



Octogram Game



up to 50
minutes for the
whole activity



10–12
13–15



3–7 players



social media

Content

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The game contains 102 cards:

- 6 character cards
- 30 share cards
- 31 comment cards
- 11 like cards
- 9 cards with the required amount of comments
- 15 octopus cards

About the Game

The game Octogram is fictional and has a fictional plot, **but much of what happens while playing the game can be applied to real life.** The game aims to simulate social networks, their algorithms, and filter and information bubbles. The higher purpose, in addition to having fun playing the game, is the introduction of phenomena that manifest themselves on social networks and perhaps also the creation of environments and situations in which players can find themselves. The goal is therefore to offer experience and information that will help players in the future to understand how social networks work and how to maneuver amid the mentioned issues.

This document is suitable for facilitators overseeing the progress of the Octogram game. In this document, facilitators will learn how to effectively conduct the game and a reflection.

Objectives

The players will:

- be aware of social media algorithms and how their behavior determines what content they see there,
- learn how to use social media more responsibly,
- discover new terms connected to online life and be able to discuss them,
- improve their communication, cooperation, and teamwork skills.

Didactic Structure of the Activity

Stage 0 (for facilitators) – Receiving the game and materials for reflection

- Printing the game.
- Reading the rules of the game before you play it with children.
- Try to be familiar with cards and their meanings.
- Read the reflection paper and adjust it if needed.

Stage 1 (10 minutes) – Get familiar with the rules

Activity: Go through every part of the game, let the children see the cards and be sure you explain their meanings. Read the rules out loud.

Stage 2 (15 minutes) – Play a test round

Activity: Play one round of the game to understand the mechanisms.

Try to remember the rules with a demonstration. This should help the children understand the cards better.



Stage 3 (10 minutes) – Read additional materials

Activity: Read the parts of the rules that the children didn't understand.

Stage 4 (unlimited, 15 minutes per round) – Play the game

Activity: Play it until enough time remains in your schedule for reflection.

Stage 4 (voluntary; +15 minutes) – Play the advanced version of the game

Activity: *If this is too easy for the players, you can play the advanced version. In the rules, you can find out how to play it on page 8.*

Stage 5 (15 minutes) – Synthesis

Activity: At the end, hold a debate. Share your opinions about the new experiences and knowledge you learn.

How to lead the debate? We have prepared a reflection for you, which you will find in Chapter 5: Reflection.

Proposal of Possible Adjustments and Modifications

The duration of the work is only an estimate. Facilitators should be able to adjust the duration of the course according to their experience and competence. However, on the other hand, it could happen that the course will not be long enough. We recommend preparing enough questions for the final reflection and to encourage discussion.

Before You Start the Game

Print the Cards

Print the cards (in color or B&W, double-sided, preferably on hard paper) and then cut them out with scissors and laminate them if you want to reuse them.

- OCTOGRAM.pdf contains basic green cards
- OCTOGRAM-extended.pdf contains pink cards for the extended version
- OCTOPUS.pdf consists of cards with octopuses

Select Cards

There are two colors of cards: green and pink (also recognizable by the symbol +). The green ones are the core cards that are used in every game. The pink are additional cards used when playing in a bigger group or when choosing to play a more difficult game. Otherwise, players separate them from the pile. The number of octopus cards never changes.

Story

Welcome to the year 2150, in a galaxy far, far away... the galaxy is inhabited by creatures called the Bubblenauts. Living in their bubbles, unable to make any new friends, they have one thing in common: access to the same social network – Octogram. However, unfortunately, this social network is not very beneficial to them as it is almost impossible to make new friends there. Why is this? Because this social network is under the firm control of a mean and unfriendly octopus. Due to the algorithms, all the Bubblenauts were only receiving information that was pleasant for them and they were only in touch with Bubblenauts with the same opinions: therefore they got locked into the information and social bubbles.

Now, it is your turn to take the stage. Beat the octopus, help the Bubblenauts make new connections on the network, and become the hero they deserve!



Game Flow

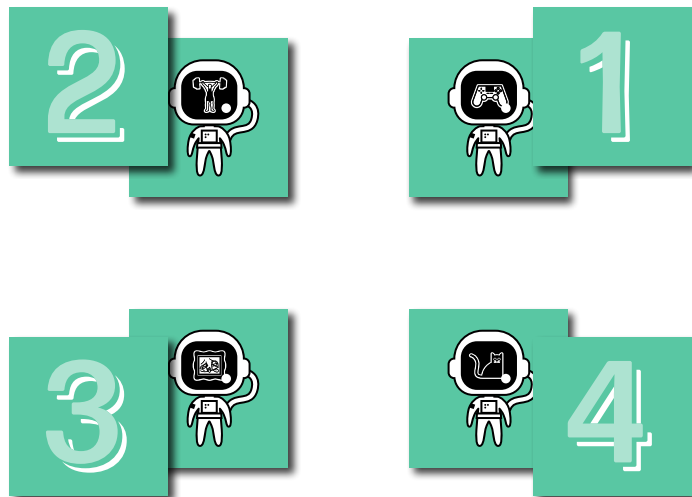
1. Goal

The main goal of the game is to connect all the characters using the playing cards. Each of the characters should be connected, including connections made 'across' the board. It is important for each connection to be one way only.

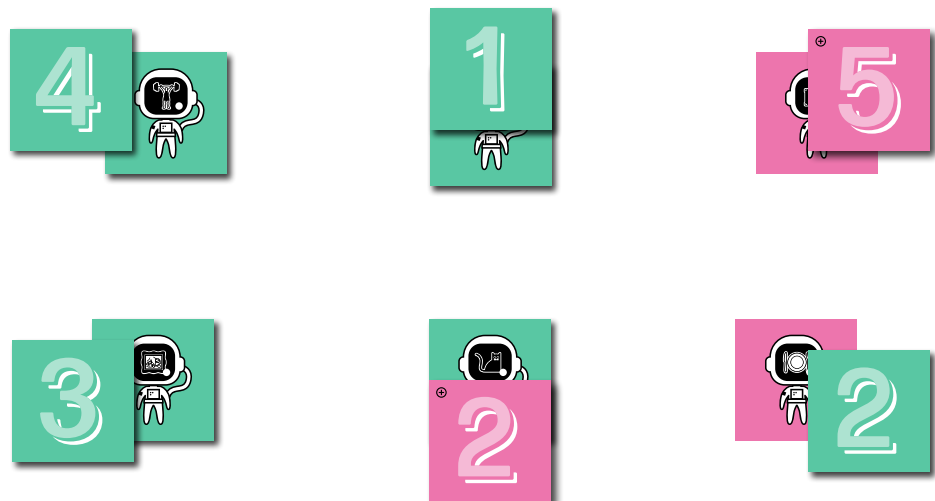
2. Start

Each of the characters has a predetermined interest, which determines which sharing cards can be placed next to the character card. At the start of the game, there are as many cards randomly drawn as there are characters in the game. These cards determine the number of comment cards necessary to make a connection to each character. The character cards are placed on the game board at the vertices of an imaginary square. One of the drawn number cards is then put on each of the characters.

The basic version of the game is played with four characters, while the version with two additional characters is intended for more advanced players wishing to increase the difficulty. It is also recommended to play with all six characters if a larger number of players want to play the game (five or more).



Picture: The opening of the game with four characters

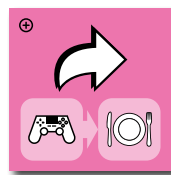


Picture: The opening of the game with six characters



3. Playing Cards

There are three main types of playing cards: shares, comments, and likes. The playing cards also contain cards specifying the number of required comments, character cards, and octopus cards. With each turn, a different person (moving clockwise) starts by drawing an octopus card. At the start of each turn, players draw two cards from the deck. The players do not need to hide their cards and they can show them to the others. During the turn, they can play either none or exactly one of these cards (unless otherwise specified by a special card, see the section about octopus cards). Anyone can start by placing the card, though the person who draws the octopus card has priority. Every turn, a different person draws an octopus card; you can move this function clockwise.



Share

The 'share' cards represent the origin point of a connection. They contain two symbols of interest connected with an arrow. These cards are placed in such a way that the interest symbol at the base of the arrow is next to the character with a matching interest symbol. At the same time, the share cards should point toward the character that has the interest symbol matching the symbol at the tip of the arrow. During the first turns of the game, it is ideal for players who have share cards on hand to play first. This can change in later turns, when there will be share cards placed between all or almost all of the characters and it would be less important to play them as first. If the players decide to play the share cards, they also have to come up with a story that connects both of the symbols featured on the card they played. This story will be used later during the play.



Example: You want to connect two Bubblenauts in the direction from left to right. The example story might be: The **athlete** was **playing an online game**.



Comment

The 'comment' cards represent the main element of a connection. Each of the cards has a character or an item on it. The player who plays the comment card can only place it next to an already placed share card. If the player places the comment card, they need to come up with an extension to the story that already exists between the two characters, as already determined by the placed share card.



Example: You have to connect these two Bubbernauts via a comment and you choose a picture of a planet. The example story might be: The **athlete** was **playing an online game** while traveling around the **globe** for the competition.



Like

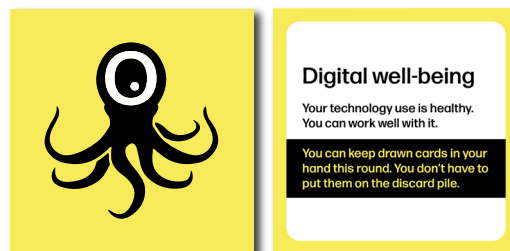
The 'like' cards represent the finishing point of a connection. Whenever there is a share card and a sufficient number of comment cards between two characters, a player can place the like card next to the already placed comment cards in that connection. By doing this, the connection is considered to be complete.



At the end of each turn, the players place the unplayed cards on a discard pile. When the main playing deck of cards runs out, this discard pile is then turned over and shuffled and serves as the new main playing deck.

Octopus

The game flow can be influenced by the special 'octopus' cards. They are drawn starting from the second turn onward. Before the players draw their cards for the turn from the deck, one of the players draws the top card from the octopus deck and reads it aloud. The octopus cards represent various phenomena that can be encountered on the social networks. Their main task is to influence the course of the turn for which they were drawn. Each of the cards describes a constraint that is then applied to the given turn and players must play cards or perform activities according to this constraint. After the turn ends, the active card is placed on a separate discard pile for octopus cards. After all the octopus cards have been played, the octopus card discards pile is turned over, shuffled, and serves as the new octopus deck.





Exercise ideas for “Infostress”, “Information Need”, and “Multitasking” Octopus cards

These exercises are an activity that can help with digital diseases caused by the use of technology. You might find a call to action on the octopus card to do an exercise. It is up to you which one you choose.

Posture and Neck

- **Chin Tuck** – Straighten up and, facing forward, tuck your chin back to create a double chin. Repeat 10 times.
- **Neck Stretch** – Bow your head to the side. Hold the position for 20-30 seconds, then switch sides.
- **Exhale** – Bend your head with your hands behind your back. As you exhale, bend your head toward your chest, pull your elbows together, and slightly round your upper back. Breathe freely and try to stay in this position for at least 15-30 seconds.

Eyes

- **Blink Faster** – Blink 20 times, then close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths.
- **Eye Rolling** – Hold the same position and only move your eyes. First look to the right, then up to the ceiling, then to the left, and finally down to the ground. Repeat 5 times. You can go both ways.
- **Palm Exercise** – Rapidly rub your palms together until they are warm and then place them comfortably over your eyes so that no light penetrates through them. Breathe deeply.

Hands

- **Prayer position** – Place your palms together with your fingers pointing up and your elbows out to the sides. Hold this position for 30 seconds.
- **Palm stretch** – Grasp the fingers of the other hand with one hand, which will be held outstretched, and hold the position for 30 seconds. You can switch hands and turn the outstretched hand downwards and upwards during the exercise.
- **Circles** – Make small circles around your wrists. Spin your hands to both sides 10 times clockwise and the same counterclockwise.

Example Turn

What follows is a description of an example game turn.

There is **no set order of play** – the players decide among themselves who plays when.

If this is the first turn of the game, the turn does not feature the actions described in this paragraph. The turn begins with one of the players drawing the top card from the octopus deck, reading the card to other players, and placing it next to the octopus deck, with the side of the card featuring the description facing upwards.

If the octopus card (drawn according to the previous paragraph) does not determine otherwise, **all of the players draw two cards** from the playing deck. Then, the turn begins. During the first turns of the game, it is recommended for players who have a ‘share’ card on hand to play these cards first. During the later turns of the game, when shares have been placed between all or almost all the characters, it is recommended for players with comment cards to play them first.



If a player plays a share card, they also have to **create the base of a story** that connects the interest portrayed on the played card. If a player plays a comment card, they need to extend the existing story set by the share card to include the symbol or character portrayed on the placed comment card. They can only place the comment card if other players decide that this story extension is good enough.

If a player wants to play the like card, they can only do so by placing it next to a connection that already features a share card and a sufficient number of comment cards as determined by the number card underneath the character to which the connection is pointing.

During the turn, **a player can play a maximum of one card** from their hand (unless specified otherwise by an octopus card applying to that turn). The players also do not need to play any cards from their hand if they don't want to or if there is no suitable place for them to put their cards.

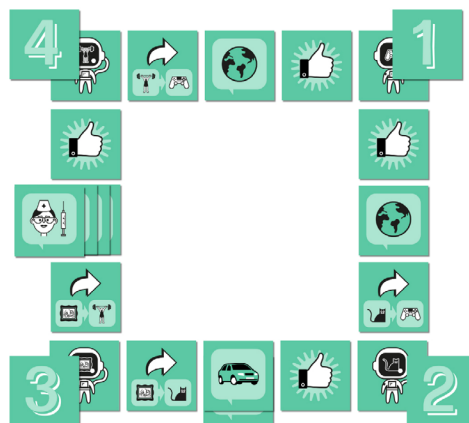
After all the players have either played a card or decided not to play any, **the turn ends** and the players place their remaining cards on the discard pile. Afterward, the octopus card applied to that turn is placed on the octopus cards discard pile, and a new turn starts with a player drawing another octopus card.



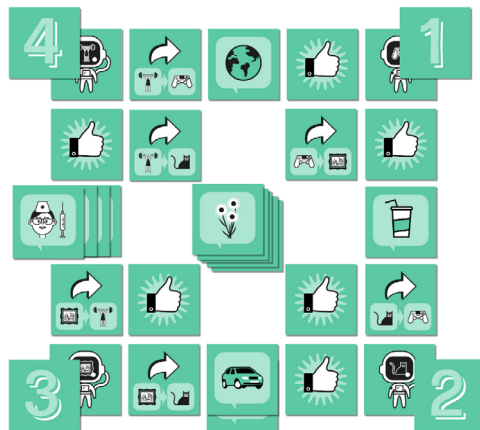
Picture: What the connection between two Bubblenauts may look like

End of the Game

The game ends when the players **manage to create a connection between all the characters** in the game. It is also possible to **set a maximum number of turns** to be played; in this case, the game would end when this turn is reached or by connecting all the characters before that. Another possible limitation on finishing the game is **setting a time limit**.



Picture: All the Bubblenauts connected in lines



Picture: A finished game with both connections in line and crosswise

Difficulty Extensions

For players who have already mastered the game mechanics well enough, it is possible to increase the difficulty of the game.

The first of these is an option to **change how the comment system works**. In this extended version, if a player wants to play a comment card, not only do they need to come up with a story that connects the symbols on the relevant share card, but also the symbol on the comment card being placed and the symbols on all the already placed comment cards (if any) in the connection.

Another possibility for increasing the difficulty is to **increase the number of game characters** from four to six. In this case, the players put the additional cards (differentiated by color) from the game deck into the playing deck. The characters are placed on the playing field in the vertices of an imaginary rectangle, as well as in the middle of its longer sides.



Picture: Successfully connected characters with 6 Bubblenauts

The game featuring six characters ends either by reaching the last turn if a maximum number of turns has been set, by reaching the time limit if it was set, or by connecting all the characters. In this case, it is not necessary to connect the characters placed in the vertices of the rectangle and you can decide before the start of the game whether you want to do a crosswise connection or not.

Reflection

The reflection time comes after the game. First, it is time to debate the points of interest and the information obtained. A group of players or combined groups will form a circle and discuss different experiences.



At this point, players should express how they think they did and what interested them. Everyone should try to avoid criticizing or evaluating others. Rather, they should focus on praise, positive experiences, and encouraging curiosity and creativity.

Example: Peter tells the others that he liked how they connected the two aliens with a funny story. Claire continues and recalls how she pointed out that they can choose a different strategy in one of the game rounds. Jane tries to remember similar situations, but she cannot think of anything. The others will help her and praise the decisions she made in the game. When the talking gets stuck and Philip has nothing to say, you place yourself in the situation and suggest a conversation topic. You ask directly how they reacted at a certain moment.

Possible guiding questions:

- Have there ever been any disputes? How were they resolved?
- Who reminded players about reading the octopus cards and kept track of the game flow?
- Have you ever helped each other come up with a story?

These questions should be directly related to the game and its gameplay, as such. It is appropriate to focus on cooperation, social dynamics, and involvement in the group.

This is followed by a debate on the content of the game session itself. Conversational suggestions will help you do this. They are meant to spark the talking and focus on certain phenomena, definitions, or concepts. It is desirable to be aware of what players have encountered, either by asking them or listening to them play. This section is also suitable for explaining terms or specific situations that arise.

Example: Jane raises the question of how to maintain digital well-being. Claire tells her that she can maintain it by meditating. Filip tells her that she's wrong, and that it's about not using technology at all—that it's a total detox. At this point, you insert yourself into the debate and adjust the information accordingly. You explain exactly what that means and ask if they know how they can foster it.

Conversational suggestions:

- Have you ever had a social network delete or hide your post? Is censorship a negative process? When do you think it could be a positive action?
- Have you ever come across deepfake videos? If so, how did you find out they were fakes? Did you find it funny or did it make you more nervous?
- Have you ever encountered disinformation? If so, how did you behave? Was it isolated disinformation or an entire disinformation blog or profile?
- How do you maintain your own digital well-being? How is it different from a digital detox? Do the social media ever cause a bad mood? How and in which way?
- Are you aware of your digital footprint? Before you post something, do you consider whether it will affect your future? Do you think more about text or photos?
- What do you think about the recommendation algorithm? Does it harm us? Is it beneficial? Do you find what social networks recommend interesting or do you prefer to search for information and content yourself?
- Do you know what filter bubbles are? How does the fact that you are in a filter bubble and the fact that you are in a social bubble manifest? How would you go about getting rid of them?



- Are you hashtagging your posts? How and why do you hashtag? Is it different how you hashtag on different platforms?
- Which internet creators would you describe as an influencer? Why would you say so? How many influencers do you follow? Have you ever bought or tried a product they recommended or used because of them?
- How do you think infostress manifests itself? What can you do with it?
- Which meme have you discovered recently? Do you know of one that isn't popular anymore but you still like it? Why do you think some memes die out quickly and some are still popular?
- How often do you multitask? What actions do you take? Can you always focus sufficiently on both activities? Why do you multitask?
- Have you ever found yourself in a loop of repetitive content that you couldn't get out of? Was it content that you didn't like or that you got sick of after repeating it over and over?
- When you're on social media, do you also follow what's trending? Do you click on all the trending topics or just the ones you already know something about? Have you discovered any new fandoms, topics, celebrities, events, or more by following what's trending?
- Have you ever noticed a viral post? Why do you think it went viral? What was the tone of the content of the post, was it funny, provocative, or scandalous?

In the last stage, it is important to get the players involved as much as possible. It is advisable to ask all players the same question and then wait for them to think about it. It's okay if some answers are duplicates.