# = Undertale =

Undertale is a role @-@ playing video game created by indie developer Toby Fox . In the game , players control a human child who has fallen into the Underground , a large , secluded region underneath the surface of the Earth , separated by a magic barrier . The player meets various monsters during a quest to return to the surface , mainly through the combat system ; the player navigates through mini @-@ bullet hell attacks by the opponent cyclically , and can opt to spare monsters instead of attacking and killing them . These choices affect the game , with the dialogue , characters , and story changing based on outcomes .

Fox developed the entirety of the game independently , including writing and composing the score , with only additional art created by other artists . The game was inspired by the Mother and Mario & Luigi role @-@ playing series , the bullet hell shooter series Touhou Project , and the British comedy show Mr. Bean . Undertale was initially meant to be two hours in length and released in mid @-@ 2014 , but development took over three years , effectively extending the campaign and delaying the release .

The game was released on Steam for Microsoft Windows and OS X on September 15 , 2015 . Upon release , the game was acclaimed for its writing , thematic material , intuitive combat system , musical score , and originality ; with praise directed towards its story , dialogue , and characters . The game sold over a million copies , and was nominated for multiple accolades and awards , including Game of the Year from several gaming publications , winning others from conventions including South by Southwest .

## = = Gameplay = =

Undertale is a role @-@ playing game that uses a top @-@ down perspective . In the game , players control a child and complete objectives in order to progress through the story . Players explore an underground world of towns and caves , and are required to solve numerous puzzles on their journey . The underground world is the home of monsters , many of whom challenge the player in combat ; players decide to kill , flee , or befriend them .

When players encounter enemies in either scripted events or random encounters , they enter a battle mode . During battles , players control a small red heart which represents their soul , and must avoid attacks unleashed by the opposing monster in a similar fashion to a bullet hell shooter . As the game progresses , new elements are introduced , such as colored obstacles which require players to remain stationary or move through them , and boss battles which change the way players control the heart . Players may choose to attack the enemy , which involves timed button presses , earning EXP and gold for defeating them . Alternatively , they can use the ACT option to perform non @-@ violent actions , which vary depending on the enemy . If players uses the right actions to respond to the enemy , they can choose to spare them and end the fight without killing them . In order for some boss encounters to be completed peacefully , the player is required to survive until the character they are facing has finished their dialogue . The game features various story branches and endings depending on whether players choose to kill or spare their enemies ; and as such , it is possible to clear the game without killing a single enemy .

Monsters will converse with players during the battles , and the game will tell the players what the monster 's feelings and actions are . Enemy attacks alter based on how players interact with them : should players choose non @-@ violent options , enemy attacks are easy , whereas they become difficult if players choose violent options . The game relies on a number of metafictional elements in both its gameplay and story . When players participate in a boss battle on a second playthrough , the dialogue will be altered depending on actions in previous playthroughs .

## = = Plot = =

Undertale takes place in the Underground , a realm where monsters , once equal to humans , were banished to after war broke out between them . The Underground is sealed from the surface world

by an imperfect magic barrier , the only point of entry being at Mount Ebott . A human child falls into the Underground and encounters Flowey , a sentient flower who teaches them the game 's mechanics and encourages them to raise their " LV " , or " LOVE " , by gaining " EXP " through killing monsters . When Flowey attempts to murder the human to take their soul for himself , the human is rescued by Toriel , a motherly goat @-@ like monster , who teaches the human to solve puzzles and survive conflict in the Underground without killing . She intends to adopt the human , wanting to protect them from Asgore Dreemurr , the king of the Underground .

The human eventually leaves Toriel to search for Asgore 's castle , which contains the barrier leading to the surface world . Along the way , the human encounters several monsters , including : the skeletons Sans and Papyrus , two brothers who act as sentries for the Underground ; Undyne , the head of the royal guard ; Alphys , the kingdom 's royal scientist ; and Mettaton , a robotic television host Alphys created . Some of them are fought , with the human having to choose whether to kill them or to show mercy ; should the human spare them , they become friends . During their travels , the human learns the cause of the war between humans and monsters . Asriel , the son of Asgore and Toriel , befriended a human child who fell into the Underground and was adopted by Asgore and Toriel . One day , the child was fatally poisoned by some flowers . When Asriel returned their body to the humans , they attacked and killed him , resulting in Asgore declaring war . Asgore now seeks to break the barrier , which requires him to collect seven human souls , of which he has six .

The game 's ending depends on how the player resolved encounters with monsters . If the player killed some but not all monsters , the human arrives at Asgore 's castle and learns that they also need a monster 's soul to cross the barrier , forcing them to fight Asgore . Sans stops the human before their confrontation , revealing that the human 's " LOVE " is an acronym for " Level Of ViolencE " and " EXP " for " EXecution Points . " Sans judges the human based on the combined resolution of the encounters . The human fights Asgore , but Flowey interrupts them , killing Asgore and stealing the human souls , becoming a monstrous abomination named ' Photoshop Flowey ' . With the aid of the rebelling souls , the human defeats Flowey , falls unconscious , and awakens on the human side of the barrier ; they receive a phone call from Sans , explaining the state of the Underground after the human 's departure . In order for the player to proceed and obtain the pacifist ending , they must complete a neutral ending first , regardless as to whether they spared monsters or not - Thus , Photoshop Flowey is the only final boss that appears in multiple paths .

If the player instead kills no monsters , as well as having completed a previous Neutral playthrough of the game , Flowey is revealed to be a reincarnation of Asriel , created as part of Alphys 's experiments . Toriel intervenes before the human fights Asgore , and is joined by the other monsters the human has befriended . Flowey ambushes the group , using the souls of all the monsters to take an older Asriel 's form to fight the human . The human connects with their new friends during the fight , eventually triumphing . Asriel reverts to his child form , destroys the barrier , and expresses his remorse to the others before leaving . The human falls unconscious , and is awoken to see their friends surrounding them , with the knowledge of the human 's name ? Frisk . The monsters reintegrate with the humans on the surface , while Frisk has the option of accepting Toriel as their adoptive mother .

Another ending ensues if the player kills all monsters , in which Frisk becomes influenced by the malevolent spirit of the fallen human child whose body Asriel attempted to return . When Frisk reaches Asgore 's castle , Sans attempts to stop them , but Frisk kills him along with Asgore and Flowey . The fallen human child assumes control and , with or without the player 's consent , destroys the universe . In order to enable further replays of the game , Frisk must first give their soul to the fallen human child in exchange for restoring the universe . In doing so , every future playthrough becomes marred by the fallen child 's presence .

## = = Development = =

Undertale was developed by Toby Fox across 2 @.@ 7 years . Development was financed through a crowdfunding campaign on the website Kickstarter . The campaign was launched on June 25 ,

2013 with a goal of US $ 5 @,@ 000 ; it ended on July 25 , 2013 , with US $ 51 @,@ 124 raised by 2 @,@ 398 people ( 1022 @.@ 48 % of the original goal ) . Undertale 's creation ensued after Fox created a battle system using the game creation system GameMaker : Studio . He wanted to develop a role @-@ playing game that was different from the traditional design , which he often found " boring to play " . He set out to develop a game with " interesting characters " , and that " utilizes the medium as a storytelling device ... instead of having the story and gameplay abstractions be completely separate " .

Fox worked on the entire game independently , besides some of the art ; he decided to work independently to avoid relying on others . Fox had little experience with game development ; he and his three brothers often used RPG Maker 2000 to make role @-@ playing games , though few were ever completed . Fox also worked on a number of EarthBound ROM hacks while in high school . Temmie Chang worked as the main artistic assistant for the game , providing most of the sprites and concept art . Fox has said that the game 's art style would likely remain the same if he had access to a larger team of artists . He found that " there 's a psychological thread that says audiences become more attached to characters drawn simply rather than in detail " , particularly benefiting from the use of visual gags within the art .

= = = Game design = = =

The defensive segment within the battle system was inspired by the Mario & Luigi series , as well as bullet hell shooters such as the Touhou Project series . When working on the battle system , Fox set out to create a mechanic that he would personally enjoy . He wanted Undertale to have a battle system as equally engaging as Super Mario RPG ( 1996 ) and Mario & Luigi : Superstar Saga ( 2003 ) . Fox did not want grinding to be necessary at any point in the game , instead leaving it optional to players . He also did not wish to introduce fetch quests , as they involve backtracking , which he dislikes . In terms of the game 's difficulty , Fox ensured that it was easy and enjoyable . He asked some friends who are inexperienced with bullet hell shooters to test the game , and found that they were able to complete it . He felt that the game 's difficulty is optimal , particularly considering the complications involved in adding another difficulty setting .

The game 's dialogue system was inspired by Shin Megami Tensei ( 1992 ) , particularly the gameplay mechanic whereby players can talk to monsters to avoid conflict . Fox intended to expand upon this mechanic , as failing to negotiate resulted in a requirement to fight . " I want to create a system that satisfied my urge for talking to monsters , " he said . When he began developing this mechanic , the concept of completing the game without killing any enemies " just evolved naturally " . However , he never considered removing the option to fight throughout development . When questioned on the difficulty of playing the game without killing , Fox responded that it is " the crux of one of the major themes of this game " , asking players to think about it themselves .

= = = Writing = = =

For the game 's writing , Fox was partly influenced by the silliness of internet culture , as well as comedy shows like Mr. Bean ( 1990 ? 1995 ) . He was also inspired by the unsettling atmosphere of EarthBound ( 1994 ) . Fox 's desire to " subvert concepts that go unquestioned in many games " further influenced Undertale 's development . Fox found that the writing became easier after establishing a character 's voice and mood . He also felt that creating the world was a natural process , as it expressed the stories of those within it . Fox felt the importance to make the game 's monsters " feel like an individual " . He cited the Final Fantasy series ( 1987 ? present ) as the opposite ; " all monsters in RPGs like Final Fantasy are the same ... there 's no meaning to that " .

The character of Toriel , who is one of the first to appear in the game , was created as a parody of tutorial characters . Fox strongly disliked the use of the companion character Fi in The Legend of Zelda : Skyward Sword ( 2011 ) , in which the answers to puzzles were often revealed early . Fox also felt that role @-@ playing video games generally lack mother characters ; in the Pokémon series ( 1996 ? present ) , as well as Mother ( 1989 ) and EarthBound , Fox felt that the mothers are

used as " symbols rather than characters " . In response , Fox intended for Toriel 's character to be " a mom that hopefully acts like a mom " , and " genuinely cares " about players ' actions .

= = = Music = = =

The game 's soundtrack was entirely composed by Fox . A self @-@ taught musician , he composed most of the tracks with little iteration ; the game 's main theme , " Undertale " , was the only song to undergo multiple iterations in development . The soundtrack was inspired by music from Super NES role @-@ playing games , such as EarthBound , as well as the webcomic Homestuck , for which Fox also provided some of the music . Fox also stated that he tries to be inspired by all music he listens to , particularly those in video games . According to Fox , over 90 % of the songs were composed specifically for the game . " Megalovania " , the song used during the boss battle with Sans , had previously been used within the Homestuck webcomic and in one of Fox 's EarthBound ROM hacks . For each section of the game , Fox composed the music prior to programming , as it helped " decide how the scene should go " . He initially tried using a music tracker to compose the soundtrack , but found it difficult to use . He ultimately decided to play segments of the music separately , and connect them on a track .

Undertale 's soundtrack has been well received by critics as part of the success of the game , in particular for its use of various leitmotifs for the various characters used throughout various tracks . In particular , " Hopes and Dreams " , the boss theme when fighting Asriel in the run @-@ through where the player avoids killing any monster , brings back most of the main character themes , and is " a perfect way to cap off your journey " , according to USgamer 's Nadia Oxford . Oxford notes this track in particular demonstrates Fox 's ability to " turning old songs into completely new experiences " , used throughout the game 's soundtrack . Tyler Hicks of GameSpot compared the music to " bit @-@ based melodies " .

= = Release = =

The game was released on September 15 , 2015 , for Microsoft Windows and OS X. Fox has expressed interest in releasing Undertale on other platforms , but is unable to port it to Nintendo platforms without reprogramming the game due to the engine 's lack of support for the platforms . A patch was released in January 2016 , fixing bugs and altering the appearance of blue attacks to help colorblind players see them better .

Other Undertale media and merchandise have been released , including toy figurines and plush toys based on characters from the game . The game 's official soundtrack was released in 2015 simultaneously with the game 's release . Additionally , two official Undertale cover albums have been released : the 2015 metal album Determination by RichaadEB and Ace Waters , and the 2016 jazz album Live at Grillby 's by Carlos Eiene .

On July 17 , 2016 , Toby Fox announced on Twitter that he has officially released the game on Linux .

= = Reception = =

Undertale received critical acclaim , and was quickly considered a cult video game by numerous publications . Review aggregator Metacritic calculated an average score of 92 out of 100 , indicating " universal acclaim " , based on 42 reviews . Metacritic ranks the game the third @-@ highest rated Windows game released in 2015 , and among the top 25 of all time . Praise was particularly directed at the game 's writing , unique characters , and combat system . GameSpot 's Tyler Hicks declared it " one of the most progressive and innovative RPGs to come in a long time " , and IGN 's Kallie Plagge called it " a masterfully crafted experience " . By the end of 2015 , in a preliminary report by Steam Spy , Undertale was one of the best @-@ selling games on Steam , with 530 @,@ 343 copies sold . By early February 2016 , the game surpassed one million .

Daniel Tack of Game Informer called the game 's combat system " incredibly nuanced " ,

commenting on the uniqueness of each enemy encounter . Giant Bomb 's Austin Walker praised the complexity of the combat , commenting that it is " unconventional , clever , and occasionally really difficult " . Ben " Yahtzee " Croshaw of The Escapist commended the game 's ability to blend " turn @-@ based and live combat elements in a way that actually fucking works " . IGN 's Plagge praised the ability to avoid combat , opting for friendly conversations instead . Jesse Singal of The Boston Globe found the game 's ability to make the player empathize with the monsters during combat if they opted for non @-@ violent actions was " indicative of the broader , fundamental sweetness at the core " of Undertale .

Reviewers praised the game 's writing and narrative , with IGN 's Plagge calling it " excellent " . The Escapist 's Croshaw considered Undertale the best @-@ written game of 2015 , writing that is " on the one hand hilarious ... and is also , by the end , rather heartfelt " . Destructoid 's Ben Davis praised the game 's characters and use of comedy , and compared its tone , characters and storytelling to Cave Story ( 2004 ) . PC Gamer 's Richard Cobbett provided similar comments , writing that " even its weaker moments ... just about work " . Breitbart 's Ned Price commended the " soul and charm " that the game conveys through its writing , but noted that the dialogue often " borders on cringey random humor " .

The game 's visuals received mixed reactions . Giant Bomb 's Walker called it " simple , but communicative " . IGN 's Plagge wrote that the game " isn 't always pretty " and " often ugly " , but felt that the music and animations compensate . Breitbart 's Price named the art " bland and not on the same level of detail as the excellent character design " , and The Escapist 's Croshaw remarked that " it wobbles between basic and functional to just plain bad " . Other reviewers liked the graphics : Daniel Tack of Game Informer felt that the visuals appropriately match the characters and settings , while Richard Cobbett of PC Gamer commended the ability of the visuals to convey emotion .

= = = Accolades = = =

Undertale has received multiple awards and nominations from several gaming publications . It won Game of the Year from The Jimquisition and Zero Punctuation , as well as Game of the Month from Rock , Paper , Shotgun . The game won the Best Game Ever poll from GameFAQs , and was awarded Best PC Game from Destructoid and IGN . At the Independent Games Festival Awards , it won the Audience Award , while the SXSW Gaming Awards named it the Most Fulfilling Crowdfunded Game , and awarded it the Matthew Crump Cultural Innovation Award .