Setting

My game will have the player character as a goose and be set across several floating islands, the player will have to fly from island to island solving puzzles to progress.

Flight

My game will have a flight mechanic that allows the player to glide, flap and dive while in the air, the player will take off by jumping off the edge of an island at which point the controls will switch from the land-based controls used in the puzzle sections to the flight controls allowing the player to access the previously mentioned abilities. While gliding the player will gradually lose speed and height meaning that they cannot just glide to the destination and will have to interact with the other flight mechanics.

This flight mechanic is similar to that of another game called AER: Memories of Old, however in that game the flight is used to further the main draw of the exploration, my game does not have much of a focus on exploration so the flight mechanics will not be used as often or as much for getting around however they will be used in some puzzles, such as having to fly across a room in a certain amount of time or having to take an object to a place the player would otherwise not be able to.

Puzzles

The puzzles themselves are not based on other systems however the idea of a puzzle game being based around a typically movement focussed ability is loosely based on the game Portal by VALVE software. In Portal the player is given the ability to create two portals that are linked together so if the player walks through one they will walk out of the other, the player can also move object through said portals allowing for far more complexity and more interesting puzzles as a result. In other games the ability to teleport is often seen only as a way to move from point A to B however **Portal**'s use of this mechanic as a necessity to solve puzzles makes the player rethink the mechanic and how to use it resulting in the player "Thinking outside the box" this, in-turn makes the user feel that the game is more

interactive improving their experience. I seek to emulate this feeling by taking another ability typically thought of only as a movement mechanic and using it as a key element in the puzzle solving aspects, where my approach differs from Portal's is how the player is introduced to the mechanic, in Portal the player is first shown how portals work by allowing them to use portals already placed in the world and moved in a pre-determined pattern only later in the game is the player given the ability to choose when and where the portals are placed, this allows the player to learn how to use the portals without overwhelming them by making them consider how they need to be placed, it also ensures the mechanic does not become boring by adding to it just as the previous version starts to get repetitive.
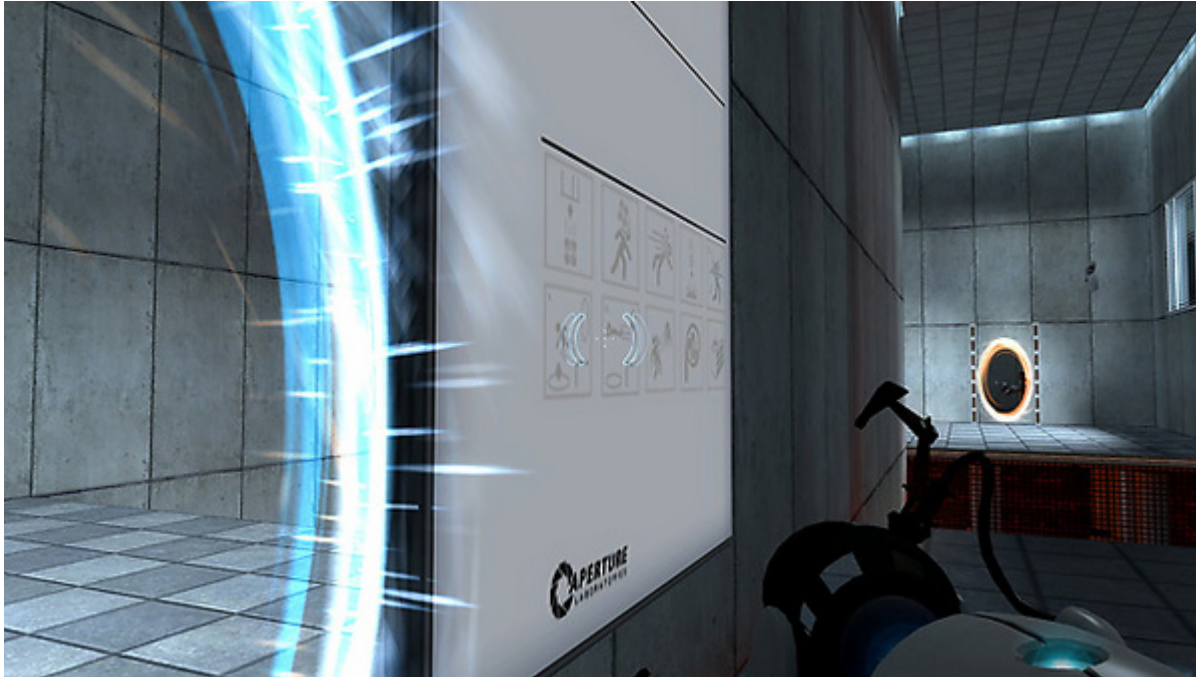

Personally I dislike limiting the player's access to mechanics as I feel it detracts from the player's experience, my approach is to give the player full access to the flight mechanics from the start but they will get used to them by flying to the location of the puzzle this allows the player to get used to the mechanic before it is used in a puzzle, this means the player will be familiar with the flight mechanics by the time they need to use them to solve a problem. It is important to familiarize the player with the central mechanic before the puzzles in order to make the design of the puzzles clearer and easier to understand, for example if there is a hole on the ground a player who is not familiar may think they are not meant to get to the other side and may never try effectively preventing the from solving the puzzle, if the same player was familiar with the flight before seeing this hole they would be more likely to realise it is a part of the puzzle and fly over it rather than waiting on the side wondering what they are missing.

Progression

I dislike how linear some puzzle games can be as it reduces the amount of impact the player feels they have on the game if no matter what they chose to do they are always doing things in the same order, however there needs to be some method of restricting the player otherwise they could just skip all of the gameplay and go straight to the end. One method of doing this is by adding checks dictating when a player can go at what time, i.e. the player can go to any of the puzzles when they want but are not allowed to solve it before another has been solved, however this can feel just as linear as if the player couldn't even see the puzzle that they aren't allowed to solve. One approach that I do like is by allowing the player to do what they want when they want to but making the things you want done later much harder to do and then giving the player things to make it easier later in the game. One game I think is a very good example of this is Subnautica by Unknown Worlds entertainment, Subnautica is an open-world survival game set in an alien ocean planet that the player crashed on, the goal of the game is to leave the planet however at the start of the game the player has no way of doing this, after exploring the player will eventually find blueprints for a

rocket that they can build however due to both story reasons and the resource requirement to build the rocket the player has to go to the deepest section of the game before they can build the rocket and finish the game, to prevent players from completing the story too quickly there are several factors preventing the player from just swimming to the required area, these are mainly the depth of the objectives being to deep to swim to without a vehicle and the early game vehicles no being able to go deep enough to get to the main objectives. This makes the player explore enough to get the late game vehicles and be able to complete the story.
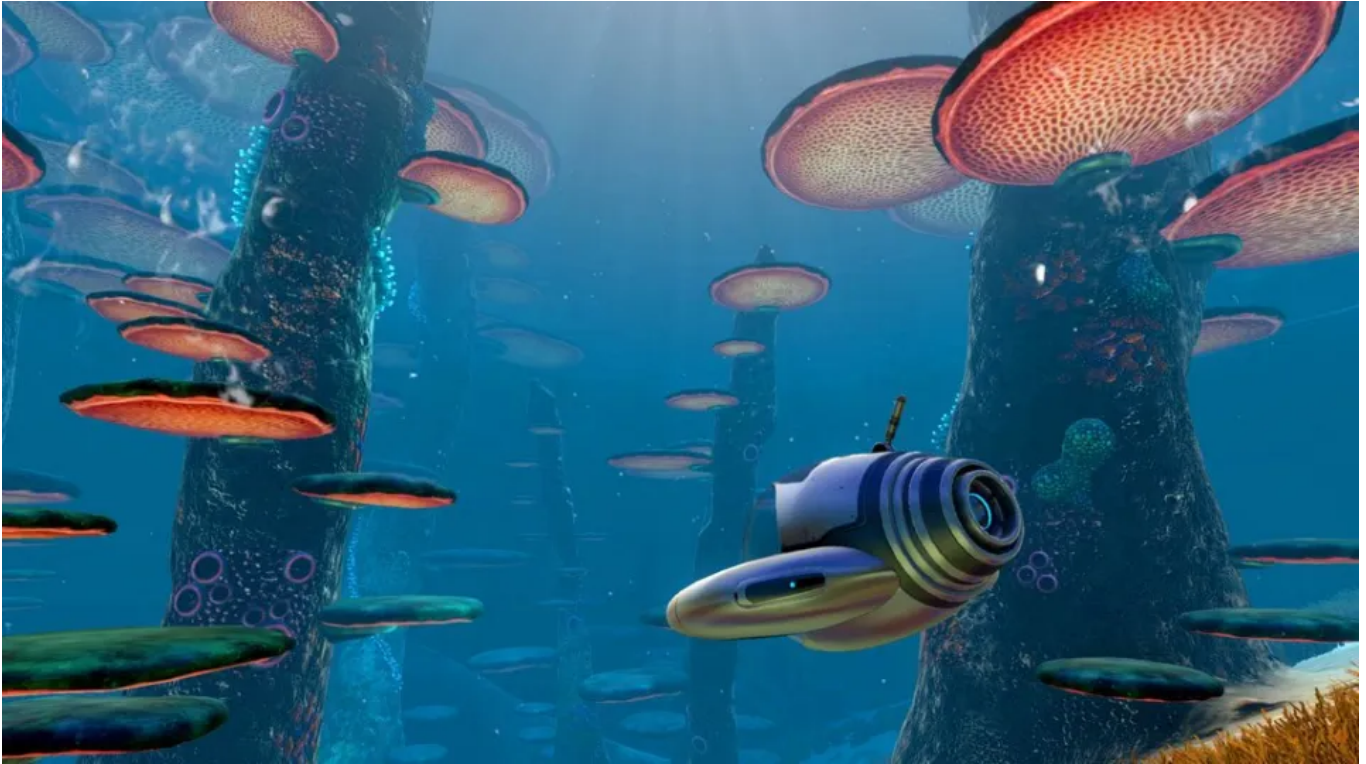
I like the general approach Subnautica takes but it still has some hard limits to it's progression (hard limits meaning the player must do X before the can do Y) that I dislike, so in my game I have opted to remove as many of them as I can without allowing the player to skip to the end; because my game is a murder mystery the overarching goal is to find the killer, to do this the player must find a set amount of clues that are given as a reward for solving the puzzles, this does not need to be done in any set order allowing the player to solve whatever puzzle they want when they want to thus removing the linear feeling the game may otherwise have while preventing the player from skipping part of the game.