

Safe Spaces

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Our initial concept for the game was to make a multi-level platformer where the defining characteristic was rooms of different color and platforms of different color, with the player able to control their own color. The player could only interact with a platform if they were the same color and couldn't be in a room unless they were a different color. We planned for the different player colors to be picked up along the way as powerups. We intended this game to be a puzzle game where room color could be controlled with buttons in the environment and the player could complete small tasks in each level. We came up with this idea by brainstorming in class the first day of the assignment.

This game has evolved very much from our original idea. After getting class feedback from the gold spike, we made several drastic changes to our design. First, we removed the individual levels in favor of a more open world. We did this because our character's movement felt really fun to play with, but the small levels seemed restricting to how much you could experiment and have fun with the character, as well as the types of obstacles we could design. Next, we changed all the powerups to include special abilities tied to that specific color at the suggestion of many of our classmates. This change made the game have more depth and allowed for interesting level design where you had to switch colors constantly for their different abilities and to interact with platforms. Players often didn't understand which colors were available to them, so we added indicators to the player that seemed to solve that problem entirely. Three indicators are initially grey and as you unlock more colors they change to the new color so that you can easily see which options you have to switch to. Spikes were also added to the game as a way of adding challenge, as well as checkpoints, so that players fail and have to return to the last checkpoint. After these changes were made, we had several people playtest the game. We found quickly that many players felt lost in the level and didn't have any direction or motivators to drive them through the map. In response to this, we added coins as a means of keeping players moving through the level and giving them a better idea of which areas they had been to and what options they had ahead of them. We then found through playtesting that many players did not get the concept of the different colored platforms intuitively so modifications were made to the first room to get the player familiar with the colored platforms quickly. On our next round of playtests, we found players to be confused about the powerups and their abilities so a pause menu with control instructions and color descriptions were added, along with a notification describing the powerup when it is picked up. We found all these changes helped players to actually progress through the level and finish the game, and much feedback after this point was overwhelmingly positive. Our game is now much more of a survival platformer than the originally intended puzzle game, yet we are very happy with the final result of our design.