

Slasher Board Game User Testing Report

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CCT419 H5S: User Experience Design - UXD and Board Games

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December 1, 2022

Methodology

There are a total of two evaluation sessions, the first session with one game played on a low-fidelity prototype and the second session with two games played on a high-fidelity prototype. The changes made during each session and how that affects future gameplay will be outlined.

Participants

Due to the nature of the test facilitation being in a university classroom, most of our participants are in the same age range. Thus, we did not focus much on this, but more on their knowledge of co-op games and the slasher genre. In the initial playtest, half of the group knew about the slasher genre, specifically referring to certain movies, while the other half were unsure, or had never watched or interacted with such media. We did not find any data to suggest however, that the people who knew about the Slasher genre better understood the theme. In the next iterations of the test, the number of people who were familiar with co-op games increased, which gave them more of a reason to be critical of our co-op aspect, as they have more experience. This however, is balanced by the fact that they were significantly less knowledgeable on the slasher genre than our previous group. They thought the theme was fitting, but they also thought the game was collaborative, as opposed to the previous groups. We can see tangible proof of our development from these two personal questions, more so than the age and gender factors (please see appendix.)

First Evaluation Session

This testing was done through a low-fidelity board drawn by our members on two pieces of A4 paper. The background and instructions of the game were conveyed by the team with all questions the players answered by the members. One 50-minute game session was played by four participants who were all male and between the age of 21 and 22 years old.

The role separation during the evaluation session was separated mainly between being the facilitators of the game and notetakers of the game process. Hera, Gillian, and Marcus were the main facilitators who provided the instructions for the game and also helped answer any questions the players had during the game. Sean, Mark, and Kamil were the notetakers registering any problems and interesting strategies made by the players during the game session. A post-game survey through Google Forms was conducted in which all four players answered. Questions within the survey are related to the users' understanding of the rules, the general game experience, and the players' opinion towards the collaboration mechanic. For detailed questions, please refer to the appendix.

Key Usability Findings & Recommendations

The first evaluation session showed how we were succeeding in making the board game feel collaborative. Actions made such as blocking hitpoints and providing action cards for their team display how the group is working as a team. Players within the comments also mentioned how the collaborative element helped make the experience of the game better. However, we did realize that players were not feeling as collaborative as we would have wanted. For example, players were more focused on completing their own tasks. Only at the end of the game did the players become more collaborative because of the necessity of keeping everyone alive and in one

room to win the game. Responses also indicate that the players “felt somewhat motivated to help the team.” making us realize that there is room for improvement in that aspect.

This evaluation session also highlighted two main issues; the amount of help needed by the players to play the game and the functionality of action cards. As one of the players mentions within their questionnaire, “It seemed like much of the clarification came from the facilitators and not from the readings provided. If the facilitators were not there I would have been very confused.” This comment made us realize how the game as a final product should be played by the players themselves, not with the guidance of the game designers. However, currently, this game is in no shape to do that as there is so much information and rules required for the player to understand in order to fully experience the game as intended. Information such as how each round works, player movements, winning conditions, abilities, action cards, disasters, and conditional permadeath are all important components of the game itself that players must be aware of. In order to achieve that, we should have cards, instructions or a better design of the board to provide the affordance for players to understand and interact without having to ask us. After our first user testing, we also realized how there is a strong need for modification and balancing the action cards. Throughout the game, players hardly drew action cards until the end. This is likely because either using an action card is not worth it because of limited actions or because the cards are too confusing. With our decision of making use of an action card one of the two actions players can make per round, there are a very limited amount of acts they can do. This results in the game moving slowly, which can be boring. The current cards are also somewhat confusing as some cards are only used in an active manner, while others are activated passively. Namely, the Armor and Hide cards were the two the players were most confused about. Essentially both these cards do the same thing by helping players avoid damage when the Slasher

is in the same room. However, the armor card could be used as a card to resist damage by moving to a room where the killer is in, and also as a card to block damage when the killer moves to the same room, allowing it to be active and passively used. The hide card is only used passively when the Slasher lands in the same room as the player to avoid damage. Changes have to be made to either make a difference between the cards or simply remove one of the two.

Next Steps

From the user testing, we realized that for our next user testing we need a board that is higher fidelity so that user movement can become more clear to the players. A sense of collaboration should also be incentivised by making the stakes higher for players. Changes have to be made to the action cards by making them require less cognitive effort for players to understand, showing how action cards could be useful for the game, and considering the usage of an action card to not be categorized as an action.

Second Evaluation Session:

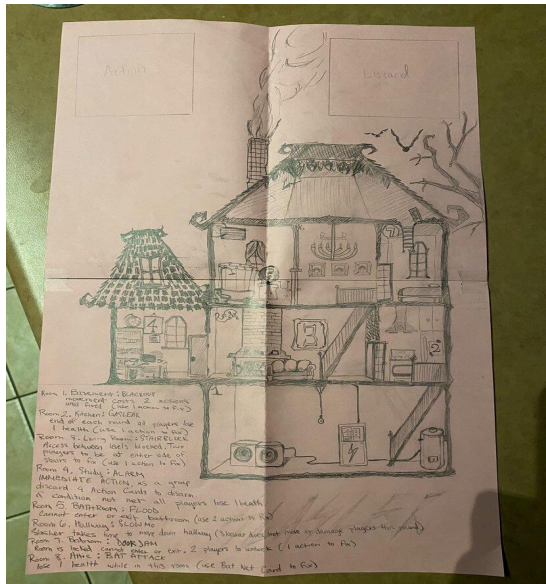


Figure 2: A High Fidelity Prototype of the Slasher Boardgame Used in the Second Playtesting Session

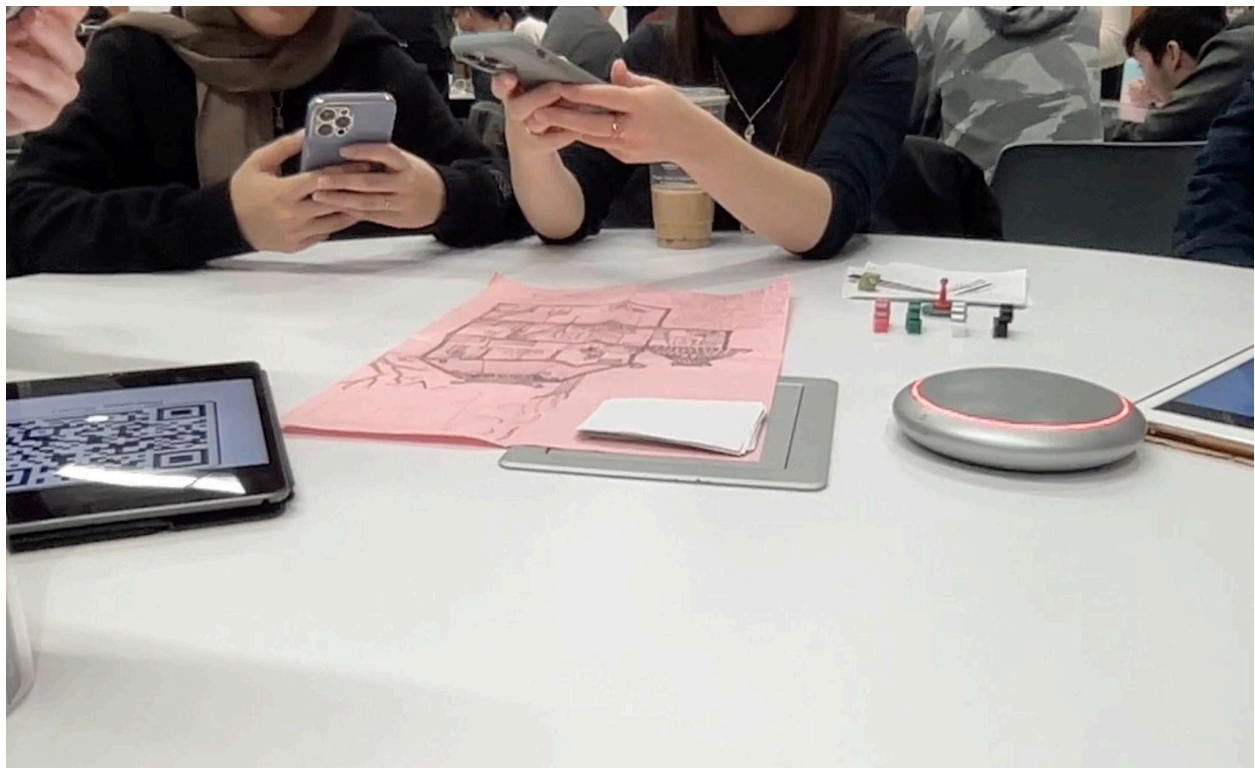


Figure 3. All of the pieces and game elements on the table during a user testing session.

In this iteration, we made improvements to the board, group members collectively implemented graphic design to the board according to the Slasher theme. In this session, we were expecting to observe users' reaction and feedback on the theme and art style of the game, and from the first testing session, we learned that our game has complex rules that need to be explained. Therefore, we created a rule book for the users to test if they can understand the rules by themselves after reading them. During the second testing session, we only intervened when players felt it was too difficult to understand the rules, in order to test the usability of the 1st version of the rule book. Two 40 minute games were played during this session. Each game involves four players playing. The demographic is more diversified: 5 female players and 3 male players participated in the testing; and the age group varies more this time, 3 players are 20 - 21 years old, 5 players are 22 - 24 years old. The role separation during the session is mostly similar to the first session with Marcus being the film recorder. The film was recorded for player feedback in the form of video clips for post-test analysis.

Key Usability Findings & Recommendations

During the second playtest session, we identified more detailed problems that needed to be made. From our observational data, we identified that although the rule book makes most of the players understand the game's general rules, it fell short of clarity in terms of details. Although they understand the general idea of one rule, some of the wording in the rule book makes it confusing in certain circumstances during plays. Further, the rules are too long for the players, the first

group took almost ten minutes to read through the rule book, and some of the members in the second group did not want to bother reading it.

As a result, upon analysis, we found that once players understand the game rules, they can enjoy the game more than in the first testing session. However, since our game has a lot of mechanics, our rule book has to be drastically revised and edited. As players mentioned in our questionnaire, most of the players rated 2 out of 5 to the “easy to understand” rate of the game. On the other hand, 6 out of 8 players rated our game over 4 out of 5 in terms of the fun experience. All the players especially liked our theme and think our gameplay cooperated with the theme very well. Therefore, we decided to clarify further about our rules in the rule book and also draw more players’ attention to our rule books. Other than the rule clarification, we also implemented a slasher drawing on the rule book to attract players with the visualized theme to encourage them to read it over. Moreover, there are some minor changes made to the game mechanics as we found that some of the action cards are confusing for both groups.

In the questionnaire, there is another significant piece of data that we paid close attention to. A lot of players rated 3 out of 5 on coming up with a clear strategy during the gameplay. However, it contradicts our observational data, as during our observation, we found that players are actively discussing their strategies. During both games played, after the player had understood the gameplay, players had a clear strategy and both teams achieved or were close to winning. Our analysis on this is that players do not think they have a strategy because the situation on the board is constantly changing due to the randomized element of the game. No one player can grasp all the information to lead the game, therefore, players have to strategize through collective effort. Another reason that might have caused this issue goes back to the rule book. At the start

of the game, many players are confused about the rules causing them to not effectively put together a strategy. All in all, the gameplay itself is sufficient enough to balance the luck and strategic elements. Therefore, we consider the current gameplay experience is what we are aiming for, and we expect a better result when we have a clearer rule book.

Next Steps

We wanted to make the rule book more readable and easier to follow. To do this, we decided to change the rule book from a constant stream of convoluted information to a step by step, more structured and methodical layout. Moreover, we also decided to add a simplified version of the rule book called the quick start guide, that provides all the necessary information to the players on what they should do when playing the game without getting too much in depth to the game mechanics. This would help the players get started playing the game quickly and if they have more questions during the gameplay, they can always refer back to the comprehensive rule book for more content. Other than the actionable changes mentioned in the last section of the report, our next step for the game is to provide a complete version of the game to take advantage of the game theme that most players like. We want to add colour to our game board and produce it in print form, along with the cards that need to be decorated since most of them are currently serving only for their functionality. We value aesthetic elements as well as gameplay elements and consider the aesthetic elements to be an integral part of the player experience. Besides the game board and cards, we also decorated the rule book to make it more appealing to read.

At this point, since we already had a solidified gameplay system and a high fidelity prototype, we are only dealing minor changes on game mechanics trying to balance character skills and action card ability. The majority is to complete the visual production towards the final version.

Comparisons Between Evaluation Sessions

The purpose of using Google Forms as our questionnaire form is so that we can easily collect and compare data. The graphs generated also help visualize the influence of our modifications between the user testing sessions. This allows us to identify what we are doing right and what we need to pay attention to.

What We Are Doing Right

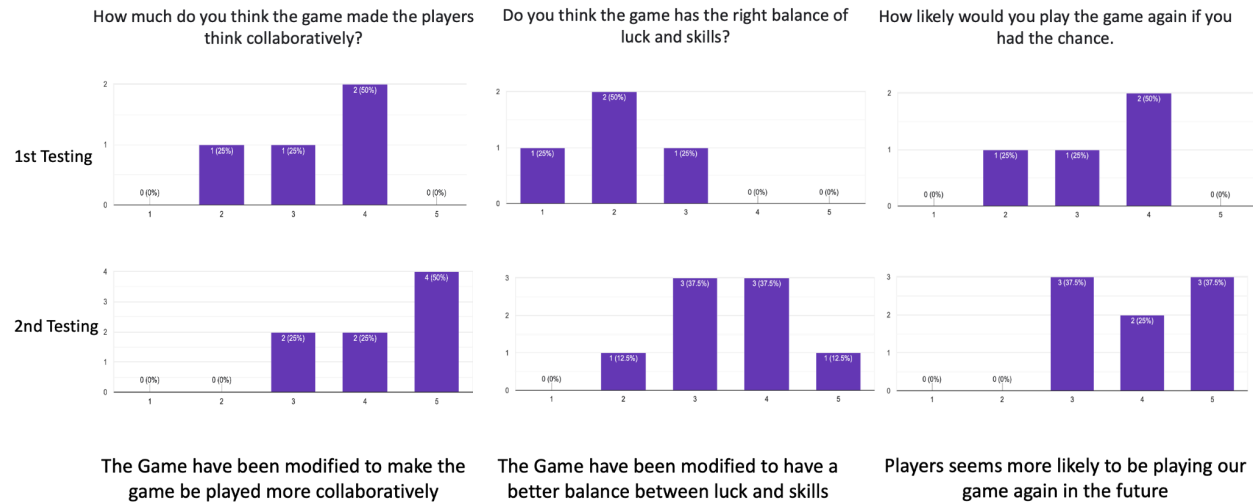


Figure 4. Outline of the differences between sessions.

From the data we collected, we could confirm that our changes were making the game more collaborative to play, more balanced in terms of skill and luck, and more enjoyable for the players.

What We Should Fix



What We Should Think About

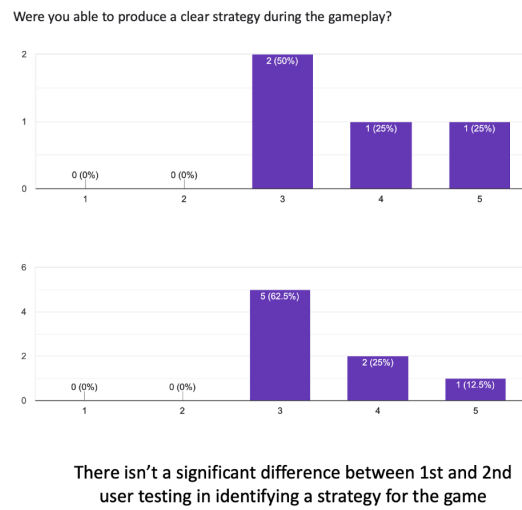


Figure 5. Outline of the aspects that remained stagnant.

The data collected from our questionnaires also made us realize that the heavy load of rules makes it difficult for the user to understand. However, considering the 2nd user testing, we did make a meaningful difference by displaying a similar result when using a rulebook instead of the game designer's guidance. Lastly, the data also suggests that strategy devising ranges between players. It is likely that players who were using the Babysitter character were able to come up with a strategy by distributing action cards to team members who need it, while other roles' abilities were not being used enough to identify a strategy. This suggests how we should rethink some of the character's abilities by making it more of a "game-changer" card if used wisely.

Appendices

Appendix A. Background Questionnaire and Reactions

How familiar are you with the slasher genre? Any movies in particular that you enjoy?

8 responses

Kinda? Scream
no
Friday the 13th, Halloween, that fred Kruger guy
not very
Very unfamiliar
Not familiar
Nope
n/a

Figure 5. Anonymous questionnaire outlining how much the groups in session two know about the slasher genre

Have you previously played any cooperative board game before? If so, what do you think is most important component about this type of game?

8 responses

Yes, making sure that everyone has a role to fulfill and that their role is meaningful
yes , strategic
Yes, the challenge and the feeling of fighting against the game.
Yes , strategy
Yeah, working together and communication
No
Yes and I think the most important component is the game being fun and as well as competitive
playing as a team

Figure 6. Anonymous questionnaire outlining how much the groups in session two know about collaborative games

Appendix B. Iterations and Changes

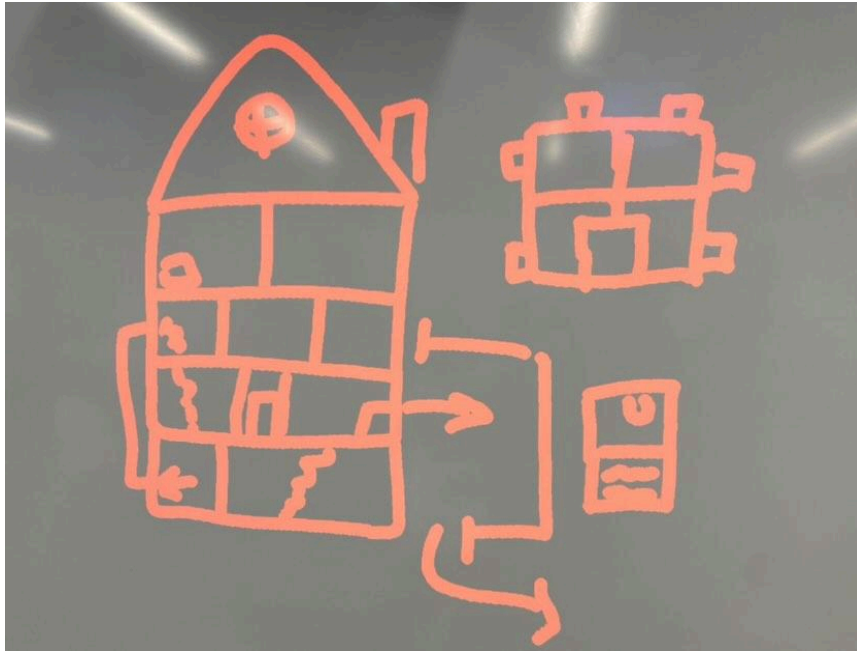


Figure 7. The first iteration of the game board idea.



Figure 8. Image of the first group in the second test session.

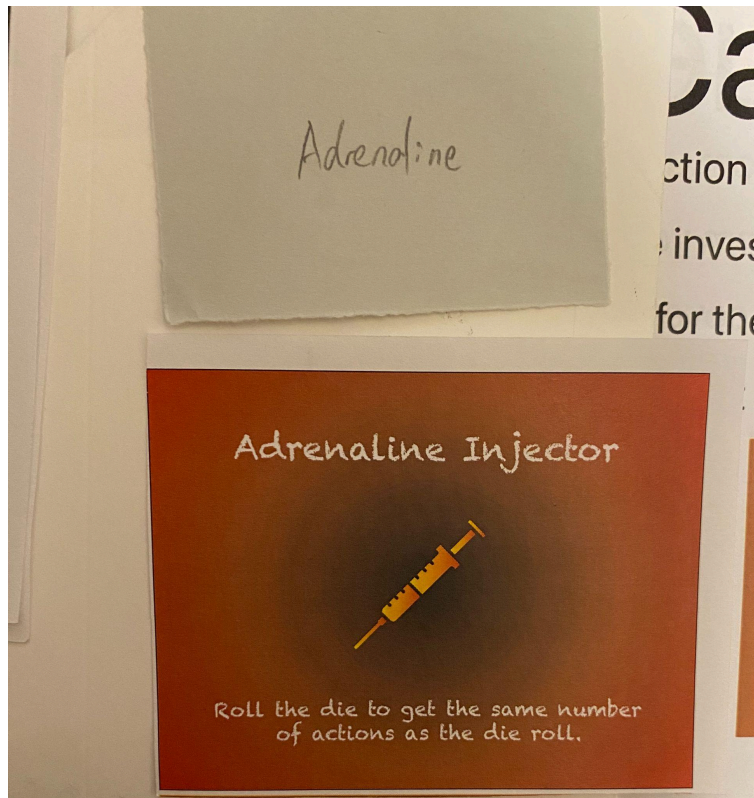


Figure 9. early low fidelity adrenaline card as used in first user test vs high fidelity prototype used in later testing sessions.

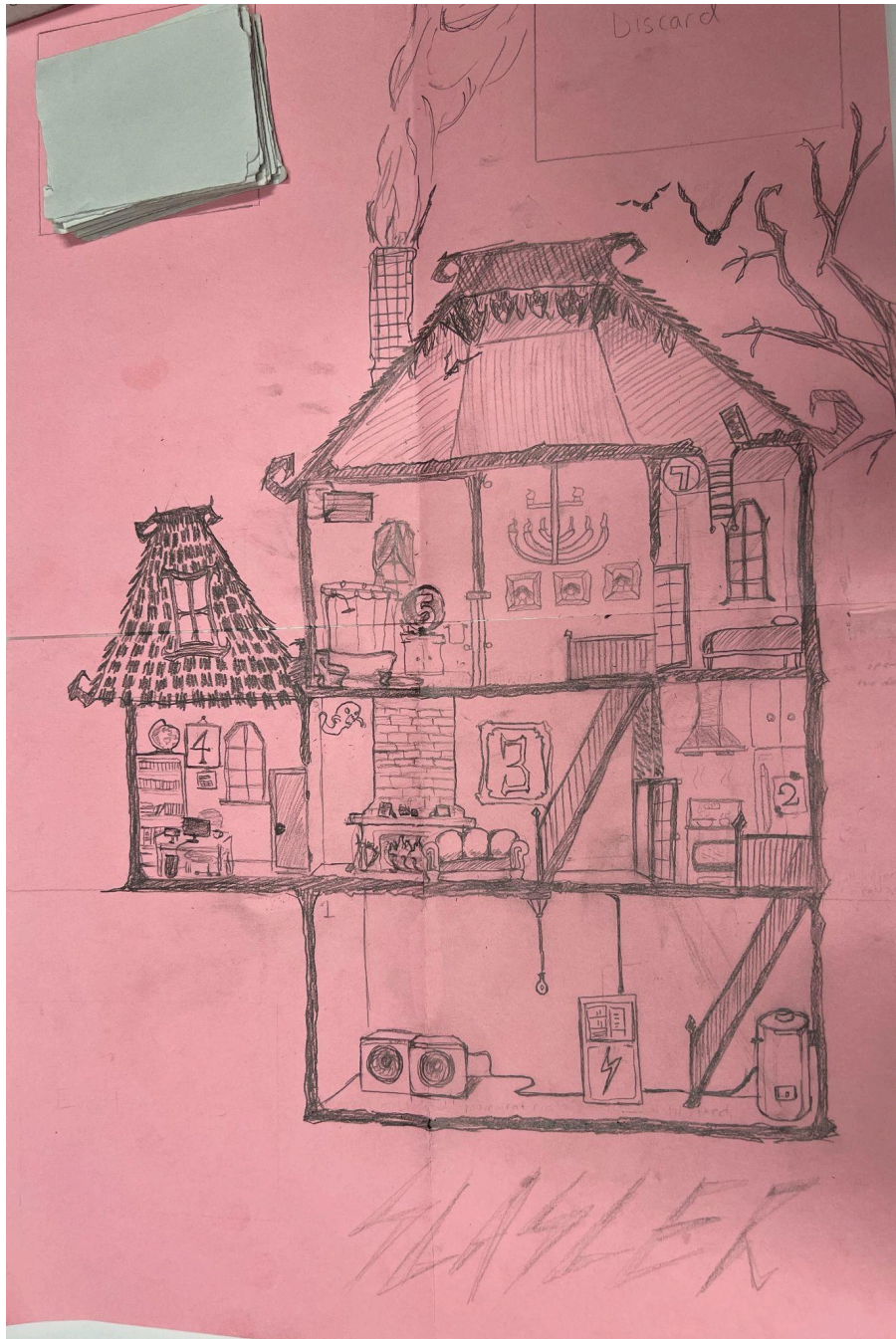


Figure 10. Hand-drawn prototype of our actual board game design which was used in the second iteration of user-testing.

Appendix C. Notetakers Notes

User Testing Notes

Instructions, Pregame

- ☐ Confusion on where they start
 - Maybe think about who starts the game
 - Solved by indicating roll to start on player cards

Actual Game

- ☐ Weakness of not knowing what is happening and confirming with the designer
- ☐ Not clarified with the instructions of the disaster
 - Maybe clarify or have an instruction card that displays the effects of each disaster
 - Trigger at the beginning of each round
 - Same as where the slasher shows up
 - Solution: Create a Instructional Card to clarify each room's disaster
- ☐ Clarify stairs at the beginning of the game and the movement system
 - Solution: Board will now be more clear displays where the stairs lead to
- ☐ Let the players know that they can be revived till they have an artifact
 - Permadeath activates after, don't actually die before
 - Solution: When flipped for Clue Card to the Artefact side, "Permadeath activated"
- ☐ Some actions require action, some don't. How would the player know that?
 - Players are not using their abilities
 - SOLUTION: Action Cards No longer require an action
- ☐ Not drawing action cards
 - Just moving around simply
 - Action cards are only drawn when players are stuck
 - Don't know about the flashlight ability
 - SOLUTION: Room 4 strategy
- ☐ Room 4 disaster
 - Not a lasting effect
 - SOLUTION: As a group discard 4 cards. If there are no 4 cards then everyone take one damage
- ☐ Attic instruction to go up should be more clear
- ☐ ARMOR vs HIDE

- Passive
- Need strong clarification between those two
- Maybe have only one of those
- It is passive and active for armor
 - Blocking gas leak?
- ☐ Group starts using actions a lot more late game
 - Solution: Room 4 encouraging action card picking up
- ☐ Don't know strategy of other players with more health taking damages
- ☐ Very Difficult for players to figure out themselves on the mechanics
- ☐ Adrenaline Confusion
 - How many actions is it?
 - We should have a stronger definition for it
 - SOLUTION: All action cards no longer require action
- ☐ Should we have abilities or not?
- ☐ Art might help make it more clear for users to know what to do
 - We using crazy artists
- ☐ Won without using their abilities and hardly used action cards till the end. Game should be more difficult

Rulebook: Things we have to clarify and make sure player knows before the game.

- Abilities of each player
- Disasters
 - How to fix the disasters
 - Does it require an action or not?
 - What is happening for each room
- The action cards
- Permadeath VS Can be Revived
 - CPR and No CPR
- The order of the game
 - First killer move through player rolling dice
 - Make actions for character

- Winning Condition
- What is considered as an action and what is not

User Testing Session 2

Pre-game

- Clarify we can share all information about everything
- Too long to read all the rules?
 - Should we separate a part in which we actually need to let them know
 - Or rules they can read during the game
- Who should start
 - Should we have whoever watched the most recent horror film starts first then clockwise
- No disaster in the first round is not clarified
- **They get hurt if they pass by the killer**
 - They do not know that
- One player was not clear on the staircase
 - Solve with design
- Do players know that covering the clue is an action?
 - **What requires an action page**
- She unlocks the room at 8 instead of 7, it should clarify that the room should be unlocked at 7 or 6 for both players
 - **Disaster Page which states the disaster itself and how to solve them**
- People are using action cards but no one is using their abilities
 - Until later in the game
- Fixing the door is an action but still moved another two actions
 - **All fixing disaster is 1 action**
- Teammates are not helping each other in terms of health
- After revive, player only get 1 HP.
 - **Add to rule book**
 - **Add a few more health kit action cards**
- The Player dies for the first time

- Two player dies
- **Roll for slasher even though they die**
 - **Add to the rule book**
- Confusion on lure
 - **REMOVING LURE**
- Babysitter and sweethearts synergy
 - Very interesting
- CPR takes two action
 - **Action page**
- Armor can block damages of all kinds, hide is specific to killer
 - **CLARIFY ARMOR ABILITY**
- Allowed to trade cards within the room is not clarified within the rules
 - **Categorize it as an action within action page for players to easily refer**
- Don't know to not roll after slasher is tased
- Don't get damaged for tasing when moving into the room
 - **Explain in rulebook**
- Taking the tactic of not taking artifact until the very end
- Had to tell the player to help take damage for another player
- What happens when all action cards are used?
 - **Do not replenish**
- Does removing the locked door require an action?

Comments:

- Rules unclear
- Action card does not require actions
 - **Have all actions that thought of be categorized in 1 or 0 action in Action Page**
- **Abilities**
- Not challenging enough

Questionnaire result links:

First:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13KjTbiPCOW0bt5A7zk_GDgyhXVs0pR2Hp_W9idYw474/edit#responses

Second:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Xapqqoxx3hXzLGO9GFroi4Hs5gmfIVw8WWnavbNnET8/edit#responses>