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

Claypool and Lindeman, WPI, CS and IMGD

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.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