

Good snack**SHILPA THOMAS**

Monday

**In-game hints help players proceed in the right direction**

Throughout the history of media, foreshadowing has been used to enhance the user's experience and enable them to interact more with the story. In simple terms, foreshadowing is a mechanism that helps indicate what is to come without revealing too much. Even in games, the designers lure the players by providing elusive clues of the upcoming themes and plot. Many a time, the in-game hints point the player in directions that they may otherwise miss. This mechanism increases the player's engagement and helps them avoid spending hours replaying the scene, figuring out how to move forward or in the right direction.

Without revealing too much about the game, I would like to illustrate how in-game hints help through a short serious game I played recently called Missed Messages, emphasizing the importance of communication. (If you are planning to play the game, I'd recommend that you play it and then read the snack). Throughout the game, the player gets subtle hints that set the game's tone and even instigates the player to do a particular action. The player receives an ample number of tips from her roommate, May, indicating she is in a tough spot. She also mentions how much she values the player and speaks about how life is short. These can be seen as two minor red flags that inform the player of the things to come and allow them to rethink their decision to go out. Another in-game hint is when the player "gets an urge to use the bathroom." This subtle hint reminds the player to stop getting sidetracked or too engrossed in the computer and messages and to pay closer attention to what's happening around them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRTjY4stv1Y> 



Bad Snack**SHILPA THOMAS**

Wednesday

**Longer wait times to replay games after failure can frustrate the players**

As games progressed over the years, one thing that hasn't changed much is the restart function. While some games force a restart from the latest checkpoint, other games give players the flexibility to choose whether to restart from the latest checkpoint or begin from the mission's start. Restarting a mission generally takes around ten seconds, during which the game loads the map and the objects. In some instances, due to the higher requirements for memory, it can take more than one minute. More often than otherwise, the player would want to restart the mission as soon as a particular objective goes wrong for want of a perfect run or to get back into the game as soon as possible to defeat a difficult section. Longer wait times to restart can irritate players and discourage them from replaying. It also leads to a situation where they rage-quit in particularly challenging scenarios where the game time could be shorter than the wait time to restart the mission.

The top-down shooter game, Helldivers, is an example where the restart time is exceptionally long. In this game, the player teams up with up to three others to complete missions on enemy planets. To make things complicated, the player can harm their teammates if their weapons and tools are not used with precision and coordination. This can lead to teammates being accidentally killed, in addition to being killed by the enemies. The game starts with players appearing on a mothership, which is navigating through space. Players can choose planets to play on and then drop down on to the planets to conquer it. On being killed, players can respawn twice in case of a solo mission or be revived by a friend in co-op missions. However, if all the players are killed, or if the player runs out of lives to respawn, the game ends the mission and takes the players back to the mothership, where they have to select the mission and drop down on to the planet again. Every mission failure is followed by a stats screen, following which the player goes to the mothership and has to select the option to drop down to the planet. This is then followed by a loading screen where the map and the objects are loaded. This process takes up to two minutes or more. There are scenarios where all the players in the game can get killed within 30 seconds of landing on a planet on higher difficulty levels. Players are also given multiple objectives to complete, half of which can be lost. Players who want a perfect run would prefer restarting the mission instantly if an objective is failed; however, the game does not have the option to restart the missions midway either. For a player who dies in-game often, the multiple two-minute waits can be excruciating and make the game tedious and less enjoyable to play.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SUdC4r82WM> 



Reply to snack

Having Unnecessarily Small Hitboxes Makes Games Frustrating

Games from the 80's and early to mid 90's often have a reputation for being surprisingly difficult. One reason for this high level of difficulty was because of game rentals. Game developers of the time didn't want players to rent a game, beat it, and then return it as they wouldn't make any money that way. To fix this they made their games have a higher level of difficulty so that a player likely wouldn't beat the entire game in a single session. One way they made games more difficult was through small hitboxes. With this, players had to make contact with an object or enemy at often very specific spots. This was especially difficult in platformers where even missing a platform or grab point by a single pixel could cost a player a life.

While this was an effective way of making sure players had to do more than one session to beat the game, it can also make the game so frustrating that the player gives up on the game altogether. In the second level of the video game adaptation of The Lion King, the player is required at one point to grab hippo tails and snouts in order to cross a river. The hitboxes on the hippos are quite small and easy to miss because of this, often result in the player losing a life and the level. For this and other things found in this level, many players found the game to be too frustrating and gave up on it altogether, ultimately defeating the purpose for making the game difficult in the first place.



Image source: <http://www.vizzed.com/boards/thread.php?id=73373>

**SHILPA THOMAS**

5:00pm



Hi Matthew,

On reading your snack, I think of the final boss scene in Max Payne 2. In this sequence, the player follows Vlad into a room where he is on top of a platform, and the player is at the bottom. The player must run around it and try to shoot him. But despite aiming the shots right at him, the enemy takes no damage and continues to drop bombs to the floor, breaking it, which eventually leads to the player's death. To defeat the Boss, the player must aim to shoot at the bolts at the end of the four vertical rods holding up the platform. Once all four bolts are shot at, the platform falls, and so does Vlad. First-time players of this game will not quickly figure out how to kill him, moreover aiming at the small hitbox, which is the bolt, in this case, will be difficult for such players.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls4XJTK-2c> ↗

