so that the material on the spinner will always be read right side up.

Storage Box with Lid for Rolling Dice

A small, sturdy box has been included in the Game Kit for storing all of the small game parts – dice, hand-held card holders, and playing pieces. During play, extra spinner overlays and cards can also be put into the box.

The lid of the box can be removed during play and used for rolling the dice. This containment of the dice will make it easier for the visually impaired player to locate and read the dice.

Adapting Commercial Games

Now that you have familiarized yourself with the components of the Game Kit, you are ready to adapt or create a game. Substitute parts from the Game Kit for parts of commercial games wherever they are needed. For example, use the tactile playing pieces in place of the playing pieces included in the games. If you are adapting a commercial board game, choose one that has a fairly simple path to follow. Paths that are too “busy” are difficult to follow both tactually and visually. Next make the path tactile by outlining it with glue, string and glue, or spaghetti that has been softened and then allowed to dry on the board, or by gluing shapes or textures on the board. If you are adapting a commercial card game, you may want to consider using the hand-held card holders and the discard/draw rack from the Game Kit with the adapted cards to make play easier.

Creating New Games

To create games of your own, consider what the goal or object of your game will be. In some games the object is to do something first, such as completing a prescribed course or series, getting rid of or collecting a certain number of cards, or answering a question, working a problem, or solving a puzzle. In other games the object is to collect the most of something such as pairs or sets of cards, play money, or points.

If a board is used, select a method of progressing around the board. This might be counting a number of spaces or by moving to the next shape or texture indicated. This move can be indicated by rolling a die or dice, spinning the spinner, or drawing cards from a well shuffled deck.

For card games, players can ask another player for a particular card, draw a card from the deck on the table, trade cards at random, or play cards out of their hands onto a game pile or in rows at the table.

Keep the rules of the game simple and be sure that everyone understands them before play begins. Games can be made more interesting by adding a few bonus and/or hazards during play. An element of luck gives everyone an equal chance of winning and also helps keep the game interesting.

Be creative and have fun!