

# A SIMPLE ROOM

Stanislav Schaller

**Target Audience:** Players over 13

**Gamer Type:** Curious/Lovers of Mystery Boxes

**Target Platform:** PC/Web Browser

**Genre:** Text Adventure

**Number of Players:** 1

**Projected Release Date:** Learning Track's End

## High Concept Statement

A Simple Room is a text adventure game about being in a room that wants you to leave. The player is initially presented with little to no description of the room's contents, only it's desire to have the player out of it. Outside of the room, the player will encounter other non-playable characters and events that will encourage the player to re-enter the room. Each new visitation of the room reveals more detail about the room, the room's intentions, unlocks more detailed descriptions of already visited locations outside the room, and new events and people to visit.

A Simple Room works to use the player's curiosity about the room to invoke a sense of mystery and accomplishment as the player explores the game world. Discovering new lines of dialogue or description in the room or the outside events should feel rewarding and motivate the player to keep experimenting with different dialogue and action options. The expansion of the world from a small, tightly confined room into a fully realized place in space, time, and emotion is A Simple Room's aim. It should feel as though the player is noticing more and more things about the world through their senses as they engage with the world.

## Feature Set

- Textual descriptions of in game events, interactions, dialogue, and setting
- Fixed player actions from a selectable list per screen/game state
  - These options rarely change and increase in number as the player discovers more about the game world
- No set path to narrative completion
  - Options start limited but slowly grow, and two players may not have the same order of events through the game world
  - The narrative will be sensitive to the order of events the player encounters, and will shift in reaction
- Save the player's progress each time they make it back to the room

## **Team Roles**

Game Designer – Responsible for designing the structure of the narrative paths and maintaining a sense of wonder in the player’s exploration regardless of path order. Storyboarding and diagramming would be great tools and skills for the game designer for A Simple Room.

Writer – Responsible for writing descriptions, dialogue, and actions. A text-based game needs engaging textual descriptions to keep players drawn in.

Developer – Responsible for programming the systems and dialogue the designer and writer create.

UI/UX Designer – Responsible for the look and feel of the game to the player. Text and selectable actions/options should be presented in a clear, attractive manner to the player that does not hinder their enjoyment or ability to play the game.

It is possible that these roles could be shared by more than one person at a time.

## **The Competition**

The game that closest rivals A Simple Room’s aim of engagement through history and an expansion of options is A Dark Room. The names are probably too similar now that I type them in the same sentence. A Dark Room uses a mixture of progress bars and expanding options over time to build a believable game world and narrative with a minimum of exposition. A Simple Room aims to create a similar sense of game world through expanding description, exposition, and choice. A Dark Room was moderately successful in its browser form and became a number one hit for a full month when it was ported to mobile.

Games like Lifeline and A Dark Room marry the human impulse to check on and make progress to build engagement for the player, while A Simple Room intends to isolate the gratification of pure discovery. I found the discovery and expansion of the game worlds in both A Dark Room and Lifeline to be as engaging as the progress bar elements present in those games. A Simple Room will also focus on an expansion of description through the player’s character’s senses, as if they are being tuned in to the world over time and experimentation.

I haven’t delved too deeply into modern text adventures beyond A Dark Room and its prequel, Ensign. A closer look at modern text adventure games such as Device 6, Horse Master, and Sun Dogs would be a valuable study in comparison for the high concept of A Simple Room.

## **Inspiration**

A Dark Room is the heaviest inspiration to A Simple Room (this sentence also begs a title change). A Dark Room progresses by offering the player more options after enough progress bars fill of already discovered options. The in-game universe itself feels like it is expanding every time a new option or progress bar is presented to the player and this feeling is invoked in the player without needing any exposition. That sense of wonder is what sparked the idea for A Simple Room.

## **Takeaway**

A Simple Room is about discovery and the senses. Descriptions of the way leaves fall from a tree may trigger a chain of choices that lead the player to completely new events or expanded descriptions and options back in The Room that doesn't want the player in it to begin with. A balance of mystery and discovery is what A Simple Room will offer, wrapped up in an evocative textual blanket.