

they are all game

Forget computer games. Put the Monopoly away. Here's some more interesting games for the whole family, writes Michael Lund

GAMES should be played face to face! That's according to Keith Done, who says you need to see your opponent's eyes before making your next move and you can't do that if they are on the other end of some internet connection.

"People tell me when they play a computer game they can talk to each other but you don't get that face-to-face reaction, you don't see the subtle smirk because someone knows they've got a good move," he says.

Done is treasurer of the League of Extraordinary Gamers, a Brisbane-based club of people dedicated to playing board games.

The whole Done family are members and Alex, 13, agrees with his dad.

"Computer games just numb your mind," Alex says. "Board games are a lot more fun because of the enjoyment and it's fun to socialise as well."

Fellow player Jeremy Norton is another who loves the face-to-face encounters of board games.

"There are no awkward silences and everyone is involved," Norton says. "It's a great medium for meeting new people and sharing some quality time together."

It's this social interaction that Done credits with a resurgence in playing board games. Ironically, though, he also gives some credit to several games that were developed as apps for smartphones and tablet devices.

"People are now asking where they can find the real version of those board games to play so they start tracking them down," he says.

"It's like a reverse technology – the board game has gone on to become an app and now people are finding their way back to the board game."

The LXG often attracts more than 100 gamers to its regular gatherings but the games they play are not the old favourites such as Monopoly or Scrabble. These are games that require more skill and involve tactics and strategy.

"Monopoly is a lot based on how lucky you are to land on things, and is that really fair?" Done asks.

"A lot of the games we play aren't governed by dice. They rely on you dealing as a person with someone, trading with them."

Many are based on games that were originally developed in Germany and they are often referred to as "European games", although they can be created and developed anywhere in the world, including in Australia.

Titles include Settlers of Catan, Ticket to Ride and 7 Wonders.

Some are easy to learn and can be played in minutes, others take more time to get to know the rules and can be quite complex to play.

Once the rules are learnt, though,



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it's all about developing the right strategy to win.

"Settlers of Catan is based upon getting resources to build villages and roads and you need resources from other people," Done says.

"So it's their willingness to trade with you and you trade with them until it gets to a point where you see who might win and then you're not going to trade with them any more."

The LXG club has more than 500 games that members can play. One of the favourites in the Done household at the moment is called 7 Wonders.

"Immediately people loved it who played it and started spreading the news through the club, and then everyone started playing it," he says.

New board games are being developed all the time and are found in specialty games stores such as Mind Games in Brisbane's Myer Centre.

Store manager Tanya Campbell says one of her favourite games is Ticket to Ride, which she has three versions of.

"The European games have meat and bones on them," she says.

"You can really get into them and they've got twice the appeal of the old games like Monopoly. You play Monopoly about once every three years and then realise why you haven't played it in three years and you're all bored before the end of the game."

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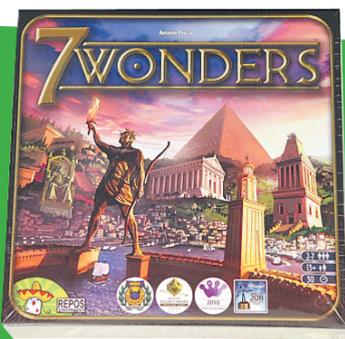
"With Ticket to Ride, we can play that every weekend."

The next LXG gathering is this Sunday at Cavendish Road State High School at Holland Park, in Brisbane's south, from about 9am-5pm, and Done says anyone is welcome to come along and join in, whether experienced or not.

"Just someone who can lose gracefully and win gracefully," Done says. "That's all that's important."

GAME ON: Tanya Campbell, of Norman Park, and Regan Henry, of Woolloongabba, play Ticket to Ride at Mind Games in Brisbane; and (above left) Keith Done.

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Viewpoint

You have a hand of cards, each with a score value between 5 and 20. Each card also has a special ability that affects the game (eg they may steal a card from another player, allow you to draw more cards etc). To win you need to have placed 100 points worth of cards on the table but other players are working both to get their own cards down and remove yours. It has simple game mechanics and is a game that pleases adults and children alike.

Yikerz

This is a two-player game. Each player has 10 highly magnetic polished stones. In your turn you place one of your stones on a playing mat. The stones react differently to each other – some attract, some repulse. If you cause a stone on the board to "jump" and connect to the stone you are placing or you cause a stone to jump off the mat, you must collect all those stones into your hand. First one to get rid of all their stones wins.

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