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GAT211

Lab Report 3

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Introduction

This was the first lab where I was actually able to playtest my game with fellow students. In the previous lab, I had presented the game in front of the class so I deferred to the other students in my group who had not had the opportunity. So, this lab ended up providing me with a great deal of information on my game that was sorely lacking. I had playtested it with a non-gamer friend before the lab, but considering his relatively high level of inebriation, it wasn’t exactly the type of playtest that led to many concrete results (he ended up doodling on the chalkboards for half an hour). I did, however, decide to make some more changes to the rule set after the changes made that were a result of the second lab. So the first section after this one will include this changed rule set—the one I brought to this most current lab—along with comments on some of the changes as well as a concise list of all the changes. I’ll then document the playtesting session from the lab, including what happened, what the players said and commented on while they were playing, and any changes they or I came up with during the session itself. Following this, I will include the new rule set which will again include comments and a change-list following it. Finally, I will provide new intensity graphs and up/down lists based on the playtesting done in lab.

Initial Rule Set (Ver. 3)

Untitled Crafting-Combat System

Components

* 2 medium-sized chalkboards
* 2 small-sized chalkboards
* 1 pack of white chalk
* 1 pack of colored chalk
* 1 felt eraser
* 1 bag of 15 gold coins
* 1 bag of 15 green coins
* 1 six-sided die
* 1 ten-sided die

Setup

* Each player takes one each of the following: medium-sized chalkboard, small-sized chalkboard, and a stick of white chalk.
* Remove one of each colored chalk piece from the box.
* One player takes the bag of gold coins, the other takes the green coins

Goal

To craft the best weapon possible—using materials that grant attack and defense bonuses, as well as defensive and offensive magic—so that the mercenary you hire to wield it may be successful in combat against your opponent.

Rules

The game has three, distinct rounds: Materials, Crafting, and Combat. Only when one round has finished may the next start.

Pre-Game Information

* The smaller chalkboard is used to keep notes and keep track of various stats as the game unfolds
* All effects from the weapons during combat (that have not been noted in the descriptions themselves) occur on the next time the player who has been hit or is guarding takes their turn to fight.
* All effects from materials last only as long as described in the Materials Round section during combat.

Materials Round

* With the coins in each bag, players must bid on the different materials they will use to make up their weapon. These materials are represented by the colored chalk.
* White chalk gives every weapon a base damage of 2 hit points per attack
* Each color of chalk represents the following statistics that can be added to the weapon
  + Red – Attack power is increased (2 x Base Damage for a total of 6 damage per hit)
  + Blue – Durability is increased (Weapon acts as a minor shield, reducing overall damage per hit by 1)
  + Green – Poison is added (A DoT equaling 2 hit points per turn for 2 turns on every hit)
  + Yellow – Blade on the weapon is incredibly sharp (Player hit with this weapon bleeds, losing 3 hit points the following round)
  + Purple – Magic Protection is added (User of the weapon wards off 2 hit points of damage for the next two rounds after weapon is used)
  + Orange – Magic Attack is added (For the next two rounds, the player hit with weapon carrying this magic suffers 1 hit point of damage and loses 1 damage per hit against their opponent)
* Using the pieces of colored chalk still left in the box, draw one out at random. This is the piece that will be bid on first.
* Bid on the selected piece until one of you refuses to go higher.
* The winner is awarded the chalk and the next piece is drawn.
* Any coins players have not used after the bidding is over may be saved as bonus coins when hiring the mercenary to wield their weapon.

**Crafting**

* Using the piece of white chalk along with their colored chalk, players craft their weapon on the medium-sized chalkboard.
* Once their drawings are finished, players must name their weapon and on the small-sized chalkboard, write all the stats that their weapons contain.

**Combat**

* Either deciding between themselves or by grabbing an impartial judge, the player with the neatest, most awesome weapon (artistic talent being mostly irrelevant) is given a bonus of 3 coins.
* Each player will then receive 10 coins back from the original supply they had at the beginning of the game.
* Using these coins, players will then choose a mercenary by buying skill sets they wish to use in combat. Write down each stat gained on your small-sized chalkboard. The skills and their cost are as follows:

(All of the percentages below apply to the role of a 10-sided die during combat.)

Attack Success Rate

* + 4 coins = 100% successful attack
  + 2 coins = 70% successful attack
  + If no coins are spent, mercenaries have a base 50% successful attack.

Damage Mitigation

* + 5 coins = -3 damage to every hit taken
  + 3 coins = -2 damage to every hit taken
  + 1 coins = -1 damage to every hit taken

Damage Multiplier

* + 5 coins = 3x multiplier to base damage
  + 3 coins = 2x multiplier to base damage

Hit Point Addition (each mercenary starts with 15 hit points)

* + 5 coins = 5 extra hit points
  + 3 coins = 3 extra hit points
  + 1 coin = 1 extra hit point
* Finally, using the stats from the weapon as well as those gained from the mercenary hired, combat begins. A six-sided die is rolled to see which player attacks first.
* The player who wins the die roll, rolls the ten-sided die to see if they have successfully hit the other player. If their roll is successful, the players determine the amount of damage taken using the stats they have tallied on their small-sized chalk board.
* After the resulting hit points have been subtracted from the opponents overall hit points, the opposing player takes their turn, completing the same steps.
* At the end of each round, players may add on any round-based materials that were bought at the beginning of the game that have not yet been used. If neither player has anything to add, nothing happens, and play resumes.
* Play continues until one mercenary has lost all of their HP, thus ending the game.

All Changes Made:

* Tightening up, rewrites, and deletions of a number of rules to lesson overall number of rules and to improve clarity.
* Reduced Materials (colored chalk) to 6 pieces from the original 12
* Reduced total amount of coins players start with (15 down to 30) due to reduction of Materials.
* Reverted to previous, back-and-forth bidding system; again, this was due to the reduction in Materials (with only one of each piece, I thought the bidding might be more exciting this way)
* Changed Damage Mitigation modifier during the Mercenary selection section as it became apparent that using percentages along with all of the other additions and subtractions would make for far too much math.

Playtesting

In this lab session, I grouped up with Kevin Robinson and Stephen Green. As we had only a very little time and Michael was able to playtest his game in the last lab, we decided to focus on Kevin’s game and mine. Kevin’s game ended up having a fairly complex battle system and by the time we were perhaps two-thirds of the way through a game, we realized we only had a little less than 20 minutes left in class. We quickly switched to my game and in the interest of time, I went over the rules quickly while pointing out sections of the rules they would need in certain parts of the game (the attributes of the different materials and the stats for the mercenary). The first thing they both mentioned was that they immediately liked the components, especially the bag of coins and the chalkboards. When they heard they would be bidding against each other, they began to play with the coins, stacking them up into different piles and letting them fall from one hand to the other. They also wanted to start drawing right away, a fact which may influence later iterations of the game.

They quickly moved into the bidding part of the game, drawing random pieces of colored chalk out of the chalk box, reading the attribute or bonus it gave to their weapon, and then bid for it. There was certainly a distinction made between the relative values of the materials as they saw them. Here is the list of materials with the amount of coins each player spent ended up bidding on it:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Material | Effect | Final Bid | Winner |
| Yellow | Add 3hp dmg on  next hit | 5 gold | Kevin |
| Red | 2 x Base Dmg | 7 gold | Stephen |
| Green | 2 HP DoT that lasts for  two rounds | 6 gold | Kevin |
| Blue | 1 HP damage mitigation | 4 gold | Stephen |
| Orange | 1 HP DoT and opponent does  hits for 1 less HP for 2 rounds | 4 gold | Stephen |
| Purple | 2 HP damage mitigation  lasting 2 rounds | 1 gold (Stephen  had no gold) | Kevin |

At the end of the bidding, Kevin had three gold left over that he would be able to use when building his mercenary. The overall engagement of the players during the bidding process vacillated wildly. Every time they bid, the person who started the bidding always started at one with the next player incrementing the bid by one and so on until someone one. No one ever took a leap to try to intimidate the other bidder, though with only 15 coins to bid with, this probably should have been expected. During the Red and Green material auctions it did get quite tense for about 10 seconds as both players tried to justify to themselves whether or not they should go up. When asked what they were thinking when bidding on a given item, they told me, since it was their first time playing and they were not familiar at all with the battle system yet to come, they had to go on instinct when deciding what to bid higher on, thus making the Red material, which gives a very clear and obvious bonus the most valuable. Kevin also mentioned that Red seemed a bit overpowered compared to the others. I was aware of this and when asked whether or not that seemed problematic to the game, they both agreed that it was most likely not and actually encouraged me to make even more over- or under- powered materials to make the bidding process more interesting. While I think there may be some merit to this bidding system, especially if I gave the players 30 coins each as it was initially, as well as retooling some of the materials (which I still plan to do regardless), I think the game might be better served if I switched back, yet again, to the other blind bidding system I had in the rules before.

The next section—crafting their weapons using a piece of white chalk and the colored chalk pieces they won in the previous section—went by surprisingly fast, lasting perhaps a minute, though this was probably because both players were aware of the time constraints. Kevin quickly drew a fairly basic sword outlined in white chalk with the blade composed of the three colored pieces of chalk he had. Stephen, on the other hand, decided to draw a machine-gun toting robot with a magical shield protecting it. It was pretty evident that Stephen was more engaged that Kevin during this phase, excitedly drawing as much as he could. Inevitably, Stephen’s drawing made all of us crack up, winning him “the most awesome” weapon award that granted him 3 extra coins to use during the mercenary building stage. As they both received 10 coins back to use when building their mercenary they ended up having the same amount of coins to spend: 13 each. This was not what I expected, but probably isn’t that rare of a case considering one of the two players is likely to have some small amount of coins left over from the material auction section of the game.

Moving on to the mercenary skill buying phase, there was a noticeable drop in engagement, some of which I expected, though it dipped further down than I anticipated. They both quietly looked over the choices available to them and just by looking at their faces it was clear they were having a somewhat difficult time deciding on would be the best way to spend their coins. When I asked them later what they thought about this part of the game, they said it was the least interesting, especially coming off the drawing of their weapons. They wanted to move pretty quickly to using the things they had just made and this was an unexpected and unwelcome detour. Kevin also said there were just too many choices and it was frustrating to try to come up with a skill set that would match his weapon stats. He did say this was at least partially influenced by the fact that we had less than ten minutes left and feeling rushed certainly didn’t help the process. After about 5 minutes they had chosen their stats and written them down on the board, ready to move on to the final section, the combat.

Stephen went first and while he had bought the 70% attack rate success for his mercenary, he rolled a 1, ending his turn. Kevin went next and since he bought the 100% attack success rate, he didn’t even have to roll. What he did have to do now was figure out the damage he would do to Stephen. This is where everything sort of fell apart. After about 30 seconds, Kevin wore the pained and frustrated expression of a person who is trying to do 3 or 4 different math calculations simultaneously, attempting to remember the number from one calculation while also figuring out which calculation came next. When he finally came to the amount of damage he could do, he was quickly losing any interest in the game that he might have gained from the previous sections. When he realized that there were even more calculations to be done based on the damage mitigation that Stephen had, he threw in the towel, saying this part of the game was far too complicated to figure out especially with a little less than five minutes left in class. I agreed and decided to use what time was left to ask them questions about the various stages of the game and what suggestions they might have to improve it.