Playtest

GAM150

1.
Why/What

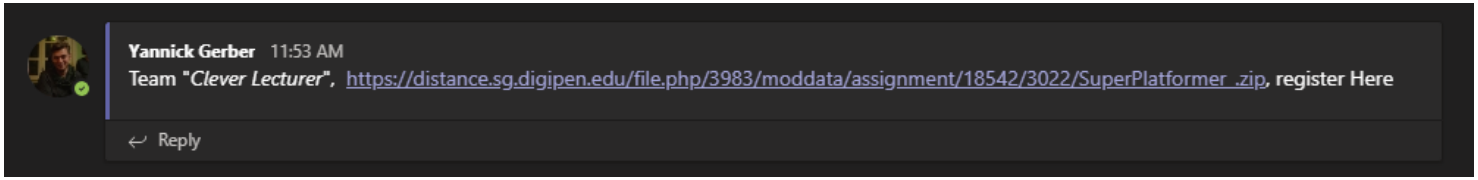
Playtesting 101

Playtest

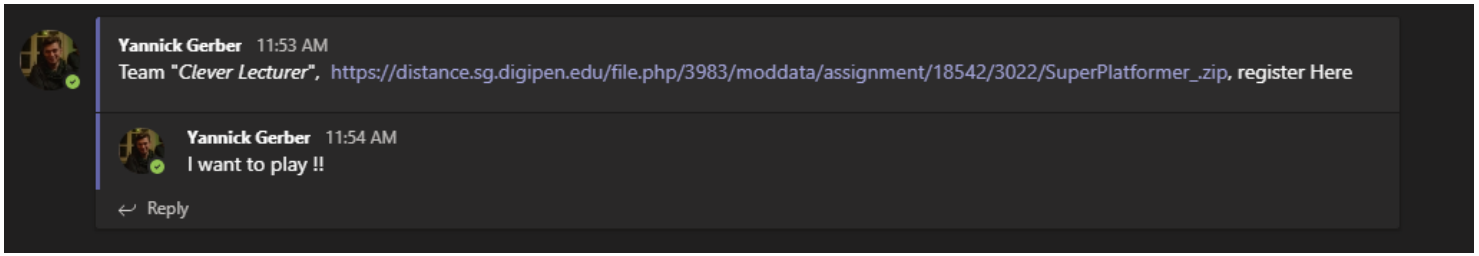
- When: **Week 11**, Thursday 30st July
- How: MS Team
- Submit your Game in a ZIP
  - Public Access **Moodle** Link
  - **Playtest** Recruitment **channel**

Recruiting Players

- Playtest Manager post a message:



- Potential Players, **Reply** to the thread:



- Playtest Manager: Setup the **direct call**

What is a playtest

- **Observe** players play a **portion** of the game
  - Any stage of the production
  - Usually up to 1h of gameplay
- **Analyze** their **Behaviors & Reaction**
  - Need to observe the user playing

06

MATERIALS COLLECTED
6 of 15

11

Why do we playtest

Not to find Bugs

A Player that knows nothing of your game will not find most bugs

Why Playtest ?

- Expose your **game to users**
  - To Improve it
  - To Validate your choices
- You are not your User
  - You are biased toward your design
  - You have more knowledge of your game

Playtest in AAA studios

- ~1999: Organized by the dev team
  - Very **artisanal**
  - **Biased** developers
  - **Non-trained** personnel to observe player
- Today: User research labs
  - **Specialized** UX researcher
  - Big investment in setups, capture methods
  - **Less Bias** on objectives, execution and analysis

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Companies invest a lot

because they can see a huge return !

2.
Preparation

How to prepare a Playtest

Define objectives

- Know the **goals** of the playtest
  - *Is the tutorial good enough teaching everything a player need to know ?”*
  - *“Are our weapons balanced ?”*
  - *“Is our first Boss too difficult ?”*
  - *“Is the controller scheme intuitive ?”*
- During playtest, **Look** for answers

Setup

- Before D-Day:
  - Prepare your setup
    - Game and versions
    - Print out Help Sheet
    - Objectives *(What to look for)*
    - Survey Questions *(google forms)*

Setup

- D-Day:
  - Prepare your Station
  - **Be Ready** before participant arrive
- Online (MS Team):
  - Recruit a user, direct call with him/her
  - User **Share Screen** while they play
  - User **turn on their Camera**
  - Record session with OBS studio, or observe

3.
Execution

Roles, Offline

- 1 **Moderator** *(Playtest Manager)*
- 1 **Observer** per player

Moderator Role

- Greet players

- Take the **Pressure off**:
  - *“We are not interested in how “well” you play the game”*
  - *“You are helping us”*
  - *“It’s our fault if something breaks or is confusing”*
  - *“You can play as long as you want”*

Moderator Role

- Explain the playtest
- Explain **ONLY** what they need to know
- Conduct Interview / Survey after playtest

Observer Role

- **Observe** the player
  - Gameplay
  - Reactions / Emotions
  - Questions he asks
  - Observations he makes *(ask him to think out loud)*
- **Be prepared**, know what to look for
- Take **notes**

Tips

- Do **NOT help** during the test
  - Do not Defend your design
  - Do not Explain your game
  - Unblock only when you sense frustration

- If they ask questions, **ask back**. You want **information**
  - *Example:*
    - *Participant: “How do I Kill this boss?”*
    - *Moderator “How do you think you should kill it ?”*
    - *=> you understand what a player would expect in your game*

Roles, Online

- 1 **Moderator** *(Playtest Manager)*

- 1 **Observer** per player
  - Or **record** your session (OBS / Fraps)

4.
After the playtest

Analysis of the data, report

Feedback gathering method

- Gather **additional information** after the playtest

- **Interview**
  - Ask **Open** questions to the player
  - Direct talk

- **Survey**
  - List of pre-defined **closed** questions
  - Google Form

Generic Examples

- Interview (generic)
  - *What was the most frustrating moment?*
  - *What was your favorite moment?*
  - *Was there anything you wanted to do that you couldn't?*
  - *If you could change, add, or remove anything, what would it be?*
  - *How would you describe this game to Someone else ?*

- Use your **observations** to ask questions
  - React to the way the user played

Generic Examples

- Survey *(from GAM 100)*
  - *[Solid Core] Is the core game mechanic clear and easy to understand?*
  - *[Controls] Are the controls easy to use?*
  - *[Goals] Does the player have a clear and easily understood objective?*
  - *What is the Player Fantasy the game is trying to create?*
  - *Suggest at least ONE idea for how this game can be improved.*

- Use your **Objectives**, be specific to your game

Analyze Data

- Create a **Playtest report**
  - Compile all Data
    - Observation Notes
    - Interview and Survey results
  - Use **visuals** to display results
  - Analyze the Issues you found
  - Propose Improvements

- Report submission:
  - **Week 12, Friday 7th of August– 11:55pm**

5.
Report Examples

From DigiPen Students

Teleportation Mechanic Results

- 6 of the 9 players understood how to use the teleportation mechanic at a fundamental level. Of the remaining, 2 were proficient at it and 1 player did not even realize there was a teleport mechanic until they were told.
- All the players felt the teleportation mechanic was intuitive, with 6 of the 9 players scoring a higher intuitiveness.
- 5 out of the 9 players did not realize they could shoot the teleportation projectile off-screen, 1 player knew they could but did not see any reason to.
- 6 out of the 9 players felt that the level was somewhat designed to accommodate the teleportation mechanic, with 1 player claiming the level was well designed for it and 1 player claiming the level was too clunky to use the teleport.

Recommendations

- **Remove the use of off-screen teleportation** in puzzles entirely. Puzzle should always be self-contained within the game screen, and off-screen mechanics should not be relied on.
- **Increase the feedback of the state of the shadow orb**, possibly by making a constantly active trail that connects the orb to the player at all times, and increase the size and prominence of the orb graphic at the top of the screen.
- **Add a longer animation** that dissolves the shadow orb.
- **Allow a player to cancel an orb automatically when they attempt to shoot a new orb**, instead of having to use the old orb before being able to shoot again.
- **Slow down the insect's traversal** movement.
- **Zoom out on areas where an end goal is available** for a few seconds.
- Remove the mid-air conditional check and the orb holding check from the game, instead **allow the player to invoke slow-motion every time they use right click**, or make it automatic everytime they charge the orb by default.
- **Make the insects look more threatening by default**, perhaps use red glows or other indicators, and increase the contrast between them and the environment.
- Either **redesign levels to ensure that slow-motion is not requiring immediate follow up shots in real-time**, or make it so the progress lost for missing the combo is lesser.
- **Redesign the lever crystals that open the doors** to make them stand out more and add a connection to their purpose.
- **Change the level assets to contrast better**, so that foreground elements stick out more. Darken the background more against the light, and make the insects stand out more.
- **Don't introduce players to the first insect directly after a fall**, introduce the enemy by foreshadowing it or revealing it while the player's attention is free.

Tongue Mechanic Accuracy:

- 7 participants thought the tongue mechanic is accurate
- 1 participant thought the tongue mechanic is not accurate as it shoots in weird directions at times

Wall Jump Controls:

- 3 participants found the controls for the wall jump intuitive
- 5 participants found the controls unintuitive
    - Reasons:
        - Jumping to the other wall by pressing the opposite directional key is weird
        - Hard to control
        - Kept trying to use the jump button to propel off the wall but it required pressing the opposite directional key

Difficulty of AI:

- All 9 participants did not find the AI difficult at all

3.4 Recommendations

1. There are points in the game whereby **interactable elements** are **not easily recognizable**. This include:
    - **Enemies** (33.3% of the participants)
    - **Interactable objects** (e.g. **Moth**: 22.2% of the participants)
    - **Interactable locations** (e.g. **Walls that could be wall-jumped**: 22.2% of the participants)

    As these are classified as S4 and S3 in terms of severity, we recommend a few actions:

    - **Add an outer glow** on objects that are interactable
    - **Change** the **aesthetics/appearance** of the interactable objects slightly, so that they can be distinguished from the background (**bolder lines, brighter colour shades** etc).

2. As the game **kept crashing** at least twice for every participant (which is classified as S4 in terms of severity), we recommend that the **game engine** should be **further fine-tuned** and **stabilized** to ensure **reliable performance**.

3. The **tongue mechanic** can be further improved, as there have been several issues raised. These include:
    - The tongue **shooting in weird directions** at times, **not being accurate** (11.1% of participants)
    - Tongue **swinging speed** is **too fast**, making it **difficult to control and figure out** (22.2%)

    As these are considered S4 in terms of severity, we recommend a few actions:

    - **Stabilizing** the tongue shooting mechanic, making it **shoot in a consistent accurate direction** when intended.
    - **Reducing the speed** of the tongue swinging, making the movement **easier to control**.

Thanks!

Any questions?