

INFT3960 – Game Production

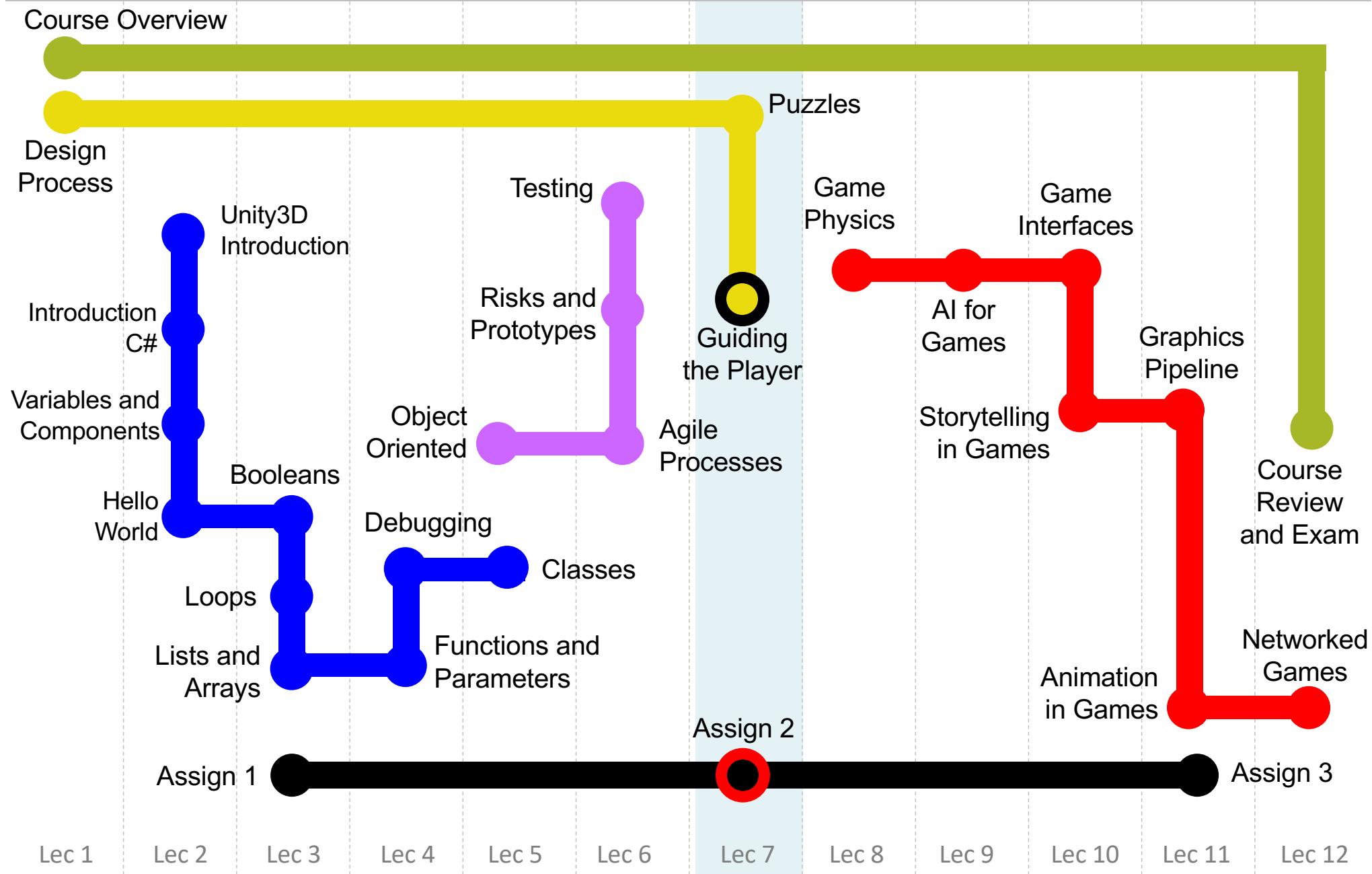
Week 07

Module 7.2

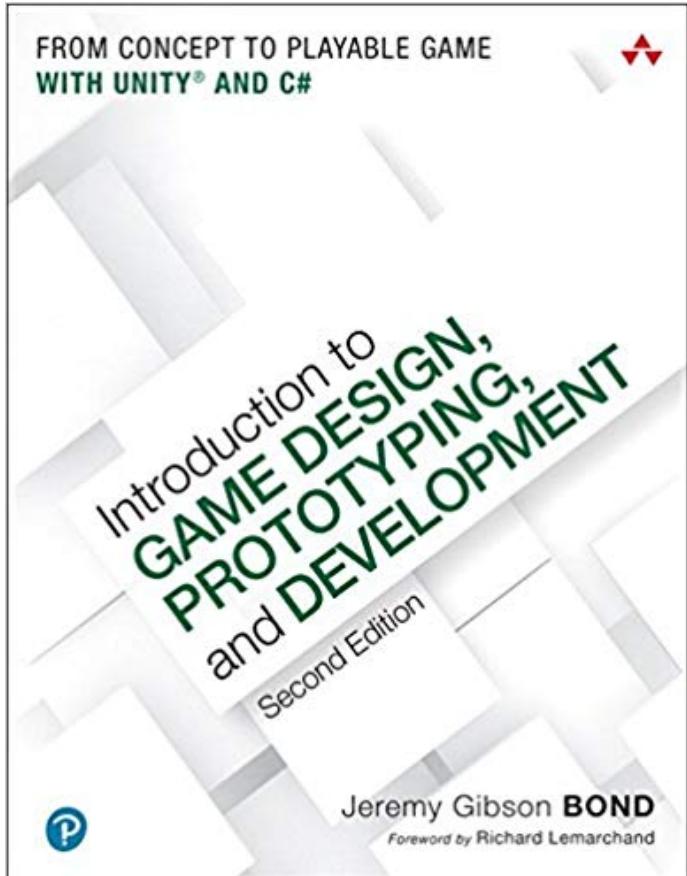
Guiding the Player

Course Overview

Lec	Date	Modules	Assignments
1	Tuesday 30 Jul	Mod 1.1, Mod 1.2	
2	Tuesday 5 Aug	Mod 2.1, Mod 2.2, Mod 2.3, Mod 2.4	
3	Tuesday 12 Aug	Mod 3.1, Mod 3.2, Mod 3.3	 Assign 1 12 Aug, 11:00 pm
4	Tuesday 19 Aug	Mod 4.1, Mod 4.2	
5	Tuesday 26 Aug	Mod 5.1, Mod 5.2	
6	Tuesday 3 Sep	Mod 6.1, Mod 6.2, Mod 6.3	
7	Tuesday 10 Sep	Mod 7.1, Mod 7.2	 Assign 2 12 Sep, 11:00 pm
8	Tuesday 17 Sep	Mod 8.1	
9	Tuesday 24 Sep	Mod 9.1	
10	Tuesday 15 Oct	Mod 10.1, Mod 10.2	
11	Tuesday 22 Oct	Mod 11.1, Mod 11.2	 Assign 3 24 Oct, 11:00pm
12	Tuesday 29 Oct	Mod 12.1, Mod 12.2	



Guiding the Player – (Chapter 13)



Guiding the Player

Guiding the Player - Topics



Guiding the Player

Direct Guidance - Overt instruction

Indirect Guidance - Covert instruction

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Guiding the Player

The more you work on a game, the more you internalize its systems and levels

However, a new player won't have any of that knowledge

You must ensure that players who have never seen your game before intuitively understand it

This requires careful, sometimes invisible guidance

Two types of guidance

- Direct Guidance - The player knows that she is being guided
- Indirect Guidance - The player is guided without realizing it

Methods of Direct Guidance

Instructions

Call to Action

Map or Guidance System

Pop-Ups

Direct Guidance

Instructions

Call to Action
Map or Guidance System
Pop-Ups

Instructions

The game explicitly tells the player what to do

These can take the form of

- Text
- Dialogue with an authoritative non-player character (NPC)
- Visual diagrams
- Often incorporate combinations of the three

One of the clearest forms of guidance

Drawbacks

- May overwhelm the player with too much information
- May annoy the player by pedantically presenting information she already knows

Direct Guidance

Instructions
Call to Action
Map or Guidance System
Pop-Ups

Call to Action

The game explicitly gives the player an action to perform and a reason to do so

Often takes the form of missions given by NPCs

Common strategy

- Present the player with a clear long-term goal
- Then give her progressively smaller medium- and short-term goals that must be accomplished on the way to the long-term goal

Direct Guidance

Instructions

Call to Action

Map or Guidance System

Pop-Ups

Call to Action

Example: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time



Long-Term Goal:

Navi tells Link that he has been summoned by the Great Deku Tree. Link is told by another NPC this is a great honor.



Smaller Goals:

Link's path to the Great Deku Tree is blocked by Mido, who tells him that he will need a sword and shield before venturing into the forest

The short-term goals are directly tied to the long-term goal of reaching the Great Deku Tree

Direct Guidance

Instructions
Call to Action
Map or Guidance System
Pop-Ups

Map or Guidance System

Many games include a map or GPS-style guidance system

Directs the player toward her goals or toward the next step in her mission

Drawbacks

- Can lead to players spending most of their time just following the directions of the virtual GPS
- Players don't think about a destination and choose their own path
- Takes longer for the player to learn the layout of the game world

Direct Guidance

Instructions
Call to Action
Map or Guidance System
Pop-Ups

Map or Guidance System

Example: *Grand Theft Auto V*

- Radar/mini-map in the corner of the screen with a highlighted route for the player to follow to the next objective
- In the vast world of GTA V, the player relies very heavily on the GPS



Direct Guidance

Instructions
Call to Action
Map or Guidance System
Pop-Ups

Pop-Ups

Contextual controls that change based on the objects near the player

Example: Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag

The same button controls such diverse actions as

- Opening doors
- Lighting barrels of gunpowder on fire
- Taking control of mounted weapons

Pop-ups with the icon for the controller button and a very short description of the action appear when a contextual action is possible

Judging Quality of Direct Guidance

The various methods of Direct Guidance can all be judged by the same four criteria

- Immediacy
- Scarcity
- Brevity
- Clarity

Judging Quality of Direct Guidance

Immediacy

The message must be given to the player when it is immediately relevant

Don't try to tell the player all the possible controls for the game at the very beginning unless they are very simple

Direct information about controls should be provided immediately the first time that the player needs it

Example: Kya: Dark Lineage

- A tree falls into the path of the player character, and she must jump over it to continue
- As it is falling, the game shows the player the message "Press X to jump" at exactly the time she needs to know that information

Judging Quality of Direct Guidance

Scarcity

Many modern games have lots of controls and lots of simultaneous goals

The player must not be flooded with too much information all at one time

Making direct controls more scarce makes them more valuable to the player and more likely to be heeded

Judging Quality of Direct Guidance

Scarcity

This is also the case with missions - A player can only really concentrate on a single mission at once

If a game gives the player too many simultaneous missions, many will eventually be ignored

Example: Skyrim

- The author currently has >200 unfinished missions in Skyrim
- Average amount of time spent playing Skyrim is 90 hours per person!
- Though released in 2011, as of July, 2014, over 60,000 people on Steam still play Skyrim daily (#6 most popular game!)
- But only 30.7% of owners on Steam have ever finished the main quest

Judging Quality of Direct Guidance

Brevity

Never use more words than are necessary

Don't give the player too much information at one time

Example: Valkyria Chronicles

A tactical combat game by Sega

"When near sandbags, press O to take cover and reduce damage from enemy attacks."

Judging Quality of Direct Guidance

Clarity

Be very clear about what you're trying to convey

Example: Valkyria Chronicles

- Why not just "When standing near sandbags, press O to take cover"
- In Valkyria Chronicles, cover not only shields you but also drastically reduces the amount of damage you take from bullets that do hit
- For the player to understand everything she needs to know about cover, she must also be told about the damage reduction.

Indirect Guidance

Much more subtle than Direct Guidance

Even as a designer you may not have noticed it

Seven methods of Indirect Control — An expansion of Jesse Schell's six methods from The Art of Game Design

- Constraints
- Goals
- Physical Interface
- Visual Design
- Audio Design
- Player Avatar
- Non-Player Characters

Indirect Guidance - Constraints

Constraints

If you give the player limited choices, she will choose one

- If given a choice of Red or Green, the player won't pick Blue

Without constraint, players run the risk of choice paralysis

- A person is presented with so many choices that she can't weigh them all against each other and instead just doesn't make a choice
- This is why a restaurant menu might have 100 different items but only feature images of 20

Indirect Guidance - Goals

Goals

Goals can also be used to guide the player indirectly

If the player has a goal to collect bananas the player will head toward the door with bananas

Materials, abilities, and circumstances can also influence the autotelic goals that players set for themselves

- Example: Minecraft – Players in danger are given the ability to craft

Indirect Guidance – Physical Interface

Physical Interface

The shape of a physical interface can be Indirect Guidance

If you give the player a guitar-shaped controller, she will generally expect to use it to play music

Giving a Guitar Hero player a regular game controller might lead her to think that she could control her character's movement around the stage

The rumble feature on controllers can also provide guidance - Example: Rumble strips in racing games

Indirect Guidance – Visual Design

Visual Design

Light

- Humans are naturally drawn to light
- If you place player in a dark room with a pool of light at one end, she will often move toward that light before exploring anything else

Similarity

- Once a player has seen that something in the world is good in some way (helpful, healing, valuable, etc.), she will seek out similar things

Trails

- Similarity can lead to a breadcrumb-trail-like effect
- The player picks up a certain item and then follows a trail of similar items to a location that the designer wishes her to explore

Indirect Guidance – Visual Design

Visual Design

Landmarks

Large interesting objects can be used as landmarks

Example: Journey by thatgamecompany

The player starts in the middle of a desert next to a sand dune - Everything around her is the same color except for a dark stone marker at the top of the tallest nearby dune - The player is driven to move up the dune toward it - Once she reaches the top, the camera rises above her, revealing a towering mountain with light bursting from the top - The camera move causes the mountain to emerge from directly behind the stone marker, showing the player that the mountain is her new goal



Indirect Guidance – Visual Design

Visual Design

Arrows

Subtle arrows can be used to guide the player

Example:
Uncharted 3



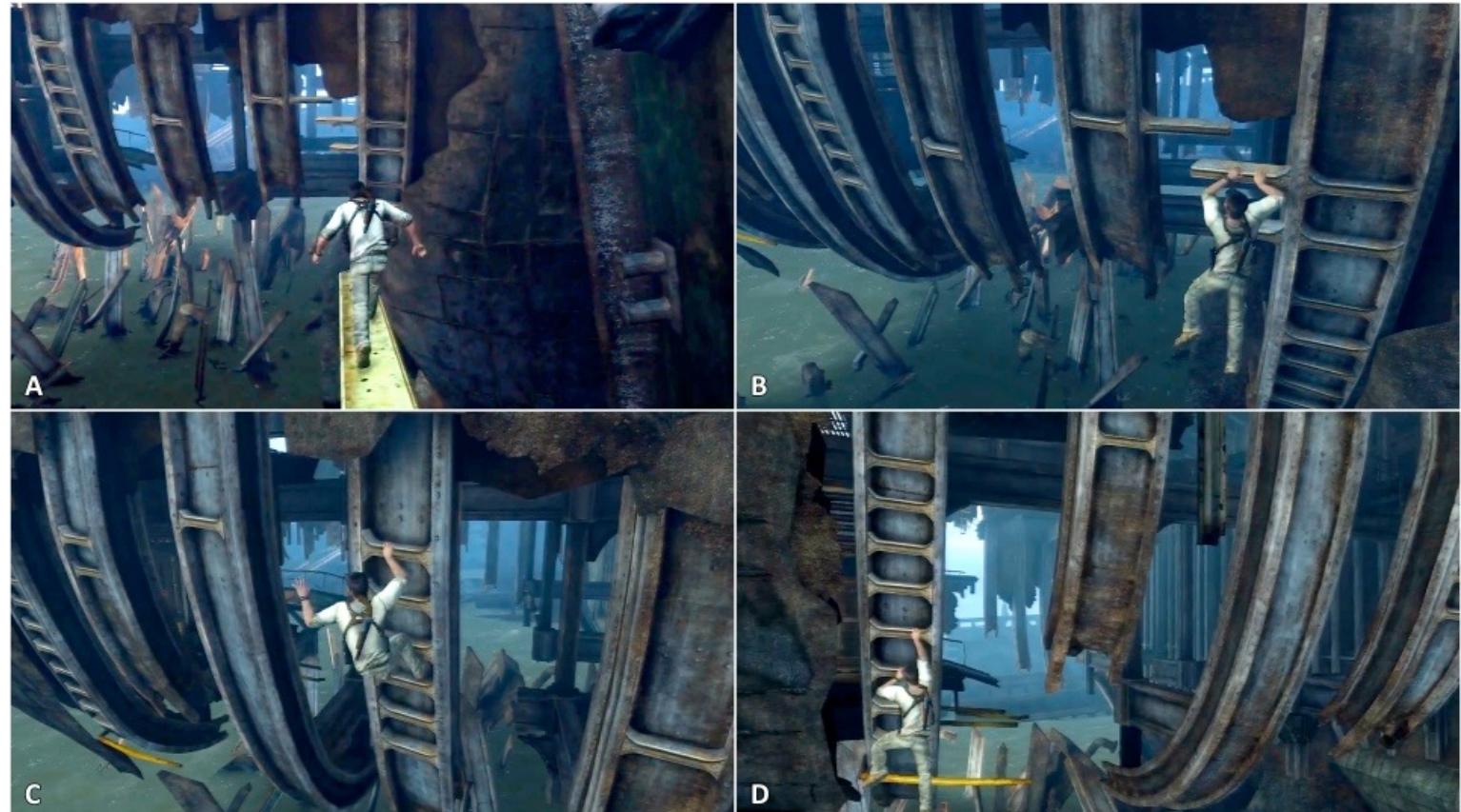
Indirect Guidance – Visual Design

Visual Design

Camera

Commonly used in traversal puzzles (looks in direction of next move)

Example:
Uncharted 3



Indirect Guidance – Visual Design

Visual Design

Contrast

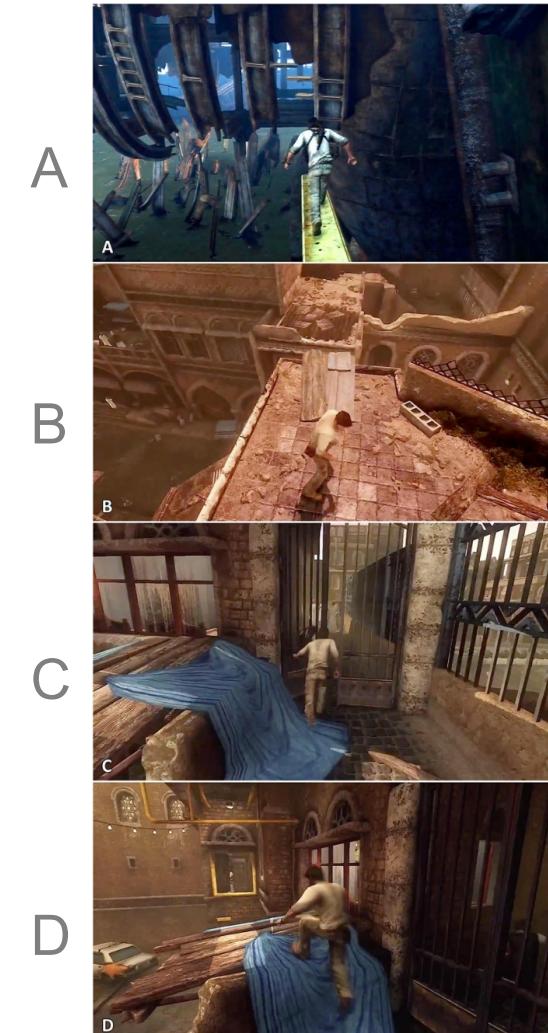
Used to draw attention to certain objects

Directionality - A: Horizontal rungs contrast with vertical elements in scene

Brightness - B: Edges are marked with bright/dark borders

Texture - C: Smooth cloth texture provides texture contrast with rough rock and wood

Color - D: Blue cloth and yellow pipes contrast with beige environment



Indirect Guidance – **Audio Design**

Audio Design

Music can influence a player's mood

- Slow, quiet music can lead the player to be more stealthy
- Raucous, boisterous music can make the player more bold

Sound effects can draw attention to possible player actions or hidden objects

- Example: Assassin's Creed 4 & Tomb Raider (2013)
- Special sounds are used to alert the player when a treasure chest (AC) or hidden tomb (TR) is nearby

Indirect Guidance – Player Avatar

Player Avatar

A player's character model can have a strong guiding effect

If the player character looks like a rock star with a guitar... The player will expect for her character to be able to play music

If the player character has a sword... The player will expect to be able to hit things and run into combat

Indirect Guidance – NPCs

Non-Player Characters

Modeling Behavior

The NPC shows the player good or bad behavior and the consequences

Example: Kya: Dark Lineage

Negative behaviour

NPC shows what NOT to do

A: Red circle shows a Nativ who stepped in a trap and was caught

Positive behavior

NPC shows proper behaviour

A: Green circle shows Nativ jumping to avoid trap

B: Green circle shows Native stopping to wait for wind trap



Indirect Guidance – NPCs

Safety

C & D: Green circle shows Nativ taking potentially-dangerous action

Because the Nativ shows confidence doing so, the player doesn't fear



Indirect Guidance – NPCs

Emotional Connections

Players can be influenced by their emotional connections to NPCs

Example: Journey

- A: The player encounters the first other creature she has seen in the game
- B: When the creature flies off, the player follows it
(presumably to avoid loneliness)

Players also chase NPCs out of anger (Assassin's Creed 4)



Teaching New Skills and Concepts

When games were simpler, this wasn't an issue

Super Mario Bros. had on the NES controller had

- 1 D-Pad - Direction
- A - Jump
- B - Run or Toss Fireball
- Start & Select Buttons

With today's games, it's much more complex

- 1 D-Pad
- 2 Analog Sticks
- A, B, X, Y, LB, RB, L-Stick, R-Stick, Start, & Back Buttons
- Left and Right Analog Triggers

Even then, many buttons on the controller are used for multiple actions

With so many controls, training of the player must be sequenced properly

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Sequencing — The art of gently presenting new information



Isolated Introduction

The player is introduced to the new mechanic such that she must use it to continue

No time pressure or danger of injury

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Sequencing — The art of gently presenting new information



Expansion

Expands use of the new mechanic

Still no penalty for failing to do so correctly

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Sequencing — The art of gently presenting new information



Adding Danger

Some danger (penalty for failure) is added

Success is still relatively easy

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Sequencing — The art of gently presenting new information



Increased Difficulty

Player must now demonstrate mastery over the new mechanic

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Sequencing — The art of gently presenting new information



Integration

Once the player understands the mechanic, she is required to integrate it with other mechanics in the game

Teaching New Skills and Concepts

Example:

Kya: Dark Lineage (PS2)

Isolated Introduction: A

Player must press X to drop below the wall

Expansion: B

Player must pump X to hover

Adding Danger: C & D

Dangerous areas are red
Can pass C without pressing X
Can just hold X to pass D

Increased Difficulty: E & F

Player must pump X to pass without damage



Quality of Indirect Guidance

Ask the following questions to judge your indirect guidance:

- What percentage of players acted in the way that you intended?
- How aware were the players that their actions were being influenced?
- How important is it to you that the guidance is covert?
- In other words, how important is it to you that the player feels like she made the decision on her own?

Summary

Both direct and indirect guidance are very important to today's complex games

Various methods exist for each

Sequencing is an excellent way to teach new skills