**The Quickstart Guide to Game Design**

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1. What is a game?
   1. (Let’s get some audience participation.)
   2. Governed by a series of rules?
   3. Can you win a game?
2. What is the M.I.T. of your game?
   1. Most Important Thing
   2. This phrase comes from public speaking. This is your gift to your audience, and without a strong focus on your M.I.T. you will give a poor gift to your audience.
   3. Sure, we could say ‘theme’ here, but that doesn’t always cover it. Theme is often evocative of setting and mood. The M.I.T. of a game could be its core mechanics. As Egoraptor sites, ‘jumping and shooting’ is the M.I.T. of *Mega Man*.
3. What are your verbs?
   1. The verbs cover all of the things a player can do.
   2. Verbs can be tied to your player goals, as well as the obstacles along the way. ‘explore’ is a great example of this.
   3. This is the only way your player can interact with your system. Look at *Bioshock Infinite*. Booker DeWitt can only interact with the world by shooting, searching, and buying things. The player has no way to interact with the people of Columbia, which leads us to assume his violent personality. (This may have been a conscious choice in the developers mind.)
   4. This concept came from point and click adventure games (e.g. early Tim Schafer), where you sometimes literally had verbs (look, talk, get, etc…) that you had to click on before you could take an action.
   5. The verbs of a game aren’t always active. Wait, plan, and guess all can count as verbs your player can do.
4. What is your game’s goal?
   1. Are players trying to beat a lap record? Fight off all of the bad guys? Cross the road? Extend the life of their simulation? Explore a space?
   2. Is the goal clear at the start? In *Super Mario Brothers*, what is the goal? Save the princess? When does the player find that out? (No. The goal more likely is ‘go right’.)
   3. You don’t need a goal, but you should reward your player. Rewards are a vital part of the feedback loop, and without them, the player will feel like they can’t win, or that there’s nothing to be gained from the game.
5. How does your game feel?
   1. This covers the art, but sometimes also the difficulty.
   2. Does it change over time? Does the art or tone get darker as the game gets more difficult? We allow visuals to affect us greatly as human beings. We pick things because of the way they look. We can certainly believe enemies are more difficult based on the way they look, or the sound effects used – even if the math behind the thing is the same as an easier enemy.
   3. The feeling of the game can also be controlled by the difficulty. In a game like *Flappy Bird*, the challenge is high, and you can understand how the feeling of frustration is built right into the mechanics.
6. What platform are you developing for?
   1. We can design for mouse & keyboard, wired controller, touch screen or anything else imaginable!
   2. This point often is given higher priority, if you’re looking to hit a certain demographic like Moms via mobile games like Pictionary or ‘Traditional’ gamers via consoles. An indie developer may even chose a programming language based on how many platforms can be reached.
7. What tools do you use when developing?
   1. The computer and the engine are the most obvious, but let’s also look at some additional ways designers build out their games.
   2. Paper Prototypes. Using toys, legos, post-it notes, markers, paper, and anything else they can repurpose, game designers can make a faster version of the game they want to build using physical props. This allows developers to find the fun before investing the time into technology.
   3. The Game Design Document. This is a quick way to pitch your idea to a team. It outlines the basic structure of the game, and—if updated regularly—can be used by teams to stay on track.
   4. Wireframes and flow charts. Here we can see the bare-bones structure of the user interface. It allows designers to work with programmers and hook the game up so it makes sense, and it allows artists a template to create assets around.