Video Game Design

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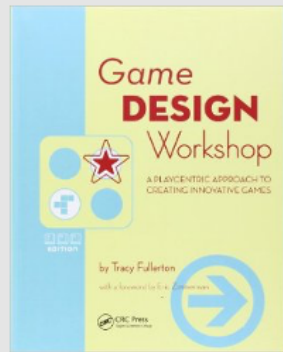
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Brainstorming

Brainstorming

- Based of Chapter 6: Conceptualization in Game Design Workshop by Tracy Fullerton

# Where do ideas come from?

- Process is often necessary to get started
- No self-censoring
  - **Don't be critical**
- Constraints can be good
- Teamstorming
  - State a purpose
  - Different views
  - Vary the structure
  - 100 ideas an hour!

Boss from life-force side scroller shooter

Your Game Idea

- Avoid copying an existing game
  - Even if you are aiming for a particular genre, don't assume specific gameplay is a requirement
  - …but existing games can serve as inspiration!
- Mechanics come first
  - Don't be distracted by dramatic elements
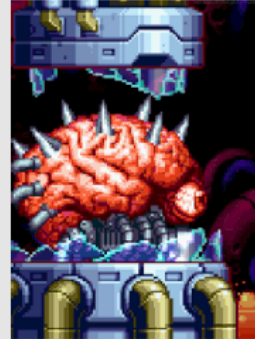
Mother brain from Metroid

Following an existing game can simultaneously stifle creativity and set your game up for the inevitable comparison. This is a tough situation to be in as the existing game is probably a successful commercial game with way more time and energy put into it

Structured Brainstorming Techniques

- Inspiration Game List (by genre/platform)
- Idea Fountain (jot list as things pop into your head)
- Categories / subcategories (taxonomy of ideas)
- Idea Tree
- List (everything about one topic)
- Idea Cards
- Shout it out (into a voice recorder or record a video conf)
- Stream of Consciousness (try to write as fast as you can think)
- Randomize (dictionary or magazine lookup and then write about topic you find)
- Research (research a topic in detail)
- Put it on the wall (white board)
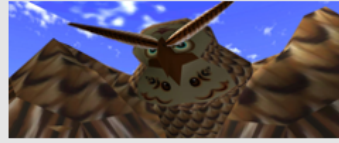- Extreme Measures (try something you wouldn't normally do)

Brainstorming activities

- In teams:
- Idea trees
- Idea cards
- Randomize
- Generate 3+ very rough game ideas
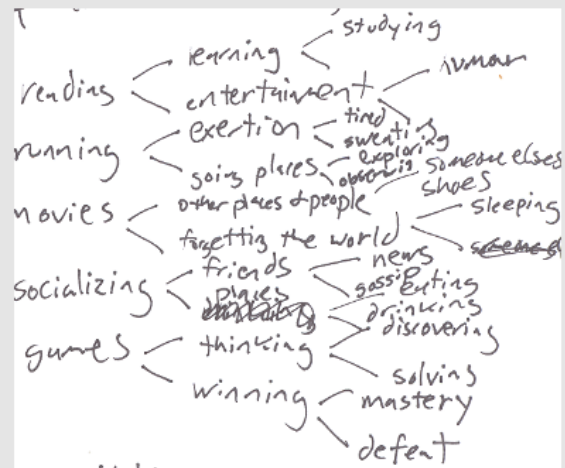- If remote, you can use a shared spreadsheet

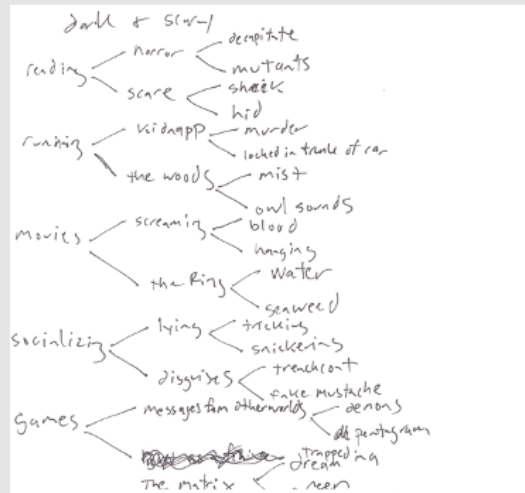Deku tree

Idea Trees

- Write down 5 things *you like*
  - Branching off each. Two ideas related to that thing
    - Branching off each idea, 2 more ideas etc.
  - Do this again, but with a theme
    - Dark and scary, middle earth, robot-controlled dystopia etc.

My Idea Tree

Dark & Scary Idea Tree

Idea Cards

- Everyone writes down phrases/ideas/adjectives/etc. on index cards
- If remote, you can use columns in a shared spreadsheet
- Shuffle (random sort) pairings and present to team for discussion

My Idea Cards

- Random pairs of cards
  - Heart-beat transistors
  - Inky hair
  - Fish vegetables
  - Misty flock-of-birds
  - Knuckle spikes

Randomize

- Randomly select pages/words from some media like a dictionary
- Online, you can use random page button in Wikipedia/Wiktionary/etc.

My Randomize

- Evade
  - Hiding from the enemy. They are always on your tail. Somehow they always know where I am!
- Ukrainian
  - Crime lord controls the underground black market. Dealing in nuclear materials from the former Soviet Union.
- Goober
  - Peanuts. A stupid person, a slack-jawed yokel. farming
- Foramen magnum
  - Where the spine goes to the brain. The connection between the body and the mind. A vital connection you must protect.The location of cybernetic components? A good place for a machine to interface with your body?

The results of my brainstorming

- Goobers
  - A kid's resource game where the player can grow different types of animal/vegetable hybrids ("goobers"). This is an online community game and your goobers will interact with each other and with other farmers' goobers. They may be friendly to each other or they may attempt to eat each other

Heartbeat Transistor

- An arty game about relationships (I imagine it with toon rendering to look like "Waking Life" or "Scanner Darkly"). You make connections to people (friends? lovers?) And that is what is keeping you alive in the game. Perhaps you are passing information around your social networks? A puzzle game with no time pressure. Game experience should be relaxing and trancelike.

Foramen Magnum

- A game about the interactions of humans and robots at a time when they are becoming one.
- In the game you start out as either robot or human, but in the course of play you will take on parts from the other. But you may find these new parts don't bend to your will initially.
  - Maybe this is a puzzle game?
  - Not a simple "oooh I got a powerup by buying a mechanical hand" thing
  - The point is learning how to use the new parts. How to subdue, subvert the smart parts that don't want to behave.