PLAYTESTING

It’s never too early
PRIMARY GOAL

Evaluate if it’s good, not if it works
SECONDARY GOALS

• Identify design flaws

• Gather positive & negative feedback
HOW TO PREPARE

• Have a working build
  • Make sure you do internal testing before giving it to your testers

• Prepare a questionnaire / survey
  • Scaled questions are better
    • Don’t ask testers to write paragraphs
    • Leave a section for comments
  • Questions should be specific
    • Don’t ask “rate the game” ask instead “how likely would you be to recommend this game to your friends?”
HOW TO PREPARE

• Fix obvious issues
  • Testers will focus on the first big bug they encounter
  • Poor balancing, controls and user experience will bias feedback

• Make a tutorial
  • In game is ideal
  • In person as a backup
    • tutorial pitch
    • Not supposed to be a guide of how to win
HOW TO PREPARE – NICE TO HAVE

• Data mining and data collection *programmatically*
  • Heat maps
  • Stats
  • Readable logs

• Will make it easier to analyze data
RUNNING THE SESSION

• Write everything down
  • You will forget the details

• Make conversation with your testers and ask questions
  • What are you doing now?
  • What are you trying to do?
  • What are you thinking about?
  • How’s the difficulty?
RUNNING THE SESSION

• Ask your testers to “Think aloud”
  • Understand their reasoning and thought process.
  • Understand why they made their decisions.

• As you test, you’ll notice if your changes were for the better
  • Iterating over playtesting sessions
  • Ideally with different people
  • Easier to measure if survey questions are quantifiable
RUNNING THE SESSION

A few notes:

• Careful not to lead your players and bias them

• Try not to explain
  • Except of your tutorial

• Only interfere if you see the players failing or getting stuck multiple times

• Keep track of useful stats
  • Number of deaths, location of deaths, play session length, etc
AFTER THE SESSION

• Ask your testers to fill out a survey/questionnaire.

• Give yourself some time to think about the feedback.

• Analyze the results
  • Find issues and create a plan to fix them
  • Excel is your friend
WHO SHOULD TEST YOUR GAME

• Definitely NOT you!
• Maybe not friends and family
• Friends of friends or people who you don’t know are ideal
INDUSTRY EXAMPLES

Mini Metro™
MILESTONE 3 - ALPHA
ALPHA PRESENTATION

- **Date:** October 30th
  - 10 minutes per team for presentation and demo
  - This time I will stop you if you go over
  - Random group order

- Game pitch (again)

- Plan for final sprints
  - What are the missing features
  - How/when you are going to implement them
  - Any risks?

- Plan for playtesting sessions
  - Who, How, When?
  - Remember play testing report due on beta
• In class (live) demo of the game
  • Handing over the controllers to the panel
  • Prepare your demo in advance
  • Have an executable ready
  • Music & SFX
  • Models and animations
  • No cheat codes
ALPHA IS THE STAGE WHEN KEY GAMEPLAY FUNCTIONALITY IS IMPLEMENTED, AND ASSETS ARE PARTIALLY FINISHED. A GAME IN ALPHA IS FEATURE COMPLETE, THAT IS, GAME IS PLAYABLE AND CONTAINS ALL THE MAJOR FEATURES. THESE FEATURES MAY BE FURTHER REVISED BASED ON TESTING AND FEEDBACK. ADDITIONAL SMALL, NEW FEATURES MAY BE ADDED, SIMILARLY PLANNED, BUT UNIMPLEMENTED FEATURES MAY BE DROPPED. PROGRAMMERS FOCUS MAINLY ON FINISHING THE CODEBASE, RATHER THAN IMPLEMENTING ADDITIONS. ALPHA OCCURS EIGHT TO TEN MONTHS BEFORE CODE RELEASE, BUT THIS CAN VARY SIGNIFICANTLY BASED ON THE SCOPE OF CONTENT AND ASSETS ANY GIVEN GAME HAS.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game_development#Alpha
What you need to present:

• Start Screen

• Main gameplay mechanics

• Win condition(s)

• Lose condition(s)
A few notes:

• Don’t restart the game between levels or sessions

• Don’t forget to take notes

• Questions?
MILESTONE 4 - BETA
BETA PRESENTATION

• Location: Ubisoft Toronto Office
  • 224 Wallace Ave #200

• Dates: November 13th and 14th
  • 3 teams per day
  • 30 minutes per team for presentation, demo & feedback
  • 15 minutes to set up
  • Random group order
BETA PRESENTATION

- Game pitch (again)
- Live demo of the completed game
  - Animation
  - Assets
  - Music & SFX
- Hand over controllers to judges to play
- Prepare demo in advance
- Have an executable ready
- Don’t forget to take notes
PLAYTESTING REPORT

• **Due:** November 13\textsuperscript{th} at 10:00 AM
• 5-10 pages
• Include:
  • Game description: changes since Alpha
  • Concerns or questions
    • Expected results from the playtest, if any
    • Previous informal playtesting
  • Testing procedure
  • Participants
  • Results
  • Analysis
  • Changes
RESULTS VS ANALYSIS

• Results is a raw, summarized listing of what happened, without interpretation

• Given results:
  • Analyze them
  • Implement the changes
DON’TS

• Use playtesting to verify that your game is “good”
  • Embrace the negative feedback and act on it.

• Ask leading questions
  • “Did you enjoy our fun and amazing starburst mechanic?”

• Take your playtesters too seriously
DOS

• Get specific results from playtesting
  • Example: The jump mechanic feels really fun – we should provide more jumping opportunities

• Ask open-ended questions
  • “How did you feel about the Starburst mechanic?”

• Keep it consistent