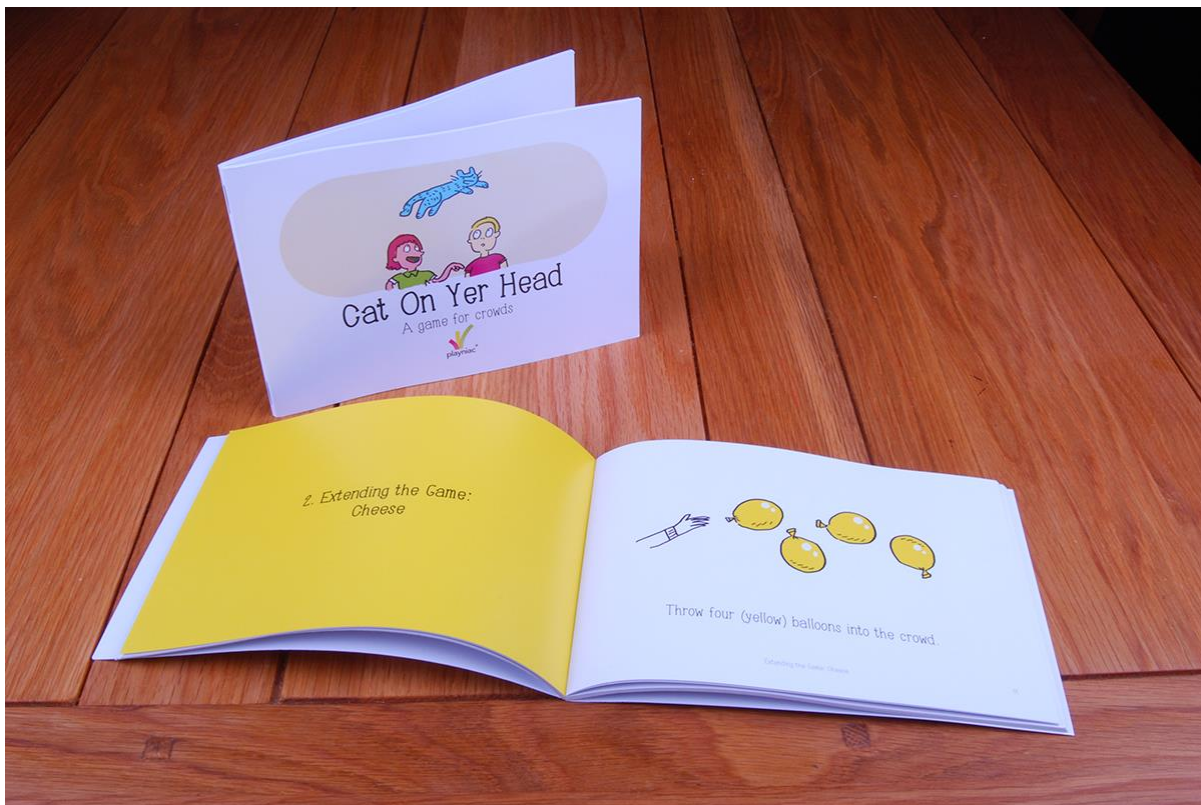# Playing Cat On Yer Head
Supplementary Teacher Guidance

This teaching guidance is written for teachers wishing to use Cat On Yer Head in the classroom. The game is described in a book published by Playniac, and it aims to teach the principles of Games Design. There is no age restriction on this game and it can be delivered equally with children and adults. The game is best played in crowds of 20 or more people. Free samples and the full game can be downloaded from www.catonyerhead.com.

Why play the game?

As well as teaching the principles of Games Design, Cat on Yer Head inspires pupils to be creative. Through an iterative development process pupils 'become' the game and through peer collaboration continue to improve their game. It is this peer collaboration that is an essential part of not just developing the game, but also playing it that brings out a deeper sense of unity, allowing pupils to collectively be a part of something larger. The activity works brilliantly as an ice breaker for any session or for team bonding skills. It can be used as a lesson starter, a fun thing to do during a school assembly or something to do as part of team building sessions. The game itself also helps to develop logical reasoning, algorithmic thinking and decomposition as well as other key computational thinking skills. It's a game with built in flexibility, the games mediator through questioning can take the game into any direction they choose and in doing so can develop links with any curriculum subject area.

Playing the game – a suggestion to help you get started

It is usually best if you launch into the game without too much prior explanation. Allow time to go through the simple game play instructions. You can use the PowerPoint slideshow "How to play Cat on Yer Head" to project the instructions to your audience.

Play the first round with the original rules. Who won? Engage pupils in discussion around what happened during the game. You may want to ask the following questions:

- Was it a fair game? Encourage pupils to explain and justify their answer
- How could the game be adapted? Encourage pupils to suggest their own modifications to the game.

Choose to implement one or two of the pupils' suggestions and play another round. If pupils are struggling to come up with their own ideas then use some of the ideas from the book. For example, increasing the time, or making the mouse hunt for cheese as well as avoiding the cat. After each round have a quick discussion to encourage pupils to develop their game further. Use your questioning to help tease out the key principles of game design. For example, you may wish to ask:

- How does the game end?
    - What if we changed the rules to end the game?
    - How would that affect the game?
- What new rules could we develop that determined the end of the game?
- Is it fair that the cat only has to catch the mouse?
    - Could we give the cat an additional goal?
    - Could we build anything to give the cat benefits or rewards?
- What if there were three game characters or more?

o   A cat, a mouse, and....?

Play multiple rounds, and in between each one use your questioning techniques to help the pupils develop the game further.

The game can continue for as long as you wish. Use it as quick 5 minute starter, or a much longer activity. Some suggested post game activities are:

- A general discussion, what did pupils learn?
- Asking pupils to jot down their ideas for their own game. They can develop these in whichever form they are comfortable with.
- A more detailed discussion around game design principles
- Producing a storyboard for the game they have played
- Creative Writing/Literacy – draft a story based on the game

Key Game Design Principles

Page	Concept
5-6	Platform
8	Game character
8-11	Game mechanics
11	Protagonist / antagonist
13	End game state; timer; constraint
14-15	Win conditions; game dynamics
16	Balancing (adjusting timer)
19	Adding features; iterative design
20-21	Extending mechanics
22	Alternate win conditions

25	Ongoing design process; iterative design
26	Further balancing (adding feature to favour mouse)
27-28	Extending mechanics
31-40	Ongoing design process; balancing new features; game mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics; where is the fun? Creativity and inventiveness
42-43	Audience invention; anyone can redesign the game.