**Ironbane [GDD]**

**WARNING:** This document is a total dump file for all the ideas I have ever bothered to write down in regards to Ironbane. A lot of the content is even from when the game was going to be completely different (2D). I don’t expect anyone to read all 35 pages, as it’s an unorganized mess, but it might be interesting to see where the current ideas came from.

Suggestions:  
  
- Balancing all gear for PvP and then fitting it to PvE  
- Letting the camera focus on the player  
- Party option/showing other players on the map  
- Separation of equipped gear from inventory items.  
- Don’t stack items with one that you have equipped.  
- No get x, kill x quests  
- No fast travel to destroy the sense of a massive world. Instead, players can teleport to anyone on their friend-list if they want to.  
- Avoid Pay-to-Win at all costs  
- No selecting already dead monsters  
- No to little in-battle healing or designated healing class. All classes can compete and do not need to rely on each other.  
- Constant PvP against the enemy except around alters.  
- Add crafting professions such as cooking. Most things that players craft should be better than what you can buy, except for very rare weapons/armor. In general players should be able to make much better dispensable items, like food.  
- Alters should be placed at the center of every town/city/outpost.  
- Add battle/zone-specific BGM (Transition between battle music and normal music could be similar to the “.Hack” method.  
- Put the RPG back into MMORPG. Quest’s will have dialogue similar to classic RPG’s like Final Fantasy, instead of the block of text that nobody reads and a button to accept.  
- Make circular collision boxes feel more “slippery”  
-Make images for the top parts of things you can walk behind, and tiles for the part you can walk in front of.  
- Place multiple tiles at once. Like a whole cliff side.  
- People should play the game and advance as a consequence, they should not be playing the game to advance.  
- Remove reset player. Griefers and hackers could abuse this too much.  
- A LFG tool that works just like WoW’s. The only differences being that players must pick what dungeon they want to do, and then they only get automatically partied with these players, not teleported to the dungeon or the other players.

**Questions**  
  
How much of a part do you want PvP to play?  
Have you decided to make the game heavily story based?  
What do you think about having multiple factions?  
Do you want to have professions?  
Fast or slow leveling?  
Party/guild options?  
  
Taglines:  
  
Sick of killing boars and collecting flowers? We are too!  
Ironbane! Putting the “RPG” back into MMORPG.  
  
They said good story in an MMO was impossible.  
Ironbane said GTFO!  
  
Ironbane. A massively multiplayer **Role-Playing** game.  
  
Still killing 20 rats? Lost your love for MMO’s? Need help?   
Ironbane is here for you bro.

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Obviously throwing out some ridiculous taglines that would never actually get used, but the tactic of jabbing fun at other more generic MMO’s might be a possibility.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
**Grand Quests**  
  
Instead of having mindless gather/kill quests, players would take part in large story driven scenarios that would take them across the world into new territories more like traditional RPG’s such as Final Fantasy. No task for the player should be dull or meaningless (e.g. “Please kill 10 boars for me so I can make some coats”). All quests should be directly related to the plot, with a couple side quests inside each quest arc that are still related to the main quest.  
  
**PvP**  
  
Players will always be able to attack enemy players, and can battle friendly players upon request. The catch of PvP is that players can only be attacked by enemies 3 levels above them. So a level 20 player for example can be attacked by a level 23 player, or the same player could attack any player higher level than them if they start the fight. This way lower level players can not get attacked by someone too powerful for them, but at the same time a high level character could be taken down by a couple lower level ones.  
  
Alternatively, there could be no free world PvP, and instead gladiatorial arenas in major cities that players would battle each other in.  
PvP could be chosen to be done at any time. It would teleport the players automatically to a special location in the world only available for people who choose to be there. This area is just like a normal zone with monsters, bosses, treasure chests etc but PvP is active against everyone not in the player’s party at all times. The gamble is that players can get lots of important crafting items and gold in the PvP zone, but everything is placed in a special “PvP” bag that is dropped upon a player’s death in the PvP zone. To actually acquire these items players must exit the zone through one of the portals scattered across the zone. If a player dies then they lose any items they had gained in the PvP zone and are teleported back to where they were before. If a player makes it to a portal alive then they are teleported back, but all the items are permanently added to their inventory. The portals are protected by safe-zones to make it harder to camp.  
  
The PvP zone is a free for all, with no low-level protection. However, there is no healing or reviving, and killing players that are 4 levels or lower below you will result in a loss of honor.  
  
**Death**  
  
If a player dies in the normal game world then they are respawned at the closest town’s alter. If a player dies in a dungeon then they are respawned at the entrance to that dungeon.

**Wilds**  
  
Wilds are PvP specific zones, that are similar to dungeons, where players can risk their life and items for a chance to grab better loot. In wilds players are only given a single life and can not use healing items, or revive. Wilds are just like dungeons, and have monsters, bosses, treasure chests etc, but PvP is active against everyone not in the player’s party at all times. The gamble is that players can get important crafting items and gold at higher rates, but everything is placed in a special “PvP” bag that is dropped upon a player’s death in the PvP zone. To actually acquire items gathered from a wild players must exit through one of several portals in the zone.  
  
**Crafting**  
  
Should be the **primary** way of getting equipment and items. All the best, weapons, armor, potions, food etc should be created by players and sold in the world market. The materials for these items should be hard to come by but not limited by a “skill” level to harvest them. Very good items will have materials that can only be harvested from very dangerous wilds or dungeons.  
  
The biggest difference in crafting with this system is that standard crafting mechanics are turned on their heads. Usually players will harvest materials in the world and then bring them back to a town or city to create things with. Instead, in Ironbane you will have the choice between crafting items at a realistically slow place, or instantly crafting them at magically empowered temples in wild zones. Crafting items manually is very slow (from hours to days), however it is done automatically for the player, and is safe. On the other hand, crafting items magically is almost instant, but requires players to enter a wild zone and risk losing their materials finding a temple.

*The High King is dead.*

*Hushed rumors tell a story of murder, and of a dark power taking hold. Mysterious and powerful men known only as The Dominion usurp the throne. Cloaked and faceless, they are driven by a maddening greed and lust for power...*

*...In the beginning there was outrage, and a valiant resistance. Despite this courage, the battles lasted a mere matter of days. In this inconceivable display of power, The Dominion revealed their secret weapon.*

*They had remastered the ancient art of magic.*

*With the omnipotence of The Dominion unquestionable, armies routed, banners fell, and trumpets were silenced. But something happened in those days that The Dominion did not intend; for magic is a force that can never be conquered. Like ink in a leaky pail, evil escaped drop by drop, and began to work its cruel and enigmatic ways once more...*

*...Now magic is seeping back into the world, and the people of Mari are afraid. Legends whisper of a time when this power corrupted the even the most righteous of men, and destroyed entire civilizations through war and conquest. From the highest kings to lowly peasants, all now bare witness to the transformation of the tranquil wildlife into a hideously twisted reality. Ravaging the countryside it continues unchecked and unchallenged as it’s infectious darkness sweeps over everything. Unspeakable monsters now walk the forests, mountains, and deserts of Mari. With every setting sun a fear grips the people, wondering if they will survive the night.*

*There is still hope. Some have discovered how to turn the powers of magic upon itself. For you the depths of night retain a small but shimmering light, and a promise of a new age.*

*The Age of Ironbane.*

**Equipment**  
  
The cardinal rule is that players should **not** be gear dependant. Gear should be heavily customizable and not have predetermined effects on stats, resistances etc. Rather, these effects should be added through some kind of crafting professions such as enchanting. Any player can wear All gear has endurance that is shown as a percentage value, if this value drops to 0% then the item is destroyed. To counteract this players can repair equipment, and the materials needed to do this will vary depending on the equipment in question.  
  
The total weight of worn equipment has a negative effect on the dexterity of a player, as well as their spirit. This can potentially slow down the player or make certain skills (like magic) less effective.  
  
**Skills**  
  
Every time a player levels up they get to pick one skill to learn. However, these skills can not be trained unless the player has the right “tome” for it. These tomes will typically be scattered across the world hidden in dangerous places like dungeons, dragon lairs, and ancient ruins. While finding tomes wouldn’t be the main objective of the game, it could provide very interesting side-content. Tomes could be used to create really interesting stories as well. For instance, think of a quest where somebody has a tome that you want, be he won't give it up until you do something for them like finding an ancient artifact in the nearby ruins. This is a pretty basic example, but gives an idea of the kind of content that could be built around tomes. Not to mention it gives players much more of a reason to explore the world in search for interesting hidden things instead of buying them all from an NPC. Another important part of the skill system is that anyone can learn any skill that they want to; players are not limited by a class choice or other restrictions. The only thing a class determines is the initial skills a player gets.  
  
**Leveling Up**  
  
Every time a player levels up they will be given two things. First they will have to spend two points between any of their attributes. Then they will get one skill point to spend on learning any skill available to them. The skills available to learn depend on what tomes the player has collected, and is limited by only that. No skill main be trained more than once.  
  
**Traveling**  
  
Players can travel from town to town via the caravans located in every town. A town can only be traveled to once a player has discovered it, and accessed the caravan there. Once a caravan is activated, it can be used to travel to any other town with an activated caravan. Players can also instantly teleport to any of their friends.  
  
**Questing**  
  
The will be no such thing as a “quest giver”, there will be no such thing as a “quest log”, and most certainly there will be no such thing as standard fetch/kill quests, and mindless objectives. Instead, every quest will be presented as a story, and told as such. Players will be lead along these stories not by accepting quests, but by choosing to play a role in this story, and following it along as it progresses.  
  
For example, let’s say that the player stumbles upon a camp of local bandits that are being attacked by a group of monsters. The player can decide to attack everyone or leave, but if they spare the bandits then a new quest will begin. After the battle the leader of the bandits will thank the player for their selfless actions, and will tell them how the previous night several members of their group had been captured by these monsters. The bandit leader will then tell the player that the group is planning to attack the lair of these monsters in the nearby cave, and he will offer for the player to join the attack. The player can decide not to, but if they do go then they will follow the bandit group to the monster cave. When the group arrives at the cave there are no monsters to be found. However, after exploring deeper into the caves the group will reach a room that has some of the imprisoned bandits in it. Some of the bandits point out that there are men missing, but they quickly move to help release their friends. As the group approaches, the prisoners seem to be desperately trying to tell the party something, but just as the gags are removed and the prisoners yell, “It’s a trap!”, a swarm of monsters ambushes the party, blocking the cave exit. A great battle takes place, with even the leader of these monsters himself taking part. If all of the monsters manage to be defeated then the bandits will celebrate and introduce the prisoners to the player. After this the outlaws cremate their fallen foes with magical fire, and return to camp.   
  
This particular story arc could have several more parts to it, but the entire thing so far could be considered one “quest”. Certain parts of quests can only occur through player-interaction, but in general quests will continue to loop themselves for eternity. In the example above the outlaws would fight the monsters over and over again, resetting every time that one side is wiped out until a player is in proximity of the bandit leader when the first battle is won at the camp. Because there are no accepted set objectives (like in most MMO’s), players will be able to stumble upon these stories at any time in their progression, and participate as much or as little as they want to.  
  
As shown with this example, quests will always be the same scripted events, but can be encountered at any time in their story, and will loop over and over again forever. This way all of the action in the world of Ironbane can be discovered and shared by all, with no instancing to separate players. As many or as few people can participate in quests as they want, and they can replay these quests as many times as they want. With this system the world will truly feel connected and alive, as players explore and find new stories to be apart of.  
  
**Main Story Quests**  
  
  
  
**Difficulty Scaling**  
  
If multiple players are together in one area then the difficulty of that area should scale accordingly. Monsters/enemies will check how many players are inside of their aggro radius, and depending on the number, the monster’s stats will change to fit. So if a monster has 20 players in its aggro radius then it will become much more powerful than it is normally.  
  
**Player-made Graphics**  
  
Charge players to let them admit their own custom sprites/tiles, to the game. We would need to moderate this function to make sure that all art admitted followed the ToS, and fit with the style of Ironbane. Also, player-created art would only be allowed inside of their personal house, and would not affect the actual game world. Sprites on the other hand, would be displayed at all times, but players can not create the actual equipment. All sprite mods would be just that, a modification of a currently functioning item in the game.  
  
**Making Combat Fun**  
  
One thing that modern MMORPG’s are generally lacking is a sense of danger in combat, especially when it comes to questing. For many game’s, questing is a mindless grind without any sense of challenge at all. For Ironbane, the goal should be to always challenge the player and to stop them from feeling invincible while keeping the difficulty at a fair level. To accomplish these goals a few major changes will be made to the combat mechanics.  
  
Firstly, the range that the enemies can detect a player in should be about as far away as the player can see. Players should not be able to abuse the system like they do in so many MMOs, and slip between enemies close to them to bypass content. For starters, this makes the game very anti-climatic and unrealistic. If you’re in an open field and you see an enemy, and they are staring right back, chances are they would attack and not sit there idiotically until you get close enough. This change to the aggro system also would give stealth skills a more practical use. The only players who *can* sneak past enemies are those who are good at sneaking, and this just makes sense.  
  
Secondly, battles should be quick, and deadly. Unless the enemy is a boss or another player, a battle against an individual standard enemy should take no longer then ten seconds from the start of the first attack. This means that a standard enemy should die in about two attacks, and a weak enemy in one. Of course there will be variation in enemy types, between large groups of small, weak, but fast-moving enemies, and less numerous but more powerful enemies. On the other hand, players will be very vulnerable to death, but not quite as much as the monsters they fight. Players will have about five times the health that their enemies have, so they can take about ten hits before going down. Still, most times a player will be fighting large mobs and can easily be surrounded and killed if not being careful. In addition, some types of enemies may be able to do large amounts of damage to the player, especially boss enemies, who can be capable of killing a player in one hit.  
  
Thirdly, there will be two types of enemies: individuals, and mobs. Most types of enemies will be classified in a “mob”, which is a group of enemies that fight together. Not all mobs are made up of the same type of enemy though, and several different kinds may be in one mob together. If one enemy in a mob is attacked, then the rest of the group will join in the fight. The other type of enemy is an individual. This type of enemy is generally reserved for boss-type enemies. An enemy classified as an individual will not be automatically joined by any other enemies around, and will not join in the fight of nearby mobs.  
  
Lastly, *every* enemy should be deadly to the player; from the final boss to the very first monster. Of course players will level up and become stronger, and in turn be able to face stronger enemies. However, the health statistic would not be as disproportionately raised like it is in so many MMORPG’s. A similar system to this would be the one used in Dark Souls, a popular RPG which does not inflate the health statistic. The difference between a player’s health at level 1 and max level is very slight, and this makes sense. Of course a player would get tougher because of their adventures, but only by so much, not by over 100 times as in some RPGs. For the most part every adult human can take about the same amount of damage before they die, and the idea that someone could sustain hundreds of times more doesn’t make any sense, and breaks the immersion of the world.  
  
Instead of an exponential increase in health, players would have a very gradual and linear improvement to their attributes such as strength, or dexterity through leveling up, and they will receive a steady improvement of weapons, armours, and skills through crafting, training, and exploration. Standard enemies will always be balanced to do about the same amount of damage no matter what level they are, but will also get more health, equipment, and skills as their levels become higher. This means that several level 1 enemies could still pose a threat to a level 50 player, but a level 1 player would never be able to win a fight against a level 50 enemy.  
  
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**Combat Mechanics**  
  
Let’s face it, the combat mechanics in most modern MMORPG’s are regurgitated clones of WoW’s system that has been around for 7 years. Many have tried, and all have failed to beat WoW at their game, so why make the same mistake over again? Why not try something unique? The modern MMORPG system is getting seriously stale and is way past its expiration date. Repeating skill rotations like “1-1-1-1-2-1-1-1-3-1...” could hardly been seen as innovative or even fun anymore. This is saddening because combat is what players do most of the time they play an MMORPG. How the MMO genre has gone on so long with so little innovation still surprises me. Long story short, these factors are what made me decided that breaking ground in this department would be the most important thing that Ironbane could do for itself.  
  
When designing the combat system I had four specific goals in mind. First, the combat needs to be completely devoid of the monotony that is “auto-attack”. Second, the player should never be able to win a battle by hitting the same button over and over again. Third, combat should have a large emphasis on thoughtful decision making and strategy. And fourth, the system should be easy to use but hard to master (like chess). I believe this fighting system, which I call “the faces of magic”, actualizes all four of these goals, and will make combat in Ironbane fun and rewarding.  
  
**The Faces of Magic**  
  
The core principles of the combat system are based on the popular card game “Magic: The Gathering”, where players must spend different kinds of “mana” to use a card. With the combat system for Ironbane I was specifically looking for a way to cut back on the monotony of a player using the same abilities over and over again to promote strategy.  
  
I decided that the reason combat has a lack of strategy in many MMORPG’s is because the choice between using two skills is rarely important, and players can generally use any of their skills at all times. This got me brainstorming about what existing games there were where the players needed to choose wisely between a few moves they had, with the choice potentially changing the skills they could use in the future. I came to the realization that Magic was a perfect example of a system like this, and so I decided to design a combat system loosely based around this idea of strategic action.  
  
Another thing I wanted to make sure the combat system provides is constant action. This is the idea that players will always have a choice to do *something*, similar to Tetris, where the player may not like their options, but always have at least one. Games get boring when players don’t have many choices to make or none at all. For instance, in the MMORPG “World of Warcraft”, players have often expressed frustration when the opponent’s skills controlling their ability to take actions and have choices in combat. Another example of this problem can be seen in games where most challenges can be completed by using the same action over and over again, another problem that is often expressed by MMORPG communities.  
  
So how will these common pitfalls be avoided in Ironbane?   
By making sure that the player **always** has the choice to use a skill that is strategic, and directly affects the future skills a player can use. Thus, the creation of the faces of magic.  
  
The primary concept of the faces of magic system is the separation of magic into five different categories that cover all the different possibilities of magic. The five “faces” of magic are greed, passion, deceit, control, and spite. Below are descriptions of what each face embodies:  
  
**Greed -** Symbolic of parasitism, it perpetuates the desire to use others to benefit oneself.  
**Passion -** Exhibits the emotional drive of magic, used to cultivate positive strength and energy.  
**Deceit -** Affiliated with fighting dirty, it realizes the desire to survive through evasion and guile.  
**Control -** Encompasses knowledge, intellect, and the ability to manipulate, predict or counter.  
**Spite -** Expresses a crazed hate and lust for revenge, it aspires to harm or curse any threat.  
  
All skills are a combination of these five elements. Every skill in the game is categorized into one of these five groups. The actual mechanics of the system are quite simple. Players can use any of their skills, but a skill can not be used unless the player has enough of the type of mana it requires. Every time a skill is used it is called “taking an action”, and after every action a player will randomly receive mana for a certain face of magic. The chance that a certain face of magic is added to a players mana is dependant on that face’s preference level. The more a face is preferred, the more likely it will be chosen as the next face after every action. Each skill has a different mana requirement that is dependant on factors like it’s strength, or effectiveness.   
  
At the beginning of combat a player will usually have no mana of any kind. To counteract this players can use a free skill called  “focus”, which will let a player use one skill without using any mana. However, a player can only focus if they have no mana available.  
  
In addition to the five faces there is a special face of magic called “chaos”. Chaos is not a face of magic that can be added to a player’s mana, but rather is a classification for skills that can be used with any kind of mana. The catch to Chaos skills are that you only need to have enough combined magic points to use them, but they will take mana points from other faces at random to cover the cost.  
  
  
  
  
  
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A new statistic would be added to the game called “Focus”. However, focus can not be increased or restored like hp and mp, instead it is 0 by default for everyone, and will become positive or negative depending on the player’s status from a range of -5 to 5. Additionally, focus does not get “used” like mp, but rather enables or disables the player to use their skills.  
  
New players would start with two skills for every focus level to get use to the system and not be overwhelmed.  
  
Players can lose focus because of various different things. These can range from being hit, which will typically lower focus by one, to effects that specifically lower focus like “Unbalanced” for a short time. Players can also gain focus by using various “stances” such as “concentrated defense”, or through effects like “Sharp” that raise focus for a short amount of time.   
  
Another major change would be the options available to players as they attack. Instead of pressing an auto-attack button to start they could have the option of various “openers”. This is the way combat actions would be set up:  
  
The first 5 action slots are reserved for your main combat action and the other 3 will only be for non-combat actions. You will only be show the combat actions that are available to you based on your current focus level. For example, at focus level 0 a player with a sword would have the actions: Heroic Leap, Charge, Battlecry, Fury of Blows, and Stand Ground.  
  
Heroic Leap: Jump to target if in range and stun them.  
Charge: Run speed increased, and attack boosted.  
Battlecry: Lower enemy focus, and defense.  
Fury of Blows: Must be in melee range; slows enemy, lowers focus, and makes target bleed.  
Standground: Increases defense, and focus  
  
Any time your level of focus changes, or you use a skill, you must wait for all of the skills on that focus level to “charge up” before you can use them. Different skills “charge up” in different amounts of time, some long, and some instantly.  
  
Waiting while not being attacked will shift your focus back toward 0 over time.  
  
All combat skills in the game are given a focus level that they can be used on. Players can choose what 5 skills they want to use for each focus level from -5 to 5, and will have to decide what works best for them and the situation.  
  
Stall: Raises the enemy’s focus by 2. Requires 3 focus.  
Parry: Raises the enemy’s focus by 1, and increases defense.  
Lower focus skills are split between two sides; skills that buff the player like healing and increase focus, or skills that only do large amounts of damage. Higher focus skills are more about flexibility of options and controlling the fight through buffs, debuff, and crowd-control. However, high focus skills don’t do nearly as much damage as the low focus skills. So while a highly focused player can manipulate the battle, the low focused player can potentially make massive attacks if not avoided.  
  
In addition to all the attack based skills there will be just as many escape, dodge, block, and canceling skills for every focus level. Successfully balancing avoiding damage and attacking is a critical component of survival in every battle.  
  
**Character Progression**  
  
There is a saying for RPG’s that goes:

*People should play the game and advance as a consequence, they should not be playing the game to advance.*

If you have ever played any old school pen and paper RPG’s like D&D you know what I’m talking about. This simple design change in how players play the game will remove all of the “grinding” because, quite simply, they will be more focused on actually playing it then getting to the next level.  
  
To achieve this goal I propose a system where the level of a player is based on how many skills they have trained, with no statistical effect on the player. When you think about it, you never truly “level up” in an RPG because the enemies grow in strength proportional to yourself. This is why I thought of a radically new system where your level doesn’t actually power up your character, but it allows you to unlock new skills. I think this will make the game much more believable, and will increase the player’s suspension of disbelief because of it. Here are a few reasons why this system makes sense:

* A blood thirsty orc is nothing to joke about right? Well of course he will get easier to kill after having trained with a sword and fighting other orcs, but it doesn’t make much sense when you can instantly kill dozens of them without any effort simply because of your “level”.
* This system would also increase the amount of content to choose from because players can survive in so many more places. We wont need to shoehorn players through a completely linear path; instead they can choose where they travel and what stories they want to experience.
* Also the replayability would improve simply because the difference between a top level player and a 1st level player is not artificially extreme. For example, the beginning area content could still be challenging later on, and wouldn’t be completely worthless after you finish it.
* This also increases the believability of the world because it feels dangerous no matter where or what level you are.
* Players **will** feel more powerful over time by gaining more skills, and better equipment, but this will be because of the skills from the places they’ve chosen to explore, or because of the weapons and armor they have crafted; **not** because of an artificial and meaningless increase in strength.
* Another benefit of this system is that players who are not very close in level can still play together fairly easily and not have to worry about being locked out of content because they are not a “high enough level”.
* This also brings the entire playerbase together, as there will be more players who are available to join groups or PvP, and they can participate and have fun even if they are not exactly the same level.
* Lastly, this system makes it much easier for us to balance the content because there are fewer variables to work with that might get in the way when trying to make content challenging but fair.

**In Conclusion**  
  
Now, I know these proposals sound pretty extreme, but I think it’s worth noting how stagnate and boring the MMO genre has become. Most MMO’s that come out today are blatant copies of World of Warcraft’s antiquated design, and they can’t succeed because WoW has already gotten a 7 year start perfecting this system. I think it would be a mistake to compete with this same design. I feel as if our time would be better spent creating a very unique game that pushes new ideas nobody has seen before, because we can take these chances as indie developers. That is part of the reason for creating this document. It is a combination of interesting new takes on a 20 year old system that we can afford to breath some fresh air into if we’re brave with our design. Obviously I’m not saying any of this should be set in stone, in fact quite the opposite. I hope we can use some of these ideas as building blocks for experimenting with what’s fun and what’s not. Maybe some of these ideas won't be fun, but it’s worth trying to see what is and what isn’t. So I implore you to deviate from the mean and explore with design. We might just end up stumbling upon the next big thing.  
  
  
This is not to be taken as-is. This is a culmination, almost a manifesto, of many of the unique things I think an MMORPG like Ironbane could be doing. While creating this document I played through several MMO’s again and dug through the forums for these games to see what players liked, didn’t like, and what *they* want in an MMO. Essentially, I filtered through this information, combined it with *my* opinions on these ideas and crafted some concepts that I think are fresh for the MMO genre, and that the tired MMO player base would be looking for.   
  
I realize how much of a conceptual change this is, but as I say toward the end of the document, as indie developers we have the chance to go out on a limb, and do something that really shakes up the genre as we know it. Hopefully you enjoy reading through this as much as I enjoyed making it. If you have any questions about it just ask me!  
  
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I know there is still a lot of untouched territory in this document. Specifically in terms of guild/party content, and I’m aware of that. However, I still want to respect the decision of Nick to make the game heavily story and PvE based. Because of this things like guilds and world PvP get put on the back burner in comparison to the core of the game that needs to be worked on, refined, and made fun.  
  
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Skills have both an offensive and defensive component to them. Sometimes skills can be purely composed of one or the other, but usually they will have a bit of both.  
  
For example, what if there was a character that you had to help fight off some invading goblins.  
  
About the crafting ability. I think everyone should start at level 1 in every kind of crafting yes.   
  
One of the important things I'm innovating on in the crafting though is making EVERYTHING useful. So things that lower level crafters make are very useful still to the high level player who will buy these items from lower level players to drive the economy.  
  
This means for example, that at level 3 leatherworking a player could make "Leather patches", which would be required for creating a level 54 "Epic Leather Vest of Awesome". This way players will feel like they are contributing at every level, and there is no such thing as "junk loot".  
  
**Combat**  
  
**Focus**  
A character’s ability to focus in combat is defined by their focus level. Focus levels are something that are generally gained and lost by using skills and having skills used on you. Your current focus level is what allows you to use skills, and every skill requires you to be at certain focus level or above to use it. The minimum focus level required to use a skill is dependant on how effective it is. However, the primary difference between focus levels and something more traditional such as mana points, is that focus levels are not spent when using a skill but are rather simply an allowance for the use of one.  
  
Skills that do a lot of damage or are very effective are considered to be “high focus” skills, meaning that the number of focus levels a player must have to use them is near the maximum (level 7). Skills that don’t do a lot of damage or are not very effective are called “low focus” skills, and require only a small amount of focus levels. Lastly, skills that fall somewhere in the middle are classified as “mid focus” skills. There is also a class of skills called “no focus” skills, which can only be used when the player has no focus at all (level 0). These skills generally try and help the player back into the fight by raising focus level or letting them use two skills in a row. When a player loses all their focus it is called “crashing”. Sometimes players can intentionally crash themselves by using skills that lower their own focus. Other times a player will crash because their opponent outsmarted them, and lowered the player’s focus to depower them.  
  
**Fury**  
Now to balance the low focus skills out we need to make sure that a player can not simply use low focus skills over and over to win a fight. This is where the introduction of the “Fury Meter” comes into play. Fury works in a very similar way to traditional mana in that it can be spent to use certain abilities. However, in this system fury serves as a defense against the overuse of low focus skills. This is due to the fact that fury can only be obtained by taking damage from an enemy. For every attack that an enemy makes on you, you will gain one point of fury. Fury points can be spent only on certain high to mid focus skills that specifically state they can be used with fury. Skills that can be used with fury are called “fury skills” and are among 3 different ranks. Rank 1 skills can be used once your fury meter has been filled up to the first bar, rank 2 skills can be used once the second is filled and rank 3 skills can be used when the whole meter is full. Once a fury skill is used, it will carry out its effect and will empty the fury meter despite how much it cost. This makes it important for players to know how much fury they want, so as to avoid wasting some by using a lower ranked skill.  
  
The most important thing to note about fury is that it does not differentiate between how much damage is done in an attack, only that an attack hit you. Because of this it is very easy to fill up an enemy’s fury meter if you attack them with many low powered attacks. Instead it is safer to wait until you can attack with a high-powered skill that does more damage on hit, and only gives the enemy one point of fury. This creates the constant balance between trying to build enough focus to do a large amount of damage to your opponent to avoid filling their fury meter, and trying to more damage then them more quickly.  
  
**Cool-down**  
There are no skill specific cool-downs in the combat system. Instead there will be a “Global cool-down” the the player needs to wait until they can make any kind of action again. The global cool-down of a player is dependant on their dexterity. The higher a player’s dexterity, the faster their global cool-down.  
  
**Over-Driving**  
If you want to use a skill and can not wait until the global cool-down is over, you can “over-drive” the skill. This lets you bypass the global cool-down and use a skill without interrupting it, but over-driving will reset your focus to level zero. This effect can be used as many times as a player wishes, but requires that a player have at least one focus level to do so. This effectively stops players from overusing the overdrive ability, and saving it for only when necessary.  
  
**Stances**  
There are five different ways that a character can fight, and these five different styles of fighting are called stances. Players can choose to change in between stances at any time, but all stances have a 5 second global cool-down, separate from the skill cool-down, that is initiated any time a stance is changed.  
  
All the stances have various passive effects to a player’s stats, but in addition they will let the player use “stance-based” skills. Stance-based skills are any skills that require a player to be in a particular stance to be used. Most skills are not stance-based, but some require the player to be in a particular stance for balance purposes. The effects that each of the five stances have are detailed below:  
  
**Stamina**  
The measure of a character’s endurance and energy in battle is classified as their “stamina”. Stamina specifically displays the amount of energy that can be used to dodge attacks or absorb damage with defensive skills. Every time a skill is used that prevents the player from receiving damage, that damage instead is instead inflicted to a player’s stamina. Additionally, any skill that is used to evade enemy attacks will also lower a player’s stamina. Once a player’s stamina is down to zero they will no longer be able to use evasive or defensive skills.  
  
**After Combat**  
After the player is considered “out of combat”, they will have their focus set back down to level 1, their stamina brought back to full, and their fury meter emptied.  
  
**Skill Gambling**  
Every skill has two different effects. One always take its effect if used, and the other has a specific chance to take effect when used. The effect that has a chance of failure is called that skill’s “gamble”, and is usually more powerful than the normal effect of the skill. The chance that a skill gamble takes effect is based on  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
**Woodcutting**  
Many items in the game are created with some kind of wood. The trees in the game are ordered from most to least common respectively:

* Birch
* Maple
* Cedar
* Willow
* Oak
* Ash
* Hickory
* Elm
* Yew
* Black Ironwood

**Gemcrafting**  
Gems can be enchanted to add special effects to certain items. The gemstones in the game are ordered from most to least common respectively:

* Quartz [clear] 40%(33%)
* Amber [yellow] 28%(25%)
* Onyx [black] 16%(18%)
* Opal [rainbow] 8%(10%)
* Emerald [green] 4%(6%)
* Sapphire [blue] 2%(4%)
* Moonstone [silver-white] 1%(2%)
* Ruby [red] 0.6%(1.2%)
* Amethyst [purple] 0.3%(0.6%)
* Diamond [clear-blue] 0.1%(0.2%)

**Mining**  
Many items in the game are created with some kind of ingot. The ingots in the game are ordered from easiest to hardest to make respectively:

* Aluminum: From aluminum(bauxite) ore. [silver-green]
* Copper: From copper ore. [orange-brown]
* Bronze: From tin and copper ore. [brown]
* Nickel: From nickel ore. [grey-gold]
* Iron: From iron ore. [dark grey]
* Steel: From iron and coal ore. [silver]
* Cobalt: From cobalt ore. [blue]
* Obsidian: From lava rock. [black]
* Titanium: From titanium ore. [sliver-red]
* Tungsten: From tungsten (wolfram) ore. [silver-white]

The only exception to this list is rock, which can be used without crafting it into an ingot first  
  
**Smithing**  
Every ingot in the game is created with some sort of rock or ore. The rocks and ores in the game are ordered from most to least common respectively:

* Aluminum(bauxite) [light green]
* Tin [light grey]
* Coal [black]
* Copper [orange-brown]
* Nickel [grey-gold]
* Iron [dark grey]
* Cobalt [blue]
* Lava Rock [black-red]
* Titanium [silver-red]
* Tungsten(wolfram) [silver-white]

**Tailoring**

* Wool Cloth
* Linen Cloth
* Silk Cloth

**Leatherworking**

* Rough Leather
* Patched Leather
* Hard Leather

**The Economy**  
  
The economy of Ironbane will be completely player-driven, with most of the world's items being player-created. Not a single vendor npc will exist that is not paid for or managed by a player. This player-run economy will be hosted by a system of areas call “bazaars”. Every town in Ironbane will have a bazaar. The town bazaar is a marketplace where players can buy and sell anything in the game. Bazaars are composed of paid npc merchants in player-owned booths that sell only what the players who own them choose.  
  
**Buying**  
  
Players have a couple options when it comes to buying items. They can either manually search a bazaar for what they want, search the orderboard, or put out an order request.  
  
Order requests are filed by selecting the order option in the orderboard, which players can access anytime and anywhere they want from their menus. When ordering, players can specify what they want, how many of it they want, and how much they want it for. When making an order the game will automatically suggest a buy price equal to the average of all current sell prices for that item worldwide. After making the order the player will pay the price they specified for the item plus the caravan shipment cost calculated for it, and wait for a seller to respond. Once a seller fulfills the order, that item will be automatically sent to the buyer by caravan and will take a short amount of time to reach their mailbox, where the buyer can pick it up. Any mailbox in any town can be used to receive the item.  
  
If a player does not want to manually search a bazaar, or request an order for what they want, then they can use the item search function of the orderboard. To do this players simply have to search for the object they want and the orderboard will automatically show where that item is being sold, and how many of it are in stock in each location. Then players can use this to travel to the bazaar with the object they are searching for and find a merchant there who sells it.  
  
**Selling**  
  
Every town will have a “Bazaar”. The town bazaar is a marketplace where players can buy and sell anything in the game. Bazaars are composed of npc merchants in player-owned booths set up around the bazaar. To sell something, a player will need to own a booth in a bazaar, and hire a merchant to work at it. If the booth is up and running then the player can transport the goods to their merchant in either of two ways. Players can either travel to their npc merchant to give them the object they wish to sell, or they can pay for a caravan to take the goods for them. Caravans are located right outside of every bazaar, and shipment costs are determined by a standard fee plus the weight of the object(s) being shipped. Once shipped the item is received after a short period of time (depending on the distance traveled), and is given to the merchant to sell.  
  
Every time that a merchant receives an object to sell the player gets to set a price per unit. By default the game will suggest a price that is the average of all of the current prices of that particular item on the market. Players can set the selling price at whatever they want, but can not sell their goods for nothing.  
  
Additionally, players can own as many booths as they want, but are limited to having one booth per bazaar. Players must pay rent on all of these booths, and two things determine the cost. First, the closer a booth is to the entrance of a bazaar (where players first enter) the more expensive it is. Second, the more people who visit that bazaar in a day the more everyone’s rent costs due to popularity. However, the relationship between location and popularity is not linear. The closer to the entrance a booth is, the more the popularity of its bazaar increases the rent. This makes it so that frontline booths in highly visited bazaars are extremely costly to rent, but also are also extremely rewarding.  
  
An alternate form of selling is through fulfilling buy orders. Any player can open up the orderboard to see a list of buy orders currently available. If any of the player’s merchants collectively have the items wanted in a buy order it will be highlighted. To fulfill an order the seller only needs to have the items asked for in the possession of one or more of their merchants. A player can not fulfill a buy order with items in their inventory or bank. Once a player has the right items and accepts the order, the items ordered will instantly be removed from that player’s merchant’s booth, and they will instantly receive the gold offered in the order.  
  
The last available form of selling is through junking. Junking is not exactly classified as selling, but provides essentially the same result. Players can decide to destroy any item they have in return for a chance to receive money back. Chances are high that players will get very little for the items they junk, but there will be a slim chance to make much more. This turns the decision into a gamble, and forces players to decide whether they want to junk items they don’t need, or sell them on the market.

**Crafting**  
  
Several factors will affect the product produced by crafting such as: the player’s crafting knowledge, the resource type used, the quality of the resources used, the quality of the player’s tools, the temple being used, and the number of times that specific item has been crafted by the player.  
  
The attributes of a material directly affect any object that is crafted with it. Each of these properties will affect the product is various ways. The different attributes of materials are as follows:

**Purity** - This is the only property that is not the same for every unit of a material type. The purity of a material is measured in percent of purity (PoP), and affects the overall quality of a material. PoP is multiplied by the normal base (100% purity) of the material’s attributes to get the new quality of that unit.

**Durability** - Affects how long objects made with this material will last before they break.

**Weight** - The weight of the material. When used in crafting this will affect the product’s weight. Weight will also determine run speed for armor, and attack delay for weapons.

**Malleability** - How ductile and workable the material is. This determines the likelihood of crafting success. The more complex and harder to craft an object is, the more a high malleability will help.

**Magicality** - How well the material responds to magical modification, and enhancement.

**Rarity** - The abundance of the material in the world.

**Bronze [brownish-orange]**  
Durability - Average  
Weight - Average  
Malleability - Very High  
Magicality - Low  
Rarity - Extremely Low  
  
**Iron [dark grey]**  
Durability - Average  
Weight - High  
Malleability - High  
Magicality - Extremely Low  
Rarity - Very Low  
  
**Cobalt [blue]**  
Durability - Low  
Weight - Low  
Malleability - Extremely High  
Magicality - Very High  
Rarity - Very Low  
  
**Steel [light grey]**  
Durability - High  
Weight - Very High  
Malleability - Average  
Magicality - Low  
Rarity - Low  
  
**Obsidian [black]**  
Durability - Extremely Low  
Weight - Very Low  
Malleability - Low  
Magicality - Very High  
Rarity - Average  
  
**Duralm [green]**  
Durability - Very High  
Weight - Extremely High  
Malleability - Low  
Magicality - Average  
Rarity - Average  
  
**Magite [purple]**  
Durability - Very Low  
Weight - Average  
Malleability - Average  
Magicality - Extremely High  
Rarity - High  
  
**Wolfram [sliver]**  
Durability - Extremely High  
Weight - Very High  
Malleability - High  
Magicality - Average  
Rarity - Very High  
  
**BloodIron [red]**  
Durability - Very High  
Weight - Very Low  
Malleability - Extremely Low  
Magicality - High  
Rarity - Very High  
  
**Mythril [white]**  
Durability - Very High  
Weight - Extremely Low  
Malleability - Very High  
Magicality - Very High  
Rarity - Extremely High  
  
Crowd control, interrupt, dispel, escape.  
  
  
  
**Questing**  
  
There is no such thing as a “quest giver”, there is no such thing as a “quest log”, and there is no such thing as mindless "fetch/kill" quests. Instead, every quest will be presented as an optional dynamic story, and told as such. The goal is for the player to feel completely immersed into what feels like a living, breathing world, that changes even when the player isn't there. Players will be lead along these stories not by accepting quests, but by choosing to play a role in the story, and following it along as it progresses.  
  
There are two main types of quests, and both are completely optional:  
  
  
**Open Quests:** Non-instanced, dynamic quests that anyone can participate in. These focus on the general conflict of the world, and a cooperative form of storytelling. Open quests are the bread and butter of the world, making up the vast majority of explorable content at every level.  
  
  
**Main Story Quests:** Instanced quests that focus on giving the player a personal experience with the lore and story content. Much less common than open quests, but many times more apparent and emphasized do to their importance in the lore. Main story quests are just as optional as open quests, but will provide a more personal, and heroic story for the player as they follow one long story arc as the primary protagonist.  
  
**An Open Quest Example**  
  
The player is exploring the world and they find a hidden trail winding through the woods. Suddenly the player stumbles upon a camp of local bandits that are being attacked by vicious monsters. At this point the player can decide whatever they want to do. They could attack everything, they could avoid the conflict, but if they help the bandits kill the monsters then a new quest will begin without anything being accepted, just by being a part of the story.  
  
After the battle the leader of the bandits will thank the player for their selfless actions, and will tell them how the previous night several members of their group had been captured by these monsters. The bandit leader will then tell the player that the group is planning to attack the lair of these monsters in the nearby cave, and he offers for the player to join the attack. The player can decide to leave whenever they want to pursue something else, but despite what the player does the quest will continue down its story path, and the bandits will go to the cave.  
  
If the player follows the bandit group they will arrive at the cave. Soon the bandits will start to notice that there are no monsters to be found, and will bicker among themselves about what to do next. After a short discussion the bandits decide to enter the cave, weary of a trap, but concerned for their companions. After exploring deeper into the caves the group will reach a room that has some of the imprisoned bandits in it. Some of the bandits point out that there are men missing before quickly moving to help release their companions.  
  
As the group approaches, the prisoners seem to be desperately trying to tell them something, but not much can be discerned while their gags are on. When the gags are removed the prisoners yell, “It’s a trap! You should have never come for us!” Suddenly a swarm of monsters ambush the group from the entrance of the cave, mocking the prisoners and shouting things like, "Yes, you should have listened! Hahaha!", and "You'll make a perfect dinner for me, humans!" The swarm of monsters block the cave exit, and engage with the bandits and player.  
  
A great battle takes place, and eventually the leader of these monsters joins in the battle, killing many bandits by the end. If all of the monsters manage to be defeated then the bandits will celebrate and introduce the released prisoners to the player, and thank the player again for the help. After this the outlaws cremate their fallen foes with magical fire, and return to camp. Upon returning to the camp, the bandit leader thanks the player again for the support, and offers what little gil he can as commission. He tells the player that there's more where that came from if he/she joins the bandits, but the player declines before leaving the camp.  
  
**How Open Questing Works**  
  
Open quests work by looping a series of scripted events that play out a story with or without player presence.  
  
Here is a step by step analysis of how an open quest would operate on a mechanical level:

* First, all of the NPC's associated with the quest would be spawned, and their scripting sequence would begin.
* Then the scripting of the quest would loop forever.
* If a player gets within the area of the quest (within 300 pixels of any associated NPC), that quest is considered "engaged" until the player leaves this area.
* While engaged, certain additional scripts will be activated for all NPCs associated with that quest. Typically these scripts will address the player as a role in the event, but how they are used is up to the quest designer.
* The quest will continue with these scripts activated as long as there are players present within the quest zone.
* The only thing that ends and resets a quest is its completion, or the death of certain NPC's associated with the quest.
* If the quest is reset then all of the NPCs associated with it are removed, everything is reset, and then respawned.

So essentially every quest is a set of scripts being continuously repeated over and over again. If a player or multiple players happen to be nearby, the quest is considered to be "engaged", and will vary slightly to accommodate for players being there. The time it takes for a quest to reset after one of the reset conditions are met will vary, but generally will be around 5 minutes.  
  
This would be how the quest scripting would work for the aforementioned open quest when no players are present:

* In the beginning 10 bandits are spawned in the camp, and 7 monsters are spawned right outside of it.
* They will fight each other until one side is defeated. If the monsters are defeated then the scripts continue, if the bandit leader is defeated then the quest will reset.
* The bandits left over will go to the cave, and find their imprisoned companions. They will have all of the same conversations that they would have with the player present.
* After the prisoner release scene a new group of monsters is spawned outside of the cave and heads toward the prisoner room.
* The monsters make some cheeky comments and move in to fight the bandits.
* If the bandit leader dies the quest is reset, if the bandits win they will celebrate and go back to camp with the rescued prisoners.
* The quest is complete and will be reset. Everything is repeated in 5 minutes.

This is the same scripting sequence for the same quest, but with a player present the whole time:

* In the beginning 10 bandits are spawned in the camp, and 7 monsters are spawned right outside of it.
* They will fight each other until one side is defeated. If the monsters are defeated then the scripts continue, if the bandit leader is defeated then the quest will reset.
* The bandit leader will thank the player(s) for their help, tell them that they are planning on raiding the monster cave, and offer for them to come along.
* The bandits left over will go to the cave, and find their imprisoned companions. They will have all of the same conversations that they would have without the player.
* After the prisoner release scene a new group of monsters is spawned outside of the cave and heads toward the prisoner room.
* The monsters make some cheeky comments and move in to fight the bandits.
* If the bandit leader dies the quest is reset, if the bandits win they will celebrate, thank the player for their help, and go back to camp with the rescued prisoners.
* Upon returning to the camp the bandit leader will personally thank the player again and offer a bit of gil for their trouble.
* The quest is complete and will be reset.  Everything is repeated in 5 minutes unless players are no longer present around the quest area.

Notice how similar the scripting is. The only thing that really changes is that the player(s) present are addressed by the NPCs and given a small reward at the end for the help they gave. The players never need to talk to a quest giver, they never need to follow strict objectives, they simply choose to be a natural part of the story, and are rewarded by being there. Because there are no accepted set objectives (like in most MMO’s), players will be able to stumble upon these stories at any time in their progression, and participate as much or as little as they want to.  
  
This way all of the action in the world of Ironbane can be discovered and shared by all, with no instancing to separate players. As many or as few people can participate in quests as they want, and they can replay these quests as many times as they want. With this system the world will truly feel connected and alive, as players explore and find new stories to be apart of.  
  
  
**Open Quest NPCs**  
  
All open quest NPCs are connected to their quest. The quest they are connected to determines when they reset and respawn. Quest NPCs are the only kind of NPCs that do not automatically respawn after death, instead they are respawned by the quest resetting.  
  
Other than this, quest NPCs are just like normal NPCs, and they each have their own set of scripts that they continuously loop. The only difference being that when a player is within the area of the quest the NPC is connect to, certain new scripts might be activated for that NPC depending on the quest.  
  
**Open Quest Rewards**  
  
The general goal for quest rewards is to not give players a reward at the end of the quest, including experience points. Quite simply, finishing a quest doesn't matter nearly as much as participating in one. The thing that should be keeping the player wanting to finish the quest is the excitement of wanting to know what will come next. When there *are* rewards at the end of a quest (e.g. the bandit leader giving the player some gil as a token of his gratitude), the reward should generally be insubstantial compared to what the players get by participating.  
  
The reason for this is to stop players from showing up at the end of a quest and getting rewarded for nothing. To truly be rewarded with a quest, the player can fight off enemies to get experience points, gil, and loot. Specifically, many quests have boss enemies that drop good items, or have hidden secrets like treasure chests to gain from.  
  
  
**A Main Story Quest Example**

|  |
| --- |
| **An excerpt from Mykel’s story:** |
| The player gets arrested upon entering the inner kingdom of Loshi. The first night in jail a grey hooded figure appears to the player. The hooded figure never says a word. He just teleports the player and himself to a well lit cave. Staying in the same fashion, the hooded figure never talks as he leads the player to a huge open area.     Before the player opens his mouth to question why he is there, a dragon lands in front of him. The player is astounded for dragons were things myths were made of. The dragon stood proud and tall, but his eyes were filled with shame and guilt.    The dragon spoke with a old and commanding voice "You must have a lot of questions, but time is of the essence. My name is Drakohune, and I believe you are the key to our future." The dragon leans in closer to be at eye level with the player. " Let me start at the beginning."    "In a time before the time of yore, we lived together in harmony. My race was old but naive, and yours was young and eager. The dragons took to helping the humans learn magic. There was years of peace throughout the land." Drakohune took pride in these statements.    With a heavy sigh he spoke solemnly "A group of magic wielders broke off and started using more dangerous and darker forms of magic. They started calling themselves Gretons, and they began controlling people's free will. With an army of mindless warriors they swept the land taking control quickly. There was almost no stopping them. The twelve kingdoms came together and begged the dragon council to stop the Gretons. The dragons agreed to help them by taking the magic away from the humans. We realized your kind was not ready for the responsibility of such a powerful tool. The war against the Gretons was known as the Purge. Many dragons and humans died by the end of the war. We finally won but the casualties were too high. We made sure this would never happen again. My kind moved to the next realm and left me and my brother Malaforic to secretly watch over the humans. Over the next couple centuries we were forgotten and our exploits were legends. Magic was all but gone in this new era."      The player looks for a sign of relief on the dragons worn face but finds nothing more but guilt. "Alas, The magic could not be contained. Humans were being born with magic in their blood. I had to make a tough call and stole these children away. I could never kill them so I trained them relentlessly on keeping their powers in check. They became the Order of Santori" Drakohune said as he motioned at the grey hoods all around them. "This seemed to have worked out in the short run, but history has a way of repeating itself. A bright student of mine named Quantay Valtrese found records of the Gretons. His thirst for knowledge lead him down a path I wished never to see again. He studied day and night and learned of their forbidden magic. My brother caught him and punished him for breaking his training. We thought this was the end of it, until he converted half of the order to his new ways and called themselves the dominion. Malaforic was the first of the order to fall to the dominion. Valtrese used his new found magic to control my brother and rechristened him 'Ironbane'. They retreated into the dark recesses of the world. Growing stronger every passing day, we called upon all magic users around the world to come and make a stand. You are one of those that were called upon. Believe it or not you are one of a few that I believe can stop Valtrese and the Dominion. You must bring balance to this world." |

**How Main Story Quests Work**  
  
Obviously main story quests are quite different from open quests. You can see with this example extracted from Mykel's work that the storytelling is much more player-centric and functions with the player as the protagonist of the story. In particular this classical way of storytelling is much more personal, and so it requires a different way of being played.  
  
To be specific, main story quests are the only part of Ironbane to implement instancing and cut-scenes to tell the story (here is a good explanation of how this might work: <http://www.ironbane.com/forum.php?action=topic&topic=211>).  
  
In main story quests you will experience parts of the story, like the example given, that would normally be ruined (or not make sense) with an open world experience. This is why main quests are instanced and separated from the open world. Here is an analysis of how a main story quest might work in a mechanical sense:

* The player enters the instanced zone (and is alerted before they do so).
* The player then plays through the experience like a classic RPG.
* At any time the player's friends can instantly join and teleport to him or her.
* If the player dies then they must start from the beginning. If the players are in a group then all of them must die before having to start over.
* Any of the players can decide to drop in and out of the instance freely.
* After the main story quest is finished, the player(s) are taken out of the instance and teleported to the defined location.
* The instance is closed when all the players have left it.
* Players can choose to go back and replay these instances whenever they want to, but can not skip ahead in the story.

The main difference between a main story quest and an open quest is that main story quests are not shared with the entire world, and so they do not loop themselves over and over again. They instead tell stories in a more traditional fashion that is based on player interaction with scripted sequences, and showing cut-scenes.  
  
**Main Story Quest NPCs**  
  
Main Story NPCs are quite different from open quest NPCs because there are no activated scripts for when players are nearby. However, they are similar because NPCs will not respawn automatically unless the instance is reset, or the NPC is specifically scripted to respawn. Other than this they work the same way as other NPCs.  
  
**Main Story Quest Rewards**  
  
The main story rewards have to face similar problems to what open quests have to face. Because friends of players can join their game at any time, it is possible for them to join when the rewards are being given out. Similar principles to open quests should applied here as well. Rewards should be gained through actual participation instead of by NPCs.  
  
**Classless System**

Ironbane avoids having any predefined classes that the player needs to choose from. In place of this, Ironbane will adopt a classless system more akin to games like Skyrim. This means that players will begin the game without any particular specialty, and will be able to experiment with what kinds of things they enjoy doing. This system will also streamline the leveling process, making it extremely simple to use and understand.

**Leveling Up**

Every time a player levels up they will get to choose a skill. Skills are special talents that are connected by a similar type. Players must be careful about which skills they pick, because these choices can not be reverted. Skills are unlocked in a progression path system, categorized by different skill areas, where some skills must be unlocked before higher level ones. For example, the skill “underwater breathing” can not be unlocked unless the player has unlocked the “faster swimming” skill at an earlier level. However, it is important to realize that leveling up does not lead to a substantially more powerful character. Instead, it allows for more available options to the player by giving them new skills.

Leveling also does not increase a player’s “attributes” as in most games. This is because players should be able to play all content and be on a relatively fair playing field with everyone else in the game. Of course players with lots of skills unlocked and better equipment will have an upper hand against a new character, but there won't be an outrageous difference in health or power. This means that it would be completely possible for a couple level 1 players to kill a max level player. Whereas in most MMOs this would be impossible.

**Skills**  
 All skills are a part of a specific skill-path, and every player character has access to every skill-path. This means that players are capable of unlocking skills of any kind, however, when a player starts the game at level one, they will have no skills available to them.  
 As a player levels up they will pick and choose what skills they want to unlock, but are limited only by their progression into that skill-path. Skill-paths are the progression path of skill unlocks, that start from one skill at the beginning with each successive skill being even more specialized into that skill area. This does not mean that skills near the beginning of a skill-path are weaker than those at the end, sometimes it could be quite the opposite. Rather, progressing through a skill-path lets the player become extremely specialized with that set of skills, and allows them to approach problems with a broader range of tools at their disposal.  
 The number of levels that a player can achieve is the only limiting factor of how many skills a player can unlock. The level cap should be balanced so that a player can only complete the progression in two skill-paths. Conversely, a player could choose to become a jack-of-all trades, and this wouldn’t make them any weaker than a player who is extremely specialized, because both players have the same wide range of skill options available to them, and the same number of skills unlocked. This is the primary reason why progressing through a skill-path must give players more options instead of more power, and is the way to keep all players, regardless of skills chosen, on the same playing field.  
  
**Combat**

Now that combat is from a third person view in the third dimension and in real-time, Ironbane’s combat focus is more action oriented. Specifically, enemies are no longer tab-targeted and attacked; instead, players will have to actually aim their attacks to hit their target. Some influence is drawn from Realm of the Mad God in this regard, as spells and attacks will be projectile-based and dodgeable.

In addition to this, a new system for using skills, spells, and other actions will be put in place. Instead of using mana that does not regenerate, players will use “energy” to perform all actions. Energy will be regenerated quickly over time, and will regenerate faster or slower depending on the weight of the items equipped, and the strength and dexterity of the character.

**Actions**  
The actions a player can use are categorized into 2 different groups: combat actions, and skills.  
  
**Combat Actions -** Actions that are not selected, but rather are built directly into the fighting mechanics. Combat actions usually do not have a cooldown besides the time it takes to complete it, but they require a large amount of energy to use. For instance, dodge is a combat action that is used by holding down shift and pressing a directional key.  
  
**Skills -** Any trained skill or spell that a player must place on their skill bar to use. Skills typically have a cooldown as well as a small energy cost when used. Because only skills that are on the skill bar can be used, the player will only have 8 skills available to them at a time. Skills will be "selected" by the player, and only one skill can be selected at a time. While a skill is selected, right clicking will allow to player to use that skill. An example of a skill is “Fireball”; the player selects fireball and right-clicks, a fireball is sent flying where the crosshair is (player's cursor), and will cause the victim hit to start on fire.

In addition to being able to use skills and combat actions, the player will be able to switch between two different weapon sets on the fly by pressing the key assigned (R by default). Lastly, mouse-wheel can be utilized for allowing players to quickly switch between skills on their skill bar on the fly (much like selecting weapons in Quake or other popular shooters).

**Controls**  
The basic control layout (for QWERTY keyboards), would be the following:  
  
**W -** Walk forward  
**S -** Walk backwards  
**A -** Turn left  
**D -** Turn right  
**Q -** Strafe left  
**E -** Strafe right  
**R -** Switch weapons  
**Left Mouse Button -** Attack with weapon(s) equipped  
**Right Mouse Button -** Use skill selected  
**# Buttons 1-8 -** Select skills #1-8  
**Scroll up -** Select next skill to the right  
**Scroll down -** Select next skill to the left  
**Spacebar -** Jump  
  
**Tentative Skill List**  
This skill list is balanced so that players will be able to max out two primary skills and two secondary skills. Primary skills are skill paths that are mostly composed of usable skills that can be equipped to the skill bar. Secondary skills are skills that are composed entirely of passive skill that affect the player at all times. Players are free to unlock any skills that they want to as the level up.  
  
Each skill path has a numbered list of skills. This indicates what order the skills will be unlocked in, starting from the first unlock at level one. In general, the later a skill is unlocked the more powerful it is, and the skills have been balanced this way on purpose. On each level up the player will be able to unlock a new skill. Players will only be show the current selection of skills that they can unlock, and will not be show the full progression path of every skill set. This is partially to make things easier to read, but also to provide some mystery about what skill might be unlocked next.  
  
**Primary Skills**  
  
**Fire Magic**

1. Fireball - Single shot damaging projectile, causes fire DOT.
2. Flare - Blinds nearby enemies.
3. Flamewhip - Roots a nearby enemy and does a weak fire DOT for as long as the player holds the attack (maximum of 10 seconds).
4. Burning Bomb - Powerful circular AoE that explodes causing damage, and fire DOT to enemies hit.
5. Flamethrower - Shoots a continuous stream of fire that does fire DOT until the player stops or energy runs out.
6. Magma Blast - Shoots a shotgun-like blast of fireballs that cause fire DOT.
7. Hot Rocket - Shoots a flaming missile that explodes on impact and causes high damage, a 3 second knockdown, and weak fire DOT in a small AOE.
8. Lava Flow - Creates an AoE lasting 15 seconds that causes fire DOT and slows any enemy that walks on it.
9. Fists of Fire - Does massive damage on touch, and causes DOT.
10. Flameward - Creates a circular wall of fire around the player that causes fire DOT and lasts 7 seconds.
11. Firetrap - Sets AoE trap that causes massive damage and fire DOT on enemy walkover.
12. Illuminate - Shines a light around player until deactivated.
13. Fire Sprites - Creates a weak creature that lasts 30 seconds and follows the player. Will target and attack nearest enemy, and explode on contact causing fire DOT.
14. Flame Weapon - Causes weapon equipped to inflict fire DOT.
15. Fire resistance - Prevents any harmful fire-based DOT effects.

**Restoration Magic**

1. Healing Beam - Heals any allies that are touched by the beam. Drains energy while being used.
2. Cure - Gets rid of burning, bleeding, and frostbite on self and nearby allies.
3. Self Healing - Passive: Healing beam heals the player while being used.
4. Energize - Removes any slow effects, increases speed, and restores 50% of the total energy on self and nearby allies for 10 seconds.
5. Purge - Gets rid of curse, root, silence, or poison effects on self and nearby allies.
6. Faster Healing - Passive: Increases the amount of healing that healing beam does per second.
7. Calm - Removes fear, daze, and stun effects from self and nearby allies.
8. Revive - Can choose to return to life with 25% health after death, 30 minute cooldown.
9. Restoration - An AoE that restores 100% of the total energy of the player and the allies around them.
10. Saving Blast - Instantly heals nearby allies to 50% of their health
11. Aura of Healing - Passive: Allies are healed very slowly by being near the player.
12. Tranquility - Disables offensive skills for everyone around the player including the player themselves for 5 seconds.
13. Healing Touch - Instant heal to 100% health.
14. Shower of Health - Slow healing AoE, lasts for 5 seconds.
15. Resurrection - Revives all nearby allies, or self when dead. Returns health to 25% for all. Cooldown of 15 minutes.

**Divine Magic**

1. Prayer - Increases the regeneration rate of energy while held.
2. Ward - Creates a magical shield that absorbs damage and deals it to the player’s energy instead. The shield stays active until the player runs out of energy or it is deactivated.
3. Light - Shines a light around player until deactivated.
4. Bless - Increases the base attack and defense for 15 seconds.
5. Righteous Glyph - Creates an AOE that improves defense, and negates magical damage done to those protected. Lasts 10 seconds.
6. Detect Evil - Detects nearby evil NPCs on the mini map. Does not detect players.
7. Convert - Turns nearby NPC enemies into allies for 10 seconds or until attacked.
8. Searing Light - Shoots a beam of light, damaging and blinding the victim while they are being hit.
9. Sanctuary - The player can not be damaged but can not attack or use skills. Lasts for 7 seconds.
10. Refuge - Protects all nearby allies and the player with a shield equal to half of the player’s health.
11. Blasphemy - All nearby enemies are knocked down for 3 seconds.
12. Holy Aura - Passive: Increases the regeneration rate of energy for allies near the player.
13. Grace - Passive: Increases the base attack and defense of nearby allies.
14. Zone of Truth - Silences nearby enemies for 5 seconds.
15. Miracle - Restores player to full health when they fall below 10%, but does not prevent death. Requires 100% of a player’s energy to use.

**Swordsmanship**

1. Sword Training - Passive: Allows player use a sword.
2. Parry - Next melee attack is blocked while being held.
3. Fury of Blows - Makes several attacks in a short period of time.
4. Lunge - Leaps the player forward doing double normal damage to enemies hit.
5. Whirlwind - Player spins in place doing AoE damage to all adjacent enemies.
6. Impale - Causes victim to take bleeding DOT, and stuns them for 3 seconds.
7. Knockdown - Knocks down any enemy hit with a sword attack.
8. Improve Parry - Passive: Parry blocks non-magical ranged attacks as well.
9. Sword Throw - Shoots sword as a ranged attack. Player loses sword for 3 seconds.
10. Dual Wield - Passive: Allows the player to equip two swords.
11. Swiftness - Passive: Increases base attack speed with swords.
12. Mighty Swing - A charged attack that does quadruple damage on hit. Can not move while attack is being charged, 2 second change-time.
13. Disarm - Causes victim within melee range to lose current weapon for 7 seconds.
14. Piercing Strike - Attacks through armor and causes double damage.
15. Sever Artery- Causes victim to take bleeding DOT, and slows their movement by half until the bleeding effect is removed.

**Secondary Skills**  
  
**Swimming**

1. Swimming - Passive: Allows player to swim on the surface of water. Drains energy, if all energy runs out the player drowns.
2. Diving - Passive: Allows players to swim under water. When breath runs out the player dies.
3. Hold Breath - Passive: Extends the time players can be underwater before drowning.
4. Attack Underwater - Passive: Allows basic attacking while underwater.
5. Faster Swimming - Passive: Increases movement speed under water.
6. Use Skills underwater - Passive: Allows skills to be used underwater.
7. Increased buoyancy - Passive: Increases jump height underwater.
8. Water Walk - Passive: Can walk on water. Drains energy quickly.
9. Weightless - Passive: Allows players to swim up. Drains energy.
10. Water Breathing - Passive: Allows players to breath underwater.

**Stealth**

1. Sneak - Passive: Lets player sneak, decreasing enemy NPC awareness of the player. Removed when the player attacks, or uses a skill. Slows by 50%, can not be activated in combat.
2. Quiet movement - Passive: Movement sound is removed while sneaking.
3. Hide - Passive: The player becomes even harder for NPCs to detect while not moving.
4. Backstab - Passive: Attacks do double damage when sneaking.
5. Camouflage - Passive: Not moving while sneaking makes the player invisible.
6. Light foot - Passive: Traps are not set off while sneaking, and movement is no longer slowed while sneaking.
7. Ghost - Passive: Sneaking makes the player invisible at all times.
8. Dead Silent - Passive: Movement sound is removed while moving normally.
9. Cutthroat - Backstabs do quadruple damage while sneaking.
10. Disappear - Passive: Allows a player to enter sneak in combat, but requires 100% of the player’s energy to use.

**Acrobatics**

1. Jump - Passive: Allows the player to jump.
2. Dodge - Passive: Allows the player to dodge in any direction.
3. Double Jump - Passive: Allows the  player to jump twice as high.
4. Improved Agility - Passive: Base movement speed is increased by 25%.
5. Endurance - Passive: Dodging costs half as much energy.
6. Sprint - Passive: Allows the player to sprint. A player can only sprint forwards.
7. Increased Fitness - Passive: Jumping don’t cost energy.
8. Balanced - Passive: Knockdown effects last half as long.
9. Extreme Training - Passive: Sprinting doesn’t cost energy.
10. Superior Dexterity - Passive: Basic attacks don’t require energy to use.

**Dynamic World**  
  
Dungeons are like normal MMO dungeons and are secret locations scattered across the game world filled with danger and treasure. However, another significant part of the content in Ironbane is the dynamic world. The dynamic world is composed of two primary parts, lairs and monoliths.  
  
Lairs are the home base for bandits, monsters, and other hostiles. Lairs will develop only in the wilderness, away from any temples. Lairs will randomly spring up in any of these locations and will begin to spread “camps” towards nearby temples. These camps are similar to small lairs and will house a smaller amount of hostiles. However, camps will also have patrols scouting around them in a circular pattern. Camps also contain a camp boss that is significantly harder to defeat then the other hostiles in the camp.  
  
The eventual goal of a lair is to expand and destroy nearby monoliths and loot anything that has been built up around them. Lairs themselves contain a large amount of hostile forces as well as several minibosses and one very powerful lair boss. Because of this lairs take a large amount of player cooperation to destroy, in addition to a large player force. It would not be uncommon to need over 50 players to take on a lair. However, lairs and the camps around them provide excellent loot and resources when destroyed. When destroyed the camp or lair will spawn a large treasure chest with special loot. This treasure chest will be open for anyone to loot for 5 minutes, but can only be looted once per player. This means that anyone involved in the battle will receive some kind of reward. Destroyed structures will also provide many useful resources for players, and the stockpile can also be looted after the camp or lair is destroyed. The stockpile, unlike the treasure chest, contains only its limited number of resources. So guilds may end up battling eachother after a lair raid to decide who gets the resources.  
  
Not every lair is the same. Lairs are classified by the primary enemy type that controls them. So some lairs may consist of outdoor camps and be primarily composed of bandits, while other liars may be entirely inside caves, and been filled with goblins. Obviously this also mean that not all lairs are the same difficulty, and they all provide different rewards for destroying.  
  
Monoliths on the other hand, are the backbone of player-created settlements. Once repaired a monolith will allow players to put resources towards building certain structures like a marketplace, a forge, a guild hall, walls etc. Monoliths can only be possessed by one guild at a time, and are considered the property and territory of of that guild. An individual can not claim a monolith as their own. Guilds can also construct structures like a barracks to employ NPC guards to protect the monolith while players are away. Guilds must supply an upkeep for their defenses in the form of food. Farms can be built around monoliths to produce a daily amount of food for the settlement.  
  
Guilds can fight for their monoliths, and can capture as many as they want to. To capture a monolith the guild must destroy all of the structures associated with that monolith first, and then they will be able to damage the monolith itself. Once the monolith is destroyed it can be rebuilt, and the new settlement will belong to the guild who destroyed the previous one.  
  
Monoliths, similar to lairs, take a very large amount of players to capture quickly. Most structures generally have a lot of health and are well defended, and the monolith has a very large amount of health as well. A normal defense will be composed of many standard guards, as well as some stronger boss guards, and a settlement leader. In general the average player settlement will be about as hard to destroy as the average lair, and will take the same amount of power and cooperation.  
  
The last element of the dynamic world are the dominion raids. Every so often portals will open up at the monoliths of all of the capital cities. This portal will be open for one day. During this time any player can enter the portal and join the fight against the Dominion. The enemies and location will change depending on who the boss of the raid is, but no matter what the fight will be extremely difficult. It should take about 100 or more skilled players to successfully complete. Every hour the monsters in the raid will reset. If the players don’t defeat the final boss by the end of the day then the portals will close. If the players do kill the boss then the guild that killed the most enemies throughout the whole raid will get a buff to all of their defensive NPCs. This guild will also receive a large amount of resources in their stockpiles.  
  
Every raid will feature a different raid boss and theme. Each raid boss will be a different high ranking leader of the Dominion. These raids will take place a couple times every week. At the  
  
Capital cities are cities that are not player controlled, and are considered to be neutral zones. In capital cities guards will attack anyone who attacks another player regardless of guild affiliation, although players can still attack each other.  
  
**PvP**  
The only PvP available is through faction vs. faction battles?