Having a Good Time in 377

this class is supposed to be fun

Ethan Robison, Winter 2019

0. Do we like our game?

Make sure that you like playing your game.

- If *you* (all three of you) like it (like, really like it), you can bet that other people like it
- Utterly no reason to make something that you don't enjoy
  - you're not getting paid
  - a good grade in comes from the hard work
  - nothing worse than a project you don't like

This will mean mean playing your own game. You need to play your own game a lot.

- **This is not negotiable.**
- You need to know if your game is fun
- Warts are okay; just make a to-do list

1. Is my core loop running yet?

People are here for your core loop. Focus on that first.

- You can always add (or re-add) more features if you have the resources
- A core loop gives you concrete goals:
    - everything below it serves it
    - everything above it adds to it

2. Can I make this smaller?

If something can be removed from your game
without causing problems, it probably should.

- It's easier add to an anemic game…
- …than it is to trim a hefty idea down to size

Constrain yourself. Constraints are a good thing:
they answer tricky design questions for you.

- Pick/generate a theme
- Pick *either* keyboard *or* mouse input
- Pick a color palette
- Pick a font

3. Does this follow my pillars of design?

It's helpful to have a handful of guiding principles behind your game.

- Make a small set of things that are *fundamental* to your game
  - words: "speed," "wonder"
  - requirements: "no text," "unique items"
  - themes: "exploration," "gore"
- Use these when you're conflicted or lost
- Give your game an unshakeable core

https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2018-03-26-dont-get-cocky-the-secrets-of-ratchet-and-clanks-15-year-survival (picture edited)

Interlude: On Gimmicks

You probably don't need a gimmick in this class.

- Most gimmicks are outside the core loop:
    - above it, as an extension of play
    - below it, as a modification of mechanics
- Few gimmicks are *fundamental*:
    - getting rid of the portals in *Portal* might make it lame, but its core loop is the same
    - getting rid of mind-reading in *Third Eye Crime* totally changes the game

Genre Choices

A genre is a *category of affective expectation.*[1]

They give you conclusions others have drawn:

- What does the camera do?
- What UI elements are critical?
- What are common gameplay mechanics?
- How is the player character represented?
- How does time behave?
- How is input captured?
- How is the player challenged?
- and so on...

[1] Paraphrased from the preface to *The Female Complaint,* by Lauren Berlant

Common genres (in this class):

- (Side-scrolling) 2D Platformer*
- Brawler
- Puzzle games
- Tycoon games[†]

Less common genres (in this class):

- Racing games
- Idle games
- Card games
- Rhythm games
- Endless runners

*Harder than you might think
[†]**Much** harder than you might think

Card Game

Strategy
- Play involves (temporal/spatial) orderings and combos of cards and actions on them
- Use "space" to your advantage; you can make a game just about arranging cards
- A well-made card game carries the team just fine (i.e., it suffices)

Gotchas
- Think hard about your core loop
- Don't spend your time on art.

TinyTouch Games, Miracle Merchant
https://youtu.be/5u4Iow87Vto?t=402

Idle Game

Strategy
- The core loop writes itself: click to make a number go up; trade the number in to make it go up faster
- Add more content by with bigger numbers

Gotchas
- Designed to trap the user for hours, so how do you turn it into 5 minutes?
- UI heavy (visual design and UI programming are harder than they seem)

Julien Thiennot, Cookie Clicker
https://i.redd.it/17os8qwh5wcz.gif

Puzzle Game

Strategy

- Simple mechanics introduced one at a time
- [Juice it up!](#)
- Most puzzles are NP-complete problems
- Puzzle games tend to be level-based

Gotchas

- Keep mechanics seriously simple (you can always add harder things later)
- Quality of life improvements (hotkeys, readable UI, etc.) are non-negotiables

Resonair, Lumines Remastered
https://steamcdn-a.akamaihd.net/steam/apps/851670/extras/20180501_shinin.jpg?t=1540500167

Racing Game

Strategy
- You're not making *Gran Turismo* and your physics will probably be bad: lean into it
- Make the driving fun, all else follows
- Fun and challenge just fall out of competitive local multiplayer play

Gotchas
- We love multiplayer; AI is super tricky
- Watch out for Unity physics 😭

Caged Element, *GRIP* (pre-launch gameplay)
http://i.imgur.com/6BB4cBk.jpg

RPG

Strategy
- Keep it *small*; give the player a role to play
- Roleplaying means meaningful choices
- Give consequences to *every* choice
- Players will connect the dots themselves

Gotchas
- **No story.**
- Keep your results visible: players can't enjoy what they can't notice

Nerial, Reigns
https://www.devolverdigital.com/images/remote/
https_s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ee-devolver
-website-assets/reigns-ss-01.gif

Side-scrolling Platformer

Strategy
- Make a game about platforms
  - lots of games that mix in other mechanics are actually about the other mechanics
- All about *moving the character*

Gotchas
- Unity physics will bite you
- Listen to feedback: platformers are all about the "feel"

Matt Makes Games, Celeste
https://cdn-images-1.medium.com/max/1000/1*icg
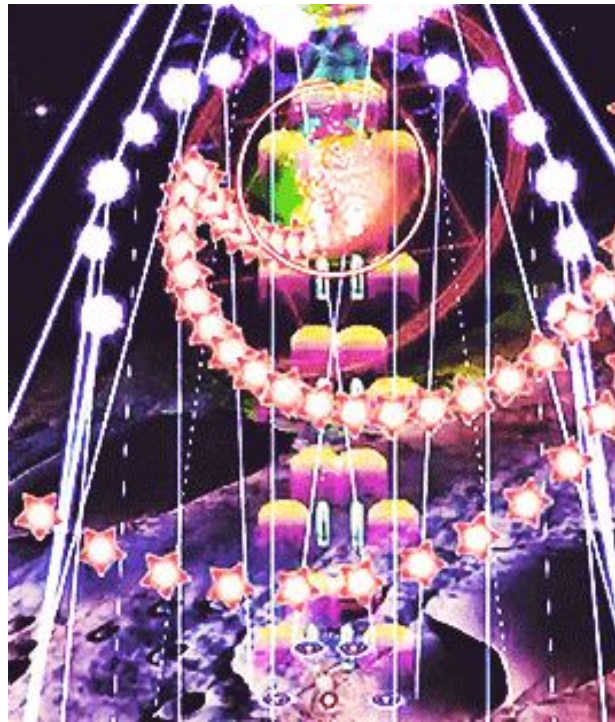TgHIQfahO2NcyyC-xIg.gif

Shmup

Strategy
- Keep your controls simple and tight
- *You don't need a gimmick*; just make a shooter that feels fun and polish that
- Particle effects are easier than they look

Gotchas
- Keep accessibility in mind: use shapes and patterns as well as color

ZUN, Touhou Project
https://i.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/001/115/941/52e.gif

Turn-Based Strategy Game

Strategy
- Pick a specific set of resources (gold, gas, space, health, whatever) for the player
- Imbalanced rock-paper-scissors model:
  - Three kinds of units, each one beating another, with different health/cost for each
- Steal ideas!

Gotchas
- Tend to be UI heavy
- Be sure about your core loop

Subset Games, Into the Breach
https://media.giphy.com/media/fx2g2LaPaqWJG
SmLgh/giphy.gif

Tower Defense

Strategy

- A base, some towers, and some enemies
- 3 unique towers, 3 unique enemies
- Similar to turn-based strategy, an imbalanced RPS model is a solid choice
- Have I mentioned stealing ideas?

Gotchas

- Instead of many, stick to a few solid towers
- Watch out for pathfinding/path annotation
- Play your game *a lot*

Ironhide Games, Kingdom Rush Frontiers
http://picandocodigo.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/krf.gif