

Game Development: First Steps



Topics in Game Development

Spring 2008

ECE 495/595; CS 491/591



Development phases

- Concept development
- Preproduction
- Prototyping
- Production
- Alpha, Beta, and Gold
 - Alpha: playable, even if some assets missing
 - Beta: contains all assets; focus on working out bugs
 - Gold: ready for release (“going gold”)



Major Creative Documents

- Concept doc (in book: “High Concept Doc” and “Game Treatment Doc”)
- Bibles (for characters, settings, puzzles)
- Flowcharts
- Concept art
- Storyboards
- Dialogue script
- The Design Document (called “game script doc in book)



Other types of documents

- Technical specs
- Schedule of deliverables (milestones)
- Budget
- Marketing plan
- Test plan

First: The Concept Stage

(includes “Elaboration Stage” from book)



- Premise?
- Who is it for?
- Why entertaining?
- Genre
- Platform
- Player's role
- Core gameplay
- Setting

The Premise: What is Game About?

- “Log line:” term from TV & movies
- Brief (1-3 sentences) summary of game
- What will hook players?
- Vivid, punchy, exciting
- Indicates characters
- Indicates major challenges
- Often written in 2nd person (“you”) – puts reader into the action





Game Premises:

■ Halo

■ Guitar Hero

■ World of Warcraft

Target audience: Who Is Your Game For?



- Age group/generation
- Gender
- Type of gamer
(hardcore? casual?)
- Income/education
- Special niche



Game Players – Latest Stats

(from Entertainment Software Association)

- Average age: 33
- 71% over 18!
- Women gamers: 38% of all gamers



What Ratings Are You Aiming For?

- Official ratings given by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board
- Based on audience, subject matter
 - EC (early childhood) 3+
 - E (everyone) (6+)
 - E 10+ (ten and older)
 - T (13+) some violence, crude humor
 - M (17+) intense violence, graphic sex, gore
 - AO (18+) prolonged violence, graphic sex
 - RP (rating pending)



Most popular games by ratings (units sold)

- 49% received an E
- 32% received a T
- 15% received an M

Why Do People Play?

- To be entertained
- Experienced as fun, as play
- Enjoy challenges
- Act out fantasies
- Escape boring real life
- Adrenaline rush; catharsis



Why will people want to play your game???



- What will make it exciting?
- What will make it special?
- What will make it engaging?

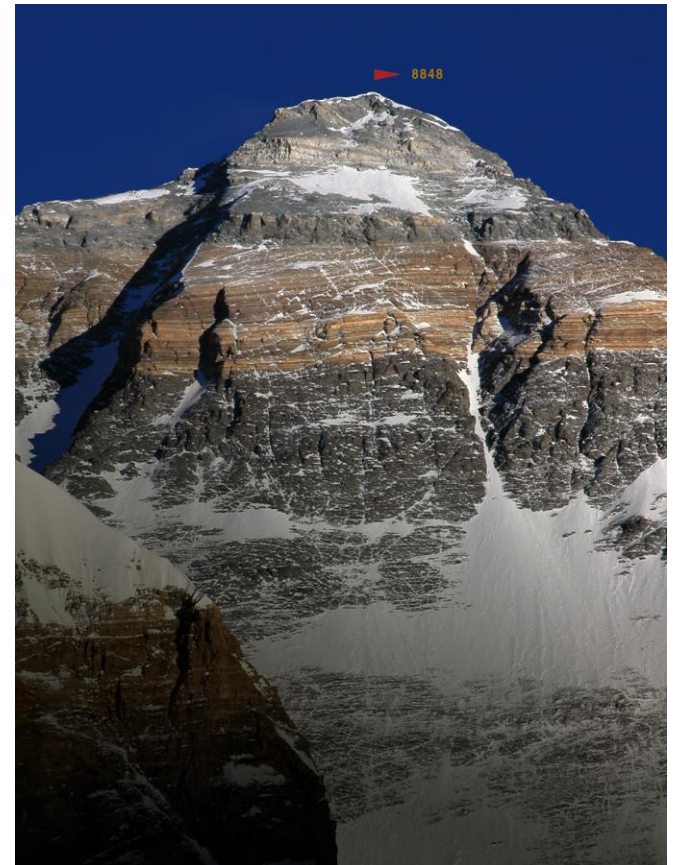
What is the player's role and goal?

- Who is the player in the game... what character does he/she play?
- What is the player trying to do... what is his/her overall objective?



What kinds of challenges will player face? (Core gameplay)

- Physical obstacles?
- A strong antagonist?
- A series of antagonists?
- Puzzles to solve?



Where will your game be set?



- What kind of world will it be... realistic? Fantasy? Sci-fi?
- What will the major location be?
- What will the time period be?



What is the Genre?

- Genre: a category of game with shared characteristics
- Many genres; no codified definitions
- Some are hybrids or too new to label
- Some major genres:
 - Action
 - Shooters
 - Strategy
 - Role-playing
 - Sports and driving
 - Adventure
 - Puzzle



Some other considerations...



Your Title

- Short
- May indicate type of game
- May indicate what game is about



The Purpose of the Game?

- Purely to entertain?
- Or does it have a pragmatic purpose as well?
- Possibilities:
 - Teaching, training
 - Information
 - Promotion, marketing, advertising
 - Recruiting
 - Community building



The Platform

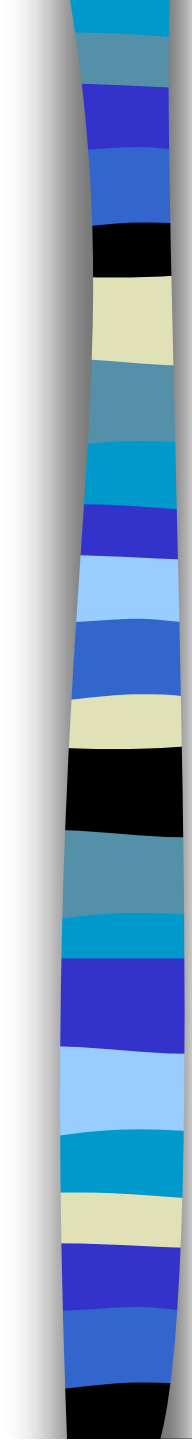
- Type of hardware or venue game to be played on
- Major types:
 - Arcade
 - Game console
 - Computer
 - Online
 - Handheld
 - Cell phones
- Other types: kiosks, VR, theme park rides, hybrids



Most popular games by platform

Popularity varies by platform:

- Game consoles
 - Action: 30.1%
 - Sports: 17.3%
- Computer games:
 - Strategy: 30.8%
 - Family & Kids: 19.8%



In sum, the first things to work out are:

- Premise
- Purpose
- Target audience & rating
- Why people will play
- Genre and platform
- Role of player
- Types of challenges
- Setting