Tasker Concept Document

IMGD 4600 Final Project

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Working Title:

Tasker

Project Thumbnail:

Tasker is a serious game designed to help the player overcome procrastination. The player helps a student study for an entrance exam while avoiding the pitfalls of procrastination. Throughout the game, the player will learn to better manage their time to get all their work done without overworking and burning themselves out. The player will manage their characters mood, energy, and time while attempting to study as much as possible before the big exam.

Target Audience:

College students.

Need Analysis

Problem Statement

The causes of procrastination are as follows [1]:

Fear of the outcome

- Fear failure.
- Fear success and what comes afterwards.
- Fear of rejection and the feeling of looking like a fool.

Helplessness in the face of complexity

- Feeling intensely un-resourceful.
- Daunting task at hand.

Rebellion and laziness

- Feeling the task was imposed upon ourselves.
- Asserting control over when or whether to do the task.

Lack of motivation

- Feel the task is not emotionally important to us.

Lack of focus and fatigue

- Distractions
- Hard to focus when tired/fatigued

Not knowing where or how to start

- Cannot figure out where or how to start.
- Cannot see the beginning and the end, therefore cannot see the middle.

Perfectionism

- Fear of wasting the idea by not implementing it well at the current level of skill
- Did not practice before implementation.

A person who is procrastinating may have one of the problems mentioned above. Sometimes, they may fail to finish their tasks, and may start doing them just before the deadline. Sometimes, they may even choose to do something else instead of what they need to do. If the

problem persists, they may step into a vicious cycle of procrastination, such that they may not want to do any tasks that requires a bit of effort.

People who are easily affected by procrastination are mainly students, as they tend to have tasks that they need to finish in a short amount of time, and the temptation to do something else is strong. [2]

Learning Objectives

- To understand some of the factors of procrastination.
- To understand how to overcome certain factors which contributed to procrastination.
- What can be done to stop procrastinating?

Hypothesis

We figured the player will be able to learn how to deal with procrastination by learning how to split tasks into reasonable amount of work chunks that the player can do easily. We also provided a game feature that allows the player to write small work chunks that they would like to do. This helps to encourage being productive, and be able to make plans ahead of time.

Through managing their character's time, stamina, and mood, as well as learning the mechanics of breaking down tasks and scheduling when to work, the player will learn to better manage their own time and work to get tasks done more efficiently and procrastinate less.

Task Analysis

Scaling down the Needs

Since it is hard to cover all 7 reasons mentioned above which lead to procrastination and all the objective methods, we decided to focus on 3-4 of them. At last, we chose these four factors in our game design: lack of motivation, lack of focus (distraction), not knowing where or how to start (complexity) and fatigue. In our research (by reading online materials and user interview), we found these 4 reasons cause most procrastination in college students. Thus, we are going to design a serious out of these factors.

Objectives

In our game, we designed some scenarios to mock up the situations when the player may encounter procrastination problems and the following methods will be used to deal with procrastination factors.

1. Lack of focus (Distractions): In real life there are many distractions such as games, books, and comics that make procrastination easy. In the game, these distractions will be present for the player's character as well. The player must learn to avoid spending too much time with these distractions and to focus on their work.

2. Fatigue: It's hard to focus when you're fatigued. Just as in real life, the player must have their character take breaks in game to recover. The player must learn to balance the amount of time spent working and taking breaks to work as efficiently as possible.

3. Not knowing where or how to start (Complexity): Sometimes, the reason why people procrastinate is that the tasks are just too complex to finish, or people do not even know where or how to start doing this task. The player's character will also encounter these types of tasks, and the player must learn about breaking down overwhelming projects into smaller more manageable chunks.

Instructional Design

There are many causes of procrastination. For college students, four of the most common causes are lack of motivation, lack of focus, failure to handle the complicated works and failure to balance working and resting.

We designed tasks of different sizes for the player to complete. The tasks simulate real life works that they have to face. We intend to inform people the importance of facing difficulties, breaking down large projects, self-control, and time management by encouraging them to help a virtual character with his work.

The tasks at the beginning will be easy to complete since we don't want to overwhelm the player. The provision of immediate feedbacks will offer them the sense of fulfilment. As the

game goes on, they will have to face more complicated tasks, and will be introduced to planning and breaking down tasks to help them deal with the added work. In order to train people to manage their daily tasks and use the time wisely, we added three factors to the character-- time, energy and mood. Those factors are essential factors even in real life, if people can balance those factors wisely, they will be energetic and efficient. We believe that through the process of helping a virtual character manage important factors, the player will be less intimidated by the difficult tasks and more familiar with making and implementing plans.

We also want to connect the player's real life to this virtual game, by making the game serve its function as a tool to remind and encourage the player. We ask them to share their real daily works and encourage them to do the work as the character does his work in the virtual world.

Interactivity

"Tasker" is a point-and-click single player 2D game. At the beginning of the game, the player will get to know the main character through the introduction and the narrative. The protagonist is a male college student who has a serious procrastination issue and cannot get his work done on time, and he is really worried about the big exam he will have in two weeks. The player's responsibility is to help the protagonist get through his procrastination. The player will control the protagonist's activities and make decisions for him. By helping the protagonist make reasonable study plans, encouraging him to ignore all the distractions, and letting him follow the plan to do daily tasks, he will be able to finish the tasks and have the potential to perform well in the final exam. Feedback is provided immediately after meaningful choices or finishing mini-tasks.

The playing time is limited to approximately 20-30 minutes every day. The system will remind the player when the time limit is reached or the daily tasks are finished. Before exiting the game, the protagonist will ask the player if they have their own work needed to do. The player can then enter their own daily plans into a dialog box and will be encouraged to turn off the TV, cellphone, computers, etc., and to do the work right away. The next time the player launches the game, they will be asked if they have finished their work and will be provided some feedback.

Narrative

The college entrance exam is near. The protagonist is in the dormitory, preparing for the big exam, but he is putting off from studying. It is too much for him to bear. What can you do from this point on?

Gameflow

The game begins with a slow introduction to the mechanics. The game gives an overview of the game environment, teaching the player the controls and the interface of the game. Once the overview of the game is complete, the games jumps the player to the first day, where the game teaches the player the game mechanics, starting from a simple task.

Once the game has taught and shown the player all of the introductory game mechanics, the game then gives the player a simple task for the main character to complete, in order to let the player play and understand how all of the game mechanics work in relation to one another. This is the end of the first day.

During the second day, the game teaches the mechanic of distractions. It can be anything, such as a goldfish given to the main character by another character, playing video games, and reading comics. The player must make sure that their character does not get too off track from their work.

After completing this second day, the game pauses and gives the player the option to save their progress, continue, or quit. This will allow the player to work on their other tasks they need to do in real life before continue playing the game.

On the third day, the game introduces the player to more complex tasks that cannot be done all at once. The player must break tasks down into smaller manageable chunks. The game teaches the player to try to complete a complicated task before the task's deadline.

Then, the game introduces another game mechanic, the bars, which represent the time allotted, the stamina the main character has available, and the main character's mood. The time allotted bar constantly goes down and when it is empty, that in game day is over. After two in-game weeks, the main character must take their exam, and the game is over.

The stamina bar goes down whenever the character is doing work, and if it is empty the character will not be able to work again until it is refilled all the way. It can be refilled by engaging in distractions to take a break from work. Using these distractions every once in a

while to stop the bar from fully depleting is essential, but using them too much wastes precious time.

Certain distractions, especially events such as parties, can affect the character's mood. For example, if invited, going to a party may greatly improve the character's mood, but use up the rest of the time for that day, while skipping it saves a lot of time, but lowers the characters mood. The higher the character's mood, the slower the stamina bar goes down while working, and the faster it recovers while taking a break.

After the game finishes showing the player what the bars represent, the player learns how to use the schedule planner, a calendar with which they can organize and manage tasks the main character will need to do for the remaining days. It notifies the player of deadlines, which represents when the tasks are due.

Finally, on the fourth day, which is the last day of the tutorial session, the game introduces the player to fatigue. The main character is too tired to continue working, and it is the player's job to provide some way of restoring the main character's stamina. The player can do this by allowing their character to briefly engage in a distraction (such as playing a game) to take a break and restore some stamina. From this point forward the player must learn to manage time between work and breaks.

This is the end of the tutorial session. The game will then begin ramping up difficulty gradually.

The game continues for about two in-game weeks with the player managing work and breaks for their character in order to be as prepared as possible for the exam. The player's final score will be based on how much studying they managed to get done in the allotted time.

At the end of each in-game day, the game is saved and the player is given the option to continue or quit. Every two days (after the initial tutorial days are finished) the game will stop and encourage player to go get some real life work done. The game will provide player a schedule similar to the one used during gameplay to organize their real life tasks.

Evaluation

As the player completes tasks, they will gain points based on the value of the given task. At the end of the last day the player character will take their entrance exam. The score the character gets on this exam (and thus the score the player gets for the game) is based on how high their score was within the game. This means that the more efficiently the player works and manages their time, the higher their final score.

The game also has the calendar that it has the player put their real tasks in. When player come back to the game it will ask them to update it on what tasks they have completed. The player will then get feedback from the game about how good a job they are doing on managing their time in real life.

User Interface

Environment

The game will be PC/Mac based application. We can use the mouse to point and click for the action on the computer.

User Interface

The main scenario is the student's room for we mostly focus on the avatar's after-school time. The main mechanic is resource (time and stamina) management, we need to provide users an intuitionistic and efficiency UI to manipulate their time and stamina in the schedule interface.

After clicking on the calendar icon, the game will navigate the player to the schedule mode, in which the player can manage their time and tasks. For instance, the player is able to drag tasks into schedule form, split tasks into pieces or check their progress.
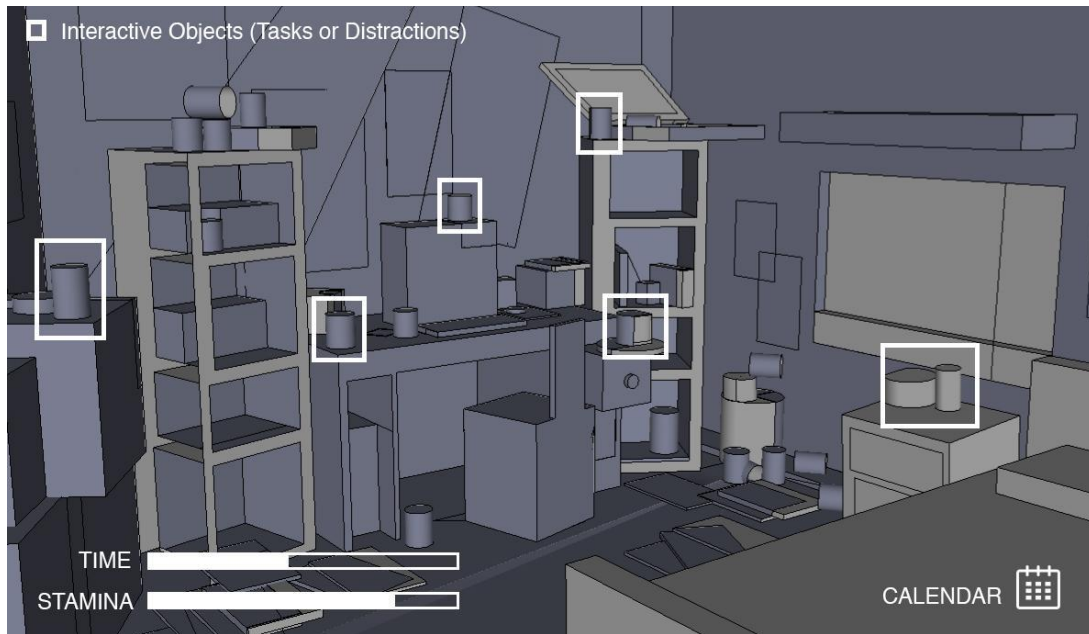
Figure 1: Main user interface. The player can point and click objects in screen or switch to Schedule mode to manage their tasks.
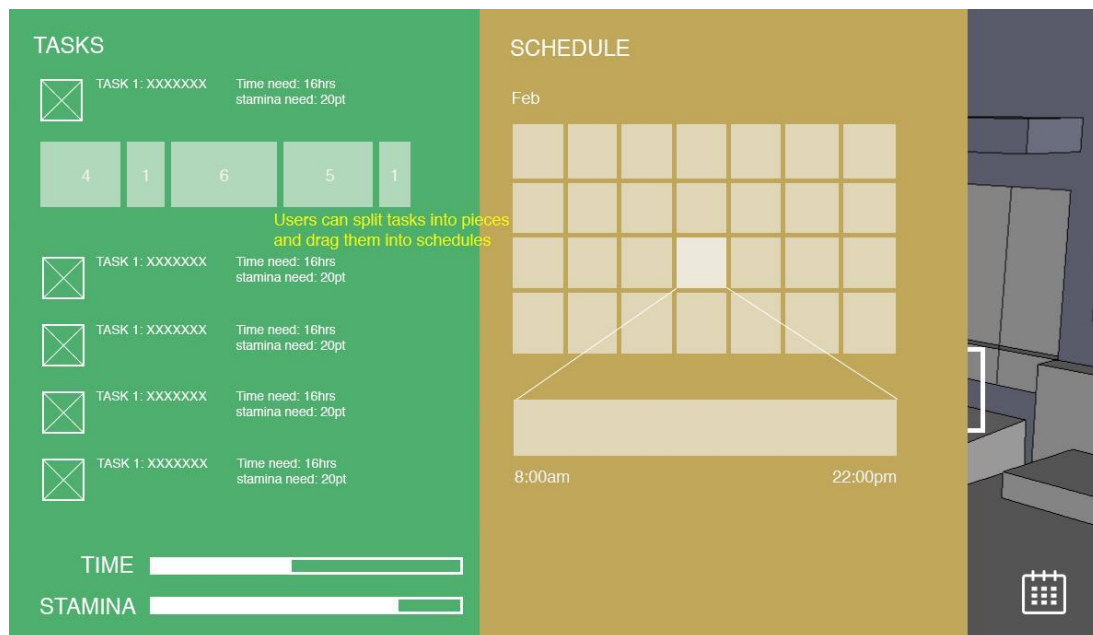

Figure 2: In this interface, the player is able to add or modify their time and schedule by splitting their tasks and dragging them to schedules. The game will give feedback about how much time and stamina the player has left. Also, the player can check how well their plan goes in this interface.
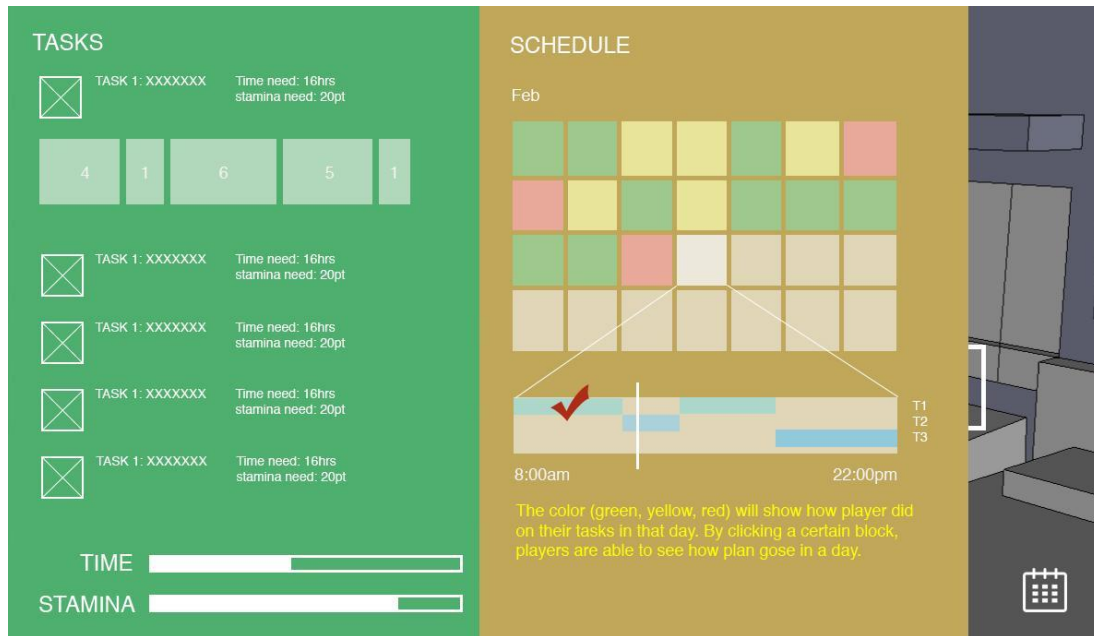
Figure 3: The colors (green, yellow, red) will show how well the player did on their tasks in that day. By clicking on a certain block, the player is able to see how the plan goes in that day.

Reference:

1. 7 Common Causes and Proven Cures for Procrastination

http://www.marcandangel.com/2010/11/22/7-common-causes-and-proven-cures-for-procrastination/

2. Procrastination: a student's worst enemy?

http://www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2012/may/09/students-procrastinating-exams