**10 Steps to Designing a gameGamehttp://www.alanemrich.com/PGD/Week\_02/PGD\_Ten\_Steps.htm**

**1. The first, and most important step, is concept development.** That is, you must determine at the very beginning what it is that you want to do. **(action plaformer)**

*This is where the High Concept, The Hook(s), and the One-Sentence Marketing Description all fit in to define the target you’re aiming for in your game design.* ***(my teacher)***

*From those, you move on to defining “The Base of the Pyramid.” It is important to know before going any further what specific things (and what*kinds *of things) will be expressly*in*cluded and*ex*cluded from the design. This will go a long way toward avoiding the problem of “Kitchen Sink-itus” where the design keeps growing and growing as more stuff gets added over the course of the game’s development cycle.* ***(Put shooting,enemys,jumping,plaforms, bosses,story***

***Do not put:levels ,eating cookies,money,shops (jk))***

*If you clearly know where the boundaries are before you get the ball rolling, you won’t make the mistake of excluding something philosophically proper and important to your design or including something that blurs the focus of the design (which threatens every single game design).*

*And never,****never****deviate from the One-Sentence Marketing Description that has been previously decided upon (unless you get everyone on board to change what kind of game to make).****Everything****has to connect back to the game’s original High Concept, Hook(s), and One-Sentence Marketing Description or else you’re heading off into the weeds and making a different game than you knew you needed to when you started. (Don’t go there.) –AE*

**Minimum 3 page summary of your idea- Who, what genre, story,** **levels, characters, game pieces……**

**2. Next comes research.** You will probably have done a little of this during the concept development stage. At this point, you must fill in as many of the gaps in your knowledge as you can.**(lots of it)**

*When making wargames, research is very important and thus very high on the list. If you’re making a less ‘serious’ game on a historical subject, research is important if you’re trying to sneak in some* ***“education value”*** *to the unsuspecting player, but be careful not to overdo it. Sid Meier, for instance, does his historical research last, opting to have the ‘history’ elements of his games based upon common knowledge (and misperceptions) so that players are ‘instantly familiar’ with what they see when they start playing that game.*

*If you’re making a game in a fictional setting, then this stage is for doing as much conceptualizing of that setting as possible. In effect, you’re starting to lay the foundation of The Base of the Pyramid.*

*(refer to conept farts)*

*If you’re making an abstract or word game, you might want to consider the mathematical probabilities that will define the ‘tolerance’ of your game design (i.e., how many pieces there will be, how many letter C’s in the Scrabble bag, etc.).*

*If you’re making a component-based game, you might want to consider materials for those special components, their prices and availability. -AE*

**3. This step is what I call “integration.”** It is where you take all of the research material and your knowledge of game mechanics and integrate it into a prototype game. **(Compile it all together)**

*Whether your prototype is a paper game or the first complete pass through writing a design document, this is where you have to design and ‘fit’ the big pieces of the design plumbing together (without worrying too much about sealing the leaks). This stage is where you’re focused on the forest, and not the trees.*

*Let me put it another way; this is the Gross Anatomy part of game design. That is, you must start nailing down how the larger systems of how the game will fit and work together (but not sweat the minutiae of how every synapse will connect).*

*Answering questions like, “What, in general, will the pieces in this game be?” “How will they move?” “How will they interact with each other?” “How will the player(s) interact with the pieces?” “What’s the object of this game?” will help you define and arrange the Big Pieces together such that you’re satisfied that your Pyramid’s structure is straight and sound. –AE*

*Trump,aliens,player,platforms,bullets*

*Enemys move tward player,player =wasd plasforms don’t move bullet moves straight*

*Bullet+e=dead enemy and points*

*E+p = less life*

*You can jump*

**4. Now, you flesh out your prototype and come up with, in effect, something that looks remarkably close to a playable game (or a complete design document, for computer games)**

*Satisfied with the Gross Anatomy of integrating your knowledge into the big pieces of your design, now it’s time to focus on the detail work, connect the synapses, and create something usable. This is where your focus zooms in from the forest (which you arranged in the previous step) to the trees.*

*There will be a lot of agonizing at this stage of the design, so expect it. Sometimes, the plumbing (from step 3) fits without a leak (in step 4) and you’re golden. More often, though, you’ll find that the design was much easier to dream up in theory (steps 1 through 3) than to execute in practice by completing all the details (step 4).*

*This step is where you really have be ‘both-brained’ (as opposed to just left-brained or right-brained) because solutions come from both sides of your brain. Sometimes, working the formulas will provide the right sealant to stop a leak in the design [using your left brain]. Other times, you’ll need to envision the pipes in a whole new way and innovate something fresh to get around a design problem [using your right brain]. Usually, it will take a combination of approaches to iron out the kinks in the design and come up with something that’s remotely playable (which is what I call being ‘both brained’).*

*Let me emphasize that****: being a game designer means being ambi-brain-trous****(as opposed to ambidextrous); that is, being ‘both brained.’ If you don’t have sufficient chops in your right brain, your game designs will lack a certain expected magic in cleverness, creativity, and originality. If you’re left brain is a weak link, then balancing, organizing, codifying, and clearly communicating your design will be problems. Many game designers are strong on one side and weak on the other, which is why they pair up with others who compensate for their weak side. When you read the game design credits for games, you’ll learn to see who was the ‘creative’ person on the design team, and who did all of the grunt work to turn that artistic vision into a well communicated, playable, and balanced game. -AE*

**5. Prepare a first draft of the rules**. Many people overlook this step, preferring to keep the rules in their heads for a while longer. They usually come to regret this.

*During the previous steps, you’ve probably made some notes to yourself already to help you stay focused on what you’re trying to achieve, and that’s a good thing. Now you need to flesh out the rules or draft a game manual to at least a minimal level where you can hand it off to someone and they’d have a good idea what you’re trying to do with this game design. That is, they can envision how the game will work and what they need to do to make it work. -AE*

**6. This is one of the more difficult steps: game development.** This means playtesting and changing the game and rewriting the rules and taking a lot of abuse from people who would rather *play* games than work on them and don’t appreciate all the problems the poor designer has in getting anything done.

*You, the game designer, stay very involved in this step; it is a ‘hands on’ operation. This is where you play your own game with others and answer team member’s questions about your design and what they’re expected to do. You’ll hear a lot of “You needed to think this though” and “You left out what happens if this and that and then the other occurs” and all about other leaks that you didn’t catch while fixing the plumbing in Step 4.*

*Important people that you trust and are working with on this game are getting their first look at “your baby” and seeing it as the crude Frankenstein monster that you’ve been able to cobble together thus far. You need to be able to get past their abuse and take their criticisms to heart if it will make a better game. (Hey, it’s not like you’ve got some monopoly on brilliant ideas, bucko.)*

*The goal of this step is to redraft and rewrite over the game’s weak spots and prepare for the next step: -AE*

**7. I call this step “blind testing.”** This is where you take your physical prototype and your written rules and send them out to somebody who can play the game without your presence. This is often very revealing.

*For computer games, this is the same as send a beta copy ‘out of house’ and having some fresh eyes see the game for the first time.*

*The most critical thing to learn from new testers is their all-important ‘first experience’ with the game. Could they get into it easily? Was it intuitive? Where the general ergonomics friendly and not frustrating? Could they find the answers to their questions quickly and easily within the game’s components? In other words, where their first few minutes (say, up to a half-hour) with the game pleasant and enjoyable? If not, you’ve got a big problem to fix right there!*

*After they’re used to the game, you’ll get feedback about what’s working and what’s not, both about the big pieces of the game’s design, as well as the minutiae players encounter. It will be difficult to make major changes at this point in the process, so a good designer has to be clever in applying solutions to real problems that are brought to his or her attention. When you reach this step, the best solutions are usually those that involve the least amount of work or changes; a clever tweak or cutting something out entirely is generally the right way to go. -AE*

**8. Editing.** This step occurs when all of your blind testing results have come back and have been integrated into the manuscript. Somebody else should now take over the manuscript and edit it. This also means trying to play the game with all of the final corrections and changes in an effort to smoke out as many gremlins as possible.

*It’s nearly impossible for writers to edit their own writing, and so it is with game designers editing their own games. At this point, a fresh pair of eyes and a mind that doesn’t have anything to forget about past iterations the game design will do a much better job on ‘finishing’ your game than you will.*

*What I mean by not having anything to forget about past version of the game design is that a new person will have never played any but the final version of it. They don’t remember how some aspect worked six versions ago (and won’t be confused by having a knowledge of any past iterations of the game). That is, they have nothing to ‘unlearn’ to play the latest version of the game. Thus, they won’t make any assumptions based upon long playtesting experience (like you will). This will make your rules or game manual true to the latest (‘final’) version of the game and not include any false reference to previous versions.*

*What you need to do at this time is to join in the final playtesting, not make any changes greater than a subtle tweak that is easily incorporated and improves the balance of the game, and proof-read everything to make sure everyone’s got it right. -AE*

**9. Production.** If you are going to publish the game, this is the production step. This is where a million things can go wrong. Rules have to be laid out (and things can get scrambled there). The artwork has to be prepared from your prototype (and is subject to untold misinterpretations). There is a lot of potential danger in this stage.

*And a lot more proofreading for you to do. You can’t do enough proofing and hands-on inspection of every aspect of production. You should read all the ad copy, the box copy, the press releases, email interviews… everything that you can. If it is in writing and about your game, you’d better jolly well interject yourself into the process and proofread it if you have the opportunity. It’s important that nothing is said about the game that it doesn’t deliver. -AE*

**10. Feedback.** This step is also extremely critical if you are going to design more games. This is the step where you systematically collect feedback from those who play your game to see where you went right and where you went wrong.

*This is a heavy burden where more than one game designer has found himself or herself martyred at the stake. Remember, this is a step where the game is analyzed to tell you what you did right or wrong. It is very personal that way.*

*Critics of the game can get quite personal (abusively so). These are not just indiscriminate flaming idiots on the internet Newsgroups, nor even the critics of the so-called ‘legitimate’ hobby press. No, these will include your closest coworkers, your best friends, even your family! When there’s something bad to be said about your game, it’s going to seem like everyone you ever knew is beating up on ‘your baby’ and you’ll want to scream, “When will it all end?”*

*But it never ends until your game has been retired to obscurity, and even then it only dies down and never quite ends.*

*So you will need very thick emotional armor. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune are all targeted at your game design (and sometimes you personally), and if you can’t take the abuse, then this will be the last game you ever design! Take solace in the fact that not everyone is going to like you or your game, and that this kind of hurtful (and occasionally helpful) feedback is all ‘part of the process.’ This is what you signed up for, and you were warned (because I just warned you).*

*Learn to take it all in stride. Separate the useful feedback from the invective and file the good criticism away and reflect upon it. Many of these people ‘are only trying to help’ (even though you many find it personally hurtful). Remember, in all things in life, never ascribe to malice what can just as easily be assigned to stupidity. Most of the hurtful things you’ll hear about you or your game are being said stupidly by someone who really doesn’t think they’re being mean. -AE*