

Game Title (Team #): The First Day (16)

In comparison to the **other** game proposals (except your own), you find this game (please mark the box):

☐ Very Interesting      ☒ Interesting      ☐ Just OK      ☐ Not Interesting      ☐ Totally Uninteresting

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**Write your critique in the space below:**

The First Day is an interesting take on horror video games, taking inspirations from different sprite-based games, which is perfect to recreate a mysterious and glooming setting. At its core, it's a single player top-down 2d puzzle horror game set in Concordia University where a student, on his first day, is the sole survivor of a mass murder as he wakes up from a nap in class. In order to progressively piece out what happened exactly, the main player must go through puzzles while keeping cool for whatever danger lies ahead.

Although the demo only showing the first part of the complete game, it seems already promising for a progress update. In fact, the game as of now, makes a clear balance between story and mechanics by incorporating a narrative to make it immersive as the player feels invested in the story through dialogue boxes. Adding to the immersion, the inclusion of gloomy background music and gory pixel art constantly puts the main player on edge as he/she feels pressure and anxiety while progressing through the levels. Moreover, the map exploration feature lets the player get lost in the detail of the game's world, but also adds more room for designing puzzles. In fact, in the game's first puzzle, the player is locked in a classroom and must figure out the room's code to get out of there. He/she has no choice but to walk around the map to find clues that not only adds to the story but helps the player progress to the next level. Overall, the puzzle was well designed and implemented as it teaches the player the basic controls of the game while progressing the story, making it interactive. The puzzle is set at a balanced difficulty, hence the player doesn't feel bothered to complete the "tutorial" level and yet again keeps him/her invested. However, a detail that may hinder development is the clustering of player events that could trigger the different endings as the team has to keep track of specific player actions, potentially causing overhead overall. Another aspect that could drag development is the game's convoluted story. In fact, reading the plot from the game design document, the team's focus on map exploration might be complicated to incorporate in the game's overall flow, since multiple scenes must be added, adding more time into designing scenes that may not involve or add any mechanics, potentially leaving the player less invested in the game.

All in all, The First Day delivers a promising demo version of the game, making immersion a key aspect of the entire game itself, where everything else is built around it, such as the story and the mechanics shown thus far. The successful balance between story and mechanics is key to the player's investment in the game. Although seemingly going in the right direction, the team must maintain the balance of story and mechanics, so that one doesn't outweigh the other, which could ruin not only the player's investment but his immersion to the story. Game cutscenes shouldn't be separate from the main levels, meaning the story should keep progressing alongside the levels.