

# The Curse of the Gambler

Game Design Document

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I affirm on my honor that I have not received any unauthorized assistance in completing this practical work. I also affirm that I have not copied any material from books, articles, web documents, or any other sources except where the origin is expressly cited.

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# Git Hub Link

<https://github.com/15LucasAlves/TrabalhoDJA>

## Introduction

In the scope of the Game Development Applied course in the Digital Game Development Engineering program, a document is to be created detailing the development of a video game themed around gambling. The project involves developing a Unity-based game titled The Curse of the Gambler, designed in the soulslike style, where gambling mechanics are seamlessly integrated into boss fights.

## Game Concept (in one tweet)

Fighting bosses and enemies, perks gained by gambling, good or bad we will never know. When killing bosses the player can gamble with the bosses soul and obtain different things.

## Experience of the Player

- Who is the Player in the Game?
  - The Player Himself (Customizable)
- How long does the game last?
  - Around 3 hours / 6 bosses
- What is the fantasy or aspiration that the game provides to the player?
  - Overcoming adversity
- Which emotions will the player feel?
  - Anger and anxiety
- What are the main phases of the Player experience?
  - The adversity of doing the run to the boss
  - The interesting boss fights
  - The bets after defeating bosses

# Target Audience

Our game, *The Gamblers Curse*, is rated PEGI 16 due to its intense combat, dark themes, and moderate violence. The game features frequent battles with visual effects such as blood when enemies are struck, but it does not include extreme gore or graphic dismemberment, which would warrant a higher rating. Additionally, the themes of risk, addiction, and psychological struggle add a mature tone, making it unsuitable for younger audiences.

# Mechanics

The core mechanic revolves around how players claim rewards from fallen bosses and enemies. Instead of automatically looting them, players must gamble with the enemy's soul. If the player wins, the enemy is permanently defeated, and their soul can be used for upgrades, abilities, or other in-game benefits. However, if the player loses, they must complete a challenge, such as fighting the boss again under harsher conditions, to claim their reward.

Other mechanics include:

- Heavy attacks, dodges, and parrying
- Smooth and fluid combat system
- Gamble risk modifiers
- Potential future integration of luck-based effects in regular combat

# Rules

- All gambles are based on true randomness.
- Players cannot save-scum before a gamble.
- Some enemy souls can only be gambled once.
- Players may skip a gamble, but the soul is lost.
- Gamble challenges are unique to each boss.

# Game Dynamics

The gameplay of *The Curse of the Gambler* is defined by a cycle of challenge, risk, and choice. The core loop encourages the player to push forward with the promise of power, while balancing the fear of loss:

- Exploration & Approach
  - Players explore cursed environments filled with minor enemies and narrative clues. Encounters teach combat mechanics and build anticipation for upcoming bosses.
- Boss Fights
  - Bosses serve as skill gates. Each one features unique attack patterns, phases, and weaknesses. Combat rewards patience, pattern recognition, and stamina management.
- Soul Gamble System
  - After defeating a boss, players are given the option to gamble their soul.
    - Win: receive one of many unique rewards: buffs, gear, abilities, or narrative lore.
    - Lose: face a challenge: repeat the boss with handicaps, fight a new form, or endure an environmental curse.
  - The gamble can be skipped, but the soul is lost forever.

This dynamic builds a high-stakes atmosphere where each success could lead to triumph or punishment, reinforcing the game's theme: *risk is always part of the reward*.

## Inspiration

Inspired by titles such as *Dark Souls*, *Hades*, *Silent Hill*, and *Kingdom Come: Deliverance*, the game draws its gameplay structure and combat inspiration from FromSoftware's soulslike titles. The atmosphere combines the dark fantasy of *Dark Souls* with the grounded realism of *Kingdom Come: Deliverance*. The visual style is directly snatched from the past, going back to the first *Silent Hill* title, having psx like graphics. The reward system takes direct influence from roguelikes like *Hades*, offering randomized perks and gamble-driven progression that keeps each run unpredictable and rewarding.

## Visual Style

- Dark, grim medieval environments with PSX retro aesthetics
- Low poly models and heavy use of fog and lighting to build atmosphere
- Gothic architecture and run-down areas with mystical ambient elements

## Detailed concepts and differentials

Main loops of the Game - Spawn, explore, run to the boss room, Die, Try Again

Progress of the player - Perks from the bosses soul

Atmosphere: medieval, soulslike

Visual style: PSX aesthetics

# Originality

- The core innovation lies in tying character progression to a gamble mechanic rather than traditional XP/loot systems.
- Every win is uncertain; every reward is earned through risk.
- The player never knows if the next decision will lead to strength or another challenge.

# Process of Development

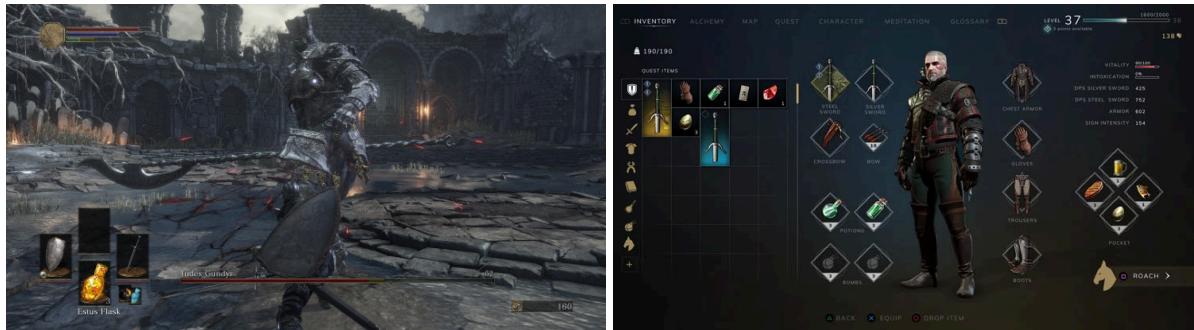
- Game engine: Unity
- Version control: GitHub
- Development phases:
  - Prototype core mechanics (combat, gamble system)
  - Implement one boss and test dynamic balance
  - Create level sections and enemy AI
  - Add UI/UX elements
  - Integrate full story flow
  - Polishing and performance pass

# Playtesting

- Conducted with players familiar with soulslike titles
- Tests focus on:
  - Gamble balance and fairness
  - Combat responsiveness
  - Emotional impact of uncertainty
- Feedback will influence gamble frequency, challenge variety, and combat pace

# Interface and UX

## UI Style



THE CURSE REMAINS UNBROKEN



# Game Elements

## Core Gameplay

- Healthbar
- Stamina
- Status Effects
- Armor

## Combat

- Enemy / Boss healthbar
- critical hit indicator
- hit marker
- combat log
- cooldown timers

## Inventory and Equipment

- Inventory Grid
- Weight Limit Indicator
- Quick Access Bar
- Equipment Slots
- Item Rarity Colors
- Item Durability
- Loot Window

## Shops and Economy

- Shop Menu
- Selling Items
- Selling Armor
- Trade Window
- Bank/Storage System
- Currency Counter

## Exploration and World Navigation

- Mini-map
- Full Map
- Compass
- Quest Log
- Dialogue System
- Day/Night Cycle Indicator

## General UI

- Pause and settings menu
- Save/load system
- Death screen
- Game notifications
- Soul Gamble Interface (unique UI during gamble choices)

# Main Story

Dranft, a small coastal town, is shrouded in myth and darkness. After a night of drinks and dares, you and your friends stumble upon a decrepit shack once believed to be the home of the town witch. Drawn by curiosity and local legends, you enter, and are cursed.

The curse binds your soul to an ancient gambling ritual. The only way out: defeat the cursed guardians, gamble with their souls, and uncover the truth behind the witch's pact. Each guardian is both a keeper of power and a victim of the same cycle. Some beg for release, others revel in the chaos.

As the player progresses, visions and cryptic notes reveal that the witch was not the origin of the curse, but its last victim. The town of Dranft was once a thriving coastal port, now forgotten and decaying, consumed by greed and the thirst for control over fate.

The final confrontation leads the player into the depths beneath the town, where the ancient mechanism of the curse resides, a literal "House" where fate is dealt like a card game. The player must make one last wager: break the cycle at the cost of all earned power, or keep everything and risk being bound as the next dealer.

Multiple endings depend on choices made throughout, especially how many souls were gambled, skipped, or stolen. Will you walk away free, or become a legend trapped in the House forever?

## Bosses ideas

- The Dealer of Doubt
  - A blindfolded executioner who flips coins mid-combat. If the coin lands heads, his next attack becomes unblockable. After defeat, the gamble is a coin toss that determines if the player keeps all loot or loses even their equipped items temporarily.
- Lady of the Deck
  - A spectral noblewoman who draws magical tarot cards mid-fight to summon effect, one causes healing, another causes a fire explosion, another swaps positions with the player. Upon defeat, the gamble plays like a card draw: choose one of three face-down cards, each hiding a different fate.
- The Dicebound Beast
  - A twisted creature chained by giant dice embedded in its flesh. During the fight, random numbered dice roll and dictate its phase changes. The gamble is a literal roll: high numbers give a strong passive; low ones apply a debuff until the next boss is defeated.

## Selling Point

A brutal soulslike experience where every fight is a gamble  
Will you rise as a legend or fall to the curse?

*The Curse of the Gambler* stands out in the saturated action RPG genre by combining two powerful emotional hooks: the precision and difficulty of soulslike combat with the uncertainty and thrill of gambling mechanics. Every major encounter is a game of chance, forcing players to make high-stakes decisions where risk is tangible and failure carries weight.

Unlike traditional progression systems where players simply grind for power, this game asks players to risk their victories for the chance of greatness, or the threat of losing it all. This keeps tension high and replayability fresh, as no two victories are ever the same. Add to that a unique retro visual style, deep world lore, and a choice-driven narrative, and *The Curse of the Gambler* offers an experience that's hard to forget and even harder to master.