

## Banjo Kazooie Breakdown

My favorite game is Banjo-Kazooie; the best elements of the game are level design and how abilities are introduced to and used by the player, the controls and characters.

The level design in Banjo-Kazooie is excellent; players are lead through the level using subtle clues and incorporate abilities from different parts of the game. Levels are designed in a circle manner to lead players around the level and eventually end up back at the start to exit the level. This avoids players feeling lost in the level because they will eventually return to a familiar area or the area where they started.

Having a circular layout allows the designers to have an idea of how a player will traverse the level. Often times the path is the brightest color on screen drawing player's eyes to it and subconsciously telling them to follow it. Using these techniques the designers can place harder challenges toward the back and right side of the level where players will travel last.

This also allows gating mechanics to force players to play through the level the direction is was designed. In the picture below of Mad Monster Mansion the hedge maze on the lower right side is accessible from the start of the level, but there is a gate that has to be broken from the other side; this makes players travel around the level to the left allowing for pacing and challenges to increase naturally without fear of a player wandering into a more difficult area before first completing an easier one.



Figure 2: Treasure Trove Cove Map



Figure 1: Mad Monster Mansion Map

Seven of the nine levels in the game, excluding the tutorial first level, introduce at least one new ability to the player. While it is possible to build an entire level based on one

ability to force the player to master it, the designers at Rare took a different approach. Levels make use of old and new player abilities to allow the player to master the game slowly over the course of the entire game.

The first level of the game introduces three new abilities to the player, the second level introduces two new abilities and the next four levels all introduce one new ability to the player. For the final two levels, the player has all of the abilities in the game. I think this systems works well because the abilities are spaced out throughout the game and give the player a chance to use all of the abilities in the game for two levels. The first level is slightly crowded but the abilities are different from each other and each ability gets a fair usage in the level.

The abilities learned in early levels of the game are still useful in later levels of the game. In the first level of the game the player learns the ability to jump and crash down into the ground called beak buster. Beak buster can be used to kill enemies and break objects. In the last level this ability is used to break areas of the ground and reveal hidden parts of the level. Throughout the game, all of the abilities learned are used in later levels and work together to provide different types of challenges to the player.



Figure 4: Beak Bust in First Level



Figure 3: Beak Buster in 8th Level

I think the characters worked really well in this game because they have opposite personality types. Banjo is nice, caring and trying to help the people he meets in his quest trying to save his sister; Kazooie is snarky and only wants to help people if they are going to reward her. Their personalities play off of each other very well and their interactions with other characters are humorous. Having two different characters gives the player a better opportunity to connect with the characters and become immersed in the game world while playing. The characters the player meets throughout the game have their own unique personalities and sounds which help distinguish them from one another.