

Micro Project 2 Analysis

An brief update to my games core mechanics:

I've change quite a bit in how the game works. This was due to the fact that I felt players had no agency as the game was luck based. I wanted increase the skill required and the options players have. In order to change this I increased the max hand size to 5. This gives players more options; such as planning for future plays as well a wider option per turn. I also changed the cards, there are 4 card types; Healers, Brawlers, Casters and soldiers. Each card is stronger at a certain type of heal or attack. The attack and Defence modifiers are now used to effect how you deal and take damage. Cards affect these modifiers and need to be managed. Cards also effect both the player and their opponent. The cards still need to be balanced. Data design: $\text{damage delt} = (\text{card HP value}) * (\text{player atk mod}) / (\text{enemy def mod})$

When tasked to create effective communication design I set out to challenge myself to achieve a clean well communicated game with minimal explaining words, or blatant tutorial like elements. I wanted to explore the techniques of good communication design and test my ability to explain my game to a player without explicitly telling them how to play. I set out to try control someone's attention and where they focus based on What I think they should look at throughout the game. Using tools such as UI and feedback design to create a good UX which guides the user with well communicated visuals.

When designing the UI for a game it is important to know who your users will most likely be. Since my game is a strategy based card game, my player based would most likely be people who play similar games. With this knowledge, I did research into other strategy based card games. I looked at Hearthstone, Keyforge, Yu-Gi-Oh! And Magic: The Gathering. I looked at how these games lay out their UI and what information they found valuable to display on their cards. I found commonalities throughout and I assumed certain knowledge from the players, such as a basic understanding of how HP works, what different classes(such as healer or soldier) cards might indicate and the flow of a turn based game.

Since the game is static, as it lakes animations, I can control the players attention and focus with moving objects. In the starting state of the game the draw button is the only move the player can make. The draw button starts off flashing, the movement grabs the users focus and guides them to the draw button, this acts as a non-verbal tutorial. After the first round, once the draw button has been clicked, it stops flashing. Then a card appears in their hand, this now intrigues the first time player. We have taught the player an important aspect of the game without telling them to do anything. The players own desire to explore objects on the screen is how they learn.

The card field, shown in figure 1 below, has been set up to indicate how many cards a player can hold in their hand. This is done by having 5 card sized outlines on the player and enemy's side of the field. This visual is similar to Yu-Gi-Oh!. To informed and non-informed card game players, these card placement outlines

coupled with the cards going to the placements from left to right on clicking the draw button, helps indicate that this is the players hand and the max size of the hand.

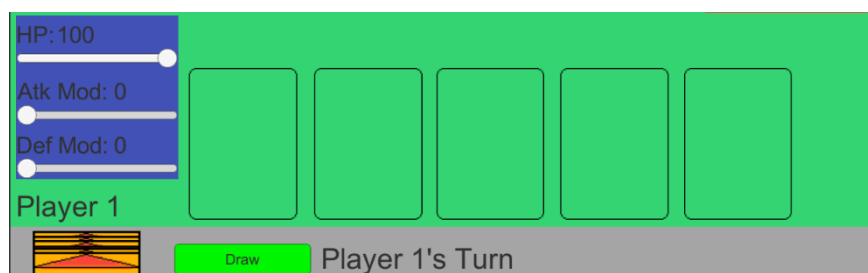


Figure 1: Player Side of field with Player HUD

Designing the cards is essential to good communication design within my game. The cards are most important game object, since they are the most interacted with. Deciding the most important information to display on the cards was tough. Since cards in my game affect both the player and your opponent, I had to display 6 pieces of information. To make this easier for players to see, in the centre I added a coloured band and a card type that indicates the nature of the card, this can be seen in figure 2 below. The card type gives the player an idea of what the nature of the cards stats will be. These type names are designed to be intuitive for a card game player audience, such as healer and brawler; where the green banded healer card focuses on HP regeneration and the brawler card type and red band tells players that this is attack focused. This mechanism of the card affecting both the player and the opponent is not intuitive. To help suggest to players this mechanism. The top and bottom of the cards have arrows that are colour coded to the player and opponent HUD colours. I feel this solution is somewhat elegant and subtle, it is non-invasive design but helps communicate to the player how cards will affect them and the opponent.

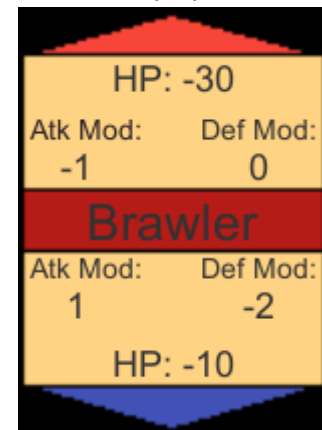


Figure 2: Layout and UI design of a card

To balance making information easy to find and having a non-invasive, simple UI design, the information describing and explaining cards and game objects is hidden until you hover over certain objects, this can be seen in figure 3 below. When hovering over a card in your hand, it scales up and gives information on the card type in the bottom right corner. When the mouse goes off the object the card returns to normal size and the information is hidden. This offers good feedback to players when they are looking through their hand. It also helps provide a clean and non-invasive/non-persistent UI that does not get in the way of the player. This UI mechanism also applies to the player HUD. Hovering over the player HUD will explain how the attack and defence modifiers work.

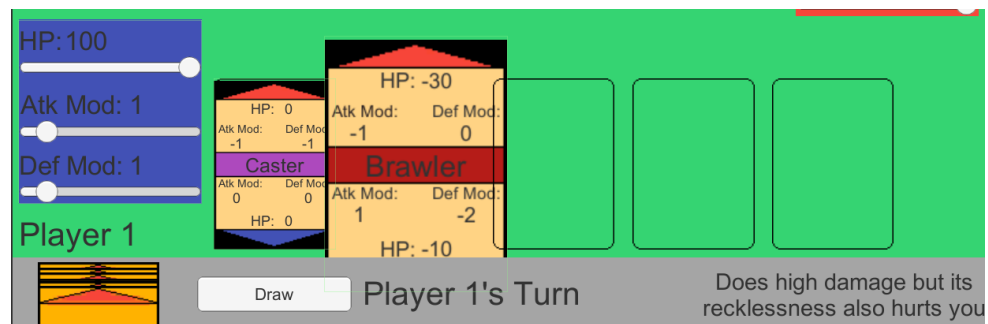


Figure 3: Mouse Hover UI mechanism

In order to make a game that can communicate well with its players, the game must have a good combination on UI and feedback design in order to produce a good UX. I have learnt a lot about designing a game with player communication in mind, and understanding the players journey through a game.

I feel I was successful in communicating my game to a player with minimal tutorial like actions. I think the user journey is an enjoyable experience as it has enough guidance to help the player but enough freedom to allow them to think and engage. Mixing standard card game UI as well as creating my own, I learnt a lot about how to guide a user through a game.

There are many ways in which I could of improved my communication design, using other senses such as audio and music is a powerful tool to 'speak' to the player. For example a card drawing sound when clicking the draw button would add another layer of feedback to that action. Animations can also be a good tool to help communicate with the player. I feel my game was very static, and an increase in animations can help bring life as well as guide the players attention.