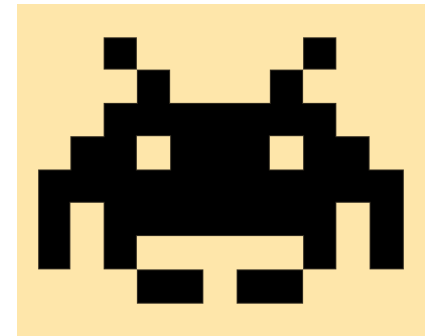# CSCI 1106
Lecture 6

Play Testing

The Greatest Game on Earth

- You have just created greatest game on earth!
  - Came up with an idea
  - Designed the game and game play
  - Implemented the game
  - Polished the game with cool graphics
  - Tested the game by playing it yourself
  - Have a business model ready to go
- You're done right?

How Do You Know?

- Do users
  - Understand your game?
  - Enjoy playing your game?
  - Play the game as you expect them to play it?
  - Know the rules of the game?
  - Retain interest in the game?
  - Find the game challenging?
- Does the game have
  - Bugs or design flaws you are not aware of?
  - Confusing properties or behaviours?
  - An easy to follow story-line?
- Can the game be improved?

Playtesting is one way to answer some of these questions

What is Playtesting?

- Playtesting is a game development method for
  - Identifying problems with the game
  - Understanding how players perceive the game
  - Getting feedback about the game
  - Improving the playability and enjoyment of the game
- Playtesting involves
  - Players:
    - Users who typically have never played the game before
    - Recruited by developers to play games
  - Observers:
    - Members of the development team
    - Observe the players as the play games and take notes

An Overview of Playtesting

Goals of Playtesting

- **Identify issues that affect game play**
  - Bugs
    - Does the game behave correctly?
  - Playability
    - Player motion and mechanics
    - Laws of physics and environment
    - Controls
    - Speed of the game
  - Understandability
    - Game objectives
    - Tactics and strategies
    - Player information and statistics

Goals of Playtesting II

- Understand how players perceive the game
  - Difficulty
  - Pace
  - Immersion
  - Interest (story line)
  - Genre
- Get feedback about the game
- Identify possible improvements
  - Extensions
  - Modifications
  - Spin-offs
  - Features

Playtesting is NOT a User Study

Playtesting

- Focuses on a single concrete product (a game)
- Used to discover issues in the product (game)
- Passive
  - Player plays the game
  - Observer observes the play
  - Occasionally ask W questions
- Cheap and fast
  - 20 to 60 minutes per player
  - Can be done often and repeated

User Studies

- Focuses on general user tasks
- Used to verify a hypothesis about user behaviour
- Active
  - Users are timed performing tasks and respond to queries
  - Investigators survey the users
- Expensive and slow
  - 1 to 10 hours per user
  - Too expensive to do often and repeat

Two Variants of Playtesting

External

- Hire players not involved with the game development to test the game

- More expensive because
  - Need to find players
  - Need to schedule players
  - Need to pay the players
  - Unknown constants

- Provides an objective view
  - Player not familiar with game

Internal

- Game developers are also game players

- Cheap
  - Developers are on site
  - Developers are already on payroll
  - Developers do not need time to familiarize themselves with the game

- Provides a continuous view
  - Developer knows about past issues

Before the Playtest

- Ensure the game is stable (does not crash)
- Recruit players
  - Should represent your target audience
  - May or may not be familiar with the game
  - Typically compensated for their time (not much)
  - Should have some experience with games
  - Select players of various experience
    - Novices, casual, experienced (gamers)
- Setup a standard "typical" game station
  - Typical hardware (console, display, controller, audio, etc)
  - Typical gaming environment (couch)
  - Will depend on type of game platform

The Playtest

- Welcome and **thank** the player
- Remind the player that
  - The game is being tested, not them
  - The player should just have fun!
  - The observer will remain silent during the game
  - The player can ask questions
- Ask the players to talk out loud as they play
- The observer
  - Must remains silent during play
  - Must takes notes of everything that happens
    - Good, bad, and ugly
  - May conduct an interview at the end of play
  - May record the session on video (not typically done)
- Thank the player again and ensure that you have contact information

The Observer Should Note

- General mood of the player
- Any comments or suggestions made by the player
- Any bugs that occur during play
- Any difficulties experienced by the player
  - Controls, UI, game mechanics
  - Game objectives, tactics, and strategies
- How easily the player learns the game
- How quickly does the player progress through the game
- How quickly does the game become too hard for the player
- Any aesthetical issues
- Any other feedback

Ignore Your Ego!

- You as the game developer may feel hurt or annoyed by some of the player's comments
- Ignore your feelings
  - You are doing this to find issues with your game
- Be prepared to accept the slings and arrows
- Remember: you still have the opportunity to improve the game!

After the Playtest

- Keep track of all the players
  - You can invite them back for additional playtests
- Collect and organize your notes
- Categorize your observations
  - Bugs (high priority)
  - Playability Issues (high priority)
  - Understandability issues (high priority)
  - Suggestions (low/medium priority)
  - Other feedback (informational)
- Address the bugs and the issues
- Playtest the game
- Repeat until game is awesome

Learning the Lessons

- Playtesting is a cheap and fast way to learn how to improve your game

- The more you do it, the better you become at it

- Listen and observe, no matter what the player does

- Playtest often and repeatedly as you improve your game