QUT INB (all units)  
Template for playtest script

This is a template to use when conducting a series of playtests and usability tests of a digital game. Use this to make a script to read to participants. Some sample material[[1]](#footnote-1) is included, but you can adapt this to your needs.

Playtest script for <game name>

I have some test instructions to read to you. You're one of several people who will be helping us out on this test and since it's important that I cover all the same points with each person, I’ll read through this so I’m sure I present everything to everyone in exactly the same way.

The test today should last about <insert duration> minutes and you can take a break or leave at any time. If you would like to take a break, or just want to stop –just let me know.

It is important to remember that we are evaluating our game, not you. You cannot make any mistakes here today. If you have difficulty with any part of any task, it’s very important to us and it will give us clues how to improve future versions of the game.

Also, please be completely frank and outspoken about any opinion or problem you have. Don’t worry about hurting my feelings—it’s much better that I hear about a problem from you than for me to hear it from thousands of players online.

Although you can’t make any mistakes, I also will not be able to help you if you do run into difficulties while using the game today. The reason for this is that I’m interested in what you might do if you ran into these difficulties by yourself. So if you ask me a question, I may ask you to continue to try to solve the issue on your own.

During this evaluation, one of the most important and interesting things for me to capture is what you think about as you do the tasks we give you.

* In order to do this, I'm going to ask you to THINK ALOUD as you work.
* What I mean by “think aloud” is that I want you to tell me EVERYTHING you are thinking, why you pressing each button, and everything you are doing and thinking from the time we start the evaluation until I ask you to complete the last survey.
* I would like you to talk CONSTANTLY.
* I don't want you to plan what you're going to say or try to explain to me what you are saying.
* Just act as if you were alone in this room speaking to yourself.
* If you are silent for a long period of time, I'll prompt you to think aloud.

Since thinking aloud is often unusual for people to do, I’d like you to practice thinking aloud. I’d like you to tell me how many windows there are in the place you live, but to think aloud while you are working out this number.

*(Proceed with window example. If they just say a number ask them how they arrived at that number. People usually mentally “walk” through the inside or around the outside of the place they live.)*

Great, it sounds like you were moving around (inside/outside) your house and counting the windows as you went. I was far more interested in *how* you arrived at the final number of windows than what the final number was.

*(Note to playtest conductor: You should aim throughout your playtesting to avoid leading the user or directing them in their experience of your game. Focus on encouraging the user to “think aloud”. This can be difficult and it is a good idea have some possible prompts written down that you can refer to while you are conducting the playtest , such as, “what are you trying to do now?”, “Can you tell me what you are thinking about?”)*

Let’s have you start the test. Pretend that you are at home, and you just downloaded this game. (*Point to the icon on the desktop which launches the game, if appropriate, or the icon on their mobile device, or similar.)* From this point, just do what comes naturally to you, and remember to always think aloud.

*(Once you have gotten all the useful data you can from the user without helping them, you can carefully ask questions and direct tasks to dig out more information, while trying not to lead the user into a particular solution. For example, if the user never discovered how to wield any new items they picked up, don’t say “Please click the inventory button and change items.” Instead, try “I see you have been using item X. Are there any other items you think you can use?” or “Do you think you have any other items in your possession that you have not used?” Give them the minimum amount of help, and then again switch to quietly watching and noting what the user does.)*

*Next, you might want to continue with a deep playtest, if your user is willing. See other materials for a description of a deep playtest. In brief, now you want to see how fun the game is and how well its challenges are tuned. If you continue with the test, use the following script. From this point out, exactitude is not as important, so you can paraphrase the following instead of reading it out word for word.)*

Thanks very much for your help. Now that we have learned what it’s like for you to play the game without any help, we now want to find out what you think of the game once you have figured out how to play it. If you want to take a break before we continue, that’s fine. If you want to stop the test here, that is also fine.

*(If they elect to leave, ask them to fill out a written survey. See other materials for this survey. Make a note on the survey that the user did not continue with deep playtesting.)*

First, I’ll tell you all the basics of how to play the game, and answer any questions you have. Don’t feel bad if you discover that you did not fully understand how to play—again, that is our problem to solve, not your fault.

*(Give a rundown of how to play. Reveal what all the controls and interactable elements are. However, avoid giving tactical advice on how best to solve each problem or win each conflict.)*

Now that you know the basics, I’d like to ask you to play again. This time, you can ask me any questions you have and I will answer them. However, try to figure out challenges on your own before you ask. Also, as before, please constantly think out loud. Lastly, as before, please be completely frank and outspoken about any opinion or problem you have.

*(Continue with a deep test for as long as you and the user would like. You can have them go through the start of the game again, start at a later point in the game, or jump them from one point to another. When done, ask the user to fill out a written survey. See other materials for this survey.)*

Thank you very much for your help with this test. Your input will help make this a better game!

1. A major portion of this material is from *Making Games More Fun: Methods for Playtesting Games* by Bill Fulton and Michael Medlock, all rights reserved. This is for academic use only. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)