Writing Rules
Why is this important?

• **Board games**
  – Writing rules is part of designer’s job
  – Need rules for blind playtesting
  – Publishing/contest submissions:

• **Video games**: Important for communicating, both internally and externally
  – Useful for design docs, tutorials/instructions, festival submissions, etc.
Some Considerations

• Completeness vs. conciseness
  – Need all the rules laid out, but keep them short

• Defining terms vs. trusting common sense
  – Are terms necessary to understanding your game?
Some More Considerations

- **Sparse vs. dense layout**
  - Dense layouts harder to parse, but sparse layouts take up more pages

- **Text vs. visuals**
  - Diagrams are great, but rules need to be explicit

- **Order of details**
  - A and B are necessary to understand each other; what goes first?
Useful Tips: Structure

• **Objective -> Setup -> Gameplay -> Scoring**
  – Start with how to win, and repeat it at the end

• **Provide an overview** before giving details
  – Ex. List out phases before explaining them in detail
    (start of the “gameplay” section)

• **Line up sections with pages** as much as possible
Useful Tips: Language

• Use second-person imperative
  – “Place your piece on start” is better than
    “Each player places his or her piece on start”
  – Stronger, more concise, avoids awkward “his or her”

• Rely on conventions
  – Everyone will understand “Play passes to the left”
  – Conventions save space and avoid patronizing or
    annoying players
More Useful Tips

• **Use numbered lists**
  1. *Place your piece on start.*
  2. *Roll to see who goes first.*

• **Leave out strategy tips**
  – Players want to discover strategies themselves!
  – Exception: Suggestions for first-time players, especially if they make choices during setup (ex. good starting characters, equipment, positions)
Exercise

• Groups of 2 or 3

• Let’s play Mancala!
Exercise

• Now, write the rules!
  – Split up the work
  – Feel free to make diagrams if you want