

COMP08035 Computer Games Design

Week 02 Lecture - Game Concepts and Tools of the Trade



Game Ideas

- Game ideas come from almost anywhere
- Don't sit and wait for inspiration, it arrives when you're already hard at work
- One idea isn't enough – think about new ones constantly
- Record your ideas – even ones that you discard
[Evernote.com](https://evernote.com)
- Feed your brain - read widely, listen to music, view art, watch movies
- Not just modern popular stuff – open your mind and expand your horizons!

Game Ideas



- Keep asking “what-if” questions about everything
- Don’t be afraid to take something that’s already successful and give it a new twist
- Mix and match different things to create something new
- A completely new idea that’s never been tried before is the riskiest strategy

Influences Behind *Bioshock*



- Multi award-winning fps with rpg customisation and stealth elements;
- Released in 2007;
- Set in 1960 in an underwater dystopian city called *Rapture* – originally intended to be set in 1946 in a utopian city;
- Game designed by Ken Levine.

Influences Behind *Bioshock*

- Ayn Rand – Objectivism – *Atlas Shrugged* (1957)
- Fyodor Dostoevsky – *Crime and Punishment* (1866)
- Film – *Logan's Run* (1976)
- George Orwell – *1984* (1949)
- Utopian/Dystopian ideas
- Moral controversy over human embryo stem cell research
- *Art Deco* artistic & design movement (1920s & 1930s)
- Steampunk (1980s & onwards)



Bioshock Design



- Youv'e seen the original pitch to get funding to develop *Bioshock*, and the launch trailer for the game itself
- Between the pitch and the launch (5 years!), the design of the game changed dramatically – this is normal for any game

<http://www.shacknews.com/article/48728/ken-levine-on-bioshock-the>

Turning An Idea Into A Concept

1. What is the nature of the gameplay? What challenges will the player face? How must the player(s) overcome them?
2. What is the victory condition for the game, if any? What is/are the player(s) trying to achieve?
3. What is the player's role? Is the player pretending to be someone or something? If so, what?



Turning An Idea Into A Concept

4. What is the game's setting? Where does it take place?
5. What is the player's interaction model? Omnipresent? Through an avatar? Something else? Some combination?
6. What is the game's primary perspective? How will the player view the game's world on the screen? Will there be more than one perspective?



Turning An Idea Into A Concept

7. What is the general structure of the game? What is going on in each mode, and what function does each mode fulfil?
8. Is the game competitive, co-operative, team-based, single-player or a combination? If multiple players are allowed, are they using the same machine with separate controls or playing over a network?

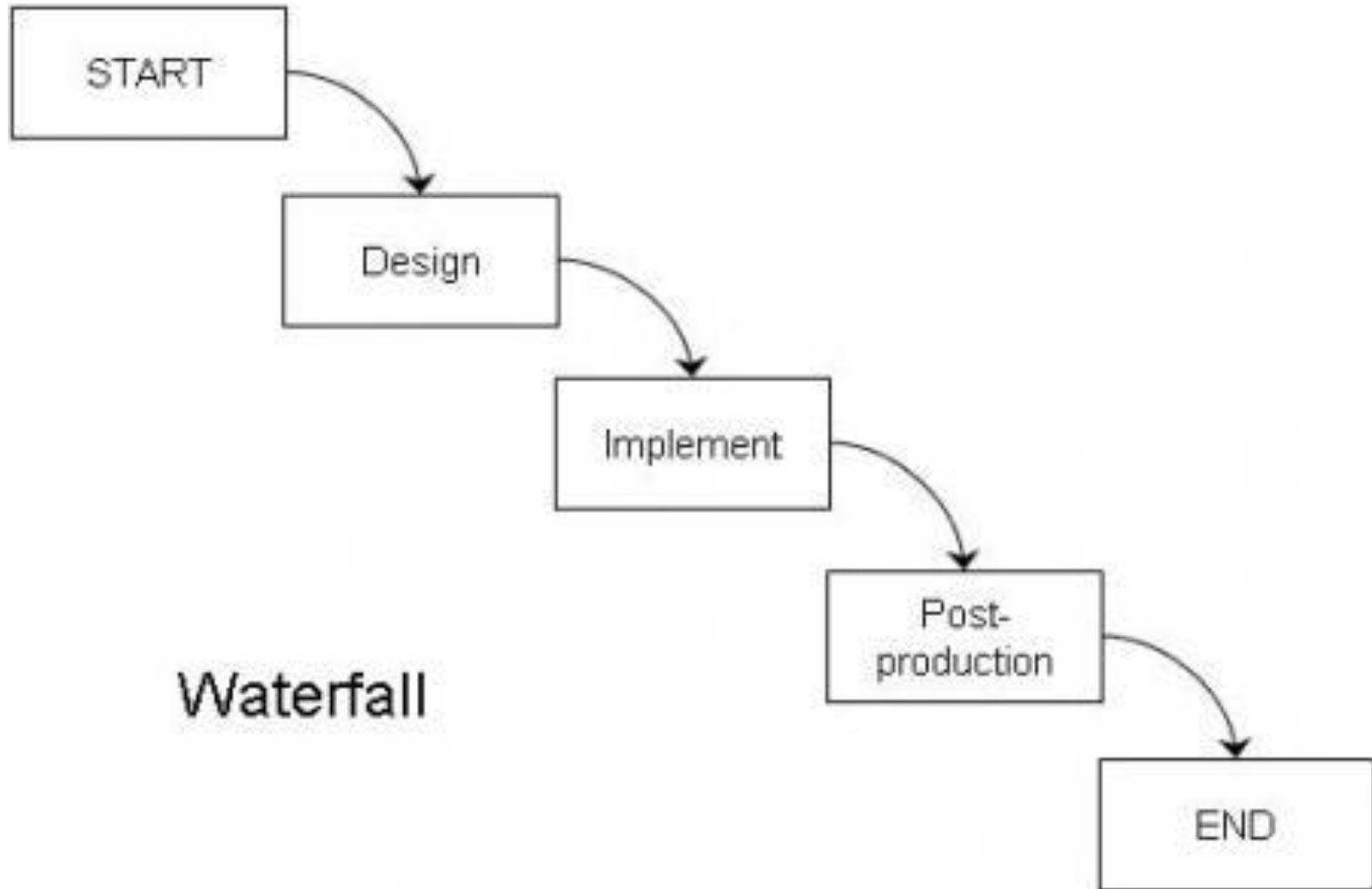


Turning An Idea Into A Concept

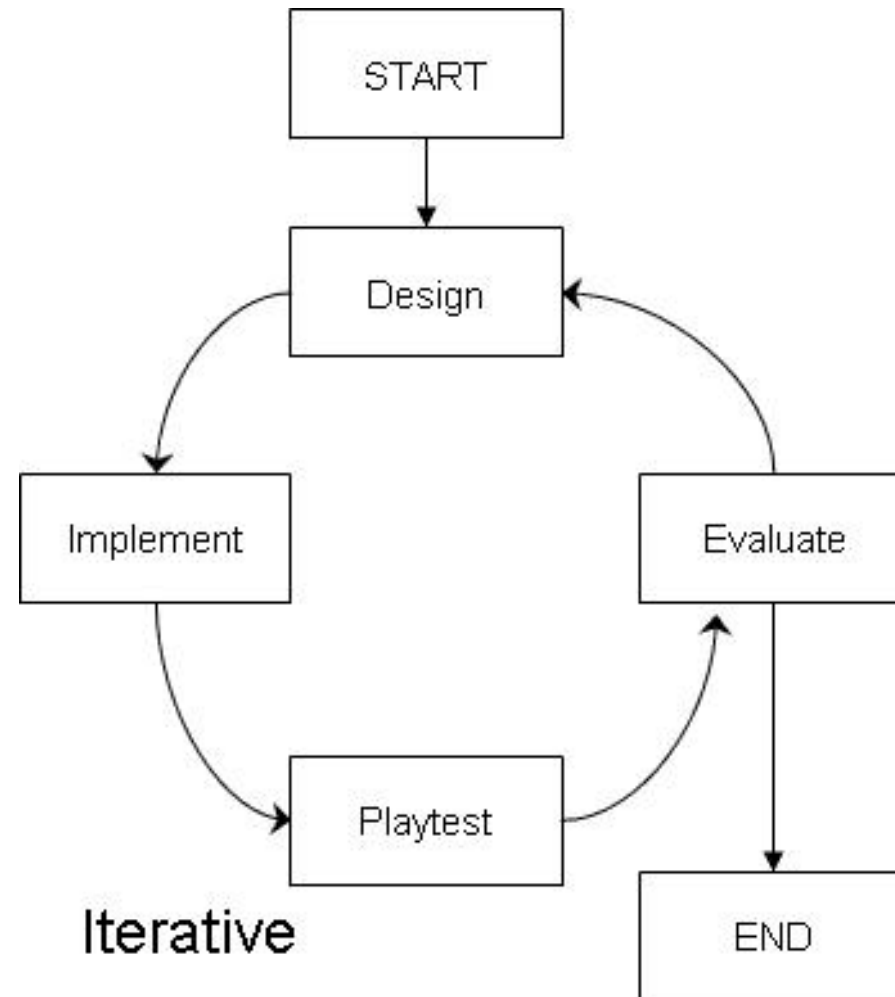
9. Does the game have a narrative or story as it goes along? Summarise the plot in a sentence or two.
10. Does the game fall into an existing genre? If so, which one?
11. Why would anyone want to play this game? Where's the **FUN**? What sort of people would be attracted to this game?



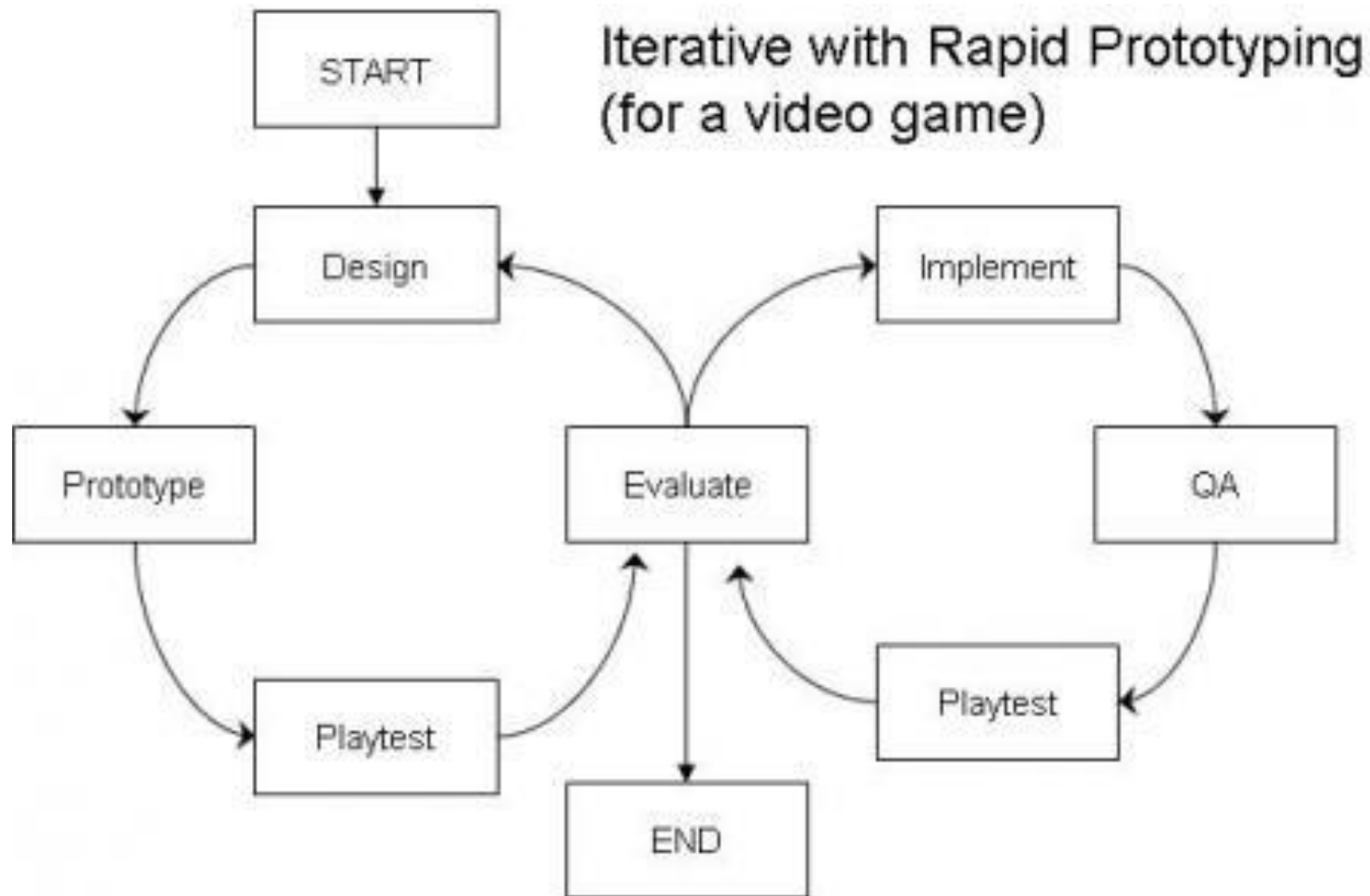
How Games Are Developed (1/3)

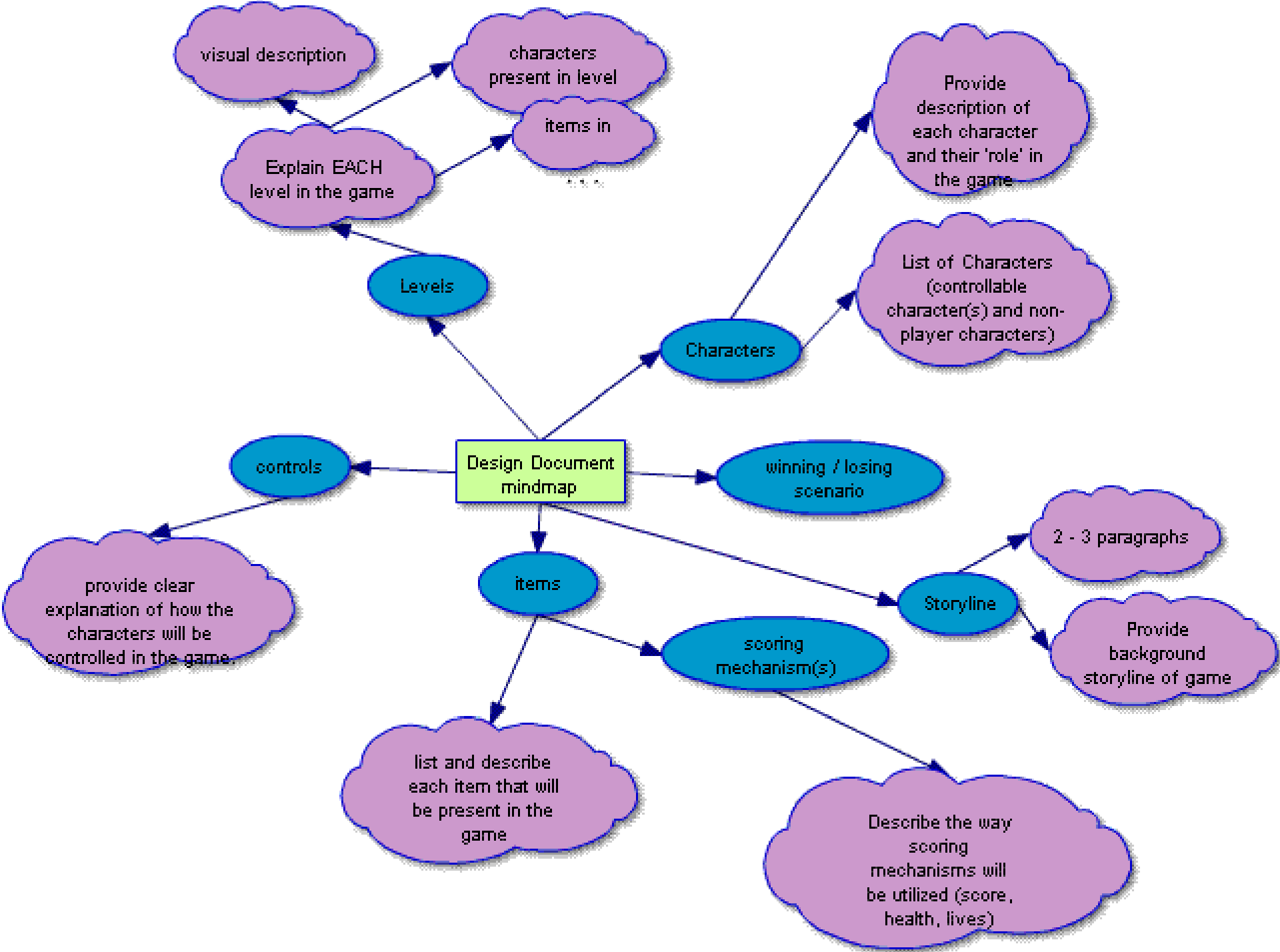


How Games Are Developed (2/3)



How Games Are Developed (3/3)







Project Planning 101

Complex process that involves seemingly simple steps:

1. Task decomposition:

- Identify all the tasks in the project
- break big tasks down into small sub-tasks

2. Time estimation:

- Estimate how long you think each sub-task should take



Project Planning 101

3. Identification of task dependencies:

- Which tasks are dependent on other tasks being completed first?
- Which tasks can be undertaken at the same time?

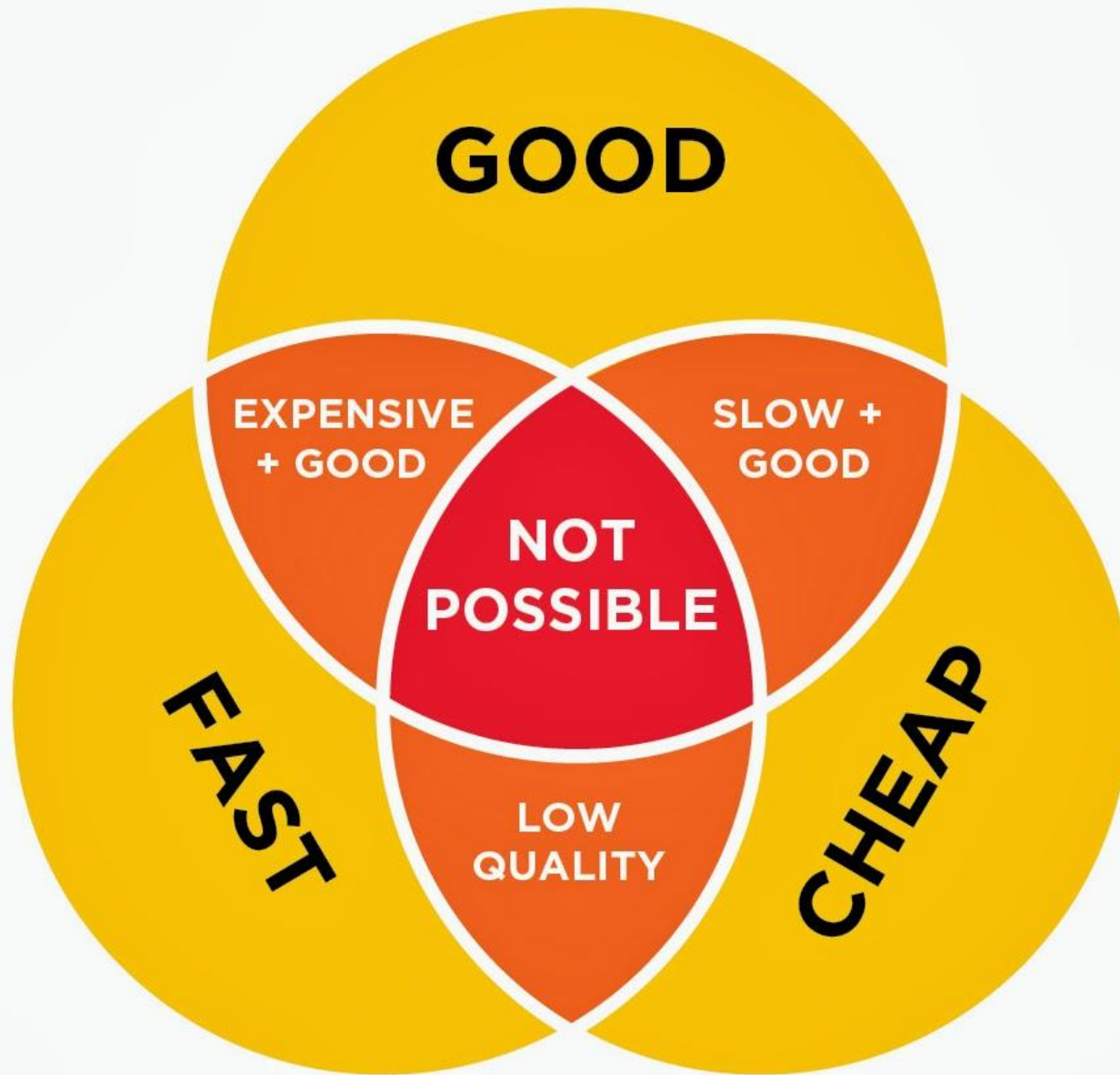
4. Task Allocation:

- Who is going to carry out each sub-task?
- Need to balance workloads

5. Monitoring and Adjustment of the Plan:

- Essential!

FOR CLIENTS WHO WANT IT ALL



LAUREN PANEPINTO FOR MUDDY COLORS



Tools of the Trade

- We are considering software tools for a start-up game studio
- Game **design** not game development
- Proprietary software is expensive and almost always unnecessary
- Consider free/libre/open source (FLOSS) equivalents

Some FLOSS Examples (1/4)

- Freemind/Freeplane
 - Brilliant tool for brainstorming and mind mapping
- Open Office/Libre Office
 - FLOSS equivalents to MS Office
- GIMP
 - You don't need Photoshop, you need this!
- Audacity
 - Audio editing and recording



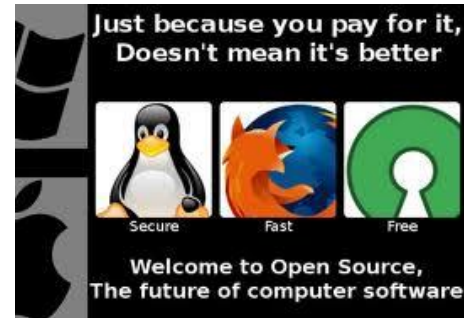
Some FLOSS Examples (2/4)

- Camstudio
 - Captures video of your desktop (great for demos/pitches)
- Virtualdub
 - Video editing package
- VLC Media Player
 - Great media player that also converts video/audio formats
- Celtx
 - Storyboarding software



Some FLOSS Examples (3/4)

- Ubuntu Linux
 - The most popular Linux distro for desktops
- Blender
 - Amazing industrial strength 3D modelling and animation
- Scribus
 - Desktop publishing for free
- PDF Creator
 - Create pdf documents easily and quickly from any application



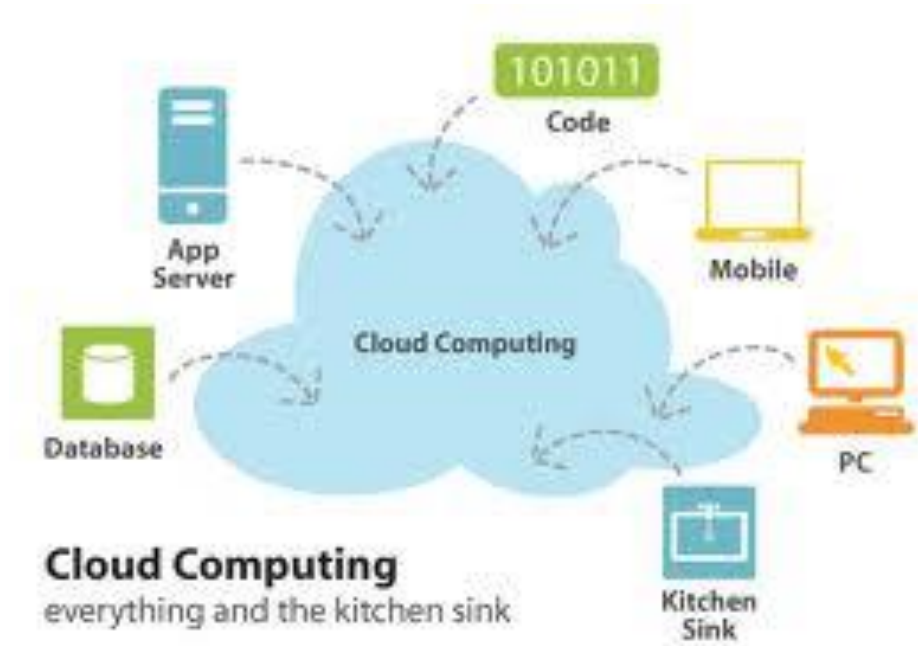
Some FLOSS Examples (4/4)

- Open Workbench
 - Project planning and management package
- Dia
 - Create diagrams (e.g. Flowcharts)
- Inkscape
 - Vector drawing package
- Firefox
 - Web browser with an amazing range of plugins



Collaboration In The Cloud

- Google Drive
- Dropbox
- Onedrive



Personal Blogging

- Reflection helps the learning process
- Writing is thinking
- Blogger
- Wordpress.com
- Blog.com



Practical



- Set up a cloud space for your team to store and share files;
- Brainstorm and discuss game ideas;
- Record your thoughts in some form, including ideas that you discard;
- Why did you discard them? Record that as well;
- If possible, agree on the best game idea for your team;
- What makes it the best idea?
- Make personal blog entries recording your initial thoughts and your progress.