

MANUAL I

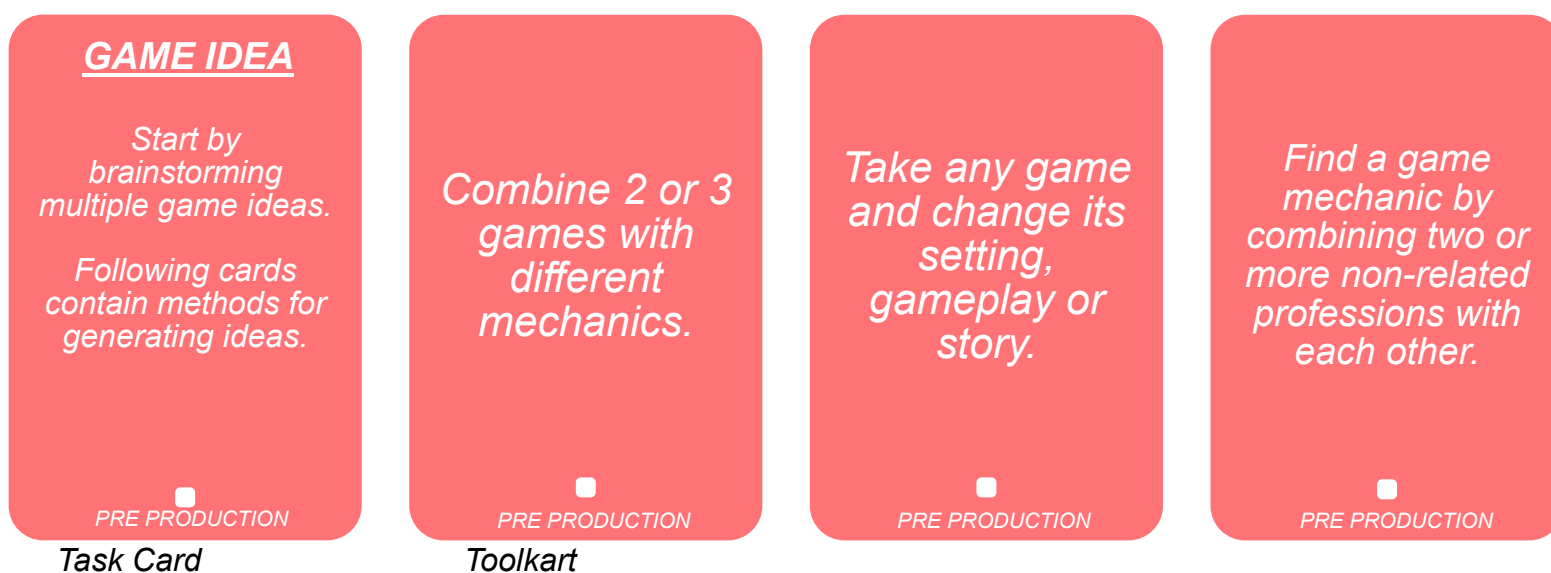
This card set is designed to guide game developers through the development process of a game. It contains methods, rules, tasks and questions which inspire you to create games with a joyful and relaxing experience for the players.

Please read the manual to understand the terminations and the overall idea of this set.

- 1. The main idea of this set is to provide game developers with a guide which helps them through the development process. If you think, that some of the cards don't help or worse, confuse you, skip them and continue with the next card.*
- 2. This set contains five topics. Each card is colored in their respective topic: Pre-Production (Pink) / Interval (Blue) / Meditative (Green) / Post-Production (Orange) / Others (Gray)*



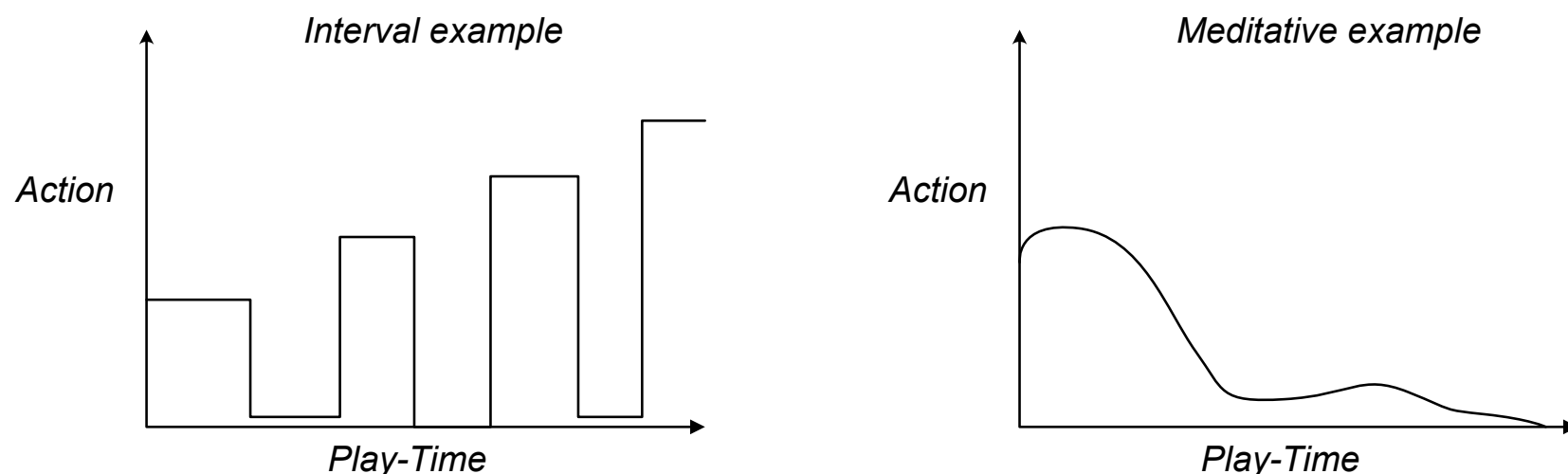
- 3. Each topic contains task cards and their respective tool cards. A task card gives you a task to fulfill. The tool cards presents methods, rules or questions which you can answer to accomplish said task. Task cards have a title which are underlined. Both are marked with the equal amount of the same symbols on the bottom. As a rule you can: use all the tool cards to fulfill a task, shuffle the tool card and pick a number or choose which tool you want to use to fulfill the respective task.*



- 4. The cards are numbered with symbols in the bottom. The numbers indicate the progression of the process. Feel free to skip cards which you think are not helpful.*
- 5. Some task cards will explicitly demand you to use all the tool cards.*
- 6. In addition to this card set you need: pen & paper, your computer, dice (or a dice-app).*
- 7. This set was carefully created to help other game developers. Every feedback helps the community. So if you think that some cards or categories are missing, if you find any misspelling, if you think some cards could be formulated differently or if you have any other ideas in regards to this set let me know at: mail@malben.ch*

MANUAL II

The two topics "Meditative" and "Interval" are the core of this set. I defined these terms as a result from my researches of different games. I'm talking here about a curve which represent in an abstract way the interaction of players and games (or more specifically a level of a game) through time.



Games which contain an **interval**-curve have an alternate order between action (i.e. more enemies, difficult puzzles, drama in a story line, music tenses up, "aggressive" visuals etc.) and relaxation (i.e. player walks around knowing nothing is going to happen, save points, story changes to a friendly mood, music is friendlier, visuals communicate that the player is safe etc.). Usually the curve rises with each challenge in your game higher, since the player masters your game better.

Examples of games with an **interval** curve are: Journey (Jumping and maneuvering character through levels are tension, storytelling and end of a level are relaxation) Dark Souls (Bonfires are safe spaces where the players relax, enemies and maneuvering character through levels are tension), Fortnite (Shooting and defending creates tension in players, exploring and collecting is relaxing).

Games which contain a **meditative** curve give the players usually full control over the game, avoid time pressure, don't include "aggressive" enemies, are open ended, focus often on exploring and creating etc. The players have through the whole game a relaxing experience.

Examples of games with a **meditative** curve are: Universe Sandbox (you can create and destroy whatever you want whenever you want), Sims (You can create and choose your life), Everything (you can be everything, and don't have time pressure).

Some games can also contain **both** curve types. It appears if the game presents a main challenge (collect a certain amount of money until day X) and let's the players manage how they want to achieve that (farming, fishing, fighting, interact with other NPC's). It can also appear if a game has the overall curve structure of a main curve but offers the players side games which have the opposite curve structure (main game interval: collect all badges by fighting with your monsters against other NPC's. side game meditative: take care of the monsters by petting and feeding them whenever you want).

Examples of games which contain **both** curve types: Stardew Valley (each day can be played in a meditative or a interval way) Pokémon (fight other trainers, you can take care of your pokémon), Minecraft (defeat the game by building, fighting and mining or create whatever you want)

Although the curves can have different shapes, they're usually distinguishable.

GAME IDEA

Start by brainstorming multiple game ideas.

Following cards contain methods for generating ideas.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Combine 2 or 3 games with different mechanics.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Take any game and change its setting, gameplay or story.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Find a game mechanic by combining two or more non-related professions with each other.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Think of a problem that some people have in their lives and create a fun or silly solution to it.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Get inspired by visuals, books, music, other games, news, history, culture, religion, science, food, hobbies etc.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Write down keywords to all the things the player should experience in your game.

Complete the sentences of at least 2 of the following cards



PRE-PRODUCTION

„The players should experience....“



PRE-PRODUCTION

After the game the players should say „This game was...“



PRE-PRODUCTION

Find the intended experience through exclusion „The players should NOT experience...“



PRE-PRODUCTION

Find references in books, movies or other games with a similar experience. "This game is similar to..."



PRE-PRODUCTION

PROTOTYPE

Time to create your prototype.

Get a pen, paper, dice and try to create your game on an abstract level.

Play the game multiple times. Following cards contain ideas on how to improve the mechanic.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Get some inspiration from other games with similar mechanics.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Adjust and/or create rules that enhance your ideal game experience.

Try to change one rule at a time to see the difference.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Playtest as early and often as you can with other people. Ideally with your target audience.

Note their feedback.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Move on to a different prototype with another idea if you find yourself stuck and then later go back through all your ideas.



PRE-PRODUCTION

IMPROVE IDEA

The next step is to focus on the essence of your idea.

Answer all questions on the following cards to improve your prototype.



PRE-PRODUCTION

What is the core mechanic of the game?
(Jumping, Shooting, Interaction, Crafting...)



PRE-PRODUCTION

What is the core experience you want to communicate? Try to find only one word for it.



PRE-PRODUCTION

How does the experience fit the core mechanic? If it doesn't fit, ask yourself what changes you have to perform to get this symbiosis between: mechanic and wished experience.



PRE-PRODUCTION

Who is the target audience for this experience / game?



PRE-PRODUCTION

What is the best target console for this experience?



PRE-PRODUCTION

MED. VS INT.

Take pen & paper and draw a Time / Action coordinate.

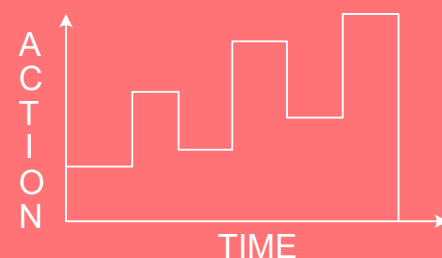
Now draw a curve which represents the gameplay of your prototype.

Following cards contain different types of coordinates. Find the most one similar to yours and note its property.



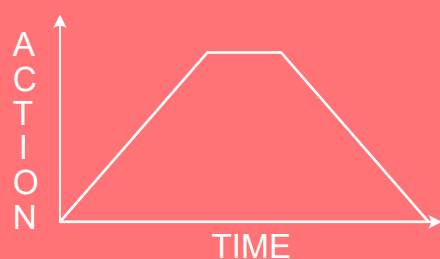
PRE-PRODUCTION

INTERVAL - 01



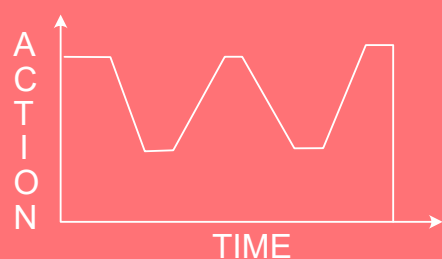
PRE-PRODUCTION

INTERVAL - 02



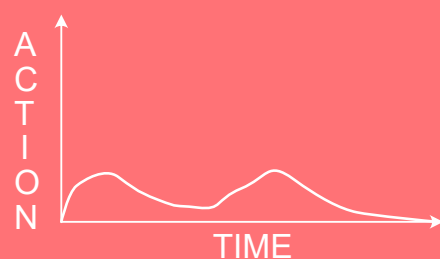
PRE-PRODUCTION

INTERVAL - 03



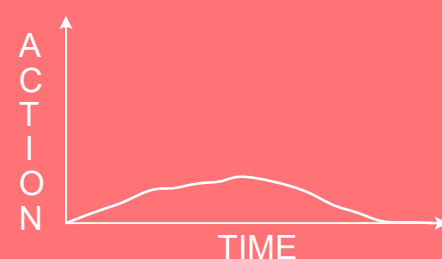
PRE-PRODUCTION

MEDITATIVE - 01



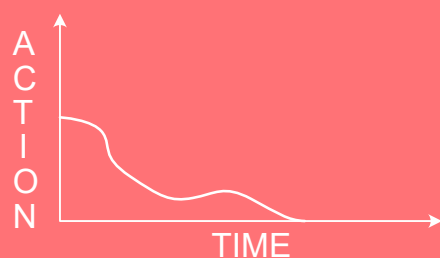
PRE-PRODUCTION

MEDITATIVE - 02



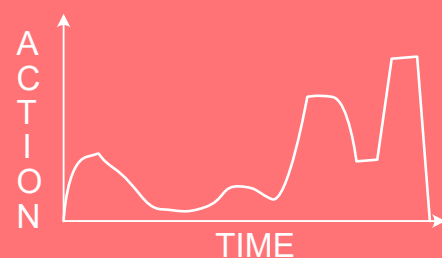
PRE-PRODUCTION

MEDITATIVE - 03



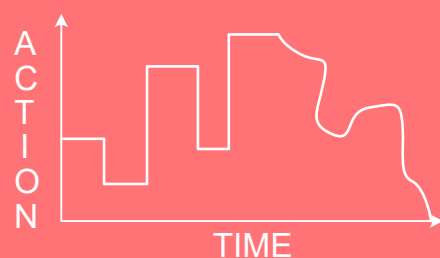
PRE-PRODUCTION

MEDITATIVE
+
INTERVAL
01



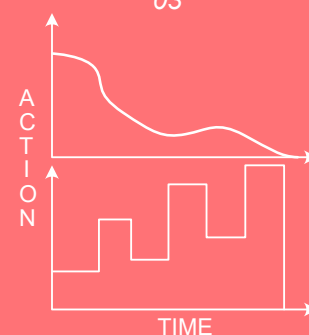
PRE-PRODUCTION

MEDITATIVE
+
INTERVAL
02



PRE-PRODUCTION

MEDITATIVE
+
INTERVAL
03



PRE-PRODUCTION

KNOW YOUR CLIENTS

It's time to make some marketing research.

The purpose of the research is to get to know your target audience, get inspired by other games and to find the right strategy to present your game.

The following cards present some general advice to this topic. Use all cards.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Create a spreadsheet of all similar games you can find. Note things like, genre, download statistics, console, curve-type, price, user commentary, web presence, color palette and other things which are important for your game.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Find your target audience, and talk with them about your game. Get inspired by their ideas and input.

Playtest with them your prototype.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Refine your prototype with the new-found Information.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Roll a D20 die.

Note X selling points of your game where X is the amount of your die.

Choose the most popular unique selling point.

PRE-PRODUCTION

CHECKLIST

Have a game idea

Defined the experience of your game

Have a working prototype

Determined whether your game has an interval a meditative or a combination of both curves.

You made some marketing research about your audience and similar games

The following card represents the approach.

PRE-PRODUCTION

PLAN

Create new game idea

Define Experience

Create Prototype

Improve Idea

Draw Curve

Marketing Research

Create another game idea

Improve idea with new findings

PRE-PRODUCTION

NEXT STEP

Continue with the next set of cards based on your Time-Action curve.

If you have a game with an interval curve, use the interval card set, otherwise use the meditative card set.

If your game has both curves, use both sets.

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

PRE-PRODUCTION

2 GAME STATES

There are two states in a game. Action & Relaxation.

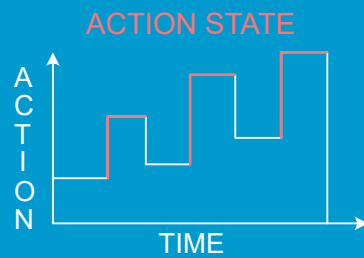
Read all cards following cards to understand these states.



INTERVAL

Action state

The players experience action, the play in the game increases intensity, music pushes the players faster, core game mechanic is activated, story gets dramatic, players tense their bodies and minds.



INTERVAL

The action state is a state where players get activated through game mechanic, story, sound, visuals etc.

The action curve in an action state should progressively increase, and at its peak stay for a certain amount of time before it decreases again.

The skill level of the players has to be in proportion to the challenge of the game to create an enjoyable game experience.



INTERVAL

Possible methods to increase the action

- Place more enemies / hazards
- Set a timer
- Give the players a handicap
- Build up the drama with sound / visuals / story...
- Combination of the options above.



INTERVAL

Relaxation state

The players know they're safe, the color palette and sounds are calming, the story reduces drama and action, the core game mechanic reduces or changes, players experience relaxation and have time to take a break.



INTERVAL

The relaxation state is the condition in which players have a moment to rest because of a change to the pace of the story, sound, visuals etc. It's contrary to the action state.

The relaxation state can offer either a break from the action state and / or give the players the opportunity to prepare for the next action state.

Let the players decide when they want to enter the next action state.

The relaxation state should offer: a time to reflect on their experience, a timeless and punishment free save space, a moment to explore and enjoy.



INTERVAL

Possible methods to increase relaxation

- Play relaxing music
- Build humor in your story
- Change the color palette to friendly colors
- Let the players have a break from the main mechanic
- Open and big rooms



INTERVAL

Game Devs have to alternate and balance between these two states to intensify the game experience. Players relax through each relaxation state more.

Interval curves can look differently for each game but they usually all intensify through the whole game.



INTERVAL

MOODBOARDS

Create mood boards of your game.

Catch the essence of the experience in a couple of pictures.

Following cards contain some advices to the mood boards.

Pick at least 1 card.



INTERVAL

Create 3 mood board types: one for the overall look and feel, the second one shows the game in an action state, the third mood board shows the game in a relaxing state.



INTERVAL

Focus on 2-5 main color types for your game. Assign those colors to the action and relaxation state.



INTERVAL

Note rules which you respect throughout the design process such as shapes, light, camera view etc.



INTERVAL

DIGITAL PROTOTYPE

If you're creating a digital game, make a simple box prototype of your current game idea.

Following cards contain suggestions on this topic.

Use all cards.



INTERVAL

Create your first prototype with simple shapes and sprites in simple colors as placeholders. The first goal is to have a playable prototype as quick as possible.



INTERVAL

Don't worry if your code is not optimized for the moment, you can improve it later on.



INTERVAL

If the game is big, break it down in sections to get faster results.



INTERVAL

BEAT CHART

Create a beat chart of your game.

A beat chart is a document which includes all the information about the things that happen in one level.

Following cards contain instructions to create a beat chart. Use all cards.

INTERVAL

1.

Create a chart with the important topics of your game such as:

- State (action / relaxation)
- Level (Level-02)
- Events in the level (AI talks to Pl.)
- What happens story-wise
- In-game time (At morning)
- Estimated playtime (20min)
- Music (Track X)
- Wished experience (Relaxes)
- Color palette (Green / Blue)
- Mechanics (Pl. learns jumping)
- Rewards / Punishment
- Enemies (Boss enemy 02)

INTERVAL

2.

Fill this chart with information of your game and try to create a balance between action and relaxation state. Offer the players the same amount of time for both states. (i.e. Action State \approx 10min Relaxation State Action State \approx 8min)

INTERVAL

3.

The beat chart is your guide. It helps you to keep track of the game progress and to make better decisions.

INTERVAL

ITERATE

Continue your prototype and iterate as often as possible to achive your optimal game experience.

Replace the box prototypes, create sound, story and visuals for your game, balance your time action curve and playtest it again.

★★★★★
INTERVAL

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Created Moodboards for the different states
- ☐ Created a digital prototype
- ☐ Created a beat chart

★★★★★
INTERVAL

NEXT STEP

If you have a game with both curve types, continue to the "Meditative" set

otherwise

Take the "Post-Production" set.

★★★★★
INTERVAL

INTERVAL

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