IMGD 1001 - The Game Development Process:
Game Design Documents

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Types of Game Design Docs

- Concept Document
- Proposal Document
- Technical Specification
- Game Design Document
- Level Designs
## Concept Document

- Used to explore game idea in more detail
- Often used as a proposal within an organization
- Developed by designer or visionary
- A short sales pitch - 1-3 pages
- May have no art, or amateur art
- Many ideas never get farther than this

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**Concept Doc**

- Must include:
  - Intro
  - Description
  - Key features
  - Genre, spin, flavor
  - Platform(s) / market data
- May also include:
  - Background / License info
  - Concept art
High Concept (1 of 2)

- The key sentence that describes your game
- MUST get the concept across concisely and quickly
- If you can’t -- it may be too complicated to sell.

High Concept (2 of 2)

- Not so good:
  - “MindRover is a game in which players build and program robotic vehicles to compete in a variety of challenges including battles, races, puzzles, and sports.”
- Better:
  - “MindRover is like Battlebots ... but with brains.”
  - Still not good enough
Exercise: High Concept

- Pick one of these 4 games:
  - Burnout
  - Grand Theft Auto
  - Shadow of the Colossus
  - Dance Dance Revolution
- Write a high concept for it
- Form groups based on game choice
- Agree on one

Proposal Doc

- Used to get a deal
- Shown to publishers and 3rd parties
- Enough detail to show that the proposal is viable - 5-50 pages
- Sales oriented
- Big picture
- Polished!
Proposal

• Must include:
  ■ Revised concept
  ■ Market analysis
  ■ Technical analysis
  ■ Schedule
  ■ Budget
  ■ Risks
  ■ Cost and revenue projections
    ■ Pessimistic, likely, optimistic
  ■ Art

Technical Specification

• The ‘How’ of game design
• Contains the architectural vision; technology to be used
• Engineering detail
• Production detail
• Owned by tech director or chief engineer
• Can be exhaustive (and exhausting): 10-100 pages
Tech Spec

- Must include:
  - Tooling
  - Art / Music / Sound / Production pipeline
  - Technology detail:
    - Platform & portability issues
    - Networking or special tech
    - Server details
  - Software engineering info
    - Major design elements
    - Key areas of technical risk
    - Alternatives to risky or expensive sections

Game Design Doc

- Functional spec: The ‘What’ of the design
- Describes the player’s experience and interactions in detail
  - Could be quite long -- several hundred pages -- but “enough” is the goal.
- Artistic feel
- Owned by the game designer
- A living document
- “The Bible”
Game Design Doc

- Must Haves
  - Game mechanics
  - User Interface
  - Visuals
  - Audio
  - Story (if any)
  - Level Specs

Very Useful links

- Chris Taylor’s sample design doc, in HTML and .DOC format:
  http://www.fafhrdproductions.com/ctaylordesign.htm
  http://www.jonathanjblair.net/ctaylordesigntemplate.zip

- Tim Ryan’s excellent two-part description of game design docs:
  http://www.gamasutra.com/features/19991019/ryan_01.htm
  http://www.gamasutra.com/features/19991217/ryan_01.htm