



ESCAPE THE DARK CASTLE



Introduction

Escape the Dark Castle is a cooperative, narrative-driven tabletop game known for its immersive storytelling, simple mechanics, and dark, atmospheric art style. My project aimed to adapt this popular board game into a mobile format, staying true to its original essence while leveraging the interactivity and convenience of digital platforms. The goal was to provide a seamless experience for players, preserving the narrative elements while enhancing accessibility through a user-friendly mobile interface.

The project involved translating the physical mechanics into a digital environment, ensuring the game retained its suspenseful, strategic gameplay. Through Unity and C#, I developed a mobile version that kept the visual and thematic elements intact, while integrating features such as:

- Digital dice rolls
- Inventory management
- Deck management
- Story progression
- Ad integration
- Music and sound FX

The adaptation faced several challenges, including maintaining the game's collaborative spirit and ensuring an intuitive user experience for mobile users. This case study explores the development process, the design choices made, and the lessons learned from creating a digital adaptation of Escape the Dark Castle.

Key Problem

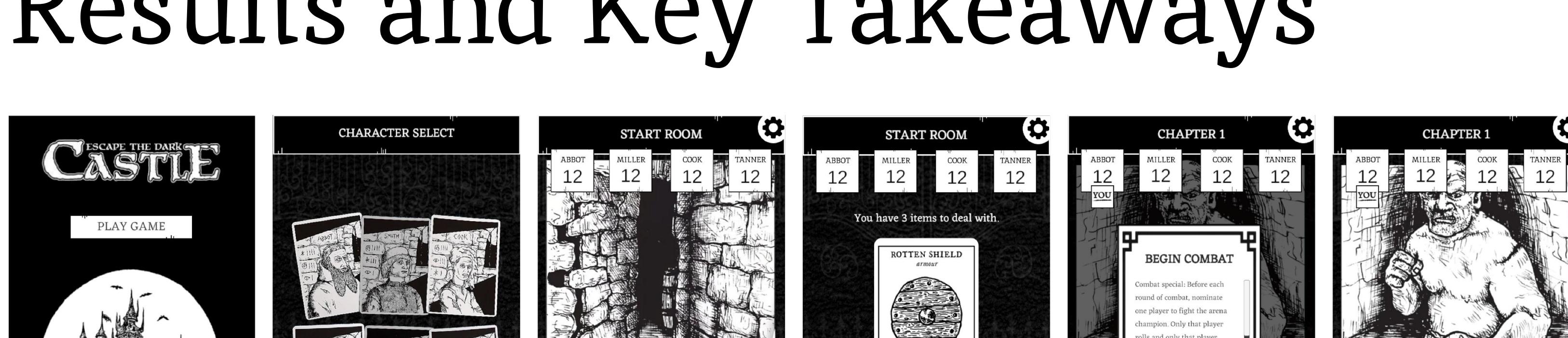
The primary challenge in developing the mobile adaptation of Escape the Dark Castle was creating a scalable framework that faithfully translated the board game's immersive, narrative-driven experience while allowing for future expansion into multiplayer modes. Initially designed for solo play, the system needed to accommodate potential future development for cooperative multiplayer functionality without requiring a complete overhaul. Additionally, the gameplay mechanics had to be adaptable enough to support multiple chapter types, maintaining clarity and engagement across varying scenarios without overwhelming or confusing the player. Balancing these requirements while preserving the essence of the original game was the central problem to solve in this project.

Users

The mobile adaptation of Escape the Dark Castle targeted two primary user groups:

1. **Fans of the Original Board Game:** This group comprises existing enthusiasts who love the tabletop version of Escape the Dark Castle. They are likely to invest in a pocket version of the game that offers a similar atmospheric experience and gameplay mechanics they are already familiar with. The goal was to provide a seamless transition from the physical to the digital, ensuring that these users felt the mobile version was a faithful and convenient way to enjoy the game they love.
2. **Mobile Gamers Interested in Fantasy Adventure Games:** This broader audience includes gamers who are attracted to immersive, narrative-driven experiences on their mobile devices. They might not be familiar with the original board game, but they enjoy fantasy settings and atmospheric adventure games. For these users, the challenge was to design an engaging and intuitive experience that would introduce them to the Escape the Dark Castle universe, offering a standalone adventure that felt fresh yet familiar within the fantasy genre.

Process and Iterations



The design approach for adapting Escape the Dark Castle to mobile started with an in-depth review of the assets available in the tabletop version. I explored which elements could be directly repurposed or adapted for a digital format, focusing on maintaining the game's distinct atmosphere and style.

Once I had a clear understanding of the assets I could work with, I moved on to the creation of game screens in Figma. My process involved developing multiple high-fidelity screen designs, iterating through various layouts and polishing the visuals until I was confident that they reflected the core experience of the board game.

After finalizing these designs, I began development, but naturally encountered challenges that weren't apparent in the design phase. As issues surfaced during development—whether in terms of user flow, scalability, or gameplay mechanics—I revisited the designs, refining and adjusting them to ensure a smoother and more intuitive experience. This iterative cycle of design, development, and refinement was crucial in adapting the game to mobile while maintaining its original charm and gameplay depth.

The image shows multiple designs for the pre-combat phase, where players can rest to heal, select characters to fight in the upcoming round, and use items from their inventory. Since this phase occurs multiple times throughout the game, it was essential to ensure usability. Additionally, the design needed to scale to accommodate different player counts, supporting 2 to 4 players seamlessly.



This project significantly enhanced my game development and mobile development skills. Working in Unity and coding in C# provided valuable learning experiences, and I'm proud of the final result, which is a fully playable and engaging adaptation of Escape the Dark Castle. However, there are areas for improvement, and with hindsight, I would approach things differently.

One of the key lessons learned was the importance of dedicating even more time to the initial design phase. While I understood the value of patience before jumping into development, creating a small, working prototype early on would have revealed certain issues that only became apparent once the game was fully functional. In future projects, I will ensure to prototype early, allowing me to identify and address potential problems sooner.