



hoaXcape duet

Player
Combat
Abilities Pitch

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Presentation Outline

01

Goals

Game overview, target audience, player segments, intended player experience, how to achieve goals

02

Feature Pitch

What is the feature, core concept behind design, overview on design approach

03

Research

Combat design, games favored by target audience, inspiration sources

04

Feature Breakdown

Feature rules & details, elements it relies on, asset breakdown & mood board

05

Prototyping Logistics

Proposed schedule on building prototype, what to prioritize, development tools, potential external assets to use as placeholders

01 Goals

What kind of game is *hoaxcape duet* ?

A first-person, sci-fi, action-adventure where you play from the perspectives of two adventurers who are self-proclaimed **hoaxes** trapped in a mysterious facility together. They must combine their skills to **escape** while also internally struggling to **break free** from imposter syndrome.

Core Design Pillars

First-person combat that grows with the characters

Combat mechanics that helps to convey the characters' personal growth and change in emotions throughout the game

Two unique playable protagonists

Both characters have their own combat specialties, personalities, and thoughts about the world around them

Immersive Story

Experience the narrative directly from each perspective to understand their shared yet inner conflicts and the overarching plot & theme

Understanding the Target Players

Target Audience

Demographics: Ages 15 — 25, those born between 1996 and 2006.

Interests: Sci-fi anime, comic books, movies, console games

Player Segments (Quantic Foundry ¹)

Quantic Gamer Type:

- **Slayer** ("The Hero in a Cinematic Story"),
- **Bounty Hunter** ("High-Octane, Solo World Exploration")

Motivations:

- **Immersion** (93%)
 - Fantasy (92%): alter ego in believable alternate world
 - Story (89%): elaborate campaign storylines, characters with interesting backstories and personalities, dialogue
- **Action** (78%)
 - Destruction (74%): explosion, mayhem, agents of chaos
 - Excitement (76%): thrilling, fast-paced, intense, rewards for rapid reaction times

Proto Persona



Alina Torres (21)

University Student — Mechanical Engineering in Robotics

Background: A Filipina-American who grew up playing action-adventure and shooter games. A junior in university who is pursuing a career in robotics inspired by her love of science fiction. However, she feels like an imposter in her field despite doing well in many of her classes. She loves single-player story-focused games with fun & exciting gameplay.

Favorite Video Games:

Bioshock Infinite, NieR: Automata, Dishonored 2, Doom Eternal, Batman: Arkham Asylum, Metroid Prime

Player Experience & Core Design Goals

User Stories	Conditions of Satisfaction
As a player, I want to feel connected with the character I'm controlling	Combat actions matches up with the player character's emotions and growth
As a player, I want to be able to blow things up	Have destructible enemies / objects that the player can blow up
As a player, I don't want to remember complex button combinations	Simplified & familiar controls for every possible action
As a player, the combat needs to feel satisfying	Appealing VFX / SFX, slight pause at impact, positive feedback loops
As a player, I want to feel powerful	Fair balance of aim assist, attack snapping, high margin of error for attacks
As a player, I want to have a variety of options for combat	Have at least 5-15 distinct tools and abilities available to player
As a player, I want to have fast-paced combat	Fast movement/attack speeds, quick feedback between player and game
As a player, I do not want to feel motion sick easily	Minimize bobbing animations during movement, avoid sudden changes in camera movement



Core Design Goals

- Mix of long & short-ranged combat abilities that match the game's narrative and character's emotions
- Fast-paced, destructive, and satisfying combat mechanics that does not put a focus on player aiming precision
- Simple to use/understand and familiar to those who play many FPS and action games



Target Experience

An immersive and action-oriented experience with a compelling narrative.

02 Feature Pitch

What is the feature?

The core set of player combat abilities for one of the two playable characters

Main Concept Behind Design

Using the **combat system** as a **storytelling tool** by directly reflecting the character's emotions and how they **break free** from the feelings of "imposter syndrome" that plague them

Combat abilities should elicit similar feelings in the player that the character is experiencing throughout the game's narrative

Lonely, Anxious, Shielded

Similar to an eclipse, the character's abilities are obscured and held back due to their feelings of imposter syndrome.



Comradely, Resolute, Vulnerable

The character gains a sense of camaraderie with their fellow adventurer and starts to use their abilities more openly, putting some of their barriers down



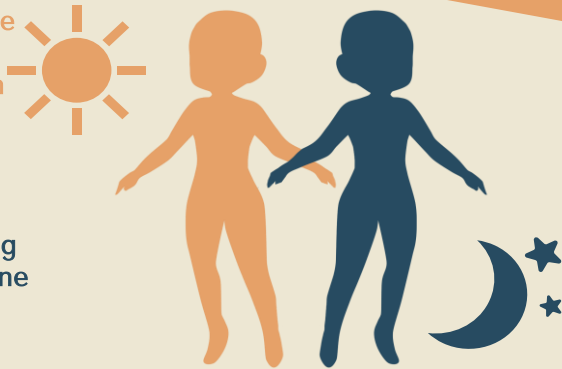
Free, Cathartic, Relieved

At the last part of the game, all of the character's abilities are fully "unlocked," making the player feel free and unchained

Overview of Goal-Reaching Design Strategy

The game will switch between the two protagonists, so the player will play as both throughout the story. Both protagonists undergo the same emotional changes.

For the purpose of this prototype, I will be focusing on the combat abilities of one of them (the dark blue "Mayari" character)



One character is loosely based off Apolaki¹, a sun god in Philippine mythology

- The "Apolaki" character's abilities are metal/fire-based.
- This character's abilities are "eclipsed" inspired by the story of Minokawa, a bird-like dragon responsible for solar eclipses in Philippine mythology².

The other character is loosely based off Mayari¹, a moon goddess in Philippine mythology.

- The "Mayari" character's abilities are ice/water-based.
- This character's abilities are also "eclipsed" inspired by the story of Bakunawa, a serpent-like dragon responsible for lunar eclipses in Philippine mythology³.

3 Sets of Abilities Designed Around Specific Emotions

- Break combat abilities into 3 distinct stages that build off of each other and become progressively more powerful
- Design each stage around eliciting the target emotions mentioned in previous slide.

Research & Brainstorm

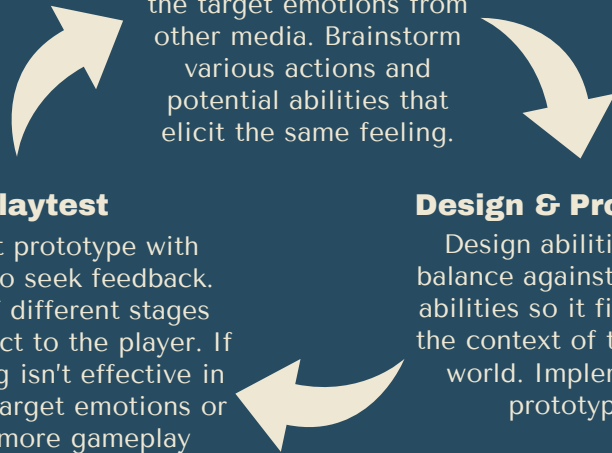
Gather different sources of inspiration that elicit the target emotions from other media. Brainstorm various actions and potential abilities that elicit the same feeling.

Playtest

Playtest prototype with players to seek feedback. Check if different stages feel distinct to the player. If something isn't effective in eliciting target emotions or needs more gameplay revisions, continue iterating

Design & Prototype

Design abilities and balance against existing abilities so it fits within the context of the game world. Implement a prototype



1. <https://www.aswangproject.com/tagalog-origin-day-night-apolaki-vs-mayari/>
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minokawa>
3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakunawa>

03 Research

Researching & Analyzing Combat Design and Target Audience



Combat Design Research

Researched various articles and posts written by other game designers about combat design. Some of the main sources I found that are applicable to this game:

- Fundamental pillars of a combat system ¹
- Framing combat abilities as tools to answer questions the game is asking the player ²
- *God of War* (2018) vs *Sekiro* combat comparison (*God of War* making the player feel powerful while *Sekiro* emphasizes precision and timing) ³



Similar Games from the Same Genre

The main games I analyzed the combat systems of for inspiration were:

- *Titanfall 2*
- *God of War (2018)*
- *Batman: Arkham Asylum*
- *NieR: Automata*
- *Doom Eternal*
- *Dishonored 2*



Word Associations from Target Demographic

Since my friends fit the target demographic, I asked them via Instagram what actions come to mind when they hear the words: solitude/anxiety, camaraderie/resolve, and freedom. Here are some of the results:

Shutting down or sinking of shoulders, overthinking, putting hands up in v-shape, shaking/quivering, taking a long walk in forest, hug, jumping with happiness, relax, stretching out like dance stretches, arms back and chest out, running outside

1. https://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/175950/the_fundamental_pillars_of_a_.php
2. <http://www.chaoticstupid.com/trinity-a-game-design-methodology-part-1/>
3. <https://twitter.com/jasondeheras/status/1358654321303277568>

Inspiration for the Gameplay

Dual Protagonists



The game having two protagonists was inspired by *Threads of Fate* and one of my past game projects, *tear*.

The two characters in *Threads of Fate* were foils of each other that created this interesting dynamic story and gameplay-wise.

The two characters in *tear* were representations of someone's outer self and their inner self. I used these two characters to show how both selves affect one struggling with anxiety problems.

Having a sort of duality between two protagonists in *hoaxcape duet* is fitting given the theme I aim to convey,

Combined Ally Attacks



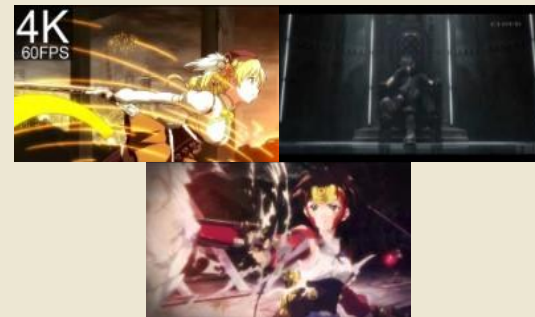
Part of the feature I want to design involves combined attacks between the two protagonists. This is something found in many JRPGs but not many FPS games.

My main sources of inspiration for this are:

- Vivi & Steiner's combined attack ¹ in *Final Fantasy IX*
- the Double Tech ² between Crono and Frog in *Chrono Trigger*
- and a scene in *Final Fantasy VII Advent Children* ³ where Cloud is literally lifted up by his friends

I wanted to recapture a similar sense of camaraderie I got from these sources of inspiration in my design

Epic Combat



Since the target audience loves to play high-octane and thrilling type of games, I gathered three videos that embodied these feelings

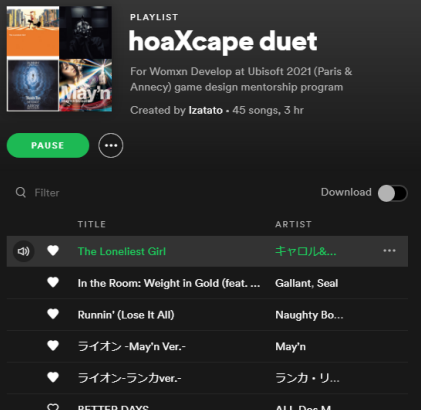
- The fight scene between Mami and Homura in *Madoka Magica Rebellion History* ⁴
- The original trailer for *Final Fantasy Versus XIII (Final Fantasy XV)* ⁵
- Mumei's fight scenes in *Kabaneri of the Iron Fortress* ⁶

Watching these scenes gives me a reference to help design fast-paced combat in the game

1. <https://youtu.be/ubDNTzskZwY?t=64>
2. <https://youtu.be/Gs3jiU63X4g?t=59>
3. <https://youtu.be/pyPI8jYlFA?t=420>
4. https://youtu.be/3Jm7Q8RsR_Y?t=51

5. https://youtu.be/b6At_bb1PNU?t=38
6. <https://youtu.be/kqCSdT2mOw4?t=33>

Inspiration for Inducing Emotions in Audience



Spotify Playlist¹

Using an idea I got during a game design workshop taught by Joe Kinglake ², I created a Spotify playlist with songs that elicited the same emotions in me that I wanted to recapture in the game. The top 5 songs represent the order of core emotions in the game:

- Lonely, anxious, shielded
- Comradely, vulnerable, resolute
- Free, cathartic, relief

03 Research

1. <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2Mx7joy5IFw8gzedWuSFgN?si=3BvZmqiwTueU-y5XWljE4A>
2. <https://josephkinglake.com/resources/>
3. <https://izabela-tolentino.github.io/projectpackets.html>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8BlrItTG-o>
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKcIHPckXqW>

Different sources listed in order that elicit the target emotions



Solitude

packets ³: A well-received past game project where I was able to successfully capture the feeling of being in space. It made players feel that sense of solitude that's often associated with being in space.



Vulnerability

TwoFourSeven ⁴: This dance performance always stood out to me because of how emotional it made me feel. Watching this portion of the performance always made me tear up and feel vulnerable.



Camaraderie

The G.O.O.D. Project ⁵ & Choreo Cookies ⁶: These two dance performances showcase strong synergy between the team members and the themes of not being alone when going through personal struggles.



Catharsis

VMO ⁷: A very powerful dance performance that effectively conveys the emotional journey towards catharsis.



Freedom

Madoka Magica ⁸ & *Macross Frontier* ⁹: This scene from *Madoka Magica* gives me the impression of feeling free. The song "Lion" from *Macross Frontier* always elicits this same feeling in me.



6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sy4Ogh4TEul>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMAulQY2yRk>
8. <https://youtu.be/a6tyJxWCJow?t=29>
9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAcVRaKIXb8>

04 Breakdown

General Combat Rules

- **Health points (HP)** can be replenished through items from their inventory
- **Ammo is unlimited**, but “magazine” size is limited. Player must spend some time reloading.
- The player has a small **shield that can block** some attacks. Stage 2 unlocks ability to parry. Using the shield can cancel any action at any time
- **No friendly fire**
- Has ability to activate a short **burst of movement** in the direction of the analog stick to **dodge attacks**.
 - Potentially test camera soft targeting enemy closest to player and crosshair only during this movement burst.
 - No soft targeting if there is no enemy in view of camera.
 - Has a small cooldown in between but can also cancel any action at any time.
- There are **3 distinct stages in ability progression that align with the game's narrative**. The combat abilities are automatically unlocked as the player continues playing through the story.



Projectile Weapon (x3)

There are three total weapons that the player unlocks over the course of the game. I will be referring to them as “pistol,” “shotgun,” and “assault rifle (AR),” because they fit those weapon stereotypes found in many FPS games. However, they don’t necessarily have to physically look like those guns specifically



Melee Weapon (x3)

Progressively gets more powerful at each stage.



Elemental Ability (x3)

There are three different elemental abilities that the player unlocks over the course of the game. Each are ice/water-based and correspond to the target emotions of that stage.

Arbitrarily set a 5 second cooldown between uses of elemental ability and revise as needed



Comrade Combo Attack (x2)

A combined attack between the player and the other main character. Can be executed when in proximity of the other character.

Stage 1 Breakdown

Lonely, anxious, shielded

Elemental ability

L2

Block

L1

R2

Shoot weapon

R1

Melee attack

Equip "pistol"

Use healing item

Dodge

Jump

Reload weapon

Sprint

L3

Crouch

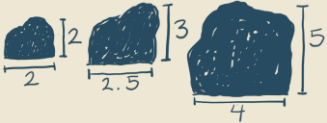
R3

Metrics

- Set player's height / distance of camera from ground as **3 units**
- Crouching height is **2 units**
- Set player's width as **1 unit**
- Set regular enemy's HP as **100**

Ice Shield Ability

- Hold **L2** to form a stationary ice shield.
- The longer you hold, the bigger the shield
- Can't move while shield is forming
- Size is incremental
- Shield protects from all attacks
- The shield melts if more than 5 are formed



- 2 seconds for **2 x 2**
- 4 seconds for **2.5 x 3**
- 6 seconds for **4 x 5**

Short reach melee attack

- Melee attack can reach 1 unit in front of player
- Causes 50 damage to enemy



Stat Description	"Pistol" Stats
Damage per "bullet"	40
Projectiles per shot	1
Cooldown between shots	0.5 s
Spread	0 degrees
"Magazine" size	50

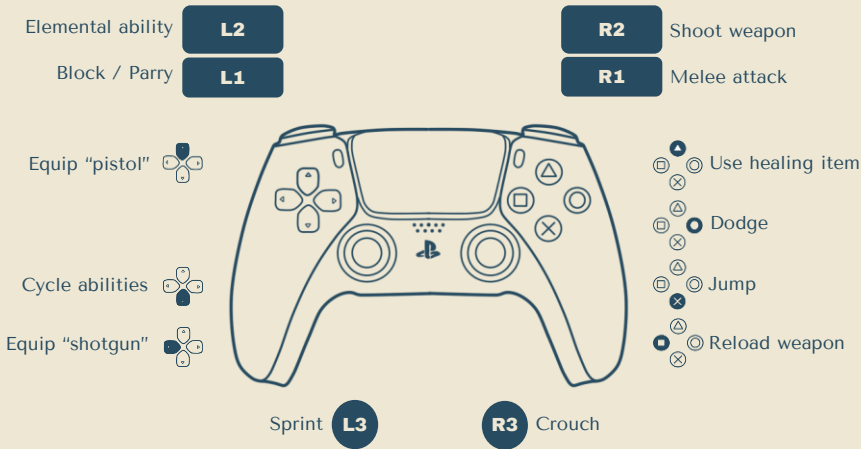
1

The first stage that the game starts in! Main abilities:

- Ice Shield Ability (reinforces the feeling of shielding oneself and loneliness)
- Short reach melee attacks (reinforces feeling of anxiety of not wanting to go far outside comfort zone)
- A "pistol" (the most discrete out of the three weapons)

Stage 2 Breakdown

Comradely, resolute, vulnerable



New abilities unlocked:

- Comrade Combo Aerial Attack (sense of camaraderie)
- Shootable ice blocks (feeling of vulnerability when charging ice blocks, but resolute when shooting it)
- Medium reach melee attacks, higher damage (going more outside comfort zone than before)
- Can now parry all attacks except for heavy attacks (resolute and willingness to fight back)
- A "shotgun" (vulnerability when reloading, resolute when shooting)

Comrade Combo Aerial Attack

- Player can jump on top of other character with to get boosted for an upper aerial attack (literally lifting them up)
- If enemy is in proximity, slow-mo activates so player has time to aim
 - Can cancel by pressing
- Confirm target with **R1** or **R2** depending on how player wants to attack



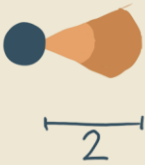
Shootable Ice Blocks

- Hold **L2** to charge up more ice blocks
- The pieces can be used by other character to attack enemy

- 2 seconds for 3
- 4 seconds for 6
- 6 seconds for 9

Medium reach melee attack

- Melee attack can reach 2 units in front of player
- Causes 75 damage to enemy



Parrying (limited)

- Can deflect bullets straight at enemies if parried at the right moment
- Can't parry "heavy" attacks from enemies

Stat Description	"Shotgun" Stats
Damage per "bullet"	100
Projectiles per shot	3
Cooldown between shots	1.0 s
Spread	10 degrees
"Magazine" size	10

Stage 3 Breakdown

Free, cathartic, relieved

Elemental ability

Block / Parry

L2

L1

R2

R1

Shoot weapon

Melee attack

Equip "pistol"

Equip "AR"

Cycle abilities

Equip "shotgun"

Sprint

Crouch

Use healing item

Dodge

Jump

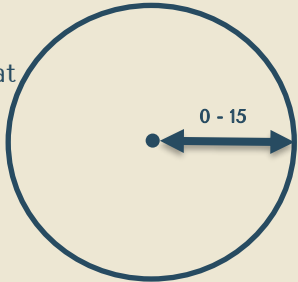
Reload weapon

New abilities unlocked:

- Blast Zone Water Bubble (like stretching out and releasing tension cathartically)
- Comrade Combo Ultimate Attack (more camaraderie)
- Long reach melee attacks, highest damage (fully confident and free)
- Can now parry all attacks (makes player feel powerful)
- An "AR" (rapid fire reinforces feeling of freedom)

Blast Zone Water Bubble

- Hold **L2** to slowly expand a water bubble that surrounds character
- Release **L2** to make it explode, causing damage to enemies within the bubble
- Size of bubble proportional to charge time but has a max radius of 15 units at 6 sec



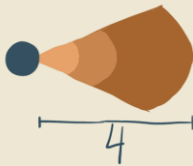
Comrade Combo Ultimate Attack

- Hold **L3** and **R3** to use this attack when ultimate attack bar is full
- Both characters combine abilities to cause heavy damage in a 25-unit radius where the epicenter is the midpoint between them
- Leaves a temporary steam cloud for 10 seconds that causes additional damage over time



Long reach melee attacks

- Melee attack can now reach 4 units in front of player
- Causes 100 damage to enemy



Parrying

- Can parry all enemy attacks when timed correctly

Stat Description	"AR" Stats
Damage per "bullet"	15
Projectiles per shot	1
Cooldown between shots	0.1 s
Spread	1 degree
"Magazine" size	200

Elements it Relies on

Ally Ai Behavior

Some Stage 2 and 3 abilities relies on how the ally character behaves. The player combat abilities would also have to be balanced against the ally ai behavior.

Enemy Design

The kinds of enemies the player comes across can make or break the player combat ability system. There needs to be a fair balance between the two to create a fun & engaging experience

Narrative

The narrative directly correlates with when certain abilities in the combat system is unlocked for the player. Both are codependent on each other for effective pacing.

Animations, VFX, Audio

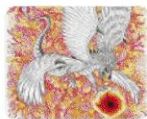
These elements are essential for the combat to feel satisfying to the player. Creates a more reactive experience for the player.

Level Design

The enemy placement, cover placement, narrow or wide areas, and any other objects in the game world directly affects how the player utilizes the character's combat abilities



Single image of Hand-forged Itak
Tagalog sword for the...



Minokawa and the Solar Eclipse



Bakunawa, Pip Gungab



Haliya vs Bakunawa, Godfrey Escota



Muerta, Xiao-Guang Sun

**TinkerBell on Twitter**

- Sci-fi fantasy design inspired by Philippine culture with a semi-realistic, anime-like art style. See Pinterest link for initial mood board
 - <https://www.pinterest.com/izacreativetato/project-xcape/>
- There's currently no set genders or appearances for the two protagonists, so this will be up to the discretion of the writers and concept artists
- Use night-blooming jasmine, a flower that can be found in the Philippines, as part of the "Mayari" character's visual design

- **"Mayari" Character Model**
 - Arms/Hands part of the rig especially crucial for First Person POV
- **Props**
 - "Pistol"
 - "Shotgun"
 - "AR"
 - Shield
 - Melee Weapon based off Filipino weapons
 - Healing item(s)
- **Animations**
 - Smooth running/dodging movement inspired by ice skating
 - Jumping
 - One for using each of the 3 special abilities
 - Reloading each of the 3 weapons
 - Blocking & Parrying
 - Ally Attacks
 - Slight pause at impact from melee attacks

- **VFX**
 - Charging effects for the three abilities
 - Weapon impact
 - Firing each weapon
 - Shooting ice blocks
 - Explosion for Bubble ability
- **HUD / UI** needs to show the following:
 - Player health bar
 - Number of healing items available
 - Which weapon is in use
 - How much "ammo" is left in weapon
 - Which ability is active
 - "Ultimate" attack bar (Stage 3 only)



Sound Assets and Technical Breakdown



Music

- Three **combat tracks** that elicit the same target feelings and mood in their respective stages
- Potentially compose a **leitmotif** that will be present throughout the three combat tracks
 - to reinforce the character's growth and desire to break free during the game
- Instruments and style up to discretion of composer



SFX

- x3 for the different weapons
 - Shooting
 - Reloading
 - Equipping
- x3 for the different special abilities
 - Charging
 - Release
- x3 for the different melee attacks
 - Swinging
 - Impact
 - Equipping
- **Player**
 - Taking damage
 - Healing



Technical Breakdown:

- **Player Movement**
 - Walking/Running & Sprinting Toggle
 - Dodging in direction of Left Analog stick
- **Weapons**
 - Hitscan & aim assist for weapons
 - Custom cooldown between shots
 - Custom # of projectiles per shot
 - Custom damage values for each weapon
 - Custom melee attack reach
- **Ally Attacks**
 - Basic proximity to ally detection
 - Slow-Mo at apex in Aerial boost when enemy is in reach
 - Steam cloud with custom DPS and duration
- **Shield**
 - Can protect about half of the player from incoming attacks
 - Parrying has a relatively large and forgiving window to execute
- **Elemental Abilities**
 - Dynamic mesh / object size for Ice Shield ability based on duration of L2 hold
 - Instantiate x number of Ice Blocks based on duration of L2 hold
 - Resultant ice blocks comrade can use to attack slowly reduces in size
 - Water bubble blast zone size based on duration of L2 hold
- **Controller Input Detection for all Actions**

05 Prototype Logistics

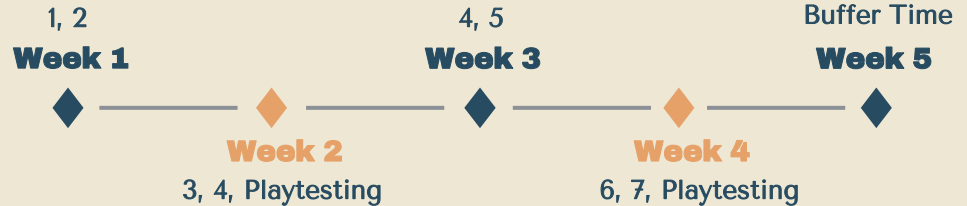
List of Components in order of Priority

1. Basic player running movement & crouching
2. Comrade Combo Attacks (since this is the most experimental)
3. Elemental Abilities
4. Melee attacks (tricky to implement in First Person)
5. Projectile Weapons (I implemented something similar to this before for a past project)
6. Dodging Movement (A little experimental but not as essential as the projectile weapons)
7. Shield (Not as essential compared to other components)

Prototype Contents

- The three main combat progression stages
- Easily switch between the different stages to compare player emotion
- Stationary enemy dummies with basic attack on loop
- Stationary comrade dummy to test Comrade Combo Attacks with
- 6 & 7 are optional if I need more time to implement & test the other components of this feature

Development Timeline



	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March						Begin prototyping phase 12	13
	14	15	16	Complete 1 + 2 17	18	19	20
	Milestone for pre-production email 21	22	Complete 3, and a portion of 4 23	24	25	First update with mentor 26	27
	28	Complete 4 + 5 29	30	31			
April					1	2	3
	Complete 6 + 7 4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	First playable version 11	12	13	14	15	Second update with mentor 16	17
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	25	26	27	28	29	30	
May							1
	Final prototype & presentation video 2						



GitHub



Tools & Potential External Assets for Developing Prototype

Particle Effects:

- <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/essentials/asset-packs/unity-particle-pack-5-x-73777>
- <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/essentials/tutorial-projects/unity-particle-pack-127325>

3D Models / Environments:

- <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/3d/characters/robots/space-robot-kyle-4696>
- <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/3d/environments/3d-scifi-kit-starter-kit-92152>
- <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/3d/environments/sci-fi/snaps-prototype-sci-fi-industrial-136759>

Plug-Ins:

- <https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/tools/input-management/first-person-all-in-one-135316>

Audio:

- <https://www.kenney.nl/assets?q=audio>
- <https://incompetech.filmmusic.io/genres>

Hello!

I created this presentation under the hypothetical assumption that the people reading this would be a full development team. Although I have specific breakdowns on the graphic and sound assets, I personally will be relying on the placeholder assets mentioned in the previous slide for the graphics and sound so I can focus on prototyping the actual gameplay!

I had a lot of fun putting together this feature pitch and learned a lot working through the guidelines. In the past, I was able to successfully design and develop a short game called *packets* around specific feelings. It was well-received by those who played it, so I wanted to challenge myself again by trying to design a combat system around a set of emotions to help tell a story. This project was partially inspired by my personal struggles with feeling like an imposter for years, and how I eventually found that many of my peers and people I look up to have felt the same way. It's hard to imagine their struggles when all you can really see are their successes.

Through designing this feature and game, I want to convey that people aren't alone in their struggles. By playing the two protagonists, the player sees that both characters view each other as more "qualified" yet aren't aware of each other's shared struggles. As they become more vulnerable with each other, it starts to directly reflect in the combat gameplay. Everyone's different, but something that's been personally helping me **break free** from "imposter syndrome" is to talk with friends about it. It's not an all-in-one solution for everyone, but it does help some people.

With that, I wanted to say thank you for providing this valuable opportunity for me to share my work with you. In a society where women are often disregarded or told that they shouldn't pursue certain careers like in video games, thank you for helping us break into the industry!

- Izabela (she/her)
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/izatolen/>



Thank you!

- Art & diagrams by Izabela (me!)
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