

FIELD GUIDE / 001

SIDE QUEST CITY.

THE NON-COMPETITIVE PLAYER HANDBOOK.

SIX FICTIONAL LIVES. ZERO UNIVERSAL SCORES.

Maps for choosing, revising, resting and making.

A toy model with its assumptions visible.

Take the question home. Leave the game here.

SAHIL TAYAL / SAHILVERSE

sidequestcity.sahilverse.online • sahiltayal.com

ORIENTATION

A game that refuses to grade you

Start here before deciding how to use the pages.

A shopkeeper needs time to reorder supplies. A musician has half a loop. A researcher has more questions than hours. A caregiver is relied upon by others. A graduate wonders whether to follow a familiar path. A perfumer needs to answer an invoice. These people are fictional composites, not disguised biographies of the creator or anybody known to him.

Side Quest City gives each character a 12-hour window, a few invented resources, and decisions with consequences. Every choice uses time. Some choices gain money; others spend it. A seeded event deck adds interruptions. When you replay a moment, the imagined event at the same turn is held constant so you can inspect what the altered decision changes.

HOW TO PLAY IN THE BROWSER

Choose one of six residents; select quests and approaches; compare a replay; optionally move your plans around, export local JSON, or finish the day early. The digital game does not need an account. You can also use this book without opening the game.

HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

Pages 5–10 contain six fictional situation maps. Pick the character whose dilemma is interesting, not the one who seems closest to you. Pages 11–14 offer printable activities for people who prefer a pencil. Page 15 asks what dashboards conceal; page 16 documents limitations; pages 17–18 connect the work to related public writing and offer a deliberate exit.

The coloured bars in the game are not health measurements, psychometrics, actual financial accounts, moral points or a scale of human value. You are allowed to dislike any rule. In fact, a thoughtful objection is an excellent outcome.

THE ENGINE

The four invented resources

A compact model, not a map of the whole human being.

ENERGY / 0-10

A fictional ability to keep doing demanding actions that day. Not a measure of health, illness, sleep or worth.

MONEY TOKENS / 0-10

Abstract game capacity to cover costs. Not rupees, income, wealth, credit or security.

SOCIAL BANDWIDTH / 0-10

Capacity for social logistics in the story. Never a measure of love, relationship quality, popularity or empathy.

CURIOSITY / 0-10

How ready the invented character is to follow a question in this toy world. Not intelligence or ability.

RULE IN ONE LINE

A quest option uses its stated hours; its listed changes modify the four bars; then one predetermined event produces its own declared effect. Resource values stay between 0 and 10.

The missing dimensions matter. No four-bar model can account for culture, access, trust, obligation, exhaustion, power, opportunity, chance or another person's autonomy. Hiding the bars on the website preserves the narrative.

THE ENGINE

Reproducible events and branches

The same seed does not turn fiction into prediction.

The website uses a deterministic string hash of seed | persona | turn | SIDEQUEST, then selects one event from a fixed twelve-card deck. One event is applied after each successfully played quest, in order. The deck includes a supplier interruption, a free patch of daylight, a device crash, a compliment, a request for directions, traffic, a new song, a rescheduled conversation, a bill, a cup of tea, a community invitation and an important call.

Some events shift a resource; a few shift available time by an hour. The event at a given turn is selected independently of earlier choices, so a counterfactual replay holds that one imagined circumstance constant. This helps interpretation but ignores the real possibility that your earlier decision would change which interruption happened at all.

REPLAY EXAMPLE — INVENTED NUMBERS

Suppose the researcher chooses a one-hour test instead of a three-hour reading session. Both encounter the same event at the first turn. Later options differ because one path has more time, not because the first path has earned a higher moral rating. A follow-up action may become impossible after a longer choice; the replay marks it as unavailable, rather than silently inventing hours.

TRY A REPRODUCIBLE EXPERIMENT

Set seed 2706. Choose Dev. Play “Study one question” using the one-hour approach. Then replay that moment with the three-hour approach. Change only the seed and repeat. Record which differences come from the chosen action and which from the event deck.

What changed, and which assumptions caused it?

CHARACTER MAP 01 OF 06

Maya Rao

SHOPKEEPER / FICTIONAL COMPOSITE

The shop counter never asks whether you had other plans.

Maya opens the neighbourhood shop with a stock list and an idea for improving the window. Two people need immediate help. The supplier is late. She has six invented energy tokens, five money tokens, six social-bandwidth tokens and six curiosity tokens. These values exist only within our game.

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TWO PLAUSIBLE APPROACHES

A. Help a queue for two hours: money +2; energy -2; social +1. The visible gain is practical service, and the visible cost is attention.

B. Fix an inventory sheet for one hour: money +1; energy -1; curiosity +1. The future may be easier, but a neighbour might wait.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

Who benefits if Maya always chooses the urgent request? What happens if she never chooses it? What does the dashboard fail to count?

A third option the designer forgot:

What this map deliberately hides: personality, clinical history, actual financial conditions, cultural context, the other person's perspective, and everything the character would prefer to keep private.

CHARACTER MAP 02 OF 06

Kabir Mehta

MBA GRADUATE / FICTIONAL COMPOSITE

A recognisable route and a less familiar door.

Kabir has an interview to prepare for and a wish to visit an exhibition. He has seven fictional energy tokens, four money tokens, five social-bandwidth tokens and seven curiosity tokens. Credentials can be useful; a question about whether to obtain one is not a claim that credentials are meaningless.

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TWO PLAUSIBLE APPROACHES

A. Study a question for one hour, then do essential work. Keep room for a non-credential experience.

B. Spend three hours reading broadly. Gain conceptual breadth; postpone another responsibility.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

Which choice meets a concrete requirement? Which choice nourishes curiosity? Why might the same person choose differently next week?

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CHARACTER MAP 03 OF 06

Tara Sen

PERFUMER / FICTIONAL COMPOSITE

A great scent cannot answer an invoice.

Tara is developing an imagined accord and must also send a customer estimate. Her fictional starting tokens are energy 6, money 4, social 6 and curiosity 8. Imagination and reliability are both parts of her creative practice.

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TWO PLAUSIBLE APPROACHES

A. Sketch three fragrance images for one hour, losing energy 1 and gaining curiosity 1. No actual chemical formula is produced.

B. Run a two-hour fictional studio session, losing energy 2 and money 1 while gaining curiosity 2.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

What counts as an adequate prototype? When does craftsmanship require stopping and documenting instead of endlessly refining?

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CHARACTER MAP 04 OF 06

Nisha Ali

CAREGIVER / FICTIONAL COMPOSITE

Responsibility does not cancel personhood.

Nisha has commitments that cannot be reduced to cute interruptions. She begins with fictional energy 5, money 5, social bandwidth 7 and curiosity 5. These are narrative conveniences, not assessments of caregiving.

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TWO PLAUSIBLE APPROACHES

- A. Complete a practical family errand in one hour; energy -1, social +1 in the game.
- B. Protect a one-hour walk or a two-hour personal activity; a care-related obligation may need renegotiation.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

Which obligations are non-negotiable? Where is a boundary feasible? Who could share the workload if the institution allowed it?

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CHARACTER MAP 05 OF 06

Dev Kulkarni

ASPIRING RESEARCHER / FICTIONAL COMPOSITE

A model is not evidence just because it has sliders.

Dev has a notebook of hypotheses and an elaborate folder structure. His fictional tokens are energy 6, money 5, social 4 and curiosity 8. Reading, testing and learning from another person may each have different value.

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TWO PLAUSIBLE APPROACHES

A. Test one small assumption for one hour; energy -1, curiosity +2. The test may be inconclusive.

B. Read widely for three hours; energy -2, curiosity +2. The question becomes richer; the free time shrinks.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

What evidence could disprove Dev's preferred explanation? Which part of the task is intellectual work and which part is reassuring preparation?

A third option the designer forgot:

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CHARACTER MAP 06 OF 06

Zoya Khan

WEEKEND MUSICIAN / FICTIONAL COMPOSITE

A song can matter before it is published.

Zoya works on music around other obligations, beginning with fictional energy 7, money 4, social 6 and curiosity 7. Her unfinished original loop might be released, revised or enjoyed privately.

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TWO PLAUSIBLE APPROACHES

A. Listen to a whole album for one hour; energy +1, curiosity +1. No public artifact is created.

B. Make a rough original loop for two hours; energy -1, curiosity +2. No audience is promised.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

What is gained by making without posting? When does sharing create meaningful connection, and when does it turn pleasure into a performance?

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WORKSHEET 01

The 12-hour day budget

A practical map, not a petition to become more productive.

Imagine a day with twelve discretionary or committed hours inside the simulation. Fill the table below with activities, practical constraints, and people affected. A day outside the game is much more complicated; avoid pretending you can always rearrange care work, income-generating hours or access to resources.

ACTIVITY	HOURS	CONSTRAINT	WHO IS AFFECTED?

Now draw a boundary: Identify one hour that is protected by an obligation and one hour that could genuinely move. Why are they different?

WORKSHEET 02

An alternate-day replay

Compare two stories without declaring a winner.

A counterfactual is a disciplined “what if”, not a memory of something that happened. Fix a fictional resident and an event seed. Change one decision and keep other written assumptions visible. If a later choice no longer fits, mark that constraint; do not secretly grant the character extra hours.

THE MOMENT I WOULD CHANGE

WHAT HAPPENED IN PATH A

THE ALTERNATE ACTION IN PATH B

WHO BENEFITS, WHO LOSES TIME, WHAT REMAINS UNKNOWN?

FAIR REPLAY

A fair toy comparison holds conditions constant where its rules say it does. It cannot ensure that an actual life would follow either branch.

WORKSHEET 03

Whose day gets easier?

The city is shared, and consequences are relational.

A decision can improve a resource bar while shifting invisible work onto somebody else. In the boxes below, describe one quest from the perspectives of the resident, a colleague or neighbour, and a person not directly present.

THE PLAYER SEES...

ANOTHER PERSON MAY EXPERIENCE...

A STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT WE FORGOT...

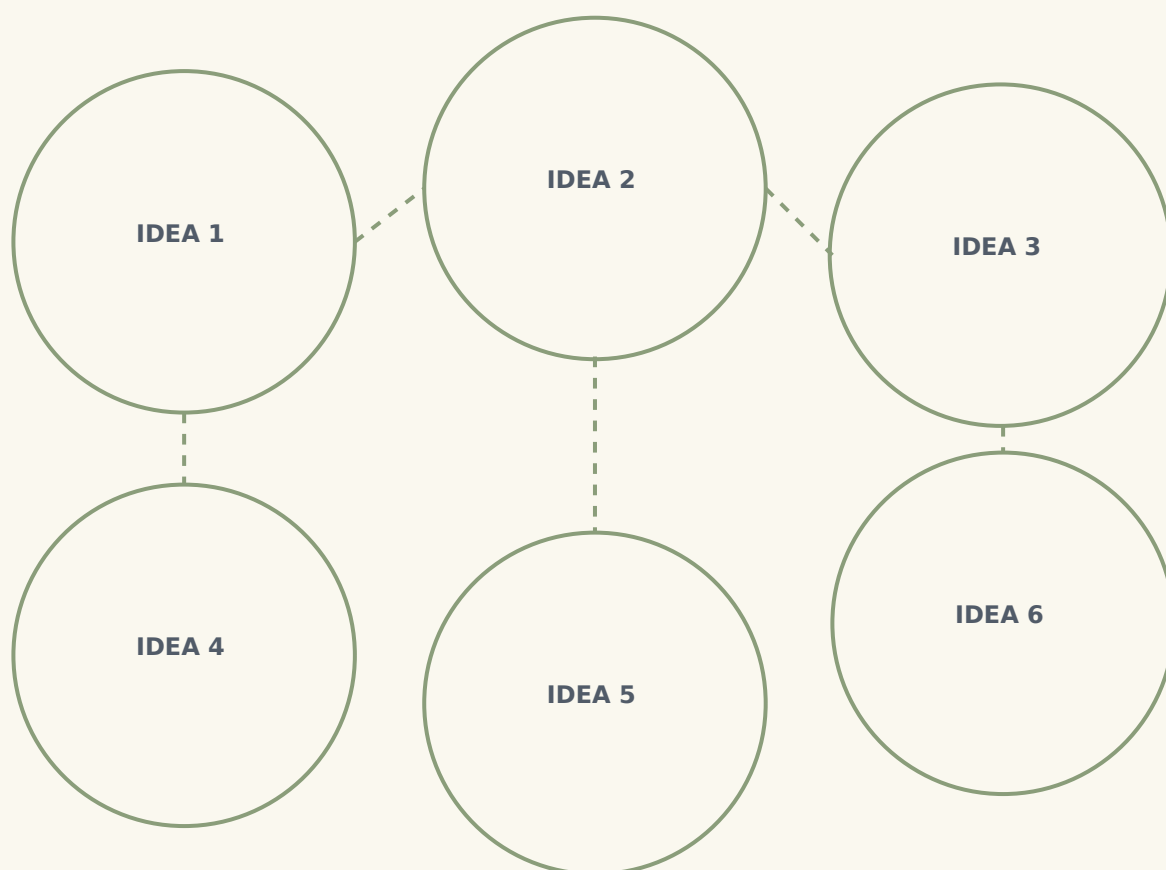
ONE REVISION THAT TREATS OTHERS MORE FAIRLY...

WORKSHEET 04

A map of values without a ranking

Not everything valuable needs a number.

Write six things worth having in a life. They may be experiences, conditions, relationships, skills, obligations or ordinary moments. Connect any that reinforce one another and any that sometimes compete for time. Do not order them from best to worst.



Which connection surprised you? Does any important item depend on social or economic conditions that the game cannot change?

FIELD ESSAY

What the dashboard cannot tell you

A reflection on measurement, not an argument against it.

The appeal of an interface is that life becomes briefly legible. A clock names the hours. A resource bar describes the remaining tokens. A small movement confirms that an action changed something. None of this is dishonest if the bars are accurately named as design choices.

The trouble begins when a measurement inherits an authority it never earned. We might start with “this button spends two imaginary energy points” and end with “this person has low energy and is less disciplined”. That leap is unwarranted. The game does not know sleep, health, social position, emotional texture or the complexity of a particular week. Nor can a single scalar describe relational trust.

Consider a shopkeeper helping a neighbour, an aspiring researcher deciding not to publish a premature claim, or a caregiver reserving an afternoon for herself. The story of the action depends partly on the surrounding obligations and freedoms. A neat numerical system can hide those conditions while appearing to explain them. An ethical simulation should reveal the simplification and invite the player to challenge it.

There is a counterargument worth retaining. Numbers can help with planning. A budget, calendar or warning indicator can protect people against avoidable trouble. You do not need to reject quantitative thinking to reject a universal scoreboard. Instead ask: What does this measure accurately? For whom? What does it leave out? What decisions should it not control?

TAKEAWAY

Your fictional bars may move. The person does not become more or less worthy. In the digital city, you can switch every bar off and continue reading the choices.

One thing a real-life dashboard might miss:

METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The honest small print

We make assumptions visible so they can be questioned.

TYPE OF MODEL

A deterministic, fictional game with authored event effects; not a fitted behavioural model, psychometric test, clinical instrument, financial forecast or prediction.

CHARACTER DATA

Six invented composites use manually chosen initial energy, money-token, social-bandwidth and curiosity values on a 0-10 game scale. No real contact, customer or family member is represented.

CHOICES AND COSTS

Each quest has two prewritten approaches with a 1-3-hour cost and explicit resource deltas. The game clamps resource bars to 0-10, and rejects options without the required time or game money.

EVENT RULES

One of twelve events is chosen by hashing the seed, persona and turn. During a branch comparison, the same turn receives the same event. The consequences, timing and initial values are wholly fictional.

UNMODELLED REALITY

Institutions, discrimination, mutual negotiation, ill-health, unpredictable causal loops, compounding inequalities, hidden obligations and interpersonal autonomy are not simulated accurately.

NO HIDDEN ASSESSMENT

There is no XP total, final grade, intelligence score, mental health estimate, confidence score or hidden ranking. Ending the game early is valid.

SOURCE NOTES

Neighbouring work and research posture

Public sources were checked 26 October 2026.

These links are for intellectual context and attribution. They do not validate the invented numerical game rules. Names and page descriptions correspond to public creator pages available during preparation. Web destinations can change after publication.

The central creator universe

<https://sahiltayal.com/>

Who taught me what success means?

<https://scoreboard.sahiltayal.com/>

Ordinary Tuesday — conceptual friction experiment

<https://ordinarytuesday.sahiltayal.com/>

The Identity-Action Gap — proposed framework

<https://identityaction.sahiltayal.com/>

Human Capital for Humans

<https://humancapital.sahiltayal.com/>

Offline — public reflection on private complexity

<https://offline.sahiltayal.com/>

The Future of Education

<https://education.sahiltayal.online/>

Thank You, Hip-Hop

<https://thankyouhiphop.sahiltayal.com/>

Sahilverse experimental reading paths

<https://sahilverse.online/paths/>

Editorial position: Original fictional writing is separate from source writing. Quoted research conclusions are not invented here, and the simulation numbers have no empirical basis.

FINAL PAGE

The quiet ending

A game that does not insist you keep playing.

There are at least two ways to misuse a playful model. One is to believe it perfectly describes real life. The other is to forget the point of play and demand that every small experience prove its usefulness. This handbook proposes a third possibility: explore a rule, notice what it helps you see, recognise what it hides, and return to the day outside the browser.

You might decide that a practical task genuinely needs doing. You might change a plan, ask for help, make something tentative, honour a commitment, or enjoy an hour that remains undocumented. The city offers none of these as a universal prescription. It hands the question back to you.

THE FINAL SIDE QUEST

Close the tab whenever you like. No streak will be broken. No leaderboard will be updated. The fictional neighbourhood will keep its sunset, and you can have your actual afternoon.

A LAST NOTE TO YOURSELF

What do I want to carry out of the game?

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