



PITCHING YOUR GAME IDEAS

Think you've got a great idea for the next console blockbuster? Or the next mobile hit that will take the app store by storm? Maybe you've got an innovative idea for a game that teaches players something or explores a subject that interests you.

In the game industry (and lots of other creative industries like movies, television and advertising), being able to describe your idea quickly, clearly and in a way that gets the audience interested in and excited about it is called **pitching**.

Kinds of Pitches

Game designers pitch their ideas at different times in the design process and to different audiences. You might pitch a brand new game idea you just came up with to a friend or collaborator to see if they think it is worth developing further. You might pitch a more complete game concept to a partner or investor who you are looking to provide resources to help you make your game. And if you want your game to be published, chances are you will be pitching a complete game design to a publisher hoping they will like it and agree to bring your game to market.

While there are lots of different kinds of pitches, there are two that are especially useful for young designers:

The Elevator Pitch

Imagine you suddenly found yourself riding on an elevator with someone who held the future of your game in his hands. Before the elevator ride is over, you've got one chance to get him excited about your game. You've got no props, no drawings, no example level for him to play: just yourself. This type of pitch is sometimes called the 'High Concept Pitch' because your audience should be able to understand the high-level concept of your game after hearing only a few words; or the 'Standing on One Foot Pitch' or 'Two Minute Pitch' because you should be able to deliver it in the time you could comfortably stay standing on one foot: about two minutes!

At any stage of your design process, you should be prepared to present a version of your Elevator Pitch. If you're very early in your game design and still exploring your idea, you should be able to describe the core concept of your game and as many of the important details of the game as you currently know. As you move further in your design (maybe you've completed your **Game Design Document** or have even started making the game), you should constantly update your pitch to include your most up to date thinking.

The Full Pitch

Once you have fully developed your game concept and are at the point where you would begin to actually make your game, you may want (or need) to prepare a **Full Pitch**. Hopefully by this time you have a good sense of what your game will be like: the core mechanics; the world, characters and story; etc. Maybe you've even got some sample artwork or prototype levels.

A Full Pitch builds on the Elevator Pitch by allowing you to more fully describe your game idea. As a result, you will almost certainly have more time: Full Pitches might take a half an hour, an hour or more. You will also be expected to describe your game in more detail, touching on all the key areas you've covered in your Game Design Document. Lastly, unlike the Elevator Pitch, you can typically use 'props' in a Full Pitch: things like drawings of your game world and characters, mock-ups of important screens in your game or diagrams that help explain key elements of your design.

Full Pitches are used in the game industry in a number of ways:

Designers might pitch their designs to friends or colleagues to get their reactions to the design in order to improve it or check for weaknesses;

Design teams at most game studios must pitch their designs as part of an official **greenlight process** where the studio decides if it is going to allow work on a game to continue to the next stage (in this case moving from design to production);

Game developers often must pitch their games to **funders** (people or companies that provide the money to make the game) and **publishers** (companies that can provide money to make the game and **distribute** the game to customers).

Pitch Tips

Be enthusiastic and confident – If you aren't excited about your game or don't seem like you believe in your own ideas, why should anyone else? Being confident (a good thing) is different from being arrogant (no one wants to work with someone who acts like they're better than they actually are).

Be professional – If your pitch is successful, the person you're pitching to may have to work with you in some way. Don't give them any reason not to want to. Show up on time, be polite, be humble and respect their time, intelligence and abilities.

Be prepared – The person you're pitching to will probably have questions or ideas. You should know your design inside and out and be ready to respond to them honestly and as best you can, even if it wasn't part of your original plan.

Don't fake it – If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest. "I hadn't considered that. Let me think about that and get back to you," is a perfectly acceptable

thing to say. Then get back to them.

Accept criticism – Chances are the person you're pitching to knows a thing or two about games and, deep down, wants you to succeed. If they have criticisms or suggestions, thank them, accept what they say and take it seriously. They've probably just pointed out an opportunity to make your design better and saved you the trouble of making a big mistake. Never be hostile or defensive.

It's OK to mess up – Your pitch won't be perfect, so don't worry about trying for perfection. Focus on communicating your design clearly with excitement and passion. The person you're pitching to knows you're going to make mistakes and doesn't care. What they care about is how good your design is.

Pitch Resources

Game pitch advice for independent game developers:

<http://makeitbigingames.com/2007/09/how-to-pitch-your-game/>

How To Pitch Your Project to Publishers:

http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6200/how_to_pitch_your_project_to_.php

Games on Kickstarter – many Kickstarter game projects include short videos that pitch the game concept in the hopes of getting regular people to help fund making the game:

<http://www.kickstarter.com/discover/categories/games>

Elevator Pitch Checklist

Time: 2 minutes

When: You should be prepared with an up-to-date version of your Elevator Pitch at all times

Goal: Communicate your basic game concept and get the person you're pitching to excited

Tools: Just you, your ideas, your body language and your voice

What To Cover

Opening

Introduce yourself

Game Title – it should be memorable and appropriate to the game

Core Concept – Be prepared to describe what the game is about in one sentence and in one paragraph.

Target Audience – Who is the game designed for? Young kids, older kids, adults?

Boys, girls or both? Is the game designed for hard-core players who like deep, highly challenging games or casual players who like to play a little bit each day? **Don't say "everyone"!**

Platform -- Is the game designed to be played on a game console? A mobile device? The web? A good game design targets a specific platform and uses the capabilities of that platform to its advantage.

Genre – What kind of game is it? Popular genres include action, adventure, sports, strategy, puzzle, racing, platformer and role-playing. Is the game a mix of genres (e.g. action-adventure or a clever combination that's never been tried before)? Or maybe you have created an entirely new genre! Use well-known games as examples if it helps you get your point across.

Gameplay

Core mechanic – What does the player do in the game? This is often best described through active verbs like running, jumping, racing, counting, puzzle solving or exploring. What makes the gameplay fun and challenging for the player? Are there any other unique features that are important to the gameplay (max 1 or 2)?

"Tilt" –

What makes your game special?

What makes your game different?

Why would someone want to play it?

Why should we care about it?

Full Pitch Checklist

Time: 30 minutes to an hour or more

When: Prepare your Full Pitch when you believe you have fully developed your game concept

Goal: Communicate your concept and convince the person you're pitching to that your game should be made

Tools: You, your ideas, your body language and your voice plus 'props' to support your pitch like sample art, diagrams and even a playable game demo

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Goals -- What is the player trying to accomplish in the game (i.e. what is the 'win state')? What does he or she have to do to achieve that goal? What barriers or obstacles exist that make achieving that goal difficult? How can the player fail at achieving the goal(s) (i.e. 'loss states')? What kind of feedback does the player get on progress towards the goal? How is the player rewarded when a goal is achieved?

Components -- what kinds of things are there in the game, for example enemies, objects in the environment, power-ups, points, etc. What do they look like? What do they do? How can the player interact with them?

Controls -- How does the player control what happens in the game? What does pushing a certain button on the controller do? Can the player move a block by touching the screen and dragging it?

User experience -- When the player starts to play the game, what steps do they follow? What screens will they see? How are levels in the game structured? How does the player move from one part of the game to the next?

Characters, World and Story -- Not every game needs characters and stories – for example, many puzzle games don't have them -- but if your game does, this section should describe them. Does the player have an avatar? Does the character get help from other players? Are there non-playing characters (NPCs) or other live players (for example, in a multiplayer game)? Are there enemies? Does the game have a story? Is there a fictional world or setting for the game that we should know something about? Sample artwork to show what the characters and world look like can be a big plus.

Visual Style – What does the game look and feel like? Where does the game take place: in the real world? A fantasy world? Space? Underground? In the past? In the future? Is the game a 2D world? A 3D World? What does the art look and feel like: is it gritty and realistic, beautiful and fantastical or something else? Once again, sample artwork can really help!

“Tilt” – What makes your game special?

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Why would someone want to play it?

Why should we care about it?

Many full pitches – especially pitches made to funders and publishers – include information about *how* the game will be made including things like team members, technology, market analysis, budget, schedule and sales projections. For your STEM Challenge pitches, you don’t need to worry about any of those.