

# Mensa For Kids Game Day Activity Plan

Each year members of Mensa gather to play and rate the year's newest board and card games. Over a long weekend, Mensans play about 30 new games and rate them in five different areas. At the end of the weekend, they vote for their favorites, and the top games are named Mensa Select and may use the Mensa Select seal on their games.

Get a taste of what it's like to be a Mensa Mind Games judge and host your own board game day, complete with judging criteria and score cards. This is a great way to have fun with friends, test out some new (to you) games, and think critically about what makes a great board game. This activity plan is written with Mensa Local Group Gifted Youth programs in mind, but can also be done in the classroom, library, or at home with family and friends.

## Preparation

Collect RSVPs from your group members. This will help you decide how many games you'll need, what size space will be adequate for your group, and whether you'll need additional volunteers.

Select a location for your game day. If you have a large group of people, you may see if a local library, recreation center, or church has a community room you can use.

Recruit extra volunteers, if necessary. For a larger group, it may be helpful to have some extra hands available to help with unpackaging the game bits and accessories and laying out judging materials (score cards, comment cards, pencils).

Determine the number of games your group will judge, and how many copies of each you will need. This will depend on your number of players and how long your game day will be. All the games suggested below can be played to completion in one hour or less.

## Ideas for Games

Check out this list of recent Mensa Select Winners and Mensa Recommended Games. The games listed below are suitable for kids aged 8+ and have been play-tested and selected for recognition by Mensa members. To see all past winners, visit our [Mensa Mind Games website](#).

*Note: some of these links are Amazon Affiliate links. If you purchase something from an Amazon Affiliate link, American Mensa may earn a commission.*

Mensa Select Winners:

- [Treasure of the Dragons \(2025\)](#)
- [Plundering Times \(2025\)](#)
- [Wandering Towers \(2024\)](#)
- [Akropolis \(2023\)](#)
- [Mille Fiori \(2023\)](#)
- [boop. \(2023\)](#)
- [Shifting Stones \(2022\)](#)
- [Miyabi \(2022\)](#)
- [Village Pillage \(2021\)](#)

- [Planet \(2019\)](#)
- [Azul \(2018\)](#)
- [Photosynthesis \(2018\)](#)

Mensa Recommended for Play:

- [Ecosystem: Coral Reef \(2023\)](#)
- [Outnumbered: Improbable Heroes \(2023\)](#)
- [Kingdomino Origins \(2022\)](#)
- [Super Mega Lucky Box \(2022\)](#)
- [Enchanted Plumes \(2022\)](#)
- [Kodama Forest \(2022\)](#)
- [5-Minute Mystery \(2022\)](#)
- [Cross Clues \(2021\)](#)
- [Dragomino \(2021\)](#)
- [Wreck Raiders \(2021\)](#)
- [Tiny Towns \(2019\)](#)
- [Reef \(2019\)](#)
- [Dragon Castle \(2019\)](#)
- [Railroad Ink: Blazing Red Edition \(2019\)](#)

#### On Game Day

Make sure you have enough score cards for every attendee (bring some extras just in case) and plenty of comment cards and pencils. Give each player one score card and a pencil and leave enough comment cards at each game table for every player to fill out at least one.

Put your attendees into playgroups, if necessary. Most of the games listed above require either 2-4 or 4-6 players. Groups should play one game from start to finish and fill out their comment cards independently before moving on to the next game. Players should play each game in full one time before playing any games a second time.

#### Evaluating the Games

Proper game evaluation is an essential part of Mensa's Mind Games event – it's how Mensa Select winners are determined and provides valuable feedback to the game manufacturers. If your players want to game like Mensans, they'll need to learn how to judge like Mensans.

Mensa Select winners are determined by how players judge them in five categories. Those categories are:

- Aesthetics – look, feel, and style
- Originality – structure, concept, and creativity
- Play value – repeatability, longevity, and price
- Play appeal – enjoyment, excitement, and challenge
- Instructions – brevity, clarity, and completeness

In addition to the Mensa Select winners, Mind Games judges also designate a category of games "Recommended for Play." These games are not Mensa Select winners but are identified by Mensa member judges as one they enjoyed playing and worth recommending to others.

As your judges play, they should keep these judging categories in mind. Encourage them to ask themselves questions like:

#### Aesthetics

1. *Is everything easy to see and read while playing?*
2. *Does the game feel well-made?*
3. *Do you like the design of the board, cards, and/or pieces?*

#### Originality

1. *Have you ever played a game like this before?*
2. *Does this game feel fresh and new, or just like another version of a game you've already played?*
3. *What makes this game different and special?*

#### Play Value

1. *Would it be fun to play this game more than once?*
2. *Could you play this game in different ways or with different people?*
3. *Does this game seem like it's worth the price?*

#### Play Appeal

1. *Did you have fun while playing this game?*
2. *Were there moments you were excited or surprised?*
3. *Was the game too easy, too hard, or just right?*

#### Instructions

1. *Were the instructions easy to understand?*
2. *Could you start playing pretty quickly after reading the rules?*
3. *Were all your questions answered in the rulebook?*

Players should fill out a comment card for each game right after they've finished playing it. If a player has time to play a board game more than once, they should fill out a comment card each time they play – there may be things they notice the second time around that they didn't on their first play through.

#### Judging

When a player has finished every game and completed comment cards for each, they can fill in their score cards. Collect everyone's score cards and use the total score given by each player to determine your group's winning game!

#### After (optional)

Ask one or more attendees to write a story about their board game day experience for your Local Group's newsletter. Share comment cards with them so they can incorporate player feedback in their writeup. Ask parents of attendees to share pictures to include as well (make sure you get a signed photo release for anyone pictured before publishing)!

#### Tips

- Be critical, not cruel. If you don't like something, that's okay. Just explain why!
- Play with focus. Try to stay off your phone and minimize other distractions.

- Scoring is not a group effort. While some commentary and discussion during gameplay is to be expected, players should not work collaboratively when judging their games.
- Judge the games as they are described in the printed rules. If you find a better way to play a game, you can make a note about it on a comment card.
- Even if a game is not the type you would normally play, use the scoring categories to rate the merits of the game.
- Think about who the game is for. You may end up playing a game that is meant for younger players. If that happens, consider whether the game would be more fun for an appropriately aged player rather than yourself.
- Mind Games veterans will tell you that the best way to attack your list is to start with the games that take the most players. Another plan of attack is to go for the games that will require the most time. These games are more difficult to tackle near the end of the event, as everyone is running out of steam. It's best to get them out of the way early.
- Clean up after each game! It helps the next group get started quickly and keeps pieces from going missing.
- Have fun!

# COMMENTS

## MENSA FOR KIDS GAME DAY

**PLAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCORING** (Scale of 1 to 5, "5" being the highest.)

Aesthetics (look, feel, style)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Originality (structure, concept, creativity)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Play value (replayability, longevity, price)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Play appeal (enjoyment, excitement, challenge)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Instructions (brevity, clarity, completeness)

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

**What did you like about this game?**

**What did you NOT like about this game?**

**Can you think of a way to make this game better?**

**Would you recommend this game to a friend?** YES \_\_\_\_\_

NO \_\_\_\_\_

## Mensa For Kids Game Day Judging Tips

When judging your games, ask yourself the following questions:

### AESTHETICS

1. Is everything easy to see and read while playing?
2. Does the game feel well-made?
3. Do you like the design of the board, cards, and/or pieces?

### ORIGINALITY

1. Have you ever played a game like this before?
2. Does this game feel fresh and new, or just like another version of a game you've already played?
3. What makes this game different and special?

### PLAY VALUE

1. Would it be fun to play this game more than once?
2. Could you play this game in different ways or with different people?
3. Does this game seem like it's worth the price?

### PLAY APPEAL

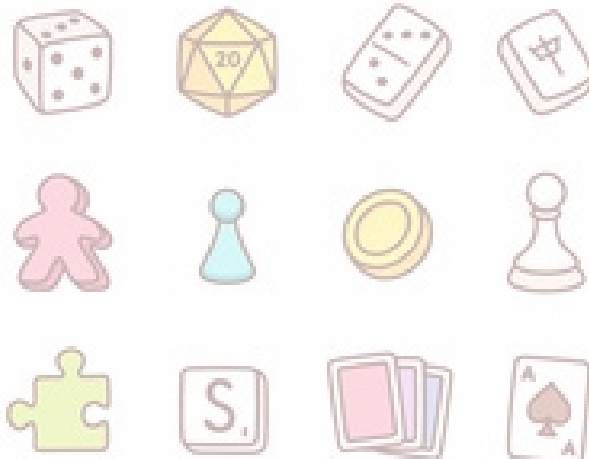
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### INSTRUCTIONS

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- Have fun!



## Mensa For Kids Game Day Score Card

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Game Name</b>	<b>Aesthetics</b> 5 points	<b>Originality</b> 5 points	<b>Play Value</b> 5 points	<b>Play Appeal</b> 5 points	<b>Instructions</b> 5 points	<b>Overall</b> 25 points	<b>Total/Rank</b>

Using the rankings calculated above, list your top 3 game choices:

1<sup>st</sup> choice: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> choice: \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> choice: \_\_\_\_\_