Playtest Report

NOTE: This playtest report will be drastically different from the others I’ve done in both all my lab reports, both in this class as well as in GAT210. I attempt to write out the raw notes as I wrote them down when playtesting, then follow that up with a brief contextual statement including who said and anything relevant that person added. After that, I will include what I had plan to do based on that change. Hopefully, this will create a more concise picture of what happened, and the useable parts taken away from the experience than my usual method of story-telling. What is lost in detail will hopefully be gained in practicality and usefulness. It may not work as well, but I think it’s worth trying at least once.

**Playtest Report**: Held on Sunday Evening 01/25/15 Approx. Time: 2 ½ hours

**Testers**: Eric Gleiser – Sophomore BAGD – [e.gleiser@digipen.edu](mailto:e.gleiser@digipen.edu) – Phone Number: Saved in Phone

Alex Dryer – Senior RTIS – [a.dreyer@digipen.edu](mailto:a.dreyer@digipen.edu) – Phone Number: Saved in Phone

**Observer**: Arend Danielek – Senior BSGD – [arend.danielek@digipen.edu](mailto:arend.danielek@digipen.edu) – Phone Number: Saved in Phone

**NOTES:**

**Section:** Initial Reading of Rules

* **Arend:** Suggests lining up Components section and Setup section in Final Draft of rules so players can immediately see how each component listed is used in the Setup of the game.

**Comments**: Agreed and will be included in final rule set

* **Alex:** Suggests that I explicitly state to put other six, non-used colored chalk pieces back into the box, so no mistake is made about whether or not to use them during gameplay.

**Comments:** Agreed. Led to much confusion and can be fixed with a few words.

* **Self:** Remember to add 4-sided die to component list now that one is in use.
* **All:** Discussion over whether bidding nothing should be allowed in blind bidding. Pros seemed to eventually outweigh cons, especially considering if a player has no use for that color in their particular build

**Comments:** Agreed. Undecided about whether to state explicitly. Right now, I don’t think its necessary

* **Eric:** Should list colors according to ROYGBIV as is customary when listing things in color

**Comments:** Never noticed this before, and he did say it was bit nitpicky, but honestly, I don’t it can hurt and if it’s somehow more pleasing, it can only help. Agreed.

* **Self:** Need to rewrite Goal section to reflect all changes made.
* **Alex:** State that the auction phase goes through all the colors. Misunderstanding at first between how phases of the game went (See later note about changing game structure)

**Comment:** Should fix itself in rewrite of rules that will make it clear how game progresses.

* **Eric:** Typo in description of Red material. Should be 4 damage per hit, not 6.
* **Alex:** Should probably put base HP of mercenaries in somewhere so players can know much certain damage values are worth when bidding on them.

**Comment:** This was the start of a number of comments that ended up resulting in a major change that will be described below. In short, bidding on materials before knowing stats of mercenary makes values of materials very abstract and difficult to bid on, leading to frustration later.

* **Eric:** Change rules font to something more readable, less bold.

**Comments:** Agreed. Need to reformat a great deal.

**Section:** Bidding on Materials

* **Self:** Alex wins first two chalk pieces, though first one results in a tie at 5 coins bid each. Since changing bid systems, I forgot to include a rule for ties. After a short discussion, I decided that it might be interesting for players to keep their current bids, but make another blind bid on top of the tied amount. Everyone seemed amenable to this suggestion and game continued. Need to include new rule to take into account tie-breaking solution.
* **Self:** Overall, Eric bidding more conservatively than Alex, winning three out of the first four chalks pieces. Another tie resulted in Alex winning again, though he is down far more coins than Eric.
* **Self:** At the end of this phase, Eric had 2 pieces of chalk to Alex’s 4. Final coin count after bidding was Alex: 5 coins left, Eric: 15 coins left. Eric seemed to change tact about halfway through the auction phase after seeing Alex snatch up a lot of the chalk pieces. At end of this phase, when asked, he said he had a plan to use more coins for merc. Otherwise, not many issues here besides the tie-breaker, but will come back to this section later when players are building mercs.

**Section:** Crafting the Weapon

* **Eric:**  Would have preferred markers and paper, but agreed after brief conversation that chalk had the benefit of not allowing players to get too detailed with their drawings and shortening overall time players could spend making them.
* **Alex:** When asked by me if he minded using the white chalk only for making weapon, he replied that it didn’t really bother him and that he was already planning about how to use the chalk to add to the weapons in the next phase.
* **Self:** Both players seemed to really get into the drawing of their weapons and the naming, laughing and enjoying themselves throughout the 8 to 9 minutes this section took. They both ended up quite different as well, Alex making something a bit more traditional and having more refined drawing skills with Eric creating some unwieldy but very entertaining weapon. The weapons as they looked at the end of this round are presented below:

**Section:** Buying Mercenary and Combat

* **Self:** With 10 coins given back to each player, Eric was able to buy everything offered by the current rule set. I had increased their prices after taking one option out (in order to simplify). At first it seemed like this might not be a good thing, having one player being able to buy all the stats available, but talking with Eric and Alex, they both agreed, given Eric’s decision to spend less on chalk, it was a perfectly viable strategy to forego some materials in order to make a stronger fighter.
* **All:** During the initial phase of buying merc skills, both Alex and Eric seemed to have some misgivings about their initial investments in the materials. They constantly were looking back to see what they had and how those materials might be changed or altered by these new stats. This became a much bigger topic of discussion after the game and will report the rest there.
* **Eric:** Suggested making reference cards so that players would have a reference for all the materials and mercenary stats during every part of the game. Alex and Arend agreed.

**Comment:** Definitely agree and a very sensible suggestion I’m not sure why I didn’t think of earlier.

* **Self:** Neither used the smaller chalkboard to write down their stats until just starting the actual combat part of the game. Eric had stated it might be a good idea to include a pad with the game (which I agreed would be nice, especially if I could have one made that had a pre-defined grid with places to put materials bought and merc skills bought). After this discussion though, both wrote down all the stats they were about to use.
* **Alex:** Need a rule stating that players can add the first material before combat begins. As it reads now, it seems as if the first round must occur before any materials can be added.

**Comment:** Agreed. This is confusing and I’ll make it clear in final rule set.

* **Alex:** Suggested writing in the rules that players should choose/write down on small chalkboard the material they will be adding privately so that the other player can’t respond to that decision, creating frustrating gameplay.

**Comment:** I’m not sure if writing a rule for this should be explicit, although it did prove quite frustrating for Alex on his first turn when he chose to add Yellow (adding a 7 point HP dmg attack) causing Eric to counter with Purple, negating the effect altogether.

* **Self:** Realizing that having materials that negate the effects of other materials creates situations that are no fun at all, with players not even being able to use a material that they may have bid aggressively for at the beginning of the game. I’ll need to rewrite at least two of the materials to have a different effect that doesn’t cancel out other material effects.
* **All:** A situation arose where Eric, due to a vagueness in the rules was able to do 16 hit points of damage in one turn (the highest possible amount using one material as I discovered later and to be re-investigated in mathematical analysis). Eric has used the red material, which granted a 2x multiplier to base damage, and also was able to roll a D6 for additional base damage. He rolled a 6, which with the starting base damage came to 8. With the multiplier it came to 16. It became apparent that this was probably a bit too high, especially considering the highest possible HP was 32. Both Eric and Alex agreed it might be better to have the multiplier only affect the original base damage and not include the added damage from the die roll. Could be easily fixed by changing “base damage” to “additional, non-base damage” in the die rolling rule.
* **Self:** Despite bring the damage down from 16 to 10, Eric still won on the next turn, as he rolled another 6 on the D6, taking Alex’s HP down to zero and ending the game.

**Section:** Post-Game Discussion

NOTE: This discussion ended up last about an hour and a half and went off on a number of tangents that while interesting, had no bearing on the final game as the conversation went into a more abstract discussion of combat systems in general. Therefore, I will only note those things said that applied directly to this game/system.

* **ALL:** The first thing I asked was whether the drawing of the weapons increased their enjoyment and engagement with the game. They both agreed saying they felt much more involved with because of the weapons they had drawn and named. They did mention that during the combat section, they forgot to add some of the colored chalk additions they had originally planned, but this was probably likely due to the fact that there a number of interruptions about rule discussions. I asked again if they minded not being able to use the colored chalk during the initial crafting phase and they both replied that they liked the idea of adding them later, during the combat phase, more than if they just used them all at once.
* **ALL:** The next major point of conversation concerned the fact that both players felt that once they had actually gotten to the combat section, having chosen their mercenaries stats, they both wished they could have gone back to the start of the game and re-bid on the materials. A few suggestions were thrown around until it became clear that the mercenary skill buying section might be better placed at the very beginning of the game. This way, the players would know the basic stats of their fighters and the effects of the materials wouldn’t be so abstracted form the reality of how they might affect combat later in the game.

**Comment:** I had to agree after mulling it over for some time that this was quite a problem and one that had probably been there since the very beginning without me realizing it. While I wasn’t thrilled about having the two coin-using sections be put back to back like that instead of buffeted by the crafting phase, it seemed like the best solution during this part of the conversation.

* **SELF:** As a direct result of the previous conversation, I wondered if it might not be better to just get rid of the mercenary skill-buying section altogether, instead having players either choose from a few pre-made options that could be spiced up with some flavor text. In her feedback to my last lab report, Kiera mentioned the same thing, stating that it might just be a better idea to get rid of the section entirely, having the players only be concerned with the weapons and their effects. Honestly, at this point, I’m not sure what to do. One part of me wants to get rid of it to make the game even simpler, but another part of me wishes to keep the merc-skill buying because it adds some diversity and choice to the actual stats used in the battle system itself, which was the actual assignment. I think, for the time being, I’ll just put this down to something I would theoretically like to investigate further with more playtests but just didn’t have the time and keep the skill-buying system in.