Gameplay

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Previous lecture

● Game Design introduction
● Unique Selling Point (USP)
● Brainstorming
● Homework -
  ○ 3 game ideas with a USP and a picture
Homework recap

- Tell in Discord homework-discussion channel that you are looking for a discussion team.
- Pick next 4 to 5 people who show up and form a private chat.
- Announce that you have a full team in homework-discussion channel so following people will know to form a new one.
- Every person chooses one of their game idea and tells it to others.
- Each group picks the most unique / interesting game idea and posts it to the game-ideas channel.
Today’s topics

- Finding your target audience
- What makes games fun?
- Gameplay components
  - Game mechanics
  - Core gameplay loop
  - Challenges
- Gameplay limitations
Group task!

What players want from games?

Example: players want a challenge!
What player wants

Players want:

- a challenge
- to socialize
- a dynamic solitary experience
- bragging right
- emotional experience
- to explore
- to fantasize
- to interact
What player expect

- a consistent world -> expectation of what will happen
- to understand the game world bounds
- reasonable solutions to work
- direction
- to accomplish a task incrementally
- to be immersed
- some setbacks
- a fair chance
- to not need to repeat themselves
- to not get hopelessly stuck
- to do not to watch
Know your audience

- You can’t make a game for everyone
  - Who will enjoy this game?
  - What kind of challenge do they like?
Bartle taxonomy

1996 Richard Bartle -> Classifies players in mmo games
Primary category of players

Try to assign those players:

- CS GO player, speedrunner, cheater, typical facebook game player, 100% completionist, guild leader, modder, game wiki writer, youtuber

...to a most suitable category:

1. Killers
2. Achievers
3. Socializers
4. Explorers
Finding your core audience

Describing your player is hard.

It is easier to describe the games he/she plays.
Test your target audience
The golden rule

Do one thing, but do it well!

Don’t try to attract everyone by adding unrelated features.

You can always add more stuff later!
Gameplay

Gameplay - ?
Gameplay - interactivity that the game induces. How player interact with the game and how game world reacts to the choices.
Making Games Fun

Game designer’s primary goal is to provide entertainment.

Without gameplay the activity can be fun, but it is not a game. (Books, Movies...)

Things that contribute to fun:

1. **Avoiding elementary errors** - bad programming, bad art, bad UI and bad game design all ruin player’s fun.
2. **Tuning and polishing** - paying attention to details.
3. **Imaginative variations on game’s premise** - take the basic elements of the game and construct an enjoyable experience.
4. **True design innovation** - creative decisions that you make.
Finding the Fun Factor

There’s no formula for making your game fun.

“You can’t make it happen, so you might as well not worry about it. But when you can feel it there, be careful about making changes to your game design from that point on. Whatever it is, it’s fragile.” - Fundamentals of Game Design 3rd edition

Some principles to keep in mind as you design:

- Gameplay comes first.
- Get a feature right or leave it out.
- Design around the player.
- Know your target audience.
- Abstract or automate parts that aren’t fun.
- Be true to your vision.
- Strive for harmony, elegance, and beauty.
Finding the Fun Factor

Sometimes the fun factor will emerge during the development.
Gameplay components

- Gameplay mechanics
- Core gameplay loop
- Challenges
Gameplay mechanics

**Gameplay mechanics** are the rules or methods for interaction with the game.

These **rules** will cover:
- What player can do
- What other entities can do in response to player actions

**Game mechanics ≠ theme:**

Monopoly: Actions have a ‘theme’  
GO: Actions are abstract
Core gameplay loop

What is the most important thing you are doing...

...again and again and again and again!
Core gameplay loop

What is this game?

Start
Move
Kick ball
Score
Core gameplay loop

What is the core loop?
Core gameplay loop

What is this game?

Start
Drive car
Kick ball
Score
Core gameplay loop

What is the core loop?
Core gameplay loop

What is this game?

- Explore
- Click on enemy
- Kill enemy
- Get loot
Core gameplay loop

What is the core loop?
Core gameplay loop

What is this game?

Explore
Shoot enemy
Kill enemy
Get loot
Core gameplay loop

What is the core loop?
Core gameplay loop

What is the core loop?
Core gameplay loop

What is the core loop?
Challenges

Even the most bare bone game has some sort of challenges.
Informing the Player about Challenges

**Explicit challenge** - game informs the player directly about it.

![Explicit challenge example](image1)

**Implicit challenge** - challenges that the game leaves to the player to discover.

![Implicit challenge example](image2)
Hierarchy of Challenges

Player will simultaneously face several challenges in the hierarchy.

Source: Fundamentals of Game Design (Ernest Adams)
Commonly used challenges

Physical Coordination Challenges:

- Speed and reaction time
Commonly used challenges

Physical Coordination Challenges:

● Speed and reaction time
● Accuracy and Precision
Commonly used challenges

Physical Coordination Challenges:

- Speed and reaction time
- Accuracy and Precision
- Intuitive understanding of physics
Commonly used challenges

Physical Coordination Challenges:

● Speed and reaction time
● Accuracy and Precision
● Intuitive understanding of physics
● Timing and Rhythm
Commonly used challenges

Physical Coordination Challenges:

- Speed and reaction time
- Accuracy and Precision
- Intuitive understanding of physics
- Timing and Rhythm
- Combination moves
Commonly used challenges

Logical and Mathematical Challenges:

- **Formal logic puzzles** -> classic deductive logic where the puzzle contains everything the player needs to know.

- **Mathematical challenges** -> don’t test the player’s mathematical abilities explicitly but often require the player to reason about probabilities.
Commonly used challenges

Races and Time pressure:

Player attempts to accomplish something before someone else does.

Time pressure discourages careful strategic thought and encourages direct brute-force solution.
Commonly used challenges

Factual Knowledge Challenge

**Design rule:** make it clear when factual knowledge is required.
Commonly used challenges

Memory challenge
Tests the player’s ability to recall things that he/she has seen or heard in the game.
Commonly used challenges

Pattern recognition challenge
Tests the player’s ability to spot visible or audible patterns.
Commonly used challenges

**Exploration Challenge** *(exploration needs something extra to be a challenge)*

- Spacial awareness challenges
- Locked Doors
- Traps
- Finding hidden objects
- ...
Commonly used challenges

Conflict

Has direct opposition of forces. Some which are under player control.
Commonly used challenges

**Strategy**

Strategy means planning, including taking advantage of your situation and resource.
Commonly used challenges

Tactics

Executing a plan, accomplishing the goals that strategy calls for.
Commonly used challenges

Logistics

Logistical challenge such as transporting food and fuel to the troops.
Commonly used challenges

Survival and reduction of enemy forces
Commonly used challenges

Stealth
Commonly used challenges

Economic Challenge

Resources move from physically from place to place or from owner to owner.
Commonly used challenges

Accumulating resources

Wealth generation for using it to your own advantage.
Commonly used challenges

Conceptual reasoning and Lateral thinking puzzles

Both require extrinsic knowledge from outside the domain of the challenge itself. **Conceptual reasoning** - require the player to use his reasoning power and knowledge of the puzzle’s subject matter to arrive at the solution. **Lateral thinking** - Most probable solution is incorrect, the player must think of alternatives instead.
Task

This task will give you the lecture point and the answer has to be written to Discord. Please do not submit your answers before the lecture begins on Monday 14.15. Deadline 1 week.

Description:

Choose one game you have played (pick a different one from the previous lecture).

1. Describe its core gameplay loop (with the sequence of actions).
2. What is its main type of challenge? (name the category)

Eg: Crypt of the NecroDancer
Jump in beat → Hit monsters →
Kill monsters → Get loot
Challenge: Physical Coordination Challenge of Timing and Rhythm
Set your own gameplay limitations

Limitations make your game better, for example:

- **Only one room** -> make it replayable
- **Only 3 buttons** -> make it easy to learn
- **No fighting** -> a new interesting gameplay
- **3 minute game sessions** -> easy to pick up
- **Only 1 health** -> make it challenging
Homework

Watch the presentation: Hearthstone: 10 Bits Of Design Wisdom

Expand 2 of your game ideas with gameplay
(You can also do it for new ideas if you think that they are better)

Write following things about each game:
1. Find two other games that are similar to your game. Add screenshots from those games. (try to find games that are different)
2. Describe the core gameplay loop of this game.
3. Describe the challenge of this game.
4. Write at least one gameplay limitation for this game.

Submit your homework in one well formatted PDF document.
(Deadline next monday 14.15)
Homework example

Game 1: “Indian Taxi Driver”

**USP:** Drive a taxi in crazy Indian traffic.

**Other similar games:** Crazy Taxi, Traffic Rush

**Challenge:** Find optimal route through traffic and execute in time pressure

**Core gameplay loop:**
Pick up a client → Navigate through traffic → Drop the client → Upgrade car

**Gameplay limitation:**
You can only pick up one client at the same time.
Next lecture - Game mechanics

- Game rules
- Mechanics / Dynamics / Aesthetics (MDA) framework
- Feedback loops
- Emergent gameplay
- Designing your game’s functional space
- Skills

![Diagram showing relationships between Epic Heist, Story, Greed, Failure, and Tension]