Intention

This prototype was created to explore how turn-based mechanics and the resulting dynamics can be clearly expressed in effective and unintrusive feedback. As the roll-to-hit mechanic formed the core idea of this prototype, this was the mechanic which received the most layered feedback along with feedback dealing with the turn-based-system.

Process

The core mechanic of this game is the roll-to-hit mechanic. As a result, this is what needed to be highlighted the most with feedback. The "roll" button appears at the beginning of the player's turn and disappears after the player enters combat. This makes it clear to the player that it is no longer the enemy's turn and it prompts them to click it. There is a 2/6 chance that the player or enemy will "miss" and will be unable to attack. This was made clear by adding the text "MISS" underneath the generated roll number. This disappears after three seconds to prevent confusion. Furthermore, text appears the first time that the player and enemy miss. This text briefly explains how the dice roll is compared to the opponent's defense. If this defense number is higher than or equal to the rolled number, the player or enemy will miss their chance to attack the opponent and the turn will pass. After the text has appeared once for both the enemy and player, it will not show again to prevent it from becoming intrusive and taking up screen space unnecessarily. It is made very clear when the player's roll succeeds as they are presented with two attack buttons: a melee attack button and a fireball attack button. These are only available to the player during the combat phase of the turn to make sure the player is aware of when they can give input. The console which originally communicated the turns, whether the player missed and if they were burned was deemed unnecessary as it took up a lot of space on the screen. Furthermore, it pulled the player's attention away from the roll results situated on the other side of the screen, causing the player to miss information.

The damage dealt to the player or enemy is communicated in several ways. There are health bars for both the player and enemy which grow smaller as health is lost. To draw attention to this change in health, a red box appears behind the health bars affected for half a second before disappearing. This also directs the player's attention to how much health is left, as the less health an entity has, the more red will show from behind the health bar. This is especially important when it communicates to the player that they have been burned by their own fireball spell. There is text that appears which says, "You were burned" which was added to make sure the player understood why they were taking damage.

To enable the player to calculate how much health is deducted from them each turn, as well as how much damage their attacks do, red numbers showing damage appear on the player (if the player is taking damage) and on the enemy (if the enemy is taking damage). This transparency helps the player make informed and strategic decisions, especially as the gameplay would ideally become more complex in the future. A screen shake was added every time damage was dealt to the player or the enemy. This feedback worked with the "MISS" text as well as the red damage numbers to further communicate when damage had been done and when the player or enemy had missed. This makes sure that the player is aware of each occurrence of damage and understands exactly how the roll-to-hit mechanic works. Furthermore, the screen shake is more pronounced when the fireball spell is played, which indicates to the player that more damage is being dealt.

Reflection

Although the feedback in this game does clarify the turn-based and roll-to-hit system, there are some improvements which could be made in the future. It can be argued that there is still too much text being used to explain concepts whereas showing the player would be more effective. With regards to the fireball spell burning the player, this could be achieved with an icon or visual cue to show the player that they are burning, such as a flame symbol, rather than having "You were burned" appear in text. If further clarification were needed, hovering over this symbol with the mouse could make the words "You were burned" appear. This is especially important to consider with the understanding that as further mechanics are added, there will not be enough room for text to explain all the mechanics.

Another mechanic which could be communicated more clearly is the "roll" mechanic. The player has no way of knowing that this is a D6 roll. An animation of a D6 rolling could provide more clarification, however communicating this information is not as important as communicating whether the player hit or missed. Another feedback element which could be improved upon is the screen shake. Arguably the difference in screen shake magnitude between the melee and enemy attacks (which do 2 damage) and the fireball attack (which does 4 damage) is not significant enough. Ideally it should be made to feel more powerful to communicate that the player is using a special and more powerful attack.

Overall, the intention has been met as the turn-based combat system and roll-to-hit mechanic are clearly expressed throughout the game. However, this feedback could be further simplified in the future so that it is clearer and more concise.