# DES 335

**Spring-2025**

**Week 10 Playtest Notes**

**DigiPen Institute of Technology**

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## Partner RPG System Title: <Court of Alphame>

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## P3 Playtest #1 Report Requirements (You Run Adventure)

Playtesting is critical for any game development, but particularly for the game’s primary, core mechanic. During lab, you will be placed into groups to discuss, analyze, and playtest each other’s adventures.

This may include attempting basic combat, resolving skill tests, etc.—anything that stress-tests any likely scenarios that might occur in your game. This report documents your observations, notes, and actionable items that come from that playtesting.

You are required to do at least ONE (1) playtest session of around 30 minutes per person. However, you are highly encouraged to do additional playtesting. If you do, use as many of the Optional Playtest Notes sections below as needed.

## Rubric

This, like other weekly reports, is not considered a separate grade, but affects your overall final grade.

* **-2%:** Not Submitted at time of grading
* **-1%:** Insufficient information and/or Late turnover of assignment (Instructor discretion)
* **+0%:** Sufficient information and description
* **+1%:** More than one playtests performed and documented

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## Playtest Session #1 [REQUIRED]

**Date:** 3/13/24

**Location:** In-Person, Thursday Lab

**Number of Playtesters:** 2

**Duration:** 30-40min

**Playtest Summary**

I playtested one of my events that I’m writing for my adventure. This event involved the players talking to an accountant to try and get information out of him and hopefully convince him to help them.

**The Good**

Overall, the playtest went fairly well. There was no confusion on the core mechanic or any of the other systems. It was clear what the options were, what you were supposed to roll, and what the outcome was based on your roll. It seems like the system functions well without any hiccups. On top of that, it seemed like both players were fairly engaged through the entire playtest, which tells me that I did a decent job making the event interesting.

**The Bad**

An issue I noticed was that the encounter might not have been balanced very well. There are two reasons for this. The first is that there were only two players instead of four, which would drastically change how the social encounters function. The other reason is that there is very little in the rules to help with the creation of social encounters. There is a difficulty chart, which does help with picking the difficulty of the encounter, but I have no context for how high an NPC’s Patience should be or what Importance level I should make their details so that they’re more balanced. Before running another playtest or making my new events I’ll have to do some number crunching to come up with reasonable values so I can make the encounters go how I want them to. It would be very helpful to have some of this math done and already in the rulebook so I can use them as a frame of reference.

**The Ugly**

This isn’t really an “issue” per say but something else I noticed is that there was some confusion in regards to the various checks being made. This was mainly due to the fact that Alphame as a system is very open-ended and relies heavily on roleplay. All of the actions that players and NPCs can perform are roleplay oriented, which is very cool. The problem, however, is that players and DMs have to either pick an action based on what they want to say, or say something based on the action they want to use. This can create some awkward pauses where people are trying to figure out what it is they’re doing as opposed to what they want to do. The root cause of this is just the roleplay-heavy nature of the system, which obviously cannot be addressed. The way then to mitigate this is to make the categories for actions broader, there were several instances where I wanted to do something specific, but ended up having to change it to fit a more generic action like “Change the Subject.”

Another issue is that it isn’t super clear what all of the stats are used for, Strongarm specifically caused some questions. It’s not always super clear what stat would actually fit what you’re doing, or what you should do based on the stat you want to use.

Easily the biggest problem I noticed was the disconnect between the roleplay and the dice rolling. Ideally in a system like this the roleplay should flow smoothly, with very few gaps in the conversation. However, in reality, we had to stop after every action to roll dice and update values. This is a mostly unavoidable issue since there’s no way to make a TTRPG that doesn’t involve these breaks for checks, but it felt excessive for a system like this. It is entirely possible that this was simply due to our inexperience with the system as we had to spend time figuring out what to roll and what each check was contested by. I will perform another playtest and see if this is an issue again.

The system really doesn’t seem to have anything that appeals to Gamists. One of the players was a Gamist who isn’t super into the roleplay aspect of things and he didn’t seem to vibe as much with the system as the other player. I would definitely recommend adding systems or tweaking things so that the game can appeal more to Gamists.

**Playtest Notes**

It’s difficult to remember what attribute defends against what, once again recommending a chart of some kind.

“What does Strongarm actually mean?”

One player is engaged with roleplay, the other is not

## Playtest Session #2 [OPTIONAL]

## You are highly encouraged to do additional playtesting. If you do, include your notes here. Otherwise, delete this entry.

**Date:** 3/16/25

**Location:** Over discord

**Number of Playtesters:** 4

**Duration:** ~1hr

**Playtest Summary**

I ran this playtest over discord with a few of my friends. All of them had been given a chance to read the system rules beforehand but were still pretty new and required some coaching. I ran the same event as before; however I added another read-aloud to give more initial context.

**The Good**

Despite the fact that all of my friends are Gamists, a player type that I don’t believe is really supported at the moment, everyone enjoyed it. It was a brand new system to them, in a brand new setting, and they had a good time. Obviously the system itself is very interesting and well designed, but I still felt it was worth it to mark down that it was enjoyed.

Everyone caught on to the way that social encounters work very quickly. The entire encounter only lasted 2 rounds, but by the start of the 2nd round they were strategizing, which required a decent understanding of how the rules worked. This would indicate that the overall core mechanic and Social Encounter structure is easy to understand, which is very nice.

**The Bad**

There was some confusion about the gather information action, everyone seemed to believe that it was used to gather information about someone else, rather than the target. This was a pretty small hiccup and was easily explained, but it does go to show that some of the wording can be a little confusing.

There was some confusion about the Inquisitor class’s features. We could not figure out how they were actually used as there was no specific bonus listed.

**The Ugly**

I think there’s a problem with the way that Social Encounters are structured, or rather there’s a problem with their lack of structure. There was no real order to the conversation, people would just say random things and as the DM I would have to respond to each one. It didn’t really feel like a conversation at all. I don’t think that it was just a problem relating to a lack of experience in the system. In both playtests run I noticed this issue, and it feels to me like a system problem. I think overall the actual victory conditions and roleplay aspects are too separated. It would be easy to replace certain things with words like “Attack” and “Health,” and it would feel just like an ordinary combat-driven game. It feels more like the chaos of a battle in D&D than the order that I think is intended. I have suggestions on how to fix this, which I will put in the feedback document.

**Playtest Notes**

Casey getting deep into objective

Goal is to have Diggory give a secret about Geoffery

Confusion about gather information

“We should just keep going for progress ticks”

Inquisitor class problems

Watching patience

Securing interaction first

“Feels weird to do same skill twice in a row, how am I supposed to assure him after he said it wouldn’t work”

Do I tell them the values

Does not know about secrets and details