

Statement of Special Topic Inclusions

Who's On Helm?!

Topic 1: Fair/Fun Difficulty Curve

[Danielle Cole: Tutorials, Fairness and Difficulty Scaling](#)

Originally in the pitch presentation, my goals in the game related to my special topic was:

- Playthrough style tutorial
- Starts off in a dingy with one crewmate
- Difficulty increases with the size of the ship/number of crewmates

I accomplished the first two tasks in the final game, and worked with Elis together to work on scaling the ships in difficulty but designing new deck layouts.

For tutorials, I presented the following guidelines in our special topic presentations: "In order to make sure your game is fair you must first teach your player how to use it. One very common mistake people make is assuming that something is common knowledge. This is often achieved by having you players do some sort of tutorial."

Following these guidelines in the game, we have a tutorial that paced appropriately and covers a wide range of the mechanics in an engaging way. I improved the instructions in the tutorials in several iterations and took advice from the alpha and beta testers.

In summary, the aspects Completed related to my section of the special topic "Fair/Fun Difficulty Curve" includes but is not limited to:

- Tutorial level
 - Popups with simple instructions
 - Popups include arrows to point at important UI and images
 - Slowly presenting the challenges players
 - On screen guide to controls (WASD)
- Starting the player with a smaller boat and one crew mate, increasing the boat's size visually
 - Players start off with the dingy, then a mid sized boat, then a large boat
 - Players are not forced to continue the difficulty curve

[Elis: Leveling System, Challenges, Fairness](#)

Original Beta goals for Fair/Fun Difficulty Curve:

Scale the difficulty based on the level and the size of the ship.

Completed Leveling System:

- Implemented a 6-level scaling mechanic for the game.
 - Lvl 1 v1: no crew, two tasks
 - Lvl 1 v2: one crew, two tasks
 - Lvl 2 v1: one crew 3 tasks
 - Lvl 2 v2: two crew 3 tasks
 - Lvl 3 v1: 3 crew 3 tasks
 - Lvl 2 v2: 3 crew 4 tasks
- Each level introduces new challenges and mechanics to keep the gameplay engaging.

New Challenges:

- Designed challenges that vary based on the size of the ship.
- Introduced new crewmates at different levels, each bringing unique improvements and challenges alike, requiring strategic approaches.

I succeeded in establishing a fair and fun difficulty curve by linking difficulty to both level and ship size. The two factors work together to slowly introduce new ideas to the players. I balanced the game to prevent overwhelming players at any stage while maintaining a sense of accomplishment. Through our beta testing we really listened to our testers and where they were confused or frustrated on “bad” or “good” things that will happen.

I feel the game has a very gradual curve that gives players choice and control of the game. Keeping to our Game Feel goals, the fairness of the game can empower the player to really feel like “a captain” that is in control.

Topic 2: Player-Created Objectives

Alex: Player-Created Objectives

Originally in the design presentation, my goal was to implement my special topic (Player-Created Objectives) to our game was to introduce a high score system. This way it'll cater to the players which create competitive goals.

After some feedback and some discussions with the group and Dr. Thue, we believed it didn't cater our special topic as much as we would have liked. We then thought of including alongside the high score system, an achievement system.

So my contributions related to my special topic was;

High Score system

- Score relies on 3 factors
 - How much health you have at the end of journey (End of level)
 - How happy your crewmates are at the end of journey
 - How fast you completed the journey (Faster is better)
- (With help from Elis to balance the Fair/Fun difficulty curve) Scaling our score systems

Achievements

There are 5 attainable achievements. I was tasked to code the completion of these achievements.

- Squeaky Clean (Players must slip on poop 10 times)
- Fire in the Hole! (Players must defeated 15 navy ship (Not in one level))
- I'm on Helm (Players complete a level under 1 minute and 20 seconds)
- We got one! (Players must fish 50 fish (Not in one level))
- King of the Pirates (Players must have over 10 000 gold)

Kenzie: Player-Created Objectives

Per the professor's advice, we shifted our topic inclusions from the design presentation to better encapsulate our special topic. For this we introduced a high-score system and an achievement system.

For this, my contributions to our special topic were to design and set up the achievements menu and create the art for each one. We set up the menu so that the player can view it from the menu and the score calculation scenes so that they are able to check their progress on how many trophies they have collected thus far. These are unique scenarios that the player must experiment during gameplay in order to achieve. The player doesn't know what the achievements are until they get them, this encourages players to try out different play styles or silly ways to interact with the game in hopes of finding one of the achievements.

As an extra addition, although it was highlighted that this doesn't quite constitute as Player-Created Objectives, we added customization options for the captain and crew so that the players have a personal, tailored experience.