



# CONNECTIONS

*2017-2018*

# Competition Manual

11<sup>th</sup> Annual Oregon Game Project Challenge

[www.ogpc.info](http://www.ogpc.info)



# THEME

## Overview

We live in a very connected world. We can collaborate and communicate with people all across the planet in seconds with personal, internet-connected devices. Neurons in our brains form our thoughts and memories. Our power grids send electrons all across the country. Everywhere you look there are systems and processes that are built of connections. Some connections are formed by people, others exist in nature. Some are enormous, and complex. Others are small and simple. Think of a system of connections, what does it connect? How can it fail? How can it be improved? The answers to these questions can be starting points for a game's design.

The 2017-2018 OGPC theme is: **Connections**

Teams will make a game exploring connections and the systems they form. Any type of game is acceptable, but interpretation of the theme must be apparent in all aspects of a submission, whether gameplay, story, art, or sound.

## Details

Connections form the basis of human existence today. Games can be made to represent any of a wide variety of categories that explore connectedness and the complications that arise from bringing things together. Games could explore connections between people, places, or objects as well as systems or even time. The theme is broad but this allows for teams to choose something relatable and interesting.

Teams could explore connections formed via the internet: banking, social media, and news all are heavily integrated parts of society that rely on connections. Nature also has many interesting connections whether cultures, water, or disease that provide many angles for games to take. Finally, teams may choose to explore manmade connections such as roads, airports, or economies. All of these rely heavily on connections and have many ways in which the connections could fail, be strengthened, or improved upon.

Alternatively, teams may choose to explore what happens when connections break down. How do things break when people stop communicating or when power is no longer delivered? What happens when an important component in the food chain fails? Why is it important to have connected banks and economies?

There are countless connections and aspects of a connected life that lend themselves to great games. Teams should think about their game's player count, visual perspective, controls, strategy, open-endedness, and everything else that makes an idea come to life. Be aware that it is very easy to attempt a concept that is too challenging so keep in mind the time and resources available.

## Using the Theme

It is easy to create a game, but what makes a great (high scoring) game? Teams should consider the theme from the very beginning. Think about things related to the theme and how a player might interact with them. What might the player be trying to achieve? A game world should not be thought of solely in terms of story, images, or sound effects (although they are also critical!). Instead, teams should consider how gameplay is different and how goals, tools, and enemies/obstacles can be tied in to ensure that everything reflects the game world. A great game will involve the theme in every step of the creation process, don't just take an existing game and try to make it fit.

One example could be to create a game in which the player packs supplies into a ship "Tetris" style. This might look very cool, but does not necessarily integrate the theme in the gameplay. However, if the player had to think about weight/fuel consumption of adding each item and the usefulness to astronauts to make the best shipment possible, this would be an interesting gameplay element inspired by the theme.

The game rules, story, environment, and player choices all need to support the theme! A high scoring game will require lots of brainstorming and research but can also be very creative.

## Goals

1. To build a game that explores the challenges of travel or life in space.
2. To create a game the whole team is proud of and feels accomplished about
3. To make a fun game! Even if finishing all graphics and sound ends up being out of reach, it is more important to make a fun game that keeps players engaged.

## Specifications

1. Students are encouraged to make a game for whatever platform they have access to, whether it be Windows, iOS, Android, NES, or TI-84.
2. The term "game" is not strictly defined. Teams need not worry about what other people think is or is not a game. Teams will explain their game to the judges and share their vision.
3. Games must be school-appropriate. Graphic violence is not acceptable in anything made for an OGPC event.
4. Games should incorporate the theme. Creative interpretations of the theme are encouraged.
5. Teams must respect copyright law and only use resources that they have legal permission to use. All game assets (such as graphics and sound) that were not created during the season by the OGPC team must be listed with the source and the license under which they are available in the game's credits. Check our

website for a list of resources from which free assets are available. Be advised that “Google image search” is not a source.

6. Games do not have to be finished. Most OGPC achievements require at least a basic, functioning, digital prototype, but a finished and polished product is not necessary to do well.

# JUDGING: SCORING SUMMARY

## Overview

Games will be evaluated at the main event by a panel of judges consisting of community volunteers from university gamers to experienced industry professionals. Judges will look at 5 aspects of the game to determine a score: Programming, Game Design, Art and Assets, Theme and Style, and Management. All of these aspects are important to any game, and we encourage teams to work to meet as many achievements as possible. Earning achievements grants points, which will help the judges determine the winners in each category. In addition to the category awards, there are also several main awards given to teams that display outstanding work in all categories.

Each team can only win one award with the exception of Player's Choice. In the event that a team is the top contender for multiple awards, it will receive the first award in the order listed below, and other teams will be considered for the remaining awards.

A presentation of the winners is created from the Team Management System (TMS) entry so teams should make sure their page is completely filled out.

## Main Awards

The main awards are given to teams that create truly outstanding games. Winning one of these awards implies outstanding work in all categories. Each award winner is carefully selected and judges will revisit teams to ensure that awards are given to the most deserving teams. Middle School and High School teams compete in separate divisions. Thus, each award will be granted to a middle school team and a high school team.

### Best in Show

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This award goes to the team that created the best game, considering all categories equally. Games that receive Best in Show excel in all categories, usually holding the top score in at least one.

### Judges' Choice

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This award is given entirely at the judges' discretion. It could be to break a tie or to recognize a noteworthy game that did not receive an award for whatever reason. This award could also go to a game that the judges thought was really fun or technically impressive regardless of performance in other areas.

## Rookie

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This award goes to the highest ranking new team (coach and all team members have not participated in OGPC before). Returning teams often know what they are doing from the start, whereas new teams may need a few months to get a rhythm down. This award recognizes the hard work of a new team that still manages to shine.

# Category Awards

The following five categories are intended to cover all the important parts of a game. Within these categories, teams will find a wide variety of achievements to ensure a well-rounded game. Teams are awarded a Category Award to recognize hard work in one realm of game design and creation. The following is a basic overview of each category:

## Programming

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This category focuses on the technical side of creating a game. Games winning the Programming Award display responsible development practices and significant technical knowledge. Choice of platform or programming language does not matter, since all major game-making tools support common programming standards such as use of functions, source control, and documentation.

## Game Design

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This category focuses on the process of designing a game. Judges look at game mechanics, design documents, and prototypes to see how a team's game evolved and grew over time. Judges are aware that students have not necessarily gone through this process before and achievements are also worded with this in mind.

## Art and Assets

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This category focuses on the visuals and audio of the game. Sound effects, music, animations, models, and sprites are examples of items being judged as part of this award. Judges award more points to teams that create their own assets; however, teams are allowed to use outside assets that are free and publicly licensed (for instance, under Creative Commons). Teams may not commission assets for their game. Teams must provide a list that identifies where assets were obtained and what license they are being used under. This list can be part of game design documents or a separate item as long as it is accessible when judging is taking place.

## Theme and Story

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This category focuses on the execution of the season's theme and story writing. Judges will evaluate teams on their attempt to follow the theme as they interpret it through game mechanics, art, and story. Judges score teams higher for having a consistent story, character development, and for communicating the theme through mechanics and gameplay rather than only intro, cut-scenes, or static images with text. Students are encouraged to think outside the box and find creative ways of expressing the theme.

## Management

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This category focuses on students' interactions with each other and with other teams. Teams must demonstrate how all members contributed to the development process, that extensive playtesting was conducted, and an active social media presence. Students must be respectful of others at the OGPC main event as judges will be mixed in the crowd along with other students, members of the press, and the public. Reaching out to other teams (through social media or networking platforms) to offer help is a good example of the kind of professional behavior judges look for. Teams should use TMS to upload images of the game and team members, and provide a description of the game. As stated above, information from TMS is used to make the award slideshow and other official OGPC materials, so teams should make sure all entries are complete. Teams are all provided a table at the main event and should strive to have a professional presentation, but are encouraged to be creative. The visual aspect of a team's table is very important for first impressions when judging.

## Player's Choice

This award is not handled by the same processes as the other awards. During the main event, the participants themselves will vote on their favorite games. At the end, judges tally up the votes to see who won this award and the most popular team wins the award. It is important to note that this award is separate from all the others and teams may win any other award in addition to this one.

## Achievements

Games are scored at the main event via achievements. Each achievement has a point value which contributes to a single scoring category. Some achievements have multiple tiers, teams will only get points for the highest tier they qualify for.

For more information and a detailed description of each and every achievement, see the Achievement Explanation document.

# TEAMS: MAKEUP AND SIZING

## Overview

Teams are an important part of OGPC. Teams allow students to split work up and produce a better game. Many achievements focus on having a well-balanced team. Students are encouraged to work together to create something awesome!

## Team Sizes

A team may have a maximum of 7 members. This limit is in place to help guarantee every participant feels like an important part of their team, help provide competitive balance, and to enable event logistics. If eight or more students want to participate in OGPC, multiple teams will need to be formed.

Although there is no lower limit, teams of at least 3 members tend to work better - solo teams and pairs will have difficulty with many achievements, particularly in Management. No one should feel discouraged from participating in OGPC but it will be more fun and fulfilling to work with a partner than solo.

## Team Composition

Successful teams usually have an artist, sound person (music and sound effects), programmer, and a writer, although there are many other roles that could be of great help in creating a game. If students are trying to form a team and cannot find someone to be a writer or artist or some other role, this does not mean that the students are unable to compete – they will just have to focus on the roles they can fill and try to get the category awards they have the people to fill. If a team cannot find an experienced programmer, there are many visual tools and online tutorials to help someone step up to fill that role. The ideal team uses their strengths to create something amazing and supplements their weaknesses with resources from other sources.

## School Affiliation

Teams are **not** required to be affiliated with a school. School affiliation can make it easier for teams to find a coach, volunteers, or meeting space but it is not necessary. All interested students are encouraged to form a team. Some teams form through local organizations such as 4H, Boys/Girls Clubs, or local libraries. Others are independently organized teams. Need help finding a team? Let us know at [info@ogpc.info](mailto:info@ogpc.info).



# MAIN EVENT: WHAT TO EXPECT

## Overview

The Main Event is where teams show off their creations to other students, parents, judges, politicians, and industry professionals from all over the state. Students are encouraged to walk around the event to see other games, although they should take turns staying to present their game. When being judged, all team members should present what they contributed as well as guide the judges through the most interesting parts of their creation.

## Judging and Demoing

Students are required to bring whatever hardware and software is required to play their game. Teams should not count on anything being available other than power and a table. Keep in mind that even the network may not be available at the moment of judging, so be sure that everything is available offline. It is very beneficial to have several devices present to show off various aspects of the game as well as the game itself. If it is not possible to bring a computer or other device to the main event, teams should document everything as well as possible and bring that instead.

Students are not required to move their setup during the event, but teams need to be ready to present their game to the judges and to other teams that drop by. Teams should always be ready to help someone play a level or talk about the game. Everyone has worked hard – now show off!

## Age Levels and Fair Judging

Teams compete in separate Middle School and High School divisions at the Main Event. All awards are awarded independently in each division. First-year teams (including the coach) at either level are eligible for a special “Rookie” award in addition to the other categories. Teams are encouraged to focus on whatever judging categories they are best equipped to deal with. The different category awards allow for teams with outstanding work in only one or two categories to still win an award.

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