GAME TESTING
Inherent in the concepts of prototyping and iteration is an understanding that high-quality testing is absolutely necessary to good game design.
Topics
Topics

- Why Playtest?
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- Why Playtest?
- Being a Great Playtester
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- Circles of Playtesters
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- Methods of Playtesting
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  - Formal Individual Testing
  - Online Playtesting
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  - Informal Individual Testing
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  - Formal Individual Testing
  - Online Playtesting
- Successful Student Playtesting Example: *Skyrates*
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  - Formal Group Testing
  - Formal Individual Testing
  - Online Playtesting
- Successful Student Playtesting Example: Skyrates
- Other Types of Game Testing
Why Playtest?
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- However, you need to get honest feedback
  - Some people will try to not hurt your feelings
  - Schell suggests saying: "I need your help. This game has some real problems, but we’re not sure what they are. Please, if there is anything at all you don’t like about this game, it will be a great help to me if you let me know."
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<th>PLAYTESTERS VS. INVESTIGATORS</th>
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- Investigator - A person administering a playtest, usually someone on your team
- Playtester - A person taking part in the playtest by playing games and giving feedback
Being a Great Playtester
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- Think out loud
Being a Great Playtester

- Think out loud
  - Tell the investigators what you're thinking as you play
Being a Great Playtester

- **Think out loud**
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  - This is especially important on the first play through a game
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  - It's difficult for investigators to know where their playtesters are coming from
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  - Don't just say "I feel happy."
  - It's better to say "I feel happy because the jumping mechanic makes me feel powerful and joyful."
Being a Great Playtester
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- Separate elements
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  - Give overall feedback first
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  - Then try to analyze art, game mechanics, game feel, sound, music, etc. as individual elements
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  - Both game design and playtesting are about checking your ego at the door
The Circles of Playtesters
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- Playtesting should be done in stages
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  - Game testing will expand through several circles of playtesters
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  - However, you eventually need to show your game to others
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- 2nd Circle: Trusted Friends
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  - Once you've iterated to the point that your game approximates the experience you were seeking, it's time for more playtesters
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    - They will find many bugs in places you just didn't think to look.
      - Because they approach gameplay in a different way.
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      - Because they approach gameplay in a different way.
    - This will often also be the first real test of the server if it's an online game.
Tissue Playtester
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- An industry term to describe a playtester who is brought in to play the game only a single time
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- The first few levels
TISSUE PLAYTESTERS

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  - The first few levels
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  - The emotional impact of the end of the game
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- 3rd Circle: Acquaintances and Others
The Circles of Playtesters

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  - Once the game seems pretty solid, and the 2nd Circle has stopped finding bugs, it's time to expand
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    - You need to get out of your social circle to hear new reactions to a game
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  - Where do you find more people?
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  - **Where do you find more people?**
    - **Local universities**
      - See if the university has a student game development club and visit them.
      - Try setting up your game in the quad (with campus permission).
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      - People head to these places to buy games, so it could be a fantastic place to get some playtest feedback
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      - Try setting up your game in the quad (with campus permission)
    - **Local game stores / Malls**
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    - **Farmers markets / Community events / Parties**
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- 4th Circle: The Internet
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  - If you're developing an online game, you're eventually going to have to reach out to the Internet and see what happens
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    - Internet users will find the most rarified bugs
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  - If you're developing an online game, you're eventually going to have to reach out to the Internet and see what happens
    - Internet users will find the most rarified bugs
    - Make sure that they have an easy way to report them
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  - The Internet can be a scary place
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  - If you're developing an online game, you're eventually going to have to reach out to the Internet and see what happens
    - Internet users will find the most rarified bugs
    - Make sure that they have an easy way to report them
  - You must also have automated data and user tracking in place
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  - Collect information on every single play session of your game
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  - **You must also have automated data and user tracking in place**
    - Collect information on every single play session of your game
    - Much of the best information from this circle will be aggregate data
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    - Covered in the "Online Playtesting" section that follows
Methods of Playtesting
Methods of Playtesting

- Several different methods of playtesting
Methods of Playtesting

- Several different methods of playtesting
  - Informal Individual Testing
Methods of Playtesting

- Several different methods of playtesting
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    - When the game is released, you won't be there to help new players
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    - If only one playtester said something, don't worry about it as much
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  - "How much would you pay for this game? / How much would you charge for this game?"
  - "What were the three most confusing things about the game?"
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  - What specific survey questions should be asked of the playtester once the playtest is complete?
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    - Provide drinks and snacks, restrooms, etc.
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    - Provide drinks and snacks, restrooms, etc.
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Methods of Playtesting: Formal Individual Testing

- **Running a formal individual playtest**
  - Make test environment similar to the eventual play environment
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  - **Post-Development** - Open online beta test *(≈1000 playtesters)*
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