Evolution Log

What is this all about?

Rarely does a game designer’s vision for a game match the final product. Instead, as the game is developed, it tends to *evolve* into something new, something better. This evolution process is marked by the following events:

1. Sparks of inspiration.
2. Feedback from testing.
3. Major obstacles encountered.
4. Reworking previous solutions.

As a relatively inexperienced game designer and developer, it is even harder for you to envision the final product of your game. Because of this, it’s extremely important to have patience and let your game evolve naturally. As it evolves, you will learn many things along the way. Remember, your goal should really be learning, so take the time research and learn new skills as you go.

The temptation, I think, is to want to finish your game as fast as possible. Instead of letting your game evolve and improve over time, you may try to force it into completion. You may find yourself feeling averse to redoing things that you had already done, but it is often in redoing something that we learn the most. This process of doing then redoing—of making then remaking, of thinking then rethinking—is important yet often overlooked.

The purpose of the evolution log, then, is for you to be able to keep track of the ways in which your game evolves over time. It should document your sparks of inspiration, the feedback you receive from testing, the major obstacles you encountered, and times that you had to rework previous solutions.

## How it Works

In Game Maker, you will keep you evolution log in the “game info” area. Every entry needs to be labeled as either INS (for inspiration), FDB (for feedback), OBS (for obstacle), and REDO (for reworking a solution), always starting with the date. Here are some examples of what entries might look like:

6/13 INS – I realized that the game was too easy. After brainstorming a few ideas, I decided to make the paddles move more slowly to force the player to make better decisions.

6/13 FDB –Mr. Christensen tested my game and lost right away. It was clearly too difficult and he seemed to get frustrated. I think he would have done better if I had given him some hints. So, I think I’ll have my game give the player some hints at the start to help them.

6/14 OBS – I really wanted to have a cool animation of a paddle “eating” a ball. It made sense with my theme… anyway, this was way too complicated. I might try again later if I learn a bit more about using the GIMP over the next two days, but for now I’m going to focus my energy elsewhere.

6/14 REDO – The sprites I made initially need to be changed. This is annoying because I had spent a lot of time on them, but they don’t really fit with the theme of my game anymore, and they could be better. Also, my old paddle sprites weren’t even the same sizes, so I needed to fix that anyway.

I hope you can see that reading the evolution log should give a clear idea of how your game evolved over time. It should be a clear demonstration of the creative journey you took to complete the game.