IMGD 1001:
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 (1 of 2)

- 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
Concept Document (2 of 2)

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
  - Let's see if we can do better! ... (next slide)
Exercise: High Concept

☐ Pick one of these 4 games
  ■ Burnout
  ■ Grand Theft Auto
  ■ Zelda - Twilight Princess
  ■ Dance Dance Revolution

☐ Write a high concept for it

☐ Form groups based on game choice

☐ Agree on one
Proposal Document (1 of 2)

- 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 Document (2 of 2)

- Must include:
  - Revised concept
  - Market analysis
  - Technical analysis
  - Schedule
  - Budget
  - Risks
  - Cost and revenue projections
    - Pessimistic, likely, optimistic
  - Art
Technical Specification (1 of 2)

- 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
Technical Specification (2 of 2)

☐ 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 Document (1 of 2)

- 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 Document (2 of 2)

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