10 Things I Hate about Your Game AI

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(Directions – PLEASE DELETE BEFORE YOU SUBMIT)

Written Assignment due Jan 17th before class – turn in on Moodle.

Worth 5% of final grade. Extra credit 20% opportunity (extra 1% on final grade).

1. Watch this 27min GDC talk: “30 Things I Hate About Your Game Pitch” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LTtr45y7P0>)
2. Brainstorm a list of “Things I Hate About Your Game AI”. Research terrible game AI and what people are complaining about. Add to your list.
3. Use ChatGPT to see if it can help you. Document all prompts and outputs at the end of this document.
4. Decide on 10 to write about. Your title is “10 Things I Hate About Your Game AI”.

Each item needs a descriptive title header, like “Getting shot in the back is not fun”.

Each item must have 4 to 8+ sentences explaining:

1. What is the thing you hate (or your “beef”).
2. Why you hate it.
   1. Why is it unfair, annoying, terrible, or bad game design?
   2. Make a solid argument.
3. One or more examples from a real game.
4. (optional) Provide a solution.

# 1 Escort mission are NOT FUN!!!

A common mission in video games involves the player escorting an NPC to another location. The issue arises with the NPC AI and its design. Whether it's Ashley from RE4 shouting "LEON!" for help or the survivors from the Dead Rising series constantly putting themselves in harm’s way, these NPCs prove to be more of a hindrance to the player than anything else. From moving too slowly, causing the player to slow down, to constantly getting themselves in trouble and forcing the player to turn back and save them, all these factors cause the player to become annoyed as the game progresses at a snail's pace.

For example, in the first Dead Rising game, it often felt as if the survivors were actively trying to get themselves killed due to how frequently they separated from the player and attempted (and failed) to fight the surrounding zombies and it also doesn’t help that when you find this survivors, most of the time they are stating that they are scared for their life. So now there’s a bit cognitive dissonance as well which, personally, feels quite world breaking.

# 2 How did you gather so much in so little time?

The strategy in the early stages of many RTS games is to gather as many resources as possible to level up quickly. You can practice this by fighting with AI opponents in skirmishes. However, some opponents can collect resources at an astonishing rate, to the point where they advance to higher ages while you're still in the Dark Age.

For instance, in the Age of Empires series, if you play on a difficulty level above "hardest," the enemy AI can gather resources so rapidly that it feels unfair. From my observations (you can record and watch your gameplay), I've noticed that the enemy AI operates with minimal delay between actions, almost as if multiple actions are happening simultaneously. Consequently, even if you're performing the same actions as the enemy, you can't gather resources as quickly because they somehow manage to do it faster.

# 3 Stop saying that sector is in danger when it’s not.

In many city-building games, you'll have several advisors giving your "tips" on how to improve the city and sounding off alarms if something is amiss. The issue arises when, 9 times out of 10, the concerns they raise aren't significant or aren't issues at all. This can be extremely annoying as they force you to stop whatever you're doing and check on the "issue" they're presenting, only for you to realize it's not a problem.

For example, in SimCity 4, your advisor often goes off the rails for no apparent reason, forcing you to halt your activities and address their concerns, only for you to ultimately ignore their advice. What's worse is that if the player is new to the game, they may trust the advisor and attempt to fix the perceived issue, only to waste their time and resources.

# 4 Can you stop stealing my kill?

n many action games, you usually have an NPC partner to assist you in your fights. The issue arises when they invest a significant effort in battling a strong opponent, only for your partner to swoop in and land the final blow, receiving credit for the victory.

For instance, in the Dynasty/Samurai Warrior series, you often have other friendly officers present to "aid" you in combat against enemy soldiers and officers (even though they deal very little damage, rendering their assistance negligible). However, it becomes frustrating when you expend time and effort weakening an enemy officer, only for your allies to steal the kill and have their name displayed on the screen as the victor. While not a major issue, it is indeed annoying to see your efforts attributed to someone else. It's akin to a friend stealing your kill in a multiplayer game.

# 5 I’m not a kid. You don’t have to tell me everything.

The concept of an NPC providing tips and tricks is a good one, as in theory, they can assist players in tight spots and serve as reminders. However, issues arise when they spew out redundant information that, at best, adds noise pollution and, at worst, insults the player's intelligence.

For instance, in the Sonic series, there's a character named Omochao who offers tips and hints while you play. The problem is that he often asks you to perform actions you've already completed. Additionally, his voice doesn't help matters; it carries a condescending tone that gives the impression the robot is looking down on you.

To improve his tolerability, it would be beneficial to check if the player has executed the move before which is something like what Plant vs Zombie did in which it would check what move you’ve done and see if it’s appropriate to drop a hint on to you. If they have a similar system to what PVZ did, then Omochoa would be lot more tolerable.

# 6 Can you stop giving me stupid quest please?

NPCs giving you missions and quests is not uncommon in many games. They provide a means for players to gain experience, items, and even expand upon the game's lore. However, the issue arises when these missions become tedious and boring. Furthermore, having a quest list cluttered with tasks you have no intention of completing only exacerbates the problem.

For instance, in Fallout 4, the character Preston constantly sends you to save settlements. While initially tolerable, it becomes increasingly annoying and dull to continually rescue settlements consisting of only 2-3 people. Although you can ignore these quests, it's frustrating when Preston interrupts you with trivial information that you'll likely forget about.

A potential solution could involve implementing a system where players can delegate quests to others, with the success or failure of the task dependent on their skills and equipped items. This could not only solve the problem but actually deepen the gameplay as since you are a leader of a faction, it would make sense for you to delegate smaller or lower priority task for other to do.

# 7 I hate how fickle and sensitive you are.

Like in real life, you can have a relationship with some characters and, like in real life, they each have their own personality and views. This can prove to be useful in keeping the player interested and invested in the game as more time with them and get to know the character, you would (hopefully) like them and would like to spend more time with them, thus increasing engagement and playtime.

However, the issue comes when these characters are fickle. It sucks even more if they have the power to make your life even worse. Like in the city builder game Pharoah, you must constantly juggle and manage your relationship with the multiple gods, pleasing them by building temple and throwing festival. Doing so will improve your relationship, thus increasing your chances of getting their blessing. But there are multiple Egyptian gods, so you have multiple gods to please but that’s not the issue, right?

Wrong. Because if one God gets more attention than the other, your relationship with that God will decrease which increase the chances of you getting curse by them. So now, how you approach and handle your relationships with the gods is like how a parent must carefully split the amount of affection they give to their kids or else you will feel the child’s wrath, except instead of kids, they are gods and instead of tantrum, you get the plague. This is not fun. Just tiring and exhausting.

# 8 Can you please stop dodging and blocking my attacks so much please?

Ok maybe this might sound like I have a skill issue because it does make sense for the enemy to try to dodge my attack which I don’t mind. But what I do mind is when it does it a bit too well to the point that it doesn’t feel fair anymore. These enemies are now moving and side strafing at the speed of sound, making it near impossible to and blocking my every move.

Take for example Yakuza 3. The enemy AI are unnaturally good at dodging and blocking your attack to the point that being able to hit a basic 3 hit combo is something worth celebrating over. The enemy sidesteps and moves unnaturally fast. And to add insult to injury, even when you can hit the enemy, he’s in a blocking stance as if he knows you’re going hit him now.

The fights become unusually difficult and makes me contemplate my ability as a gamer due to me constantly failing to land a hit on a simple grunt in the game.

# 9 Can you stop getting in trouble for 5 minutes? FOR 5 MINUTES

The work of an ally NPC travelling with you is to help you traverse the area of the game and give you tips and tricks. However, maybe for plot convenience, they often get themselves in trouble and it’s up to you to(reluctantly) save them to progress the plot. This is annoying.

It’s even more annoying when the characters name does not fit their occupation.

For example, in the Monster Hunter World, the Handler(ironic) is supposed to be your partner who travels the world with you, tracking and recording the behavior of the local monster quietly and from a distance. Sadly the “quietly” and “at the distance” must not be part of her vocabulary as she tends to get in trouble and it’s up to you to save her.

I would propose a solution but funny enough, they have already implemented the solution in their expansion pack, Ice borne. There, the Handler is replaced by the Serious Handler which is basically the handler except she can do her job right.

# 10 More health + More damage ≠ More fun

As a game progresses, one may expect the difficulty of the game and thus the difficulty of the enemy to increase as well. However, some games think that just giving the base enemy more health and being able to deal more damage will equate to it being more difficult while it just becomes a grind fest.

Extremely common in many RPG and MMORPG games, they tend to re-use the same enemy type but with more health and damage output. This is not fun.

But some games can circumvent this issue by giving this familiar enemy new move set instead. For example, in the game ULTRAKILL, if you played the game on another difficulty, the enemy now has a whole new move set and can even learn and predict your upcoming moves. So now you need to adapt to these new changes to overcome them.

**ChatGPT SECTION**

**Document all ChatGPT prompts and output here. Just copy and paste below here:**