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GAM200

Team Luminosity

Game KnightLight

Playtest Report 6

KnightLight Final Unity Build Playtest

Subject

KnightLight's final Unity Build

Executive Summary

Based on the feedback gathered from last playtest, a new build of the game was made. This build included new changes to different UX elements and the level design of the tutorial. This with the purpose of finding out how first-time users reacted to these new changes in the tutorial. Additionally, one of the playtesters was not a first-time user who playtested the last build to see what changes they liked or not compared to the previous build. In summary, new players had trouble understanding how the flashlight mechanic works even after seeing the instructions on the wall at the start of the tutorial. Playtesters also mentioned they preferred using the 'Space' key for jumping. New players were not able to understand the aura around the player until they were told about it and they tested it themselves. Regarding the hidden chest, new players missed it as the going through jump-through platforms mechanic hadn't been taught yet in the tutorial. Based on these and other conclusions obtained from this playtest, we can form the appropriate recommendations and implement them in the game to make a better Unity build. Some of these recommendations are adding a short animation at the start of the tutorial to explain the entrance above the player. Making the 'Space' key the default for jumping, while 'W' can be a key to interact with the exit door. Having better signifiers for the aura around the player and modifying or removing its particles. I believe that implementing these changes will make our game more successful.

Purpose

“What changes should we make to our game’s UX elements and tutorial level design before implementing them into the game?”

The purpose of this playtest was to find potential changes that could be implemented to the game’s different UX elements such as flashlight feel (including focus speed, overheating cooldown, super charge power, etc.), sound effects, menus, player interactions, etc. As well as the tutorial’s level design, making sure it teaches the main mechanics appropriately.

Extra playtesting

In addition, some level design aspects will be observed and written down to analyze them and make the appropriate changes to the tilemap or game object positioning. As well as some observations regarding player interaction with the UI.

Method of testing

The way this playtest session was structured similarly to the previous one by making playtesters play through the current Unity build of our game. Based on the previous playtest’s recommendations, appropriate changes were made to the Unity build of the game. This new version of the build features the same three scenes: Main Menu, Tutorial, and Victory scenes, with changes to the UX, UI, and level design. Some of the main changes are:

- The Knight sprite was updated in the main menu, since the last build had the old sprite made by combining other sprites instead of using the new custom Knight sprite.
- The level design changed to feature a splitting path that leads to two different paths with one of them having a hidden ‘little guy’ collectible. Additionally, more coins were added in comparison to the previous build.
- The aura was changed to have particles around it to make it more noticeable to the player. In addition to its color, along with the flashlight’s color, being changed from white to a yellow color.

- Some more particle effects were added such as the one for the overheating flashlight, the healing lamp healing particles, etc.
- The addition of a restart option in the pause menu, as well as being able to use the 'R' key to restart the scene.

The only instruction given to the playtesters was to share their thoughts as they played through the experience. Playtesters were not instructed or shown any of the game controls or mechanics before the experience, excluding the playtester who's not a first time user.

Methodology

Two of the playtest sessions were done online over Discord with playtesters streaming what they saw on screen using the screen share feature, while another one was done in-person on another team's designer. These were performed on different dates throughout November 26th to November 27th, 2023. The average playtest session was about 13.3 minutes including gameplay, feedback sharing, and debriefing. The two participants playtested online were non-DigiPen college students around the age of 21, while the other one was a 19-year-old DigiPen BAGD. For the two non-DigiPen students, one of the relationships with the researcher is being regular subjects for playtesting, while the other one was the researcher's sibling. The DigiPen designer playtested in person had no previous relationship with the researcher other than being class peers. No ethical considerations to be made regarding the experience. All playtesters consented to having their data collected and analyzed to form recommendations for our game design.

Participants

Playtester A

Name: Carlos Callupe

Identity: Non-DigiPen Film and Media Studies Student

Place: Discord

Date: 11/26/23

Session length: 14 minutes

First Time User: Yes

Playtester B

Name: Michael Okamoto

Identity: Non-DigiPen Community College Student

Place: Discord

Date: 11/26/23

Session length: 13 minutes

First Time User: No

Playtester C

Name: Madds Devlaeminck

Identity: DigiPen BAGD Student

Place: Edison Lab Space

Date: 11/27/23

Session length: 13 minutes

First Time User: Yes

Limitations

While choosing the sample, we wanted at least one first time user to test the tutorialization of our game more successfully, without previous knowledge or any kind of bias. We also wanted at least one designer as getting more technical feedback from a playtester is really useful in this stage of development as we're getting closer to shipping and having our game graded.

The only limitations to consider regarding the playtesters' relationship with the researcher is that one of the non-DigiPen students is a regular playtester for the researcher and has played previous builds of the game and previous games too, meaning they're familiar with the process of participant observation, whereas the other is the researcher's sibling which might create some bias or omission of feedback that they might consider upsetting to the researcher. Regarding the DigiPen BAGD, the only relationship between her and the researcher is being academic peers.

Observations

Participant A

The first thing this playtester did when opening the game was point out the flashlight that moved around following the player's mouse cursor and how the Knight would flip depending on its rotation. After spinning the flashlight around some more times, he mentioned liking the monochromatic look of the game while pressing the 'Start' button. After loading the tutorial level, he'd realize that the game does have color after looking at the player's aura. After looking at the instructions in the background of the level, he struggled for some seconds before realizing that the sprites in the instructions are mouse button icons. Once this was learned, he proceeded to hold the super charged flashlight until he realized that holding it for too long overheated the flashlight and dealt damage to the player. After learning how the main mechanic worked, he proceeded to progress through the level. He tried to jump the spikes by pressing 'Space' which didn't make the player jump as 'W' is the only key bind for jumping. He mentioned unconsciously pressing 'Space' as it's a consensus across games that 'Space' is the jump key when jumping is a mechanic. One point brought up regarding level design was whether the gap in the ceiling was where the player fell from or a place where the player could go later on. One thing that intrigued the playtester was the player aura which he didn't know how it worked until he touched a spike and started testing

how it got smaller as the player lost health. Once he passed the first couple obstacles, and dropping to the jump-through platform, the playtester went to the left following the coins then checked the right side and dropped finding the chest. Once he opened it, he mentioned the creature inside was some kind of “beetle”. Additionally, when questioned why they went back to the right path, he mentioned liking how different paths can lead to the same path. After triggering the lamp and opening the door, he went past the healing lamp and didn’t notice the healing effect and its feedback. After that, he defeated the enemy right before the end and proceeded to the exit door.

When asked to share feedback, as he was going back to the main menu, he went to the options menu and checked the settings. He then unchecked the fullscreen toggle and mentioned how good it was that you can toggle fullscreen as he always plays games in windowed mode. After checking the credits menu and quit confirmation. He went back to the level and in the spawn, he said he didn’t know whether the player fell there or the entrance on the ceiling was somewhere the player will be able to go to later. Another point he brought up was how even after playing the entire tutorial, he still struggled using the ‘W’ key for jumping as most other games use the ‘Space’ key, which resulted in him falling on hazards multiple times. Additionally, he referred to the aura as the “Shield” because of the context and shape. His opinion on it was that it should be explained better as he didn’t realize it went down as he took more damage initially. Another thing mentioned was how the player was sent to the next scene as soon as they touched the door which felt too sudden, and that you should let players choose if they want to go through the door and add some time or animation before loading the next scene. Another thought shared by the playtester was how colors played an important role in the game as they instinctively tell the player to use the light on them. Additionally, the playtester mentioned how we could continue playing with these mechanics and hide elements around the map that can unlock secrets. Once he finished the tutorial another time, he mentioned liking the sound effects. But when he was back on the menu, he said the button borders had too much detail and didn’t fit with the aesthetic of the rest of the buttons which was more simplistic. When asked what he would like to see in the future, he said more collectibles spread around the map. As well as, if we decide to make levels like this in a larger scale like a Metroid Vania, we should add checkpoints.

Participant B

This playtester went to the options menu as soon as they opened the game and tested the volume settings. Then he checked the credits menu and asked why I was last, attributing it to bullying, which I denied. Once he entered the tutorial, he pointed out the weird aura around the player and the instructions on the wall, which he didn't bother checking as he already knew the controls. He proceeded to follow the coins avoiding the hazards. After dropping to the jump-through platform, he noticed the coins on the left and grabbed them but **hesitated before jumping**. He returned to the right and checked under the jump-through platform with the flashlight and noticed the coins. He followed them and found the chest with the little guy collectible, mentioning it being cool. **When asked why he chose the right path over the left one, he said the right path was the first path he was presented with**. After this, he continued through the level normally as there weren't many changes made to the second half, finishing the tutorial.

When asked to share feedback and any changes he noticed were made to the level and whether he liked them or not. He said **coins were easier to get now which he liked because he likes their sound effect**. He also mentioned **not liking how the new aura looks bad when you get close to a wall since the particles just build up on the player**. Another point brought up regarding the aura was about its color looking off and being too similar to the healing lamp. Additionally, **he mentioned liking the new cooldown that triggers after the player overheats the flashlight**, but he didn't notice the new particle effect that plays on the direction the flashlight was casted. Finally, one idea the player shared was how **the knockback from overheating the flashlight or receiving damage from a hazard could become a new mechanic that requires you to receive damage from hazards or overheating to get knocked midair to reach higher platforms**.

Participant C

When this playtester opened the game on her laptop, I noticed she didn't have a mouse, so I gave her mine. After taking a look at the menu, she went straight to play and loaded the tutorial scene. After some struggling with the mouse controls, she continued through the hazards not understanding the mechanics yet. After dropping to the jump-through platform, she went through the left path and missed the chest. At this point, the playtester kept repeatedly getting hurt by the spikes, and on the long jump, she died and restarted the level. After getting to the split paths, she went left again, but this time she tried to go back to the right using the jump-through platform, but she noticed there was a ceiling blocking the entrance to the chest from her position. After giving up, she continued to the lamp which she triggered after multiple attempts, mentioning how she just found out that you had to hold your flashlight on the lamp. She continued to the exit of the level normally without noticing the healing lamp, and when she ran into the enemies, she mentioned how cool its sound effects were. After defeating it, she went through the exit door and finished the tutorial.

When asked to share feedback, the playtester mentioned how it took her a minute to understand the main mechanic, then she realized that you need to hold both mouse buttons which she found interesting. When questioned about the player aura, she said she didn't pay much attention to it as her attention was on the flashlight. She then proceeded to get back in the tutorial to test the aura and she did notice it getting smaller as she took damage this time. She was then asked about the healing lamp and mentioned not knowing what it did. She made her way to the lamp and activated it but still didn't notice its effect. She was instructed to take damage and she realized the lamp restores the player's health. After this, she was asked how she thought you were supposed to get the chest which she didn't know how to obtain. She was then instructed to go back to the jump-through she fell to and check under it. She noticed the coins and jumped down to find the chest. She got the little guy collectible and mentioned it being cute. At this point, she said these mechanics would be easier to understand if there were more tutorialization, and that we should teach these mechanics before introducing a challenge that includes them, mentioning this was her main suggestion as a designer: teaching all mechanics before introducing challenges. Finally, she mentioned liking the enemy design as she already knew how to defeat the enemy just by looking and listening to the enemy. Also, she really liked the atmosphere of the game.

Conclusions

After making all these observations based on the playtesters' experience, these are the main takeaways:

- Players like the flashlight following the mouse cursor in the main menu.
- Players like the monochromatic palette.
- Players have trouble recognizing the mouse button icons.
- Players don't know that holding the flashlight for too long overheats the flashlight until they try it themselves.
- Players prefer 'Space' being used to perform a jump.
- Players would like a falling animation at the start of the tutorial level.
- Players don't fully understand the aura signifier at the start.
- Most players ignore the hidden right path because the mechanic wasn't taught.
- Players like different paths that can lead to the same one.
- Players light up the healing lamp but ignore it.
- Players like the different settings in the options menu.
- Players don't like a sudden scene change when getting to the exit.
- Players like the correlation between colors and interaction.
- Players like the sound effects.
- Players would like to see more collectibles spread around the map.
- Players want checkpoints if the levels get bigger.
- Players usually follow the first path they're presented with.
- Players like collectible sound effects.
- Players don't like the outer ring aura particles because they get too distracting.
- Players don't like the aura color being too similar to the healing lamps.
- Players like the overheating animation and sequence.
- Players would like to see the overheating knockback become a mechanic.
- Players need to be reminded that a mouse is recommended to play the game.
- Players don't fully understand the flashlight mechanic even after seeing the instructions.
- Players like enemy sound effects.
- It tends to take a while for players to understand mechanics.

- Players find holding both mouse buttons interesting.
- Players pay more attention to the flashlight than the aura.
- Players like the enemy design and understand how to defeat it.
- Players like the game's atmosphere.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following solutions or features can be implemented to the custom engine.

- We should work on the main menu flashlight's feel by making it feel more natural or more like the in-game version.
- We should use colors in a limited manner to avoid altering the game's aesthetic too much.
- The mouse button icons should be changed to resemble a mouse better.
- We should teach the players that holding the flashlight for too long is bad, as it can overheat, early in the tutorial.
- We should change the jump key bind to 'Space' as it's more intuitive, and we can use 'W' to interact with doors or other objects later on.
- We should add an animation at the start of the tutorial level for context.
- We should teach the aura signifier better in the tutorial.
- We should teach players how to go through jump through platforms by pressing the 'S' key on them.
- We should add multiple paths that can connect with each other, but they all lead to the same destination.
- We should teach the healing lamp effect better in the tutorial.
- We should implement useful settings in the options menu.
- We should allow the player to choose whether they go through the exit door or not and add a transition between rooms.
- We should keep using colors to signify interaction with light.
- We should make sound effects more impactful.
- We should add more collectibles to the levels.
- We should turn healing lamps into checkpoints if we decide to make bigger scale levels.

- We should make more level designs featuring path splitting.
- We should make collectible feedback more satisfying to the player.
- We should remove the particles around the player aura.
- We should change the player aura back to white.
- We should make the overheating sequence smoother.
- We should consider testing level designs around the overheating knockback.
- We should remind the player that a mouse is recommended to play the game.
- We should make better tutorialization for the flashlight mechanic.
- We should make enemy sound effects more threatening.
- We should make a better tutorial by making sure all mechanics are taught from the start.
- We should keep the holding both buttons to super charge the flashlight mechanic.
- We should make the aura feedback more impactful.
- We should make enemies more threatening in general to help players understand they're enemies.
- We should add elements that enhance the game's atmosphere like more decorations.