BALANCING

-Who goes first

We could create a coin toss at the beginning of each game to see who goes first. The coin’s two sides would each look like their respective themes. I imagine it wouldn’t be difficult to implement RNG and, depending on that, to make the player who ‘won’ go first.

-Increasing difficulty with level (or time)

This is done by either making the camera move faster or giving the players increasingly less time to act, but enough time to at least jump on the platform, or making the platforms move faster. This depends on what results we will get from the playtesting sessions

-Let players get through easy parts first

This could be implemented like this: If the players take, say 50% of the time they’re allotted, their time is going to be capped and so they will have to make their decision faster. When the time will be minimal, the platforms could move increasingly faster

-Layers of Challenge

The players could be each awarded a grade at the end of each round. This makes the casual players be thrilled that they got a C and feel like they can do better. Also, it is a good occasion to create schadenfreude

-Learning to play is important

We should have a very short, guided tutorial to let players move freely without fearing to lose lives. The technique is called Kishotenketsu and it has proved to be very effective in the Mario Odyssey games.

-Meaningful choices

We have this covered by the risk & reward system imposed by the game’s main concept and by the positioning of the pickups

-Dominant strategies

These will surface as we playtest and will be dealt with when we get to them

-Triangularity

A.k.a. risk and reward. We could follow the Space Invaders model and, once or twice a round, give the players a very fast-moving platform with really high-value targets at the very end of the platforms, similar to how there is a red saucer that appears once in a while in the above-mentioned game. Also, the risk and reward system should be balanced so that if the player receives the high risk reward he gets less points than if he would fall and lose points, to encourage constant tackling of the risks

-Skill vs Chance

We are designing a game that requires less skill, and as such we will leave a few components of the game to be decided by RNG, such as when upgrades appear and maybe how powerful they are, but some will be left to the player strategizing, such as when to use an upgrade and how to make the best of the low skills that he possesses by balancing it with tactics and a bit of luck

-Head vs Hand

Our game shouldn’t have too much fast-paced action, nor to should it be too much of an intellectual challenge. We want it to be easily playable and we want it to give instant gratification when played.

-Can novices and experts alike have fun with our game?

We are trying to achieve just that, and as such we implemented the upgrades. They will put the more skilled player to the test while making the less skilled one have an advantage. My suggestion for balancing the game properly is, when an upgrade is used against the other player, not to punish him too hard and as such make him only lose half the points he would lose if he were to fall in the water, so that the game’s balance can quickly, yet steadily shift. However, we do want the player with more skill to win the majority of the time, say 60% of the time. The player who is less skilled knows that he is less skilled and if the game doesn’t give him a chance to win, he will lose interest.

-Time of Gameplay

Since we have established using rounds, the time of each round should be no longer than one minute, and the players should compete to the best of 3 rounds to ensure that quick matches can take place.

-Rewards

We will add special sound effects, visual cues and point bonuses to encourage players who get high risk rewards, but we will also try to give players who use upgrades the same rewards. This will make each feel judged (in a good way!) and they will feel like they are each using their very own tactic and feel like they have their own personal playstyle that no one else has. Each era is going to have different sounds and animations for all of the rewards, to avoid having two players with the same play style feel like they are not doing anything different.

-Punishment

We should consider adding in shaming (it’s not as bad as it sounds) feedback, such as specific sound effects and visual cues when players fall off the platform, plus a message that tells them that they did a bad job. In addition to having lost some points, this is going to make them be more careful with the way they play.