Jason Clark

GAT211

Project 1

Game Analysis/Intensity Document

1. Lab 2 Discussion of Game

Since about only half the students were able to discuss their game at the front of the class during this lab, there was a bit of a lopsided amount of people who were able to playtest versus those who just went through their game with the class. I was part of the latter group, though I was still able to get a number of helpful suggestions. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the lab and the necessity to turn it in the next day, I will be unable to do any real playtesting for this system until after this lab report is due. I will be making changes, however, based on the feedback received from both Prof. Holcomb and the other students when I presented the game to the class. That feedback will now be described and commented upon.

The first feedback I received was from Michael Green. He thought it might be interesting and fun to bring the blacksmith back into the action, so to speak, during the actual combat. Say during combat, a piece of the weapon is knocked off or an effect has worn off and must be reapplied. The players could then, between each round have a short “tune-up” section that allows them to add any additional effects that they have in their possession or perhaps reattach some part of the weapon that will has been broken off (though this breaking of the weapon will have to be a part of combat itself with its own rules). Prof. Holcomb chimed in, saying that the idea of having the smiths run in and staple gun parts on to the weapon was very appealing. Frankly, I think it is a great idea and hope to implement it into the current system, though I’ll have to be careful about how many more rules are added.

On the subject of rules, Prof. Holcomb also mentioned that there might be a few cases where rules I had discussed might not be necessary; for example, the rule that sets a time limit on drawing the weapon. He said that in actual play, the players will most likely solve this issue themselves by badgering the other one and thus it would make for one less element (the timer) that players would need to keep track of. I initially resisted but then thought about my experience in situations somewhat similar to this where my fellow players have demanded that a player either finish his or her move. This also has the virtue of requiring one less component (a timer, which I forgot to put in the initial rules anyhow). Another rule Prof. Holcomb brought up concerns the traits added to the mercenaries. I currently have a rule stating that the trait to gain a successful attack percentage is mandatory. His solution is to instead make it so that if players choose not to spend any coins on this trait, they will receive the lowest amount that originally just cost 1 coin. This makes it so that all players’ weapons will have at least a base attack chance (which makes more sense thematically) and gets rid of another rule.

Finally, at the end of class, I asked Prof. Holcomb if he had any more advice for my system and he mentioned three things. First, I will need to playtest and see how well players are able to keep up with the math. I expressed my own misgivings about that particular problem during the lab itself and know that I will need to adjust some things in the future. The next piece of advice he gave me is that I should perhaps unbalance the traits that can be bought for the weapons even more than they are so that they have different relative values for the players. This could make the bidding process even more interesting if certain traits are seen as inherently more valuable, thus causing players to bid more so that they can either have it for themselves and/or to keep their opponents from getting it. Finally, he mentioned that it might be interesting to try “hidden” bidding, where both players have a certain amount that they keep secret and then reveal that amount at the same time. If a tie results, that trait might be thrown out altogether. This would cut down on the complexity of the statistics during the combat and considerably cut down on some of the auction rules. All of these things have merit and I plan to try them out as I start to playtest the game in earnest this upcoming week. While I didn’t get to playtest the game with actual players during this lab, I am still confident that I received more than enough feedback to make meaningful changes to the rules.

1. First Set of Intensity Graphs

Given the three distinct, unique sections of the game, it might be more helpful in analyzing my game if, at first, I make intensity curves for each of the three sections. The sections, I’m assuming, will be of slightly different length and will have different levels of intensity reached. For example, I imagine the height of the bidding will be a bit more intense than say, drawing the weapon, however enjoyable that part of the game may be. Coupled with each intensity curve will be Up/Down lists that correspond to times on the curve itself. Because of three factors—this being a completely new system, the fact that I have not had the opportunity to playtest this yet, and that most all of the changes to the game need to be made completely within the individual, discrete stages—I have elected to save the complete game intensity curve for the next lab report, where I will go into far more detail about how each of the systems work together to create one complete, engaging experience.

**Curve 1: Materials Auction**

Up List

* Players Bidding
  + As can be seen on the graph the two players are constantly interchanging their relative intensity values. At the start, when the field is wide open and there’s everything to choose from, game play isn’t especially exciting, but still probably more so than the second choice, when both players are accustomed to the mechanic somewhat but still have most all of the options available to them. That is why the intensity takes a bit of a dive at Time + 0:30. As the auctions continue, the choices continue to dwindle along with the amount of coins the players have to bid with. These two events together cause the intensity to make ever higher leaps as the auction progresses. Finally, at the last bidding, the intensity takes one more rather large dive as the outcome would most likely be obvious at this point.
* Deciding which material to be up for auction
* Deciding how much to bid for each material up for auction

Down List

* Waiting on the opposing player to make his or her move, especially if that opposing player is trying to make a detailed, complex analysis while you are just ready to move on.
* Repetition of bidding – this one is not necessarily a bad one at all. As players get more comfortable bidding, they might gain a bit more confidence. While they may not be quite as “on the edge of their seat”, they are still comfortably engaged with the game.

**Curve 2: Crafting**

Up List

* At Time + 1:30, after the player has gotten into the comfortable, grindy part of drawing the weapon, that moment when it starts to come together and you can see the finished product in your mind, starts to raise the intensity and will continue to for the next few minutes.
* Drawing an unexpected, but amazing piece of your weapon

Down List

* After the initial burst of excitement at Time + 0:00, players will most likely get into the flow and rhythm of drawing for a minute or two. Like the “repetition of bidding” mentioned in the previous Down List, this one is also not a bad thing. During this phase of the game, players should be able to let their guard down a bit and just have fun creating the most unique weapon they can think of.
* Near the end of the crafting period, starting at around Time + 4:30, it is very clear what the weapon will look like and most of the work from this point out is polish. That’s not to say there’s not the opportunity to make a last-minute addition that really pulls the entire thing together, but I imagine that’s much more rare than merely letting what you already have be.
* Waiting on the other player to finish, especially if you’ve been done and they seem to be taking their precious time creating a very detailed, photo-realistic representation of their weapon. This might initially spark a bit of intensity of the waiting player as they try to imagine some novel way of talking smack, but that would be quite short-lived.

**Curve 3: Combat**

Up List

* High rolls. In my system, high rolls can be especially loaded. If a player has, say, not taken a very high success rate of attack, but in turn has pumped up their damage to crazy levels, then a high roll for them vindicates their decision, making that player feel smart and accomplished.
* Low rolls, especially for the opposing player and extra especially if that attack would have been catastrophic—a very real possibility in my system for a player with certain types of builds.
* Unexpected convergence of multiple abilities and stats that gives a player a huge advantage. It this type of situation that I am representing in the above intensity graph at Time + 2:00 (the Blue line). Given the amount of traits available to the player, I imagine there will be a number of times when a player simply forgets everything they have, but once they run through the abilities and stats they’ve kept track of on the small chalkboard, they realize they’ve just made a devastating attack.

Down List

* Being the victim of said devastating attack. This is also represented at Time + 2:00 (the Orange line). After trying your best to create a powerful, awesome weapon and having the foresight to wisely choose the best features of your mercenary, there are still going to be times when the other player just demolishes the best of your intentions. With this system, that’s just part of the package.
* Math—lots of math. This is a very real and serious problem with my game that I honestly have no idea how bad the situation really is. Because I was one of the students who presented in front of the class instead playtesting, I was unfortunately unable to playtest this before this lab report (while there is usually no excuse for this, even when the lab report is due the next day, this particular weekend is the Zero Engine Game Jam in which I’ll be taking part, thus forcing me to write this lab report directly after the lab itself). So, the first thing I must do come Monday is playtest, playtest, playtest. That is, without a doubt, the only way to figure out how bad the problem is and how I might go about fixing it. I can think of any number of solutions, but without actual playtest evidence, it would be like shooting in the dark trying to find a solution that would work for players.

1. Lab 3 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.

The first thing that was said, and I honestly cannot remember who mentioned it first because they both so enthusiastically endorsed the suggestion, was that there needs to be more drawing and interaction during the combat itself. Kevin said that I could even cut one of the sections—the mercenary section being the most obvious candidate—in favor of adding more player interaction into the combat section. Upon hearing this, and finally seeing how my game played out, it became clear that I had pushed the combat (the thing that should be the main part of the game) to the back and didn’t give it enough attention. Steven chimed in saying that I should try to work in a way that players could keep drawing or adding to the weapons during the combat, having the players act as a smith who adds on or repairs the weapon after each round; he compared it to a boxing coach bandaging up and giving advice to the boxer in between each round. Elaborating on this idea, Kevin suggested that the player could “activate” the power of the materials in between rounds, which would not only allow the player to more strategically decide when to use them (especially those that have abilities only lasting a few rounds) but also keep the math the down to a minimum by only allowing one type of material to be active at a time. I loved the idea but was stumped at first how I might be able to implement it. In fact, all of the suggestions they had were valuable and on the mark, giving me a great deal of material to work with in crafting the next iteration.

1. Lab 3 Intensity Graphs

NOTE: These graphs are based on the playtesting done using the previous rule version and not on the revised rule list. The idea is that I can have a representation of how the game actually played to compare it to what I envisioned in the previous lab report.

Bidding Section

Up/Down Lists

Up

* Whenever an auction would reach a bid of 4 or higher.
* Large up spike if the bid went to 6 or higher, like at Time + 0:45 and +1:45
* Winning the auction
* The start of the next auction after the one just lost (that player now, usually, has more money and thus more opportunity)

Down

* Bidding starting at 1
* Bidding incrementing by 1 gold only until it reaches a certain amount
* Losing an auction
* The start of the auction directly after the one just won (that player now has less money and realizes they will not be able to compete as strongly)
* The last auction where Steven had run out of money and Kevin winning was a *fait accompli*.

Crafting Section

Up/Down Lists

Up

* Starting the drawings, both players were inititally engaged, with Steven a bit more so than Kevin (I wouldn’t realize why until I saw their finished drawings)
* Both started with the white chalk, but after about 45 seconds, when using the colored chalk, they both seemed to be more engaged with it.
* For Steven, he kept adding more strange things to his drawings, keeping him invested for a longer period of time

Down

* After the initial start, both seemed to settle in while drawing the outlines with the white chalk
* Kevin, after making a pretty standard sword and just coloring in the blade, lost a good bit of interest and as time ticked by, seemed slightly impatient as Steven kept going
* Steven only started losing steam as he realized that he needed to hurry and finish, as Kevin was done and waiting.

Combat Section

Up/Down Lists

Up

* The start of choosing the mercenary stats had the players initially engaged…but only initially.
* The start of combat, finally.
* The first roll for each player

Down

* Realizing that building the mercenary was a tedious and somewhat frustrating task.
* Adding a bunch of numbers to a chalkboard
* Waiting for your turn to roll
* Steven didn’t react too harshly to missing on his first roll; he still seemed eager to see how it might play out.
* Kevin trying to determine how much damage he had done with his successful attack (this should be an up, so MAJOR PROBLEM)
* Both getting frustrated by the math involved.
* Finally stopping after the first round, realizing most of combat would be spent on math.

1. Final Playtesting Notes

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.