

Lecture11 Design Document Template

1. Concept Document

Entertainment / Serious / Educational

Create a **one-page concept document** for a game that you are interested in working on.

Note: Keep this concept doc to one (1) page. Be concise and decide what is most important to get across to your target audience (busy executives, bored marketing folks, and overworked game developers).

CONCEPT DOCUMENT TEMPLATE — ENTERTAINMENT GAME

- **Game Title**
 - Give your game a name!
 - Leave this until after you’ve filled out the rest of the template.
- **Intended Audience**
 - Who is your game intended for? Who will enjoy it?
- **High Concept**
 - Describe your game in just a few sentences.
- **Genre**
 - What type of game is it? What sorts of games is it similar to?
- **Description**
 - Describe the look and feel of your game.
 - Briefly describe the game world, the player’s place in it, and so on.
 - Give more detail than in the “High Concept” section.
- **Story**
 - What is your game’s story?
 - Why is the player here and what are they doing?
 - What is their eventual goal? (Even if your game doesn’t have an explicit story, with characters and dialogue, it should have background and goal(s) for the player.)
- **Settings/Environments**
 - List and briefly detail the setting(s)/environment(s) in which your game takes place.
 - What will the player see in your game?
 - Where will s/he go?
- **Features/Gameplay**
 - List the important features of your game and give examples of its gameplay.
 - This section should complement the “Description” section, not duplicate it.
 - A bullet list would work well.
 - How does this gameplay fit your story and setting?
- **USPs**
 - What are your game’s Unique Selling Points?
 - What’s different about it?

Game Adaptation

Choose a novel, graphic novel, TV series, or movie that hasn’t had a game adaptation created for it. Write up a concept doc treatment that adapts that property into a game format (entertainment, educational, or training). This document can be longer than one page but no more than two pages. Use this template to guide your treatment.

CONCEPT DOCUMENT TEMPLATE — GAME ADAPTATION

- **Original IP (Intellectual Property)**
 - Tell us about the property (movie, book, etc.) your game will be based on.
- **Game World/Setting**
 - Describe the world in which this property takes place.
- **Intended Game Genre**
 - Tell us about the genre you have chosen for your game treatment of this property and why you feel it would be the best way to present this property in a game.

- **Original Story**
 - Give us an overview of the original property’s story.
 - Then tell us if your game would enable the player to play through this story or experience parts of it, or if your game is intended to tell a completely different story.
 - If the latter, explain how you plan to ensure your story stays true to the look and feel of the franchise, so that players don’t feel misled.
- **Your Story**
 - Give us some of the major beats in your planned story so we get a feel for the player’s experience. If it works best for you to merge this section with the previous one, feel free to do so.
- **Original Characters**
 - List the major characters in the original property, with brief descriptions of their personalities and roles in the story.
 - Also mention what, if any, part these original characters will play in your story.
- **Your Characters**
 - Tell us about the major characters in your story, giving us some detail about their backgrounds, personalities, and the roles they will fulfill in your game and story.
 - Be sure to give us a good feel for your Hero and their nemesis (the Shadow).
- **Audience Expectations**
 - What do you feel the audience of the original property expects from a game adaption of it?
 - How are you trying to meet (or distract the audience from) those expectations?
 - What aspects of audience expectations do you feel would be most concerning or hardest to fulfill?

2. Game Design Document (GDD)

Choose one of your concept docs from which to start developing an outline for a game design document (GDD). GDD covers your game’s story, cast of characters, and game world; strive to make it as comprehensive as you can. The GDD is the foundation for subsequent development of your game’s design and story, so make it good. Please note:

- Your cast of characters needs to include not just those on the side of the Hero, but also those on the Shadow’s side as well.
- The Key Locations are places in your game world where important events occur. Don’t just give the names of the places —give a brief description of the location and tell what happens there and why it’s important to your story.

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT OUTLINE

Name of Game

THE BASICS: This information should mostly come from your concept doc.

- **Game**
 - Describe your game in a paragraph.
- **Genre**
 - What genre does your game fit into?
- **Audience**
 - Who is the target audience for your game?
- **USPs**
 - What is the hook(s) for your game?
 - What’s different about it?
 - What’s the player going to love about it?
 - What is there about your game that will surprise the player and keep them coming back?

STORY: Here’s where you give us the details on your game’s story and the player’s place in it. Every game needs a story, even if it’s only for the dev team.

- **Plot**
 - What happens in your story?
 - Give us at least a basic outline of your story, including the start and the ending.
- **The Player Character**
 - Tell us who the player character (PC) is in your story—background, motivations, goals, and so on.
 - If possible, include concept art of the PC or an image from another game to give us a sense of the PC.
- **The Foe (Shadow)**

- Who or what is the main force opposing the player’s drive toward their end goal?
- What are this character’s goals?
- How do they aim to achieve them?
- **Other Characters**
 - Who else is in your story, what’s their purpose, and what do they do?

- **Story Vehicles**

- Tell us how you will convey your story to the player.
- Will there be dialogue (text or voice) with non-player characters (NPCs)?
- Text screens with story as a reward for player accomplishments? Cutscenes?

THE GAME WORLD: Tell us about your game world here. Fill in all sections as completely as possible. Add other sections if your game calls for them.

- **Environments**
 - Describe the environments the player will encounter in your game.
 - Concept art and/or images from other games could help convey this.
- **Key Locations**
 - Describe the key locations in your world, places where important parts of the story occur.
- **Game Flow**
 - How does the PC experience your game world?
 - How do the world’s locations connect?
 - Include the order in which the player encounters the sections of your game world.
 - Note: Make sure the connections between areas are either logical or make sense within the context of your story!
- **Interactivity**
 - What can the player do with your game world?
 - How do they interact with it?
 - List some examples of interactive objects, items, and locations here.
 - Also, in what ways can the player interact with the inhabitants of your game world?
- **Training**
 - Is there a training level/area built into your game?
 - If so, describe it here. If not, how does the player learn the controls and how to play?
 - Does the training level also serve to familiarize the player with the game world and his/her PC?
- **Map/Layout**
 - Describe the layout of your world here—how the levels, environments, or areas of your game world connect, how the player makes his/her way through your world.
 - Include a map(s) or image(s) showing this layout.

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT OUTLINE

Name of Game

GAMEPLAY: How does the PC interact with your game world, its setting, characters, objects, structures, etc.?

- **Player Experience**
 - What will the player experience be like in your game?
 - What emotions or reactions are you aiming to inspire in the player?
- **Player Character Actions**
 - What can the PC do in your game?
 - How do they interact with the game world and its characters?
- **Player Character End Goal**
 - What is the PC’s end goal in the game?
 - What are they trying to accomplish?
 - And when they reach the end, what are the rewards?
- **Enemies**
 - These are the animate obstacles to the player’s progress.
 - Who are the player’s foes, what do they want, what do they do, etc.?
 - Is there a hierarchy to these foes? If so, who leads them?
 - Concept art or images from other games will help give a feel for these foes.
- **Combat**
 - How does combat work?

- How does the player battle forces inimical to their quest?
- It's OK if combat does not fit the theme of your game, but be sure to tell us what characters or objects oppose the player's quest and how they overcome them.
- **Obstacles**
 - What inanimate challenges will the player encounter in your game?
- **Object, Items, Weapons, ETC.**
 - What inanimate objects can the player pick up or otherwise interact with?
 - How do those work?
 - Any parts of the environment that are interactable, detail them here
- **Replayability**
 - How replayable is your game?
 - What makes it replayable?
 - If it isn't, try to make it so.

ART STYLE/AESTHETICS: What is the look and feel of your game? What atmosphere do you hope to create for the player?

- Be sure to describe the images you add here, telling the environment artists and level designers on your team what each image means for the game.
- Also be sure to give images for character art style.
- Note: This section must include either original concept art or images/ screenshots/concepts from other games that show the art style you're aiming for.
- Create sub-sections here as needed.

USER INTERFACE/CONTROLS: How does the player interact with your game world and its characters, items, and environment? What information and capabilities do you provide the player as s/he is playing?

- **Interface**
 - What information will you display on-screen for the player?
 - Include a sketch of the user interface (UI) during gameplay.
- **Menus**
 - What menus and capabilities do you provide the player (e.g., Inventory, Journal, Equipping/Loadout)?
 - These should all be functions that enhance the player's experience.
 - Include a sketch or image of each menu you plan.
- **Messaging**
 - How does the game world convey information to the player?
 - Is it via dialogue, text messages, verbal notifications, images and effects splashed onto the screen, etc.?

MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECT: Tell us about the audio component of your game design. Keep in mind that audio works with the visuals, story, and gameplay to help create a unified theme for the player experience

- **Music**
 - Describe the general style of the music for your game, the atmosphere you're trying to create, and the effect you hope the music has on the player.
 - For each distinct area of your game, give suggestions as to the mood/atmosphere the music should convey.
- **Sound Effects**
 - Give us an idea of the kinds of events, player/NPC actions, and so on that will trigger sound effects in your game.
 - Also list unique ambient sounds (background sounds) for each distinct area of your game, to convey the feel of that area (e.g., machinery and truck sounds in an industrial area).

Original Short Story

Write an original short story, 2–5 pages long, set in the game world you are developing. Remember that stories are about people/characters and how they cause or react to events in the world around them. Make this story about an important character or characters in your game. It can be about anyone in your world, not necessarily your game's Hero. This story should give the reader insight into your game world and the people who inhabit it.

Story and Gameplay

Consider how published games have integrated (or failed to integrate) story with gameplay.

For a game of your choosing (default is The Walking Dead, Season 1 Episode 1), write a two-to four-page paper discussing how that development team integrated story and gameplay to create the player experience.

Think of this paper as a persuasive essay. State your thesis (whether or not this particular game did a good job of integrating story and gameplay) in the opening paragraph, present your evidence (give examples from the game to prove your point) in the middle sections of your paper, and then sum it all up for us with a concluding paragraph or two that restates your opinions about this game.

Note that the game you choose must have a significant story component!

Develop Story and Characters

Give brief descriptions of the major beats or scenes of the story. You don't have to have the story completely fleshed out, just take it to the next stage of development, adding scenes and plot points.

Populate your story with a strong cast of characters, giving each a background, motivation(s), role(s) in the story, and relationships with other characters. Develop a strong cast on both sides of the story (the Hero's side and the Shadow's side). Make these characters come alive for us, make them feel like real people we'd care about instead of cardboard cutouts.

Cinematic Scripts

Write two cinematic scripts to accompany the game you're developing in your GDD. Use screenplay format. The first of these two scripts is for the opening cinematic of your game; the second script is for the ending cinematic of your game. Each should be 2-5 pages long.

As examples for my classes, I add links to the cinematic scripts I wrote for the Punisher game.

You can use brief scripts from the Internet as examples.

Keep in mind that your scripts should convey the information that artists, level designers, animators, sound designers, and other developers will need to create this cinematic.

Shadow Story

Write a two- to four-page story that gives new insight into the personality, motivation(s), and background of your Shadow. Let us see what makes them tick.

It doesn't matter whether you write your Shadow's story in first person or third person, as long as we get to see inside their mind. We need to see your Shadow as more than a cardboard cutout for the Hero's opposition to feel worthy of them.

Third Short Story

Write another original short story, 2+ pages long, that takes place in your game world.

Remember that stories are about people/characters. Make this story about a character who is important to your story, but NOT your story's Hero or Shadow.

Ideally the story will take place in an area of your game you have not yet explored in a previous story.

This story should give the reader more insight into your game world and the people who inhabit it.

3. Quest Document

Develop three quests/missions for your game. Make sure that these complement your intended design and reveal both story and character to the player.

These tasks should feel meaningful to the player (not just fetch quests), and they should advance the story. Ensure that the quests you create showcase the type of gameplay players can expect in your game.

Each quest should feature a different type of gameplay you intend for your game.

Do not write out the actual dialogue to be said during the quest, just include a summary of the story and character information the player gains during the quest and who conveys it.

QUEST

Add a paragraph at the start of this doc that tells the reader the basics of your game—a few sentences on your game's genre, story, etc. to give the reader context for these quests.

- **Quest Name**
 - Give your quest a name that hints at its purpose or end result, without being too obvious about it.
- **Quest Type**
 - What sort of quest is this—Kill, Fed Ex (delivery), etc.?
- **Success Creation/Criteria**
 - What is the goal here, what does the player need to accomplish to succeed?
- **Setting**
 - Where does this quest take place, physically within your game world?
 - How does this setting affect the player and quest?
- **Place in Story**
 - Where in the overall course of the story does this quest occur?
- **Characters Involved**

- List the characters the player will encounter during this quest, as well as the gameplay and/or story purpose each serves
- **Story Purpose**
 - What part(s) of the story does the player experience during this quest?
 - What is revealed to them or what do they learn?
- **Gameplay Purpose**
 - What obstacles/difficulties does this quest pose for the player?
 - What skills, knowledge, or items do they need to use to fulfill this quest?
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Any information about your quest that doesn't fit the other categories, put it here.
- **Quest Playthrough**
 - Walk us through this quest, from start to finish.
 - Lay out each notable step in the quest, tell us where and when other characters are encountered, write out the conversations that occur, describe any obstacles the player encounters or discoveries they make, and so on.
 - We should feel that we know everything about your quest by the end.

4. The Game World

THE GAME WORLD

Tell us about your game world here. Add other sections if your game calls for them. Remember that your descriptions of locations in your game will be the means you convey the look and feel of your game world to the player!

- **Environments**
 - Describe the environments the player will encounter in your game.
- **Interactivity**
 - What can the player do with your game world?
 - How do they interact with it?
 - List some examples of interactive objects, items, and locations here.
- **Key Locations**
 - Describe the key locations in your world, places where vital parts of the story occur.
- **Game Flow**
 - How does the PC experience your game world?
 - How do the world's locations connect?
 - Include the order in which the player encounters the sections of your game world.
 - Note: Make sure the connections between areas are either logical or make sense within the context of your story!
- **Map/Layout**
 - Include a map(s) or image(s) that visually depicts the layout of your game world as the player will experience it.

GAME WORLD ANALYSIS PROMPTS

Describe the game's world and its impact on the player experience.

SETTING

- What is the physical setting for this game?
- What type of world is it, what terrains and biomes does the player encounter?
- How do the terrain and physical layout of this game world affect its mood/atmosphere?
- Tell us about some of the important locations in the game world.
- How does the setting affect or interact with the story and characters?

In a well-developed game, the setting is a vital part of the story, often feeling like a character in the story, so strong is its presence.

- **Story**
 - What's the game's story? Give us the overall plot in a few paragraphs.
- **Characters**
 - Tell us (briefly) about the main characters in the story, what parts they play in the story and gameplay, how well-developed they feel, and what interactions the player has with them. Who is the player in this game?

CONFLICT

- What is the main conflict in the game?
- Who drives this conflict, who are the major characters in it?
- What is the player's part in this conflict?
- Does it feel like the player has any agency (free will) in the story or is s/he have little to no effect on it?
- What smaller conflicts (sub-plots) are in the game?
- **Events**
 - What major events occur in the story and how much of a part does the player play in them?
 - What does each major event mean for the direction of the story and the player?
- **Conclusion**
 - Wrap it all up for us in a concluding paragraph.
 - How do all the elements you've discussed work together to deliver the player experience?

You don't have to slavishly follow the above prompts, nor tackle them in the given order. Feel free to write your analysis in whatever manner seems most appropriate to you

Flowchart

Flowchart a plan for how your game will be presented to players, detailing the player's path through the game's story, from room to room in your game.

You can use Twine2 to quickly generate rooms to represent the pathways through your game or you can use a mapper app such as Trizbort (<https://trizbort.genstein.net/>).

You are also free to draw your flowchart by hand, take a picture of it, and insert that picture into the document you submit.

5. Game Rules

GAME RULES

The following elements should be present in your game rules. Separate the sections of rules by using the section names as headers (e.g., Story/Intro, Component List, and so on).

SECTIONS

- **Story/Intro**
 - What players are doing, what their goals are
- **Component List**
 - All the parts of your game
- **Setup**
 - How to set up and get ready to play
- **How to Start**
 - How to begin play
- **Turn Sequence**
 - What a player can do on their turn
- **How to Play**
 - Details about how the game mechanics work
- **How to Win**
 - Wrap up with the victory conditions, very specifically how to win your game
- **Advanced/Optional Rules**
 - More game mechanics players can decide to layer in once they've mastered the Basic game

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- **Story**
 - Start with a brief story for the players—what the game's about, what they're doing in the game, and what their goal(s) is.
 - Be sure to state players' goals are in the game!
 - Don't need to be flowery or fiction-y, just what the game's about.
- **Player Need to Know**
 - Think about what players need to know to play your game
 - What do they need to know first?
 - That's where you start after the brief intro

- Setup general rules about how to play
- The order in which players do things in their turn
- **Concise**
 - Keep your rules concise, direct, and to the point
 - Don't being cute, put the rules in a character's voice, or anything like that.
 - Keep your sentences and paragraphs short
 - Outline form (bullet points) is fine at this stage
- **Feedback**
 - As with everything else about your game at this point, you're going to get lots of feedback and make lots of changes.
 - Don't worry about making the rules perfect, just make them understandable
 - Decide what game mechanics are core to your gameplay
 - That becomes your Basic game

Analyze Yourself as a Gamer

Write a 2-4 page paper analyzing yourself as a game player, using both Bartle's Taxonomy and the QF model (<http://quanticfoundry.com/>) to identify your motivations in a variety of game genres.

While analyzing yourself via Bartle's Taxonomy, consider your motivations in at least two or three different genres of games, either digital or analog. You should find that you have a different mix of motivations for each genre. Be sure to give percentages for each motivation and make sure they add up to 100%!

In your paper, end with a conclusion that tells us your thoughts on these two methods of analyzing yourself as a player. And tell us which method you think best represents your true player nature.

6. After Action Report (AAR)

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Pick a game that will take you at least 10–20 hours to play. Do not choose a game that is too simple or easy. Try to pick a game you haven't played before or haven't completed.

OVERVIEW

- Name of the game you played, year it was published, who made it.
- Give a brief overview of the game—what sort of game it is, why you chose to play it, etc.
- Who is the audience for this game, who is the game aimed at?
- Roughly how many hours you spent playing the game.

GAMEPLAY RECORD

- In this section, keep a record of your gameplay times. Write down the day, time you started playing, and time you stopped. Then write some notes about what you did in the game each time you played.

CONCLUSION

- In this section, sum up your gameplay experience.
 - Did you enjoy this game?
 - How did it end?
 - What did you like about it?
 - What didn't you like about it?
 - Make suggestions for improving the parts of the game you didn't like.
- This section should be 1-2 pages of your thoughts on the game, its story and gameplay. Don't just write a simple summary here-add your thoughts on what you experienced, how you felt about it, what you liked and didn't like, and so on.

DIGITAL GAME ANALYSIS — PROMPTS

Consider the following aspects of your chosen game as you write up your analysis

- **The Basics**
 - game name, developer, genre, game overview, etc.
- **The Purpose**
 - What do players do in this game, what are their goals?
- **Story**
 - What's the game's story? (All games have a story, even if it's just a recap of what the player is after in the game.)
- **Interactions**

- If this is a multiplayer game, what interactions occur among players?
- If it's a single-player game, what interactions does the PC have with NPCs?
- **Gameplay**
 - Tell us about the mechanics of the game, how the game works.
 - What systems or mechanics are core to the experience (e.g., in Mario Kart the core mechanics are driving around the track, picking up and using power-ups, and interacting with other players/AI)?
 - Any ideas for game mechanics you'd like to see added to this game?
- **The Good, The Bad and the Ugly**
 - What do you like about the game and what do you dislike?
 - What areas do you see for improvement, what do you wish the developers had incorporated into the game?
- **Sum Up Your Experience**
 - How do you feel about the game and why?
 - Wrap it all up for us in a concluding paragraph.