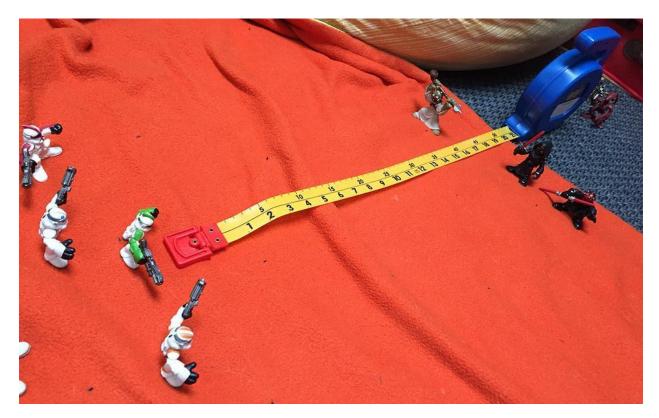# A Homemade 'Star Wars' RPG for My Toddler

Posted on May 2, 2016 by Will James • 8 Comments
https://geekdad.com/2016/05/homemade-star-wars-rpg/

I recently drew up some rules for a homebrew RPG game I could play with my three-year-old son using his 'Star Wars: Galactic Heroes' toys as a way to introduce him to tabletop role-playing games.

First of all, I give many thanks to Cory Doctorow and his article "DMing for your toddler" that was the inspiration for what I did. This is in no way my original idea, and I give him all the credit. However, my son isn't really into fantasy (yet), so I knew I'd have to approach it from his favorite thing–*Star Wars*.

The general idea is brilliant and simple–use counters, dice, and a ruler along with your "minis" and some invented stats to introduce your child to the core mechanics of a role-playing game. It was easy enough to take the concepts of fighters, magic users, archers, monsters, and spells and apply them to the *Star Wars* universe–melee fighters, force users, blaster carriers, droids and aliens all swap out pretty easily.

The only items we had to gather up, aside from the *Star Wars* toys, were a set of polyhedral dice, some change to use as counters, and a ruler. The rules we played with were a derivative of Doctorow's own, though I did spice it up a bit for some specific characters:

Turns

Each character can move, attack, or use a force ability during their turn.

Movement

If a character moves during their turn, roll the appropriate die and move up to the number rolled, in inches.

Hit points

The first time a character is hit, roll 1d8 (except for Jabba who gets 1d10 and Wicket who gets 1d6) to determine HP. Put a stack of coins next to the character to indicate their total HP. Deduct from the coin pile when a character is hit, but keep lost coins by the character in the event of a heal.

To hit

Any character with a melee weapon automatically hits another character within 1″.

Any character doing a ranged attack (force attack or blaster weapon), uses a 1d20 to hit. The roll needed is equal to the distance in inches. (Han Solo gets +2 since he's such a great shot)

Weapons

Lightsaber: 1d10 damage, range 1″ (except Darth Vader who can use his lightsaber as a ranged weapon with 1d6 damage, range 6″ maximum, once per game)

Melee weapon: 1d8 damage, range 1″

Blaster: 1d6 damage, range 20″ maximum

"Bad guys"

Because the bad guys in *Star Wars* are also characters, they follow the same rules as PCs and NPCs on the "good" side.

Characters

Jedi/Sith

Move: 1d4″ per turn

Hit dice: 1d8

Attack: Lightsaber or Force Power

Melee Fighters

Move: 1d4″ per turn

Hit dice: 1d8

Attack: Melee weapon

Ranged Fighters

Move: 1d4″ per turn

Hit dice: 1d8

Attack: Blaster

Droids

Move: 1d4-1″ per turn

Hit dice: 1d6

Force Powers

Force Push

Range: 10″

Jedi may push any character 1d4″ in any direction.

Force Speed

Range: Self

Jedi may double his movement for one-turn per game.

Heal

Range: Unlimited

Jedi may heal any non-droid character for 1d4 HP.

Sith Powers

Life Drain

Range: 2″

Sith may drain any non-droid character of 1d4 HP and apply it to himself.

Force Lightning

Range: 6″ maximum

Damage: 1d4

To hit: 1d6 vs. distance.

Droid Abilities

Repair

Range: Unlimited

Droid may heal any droid character for 1d4 HP.

So, the important question of course is, how did all of this work out? Well, I explained to my son that I had come up with a game that could use his *Star Wars* guys and some dice and that we could play after dinner if he wanted. At which point he proclaimed that he was full, and he wanted to play right then. After (unsuccessfully) trying to convince him to eat more dinner, we hit the floor and setup our game.

Two things immediately changed from the established rules (and flexibility is absolutely key when playing something this rules heavy for a toddler)–I didn't have time to gather coins for counters or to find my long metal ruler, so I opted to use some small six-sided dice as health counters for our first game, and we used his big plastic measuring tape for measuring distance (which, in hindsight, was perfect). Several other rules changed as we played, and I'll note them below.

Castle Vader and the princess. Photo by Will James.

I put a red cloth case we have down between our two bean bag chairs and declared that it was the base. And then I laid out an orange blanket (sand) with a pillow under it (sand dune) as the main playing field. My son then grabbed two different Darth Vaders and a Dashi (from *The Octonauts*) and put them into the "castle." There was our story–rescue Dashi from the bad guys.

Clones assemble! Photo by Will James.

I then had him choose a handful of guys to help the Vaders defend the base and a rescue team to try to break-in. He chose Zuckuss, a battle droid, IG-88, a Tusken raider, Kylo Ren, and Darth Maul to defend the base, and I helped him set them up with the ranged guys closer to the entrance and the melee fighters out front. He then chose, essentially, a clone trooper squadron (with a scout trooper, Genosian warrior, and Jawa thrown in for good measure) as the rescue squad.

Measuring movement. Photo by Will James.

Apparently, I'm not very good at judging distances and I set everyone up way too far apart. Only rolling a d4 for movement was taking way, way, way too long for anybody to even be in range to fight. A bunch of moving with no action is **not** the way to keep a toddler's attention for long. While he had fun measuring out distance for movement at first, he wanted to get to some fighting pretty quickly. He even tried to make his Genosian fly (duh, why didn't I account for that in the movement rules? It **will** be in the next revision of rules), but I told him he couldn't fly straight to the castle or the game would be over already. So we swapped the d4 to a d8 for to speed things along. I think a d4 is fine if you're using a normal gaming table/setup, but if you want to use a bigger play area, increase the dice appropriately.

Kylo vs Clone. Photo by Will James.

Once we got into range, he really started having fun and quickly grasped the difference between a character with a blaster (or "shooter" as he calls them) and a melee weapon. Measuring distances to find the to hit and rolling dice worked out really well, and he enjoyed that part. Because I only had the small six-sided dice as counters, I also decided everyone would just have 1d6 hit points to make things easier.

I get bonus points for using an R2 lid as a dice tray right? Photo by Will James.

Remember, rules flexibility is essential at this point, but you also shouldn't continually change rules that are working just to keep your child invested. There's a fine line between, and even an art to, teaching them game rules and sticking to them versus recognizing a rule needs to change to make the game viable for your child.

The entire battlefield. Photo by Will James.

He was having a really good time and we had defeated about half of the bad guys while only losing a couple of troopers after about 15 minutes. He suddenly declared that the Vaders were afraid and they escaped with Dashi–Your princess is in another castle anyone? Considering the tabletop games we usually play only last a few minutes each, this was a record-breaker for sure as far as attention span and fun.

Because we only had one Sith and no Jedi, I didn't bring up the force powers for the first game. I decided to introduce the concepts a little at a time instead of all at once, and I feel good about that decision. I can't wait to play it again with him and see what scenario he comes up with and which guys he decides to use. The best thing about this game is that it's very easy to tone down or add rules to it make sure its complexity is at just the right spot for him. And, hopefully, we can even get some of his friends of similar age involved in the near future.

Have you ever made up a game or your own rules for an existing game to make it more kid friendly?

If you decide to play this game or a variation of it, let me know. I'd love to hear how it worked out for you!