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a game by Jonathan A. Leistikio

## Object

To be the last hamster left in play. The best way to do this is to avoid falling into the Alligator Pit at the end of the Conveyor Belt.

## Obstacles and Hazards

- The Conveyor Belt: You must keep moving up the Conveyor Belt or you'll get dumped off the edge into...
- The Alligator Pit: At the end of the Conveyor Belt is a pit with one or more hungry alligators in it. If it comes down to a battle between a hamster and an alligator, my money's on the reptile.
- Other hamsters: Other hamsters may try to push you into the Alligator Pit to increase their odds of being the last one in the game. Be careful!
- Fatigue: The stress of constant exertion will wear down even the heartiest hamster. You've got to stop running eventually you know...

## You Need

The following pieces, which can all be downloaded from <http://www.invisible-city.com/bazaar/>

- Five stand-up Hamster pieces.
- Five clusters of Pluck chips, containing eight chips each.
- Ten Conveyor Belt strips, 1 square by 5 squares long. One of these will have asterisks on each end.

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## Tabletop Games

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## You Need, continued

- One Alligator Pit strip.
- Twenty-one Alligator chips.
- One copy of the Experimental Subject Profile Sheet for every hamster in the game (or you can just make your own with pencil and paper).
- One copy of the Experimental Data Sheet (or you can just make your own).

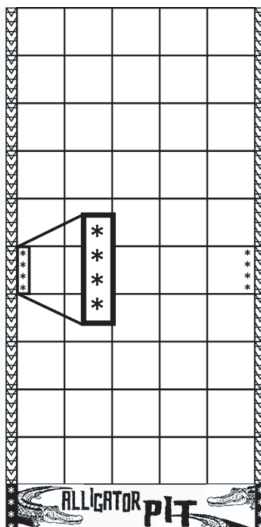
To make the chips and strips rigid, we recommend gluing them to a cereal box, letting them dry, and cutting them out. Color the alligator chips green, and color each of the five groups of Pluck chips a different color (you might also want to color the white space around the five hamsters the same colors you color the Pluck chips).

You will also need:

- One or more dice (six-sided).
- The Hamster Aptitude Tester, or "HAT": A paper bag or other container that can not be seen through for mixing Pluck chips up in and drawing them out at random.

## Setup

1. Lay out the ten Conveyor Belt strips parallel to each other so that all arrows are pointing in the same direction (they should make a 5 x 10 grid). Place the Alligator Pit at the end of the Conveyor Belt that the arrows are pointing at. Make sure that the Belt strip with the asterisks on it is the fifth strip (counting the strip next to the Alligator Pit as strip number one) of the Conveyor Belt.



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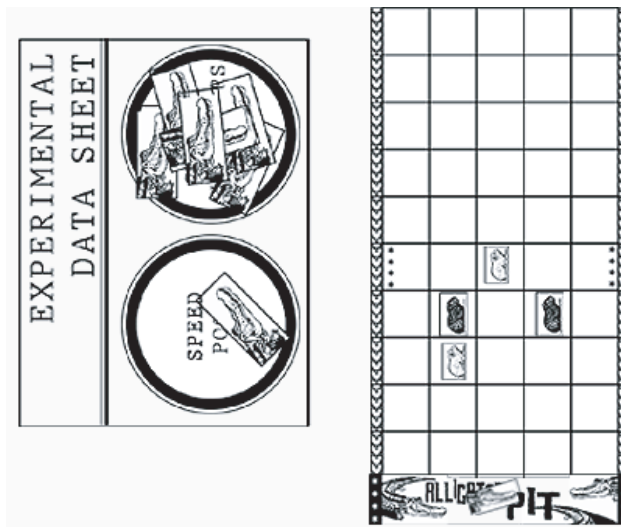
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## Setup. continued

- All players start with a Hamster piece and seven Pluck chips. Make sure these chips are all the same color. (The game comes with eight chips for each hamster; one's just an extra.)
- Each player places one Pluck chip in the HAT. Draw chips from the HAT, returning the chips to their owners, until the HAT is empty. In the order that their chips were drawn, each player gets to place his or her hamster on the Conveyor Belt no farther than the fifth strip with the asterisks on it.
- Each player gets an Experimental Subject Profile Sheet. Fold this sheet in half so that you can hide and reveal the three traits that are written on it (Mettle, Scamper and Friskiness). You may want to draw a little picture of your hamster on the part that shows while your sheet is folded over.
- Put one Alligator chip in the Alligator Pit. Put one chip (one of the extra Alligator chips will do nicely) in the Conveyor Belt's Speed pool on the Experimental Data Sheet. Here's what your playing area should look like when you're about ready to start:



## Play

- Play: Play proceeds in this order. Each step shall be explained below.
- Allocate Pluck.
  - Determine Initiative for the round.
  - Declare Actions.
  - Resolve Actions.
  - Move the Conveyor Belt.
  - Alligator Actions.
  - Check for Fatigue.
  - Tally Hamsters.
  - Begin a new round.

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## Play, continued

### 1. Allocate Pluck.

At the beginning of each round, players use their Experimental Subject Profile Sheet to secretly allocate their Pluck chips to their Scamper, Mettle, and Friskiness.

Scamper - If you take an action that permits you to move, then your Scamper determines how many squares you get to move.

Mettle - Your Mettle indicates how tough you are. Hamsters with lots of Mettle push and resist pushing well, while hamsters with little Mettle do not.

Friskiness - Your Friskiness measures how alert you are to what's going on around you. Friskiness is used to determine who acts first each round (this is also called Initiative).

Collectively, Scamper, Mettle and Friskiness are called Traits, and these will determine how successful you are at the various Tests that your hamster will face. The different types of Tests are explained in full under the "Actions" step below, but here's a general description of Tests and how your Traits relate to them.

Once all players have secretly allocated Pluck chips to their Traits, they are revealed simultaneously. Pluck chips are not re-allocated until the beginning of the next round.

### 2. Determine Initiative for the round.

Put the Friskiness chips from all hamsters in the HAT. The chip of the first hamster drawn gets the highest initiative. The chip of the next hamster drawn gets the next-highest initiative, and so on.

When one Friskiness chip for a hamster has been drawn, return all of that hamster's Friskiness chips in the HAT to that hamster.

When no chips remain in the HAT, move on to Step 3.

### 3. Declare Actions.

The hamster with the lowest initiative declares what action they are going to take this round, then the next-highest hamster. This continues until the hamster with the highest initiative has done so.

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## Play, continued

### Actions:

A hamster may perform one of the following actions each round:

**Rest** - Do not move. When you lose Pluck in this game, the chips go into a Fatigue pile, and resting allows you to get chips back from this pile. If there are any in the pile while you are resting, roll a die. If it is an even number, then retrieve one Pluck chip from your Fatigue pile.

**Run** - You may use Pluck that you have allocated to your Scamper to move. You may move one square for every chip you choose to spend - flip them over to indicate that you've used them. Alternately, you may choose to move two squares for each Scamper chip. If you choose to do this, move any chips spent in this fashion into your Fatigue pile instead of just flipping them over.

**Push** - Pushing is the act of attempting to move into a Conveyor Belt square occupied by another object. (In the basic game, these other "objects" will always be other hamsters-- but keep your eyes peeled for our upcoming Run, Hamster, Run expansion.) If you are attempting to Push something, test your Mettle against its Mettle (see Appendix A for how to perform a Test). If you win the test, then you may move into the square that that object occupied, pushing the object into the next adjacent square in the direction that you are moving. Each time you do this, you must flip two Scamper chips over (In other words, you flip one Scamper chip when Running-- moving just yourself --but two when pushing something around). You may not Push an object into the same square as another object or wall. Once you have successfully Pushed something, you may continue to Push it (flip two Scamper chips per Push) or you may spend your remaining Scamper chips by Running (see above). If you lose the test, then you may not occupy that square; flip one Scamper chip over. You may attempt to Push that object again, or you may spend your remaining Scamper chips Running (as above, except you may not use the "move two squares" option). If you can not flip a Scamper chip over, then put a Mettle chip in your Fatigue pile.

**Throw** - Throwing is the act of attempting to move an object in a square adjacent to yours. If you are attempting to Throw something, test your Mettle against its Mettle (see Appendix A for how to perform a Test). If you win the test, then you may move the adjacent object a number of squares (in a straight line) equal to  $1/2$  your Mettle and your turn ends. (Round any fractional remainder up.) If you lose, then your turn ends.

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## Play, continued

### 4. Resolve Actions.

The hamster with the highest initiative resolves their action, then the next-highest hamster. This continues until the hamster with the lowest initiative has done so.

If a hamster decides that they want to take an action that is different from the one that they declared on the previous step, then they may do so, but they must put one of their Pluck chips (their choice) in their Fatigue pile before they take their new action.

A hamster that moves, is pushed, or is thrown onto the Alligator Pit strip has fallen into the Alligator Pit. Hamsters in the Pit can not get out of it.

A hamster or other object that attempts to move, is pushed, or is shoved off the side or top of the Conveyor Belt hits a wall and must stay in the square that they are in. Any hamster pushing this hamster or object similarly stays in their square.

To see an example of choosing and resolving Actions, see Appendix B.

### 5. Move the Conveyor Belt.

The section of the Conveyor Belt closest to the Alligator Pit is removed, dumping any hamsters that were on it into the Alligator Pit (Good luck!). Place this section on the end farthest away from the Alligator Pit. Do this once for every chip that is in the Conveyor Belt's Speed pool.

Any hamster that is dumped by the Conveyor Belt onto the Alligator Pit strip has fallen into the Alligator Pit.

If the section with the asterisks is removed and placed back at the top of the Conveyor Belt, then add another chip to the Conveyor Belt's Speed chip pool.

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## Play, continued

### 6. Alligator Actions.

a. Roll a die. If it is less than or equal to the number of hamsters in the Alligator Pit, then add an alligator chip to the Alligator Pit.

b. Roll a die for every alligator chip in the Alligator Pit. A randomly selected hamster in the Pit gets Chomp!-ed for every die that is less than or equal to the number of hamsters in the Pit (Note: Each Chomp! is randomly assigned to a hamster - do not randomly pick just one hamster to be the target of all Chomp!s.).

c. Chomp!-ing - Alligators have a Mettle equal to a die-roll plus three ( $d6+3$ ). Determine this randomly before each Chomp!. Test the alligator's Mettle against the Hamster that they're trying to Chomp! (Use the extra alligator chips for this test.). If the hamster wins, then they lose one Mettle chip (because they won a test of Mettle). If the alligator wins, then roll a die; the hamster loses this many Pluck chips (hamster's choice of which chips they lose). If a hamster loses their last Pluck chip in this fashion, then they have been eaten and are removed from the game (They may make sound effects, draws, and rolls for the alligators now.).

### 7. Check for Fatigue.

All hamsters who took actions other than Resting must roll a die. If it is an even number, then they lose a Pluck chip to their Fatigue pile.

### 8. Tally Hamsters.

Count the number of hamsters in play. If only one is left, then that hamster wins the game. If no hamsters are left, then the alligators win the game.

### 9. Begin a new round.

Check to see if any Hamsters have no Pluck chips left. Any hamster with no Pluck has passed out and may only declare Rest actions until they have at least one Pluck chip.

Start the next round at Step 1 (Allocate Pluck) again.

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## Appendix A : Tests

Tests: Tests are used to figure out if a hamster succeeds or fails at a given feat. Tests are always made against a Trait (Scamper, Mettle, or Friskiness). The hamster that causes the test to occur is called the initiator and all other hamsters involved are defenders; all hamsters involved are participants in the test. Tests state what Trait the initiator is using and what Trait the defenders use to resist. The first Trait mentioned is always the initiator's Trait, and the second one is always the defender's Trait. If only one Trait is mentioned, then all participants use the same Trait. For example: In a test of Scamper vs. Mettle, the initiator uses the chips from their Scamper and the defender uses the chips from their Mettle. In a test of Friskiness, all participants use the chips from their Friskiness.

(In the basic game, all possible tests are Mettle vs. Mettle tests, but keep your eyes open for an upcoming Run, Hamster, Run expansion set.)

A hamster must have at least one chip in the Trait required by the test to initiate a test. If the initiator does not have a chip in the Trait required, then the test does not occur. If a defender does not have a chip in his or her required Trait, then they do not get to put any chips in the HAT for that test.

To perform a test, put all chips involved in the HAT, shake the HAT to assure randomness, and draw one chip out of the HAT. The hamster who owns that chip wins the test. Return all chips used in the test to the appropriate Trait pools of their respective hamsters.

If your hamster is the defender in a test, you may choose to not resist. If you do this, then do not place any chips in the HAT for this test. Effectively, this lets the initiator win the test, but you do not place your chips at risk if there are any consequences for winning.

Whenever a hamster wins a test of Mettle, they immediately lose one chip from their Mettle.

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## Appendix B : Example

It's the first round of the game and there are four hamsters playing. Listed in order of initiative for this round, they are: Alice, Bob, Cathleen, and Dave.

In Step 3 (Declare Actions), Dave said that he was going to Push, Cathleen said that she was going to Run, Bob said that he was going to Rest, and Alice said that she was going to Throw.

Step 4 (Resolve Actions) begins with Alice resolving her Throw. She moves next to Bob, they test their Mettles, and Alice wins. She loses one chip from her Mettle and successfully Throws Bob three squares, putting him one square away from the edge of the Alligator Pit. Bob resolves his action and Rests. Since it's the beginning of the game, he hasn't lost any chips (Bob decided to Rest so that he wouldn't have to roll for Fatigue: see step 7, below), so he doesn't bother rolling to see if he gets a Pluck chip back. Cathleen notices that if she changes her declared action from Running to Pushing, she has a chance of Pushing Bob one square closer to the edge of the Pit, causing him to fall in when the Conveyor Belt moves (see step 5, below). Cathleen declares that she's changing her action from Running to Pushing and places a chip from her Friskiness in her Fatigue pile. Cathleen moves next to Bob, and beats him in a test of Mettle. She loses a Mettle chip and pushes Bob one square closer to the Pit (flipping two Scamper chips to do so) and then flips her last Scamper chip to back one square up the Conveyor Belt. Dave originally intended to Push Bob to the edge this turn, but decides to pick on Cathleen instead (Note that since Dave is only changing the target of his action, he does not pay the one-chip penalty for changing actions. ). He moves over to Cathleen and they test their Mettles, but Cathleen wins. Cathleen loses a Mettle chip (for winning) and Dave flips a Scamper chip over for a failed Push, leaving him with one unused Scamper chip. Dave decides to move up the belt with his last Scamper chip.

So, at the end of the first round, Alice has lost one Pluck chip (for winning a Mettle test), Bob has not lost any Pluck and is about to fall in the Alligator Pit, Cathleen has lost three Pluck chips (two for winning Mettle tests and one for changing actions), and Dave hasn't lost any Pluck chips.

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## Origin and Credits

Origin Log, by Jonathan A. Leistiko:

5/25/00 I remember thinking that it'd be fun to make a game where the players were all animals in an experiment. I think that I was thinking about how pointless many animal experiments would seem to us if we were the subjects of them.

Anyway, that was several months ago in the car with Sharon. About a week ago, this game came back to me with a vengeance and I wrote almost all of the text as it is now (without html markup) in a two-hour stint. The bit with the chips and the hat came out around that time too. I was previously planning on using a stat-and-die-check style of conflict resolution before selecting a chip pool method. I'm curious to see how it works. My greatest concern is that sorting the chips out after each test will take too long. I think that it will be important to color-code them.

5/29/00 - Memorial Day I played the game for the first time with Sharon and Chris McLaren this weekend and it was really boring. It was too easy to outrun the Conveyor Belt, too easy to regain lost Pluck, and too easy to outrun hamsters that are trying to Push you. Chris also suggested that there should be special effects in the game, like power pellets or somesuch. Many basic changes were made, like the accelerating Conveyor Belt, flipping Scamper chips to move (Sharon's idea), and the distances that a hamster can move for various actions were changed. The Profile sheets for each hamster were created that evening too.

Obviously, a massive re-write of the rules followed. On the bright side, the HAT worked really well.

### Credits:

Concept, development : Jonathan A. Leistiko

Playtesting, conceptual assistance : Sharon J. Cichelli, Chris McLaren

Editing, graphic design : Jeremy P. Bushnell

Hamsters provided by : Sean Tejaratchi from Crap Hound

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