

Thomas Steinke
Brady Trinh
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Lab 3 Report

Our game is a simple platformer named *Wilbert the Slime*. In *Wilbert*, you play as a slime who wants to go on a trip to see the world. His journey leads him through a variety of places, including fields, forests, caves, and a mountain, but over the course of his trip he learns that everything is not quite as happy-go-lucky as it seems. A series of adventurers in every level try to attack Wilbert, and as the reality of the situation dawns on him Wilbert becomes less and less optimistic.

Throughout the course of the game, Wilbert touches base with you through cutscene dialogues where he expressed how he feels about the situation at hand. If he has been hurt a lot, Wilbert becomes more and more frustrated and worn down, until he just can't wait to go back home. The dialog serves as a "checkpoint," to indicate to the player what kind of job they are doing at taking care of Wilbert. If Wilbert has gotten hurt more, he shows a lot more pain during these dialogs, whereas he is happier and more optimistic if the player has taken good care of him.

However, Wilbert is not just a simple slime being beaten around by the world. When adventurers attack him, he gets frustrated, which manifests itself in "Fury Mode," where Wilbert can become invulnerable and kill the adventurers. As Wilbert defeats more adventurers, he becomes more and more angry, until after a point he cannot even turn off Fury Mode. The dialog scenes reflect this too, as Wilbert's expressions get more and more visibly angry while he is talking. Sometimes Wilbert will try and fight it, and sometimes he will give in and seek out adventurers to defeat.



Through these cutscenes, the player learns more about Wilbert. For example, after traversing the cave Wilbert will realize that he hasn't seen any of his friends and wonder where they are. Additionally, when Wilbert starts to get angry he refers to the voice that keeps telling him he needs violence, displaying a second dimension to an otherwise bubbly personality. Additionally, Wilbert will begin to transform based on his actions. As he lashes out in anger, Wilbert turns visibly red and reacts angrily towards everything, but if he keeps it subdued he grows more timid and wants the adventure to end.

Wilbert the Slime fulfills the objectives of the assignment because it is, at its core, a game about Wilbert as a character. The levels serve as entertaining and challenging context, but Wilbert expresses himself and really comes to life through the dialog cutscenes. He shows a variety of emotions, from happiness to anger and internal conflict within those emotions as he struggles with his anger. Additionally, between Fury and normal mode Wilbert's in-game animations change. He has a smile on his face while he rolls around, which disappears when he is enraged, and as a happy little slime he has an idle animation of curiously looking around at the world.

Another way we focus on Wilbert in the game is by creating a narrative arc with the level designs. Initially, the levels are designed to be challenging with a lot of enemies, but on a pretty generic platforming system. Then, we add in the functionality of branches you can jump onto from underneath, and make the level a lot more open to give the player a sense of being high up in the trees. Afterwards, the compact cave levels with spikes add a new dimension of danger to the player, but enemies become more sparse. Finally, the mountain levels are almost purely an experience of player against the environment, and the levels are designed to make the player feel as exhausted and frustrated as Wilbert would.

Additionally, we make effective use of sound and music to convey emotion during the game. Initially, the background music is blissful, and carries the emotion of ignorant joy that Wilbert expresses in his dialog. Later on, the music becomes more foreboding and concerning, and Wilbert becomes more disheartened along with it. Then, the mountain levels have a lonely background coupled with them, and the player is ready to go home, just like Wilbert. Finally, the game ends with reflective, calming music to signify an end to the player's journey.

The work was divided up such that each of us would be responsible for different features of the game, but we collaborated on all major fronts. The cutscenes, dialogue, sound functionality, player animations and artwork, and fury system was handled by Thomas. The level design, all non-player artwork, platforming engine, player interactions, health indicator, music choices, and enemy design was handled by Brady. Any other design decisions and bug fixes were a collaborative effort between the two of us. In terms of work on the main character, Brady provided the original character design and backstory while Thomas expanded on it through the fury system and the details of the dialogue.

The user feedback we received revealed to us some issues with the game, but fortunately there were not a lot of major flaws to address. The complaint that we saw the most often was that there was no display to show how many lives or how much health was remaining for Wilbert. As a result, it was hard for player to keep track of how well they were doing. In order to fix this, we added a life counter and health indicator in the upper left corner of the screen.

Another issue we saw people talk about was the introductory dialogue becoming tedious after multiple restarts and playthroughs. After the first playthrough, most people did not want to sit through the same tedium and just wanted to get to the game. This was addressed by allowing a hotkey to be pressed to skip the dialogue and jump right into the game. This way, the player can choose whether or not they want to read the dialogue each time.

The next issue we addressed was the lack of instructions given to the player. We solved this by adding a page of dialogue that explained the controls in the introduction, and adding UI elements to describe what the player could do.

Lastly, there were some gameplay bugs that players encountered mainly due to hitboxes extending past platforms. This was fixed by adjusting the thickness of the platforms in question so that the hitboxes would stay bounded properly.