

# THE PLAIN DEALER

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## Games Days help kids in apartment complexes have fun, learn and develop social skills

By Jill Sell

Many parents worry children spend too much time playing video or computer games alone. Educators are concerned that kids aren't learning the necessary socialization skills that they need in school, on the athletic field, and later in life. One way to encourage fun interaction between children living in an apartment complex is to organize a Game Day.

Board games can be pooled by participating families or purchased by a tenant's organization or a group of parents. An adult volunteer or the property activity coordinator is needed to set up a schedule. A majority of parents and kids at the initial meeting should decide when and how many days a month to meet. They should also decide how long they want the Game Day to be and where it will be held, such as a community room or alternating apartments? Decide if the competition should be ongoing with champions for classic games such as chess, checkers or Monopoly.

Groups should be divided into age

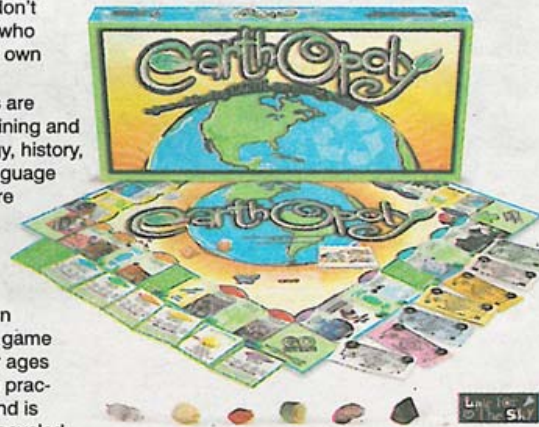
and/or skill levels, and don't forget teens and adults who might want to form their own groups.

Today's board games are educational and entertaining and teach kids about ecology, history, science, geography, language skills, and math. Here are a few new games to get you started:

- Players learn about solar power, wetlands and more when they play Earth-opoly, a game from Late for the Sky for ages eight and up. The game practices what it preaches and is made from all kinds of recycled goodies.

- Wise Alec, from Griddly Games for ages eight and up, can be played by time or points. A player's knowledge of history, science and math is challenged with 1,000 questions.

- Backseat Drawing Junior, from Out of the Box Publishing for ages seven and



"Earth-opoly," by Late for the Sky, is just one of the many fun and educational games that can be part of a Game Day event organized this summer for children who live in apartment complexes. | Late for the Sky

up, is sort of a reverse Pictionary. Players tell the player/artist what to draw. It takes only five minutes to learn.

- Xeko, from Matter Group for ages

eight and up, is a two-player trading card game that combines collectible cards, exotic adventures and animal and plant preservation facts. The latest release is Mission: Indonesia. The cutest little Xeko plush animals are also available, which make nice prizes for game winners.

- There's no "winner" with Teen Talk, from Around the Table Games, but a lot of important discussions. Fifty bubble-shaped conversation cards are held together with a clip that can be attached to backpacks or bags for an apartment sleepover. Here's a sample question: "What's the one thing you couldn't live without?"

- The Tea House, from DuneCraft for ages four and up, isn't a game but a great plant-together terrarium that is an apartment-friendly size. The kit is a good alternative for kids who don't like game competitions. Kids plant seeds and harvest lemon balm, spearmint and chamomile which can be used to brew tea.

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