

## Doodlerama: A complete game for children and adults

This is a game I've played many times with a variety of children at my workplace and I would like to share it with everyone here; to play, you will need the following:

- A pad of large sheets of paper, the larger the better; a lot will be drawn on each sheet and every player needs to be able to reach the sheet easily. You could stick it on a wall if you don't have enough space on the table.
- A packet of colouring pencils; you can use pens or plain pencils instead, but colouring pencils have two advantages. First, you can rub out what you have drawn more easily and second, colour will bring the scene to life.
- An eraser or two (see above)
- Enough dice to give three to each player; when 'dice' are referred to in this game, we're talking about the cube-shaped kind, with six faces numbered 1 to 6.

For a basic game of Doodlerama make the following preparations:

- Draw six squares down the left side of the page and another six down the right side; number the squares in each bar from 1 at the top to 6 at the bottom.
- The boxes down the left side are for Simple Shapes, which are a straight line, a curved line, a right-angle, a circle, a triangle and a square.
- The boxes down the right side are for Special Shapes; each player should take it in turn to draw something in one of these squares. Each shape should be quick to draw and simple for others to copy; you can draw shapes that people are familiar with, e.g. a love heart, a Pac-man, a flower, a lightning bolt, etc. Alternatively, you can draw just abstract shapes. Draw freely and use whatever comes into your head but don't focus on it, just follow your pencil. If there are less than six players, then the youngest players get to fill in the blank squares, after everyone has filled in at least one of them.
- Give everybody 3 dice, then, starting with the youngest player first, begin to tell the story. I recommend choosing a story, one that everybody is familiar with, such as 'Red Riding Hood' or Goldilocks and the Three Bears', or any favourite book or film.

On each player's turn, they roll all the dice they have and refer to the two bars of Simple & Special Shapes to see what they must draw this turn:

- Compare each single die rolled to the Simple Shapes; your doodle must include all those results. For example, if you rolled 3, 5 and 6, you would have to draw a right-angle, a triangle and a square. If you rolled 2, 2 and 4, you would have to draw two curved lines and a circle.

- Compare each pair of results to the Special Shapes; your doodle may include any Special Shape you have rolled a pair for, instead of drawing two copies of the Simple Shape that corresponds to that number. For each additional die showing that result after the pair, you may draw that shape once more. For example, if you rolled 2, 2 and 4, then you could draw 2 curved lines and a circle, or draw the second shape in the Special Shapes bar once, with one circle. If you rolled 1, 1 and 1, you could either draw three straight lines, or draw the first shape in the Special bar twice.

Whatever you draw is your doodle for this turn and it must include all the shapes you have rolled for, both Simple and Special. All the shapes in the doodle must be part of the same picture: they do not have to touch, but they must all help to define the same ‘thing’, whatever it is. It’s entirely up to you what you draw, but you will need to describe it to the other players; describing your doodle is a mixture of two important talents, these being imagination and cheek.

- **Imagination** is the ability to put the shapes you have drawn together into a reasonable picture that fits well into the story. The aspect of imagination is about your creativity and artistry, both in drawing and story-telling. For example, if the story so far is set in France and your roll results in one straight line plus two circles, you might draw a passable bicycle and say that the leader of the Tour de France has just ridden into the scene.
- **Cheek** is the ability to make less do more or simply to get away with the ridiculous just because it is entertaining. If you are less artistically inclined than other players, you can simply draw as little as possible and explain away the missing parts of your doodle using cheek. For example, if you roll three circles, you could simply draw them separately on the page and say they are the footprints of a Polar bear in the snow; if anyone asks you where the fourth leg is, just say it’s only standing on three of them while it scratches its nose!

You can also use your results to modify any doodle that already exists on the page, adding further detail or even obscuring things that have already been drawn, though in the advanced game, you may be challenged to a Pencil Duel when you do this. If you are truly stumped and can’t think of anything to draw, you must still draw your shapes on the page, but you don’t have to say anything about them; optionally, if you do this, you have to pass one of your dice over to the next player, who adds it to their own dice pool.

When describing your doodle, you also have to add it into the ongoing narrative; as players take turns, the story the scene depicts will grow and expand, going in whatever direction the players decide. There is no limit on what any player can bring into the story or how they can change things, this is a freeform story-telling game and no-one can veto what anyone else does on their turn. This means the only way to affect what happens in the story is your ability to draw and narrate what you like on your own turn. Beyond this, the game is intended as a fun activity: there

is no goal to pursue and definitely no winners or losers. It's an opportunity for everyone taking part to exercise their imaginations, their drawing skills and their oration, without judgement or censure. Just enjoy it and go with the flow. If your playsheet fills up, call an end to that scene and move on to a new one, either continuing that story or starting afresh.