

Game Documentation

It *is* necessary, and people *do* read it!

Game Development Foundations

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What Documents Get Made When Making a Game?

- At a minimum, the following documents should be made:
 - The Game Design Document,
 - The Art Bible, and
 - The Technical Design Document
- Let's look at each of these in turn

The Game Design Document

- This is probable the most important document that will be written for your game
- It contains information about the game's:
 - Story
 - Characters
 - Level / environment design
 - Art
 - Sound and Music
 - User Interface and Game Controls

The Game Design Document

- The Game Design Document should tell everyone on your team
 - What game you are making
 - What the game mechanics are
 - Who will play the game
 - How many / what levels it will have
 - How long it will take to make
 - ...and any other important information about it's design

The Game Design Document

- The GDD is typically written by the game designer, but all members of the team should contribute
- It is a *'living document'*
 - It is updated constantly throughout development to reflect any changes

The Art Bible

- Created by the art director / lead artist
- Defines the art style
- All artist will refer to this document to ensure created assets will match this style

The Technical Design Document

- Created by the lead programmer
- Defines technical details regarding the implementation of the game. For example:
 - What game engine is being used
 - How level data is stored
 - What AI algorithms are being used
 - How assets and textures should be formatted
- Also contains any technical constraints that might affect the game design

Why You Need a Game Design Document

- Movie makers use movie scripts.
- Architects use blueprints.
- Musicians use a score.
- Why would you want to make a game without any sort of plan?

Why You Need a Game Design Document

- It aids the game design process
 - It lets you focus on designing the game before worrying about how to make it
- It conveys the game's vision to the rest of the team
- New team members can quickly be brought up to speed
- It ensures you don't lose your vision throughout development

Writing a Good Game Design Document

- Make sure your document has 'soul'
 - Inspire the people on your team
 - Describe the feel that the game should have, the purpose behind each element, the experience users will have
- Make it readable
 - Don't use point form, but don't put in too much text either. Plenty of white space, short lines of text, with bold headers
- Get into the details
 - Make sure your document is actually useful for making the game

A Game Design Document Template

- Introduction (what is your game about):
 - Include genre, theme, gameplay, references to similar games
- Game Atmosphere
 - The atmosphere/mood, location/level descriptions, character/audio design
- Story
 - Scenario/setting, description, story elements

A Game Design Document Template

- Gameplay
 - Levels, player controls, mechanics, how to win/lose, why is the game fun?
- Level Design
 - How will levels be made, physical level layouts, any external programs used?
- Title and Information Screens
 - Show a diagram showing how to get to each game state/screen
- Scope
 - Is your game too big/small, is it realistically achievable?

A Game Design Document Template

- Timelines

- A good GDD also shows deadlines and dates for when the major components will be completed
 - First playable Prototype (that first version that 'works')
 - Alpha (all major gameplay implemented)
 - Beta (nothing left to add, just bugs left to fix)
 - Gold (this is the version you release)

Summary

- Documenting your game design is important
- The main documents are the Game Design Doc, the Art Bible, and the Technical Design Doc
- The GDD contains the vision for your game
 - It gets every member of your team on the same page
- There is no 'fixed' format for a GDD, but using a guide or template can be helpful

References

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