

Legacy of the Rift

Alpha Code Design Document

October 12, 2019

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Playtesting Report

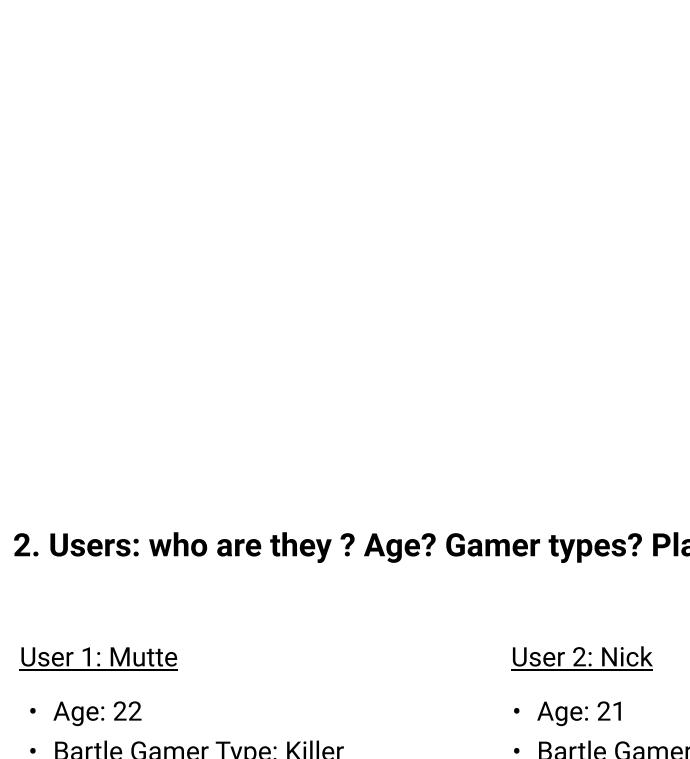
Name of Team: The Seggsmen

Names of Team members: Hanna Luu, Mark Robles, Erika Wang

1. Setup:

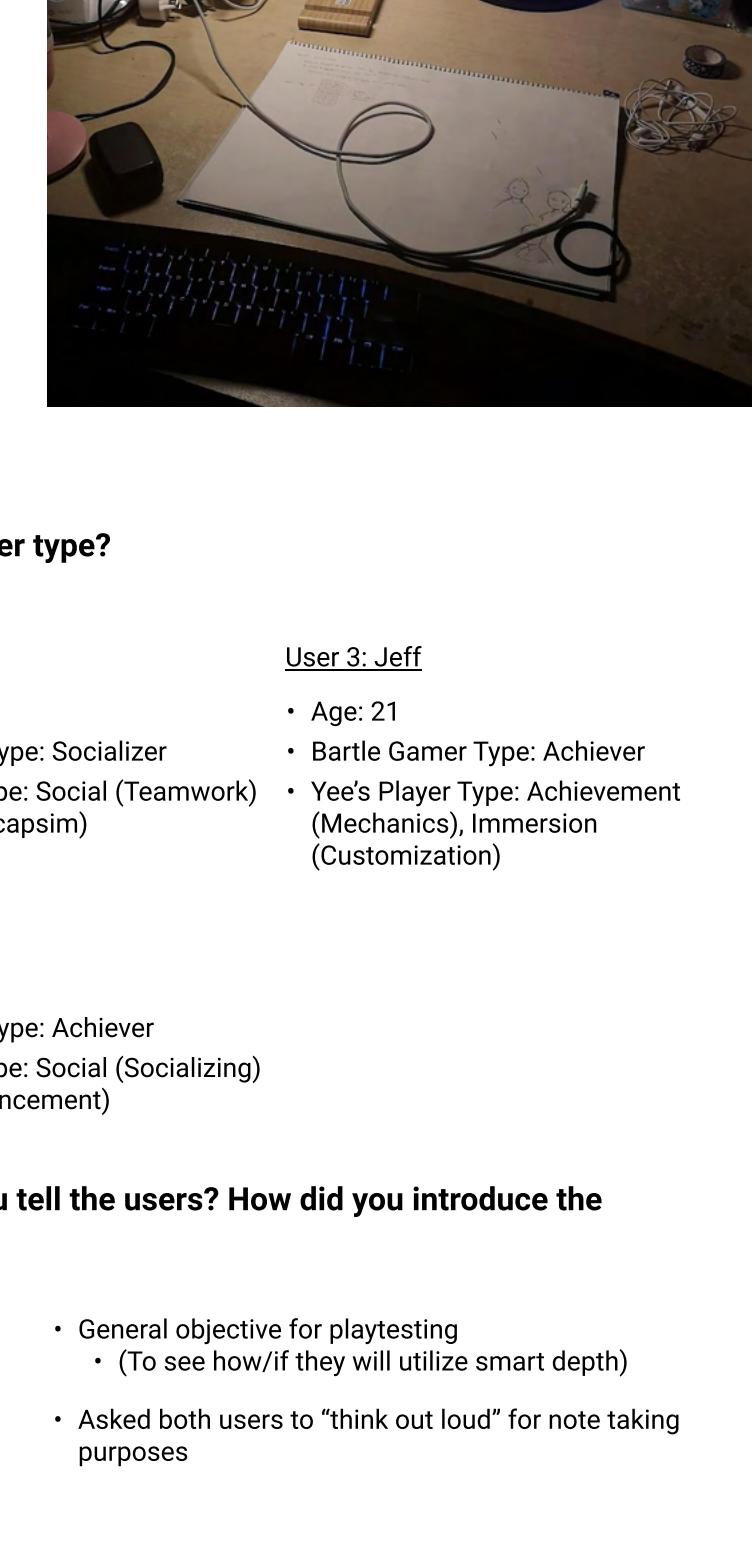
Playtest 1:

- Sessions: 4
- People: 4
- Location: SFU Surrey, Studio A
- Setup: Laptop + wireless mouse



Playtest 2:

- Sessions: 1
- People: 1
- Location: Erika's house, study desk
- Setup: Desktop PC, keyboard, wireless mouse



2. Users: who are they? Age? Gamer types? Player type?

User 1: Mutte

- Age: 22
- Bartle Gamer Type: Killer
- Yee's Player Type: Achievement (Competitor)

User 2: Nick

- Age: 21
- Bartle Gamer Type: Socializer
- Yee's Player Type: Social (Teamwork) Immersion (Escapism)

User 3: Jeff

- Age: 21
- Bartle Gamer Type: Achiever
- Yee's Player Type: Achievement (Mechanics), Immersion (Customization)

User 4: Lynnsey

- Age: 21
- Bartle Gamer Type: Socializer
- Yee's Player Type: Immersion (Customization)

User 5: Aika

- Age: 14
- Bartle Gamer Type: Achiever
- Yee's Player Type: Social (Socializing) Achiever (Advancement)

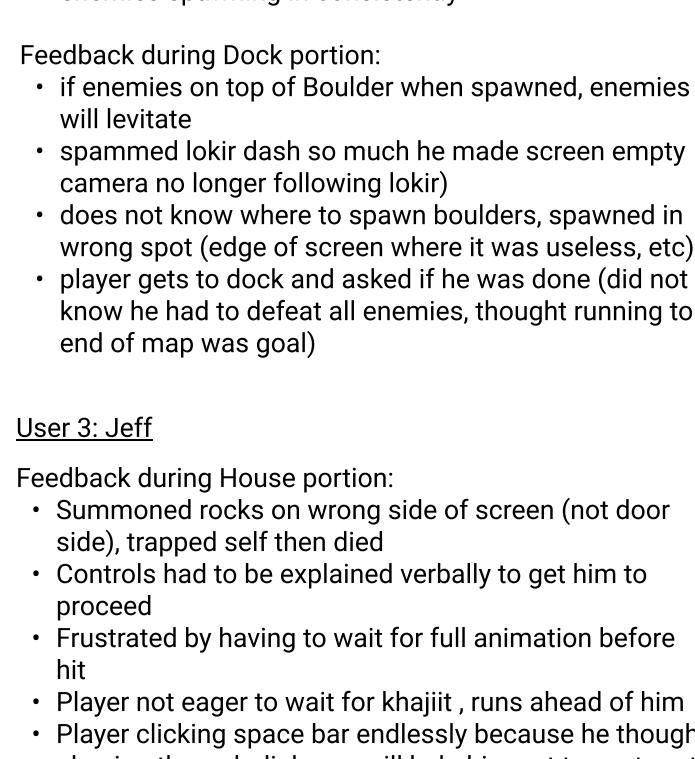
3. Procedure: describe what you did, what did you tell the users? How did you introduce the game, if you did?

- Basic controls, only when players got stuck
 - (Keys used for character switching, moving, basic attack, abilities)
- Win condition
 - (After three waves, game is complete)

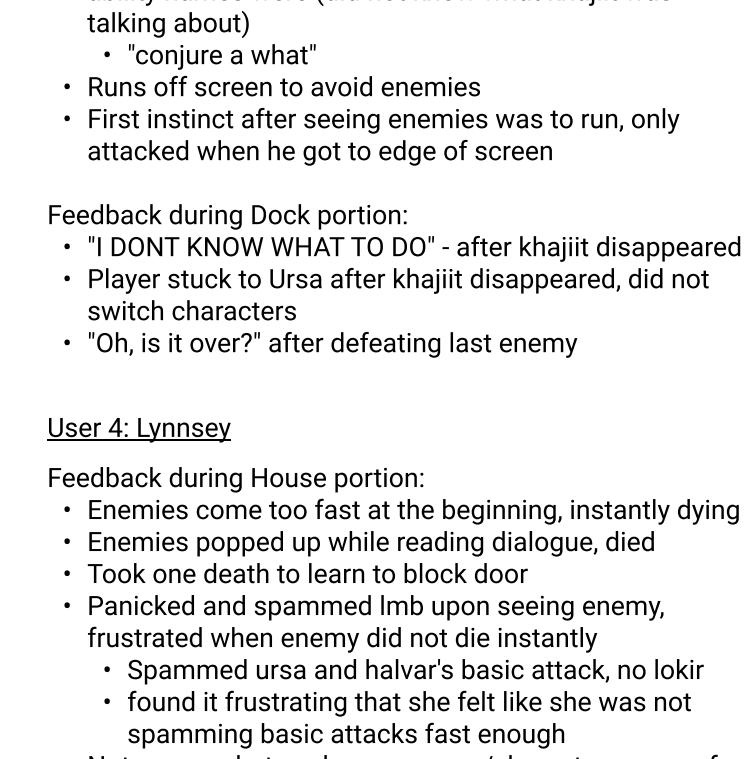
- General objective for playtesting
 - (To see how/if they will utilize smart depth)
- Asked both users to "think out loud" for note taking purposes

4. Pictures to show each of the playtesting sessions with play testers presenting

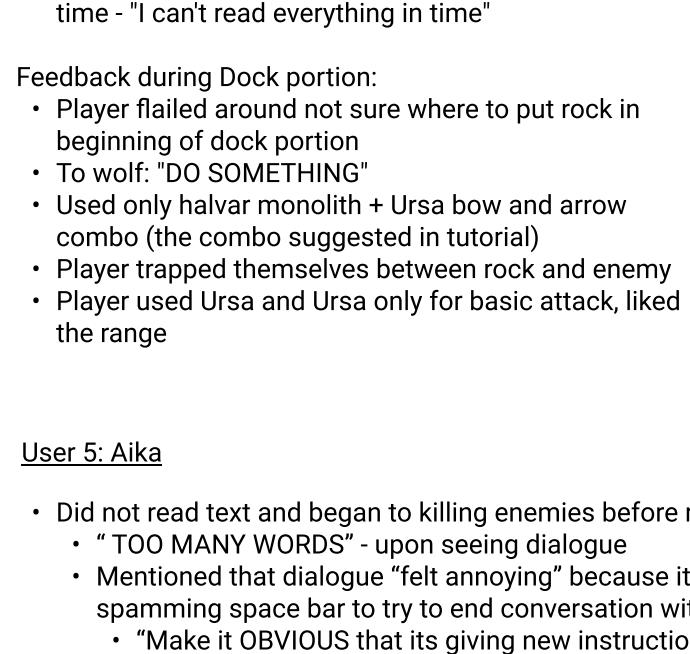
User 1: Mutte



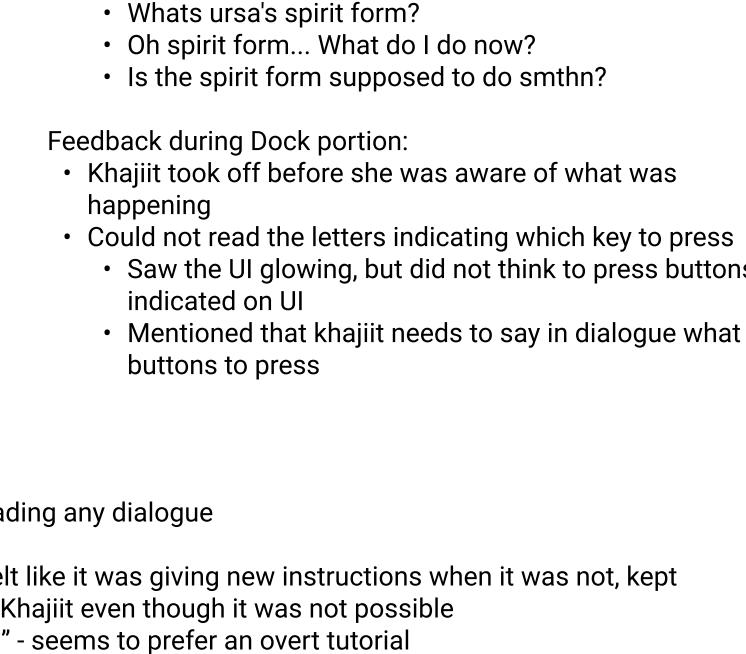
User 2: Nick



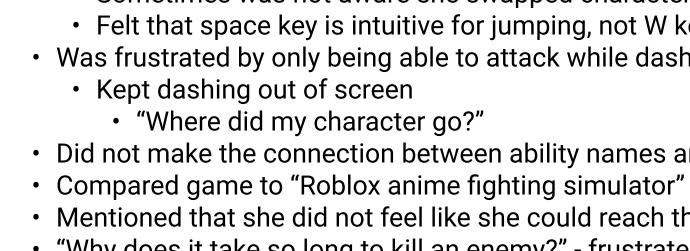
User 3: Jeff



User 4: Lynnsey



User 5: Aika



5. Observation notes: what did they say? Try to be objective and write everything with no bias.

User 1: Mutte

Feedback during House portion:

- player lost HP while reading khajit text

- trapped himself between enemy and rock

- "I'm so lost.... Oh no...." at halvar part of tutorial

- would rather choose their own character than be told character to play

- player switches to halvar mid tutorial to beat characters even after being told to switch to Ursu

- players not familiar enough with character to be referred to by name

- "lacerate through the enemy... Theres no enemy here..."

- Player mentioned that they wished there were more enemies spawning in consistently

Feedback during Dock portion:

- if enemies on top of Boulder when spawned, enemies will levitate

- spammed lokir dash so much he made screen empty camera no longer following lokir

- does not know where to spawn boulders, spawned in wrong spot (edge of screen where it was useless, etc)

- player gets to dock and asked if he was done (did not know he had to defeat all enemies, thought running to end of map was goal)

User 3: Jeff

Feedback during House portion:

- Summoned rocks on wrong side of screen (not door side), trapped self then died

- Controls had to be explained verbally to get him to proceed

- Frustrated by having to wait for full animation before hit

- Player not eager to wait for khajit, runs ahead of him

- Player clicking space bar endlessly because he thought phasing through dialogue will help him get to next part of tutorial

- Kept clicking space thinking there was more dialogue, even after seeing text repeat

- Mentioned that it is hard to read and play at the same time - "I can't read everything in time"

Feedback during Dock portion:

- Player flailed around not sure where to put rock in beginning of dock portion

- To wolf: "DO SOMETHING"

- Used only halvar monolith + Ursu bow and arrow combo (the combo suggested in tutorial)

- Player trapped themselves between rock and enemy

- Player used Ursu and Ursu only for basic attack, liked the range

User 4: Lynnsey

Feedback during House portion:

- "TOO MANY WORDS" - upon seeing dialogue

- Mentioned that dialogue "felt annoying" because it felt like it was giving new instructions when it was not, kept spamming space bar to try to end conversation with Khajit even though it was not possible

- "Make it OBVIOUS that its giving new instructions" - seems to prefer an overt tutorial

- Did not see glow in UI indicating which buttons to press

- Had to be verbally given instructions by dev team

- Overall confused on what buttons to press

- Sometimes was not aware she swapped characters

- Felt that space key is intuitive for jumping, not W key - "OBVIOUSLY THE SPACE KEY IS FOR JUMP"

- Was frustrated by only being able to attack while dashing when playing as Lokir

- Kept dashing out of screen

- "Where did my character go?"

- Did not make the connection between ability names and what buttons to press

- Compared game to "Roblox anime fighting simulator"

- Mentioned that she did not feel like she could reach the end of the game

- "Why does it take so long to kill an enemy?" - frustrated by the number of hits it takes to kill an enemy

- Found it frustrating that characters did not follow mouse, felt that characters should face direction of mouse

- Did not realize she finished dock level

- Wanted to hit and move at the same time but felt that it takes too much time

- "Why does the enemy walk faster than the player?"

- "Why did this character just fly in?" - upon seeing Shore level enemy

- "Where did the bear go?" - Upon using Ursu's ultimate ability

- "WHAT IS THE POINT OF THE WOLF?" - Upon seeing Ursu's ability

- I'm immortal! - Upon figuring out that wolf was for healing

- Turned out to be favourite feature

- Expressed frustration via yelling after feeling that some ultimate attacks did not do enough damage for it to be worth the wait for Zeal bar to recover

- Before getting comfortable with game, continually used Lokir to transport herself, because of his speed

- Began using combos after getting comfortable with game

- After few minutes, stopped doing anything but Halvar ability combined with basic attack

- After a few deaths, found strategies such as stacking rocks and attacking through them

- "Oh my god" - upon seeing ultimate ability

• Our playtesting sessions revealed that the current covert tutorial we have will need to re-structure our tutorial. Current strategies, such as visual indicators in the UI or in-dialogue instructions, were ignored by the majority of our playtesters, who preferred to press buttons as according to their own instincts rather than being told what to do. This was the same regarding our UI, where contrary to our expectations, players were unaware of what the glowing was communicating. Furthermore, another problem that surfaced with having players read dialogue during our tutorial was that all of our players experienced at least one game over before they were able to successfully skim through the dialogue, because they would not realize that they were getting attacked by enemies while reading.

• Another specific issue that caused players to reach game over multiple times was Halvar's monolith, which spawns upon pressing the Q button. We observed that many players took more than a few game overs to get accustomed to this ability - in multiple cases, players would spawn the monolith on a side of the screen where the rock would either prevent them from moving forwards, trap them with nowhere to run from the enemy, or make it impossible for them to move at all due to the player getting stuck between two monoliths. This was due to two factors; the first one being that the player was unaware that there would be a rock being spawned at all, and the second one being that they had no idea where the rock would be spawned. Players would panic and attempt to destroy the rock they had just spawned, meaning that for future iterations we must incorporate a way to prevent panic from spawning rocks.

User 5: Aika

• Did not read text and began to killing enemies before reading any dialogue

- "TOO MANY WORDS" - upon seeing dialogue

- Mentioned that dialogue "felt annoying" because it felt like it was giving new instructions when it was not, kept spamming space bar to try to end conversation with Khajit even though it was not possible

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Rationale + Outcomes for Alpha Code

Design questions intended to answer with this prototype:

Mechanics:

- Are players able to familiarize themselves with combining abilities beyond what was suggested in the tutorial?
- After our first prototype, are there still any characters/abilities that unbalance the gameplay?

Kinesthetics:

- After refining the camera perspective from last iteration, do players still find that they are too close to the characters, or enemies?
- Are the key controls intuitive enough for players to be able to remember them after the tutorial?

Technology:

- Do the current rest times between enemy waves give players too much of a rest between waves? Too little?
- After further refinement on the collisions that occur between the player, enemies, and environment, are there still any remaining points of frustration for players regarding how they collide with other objects in the game?

Types of prototype that were built + why

- We built 3 prototypes this week. One was a prototype of our beginning tutorial level, another was the next progression of that level that focussed on trying to promote combinations of character attacks/abilities, and the last prototype was the progression of when players acquire their ultimate abilities. The tutorial prototype was built to test the effectiveness of a mandatory skill gate & covert formal tutorial style. The next prototype was built to see if giving players an example of a potential attack/ability combination would lead to them further exploring different combinations. And the last prototype was built to test if the progression of the last two prototypes gave them enough time to learn the basic game mechanics before unlocking their ultimate abilities.

How are those intended questions are clarified with the current prototype (what works and what doesn't)

Mechanics:

- Are players able to familiarize themselves with combining abilities beyond what was suggested in the tutorial?
 - No, the most players only seemed to use the one ability combo suggested by an NPC during the tutorial. Only one player, who had a significantly longer amount of time to test our game than the rest, was able to create a strategy on her own.
- After our first prototype, are there still any characters/abilities that unbalance the gameplay?
 - Yes; presumably because she is the character that is in use when the tutorial ends, three of our five playtesters did not switch from Ursa after the tutorial. One player cited that they like the range on her attack. Additionally, no players selected Lokir as their character of choice.

Kinesthetics:

- After refining the camera perspective from last iteration, do players still find that they are too close to the characters, or enemies?
 - No; gameplay did not seem to be inhibited by the camera perspective. The players were able to sight and combat the enemies in a timely manner.
- Are the key controls intuitive enough for players to be able to remember them after the tutorial?
 - Key controls may not need to be refined; we only had one complaint about the controls, which was that the space bar should be used for jumping rather than progressing dialogue. Any issues that arose regarding our controls was due to the playtesters not fully understanding our tutorial.

Technology:

- Do the current rest times between enemy waves give players too much of a rest between waves? Too little?
 - After playtesting, the rest time between waves during the Dock level seemed to strike a good balance between giving players enough time to mentally recover between waves without making them confused and/or frustrated about why there was a break before more enemies approached them. The spawn times for the Tutorial level however did cause some frustration as enemies would approach players as they were trying to read the dialogue.
- After further refinement on the collisions that occur between the player, enemies, and environment, are there still any remaining points of frustration for players regarding how they collide with other objects in the game?
 - The main point of frustration that still persists is regarding the player collision with Halvar's Legendary Monolith. Despite having a mechanic that exists where players can use Lokir to dash through the Monolith, many players were still unable use the Monolith without trapping themselves between enemies or the environment. We considered removing the collision between the Monolith and the player completely, but we found that it did not punish players for imprudent placement and conversely, did not reward players for prudent placement.

Any unexpected outcomes? Does it mean a new gameplay experience to include as a feature or a problem to resolve?

Two unexpected outcomes:

- Overt tutorial will be more effective than covert
 - All players had to be told by playtest conductors what to do vs being told thru the tutorial
 - Current strategies, such as glowing UI and in-dialogue instructions, need to be re-evaluated
 - Having to read dialogue during tutorial caused playtesters to die over and over again
 - A few players would not read dialogue at all, making them lost in tutorial
 - Players who read the dialogue were also left confused

- Halvar's monolith

- Hard for players to get accustomed to
 - Players often trapped themselves by placing rock in the wrong area, causing death
 - During tutorial, they would place rock on wrong side of the screen as halvar was right facing when rock had to be placed on the right
 - Most times did not know that a giant rock would get in their way, due to not being aware that there would be a rock, or where rock would get placed

Possible Solutions:

- Modification of tutorial UI, tutorial dialogue
- Allowing players to cancel effects of abilities if necessary

What further questions should be tested with next prototype?

Mechanics:

- Will players be compelled to play as Lokir, or will he continue to be ignored in favour of Halvar or Ursa?
- Because players felt frustrated by Halvar's monolith ability this iteration - how might our solution help the players feel comfortable with choosing Halvar for his ability?

Kinesthetics:

- In future iterations, we will be adding variations to colour in our visual assets - will these added colours afford something to the player an action that is not possible, and if so, what are the actions?
- Once we re-work our tutorial, we will fully understand if players not being familiar with controls is the tutorial's fault or if it comes from it not being intuitive. Which if one is the case, and how might we solve any problems that arise?

Technology:

- With the addition of terrain dangers such as water and varying level terrain heights/platforms, does the refined enemy AI behave in any way that creates game-breaking exploits?
- With playtesters noting odd gravity behaviour from enemies, after refining the physics that are applied to enemies, are there still any conditions in which enemy physics behaves in unexpected ways?

Design Refinements

Based on Internal Review

- Although compared to our last iteration, we have significantly more visual feedback based on player interactions, but we still feel that there are many elements missing. We are seeking to add even more visual feedback elements, such as for damage on player, to create a satisfying experience for the player.
- Also with our current iteration, we are missing several UI elements that we initially thought to be decorative, such as portraits for character dialogue. However, we feel that this is a necessary element to add in our next step to make our game more immersive as we believe that our narrative will be a large selling point to our game.

Based on Playtesting Feedback

Analysis:

- As outlined in our playtesting report, the primary issue with this iteration was that the challenge in this game began ramping up at our tutorial, leaving players hardly any time to rest. We are aiming to add more instances of rest to our game, especially because the ramping prevented players from familiarizing themselves with each ability, and ultimately some playtesters mentioned that they felt like they “could not finish the game”.

Suggested refinements:

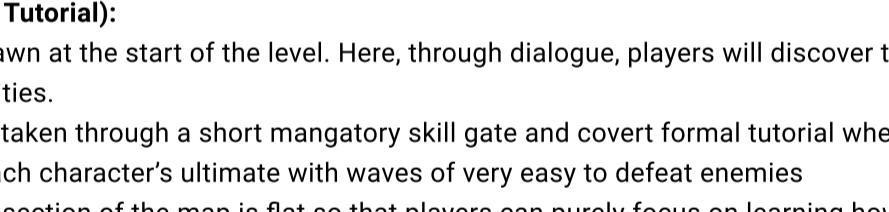
- Halvar's monolith
 - One of our abilities revealed a problem that appeared to be mutual across all of our abilities and ultimates: players would activate them unintentionally, or intentionally but with no idea as to what they do.
 - For future iterations, we will seek a way in which players can exit or negate any undesired actions that provide long-lasting consequences.
- We also received feedback from our playtesters telling us what was working and what was not working in our current UI. A few issues mentioned included:
 - Not being able to see the “glow” indicating what to do,
 - Not being able to skim the text for explicit instructions,
 - Not being able to tell which character was speaking,
 - Players assuming that the dialogue box will go away if they press the space bar enough times.We will be reflecting these feedbacks in our future iterations, by changing the way in which our tutorial UI is presented, so that dialogue and instructions are separated, with a different method such as motion to indicate what the player is supposed to do next.

Level Design Document - Macro Doc (Constraints)

Level Concept (Shadow's End Shore)

- Level concept (what this level is about), what are your basic archetypes of mechanics, how do you lay out setups with them (in terms of what, how many, env features), and how they ramp up within each level and between levels, , what rewards player gets, and things of that nature
- Basic Archetypes of Mechanics
 - Environment
 - A shore surrounded by water which causes instant death if the player makes contact with it. Conversely, the enemies will also die if they make contact with the water. The shore level also contains various ramps wherein players can position themselves on the high ground. For instance, players can take advantage of Ursa's long range attacks whilst on the ramps.
- Enemy Archetypes will be categorized in terms of Health, Attack Range, Attack Damage, and Speed.
 - **Shadowmares:** The level starts off with Shadowmare enemies. These melee enemies spawn in high numbers to swarm the player. As such, Horsefolk have low Attack Range, medium Attack Damage, medium Health, and medium Speed.
 - **Botchlings:** As the player progresses through the waves, Botchling enemies will start spawning. These dead babies pounce at the player from a range. They have a wind-up time of one second, where they telegraph their pounce. Within this time-frame, the player can attempt to evade the pounce or attack the Botchling mid-pounce. As such, Botchlings medium Attack Range, high Attack Damage, low Health, and high Speed. Botchlings are also very hard to hit with ranged attacks and slashing attacks due to their very small size. Thus, players would have to mainly utilize Halvar's basic attacks to AOE damage them as he swings his hammer into the floor.
- Setup Layout
 - A: Shadowmares
 - B: Botchlings
- AB | REST | AAB | REST | AABB | REST | AAABB | REST | AAABBB | REST
 - The initial part of the shore level will yield ramp ups of the Shadowmare enemies. That is to say that each wave yields more enemies. Between each wave, the player has a 5 second respite to either reposition or heal before the next wave starts.
 - During the next part of the shore level, Botchlings will begin to make an appearance. They will first appear in small numbers, then more will be spawned gradually together with the Shadowmares. This trend continues until the final wave. With both enemy archetypes being spawned together, the player will have to be more prudent in evading enemy attacks. For instance, if the player evades a Botchling pounce either by dashing through them or simply going backwards during the wind-up, they may be met with Horsefolk, ready to attack them with their guard down.
- Level Rewards
 - During the initial part of the shore level, players will be rewarded with being able to use their ultimate abilities as they are locked during the previous levels. These abilities are the strongest skills of the Legacies, providing massive utility to the party.
 - Players also gain zeal over time; a resource that expends when abilities are casted. The player can become Overzealous once they reach the zeal threshold. To attain the Overzealous state, players will have to perform basic attacks on enemies to fill the bar maximally. Once an ultimate ability is casted, all zeal is consumed, resetting to 0.

Bubble Diagram



1. Level Start (Ultimate Tutorial):

- Where players spawn at the start of the level. Here, through dialogue, players will discover that they have uncoked their ultimate abilities.
- The player will be taken through a short mangatory skill gate and covert formal tutorial where they will discover the functionality of each character's ultimate with waves of very easy to defeat enemies
- The terrain in this section of the map is flat so that players can purely focus on learning how their ultimate abilities work

2. First Encounter with New Enemy Type:

- After players complete the very quick ultimate tutorial section, players will be given the abiity to traverse past the area that was previously locked due to the tutorial
- The first wave of enemies they will encounter here will be a new enemy type that the players have never encountered before, Botchlings.
- The terrain on this section of the map includes ramps as both botchlings and the player can use the varying levels of terrain to their advantage

3. First Mixed Enemy Wave:

- This will be the first wave in the game where players will have to defeat a mixture of enemy types in the same wave. This being Horsefolk and Botchlings.
- The terrain on this section of the map will be flat so players do not become suddenly become overwhelmed with the added complexity of mixed enemy types as well as varying level heights

4. Mixed Enemy Wave with Varying Level Heights:

- This will be the final section of the map. Here, players will be given the most difficult challenge they've faced so far. The added complexity of varying level heights as well as mixed enemy type waves

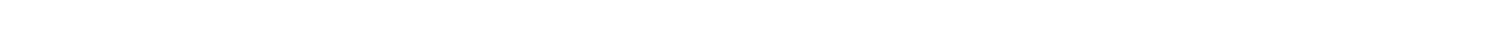
Overview Map

★ = Level Start

★ = Level End

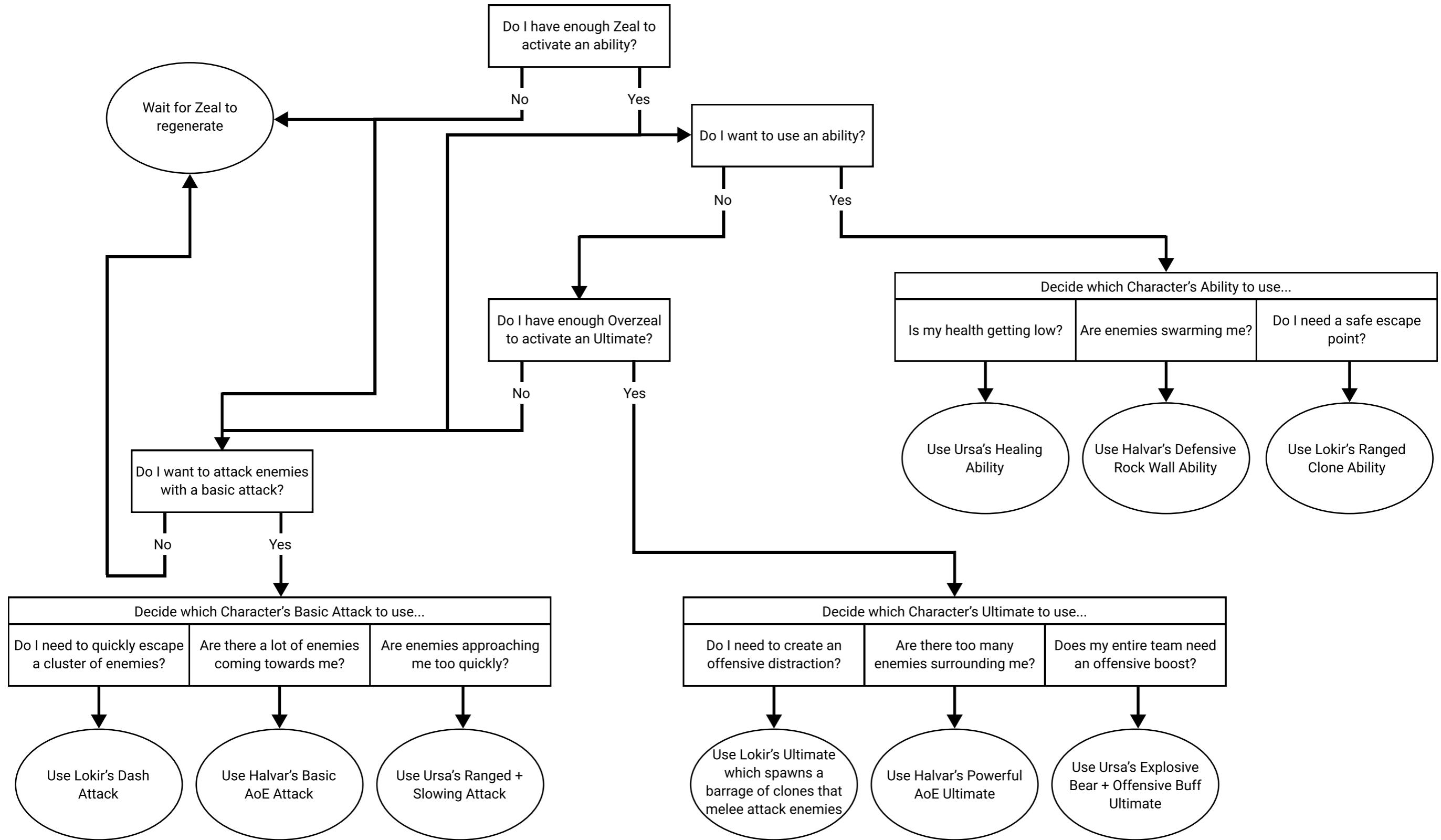
S = Shadow Mare Spawnpoint

B = Botchling Spawnpoint



Leading Players Mentally & Physically

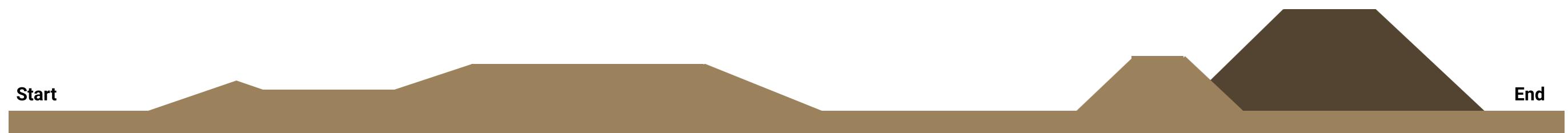
Mental (Obstacle Decision Tree)



- Our game's moment to moment thinking revolves around our level objective of defeating waves of enemies. Players have a lot of decisions they can make depending on how they want to achieve this goal. Depending on what style of play they prefer, the current enemy type they are facing, and what their current health/zeal status is, there are many different actions players can take.

- On a macro level, our player's moment to moment thinking also fits into one of our game's overall narrative goals of the Ironhand siblings discovering that they are much more powerful if they work together despite each sibling being very different/unique

Path Layout



- Our game's path layout for levels will be strictly linear paths. Since our game is also a 2D action side scroller with narrative decision making, we wanted to ensure that we kept our scope within reach for our team's size and ability.

- We believe players will still feel a great sense of agency within the game as our combat mechanics give players a lot of choices on how they can defeat different types of enemies. They will also have a sense of agency through the dialogue choices they will have.

Visual Cues

- Currently, our game heavily relies on camera movement to indicate where players should proceed to next. During the Ultimate tutorial of this shore level that we have been using as an example for this design document, the camera is locked in one position. The player's movement does not move the camera during the tutorial, which indicates to the player that they cannot proceed until they complete the task that has been directed through in-level dialogue.

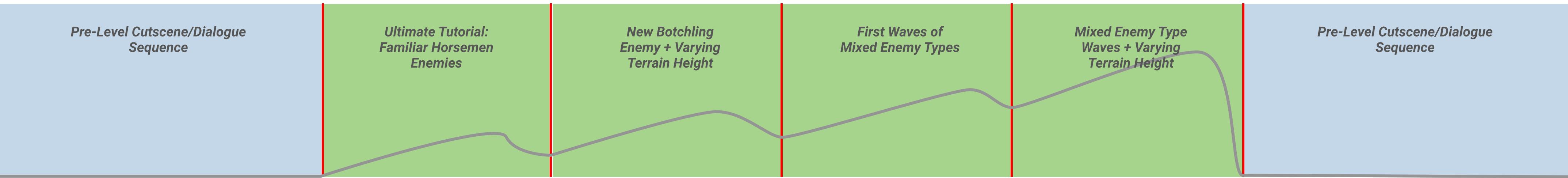
- Additional visual cues we have for players is using most gamer's natural instinct in 2D side scrolling games to proceed/progress by moving to the right. Enemy wave spawn points are also placed to the right of the character, which means that enemies will be approaching the players from the right. This indicates to the players that in order to defeat more enemies, the player will have to proceed to the right of the level.

★ = Level Start
 ★ = Level End
 S = Shadow Mare Spawnpoint
 B = Botching Spawnpoint



Major Beats & Pacing Rhythm

- The player finds out that the powers of the 3 siblings are enhancing the powers of the other Gifted, specifically making it so the Legacies can activate their ultimate abilities. This is done through an in-level dialogue sequence, wherein each Legacy will take turns gaining insight as to what their ultimate ability does.
- Through merging both this gameplay and narrative beat seamlessly into this particular level, players will be able to learn the utility that each ultimate ability provides and while actively applying that knowledge in a set scenario. This will give players a greater cognitive imprint to ensure that players have an easier time learning and remembering what each ultimate ability does, and how to effectively use it in gameplay.



Reward Schedules

- What reward schedules, among the four combined types, are used (At least overlapping with three types of schedules are required, which involves at least six types of rewards)
 - The main 3 reward types utilized are Progress and Improvement, and collection.
 - In terms of Progression rewards, players will be able to unlock the next areas after defeating all waves of enemies in the current level. In terms of Improvement rewards, players will be able to unlock their abilities and ultimate abilities by progressing through the narrative and levels. In this case, the players will be unlocking their ultimate abilities. Finally, in terms of Collection rewards, players are given zeal over time to expend for ability usage. They are then given more zeal in the Overzealous state (once they reach the zeal threshold) by performing basic attacks on enemies. Once they reach the Overzealous threshold, they will be able to activate their ultimate abilities and expend all their zeal.
 - The reward schedules follow a static per-action and static per-interval setup. And are scheduled linearly as such:
 - Every action
 - Players can perform basic attacks or activate abilities. This yields zeal gain in an overzealous state and damaging enemies to progress to the next wave/level.
 - Every second
 - If players are not in an overzealous state, they gain a set amount of zeal every second until then. As each ability requires different amounts of zeal, they will have to manage. As such, players are rewarded with prudent ability usage to optimize its utility during combat scenarios.
 - Every 30 seconds to a minute
 - After defeating enemies in a wave (the amount of time to complete a wave may differ due to player skill levels), players are given a 5-second respite to either reposition themselves or heal damage. Prudent positioning may yield advantages, such as using higher ground to extend the range arc of Ursa's arrows. Higher health before the next waves increases the player's chances to survive swarms of enemies.
 - Every Level
 - After every level, cutscenes are played to progress the narrative gain more insight about the story's characters and conflict.
 - Every Act
 - Like the level schedules, narrative twists are given every act to add to the allure of the narrative. Every act may introduce new enemy types, bosses, or mini-bosses in the form of Eidolons, which are spirits of deceased legendary heroes (not included in this iteration). These enemies have novel combat mechanics.

Gameplay Teaching Components

In the entirety of our game, we will be using Mandatory Skill Gates, Covert Formal Tutorials, and Teaching Through Experiment. For this shore level that we've been discussing in this document, the level includes all of the aforementioned teaching types. For the levels after the shore level, we will be mainly using teaching through experiment to encourage players to form strategies that utilize the special roles of all the 3 characters.

We found that the Covert Formal Tutorial style we chose to use for our in-level dialogue tutorials were not as effective as we thought they would be. In combination with the UI, and lack of overt instruction on which key to press, players often did not know which key to press to activate the correct action. Even though we also included glowing & specific key buttons on the UI during our tutorials, players did not notice those either. To resolve this issue, we will change our Covert Formal Tutorial style to Overt. While we will still try to keep the dialogue within the language/style of the narrative world, we will also have the dialogue explicitly state which keys the players needs to press. We will also continue to refine our UI Design to assist with this.

As for teaching through experiment, we have yet to fully implement this style of instruction yet as our early levels focus heavily on trying to teach players the basic functions and mechanics of the game. For our later levels, we plan to implement level designs and varied enemy types that will promote the exploration of various character attack/ability combinations.