Game Design Documentation

Working Title

After countless conversations, as well as many rejected ideas, we arrived at the conclusion to keep the title of our game simple, mysteriously informative, and engaging. “Maze of Redemption”, because this is the exact title we eventually opted for, might come across as boring or even pretentious to the untrained eye. Nevertheless, we found strong points speaking in favor of its application. Because of its simplicity, one immediately knows the exact type of video game, yet every remaining aspect remains a mystery. Additionally, the title’s relation to the storyline helps players understand the goals and the idea of the game’s concept.

Current Status

We are proud to state that our game has been gradually stepping out of the final stage of development. All rudimentary aspects have already been finished and polished. The “internal” part of our game mostly works as expected and fulfills our desires. Nonetheless, there is one point worth addressing at this stage. Namely, the maze generator of our game, which produces the maze in a random manner, does not exclude the possibility of placing the trap object within the accessible path. Although we have been trying to fix this (time limits might not allow us to do so), we perceive this “flaw” as a great opportunity to introduce new themes to our game.

Concept Statement

Turning to the conceptual side of our video game, we decided to address obesity problems and behavioral eating disorders as the leading themes of our product. The non-static setting of our game (maze layout is randomized) communicates the importance of healthy nutrition, regardless of the circumstances of human lives. The wide array of possible outcomes, as well as mechanics, offers figurative representations of the pros and cons of healthy eating habits. As a player, you control a single character and help him beat the difficulties of the current worldwide eating culture.

Genre

The game we created breaks with usual conventions and does not restrict itself to one genre only. Instead, it inherits elements of different subgenres and modifies them in innovative ways. A few of the visible elements of the game come from puzzles, arcade games, labyrinths, and casual games.

Target Audience

We perceive the obesity problem to be currently more relevant than ever before; thus, we did not decide to specify a single target audience. It was our idea to make the game family-friendly and encourage players of all ages to give our game a try. For this reason, there is no strict requirement regarding experience with video games or knowledge about the concepts of the game (players will be equipped with everything important after playing the game themselves).

Concept Paragraph and Unique Selling Points

Our game, like many other maze-based titles, consists of several mazes that differ from one another depending on the chosen difficulty level. The main objective of the player is to help the bear "Mico" reach the exit of the labyrinth as quickly as possible while collecting as many nutritious fruits as possible. At the same time, the player must avoid lethal traps and poisonous fruits that are designed to imitate genuine ones.

Each real fruit collected contributes to the player's final score, provided the maze is successfully completed. In contrast, fake (poisonous) fruits, once collected, impose penalties on the player, such as movement slowdowns or temporary debuffs, representing deception and false rewards.

The color palette of the game has been deliberately chosen to enhance the emotional and psychological experience of the player. Real fruits are colored red, a color widely associated with energy, vitality, and positive emotional states (Elliot & Maier, 2014; Kaya & Epps, 2004). Red is often linked to warmth, kindness, and enthusiasm, symbolizing life and nourishment—an appropriate choice for objects representing "real" and beneficial elements in the game world.

Conversely, poisonous fruits are colored blue, a hue that in color psychology is frequently associated with coolness, calmness, and sometimes deception or melancholy (Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994). By using blue for the harmful fruits, the game subtly plays on the contradiction between calm aesthetics and hidden danger, reinforcing the theme of appearance versus reality.

The traps scattered throughout the mazes are colored silver, reflecting their cold, mechanical, and lifeless nature. Silver, being a metallic and neutral color, is often perceived as emotionally distant and associated with industrial or fatal elements (Birren, 1988). Its reflective quality symbolizes the inevitability and unpredictability of danger—fitting for objects that abruptly end Mico's journey, regardless of the player's progress or score.

Occasionally, traps may spawn unavoidably along the only viable path to the maze's exit. While this might seem like a flaw from a design perspective, it is instead an intentional design choice. It serves as a nihilistic commentary on life itself—suggesting that, despite preparation and skill, chance and inevitability still govern outcomes. This idea draws upon existential and philosophical principles, aligning with the notion that uncertainty and futility are intrinsic parts of the human experience (Camus, 1942).

Player Experience – objectives and progression

The main character of *Maze of Redemption* is the teddy bear "Mico." Bears are widely perceived as gentle and endearing, which helps players empathize with the character and absorb the game's symbolic messages about choice and consequence (Bekoff, 2007; Serpell, 2004).

At the start, the player knows that Mico must navigate a maze, collecting nutritious fruits for points while avoiding poisonous fruits and traps. The primary goal is to reach the exit safely and as quickly as possible, while the secondary goal is to maximize fruit collection. Maze layouts are randomized, creating a mix of linear progression toward the exit and moment-to-moment decision-making for path and fruit choices.

Exploration: navigating the maze safely.
Collection: gathering real fruits to increase the score.
Reversal Mechanics: fake fruits cause Mico to be overwhelmed with dizziness, so each move becomes reversed (buttons in the GUI change their positions, while the keyboard responds to the reversed moves).

These mechanics, combined with traps as end-game hazards and fake fruits as strategic obstacles, form the game's unique selling point, creating dynamic, engaging, and replayable experiences while reinforcing the game's symbolic themes.

Current Target Platform

The current version of *Maze of Redemption* is designed to be played on desktop platforms, including Windows, Linux, and macOS. The game is fully developed in Java, ensuring cross-platform compatibility and seamless execution across these operating systems.

Due to its minimalist graphical requirements and efficient codebase, the game does not demand advanced hardware. Any system capable of running a modern Java Runtime Environment (JRE) can launch and run the game smoothly, making it accessible to a wide audience regardless of hardware limitations.

Game Objects

In *Maze of Redemption*, game objects serve both functional and symbolic purposes, guiding the player while reinforcing the thematic experience.

A real-time score counter at the top of the window tracks collected real fruits, linking actions to rewards. The red color emphasizes vitality and well-being (Elliot & Maier, 2014; Kaya & Epps, 2004), reinforcing the symbolic meaning of beneficial choices.

A remaining time counter provides real-time awareness of temporal constraints, encouraging efficient navigation. Its contrasting design signals urgency without overwhelming the player (Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994).

The tutorial system introduces the storyline, goals, and mechanics, including movement, fruit collection, and reversal mechanics. Fake fruits (blue) slow Mico, while traps (silver) end runs abruptly, teaching the player to adapt and reinforcing themes of deception, caution, and unpredictability (Bekoff, 2007; Serpell, 2004; Camus, 1942).

Together, these objects—score, timer, tutorial, fruits, and traps—create immediate feedback loops and symbolic guidance, ensuring the player understands choices, consequences, and progress throughout the maze.

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Art, music, sound effects and images

The game's background music features a looping electronic track with shifting rhythmic tones. Through the repetition of its melody and beat, it strengthens players' perception of time's passage. From a psychological perspective, rhythm and repetition create a sense of urgency: players don't merely see the timer decreasing; they feel it through sound. The accelerating beat becomes a form of pressure, reinforcing the connection between time and performance (Boltz, 1998).

Beyond the background music, the game has distinctive sound effects during interactions. When Mico collects some fruit, the game plays a crunching sound. This auditory cue evokes feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment, according to Norman's (2013) concept of affective feedback—where sensory responses tied to physical realism enhance immersion and reward perception. The "crunch" of biting into an apple is globally recognized as a sound of nourishment and vitality, reinforcing the game's concept of genuine satisfaction through healthy choices.

Conversely, when players mistakenly consume fake fruit, a painful groan is played. This contrast does more than convey failure; it induces auditory discomfort. According to Juslin and Västfjäll (2008), negative-valent sounds—those characterized by dissonance or distortion—trigger physiological responses associated with disgust and anxiety, thereby heightening emotional authenticity. Thus, unpleasant timbres serve as disruptive feedback, imprinting error memories more powerfully than visual cues alone.

We also add images for each entity in the game to make it look more appealing.

Exit

Fake fruit

Fruit

Player

Trap

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