It's time to make your own game.

It was a cold and rainy Sunday in mid-April. By most measures this was the perfect board-game day. The kids and I went through the typical options: *Monopoly*, *Life*, *Battleship*, and about a dozen others. Good sure, but we'd been there, done that. We needed something new. So we set out to make our own game using what we had around the house. This wasn't our first homemade game. Last year we took a large piece of scrap cardboard and cut-outs from the recycle bin to make *RainbowHeartLand, a Candyland* meets *Chutes and Ladders* meets *HeroClix* mash-up with lots of hearts, lots of superheroes, and lots of pink. It's been a big hit in the house, and often is their first choice to play. In fact we happen to have quite an extensive collection of *HeroClix* mini-figures, including Wonder Woman, Batman, Superman, Green Lantern, Lex Luthor, Doomsday, Sinestro, and a couple hundred more (if you are interested, you can find these at a pretty reasonable price in lots on eBay). So we figured we could reuse the figures in the new game, and that became the starting point.

To back up a bit, the week before I had purchased *Super Munchkin* (I highly recommend any of the various *Munchkin* games) and played it with some friends. We had a great time, and while the kids are getting a bit older, they weren't quite ready for something this complicated, not to mention that the content is a bit PG-13ish. So I figured we could make something that captured some of the best qualities of *Munchkin*, add in the *HeroClix* figures, integrate *RainbowHeartLand,* and above all give us something to do on this rainy Sunday.

The closest thing I can equate game making to would be cooking. And while you might not fancy yourself a gourmet chef, everybody can "cook," and everybody can make a game. For me, when it comes to games, like a good chef I first take care of the big picture, and then get great pleasure in the little touches and small details. For those of you just starting out, you may be a bit fearful of simply burning the toast (so-to-speak), so I suggest focusing on the big picture. The most important thing is to involve your children (or friends) in making the game. If they make it, they own it. For example, I knew that in the game we would need "boots of speed," so I let them draw the boots on the cards. I knew we would need "treasure cards," and again they made these cards. In fact they made each of the seventy-two cards (18 each in four categories ranging from easy to extremely hard). I made the base set of rules, knowing that after the first couple of playthroughs there would need to be some tweaks (there always are). The best advice I can give you for making rules is to keep it simple and elegant, and sometimes it is better for one person to come up with the base set of rules, and others to offer advice (too many cooks can spoil the soup). And focus on your strengths. If you have an artistic flair, maybe you could have an impromptu art lesson. Maybe the game is about drawing at its core (think *Pictionary*).

In the end you really can't go wrong. You'll spend some quality time with the people you care about, make something together that you'll come back to again and again. My kids love the game, and ask to play it regularly. From their point of view it doesn't matter if its chocolate chip cookies, chicken and biscuits, or a good burger from the grill, if they have a hand in making it, it will taste all the better.

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