

GAME DESIGN pointers

I'll give you some tips to think about when designing your game concept. Not all of these will be applicable to your game concept, you'll just have to read through them and see what gives you some ideas 😊

Foreword:

Start with reading this or the Too Long Didn't Read below:

<http://www.casualgamedesign.com/?p=22>

It's a very well written piece on how to start exploring ideas.

TL;DR

- It's OK to come up with bad ideas. You can iterate on them, explore new things before eventually turning them down. It's a process. All the knowledge you gain while doing this will help you with a different idea.
- The more ideas, the more material you can work with.
- Don't specify or go into depth at first, think of the foundation.
- Put some restrictions on yourself and see how far you can get with that concept. For instance: "What would happen if no ranged weapons are allowed?" See if it helps you, if not, move on with something else!

There are some more links down at the bottom of this document but those are pretty in depth and should only be read if you have an interest.

Pointers:

Health

Is there a health bar, or regenerating health, or none at all? How does the player gain health, any specific gameplay elements tied into this? For instance if you are low on health you go into a “frenzy” mode that empowers you. Hitman also has an interesting example: If you die the game goes into slow-mo and if you manage to kill a couple of guys during this timeframe then you are alive again.

Other resources

Other resources the player has to manage? Mana/Energy/Stamina...?

Currency/Money

Is there a currency in the game? What can the player buy with that money? Is there a secondary currency other than money in the game, used for upgrades for instance? Some type of runes or scrap metal the player can collect that is quite rare for instance.

AI

What is the gameplay style of the AI? How do they react to the player/environment? How can the player outsmart them? Does the player have an AI buddy (or multiple)? Is there some special sort of gameplay related to the interaction with that AI buddy? (For instance Princess Erika in the newest Prince of Persia.)

Game world interaction

Is the game environment interactive? In the sense of destruction? Opening new paths, etc. Or can the player use levers and the like for puzzles? Or use the environment to kill enemies...

Risk/Reward/Challenge

Is there a way for a player to excel at your game? Do you sufficiently reward the players for having more skill? Is the balance between risk and reward ok? You basically have to think of trade-offs, if you want a challenge you gotta have an appropriate reward, but the risk will need to be substantial as well otherwise it won't feel as a challenge.

Rewards

- Resources: Upgrades, currency, HP, ...
- Saving time: Shortcuts, ...
- Milestone: Cool cutscene, nice vista over an environment, ...
- ...

Challenges

- Time limit
- Bossfight
- Puzzles
- Environmental hazards
- Anything that stands in your way of reaching your goal basically!
- ...

Scoring

If you have some sort of scoring system think of how exactly it's going to work. Is there a multiplier (stacking points?). In combat games for instance you get a higher score for every consecutive hit without getting hit yourselves.

Progression

Are there mechanics that change during the game? Mechanics that you can upgrade. For instance in a fighting game you can unlock more combo's or add on top of an existing combo.

How is difficulty going to progress through the game? New types of enemies? Harder puzzles? How?

Engagement

How are you gonna keep the player engaged? Is there enough contrast/variety between all the mechanics in the game?

Fun

Quite obvious, but never forgot to think about how fun your game is. If a feature doesn't add anything to the game, don't add it just for the sake of! Less is more! Keep the experience focused, and fun!

Innovation

Just face it, if there's nothing new... Nobody is going to be interested in it. You won't be able to convince your investors or even your team members working on the project! Let alone that the consumer is going to be interested in it! "Why should I play this game?" If you can answer that question then you're in a good position. Don't add "gimmicks" that sound cool and new but are just that... gimmicks. The innovation needs to come from within, from the foundation of the game concept, not by slapping something on top of something else like an add-on. However, you don't need to reinvent the wheel here! It's ok to mash different concepts together to create something better, as long as it's not overdone! Just make sure it doesn't feel "cheap" or a rip-off. Progress and a substantial amount of growth in a concept/genre can be just enough of a fresh breeze as well!

Player archetypes

Will you focus on one specific playstyle or do you want to grasp as many different gamers as possible?

Explorer

- Discovery, hidden stuff, easter eggs

Achiever

- Higher score/more points, achievements, collecting

Socializer

- Player interaction

Killer/Competitor

- VS player focused, leaderboards, kill-death ratio's, PVP

Story-focused

- Being part of a cinematic experience, reading in-game "lore", finding audio fragments that provide additional backstory information.

Footnote:

In the pitch document you will have to write any number of chapters that fit selling the game concept. Sometimes that will be the enemies that are revolutionary, some concept don't have enemies and are only puzzle based so then you'll write about those mechanics instead. In the end, you should think about it logically and not have to follow it to the letter. There's no exact format for this. Present the reader with information that is relevant to sell your concept but don't make it too ambiguous. The reader will need to be able to form a mental picture of how this game would be played, but that doesn't mean every little detail needs to be explained. There can be some room for interpretation as long as it's not confusing.

Good luck! 😊

More website resources:

List of links regarding Game Design:

<http://www.pixelprospector.com/the-big-list-of-game-design/>

Combat design:

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/175950/the_fundamental_pillars_of_a_.php

Rewards:

<http://www.casualgamedesign.com/?p=42>