# Choosing and Understanding Your Platform

## TERMS

**platform (n.)** The hardware that runs and controls the software of your game.

**monetary model (revenue model) (n.)** The payment method and pay structure the player uses to purchase your game.

**microtransaction (n.)** Small purchases made by the player during the course of play.

**free to play (F2P) (adj.)** A revenue model in which the core game loop is available for free, but players can purchase upgrades through micro-transactions that accelerate their progress through the experience.

**accelerometer (n.)** The internal instrument in a device that tracks acceleration and tilt.

**platform affordance (n.)** Interactions available to the player through the hardware specific to a given platform, such as a touch-screen or controller vibration.

**W**hen deciding what platform your game will use, you're also deciding which communities and audiences your experience will reach. Mobile games are more likely to reach older players, casual gamers, and women than a game made strictly for Xbox. Nintendo consoles are more likely to attract kids and families. Will prefers the wide audience reached by PC games, especially since those games tend to have more active social communities. When choosing the platform for your game, keep in mind the following:

1. **The rise of accessible digital marketplaces, like the iOS App Store and Steam, have made it easier** for independent developers to launch their games than ever before. You no longer have to rely on large publishers to print your game to disc. The popularity of cross-platform tools in development like Unity also mean that games are more likely to be released across multiple platforms.

2. **Different player communities have different expectations when it comes to monetization.** Mobile users are far more likely to be familiar with free-to-play structures, while PC players understand a subscription-based model. Choose your revenue model only after you have a full understanding of your audience.

3. **Don't rely too much on the hardware features of a certain platform when designing your game,** because these experiences become obsolete as the technology changes. Strive to find the most accessible user interface that you can, and think about platform affordances like touchscreens and unique controllers as ancillary to the core experience.

## LEARN MORE

- The free to play (F2P) model is not a good choice if you're a small independent developer, because the overwhelming majority of players will not choose to spend money through microtransactions. In fact, the revenue

model for F2P games is sustained by a top spending group of about five percent of players. In order to have a successful F2P game, then, you'll first need a player base large enough to produce this lucrative minority group. This kind of player base is usually developed through large-scale marketing campaigns.

— Go to the app store and play the most popular free to play game on your mobile device. Whenever you encounter a microtransaction, consider whether it feels fair or exploitative to you as a player. Then, decide whether microtransactions add or subtract from the core experience of playing the game.

• Consider how experiences can be designed beyond popular platforms by researching the games submitted to the alt.ctrl.GDC festival at the Game Developers Conference every year. This festival highlights independent video games that use non-traditional controllers as their primary interface. Voiceball by Hella Velvet, for example, uses the pitch of your voice to create a visualizer. Players use this visualizer to bat around a ball.

## ASSIGNMENTS

• Take a game concept from your note-book and imagine how it would be executed on three different platforms: PC, Nintendo Console, and mobile. Write a brief describing how the control scheme would work, as well as how the design would change to reach the audience expectations for that platform.

• Fill out the Platform (2.a) and Revenue Model (2.d) sections of of your Game Design Document. Describe why you've chosen the given platform and model, and how those decisions will impact your audience.