

The Official* List of Starting Board Games for Your Library

*As arbitrarily defined by David McHugh (dtmchugh@wisc.edu, [linkedin.com/in/mchugh1/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mchugh1/))

Additional Lists (from other librarians):

- <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/board-game-library>
- <https://boardgamegeek.com/blogger/8257/jenn-bartlett>

The Official* List of Starting Board Games for Your Library

Kids

- [Disney Villainous](#)
- [Outfoxed](#)
- [HABA Games come highly recommended](#)

Cooperative

- [Pandemic](#)
- [Hanabi](#)

Social Deduction/Deception

- [One Night Ultimate Werewolf](#)
- [Decrypto](#)

Great for Groups

- [Mysterium](#)
- [Set](#)
- [Dixit](#)

Modern Classics

- [Carcassonne](#)
- [Catan](#)
- [Dominion](#)
- [Ticket to Ride](#)

2 player games

- [7 Wonders Duels](#)
- [Onitama](#)
- [Patchwork](#)

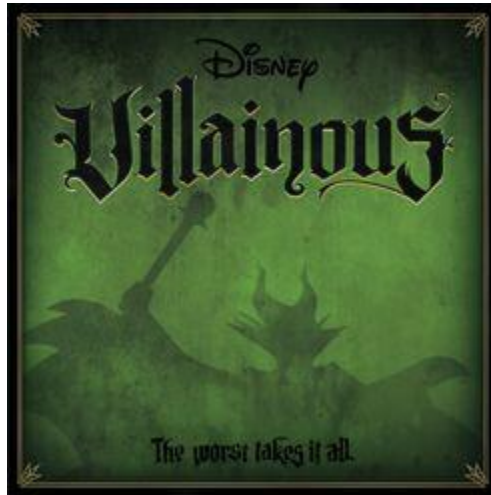
Miscellaneous

- [Photosynthesis](#)
- [Evolution](#)

Honorable Mentions

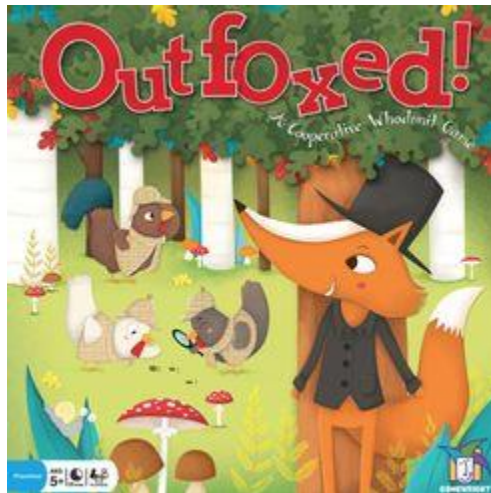
Kids

- Disney Villainous



-
- Price: \$20-40
- Rating: 7.0
- Play Time: 45-120 min
- Complexity: 2.49 / 5
- Players: 2-6
- Replaceability: Low
- Notes:
 - Variety of expansions
 - Popular game for kids around ages 10+

- Outfoxed

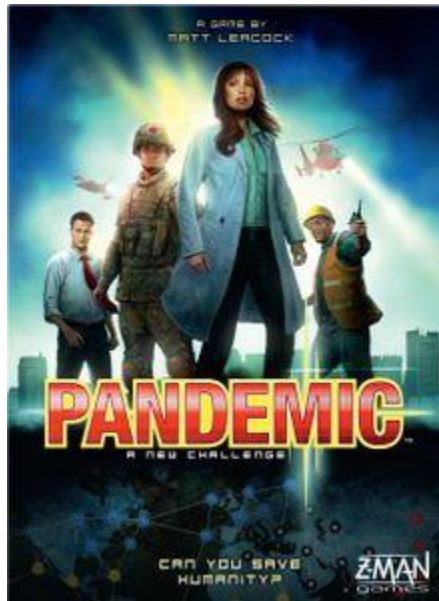


-
- Price: \$20
- Rating: 7.2

- Play Time: 20 min
- Complexity: 1.11 / 5
- Players: 2-4
- Replaceability: Low
- Notes:
 - Fun kid's mystery game
 - Cooperative
- [HABA Games](#) come highly recommended

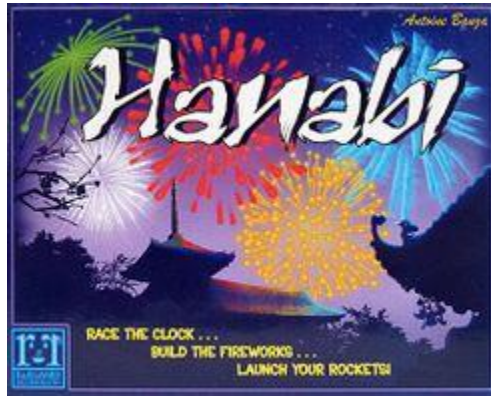
Cooperative

- Pandemic



-
- Price: \$35
- Rating: 7.5
- Play Time: 45 min
- Complexity: 2.4 / 5
- Players: 2-4
- Replaceability: Medium
- Notes:
 - Many varieties (versions & expansions), but note that the Legacy versions are meant to only be played once each!
 - Cooperative globe trotting, disease fighting game

- Hanabi



-
- Price: \$10
- Rating: 7
- Play Time: 25 min
- Complexity: 1.69 / 5
- Players: 2-5
- Replaceability: Low (mostly just cards, but you need the full suits)
- Notes:
 - Cooperatively play cards in order, but without being able to see your own cards or tell others much about theirs
 - Clever and pretty, might make your brain hurt after a while
 - Simple but hard

Social Deduction/Deception

- One Night Ultimate Werewolf



-
- Price: ~\$20
- Rating: 7.11
- Play Time: 10 min
- Complexity: 1.37 / 5
- Players: 3-10
- Replaceability: Low

- Notes:
 - The most streamlined social deduction game
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- Decrypto



-
- Price: ~\$20
- Rating: 7.8
- Play Time: 15-45 min (usually skews on the longer side)
- Complexity: 1.81 / 5
- Players: 3-8
- Replaceability: Very high
- Notes:
 - Crack the other team's code through giving subtle verbal clues
 - Codenames is popular and pretty similar; they can substitute for each other
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Great for Groups

- **Mysterium**



-
- Price: ~\$35
- Rating: 7.2
- Play Time: 45 min
- Complexity: 1.9 / 5
- Players: 2-7
- Replaceability: High
- Notes:
 - A perfect hybrid of Clue and Dixit!
 - Use art as clues to cooperatively solve a murder

- **Set**



-
- Price: ~\$10

- Rating: 6.5
- Play Time: 30 min (often less)
- Complexity: 1.66 / 5
- Players: 1-20
- Replaceability: Highest
- Notes:
 - Pattern matching game
 - Simple, but a mental workout

- Dixit



-
- Price: \$35
- Rating: 7.2
- Play Time: 30 min
- Complexity: 1.2 / 5
- Players: 3-8
- Replaceability: Highest
- Notes:
 - Lovely art
 - Not very competitive
 - Works for a wide range of ages, officially 8+ but you could start earlier
 - Various versions

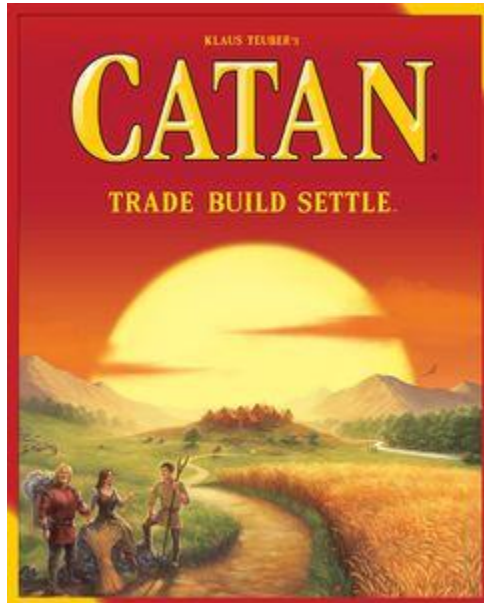
Modern Classics

- Carcassonne



-
- Price: ~\$20
- Rating: 7.4
- Play Time: 30-45 min
- Complexity: 1.9 / 5
- Players: 2-5
- Replaceability: Very High
- Notes:
 - Ages 7+
 - Place tiles and pawns to build a map and gain points through controlling areas
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- Catan



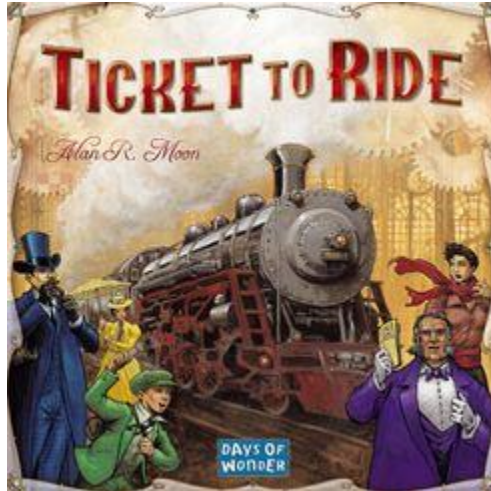
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- Price: ~\$40 but easy to find lightly used
- Rating: 7.1
- Play Time: 60-120 min (but usually on the lower end)
- Complexity: 2.3 / 5
- Players: 3-4
- Replaceability: Medium
- Notes:
 - So many versions!
 - Helped start the current board game renaissance

- Dominion



-
- Price: \$30-45
- Rating: 7.6
- Play Time: 30 min
- Complexity: 2.35 / 5

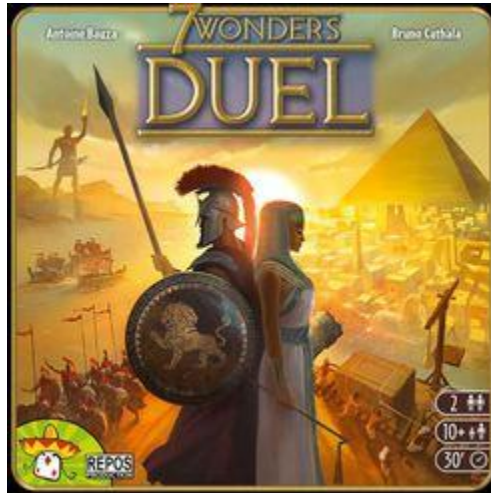
- Players: 2-4
- Replaceability: Medium (almost all cards, doesn't make a huge difference if a few are missing)
- Notes:
 - Many versions, many of which require the base game
 - Created the deck building genre
- Ticket to Ride



-
- Price: \$45
- Rating: 7.4
- Play Time: 30-60 min
- Complexity: 1.83 / 5
- Players: 2-5
- Replaceability: High
- Notes:
 - Build train routes across a continent (which continent varies by version)
 - Compete over the key routes needed to connect the cities you need

2 player games

- 7 Wonders Duels



-
- Price: \$20
- Rating: 8.1
- Play Time: 30 min
- Complexity: 2.23 / 5
- Players: 2
- Replaceability: Medium
- Notes:



- Onitama



-
- Price: \$30
- Rating: 7.4

- Play Time: 15-20 min
- Complexity: 1.66 / 5
- Players: 2
- Replaceability: Medium
- Notes:
 - Elegant little chess-like game

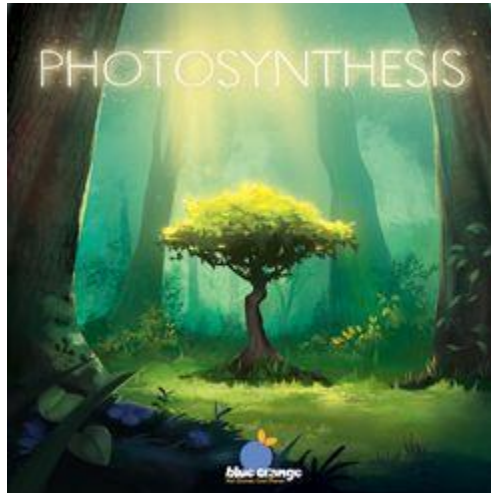
- Patchwork



-
- Price: ~\$25
- Rating: 7.6
- Play Time: 15-30 min
- Complexity: 1.6 / 5
- Players: 2
- Replaceability: Very low
- Notes:
 - Competitive Tetris-like tile placement quilting game

Miscellaneous

- Photosynthesis



-
- Price: \$25 - \$40
- Rating: 7
- Play Time: 30-60 min
- Complexity: 2.26 / 5
- Players: 2-4
- Replaceability: Low (all unique pieces, all needed)
- Notes:
 - Pretty & clever game of competing for sunlight via strategic tree placement & growth

- Evolution



-
- Price: ~\$40

- Rating: 7.1
- Play Time: 60 min
- Complexity: 2.43 / 5
- Players: 2-6
- Replaceability: Medium
- Notes:
 - Can be cut-throat as you evolve your species to compete for food (and sometimes devour each other)

Honorable Mentions

- Mole Rats in Space
- Bananagrams
- Brindlewood Bay cozy mystery TTRPG (haven't played but looks delightful)
- Forbidden Desert (and other versions)
- Sushi Go!
- Colt Express
- Terraforming Mars (great but pricey)
- Wingspan (great but a little pricey)
- Social
 - Love Letter
 - Coup
 - Resistance