

Playtest Evaluation

Hostage Mechanic

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Implementation of the playtest

The player is inside of a level in which he can freely move around. In front of him is an NPC that can be grabbed. The hostage is facing the enemy of the level. The enemy will start shooting when the player is spotted. By grabbing the hostage, the player can see a reaction of the enemy which is surrendering. The player can play around in the level can try to shoot the enemy and can see the different behaviors of the AI.

Test methodology

The idea was to let the player experience a closed combat situation. To keep it simple the level was just the two NPC's facing each other and walls behind the player can hide. This way there are no unnecessary distractions, and the player will just focus on the reaction of the AI when the player grabbed the hostage.

Summary of user opinions

- The user's opinion about the general idea to make a mechanic like this was positive. All users would like to see it in a finished game. Also, the users liked that this would be a more realistic behavior of the enemy.
- Users had problems with the "E" key, which is used to take the hostage. You must hold the button but then you cannot properly use the movement controls anymore. Also, it was confusing that in the playtest document was not written that the "E" must be held.
- The biggest problem mentioned is the balancing of the mechanic. Right now, there is no penalty when the player takes a hostage, and the enemy just will not shoot at you which creates some kind of god mode.
- The user's mentioned that maybe another form of surrendering would be more believable. Like letting the AI try to rescue the hostage by moving around to get a free shot.
- The health bar is still visible when the enemy died.
- A bigger level with more situations to use the mechanic would be nice
- Weird behavior of the hostage when releasing while looking up

Main problem and how to change it

The balancing of the mechanic is the biggest problem of the prototype. That is why it should be the main focus. To give players the feeling of entering a god mode is not what this mechanic should feel like. The mechanic should try to make a game more realistic.

Player penalty

When the player takes a hostage, his camera will start shaking which will make it harder to aim. Also, the movement speed will be reduced to a minimum so that the player can barely move around. But not too much this should not feel like a stun.

Better AI behavior

The AI should not just stand around. After a short while, it should slowly start moving and try to find an opportunity to get a free shot on the player and not hit the hostage. When the player is hit, he will instantly drop the hostage. Also, when the player is facing backward to the AI it should start shooting.

Optional change for the hostage

When a hostage is grabbed it will release itself after a short duration, but this could be too much of a penalty for the player.

Other Changes

- Change the grab from holding "E" to toggle with "E" this way it should not be a problem to control the player during a grab.
- When an enemy dies the health bar should not be visible anymore
- After the grab is released the world position of the hostage should be reset to normal so that it will not fly around.
- The Hostage should not follow the camera when moving vertically

Optional Changes

- A bigger level would make the prototype more fun to play. There could be situations with more than one enemy or with different places to hide before grabbing.
- Patrolling guards in the level
- Not different NPCs for enemies and hostage instead just one kind of enemy which can attack or be hold as hostage
- A view cone for the enemy