Heroes & Villains

By *Colin McCargo*

A *Cooperative* Strategy Card Game
for *2-4* Players
Ages *14+*

Game Description:
Players work together to defeat the Villain attacking the city.

GRATIS Outline

Goals

- Decide whether to attack, defend, heal, or boost.
- Do damage to the Villain as a team.
- Defeat the Villain

Rules

- Shuffle each player's deck and draw 4 cards. Shuffle the Villain's deck so that it is ready to play.
- Each of the Heroes plays a card first in no particular order, then the Villain's card is revealed.
- Each Hero starts with 20 HP; the Villain starts with 30 HP times the number of players
- Players decide whether to discard their hand for a new one or play an action.
- These are the actions I can take when it's my turn (depending on cards in hand).
  - Basic Attack
  - Basic Defence
  - Special Attack
  - Full Block (Hero Only)
  - Power up (Hero Only)
  - Stun (Hero Only)
  - Heal
- When turns occur, Heroes select a card from their hand. The Villain just shows that top card of the deck and reveals it.
- The Villain is a passive character: no one plays as the Villain.
- When the Villain is defeated, the Heroes lose. If all the Heroes are defeated, the Villain wins.

Actions

Heroes:
- Basic Attack: -3 HP
- Basic Defence: ½ damage taken
- Special Attack: Double hit -6 HP
- Full Block: no damage taken to any Heroes
- Stun: -5 HP; skips Villains next turn
- Wisdom: next attack x2 damage for all Heroes
- Heal: +5 HP back

Super Villain
- Basic Attack: -2 HP to all players
- Special Attack: -6 HP to all players
- Heal: +5 HP

Transitions

- Start Game
- Draw a card from your deck
- Stun cards played on the Villain prevent him from playing this turn.
- End Game

Items

- 30 x Action Cards
  - 10 x Basic Defence Cards
  - 10 x Basic Attack Cards (20x Villain)
  - 2 x Healing Cards (2x Villain)
  - 2 x Full Block Cards
  - 2 x Special Attack Cards (8x Villain)
  - 2 x Stun Cards
  - 2 x Wisdom Cards
- A reference card that explains what each card can do if played.
- Health Tracker for players and Villain.

Setup

- Each Hero has their own deck as does the Villain.
- After shuffling the decks, each Hero draws 4 cards into their hand
- The oldest Hero goes first.

Identify Meaningful Choices

Meaningful Choices

Card Decision
- This choice is meaningful because it can decide how much damage the player deals (with stun as well), takes, heals back, or even if the player does nothing in preparation of doing more damage the next turn.
- This decision occurs when the player plays a card from their hand of four cards. These cards could be any combination at any time.

Discard Hand
- This is a meaningful choice because it allows the player to discard their entire hand and draw a whole new hand. The downside is that the player sacrifice their ability to play a card that round.
- This decision occurs at the beginning of the player's turn as a choice of what they will do that turn. This can make it so that player does not play a card at all that turn.

Explanation (answer in at least **one paragraph**)

How do the Meaningful Choices listed above impact your game? How do they improve the gameplay? What would the gameplay be like without these choices?

These choices make or break the game. They allow the players a variation in the ways in which they can attack the villain. They allow for more strategy to the system. Otherwise the game would just be a back and forth of basic attacks and blocking. This would extend the gameplay time severely and more than likely tilt the game drastically in the Villain's favor.

Single Player Playtest #1 Photo

Single Player Playtest #1 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. In 2 or 3 sentences, how would you quickly (but accurately) describe your game to others?

This is a turn-based cooperative card game where players work together to defeat the Vlain. Players accomplish this task by playing basic and special action cards to attack, block, heal, and stun the Villain while they strike back with their own deck of basic and special action cards.

2. Did you run into any loopholes or dominant strategies with your design? If so, how did you alter the design to fix these issues? If not, what about your design prevented those loopholes?

This first playtest went smoothly. The balance of the health and battle system did not seem to show any dominant strategies for either side. In a future playthrough, I feel like it might be better to have the Wisdom and Full Block card apply to all players.

3. What are some of your thoughts on your design? Did the mechanics you made on paper translate well when actually playing the game? *For example: What were the most used actions, least used actions?*

I think my planning of the game translated well. I fully expected the majority of cards played to be basic attacks and blocks by the players so as to not be overpowered against the Villain even with much higher HP.

4. Did the player choices in your game feel meaningful? If so, how were they meaningful? If not, why not? What can you do to improve the meaningful choices available to the player?

The choices were crucial at certain moments: sometimes staving off death and sometimes setting up the perfect opportunity to do severe damage to the Villain. Like I stated above, I feel like it might be better to have the Wisdom and Full Block cards apply to all players. This would allow for more teamwork and planning against the Villain.

5. How long did your game setup take? How was the presentation and usability of your materials? What improvements can you make for the next playtest to go more smoothly and look more professional? *For example: did you use card sleeves, were you trying to shuffle loose leaf paper?*

The setup process did not take long. However, even though the card were made from pretty sturdy cardstock, they could probably use card sleeves to make handling a little easier. I will have to get some before the group playtests.

Single Player Playtest #2 Photo
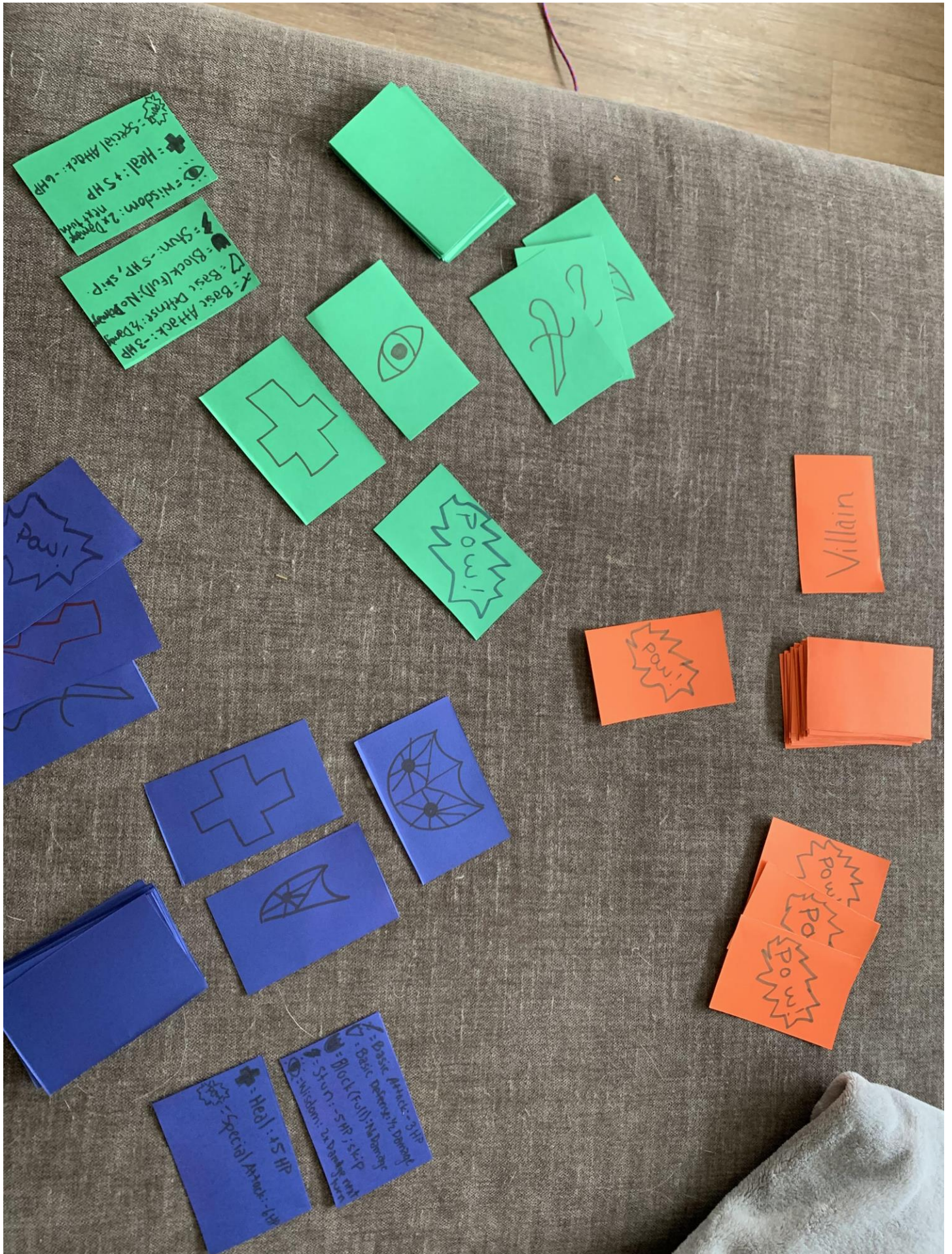
Single Player Playtest #2 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. After a second playthrough, did you run into any new loopholes or dominant strategies with your design? If so, how did you alter the design to fix these issues? If not, what about your design prevented those loopholes?

This time through, the balance of health level between the Heroes and the Villain was more of an issue. The Villain was able to play some more special attack consecutively and drain the Heroes' HP before the Heroes had the Villain at half HP. I think adjusting the Villain HP to 30x players instead of 50x would help.

2. After a second playthrough, what are your new thoughts on the design? Did the changes you make from the first playtest improve your game? Explain some of those changes and how they improved or detracted from the game experience.

I am enjoying the design. It is simply, but it is easy to follow along with and keep up to speed. The reference card has been really helpful.

3. After your presentation updates from playtest #1, how did your play experience improve? Were there any issues with the user experience? How can you continue to improve the flow of your game for the next test? If you did not make presentation updates, what should you do before the next playtest?

As I stated for the initial playtest. Card sleeves would probably improve the play speed and ease since the cards are cut up cardstock. They work well but can stick together and not draw as easily.

4. Which actions did you use the most, which did you use the least? Were some not used at all? How can you balance out your actions to create multiple, interesting paths to victory?

The most common cards were basic attacks just because there were so many. I think I can adjust the numbers down to increase the special card count as well.
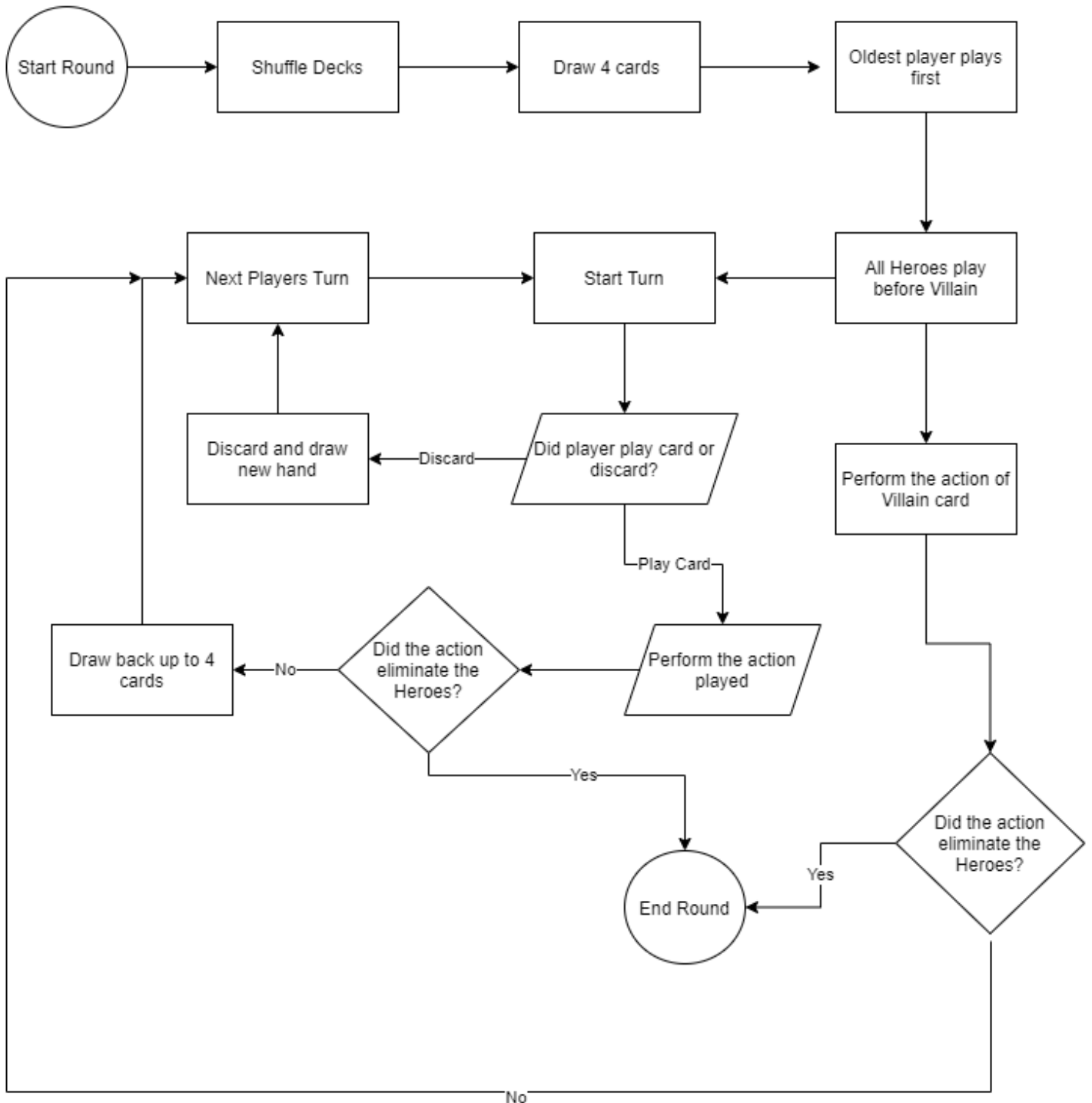
5. Describe the decisions you made throughout a few example turns in your game. Point out each major decision, and quickly describe how that decision was meaningful.

I was able to have one of the Heroes take the risk of playing a Wisdom card that doubles the damage on the next turn at the risk of taking severe damage from the Villain this turn. It worked out in the Hero's favor, as the Villain's card was just a basic attack so not too much damage was taken. On the Hero's next turn, they were able to play the Special Attack card, which is already double a Basic Attack, so the Hero essentially was able to do 4x Basic Attack card damage.

Flowchart

```
Start Round → Shuffle Decks → Draw 4 cards → Oldest player plays first
```

Start Round → Shuffle Decks → Draw 4 cards → Oldest player plays first

Next Players Turn → Start Turn ← All Heroes play before Villain

Start Turn → Did player play card or discard?

Did player play card or discard? —Discard→ Discard and draw new hand → Next Players Turn

Did player play card or discard? —Play Card→ Perform the action played

All Heroes play before Villain → Perform the action of Villain card

Perform the action played → Did the action eliminate the Heroes?

Did the action eliminate the Heroes? —No→ Draw back up to 4 cards → Next Players Turn

Did the action eliminate the Heroes? —Yes→ End Round

Perform the action of Villain card → Did the action eliminate the Heroes?

Did the action eliminate the Heroes? —Yes→ End Round

Did the action eliminate the Heroes? —No→ Next Players Turn

Group Playtest Photo #1

Group Playtest #1 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. Describe the Meaningful Choices available to your players during this playtest. Did these choices lead to interesting strategies, or was there a dominant strategy / obvious choice always available? Were there multiple viable ways for players to achieve victory? What improvements can you make from these observations to enhance the Meaningful Choices available?

The main meaningful choice given to players is which type of card they wish to play. However, there were times when the player had a hand full of block cards, which eliminated the choice. In order to fix this, I added a discard mechanic as an additional meaningful choice.

2. Did your Flowchart do a good job of explaining the player actions and overall flow of the game? What questions did your players ask you during the playtest about your rules? What steps will you take to clarify those areas? Were there any instances or situations that were not covered by the rules or Flowchart at all?

One of the questions that was asked was if all players go before the Villain. I realized that was not explicitly stated. I decided to make it so that all the Heroes play before knowing what the Villain plays.

3. What are some of your thoughts on your design? Did your players have any contributions or thoughts on your design? Are you planning on changing your design based on those observations? Explain your decision.

One piece of feedback that I received was about health point tracking. There is not a visual tracker for how much health you or the Villain have. I will be implementing a simple HP tracker to players and villain so not have to calculate in their head and remember what they are at.

Group Playtest Photo #2
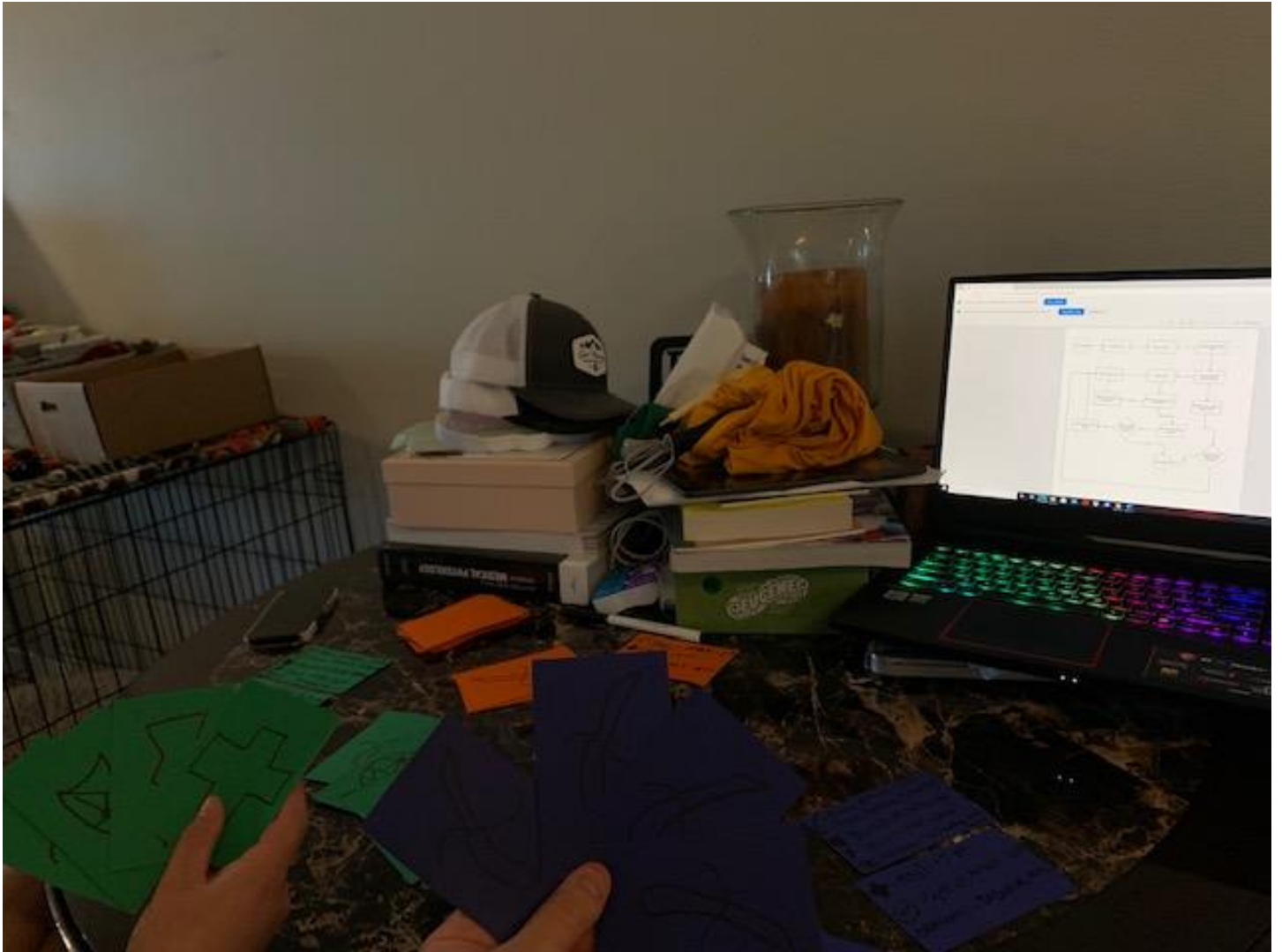
Group Playtest #2 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. After your updates from the first playtest this week, describe the Meaningful Choices your players made this time. Did these choices lead to interesting strategies? Did you eliminate any dominant strategies, or are they still present? What other improvements can be made to the mechanics of the game?

I think the inclusion of the discard choice made for more important strategies. There were times when a player would discard because there were no attacks in their hand and someone had played a Wisdom card for bonus next round for everyone. This allowed them to pull the attack needed from their deck for bonus damage.

2. After updating your rules and Flowchart, did players understand how the game was to be played? Did you encounter new questions that were not addressed in the rules? How can you continue to clarify and simplify the explanation of your rules?

The flowchart has helped players following along in the pattern of the game. This was especially important when making those meaningful choices of whether to discard your hand or play what you have.

3. How did your design changes after the previous playtest alter the gameplay? Were these good changes, or did they negatively affect the game? Are you finding that these iterations are smaller tweaks or larger mechanical changes? With this in mind, do you feel like you are close to the "final design" of your game?

The big adjustment made was adding a health tracker for players and the Villain. These adjustments mostly helped with the flow of play. It did not change the aspect of the game so much as improve convenience. The playthrough also showed flaws in the idea of "half damage" for basic blocks from Heroes. This was because the special attack from the Villain is 5 damage, so I adjusted it to 6 damage for an even half. With all the recent changes, I do feel like I am nearing the final edition.

Group Playtest Photo #3

Group Playtest #3 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. What type of gameplay emerged from this next playtest? Did you encounter different Meaningful Choices for your players, or were they the same as last time? Is the gameplay varied enough to remain interesting for multiple playthroughs?

With the recent add in of discard mechanic, this has allowed for much more strategic choices for players. They now have the chance to completely change their ability to aid their teammates going forward if they could not do so with what they had previously.

2. Were you able to explain your game by only reading from the Rules and Flowchart? Did you need to supplement your rulebook with clarifications and examples? If so, how could you incorporate that information into a more effective set of rules for the next playtest?

When I explained my rulebook to newer players, there were very few questions. The only clarification that was needed was the amount of health lost or gained for certain cards. Even that was easily explained using the reference cards that each player is given. There was also a few questions on order of play for Heroes. This has been adjusted in the rules.

3. How has the game changed since your original design? Reflect back on the changes and iterations you've made since your single player playtests. Think about the critiques and feedback you have gained from other players and how their input has shaped your game.

I think in concept, this game is the same. However, the changes made has really improved game play mechanics, player engagement, and the flow of play so much more.

Week 4 - Assignment 4

Rulebook, Quick Reference, Observed Playtest and Final Reflection

Rulebook

Thematic Backstory

Here you should include your fun flavor text for your game. Set the stage for the players to get them in the right mindset for your card game. Note: This is not a creative writing assignment. Your goal is not to create an amazing story, your focus should be on the card game mechanics. Keep this short and sweet.

List of Game Components

56 Game Cards
- *30 Red Cards (Hero)*
- *30 Blue Cards (Hero)*
- *30 Yellow Cards (Hero)*
- *30 Green Cards (Hero)*
- *30 Orange Cards (Villain)*
- *5 Health Point Trackers*
- *Instruction Manual*
- *Cheat Sheet / Quick Reference*

Game Setup

- Shuffle each players' deck including the Villain's
- Set your Health Point Trackers to 20 and the Villain's to 30 times the number of players (ie. 2:60, 3:90, 4:120)
- Each player draws 4 cards into their hand

Objective

Players work together using various actions to defeat the Villain. When the Villains Health Points reaches 0 then the Villain has been defeated and the Heroes win.

Turn Overview

1. *Players decide whether or not they will play a card or discard their hand.*
2. *If they discard, the player draws back up to 4 cards.*
3. *If they play a card, follow the action of card as displayed on the reference card.*
4. *Player then draws back up to 4 cards and it is the next player's turn.*
5. *This repeated for each Hero before it is the Villain's turn.*
6. *On the Villain's turn, reveal the top card of the deck and follow the action displayed.*

Details Regarding Various Game Mechanics

A Hero will decide whether or not to play or discard. If they discard, they draw a whole new hand. If they play a card, they are to perform the action of the card and draw back up to 4 cards. This repeats with all of the Heroes before the Villain's card is revealed. Once all the of the Heroes have played, reveal the Villain's card and perform the action and any of the Heroes action that counter it..

Ending the Game

The players win when the Villain's Health Points reach 0.

Examples of Play

The two Heroes will play their cards. One player plays a Full Block to protect the whole team and the other plays a Special attack to deal 6 damage to the Villain. The Villain's card is revealed as a Basic Attack but has no effect due to the Full Block played by the first Hero.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: *Do all of the Heroes play their turns before the Villain goes?*
A: *All players play their turns before the Villain as to not know what the Villain plays before they do.*

Q: *Which of the card interact with the individual player and which interact with the team as a whole?*
A: *The Full Block and the Wisdom cards are the only cards that interact with the team as a whole.*

Documentation Updates (Patch Notes)

*Version 0.2 - After Observed Playtest #1*
> *Clarified the Turn Overview to explain that ALL Heroes take their turns before the Villain. This is to prevent any of the Heroes from knowing what the Villain will play. That way Heroes can not just always protect/counter against the Villain*

Quick Reference (Cheat Sheet)

✗ = Basic Attack: -3 HP

▽ = Basic Defense: ½ Damage

🛡 = Block (Full): No Damage

⚡ = Stun: -5 HP, skip option... Discard All.....

👁 = Wisdom: 2x Damage next turn

✚ = Heal: +5 HP

✷ = Special Attack: -6 HP

Observed Playtest Photo #1
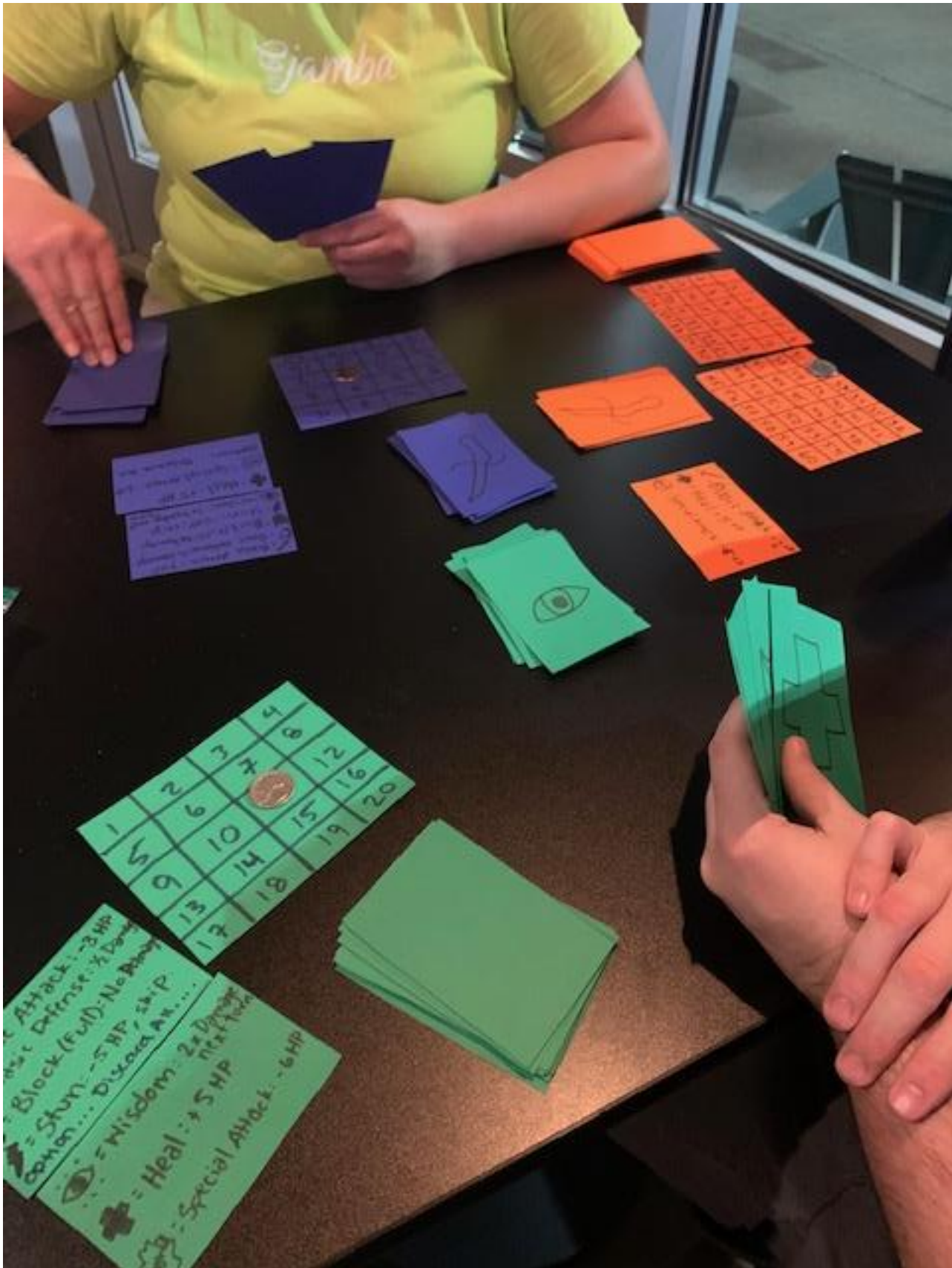
How long did this playtest last in minutes?
15 Minutes

Observed Playtest #1 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. Were your players able to understand the rules and mechanics of your game by reading the rules you provided? What changes would you make to how you present the rules for the next playtest? Did your players use the Quick Reference (Cheat Sheet)? Did they find the information clear and useful? What changes could be made to improve the Quick Reference?

The players stated the flow of the game and mechanics were easy to follow. The players found the Cheat Sheet to be very useful and had no questions until after they had finished.

2. Tell us about some of your observations from the playtest. Were players getting frustrated, when and where? Were they excited? What were some notable reactions to the game? Try to explain why you think these reactions happened and if they were a part of the design goals of the game.

Players worked cooperatively to strategize against the Villain with one person defending while the other focused attack/stuns. They were excited when they were combo the Villain and deal extra damage.

3. How was the user experience of the game? Were players able to shuffle and deal cards easily? Were the descriptions and text on the cards, rules, and Quick Reference clear? What can be improved here for the next playtest?

The cards were drawn and played smoothly for what they are. The card stock held together well and was easily shuffled. The Quick Reference had clear descriptions that players stated were easy to understand.

4. Describe the meaningful choices you providing for your players. Are they using all of those meaningful choices, or only some? What changes to your design could further improve your game?

The players used the meaningful choices properly and strategically. One player had too many of the same card so discarded their hand to get new cards. Another time, players worked together and one played a block while the other Special Attacked.

Observed Playtest Photo #2

How long did this playtest last in minutes?
20 Minutes

Observed Playtest #2 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. Did your group encounter any dominant strategies during the second playtest? Did you encounter any unexpected player strategies?

This playthrough demonstrated a much more defensive play hence why it was a longer play time. The players eventually defeated the Villain, but it was close in Health Points.

2. How long did it take for the group to learn your game this time? Were your rules and Quick Reference updates effective? Are there any other iterations you can make to improve the clarity of your game rules? *For Example: Provide a Sample Turn.*

The clarifications made about the turn order, clarified a lot of confusion from the first playtest. There is another variation that I can implement later, that allows players to select any number of cards to discard instead of the entire hand. This would allow players to keep some cards they may want and replace the ones they do not.

3. What sort of gameplay dynamics emerged within this group? How did those dynamics affect the gameplay? Would you encourage or discourage those dynamics for future games?

The gameplay dynamics that I would discourage is playing fully defensive or fully offensive. This playtest was very defensive and dragged the game out. There should be a good balance of the two with players working with one another. This will help to protect the players' Health Points while still putting damage towards the Villain.

Observed Playtest Photo #3
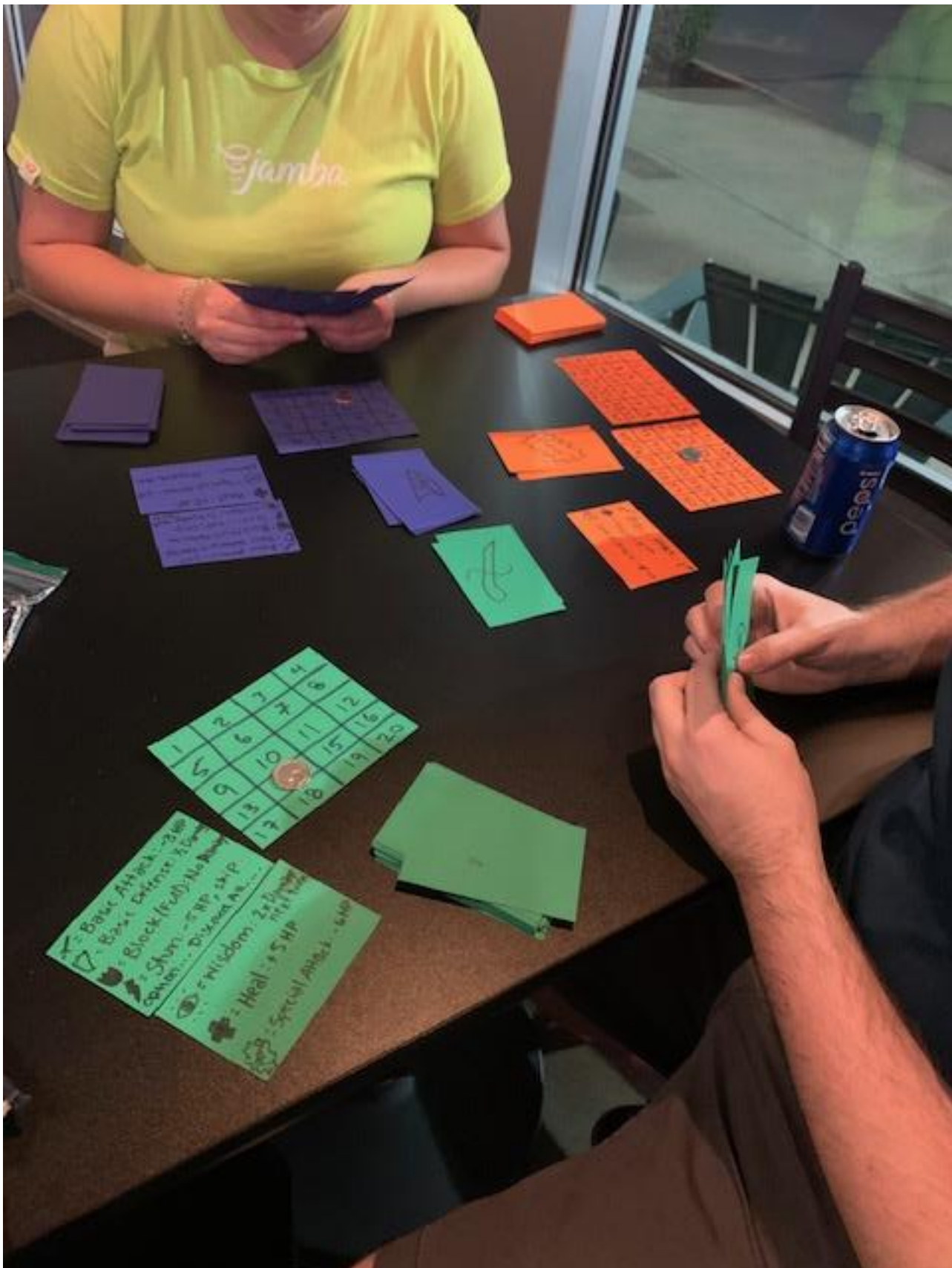
How long did this playtest last in minutes?
10 Minutes

Observed Playtest #3 Questionnaire

(at least **one paragraph per question**)

1. Can you put this version of your game down in front of a group of people, walk away, and have them fully understand how to play the game? If yes, how did you achieve this. If no, what needs to be done to get there?

For Example: Are your Rules clear? Is your Quick Reference helpful? Are the cards concise and descriptive?

I believe that I could put this game in front of players and leave them to play it. They would be able to understand the rules and guidelines. They might rely on the reference card a bit, but they would be able to have a full play through.

2. Did each gameplay session feel unique? Were new strategies and interactions happening each time a group played, or was the same strategy used every game to win? How can you ensure that your game remains interested and replayable?

The variation can depend on the play style of the players. This play test was much shorter due to the aggressive strategy of the players. They used much more protect and power up strategies in order to deal a large amount of damage at once to the Villain.

3. What feedback did you get from your final group of playtesters? What were their impressions of the game? Did they offer any helpful or unique insights on the design of your game?

One of the best insights that these players gave were ways in which to further expand the game. These were suggestions like specific actions that could only be played by specific players instead of everyone all having the same cards.

Final Reflection Questionnaire

(at least **two paragraphs** per question)

Here you will record your experience with documenting, prototyping and testing your first game design. Go into as much detail as possible, this is incredibly helpful when you come back to reference this project in the future.

1. What did you learn about game design documentation? (two paragraphs minimum)

This documentation process has help me to understand the basics and the complexities of designing a game. The little things can mean the most for this process. It really is about keeping it simple. The original thoughts that I had for this game were far and beyond what it ended up being.

When I got the point of writing up rules and GRATIS, that is when I developed what this game became. Documenting my thoughts into the actual GDD made me realize that I needed to simplify the concept. I was able to create something similar to my original but with a different playstyle.

2. What did you learn by using the iterative design process? (two paragraphs minimum)

The iterative design process allowed me to further progress my plan. Every playtest allowed me to find new ways to improve my game and the mechanics of it. The hardest part was realizing my own insecurities toward this game.

I wanted it to be perfect. This design process allowed me to step back from that. I was able to view individual aspects of the game and improve upon them one thing at a time.

3. What did you learn about play testing? (two paragraphs minimum)

The play testing was the most important aspect. Every time I did a play test, I was able to find new ways to improve my game. However, I also found flaws that my game had, which was discouraging at times. I learned that that is just how it is going to feel to me as the designer.

When I observed the play tests rather than be a part of them, it was much more encouraging. I was able to see that the players were enjoying the game. I did not have to be as critical to my own creation. I got to see how players enjoyed the game.

4. What did you like about your game? What didn't you like? (two paragraphs minimum)

I am very happy with what I have created. It may not be the original idea that I had developed, but I love what it has become. I tried too hard to make it something amazing at the beginning. Through the process, I was able to create something closer to what was manageable and what I wanted it to be.

This was a humbling experience that showed me what it means to be a game designer in any sense. It showed me that no matter what, I will always be critical of what I create. I may not like what I have until I get to see how others see it.

5. How can you improve your process the next time you make a game? (two paragraphs minimum)

One of the biggest things I could change was suggested by one of my final play testers. They suggested a way to have players have specific cards in their deck. This would be instead of all of the players having the same cards in all decks.

This could be accomplished with certain decks being more defensive with healing abilities. Another deck may be more aggressive with different attack types. This would allow for another meaningful choice of which deck you want to play, bringing the game to a different level.