

GAME TWO – LEVEL DESIGN GUIDELINES

GENERAL GUIDELINES NOTES:

- The guideline is only to provide basic ideas of how our levels should be made, what should they contain et cetera. It is only to help in designing levels but its content shouldn't be considered mandatory. Some of the best levels can be achieved by breaking rules, so don't be afraid to experiment.

BASIC LEVEL GEOMETRY NOTES:

- **Small size** – since we don't have many level builders and so far TLD's workflow has been in a bit of a development hell, this time instead of thinking on an "epic" scale let's try to do something on a smaller scope. **Tomb Raider Chronicles** had a good balance between size of the level and gameplay time. This made each level long enough to get accustomed to it, yet too short to get bored/irritated by it. We should try to make our levels the same size.
- **Verticality** – most locations in Tomb Raider: the Angel of Darkness seem to extend vertically rather than horizontally. Think of Tomb of Ancients, which is a big shaft, or starting location of the Sanitarium. Such places are often more memorable, like St. Francis Folly with its vertical staircase chamber. This creates a nice view and more intriguing gameplay.
- **Foreshadowing** – already mentioned in the original TRLE manual. Foreshadowing gives player a possibility to see something that's waiting for him further in the level. It is a great way to make players think in advance of what's lying ahead, makes them want to go there and it allows them to prepare beforehand.
- **Backtracking** – yes indeed, it was one of bigger problems of TR1-3, where you have to backtrack to the beginning of the level because they forgot one pickup. This kind of backtracking is bad. **Good backtracking** on the other hand makes earlier rooms usable more than once, it also gives a feeling of relieve to find a known place after a set of new, dangerous rooms. A good backtracking allows player to visit room and see it from different perspective. Example: The Lux Veritatis Sanctum in Forgotten Remnants levelset. Lara first reach the main cloister/courtyard, from which she goes into different rooms. The cloister is then used once. But, while progressing through the level, at one point you reach the balcony, giving you the possibility to see the cloister from a new perspective and get access to parts of it that weren't available before.
- **Meta2TR is not allowed (atm)** – simply because so far only one person could work on it (Quentin) and it only made building slower rather than faster. We might want to use meta2tr at one point in future, or use TombEditor's geometry import to improve our gameplay, but for the time being meta2tr isn't allowed. Levels should be made in a classic way with the possibility to meta2tr them afterwards (Mists of Avalon alike).
- **Colour diversity** – TRAOD was a darker game, but it managed to include a rich palette of colours throughout the entire game. It is important for each level to have its unique colour scheme that isn't reused in other levels. **3 main colours** should be a **minimal amount**, although it depends on the kind of level and author's vision.
- **Read chapter "DESIGNING TOMB RAIDER" (p. 56) in the official TRLE MANUAL!**

GAMEPLAY-SPECIFIC NOTES:

- **4 puzzles per level** – each level should contain at least **1 big puzzle** around which the entire level is built and **3 smaller puzzles** of lesser significance. Each puzzle should have its concept drawn and shown to scripters in order to improve it and make a setup for it.
Examples: Streets of Rome in TRC, where you had to find Symbol of Saturn and Star of David in order to unlock the main door to the temple (or actually the cutscene). St. Francis Folly in TR1, where you had to find four keys in order to unlock the door to the next level.
 - Main puzzles should be unique for each level to give a feeling of diversity. They should be way harder/more complex than classic TR1-3 key puzzles.
Examples: TRAOD alchemical signs puzzle in Archaeological Dig. Shiva and Kali puzzle in TRU. Beneath Croft Manor light puzzle in TRU.
 - **This does not apply to “the three realms” levels as they are sub-levels of the Zenoath level.**
- **Action rooms** – each level should have action rooms in which important storyline events will happen. Other events or puzzles can also be in such rooms, it’s just important that the level does correspond to the storyline.
- **New skills** – each level should introduce at least **one new skill or feature** for Lara. Be it new move, fancy weapon (Desert Ranger with lasersight), crowbar et cetera.
 - **This does not apply to the level where Kurtis is introduced as a playable character, since he will have all his unique skills in that same levels.**
- **1 pickup weapon per level** – each level should have one or two pickable weapon for Lara to find.
 - **This does not apply to Kurtis and “the three realms” levels. In these levels no weapons should be placed *at all*.**

This document will be updated accordingly.