

Intent

Virus Venture: Safety on the Net is a simple, educational platformer game that aims to teach children in and around the 3rd-5th grade age demographic about the dangers of the internet. This includes scams, protecting personal information, and more. This game would be played in a classroom environment, likely on chromebooks or in a computer lab.

The player will experience the journey of a boy learning how to protect himself on the internet from the hazards it contains. He initially falls for a scam which traps him in cyberspace, now he must escape by learning internet safety skills. Our player will adventure through the digital world, defeating viruses and learning basic internet safety skills to return to the real world.

Target Audience

For this game, we want to aim for engaging with an audience of children in classrooms within the 7 - 10 Age group. We hope to do so by inciting the explicit motivations of safety, and adventure as well as inciting the implicit motivations of (very minor) challenge and story. The game will have a very basic reading element to it (appropriate for the age group) and will be easily completable within a class period.

To get this game out there to kids, we also are marketing to educators and parents. The message of this game is about online safety and the dangers of the internet, knowledge that adults would want to see their children learn. The game is clearly educational and fun, and would come off as a great teaching tool to start teaching children about being safe online.

Monetization

The game will have no microtransactions of the sort, or ads. However, the game will be sold as a teaching tool, and can be purchased by educators for classroom use. While the target audience is the children, we are marketing to school districts, displaying why they should purchase our game as a teaching

tool. The game would be designed and marketed to schools for them to keep, and to continue to use as an educational tool in their classrooms.

Context and Content.

The player takes the role of a young boy who must undergo a journey through cyberspace after falling victim to a internet scam.

The player character must learn internet safety skills and defeat viruses to escape. Max, our main character, falls victim to a "b-bucks" scam and uses his father's credit card to attempt to get b-bucks. This installs a virus on his grandmother's old computer, transporting Max, his father, and his grandmother into cyberspace. Max is scolded by Emma T. Cohn, the computer's virtual assistant, who explains the virus that got downloaded onto the computer.

The game takes place in an old internet explorer-esc computer, with the environments reflecting old computer backgrounds. The player character must travel through the internet lands to undo his actions and delete the virus infecting the computer. To do this, the player must locate the virus infected area in the level, and rid it of the virus. To beat these virus challenges, the player will input a sequence of arrow keys to rid the area of virus pop-ups. After beating the challenge by putting in the proper sequence, Max will learn new game abilities and use these abilities to help him escape the computer! The player starts off with only basic platforming skills, running and jumping. By the end, Max will be able to destroy viruses with a shockwave stomp, slide, and super jump!

Player Motivation

The motivation for this game is completion primarily. When presented with a sidescroller, many kids would wish to beat it, so we provide that with a little added challenge and educational elements. We do this by adding platforming, making the player have to navigate to find their objective: The virus affected areas on the computer.

The player will be motivated to seek out these areas as they provide power-ups for progression, giving the player characters a reward for finding them. This is the core game loop, and this is what keeps players motivated throughout the levels of the game, as well as wanting to defeat the virus and escape the computer.

Game States

The beginning of the game has the player with only a few mechanics, moving and jumping. The player uses this to progress through the game and acquire more mechanics. By the end of the game the player character can attack, slide, and charge jump as well, having acquired these power-ups throughout the earlier levels. The very end state of the game would be the escape of the computer and return to the real world where the player would come out of the experience knowing more about internet safety.

There is no loss state, as we wanted to make this game easy and accessible to younger audiences. When hit by an enemy, the player will simply be staggered and given I-frames so they can recover. The same will happen if you fall into a bottomless pit while platforming. You'll be teleported to a checkpoint in a staggered state, giving the player the ability to keep trying without consequence.

Mechanics and Systems

Systems List

Player Movement:

- Jump (Up Arrow)
- Left/Right Movement (Left & Right Arrows)
- Special Moves
 - Regular Jump that is pressed once for a regular height
 - Once charged jump is obtained, hold space to charge height

- Regular jump goes 1 block, charged jump can go anywhere from 1 to 5 blocks, but not less than the regular jump
- Slide from a standstill start
- Moves the character forward at least 2 blocks
- 'Shockwave' effect that destroys enemies to the left and right of the player character
- Charged / Higher Jump (Hold Up Arrow)
- Slide (Down Arrow)
- Shockwave (Space)
- Collision
 - Colliding with small virus enemies have no consequence aside from interfering with movement

UI:

- Main Menu Screen
- Tutorial
- Win Screen

Virus Infected Areas:

- Arrow Sequence
 - Integer that is increased if player is correctly following directions
- Pop-Ups
 - How the game communicates the arrow sequence inputs to the player
- Emma T. Cohn
 - Follows the player similar to eggs in Yoshi's island
 - Trails behind the player, moving through walls and enemies

AI:

- Emma
 - ("must follow player character" - Jorge)
- Virus Enemy
 - ("moves left to right, doesn't walk off platforms; red koopa behavior" - Jorge)

Aesthetic Direction

The game will feature painted and stylized backgrounds, with the characters having cartoonish proportions as well as lineart. There is a focus on putting prominence in the aesthetic aspects of early 2000s computer backgrounds, most specifically, the bright green grass and blue sky. Due to this, the game will feature a mostly natural, but slightly saturated color-scheme.

Art Direction

For this game we'll have a vibrant, generally warmer color palette. The characters will be especially saturated and have darker values than the background so that they stand out.

This style would have heavily stylized characters combined with relatively simple shading in both the characters and the background to create a sense of three-dimensionality. Lineart will be used for the characters but not the backgrounds so that the characters stand out from the environment. The game will have vibrant colors and eye-catching UI and effects which appeal to younger players.

The highly stylized characters would allow for the usage of shape language for indicating a character's personality, and a more simplistic style of drawing and shading would allow the artists to make more assets and iterate more often based on feedback. Having more saturated colors would also appeal more to our target audience, as kids tend to like bright colors.

Sound Design

For this game, the sound design was made to fit a retro and digitally styled soundscape. Aiming to make the player experience enjoyable, the music has an aesthetically motivating and emotional composition, utilizing some classical composition mixed with modern synthesizer elements. To accomplish this, the instrumentation of the game will feature digital retro synth leads and pads, guitar samples with effect pedals and post production.

Some soundfonts from reference material may be used as well, as this is a standard practice with digital music. Lastly, the BPM will likely stay consistent throughout the whole game, sitting at 117 BPM.