

CSCx171 Milestone #2

Playtesting

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1 Description

It is impossible to completely design a marketable game from scratch. Game designers use an interactive design approach in which they continually loop over the following four stages: Prototyping, Playtesting, Evaluation, and Refinement. This process needs to begin as soon as possible in the development of a game and is the reason why I had you create a prototype in your Milestone 1. In this Milestone, you are going to do one iteration of the aforementioned design process.

2 Iterative Design Process

Iterative design is a design process based on playtesting. The key is to get a working prototype up and running as soon as possible. Using this prototype, you playtest the game evaluating the rules, player choices, and general game play. Using this evaluation you make changes to the prototype and begin the process again. The key concept is that you never know how a game will actually play until you play it.

2.1 Prototyping

For this milestone, you must create a playable game prototype that contains at least 30% of the game's rules, controls, and features. This first prototype is not going to be pretty. You should concentrate on implementing key game rules and basic controls. Pretty graphics and cool animations should be left out at this point. It is ok to have a circle kill a square or have a triangle capturing ovals at this stage.

2.2 Playtesting

Once you have a playable prototype, you are going to playtest it. You should try and find as many people as you can to try your game. Every member of your team should play it, some students from other groups should play it, and, if you can manage it, get your mom, grandma, or little brother to play it. Also, you should observe players playing your prototype and note when you feel they were having trouble with a game mechanic or looked confused as to what to do next.

2.3 Evaluation

You should have some way of capturing the feedback from those that playtested your game. You can have a questionnaire that they complete after playing the game or perhaps you could interview them. Try and determine if they understood the rules, the goal of the game, and did they like the controls. Did they feel challenged? What decisions were they required to make? Did they like the feedback they got from the game? What didn't they like about the game? Would they play it again? Why or why not?

2.4 Refinement

Finally, look at the feedback you got from the players. Do you see some commonalities in their complaints or praise? What changes could you make to your game to address their concerns? Prioritize the improvements you could make to your game, based on the players' feedback, and start working on incorporating those changes into your next prototype.

3 Write-up

You are going to submit a 5-page paper describing your iteration through the design process. Your paper should use 10pt font, have 1in margins, and be single-spaced. Here are the major sections you need in your paper along with a brief description of each:

Description Briefly describe the goal of your game, the basic rules, and the control.

Prototype Describe what features and rules you have implemented in your prototype. You are required to minimally implement 30% of your final game.

Playtesting Describe the process the players went through in play testing your game. How much time did you spend explaining the rules and controls. How long did they play for? Did you have them try out different scenarios? Who playtested your game?

Evaluation Discuss all the methods you used to collect feedback from the players. What questions did you ask them? When did you collect the information from them? Describe how you analyzed the results.

Refinement Given this feedback, what should you change about your game? You should include the prioritized list of game improvements discussed in Section 2.4.

Deliverables

You must submit the following on, or before, November 2:

1. A playable 30% prototype that you will demonstrate in lab.
2. A 3-4 page paper describing each phase of your iterative development: Prototyping, Playtesting, Evaluation, Refinement

Assessment

You will be graded in the following categories:

- Prototype (5pts)
- Playtesting (3pts)
- Evaluation (3pts)
- Refinement (3pts)
- Paper Quality (5pts)