

# Game Design Document

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# GAME OVERVIEW - INDEX

High-level description of the game's purpose, tone, and intended experience.

- Vision Page
- Player Experience
- Player Goals
- Limits & Priorities

# VISION & OVERVIEW

The big picture. What this game is, at its core.

## CORE IDEA

If you had to explain this game to a friend without rambling, what is it?

## PURPOSE

Why are you making this game? What made you care enough to start it?

## WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

What kind of experience do you want the player to walk away with?

# PLAYER EXPERIENCE

How the game feels to play

## PLAYER PERSPECTIVE

How does the player experience the world? (POV, camera, embodiment)

## EMOTIONAL TONE

What emotions are you aiming for most of the time? (It's okay if it's messy.)

## PACING

Does this game want the player to slow down, stay alert, or feel pressured?

## PLAYER MINDSET

How should the player be thinking while playing? Curious? Careful? Reflective?

# PLAYER GOALS

What the player is trying to accomplish

## PRIMARY GOAL

At the highest level, what is the player trying to reach or resolve?

## SHORT-TERM GOALS

What does the player focus on moment to moment to keep moving forward?

## WHAT THE PLAYER SHOULD UNDERSTAND

What knowledge or realization should the player gain as they progress?

## HOW PROGRESS IS COMMUNICATED

How does the game quietly let the player know they're making progress?

# LIMITS & PRIORITIES

Focus, limits, and what matters most

## CORE REQUIREMENTS

What must exist for this game to feel complete?

## TIME & ENERGY LIMITS

What realistically limits development right now?

## NOT IN THIS GAME

Ideas intentionally excluded to protect focus.

## SAVE FOR LATER

Ideas worth keeping, but not committing right now.

# GAMEPLAY LOOP - INDEX

The one loop that explains how the game works overall

- Core Gameplay Loop

If this applies to your game:

- Puzzle Loop
- Exploration Loop
- Emotional Loop
- Failure Loop

# CORE GAMEPLAY LOOP

The main cycle of actions the player repeats

## CORE LOOP

In simple terms, what does the player repeatedly do while playing this game?

## HOW THE LOOP EVOLVES

How does this loop change or deepen as the game progresses?

## PRESSURE & TENSION

What creates tension during the loop?

## FEEDBACK & PROGRESS

How does the game let the player know their actions matter or lead somewhere?

# PUZZLE LOOP

How puzzles function within the game

## WHAT THE PLAYER DOES

What actions does the player take when engaging with a puzzle?

## HOW PUZZLES ARE PRESENTED

How does the game communicate that something is a puzzle?

## HOW THE PLAYER IS MEANT TO THINK

What kind of thinking does the puzzle encourage?

## RESOLUTION & FEEDBACK

What happens when a puzzle is solved, partially solved, or left unsolved?

# EXPLORATION LOOP

How the player moves through and discovers the world

## WHAT THE PLAYER DOES

What does the player actually do while exploring?

## WHAT DRAWS THE PLAYER FORWARD

What motivates the player to keep exploring?

## WHAT THE PLAYER IS MEANT TO NOTICE

What kinds of details matter during exploration?

## HOW EXPLORATION FEEDS THE GAME

What does exploration lead to?

# EMOTIONAL LOOP

How emotions rise, shift, and settle during play

## EMOTIONAL ENTRY POINT

What emotional state does the player usually enter this loop with?

## EMOTIONAL BUILD

How do the game's systems or moments deepen or shift that emotion?

## PLAYER REFLECTION

What is the player meant to think or question during this loop?

## EMOTIONAL RELEASE OR TRANSITION

How does the game give the player relief, clarity, or emotional movement?

# FAILURE LOOP

What happens when things don't go as planned

## WHAT COUNTS AS FAILURE

What situations are considered failure or setbacks in this game?

## HOW THE GAME RESPONDS

How does the game react when the player fails?

## WHAT THE PLAYER LEARNS

What is the player meant to understand or adjust after failing?

## HOW THE PLAYER CONTINUES

How does the player re-enter the loop after failure?

# MECHANICS

The systems that support the gameplay loops

# MECHANICS

Core systems used throughout the game

- Movement
- Interaction
- Exploration Progression
- Saving & Checkpoints
- Camera / Perspective

## Conditional / Supporting Mechanics

- Puzzle Logic
- UI & Menus
- Audio Cues & Feedback
- Accessibility Options

# MOVEMENT

How the player moves through the world

## DESIGN INTENT

Why does movement feel the way it does?

## PRIMARY ACTIONS

What movement actions are available to the player?

## LIMITATIONS & RULES

What restrictions or rules apply to movement?

## HOW THIS SUPPORTS THE GAME LOOPS

Which gameplay loops rely on this mechanic?

# INTERACTION

How the player engages with the world

## HOW INTERACTION IS TRIGGERED

How does the player initiate interaction?

## PRIMARY INTERACTIONS

What kinds of things can the player interact with?

## PLAYER EXPECTATION

What does the player expect to happen when they interact with something?

## HOW INTERACTION SUPPORTS THE GAME LOOPS

Which gameplay loops rely on interaction, and how?

# EXPLORATION PROGRESSION

How exploration opens up and moves forward

## WHAT OPENS THE WAY FORWARD

What allows the player to access new areas?

## PROGRESSION STRUCTURE

How does exploration progress over time?

## PLAYER AGENCY & CHOICE

How much choice does the player have in where or when they progress?

## HOW EXPLORATION PROGRESSION SUPPORTS THE GAME LOOPS

How does progression reinforce exploration, puzzles, and emotional pacing?

# CAMERA / PERSPECTIVE

How the player sees and experiences the world

## CAMERA BEHAVIOR

How does the camera generally behave?

## CORE PERSPECTIVE

How does the player view the world?

## PLAYER COMFORT & CONTROL

What is done to keep the camera readable and comfortable for the player?

## HOW THE CAMERA SUPPORTS THE GAME LOOPS

How does the camera reinforce exploration, emotion, and tension?

# SAVING & CHECKPOINTS

How progress is preserved and respected

## WHEN SAVES OCCUR

At what moments does the game save player progress?

## SAVE SYSTEM OVERVIEW

How does saving work in this game?

## PLAYER CONTROL & TRANSPARENCY

How does the player know when and what is being saved?

## HOW SAVING SUPPORTS THE GAME LOOPS

How does the save system reinforce exploration, failure, and pacing?

# PUZZLE LOGIC

How puzzles function under the hood

## PUZZLE STATES

What states can a puzzle be in?

## CORE PUZZLE STRUCTURE

How are puzzles structured at a high level?

## PLAYER INPUT & RESPONSE

How does the game respond to correct, incorrect, or incomplete actions?

## HOW PUZZLE LOGIC SUPPORTS THE GAME LOOPS

How does puzzle logic reinforce exploration, emotion, and progression?

# UI & MENUS

How the game communicates with the player

## UI APPROACH

What is the overall approach to UI in this game?

## CORE MENUS

What menus exist and what is their purpose?

## IN-GAME UI ELEMENTS

What UI appears during gameplay, if any?

## PLAYER FEEDBACK & CONFIRMATION

How does the game confirm actions or progress?

# AUDIO CUES & FEEDBACK

How sound communicates information to the player

## AUDIO ROLE

What role does audio play in communicating information to the player?

## TYPES OF AUDIO FEEDBACK

What kinds of audio feedback are used?

## TIMING & PRIORITY

When does audio play, and which sounds take priority over others?

## AUDIO LIMITS & INTENTIONAL ABSENCE

What audio is intentionally limited, avoided, or absent – and why?

# ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS

How the game accommodates different player needs

## ACCESSIBILITY GOALS

What accessibility goals does the game aim to support?

## AVAILABLE OPTIONS

What accessibility options are available to the player?

## PLAYER CONTROL & FLEXIBILITY

How much control does the player have over these options?

## COMMUNICATION & DISCOVERY

How are accessibility options communicated to the player

# STORY & THEMES

Narrative purpose and meaning within the game

# STORY & THEMES

- Story & Themes – Core

OPTIONAL (ONLY IF RELEVANT)

- Narrative Structure
- Player Choice & Consequence
- Worldbuilding Rules

# STORY & THEMES - CORE

STORY'S ROLE

THEMES

STORY DELIVERY METHODS

PLAYER RELATIONSHIP TO THE STORY

STORY LIMITS & BOUNDARIES

# NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

How the story is organized over time

STRUCTURE TYPE

STORY PROGRESSION

ORDER FLEXIBILITY

PACING CONTROL

STRUCTURAL LIMITS

# PLAYER CHOICE & CONSEQUENCE

How the story is organized over time

TYPES OF PLAYER CHOICES

IMPACT OF CHOICES

CONSEQUENCE VISIBILITY

PERMANENCE OF CONSEQUENCES

CHOICE LIMITS & INTENTIONAL ABSENCE

# WORLDBUILDING RULES

The rules that define the game world

WORLD TYPE

WORLD RULES

CONSISTENCY & LOGIC

WHAT THE WORLD DOES NOT DO

HOW WORLDBUILDING SUPPORTS THE GAME

# LEVELS

How the game is structured into playable sections

# LEVELS – INDEX

- Level Structure Overview
- Individual Level Template

OPTIONAL (ONLY IF RELEVANT)

- Level Types
- Level Progression Order
- Hubs & Transition Spaces
- Optional / Side Content

# LEVEL STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

How the game is divided into playable sections

OVERALL LEVEL ORGANIZATION

STRUCTURAL LIMITS & RULES

EXPECTED LEVEL SCALE

LEVEL UNIT DEFINITION

LEVEL ENTRY & EXIT

# LEVEL TYPES

Different kinds of playable sections in the game

PRIMARY LEVEL TYPES

REPEATING LEVEL TYPES

UNIQUE OR ONE-OFF LEVELS

REPEATING LEVEL TYPES

LEVEL TYPE LIMITS

# LEVEL PROGRESSION ORDER

PROGRESSION MODEL

UNLOCK CONDITIONS

REVISITING LEVELS

PACING INTENT

PROGRESSION LIMITS

# HUB / TRANSITION SPACES

HUB / TRANSITION PURPOSE

FREQUENCY & RETURN

AVAILABLE PLAYER ACTIONS

TIME & PACING ROLE

HUB / TRANSITION LIMITS

# OPTIONAL / SIDE CONTENT

TYPES OF OPTIONAL CONTENT

PLAYER MOTIVATION

ACCESS CONDITIONS

IMPACT ON MAIN PROGRESSION

OPTIONAL CONTENT LIMITS

# INDIVIDUAL LEVEL TEMPLATE

Reusable structure for designing a single level or section

LEVEL PURPOSE

PRIMARY PLAYER GOALS

CORE MECHANICS USED

PLAYER EXPERIENCE INTENT

LEVEL LIMITS & NOTES

LEVEL TYPE

ESTIMATED TIME

# CHARACTERS

Playable and non-playable entities in the game

# CHARACTERS - INDEX

- Character Core Template

OPTIONAL (ONLY IF RELEVANT)

- Player Character(s)
- Non-Playable Characters(NPCs)
- Enemies / Opponents
- Companions / Allies
- One-off or Narrative Characters

# CHARACTER CORE TEMPLATE

## CHARACTER ROLE & PURPOSE

What role does this character serve in the game?

## FUNCTION IN GAMEPLAY

How does this character affect what the player does?

## CHARACTER TYPE

How should this character be categorized?

## FREQUENCY & PRESENCE

How often does the player encounter this character?

## PLAYER RELATIONSHIP

How does the player relate to this character?

# Page 1: Player Character – Core Identity

Player Character Overview

Player Role in the Game

Player Identity

Player-World Relationship

# Page 1 – NPC Identity & Purpose

NPC ROLE & PURPOSE

FUNCTION IN GAMEPLAY

PLAYER RELATIONSHIP

IMPORTANCE LEVEL

# Page 2 – NPC Identity & Purpose

BEHAVIOR & PERSONALITY

INTERACTION RULES

BOUNDARIES AND LIMITS

NOTES / OPEN QUESTIONS

# Page 1 – Role & Design Intent

ENEMY ROLE

PLAYER GOAL WHEN ENCOUNTERED

THREAT TYPE

IMPORTANCE LEVEL

# Page 2 – Role & Design Intent

BEHAVIOR PATTERN

DIRECTION & AWARENESS

PLAYER COUNTERS

FAILURE STATE

# Page 3 – Role & Design Intent

LIMITS & RULES

VARIANTS (OPTIONAL)

AUDIO / VISUAL IDENTITY

DESIGN RISKS / NOTES

# PAGE 1 - BOSS INTENT & EXPERIENCE

BOSS PURPOSE

ENCOUNTER TYPE

PLAYER GOAL

# PAGE 2 - BOSS MECHANICS & FLOW

CORE MECHANIC

PLAYER COUNTERS

PHASE STRUCTURE

FAILURE STATE

# ROLE & RELATIONSHIP

COMPANION ROLE

LIMITS & RULES

FUNCTION IN GAMEPLAY

PRESENCE & AVAILABILITY

IMPORTANCE LEVEL

# ONE-OFF / NARRATIVE CHARACTERS

NARRATIVE PURPOSE

PLAYER IMPACT

MOMENT OF APPEARANCE

INTERACTION TYPE

# UI / UX

How the game communicates, guides, and responds to the player

# UI / UX - INDEX

## Core UI Structure

- HUD & On-Screen Information
- Menus & Navigation Flow
- Player Feedback & Responsiveness

## Supporting UI Systems

- Visual Language & Consistency
- Input & Control Communication
- Accessibility Considerations
- Optional / Advanced UI
- Interruptions & Recovery

# HUD & On-Screen Information

What the player sees while actively playing

## Purpose of the HUD

Why does the HUD exist in this game?

## Always Visible Information

What is shown on screen at all times (or most of the time)?

## Contextual / Conditional HUD

What appears only when relevant?

## Player Control & Visibility

How much control does the player have over the HUD?

# Primary Menu Flow

Menu Types Included

Navigation Rules

Fail States & Edge Cases

Input & Control Expectations

# Player Feedback & Responsiveness

Design Intent

Player Action

Game Feedback

Visual Feedback

Audio Feedback

Input Feedback

Timing & Clarity

# Visual Language & Consistency

How the game looks, feels and stays visually coherent

Color & Contrast

Shape & Silhouette

Motion & Animation Style

UI & World Cohesion

Consistency Rules

# Input & Control Communication

## Input Discovery

How does the player first learn the controls?

## Contextual Input Prompts

How does the game show what input is relevant right now?

## Player Confirmation & Feedback

How does the player know their input worked?

## Input Limits & Prevention

When and how does the game prevent invalid input?

## Misinput & Error Handling

What happens when the player presses the wrong thing?

# ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Making sure more people can actually play your game

## How this Game Aprroaches Accessibility

Before details.. what's the vibe?

### Controls & Input Flexibility

Can players interact with the game in a way that feels comfortable to them?

### Visual Comfort & Readability

How easy is it to look at your game for long periods of time?

### Sound, Text, & Information

If a player misses a sound, do they miss the game?

### Notes for Later (Optional)

Ideas you don't want to forget, but are not committing to yet

# OPTIONAL / ADVANCED UI

Extra UI ideas that can elevate the experience (but are not required)

## Dynamic / Contextual UI

Does the UI change based on what the player is doing?

## Diegetic UI (Optional, but cool)

Is any part of the UI built into the world itself?

## UI States & Edge Cases

What happens when things don't go as planned?

## Information Priority

What does the player really need to see first?

## Optional Notes

Anything experimental, risky, or still undecided

# INTERRUPTIONS & RECOVERY

What happens when the game doesn't behave properly?

## When the Game Changes State

What happens to the UI when the game shifts modes?

## Interrupted Actions

What if the player does something "out of order"?

## Failure, Restart, & Retry States

How does the UI behave when things go wrong?

## Lost Focus & Input Issues

What happens if input is interrupted or unavailable?

## What Could Go Wrong (Be Honest)

What are you most worried about?

# AUDIO

How the game sounds, reacts, and communicates through audio

# AUDIO - INDEX

## Core Audio Design

- Overall Audio Direction
- Music & Musical Identity
- Sound Effects (SFX)

## Player Communication

- Audio Feedback & Responsiveness
- Diegetic vs Non Diegetic Sound

## Systems & States

- Audio States & Transitions

# OVERALL AUDIO DIRECTION

What the game should sound like. Emotionally and tonally

## The First Impression

What should the player feel the moment they hear the game?

## Emotional Role of Audio

What job does sound do in this game?

## Loud vs Quiet

How does the game use volume and silence?

## Realism vs Style

How "real" should the audio feel?

## Audio as Information

What does sound teach the player?

## Notes / Feelings / Words

What does sound teach the player?

# MUSIC & MUSICAL IDENTITY

What the music feels like, not how it's composed

## The Game's Musical Voice

If this game had a musical personality, what would it be?

## When Music is Present & When it isn't

How often should music exist in the experience?

## Repeated Themes & Motifs

Are there sounds or melodies the player will hear more than once?

## Music & Player Agency

Does the music react to what the player does?

## Style Boundaries

What kind of music would feel wrong in this game?

## Reality Check

What's realistic for this project?

# SOUND EFFECTS (SFX)

The small sounds that make the game feel alive

## Player Actions

What should the player feel when they do something?

## World & Environment

How does the world sound when the player is not doing something?

## Feedback & Confirmation

How does sound confirm that something happened?

## Danger, Tension & Alerts

How does the game warn the player through sound?

## Variation & Repetition

How does the game avoid sounding repetitive?

## Notes, Ideas & "Remember This"

Anything you don't want to forget later

# AUDIO FEEDBACK & RESPONSIVENESS

How sound responds to the player and proves the game is listening

## Confirming Player Actions

How does sound say "yes, that worked"?

## Failure & Invalid Actions

How does the game say "not like that"?

## Timing & Immediacy

How fast does the sound react to input?

## Intensity & Escalation

How does sound change as situations become more intense?

## Consistency & Learning

Can players learn the game through sound alone?

## When sound should not respond

Are there moments where silence is better?

# AUDIO STATES & TRANSITIONS

How sound shifts as the game changes

## Major Audio States

What different "modes" does the game have, audio wise?

## How Audio Changes Between States

When the game shifts, how should sound respond?

## Priority & Overlap

What sounds matter most when multiple things happen at once?

## Entering & Exiting Intense Moments

How does audio ramp up and come back down?

## Pause, Interrupt & Recovery

What happens to audio when gameplay is interrupted?

## Silence as a Transition

Are there moments where sound intentionally drops out?

# DIEGETIC & NON DIEGETIC SOUND

How sound shifts as the game changes

Diegetic sound = sound that exists inside the game world

Non Diegetic sound = sound that exists for the player only

Sounds the world can "hear"

What sounds belong inside the game world?

Player Awareness & Immersion

How aware should the player be of the "game layer"?

Rules you want to follow

Personal guidelines for sound placement

Notes & Instincts

Anything that just feels right or wrong

# TECHNICAL NOTES

Important technical decisions, limits, and reminders for this project

# TECHNICAL NOTES - INDEX

## Core Technical Setup

- Target Platform(s)
- Engine & Tools
- Input & Control Support

## Performance & Limits

- Performance Goals
- Technical Constraints
- Known Risks & Watch Outs

## System Behavior

- Fail Safes & Recovery

## Optional / Future

- Stretch Goals
- Post-Launch

# Target Platforms

Primary Platform

Secondary / Future Platforms

Input Expectations

How are the players expected to interact with the game?

Performance Assumptions

What kind of hardware are you designing for?

Notes

# Engine & Tools

What this game is built with, and why

## Game Engine

What engine is this game being built in? And why that one?

## Core Development Tools

What tools are regularly used during development?

## Supporting / Optional Tools

Tools that make life easier but the game doesn't fall apart without them

# Input & Control Support

How the player interacts with the game

## Supported Input Methods

What ways can the player play the game?

## Primary Control Scheme

What is the default way the game is meant to be played?

## Remapping & Customization

How much control does the player have over controls?

## Input Feedback & Clarity

How does the player know their input worked?

# Performance Goals

How the game is expected to run not how it's optimized

## Target Experience

What does "good performance" look like for this game?

## Frame Rate Expectations

What level of smoothness are you aiming for?

## Visual vs Performance Priority

If something has to give, what gives first?

## Hardware Assumptions

Are you assuming low end hardware, mid range or high end?

# Technical Constraints

The limits this project is designed around

## Engine / Technology Limits

What can't be done because of the tech?

## Performance Driven Limits

What's restricted to protect performance?

## Platform based limits

What constraints come from where the game is played?

## Known Pain Points

What areas might be frustrating or fragile?

# Saving, Loading & Persistence

What does the game remember?

What progress should persist between play sessions?

How Saving Works

How and when does the game save progress?

Player Control and Visibility

How aware is the player of saving and loading?

Loading & Resuming play

What happens when the player comes back?

# KNOWN RISKS AND WATCH OUTS

Things that could cause problems if we're not careful

## Technical Risks

What parts of the tech might be unstable or difficult?

## Design & Gameplay Risks

What design choices could cause friction or confusion?

## Player Experience Risks

Where might players get frustrated, lost, disengaged?

## Personal / Team Risks

What human factors could impact development?

# **Fail Safes & Recovery**

What happens when something goes wrong and how the game recovers

## **What Could Go Wrong?**

## **Player Escape Options**

How can the player recover if something feels stuck or broken?

## **Checkpoints & Safe States**

Where does the game intentionally give the player a stable point/

## **Testing & Watch Points**

What should be tested heavily because it's fragile?

# Stretch Goals

Nice to have ideas that only happen if everything goes right

## What Counts as a Stretch Goal?

What features are cool but not required?

## Conditions for Implementation

When would it actually make sense to add these?

## Dependencies & Requirements

What would these ideas depend on?

## Risk vs Reward

Are these ideas worth the cost?

# Post Launch

What happens after the game is released

## Expectations After Launch

What level of support do you realistically want to provide?

## Bug Fixes & Stability

How will issues be handled once players are involved?

## Additional Content or not

Is the game done when it ships or does it grow over time?

## Community & Feedback

How involved do you want to be with players?

# Brain Dump

## Character Identity

- Name / Identifier:
- Character Type:
- Narrative Importance:

## Role & Purpose

Why this character exists

## Function in Gameplay

What the player actually does with or against them

## Presence & Frequency

How often they appear

## Player Relationship

How should the player feel about this character?

## Notes