GUIDING THE PLAYER

Topics

- **Guiding the Player**
  - **Direct Guidance**
    - **explicit instruction**
  - **Indirect Guidance**
    - **hidden instruction**
- **Teaching New Skills and Concepts**

Guiding the Player

- **You must ensure that players who have never seen your game before, intuitively understand it.**

- **This requires careful, sometimes invisible guidance**

- **Two types of guidance**
  - **Direct Guidance** - The player knows that he/she is being guided
  - **Indirect Guidance** - The player is guided without realizing it

Methods of Direct Guidance

- **Instructions**
  - **The game explicitly tells the player what to do.**
  - **These can take the form of:**
    - Text;
    - Dialogue with an authoritative non-player character (NPC);
    - Visual diagrams;
  - **Often incorporate combinations of the three.**
  - **One of the clearest forms of direct guidance.**
  - **Drawbacks**
    - May **overwhelm the player with too much information**;
    - May **annoy the player by** thoroughly presenting **information he/she already knows**.

Methods of Direct Guidance (continue)

- **Call to Action**
  - **The game explicitly gives the player an action to perform and a reason to do so**
  - **Often takes the form of missions given by NPCs**
    - **Common strategy**
      - Present the player with a clear **long-term goal**
      - Then give him/her progressively **smaller medium- and short-term** goals that must be accomplished on the way to the long-term goal
  - **Example: *The Legend of Zelda***
    - **Long-Term Goal**: Navi tells Link that he has been called for by the Great Deku Tree. Link is told by another NPC this is a great honor.
    - **Smaller Goals**: Link's path to the Great Deku Tree is blocked by Mido, who tells him that he will need a blade and guard before venturing into the forest.
    - The short-term goals are directly tied to the long-term goal of reaching the Great Deku Tree

Methods of Direct Guidance (continue)

- **Map or Guidance System**
  - **Many games include a map or GPS-style guidance system.**
  - *Directs the player toward her goals or toward the next step in his/her mission.*
  - **Example:** *Grand Theft Auto V*
    - **Radar/mini-map in the corner of the screen with a highlighted route for the player to follow to the next objective.**
    - In other game, the player relies very heavily on the GPS
  - **Drawbacks**
    - Can lead to players spending most of their time just following the directions of the virtual GPS
    - Players don't think about a destination and choose their own path

Methods of Direct Guidance (continue)

- **Pop-Ups**
  - Contextual controls that change based on the objects near the player
  - Example: *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*
    - The same button controls diverse actions as
      - Opening doors
      - Lighting barrels of gunpowder on fire
      - Taking control of mounted weapons
    - **Pop-ups with the icon and a very short description of the action appear when a contextual action is possible.**

Judging the Quality of Direct Guidance

- **Methods of Direct Guidance can all be judged by the same four criteria:**
  - **Immediacy;**
  - **Scarcity;**
  - **Brevity;**
  - **Clarity;**

Judging the Quality of Direct Guidance

- **Immediacy**
  - **The message must be given to the player when it is immediately relevant**
    - Don't try to tell the player all the possible controls for the game at the very beginning unless they are very simple.
  - **Direct information about controls should be provided immediately the first time that the player needs it.**
  - **Example: Kya: Dark Lineage**
    - **A tree falls into the** path of the player character, and **he/she must jump over it to continue.**
    - **As it is falling,** the game shows the player the **message "Press X to jump"** at **exactly the time he/she needs** to know that information

Judging the Quality of Direct Guidance

- **Scarcity**
  - Many modern games have lots of controls and lots of simultaneous goals.
  - The player must not be flooded with too much information all at one time.
  - Making direct controls more scarce makes them more valuable to the player and more likely to be heeded
  - This is also the case with missions:
    - A player can only really concentrate on a single mission at once
    - If a game gives the player too many simultaneous missions, many will eventually be ignored.

Judging the Quality of Direct Guidance

- ## Conciseness
  - Never use more words than are necessary
  - Don't give the player too much information at one time
  - Example: Valkyria Chronicles
    - A tactical combat game by Sega
    - "When near sandbags, press O to take cover and reduce damage from enemy attacks."

- ## Clarity
  - **Be very clear about what you're trying to convey**
  - Example: Valkyria Chronicles
    - Why not just "When standing near sandbags, press O to take cover"
    - **In Valkyria Chronicles, cover not only shields you but also drastically reduces the amount of damage you take from bullets that do hit.**
    - **For the player to understand everything he/she needs to know about cover, she must also be told about the damage reduction.**

Indirect Guidance

- **Seven methods of Indirect Control** — An expansion of Jesse Schell's six methods from *The Art of Game Design*
  - Constraints
  - Goals
  - Physical Interface
  - Visual Design
  - Audio Design
  - Player Avatar
  - Non-Player Characters

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Constraints**
  - **If you give the player limited choices, he/she will choose one:**
    - If given a choice of Red or Green, the player won't try to pick Blue.

- **Goals**
  - **Goals can also be used to guide the player indirectly.**
    - **If the player has a goal to collect bananas, the player heads toward the door with bananas.**

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Physical Interface**
  - The shape of a physical interface can be Indirect Guidance
    - If you give the player a guitar-shaped controller, he/she will generally expect to use it to play music.

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Visual Design — The broadest category of Indirect Guidance**
  - **Light**
    - Humans are naturally drawn to light.
    - If you place a player in a dark room with a pool of light at one end, she will often move toward that light before exploring anything else.
 - **Similarity**
    - Once a player has seen that something in the world is good in some way (helpful, healing, valuable, etc.), she will seek out similar things.

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Visual Design (continue)**
  - **Landmarks**
    - Large interesting objects can be used as landmarks
    - Example: *Journey* by thatgame company
    - The player starts in the middle of a desert next to a sand hill.
    - Everything around her **is the same color except** for a **dark stone marker at the top of the tallest nearby hill.**
    - **The player is driven to move up the hill** toward it
    - **Once she reaches the top, the camera rises above her, revealing a towering mountain with light bursting from the top**
      - **The camera move causes the mountain to emerge from directly behind the stone marker**, **showing the player that the mountain is her new goal**
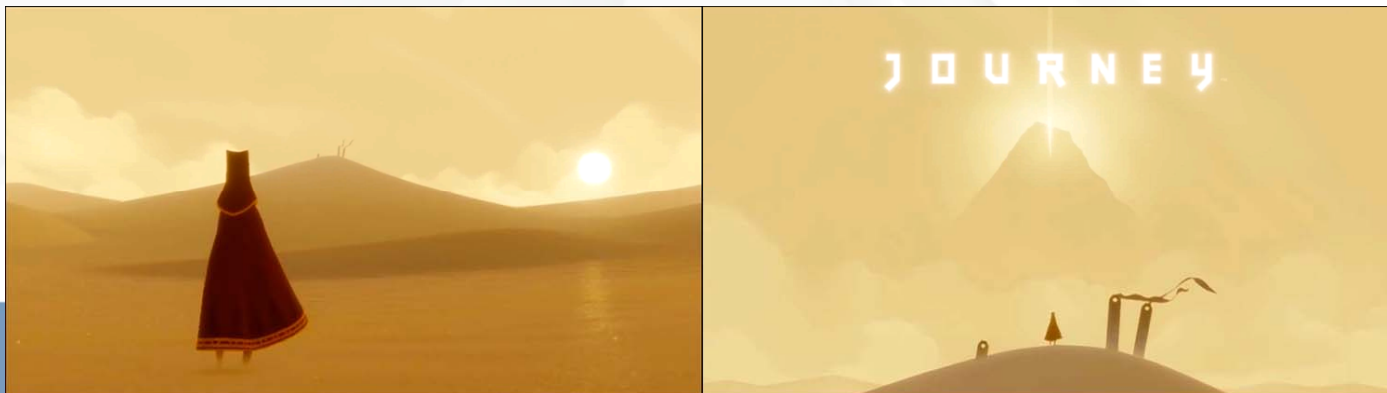
Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Visual Design (continue)**
  - **Arrows**
    - Subtle arrows can be used to guide the player
    - Example: *Uncharted 3*

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- ## Visual Design

  - ### Camera
    - Commonly used in traversal puzzles (looks in direction of next move)
    - Example: *Uncharted 3*

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Visual Design (continue)**
  - **Contrast**
    - **Used to draw attention to certain objects**
      - **Directionality**
        - Image A: Horizontal stairs contrast with vertical elements in scene
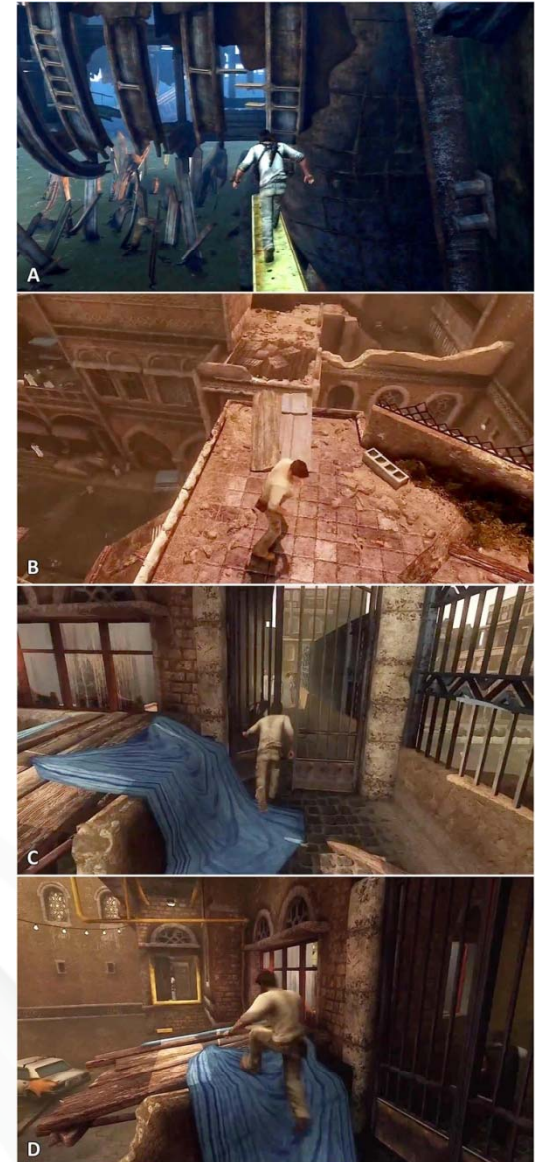   - **Brightness**
        - Image B: Edges are marked with bright/dark borders
      - **Texture**
        - Image C: Smooth cloth texture provides texture contrast with rough rock and wood
      - **Color**
        - Image D: Blue cloth and yellow pipes contrast with beige environment

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Audio Design**
  - **Music can influence a player's mood**
    - Slow, quiet music can lead the player to be more quiet
    - rough, animated music can make the player more bold
  - **Sound effects can draw attention to possible player actions or hidden objects**
    - Example: *Assassin's Creed 4* & *Tomb Raider* (2013)
      - Special sounds are *used to alert the player when a treasure chest or hidden tomb is nearby*

- **Player Avatar**
  - **A player's character model can have a strong guiding effect**
  - **If the player character looks like a rock star with a guitar…**
    - The player will expect for his/her character to be able to play music
  - **If the player character has a steel…**
    - The player will expect to be able to hit things and run into fight

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Non-Player Characters**
  - **Modeling Behavior**
    - The NPC shows the player good or bad behavior and the consequences
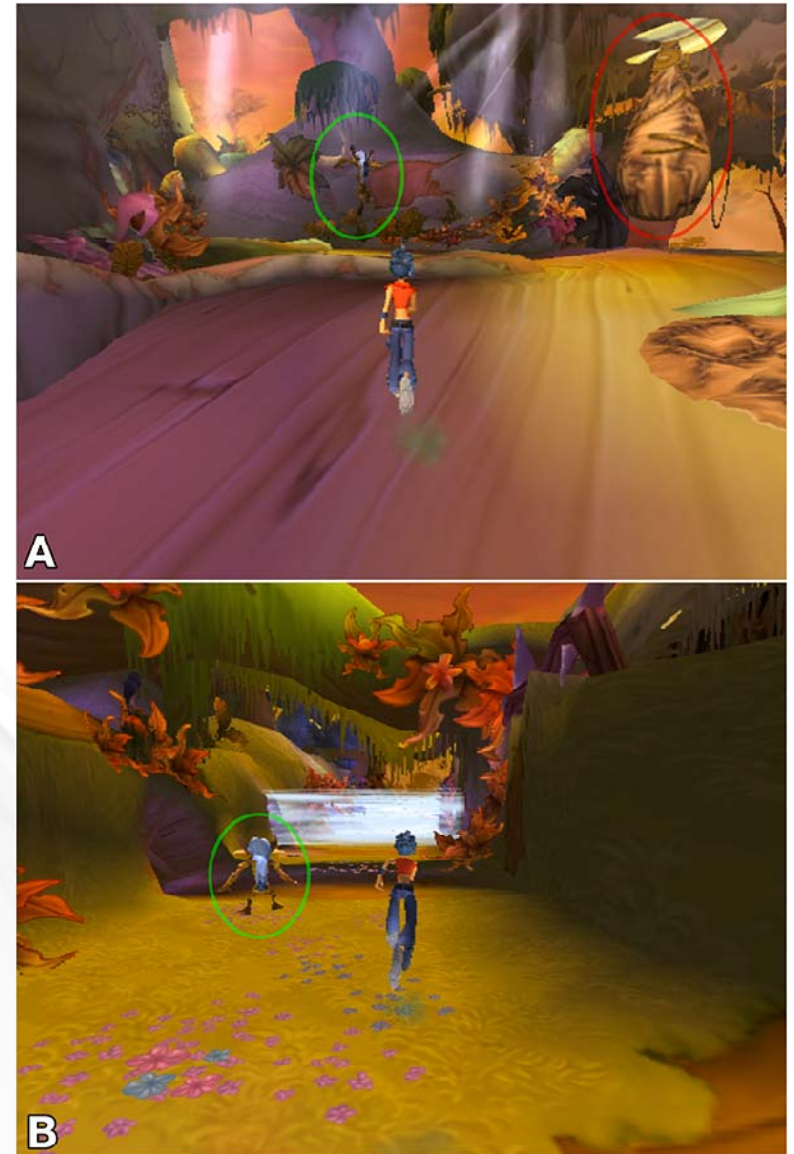 - **Example: Kya: Dark Lineage**
  - **Negative behavior**
    - NPC shows what NOT to do
    - Image A: Red circle shows a Nativ who stepped in a trap and was caught
  - **Positive behavior**
    - NPC shows proper bahavior
    - Image A: Green circle shows Nativ jumping to avoid trap
    - Image B: Green circle shows Native stopping to wait for wind trap

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Non-Player Characters (continue)**
  - **Safety**
    - Image C & D: Green circle shows Nativ taking potentially-dangerous action
    - Because the Nativ shows confidence doing so, the player doesn't fear

Seven Methods of Indirect Guidance

- **Non-Player Characters (continue)**
  - **Emotional Connections**
    - Players can be influenced by their emotional connections to NPCs
  - **Example:** *Journey*
    - Image A: The player encounters the first other creature she has seen in the game
    - Image B: When the creature flies off, the player follows it (presumably to avoid loneliness)