

EXTRA CREDIT

Overview

Extra Credit is a cinematic, choice-driven narrative RPG set at Harvard-Westlake. Players navigate high school by making decisions about academics, relationships, and personal priorities, all while responding to institutional pressure and limited time.

The player's objective is to graduate. How they reach that point and who they become along the way depends on the choices they make and how those choices shape their standing, connections, and stress over time. Some opportunities allow players to recover from earlier decisions, while others reveal that certain consequences cannot be undone.

The game concludes with multiple reflective endings that assess the player's trajectory rather than ranking their success. Endings vary based on how players balance ambition, well-being, and identity, offering no single "correct" outcome, only a clear explanation of how the player arrived there.

Purpose of the Game

- Goal:

Provide a cinematic, choice-driven narrative experience that allows players to explore how decisions made during high school shape identity, opportunity, and long-term outcomes. Rather than focusing on winning or optimization, the game's goal is to guide players toward graduation while encouraging reflection on how ambition, relationships, and pressure interact over time.

- Objective:

The player's primary objective is to graduate from Harvard-Westlake. Along the way, players make academic, social, and personal choices that influence their standing within the school, their stress levels, and their relationships. The game emphasizes that while effort and recovery are sometimes possible, not all consequences can be undone.

- Target Audience:

Age Group: High school students, college-age players, and young adults, including both current students and alumni.

Interests: Narrative-driven games, interactive storytelling, choice-based RPGs, and players interested in exploring personal growth, institutional pressure, and realistic life decisions.

Core Features

1. Narrative Navigation:

Players progress through the game by moving between key locations on campus (classrooms, common spaces, offices, events) and engaging in story-driven scenes rather than free movement. Each location presents unique dialogue options and decision points that advance the narrative.

2. Choice-Based Decision Making:

At critical moments, players are presented with choices related to academics, relationships, and personal priorities. These choices are permanent and directly influence future dialogue, available opportunities, and story paths.

3. Standing System:

Player decisions affect their Standing, which represents their position within the school's informal hierarchy. Standing influences how seriously teachers, administrators, and peers respond to the player, determining which opportunities are available or inaccessible over time.

4. Pressure and Consequence Mechanics:

As players take on commitments and face setbacks, Pressure accumulates. High pressure alters dialogue tone, limits decision quality, and impacts narrative outcomes, reinforcing the emotional weight of overextension and burnout.

5. Relationship Development:

Interactions with classmates and faculty build or strain Connections. Strong connections can provide support, information, or alternate paths, while weak or damaged relationships may close off opportunities later in the game.

6. Yearly Progression:

The game advances through academic years, with each year introducing new responsibilities, expectations, and constraints. Earlier choices influence what options remain available in later stages.

7. Graduation and Endings:

Upon reaching graduation, the game concludes with a reflective ending that summarizes the player's trajectory. Endings vary based on accumulated Standing, Pressure, Connections, and Reputation, offering multiple valid outcomes rather than a single win condition.

User Flow

- 1. Start Screen:

Options: Start Game, Continue, Settings.

Instructions: Brief explanation of the game's objective and how choices affect the story.

- 2. Gameplay:

The player progresses through the game by selecting activities and making narrative choices related to academics, relationships, and personal priorities.

Each choice advances the story and influences future options.

- 3. Scene Transitions:

After a narrative scene concludes, the story advances directly to the next scripted situation rather than returning to a traditional menu or free-roam hub.

The next scene presented depends on the player's previous choices, creating a continuous narrative flow.

- 4. Year Progression:

After a set number of scenes, the game advances to the next academic year with new challenges and expectations.

Choices made in earlier years affect available options later.

- 5. Graduation / End Screen:

Upon completing the final year, the game displays a summary of the player's choices and presents one of several possible endings.

The player may return to the start screen to replay the game.

Mechanics

- Narrative Progression:

The game advances through a sequence of scripted narrative scenes. Player progress is determined by completing scenes and making choices rather than real-time movement or skill-based actions.

- Choice Selection:

At key moments, players select dialogue or action choices that influence the direction of the story. Choices are permanent and affect future scenes and available options.

- Story Completion:

The game progresses through academic years. Completing the final year triggers the ending sequence based on accumulated choices and stats.

- Visible Stat Meters

The game uses four visible meters displayed on screen to track the player's progress and influence narrative outcomes. These meters update immediately after major decisions, clearly showing the consequences of player choices.

Standing:

Represents the player's position within the school's social and institutional hierarchy. Higher standing increases access to opportunities, support from teachers, and favorable outcomes, while lower standing limits influence and flexibility.

Pressure:

Measures accumulated stress and burnout. As pressure increases, certain dialogue options may become unavailable, scenes may take on a more negative tone, and long-term consequences become more severe.

Connection:

Tracks the strength of relationships with peers and teachers. Strong connections unlock additional dialogue options, support during difficult moments, and alternative story paths.

Reputation:

Reflects how the institution formally perceives the player. Reputation influences administrative decisions, academic opportunities, and how strictly rules are applied to the player.

Interactive Elements

- Buttons:

Players interact with the game primarily through dialogue selection buttons during narrative scenes. Standard menu buttons such as Pause, Save, Load, and Settings are accessible at appropriate points throughout gameplay.

- Dialogue Interface:

Dialogue is presented in a cinematic text-based format. Players select from clearly labeled response options that determine how scenes progress and which choices are made.

- Stat Meter Display (HUD):

The game displays four visible meters on screen: Standing, Pressure, Connection, and Reputation. These meters update after major decisions, providing immediate visual feedback on how player choices affect progression.

- Notifications and Feedback:

Brief on-screen notifications indicate significant changes to stat meters or major narrative outcomes, helping players understand the consequences of their decisions.

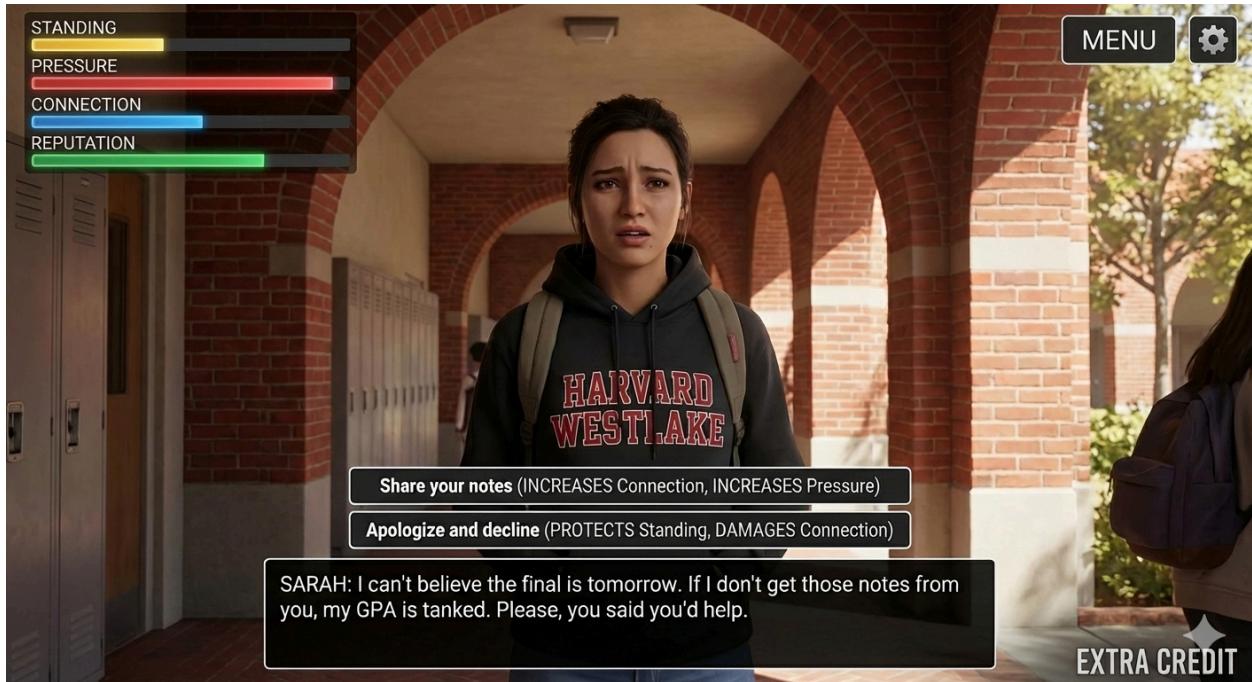
- End Summary Screen:

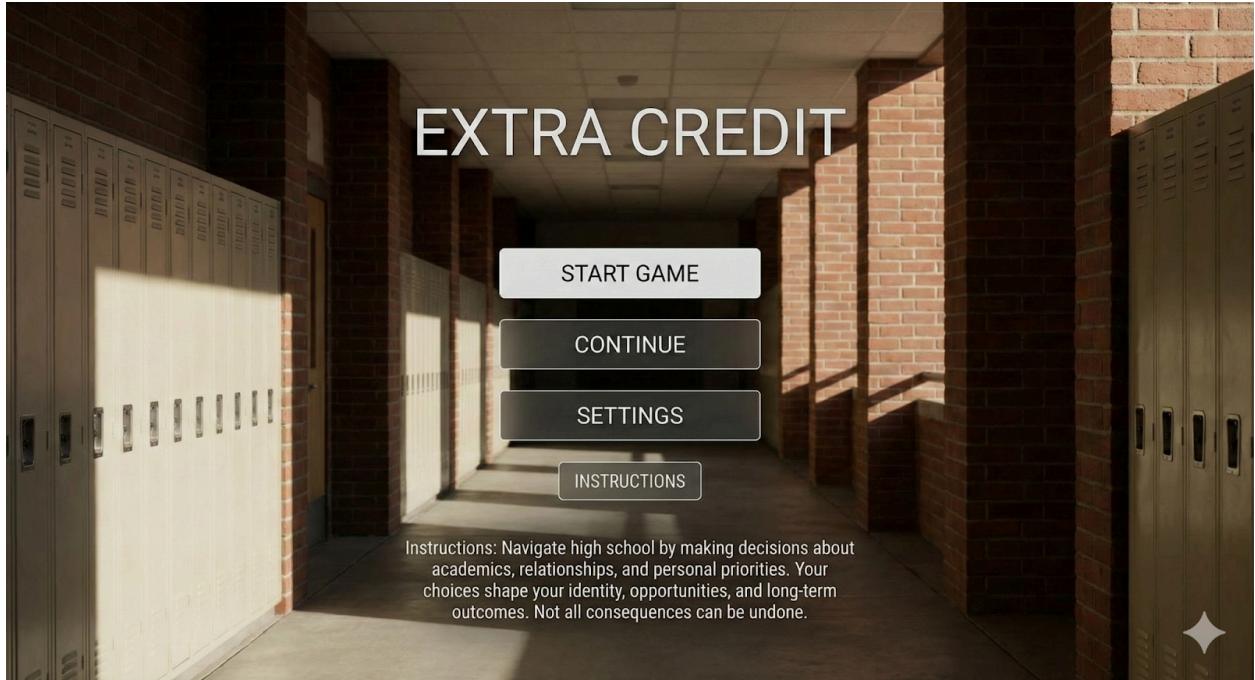
Upon graduation, the game presents a summary screen that displays final stat values and explains the resulting ending. Players may then choose to replay the game or return to the start screen.

- Story Progress Panel:

Players can access a dedicated panel that displays a branching path map of the narrative. This panel shows which scenes have already been played, which paths are currently locked, and which story branches remain unexplored. The panel allows players to understand the structure of the story without revealing future outcomes, encouraging replayability and reflection on past choices.

Visual Style





- Theme:

Cinematic and grounded, emphasizing realism and emotional tone over stylization. The visual design reflects a serious, reflective atmosphere that mirrors the pressures and structure of an academic environment.

- Imagery and Iconography:

Settings: Classrooms, hallways, offices, and common spaces are depicted realistically to reinforce immersion and familiarity.

Characters: Characters are presented in a semi-realistic style, focusing on facial expression and body language to convey emotion.

Icons: Simple, minimal icons are used for menus and stat meters to avoid visual clutter and keep focus on the narrative.

- Typography

Font Style: Clean, modern sans-serif fonts are used for dialogue and interface elements to maintain clarity and seriousness.

Readability: Text is sized and spaced for easy reading during extended dialogue scenes, with strong contrast between text and background.

- Layout:

Dialogue Area: Dialogue text and choices are centered and clearly separated from the background to keep player focus on decision-making.

Stat Meter Display: Visible stat meters are placed consistently along the edge of the screen for easy reference without distracting from scenes.

Scene Focus: Visual elements are arranged to prioritize characters and dialogue rather than interface elements.

Navigation:

Menus and buttons are minimal and unobtrusive, allowing players to pause, save, or adjust settings without breaking immersion.

Technical Specifications

- 1. Technology Stack

Programming Language: JavaScript

Platform: Web-based application

Frontend: HTML5 and CSS3 for layout, styling, and interface elements

The game is designed to run in a standard web browser to ensure accessibility and ease of distribution.

- 2. Architecture

Scene-Based Structure:

The game is organized as a sequence of narrative scenes. Each scene presents dialogue, choices, and outcomes before transitioning to the next scene based on player decisions.

State Management:

A central game state tracks player progress, including current scene, academic year, and stat values. This allows choices to persist and influence future events.

- 3. Data Model

Player Data:

Stores the player's current Standing, Pressure, Connection, and Reputation values, along with key narrative decisions.

Narrative Data:

Scenes are defined as structured data containing dialogue, available choices, and resulting effects on stats and story progression.

Ending Conditions:

Endings are determined by evaluating final stat values and major decisions at the conclusion of the game.

- 4. Performance and Accessibility

Client-Side Execution:

The game runs entirely in the user's browser, requiring no server-side processing during gameplay.

Lightweight Assets:

Visual and audio assets are optimized for quick loading and smooth performance across devices.

Accessibility Considerations:

Clear text, readable fonts, and simple navigation ensure the game is accessible to a wide range of players.