

**Design Document for:**

# **Your Game Title Here**

**Subtitle of Game title**

“Cool game quote here”™

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Version # 1.00

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Table of Contents

[Your Game Title Here 1](#_Toc366807986)

[Version 1.00 5](#_Toc366807987)

[Version **1**.**1**0 5](#_Toc366807988)

[Version 2.00 5](#_Toc366807989)

[Version 2.10 5](#_Toc366807990)

[Game Overview 6](#_Toc366807991)

[Philosophy 6](#_Toc366807992)

[**Philosophical point #1** 6](#_Toc366807993)

[**Philosophical point #2** 6](#_Toc366807994)

[**Philosophical point #3** 6](#_Toc366807995)

[Common Questions 6](#_Toc366807996)

[**What is the game?** 6](#_Toc366807997)

[**Why create this game?** 6](#_Toc366807998)

[**Where does the game take place?** 6](#_Toc366807999)

[**What does the name of your game mean?** 6](#_Toc366808000)

[**What do I control?** 6](#_Toc366808001)

[**How many characters do I control?** 7](#_Toc366808002)

[**What is the main focus?** 7](#_Toc366808003)

[**What’s different?** 7](#_Toc366808004)

[**What is your projected SAM ratio?** 7](#_Toc366808005)

[**What are your milestones?** 7](#_Toc366808006)

[Game Design Mission Statement 7](#_Toc366808007)

[Target Audience 9](#_Toc366808008)

[Marketing Intentions 9](#_Toc366808009)

[Advertising 9](#_Toc366808010)

[Comparable Products 9](#_Toc366808011)

[General Features 10](#_Toc366808012)

[Multi-player Features 10](#_Toc366808013)

[Editor 10](#_Toc366808014)

[Game play 10](#_Toc366808015)

[Location #1 11](#_Toc366808016)

[Location #2 11](#_Toc366808017)

[Location #3 11](#_Toc366808018)

[The Physical World 11](#_Toc366808019)

[**Key Locations** 11](#_Toc366808020)

[**Travel** 11](#_Toc366808021)

[**Scale** 11](#_Toc366808022)

[**Objects** 11](#_Toc366808023)

[**Weather** 12](#_Toc366808024)

[**Day and Night** 12](#_Toc366808025)

[**Time** 12](#_Toc366808026)

[Rendering System 12](#_Toc366808027)

[**2D/3D Rendering** 12](#_Toc366808028)

[Camera 12](#_Toc366808029)

[**Camera Detail #1** 12](#_Toc366808030)

[**Camera Detail #2** 12](#_Toc366808031)

[Game Engine 12](#_Toc366808032)

[**Game Engine Detail #1** 12](#_Toc366808033)

[**Water** 12](#_Toc366808034)

[**Collision Detection** 13](#_Toc366808035)

[Lighting Models 13](#_Toc366808036)

[**Lighting Model Detail #1** 13](#_Toc366808037)

[**Lighting Model Detail #2** 13](#_Toc366808038)

[The World Layout 14](#_Toc366808039)

[World Layout Detail #1 14](#_Toc366808040)

[World Layout Detail #2 14](#_Toc366808041)

[Game Characters 15](#_Toc366808042)

[Creating a Character 15](#_Toc366808043)

[Enemies and Monsters 15](#_Toc366808044)

[User Interface 16](#_Toc366808045)

[User Interface Detail #1 16](#_Toc366808046)

[User Interface Detail #2 16](#_Toc366808047)

[SAM Ratio 17](#_Toc366808048)

[Setting 17](#_Toc366808049)

[Avatar 17](#_Toc366808050)

[Mechanics 17](#_Toc366808051)

[Weapons 18](#_Toc366808052)

[Weapons Details #1 18](#_Toc366808053)

[Weapons Details #2 18](#_Toc366808054)

[Musical Scores and Sound Effects 19](#_Toc366808055)

[Red Book Audio 19](#_Toc366808056)

[3D Sound 19](#_Toc366808057)

[Sound Design 19](#_Toc366808058)

[Game Design Mission Statement 20](#_Toc366808059)

[Game Design Mission Statement #1 20](#_Toc366808060)

[Game Design Mission Statement #2 20](#_Toc366808061)

[Single Player Game 21](#_Toc366808062)

[Single Player Experience 21](#_Toc366808063)

[Single Player Game Detail #1 21](#_Toc366808064)

[Single Player Game Detail #2 21](#_Toc366808065)

[Story 21](#_Toc366808066)

[Hours of Game-play 21](#_Toc366808067)

[Victory Conditions 21](#_Toc366808068)

[Multi-player Game 22](#_Toc366808069)

[Max Players 22](#_Toc366808070)

[Servers 22](#_Toc366808071)

[Customization 22](#_Toc366808072)

[Internet 22](#_Toc366808073)

[Gaming Sites 22](#_Toc366808074)

[Persistence 22](#_Toc366808075)

[Saving and Loading 22](#_Toc366808076)

[Character Rendering 23](#_Toc366808077)

[Character Rendering Detail #1 23](#_Toc366808078)

[Character Rendering Detail #2 23](#_Toc366808079)

[World Editing 24](#_Toc366808080)

[World Editing Detail #1 24](#_Toc366808081)

[World Editing Detail #2 24](#_Toc366808082)

[Future Section 25](#_Toc366808083)

[Sequel plans 25](#_Toc366808084)

[DLC plans 25](#_Toc366808085)

[DLC Feature #1 25](#_Toc366808086)

[DLC Feature #2 25](#_Toc366808087)

[Future Features 25](#_Toc366808088)

[Future Feature #1 25](#_Toc366808089)

[Future Feature #2 25](#_Toc366808090)

[Extra Miscellaneous Stuff 26](#_Toc366808091)

[Junk I am working on… 26](#_Toc366808092)

[Crazy idea #1 26](#_Toc366808093)

[Crazy idea #2 26](#_Toc366808094)

[“XYZ Appendix” 27](#_Toc366808095)

[“Objects Appendix” 27](#_Toc366808096)

[“User Interface Appendix” 27](#_Toc366808097)

[“Networking Appendix” 27](#_Toc366808098)

[“Character Rendering and Animation Appendix” 27](#_Toc366808099)

[“Story Appendix” 27](#_Toc366808100)

**Design History**

#### Overview

In this paragraph describe to the reader what you are trying to achieve with the design history. It is possible that they don’t know what this is for and you need to explain it to them.

## Version 1.00

Version 1.00 is the first draft of the Game Design Document for our game. Here is where we have placed together the first run through of all of the ideas. Commonly this is done before the rest of the team can get a say on what will and will not happen (but this will not last that way for too long.). For this section, just give a summary of your goal for version 1.00.

### Version **1**.**1**0

Version 1.10 is several tweaks while we are in the process of putting the design together. Some of the changes are:

1. Pairing down of the design scope. (Scope, not design)
2. More detailed descriptions in many areas, specifically A, B and C.
3. Story details.
4. World layout and design.

## Version 2.00

Version 2.00 is a major update from where we were at with version 1.00. Some of what we accomplished was this, that, and the other. We also wanted to fully analyze and pan out the character with the blue hair that does the thing. We feel we have now accomplished enough to call this the next version.

Included in the changes are:

1. Minor revisions throughout entire document.
2. Added “User Interface Appendix”.
3. Added “Game Object Properties Appendix”.
4. Added concept sketch for world.

### Version 2.10

Version 2.10 has a few small tweaks. We have gone through and fixed a few typos and grammer errors because that one dev kept bugging me to fix it. We also made some changes in:

1. Organized the “User Interface Appendix”
2. Added images to the “Enemies Appendix”
3. Removed the “Crazy Idea #3”

# **Game Overview**

## Philosophy

### **Philosophical point #1**

This game is trying to do this and that. Fundamentally I am trying to achieve something that has never been achieved before. Or. This game will not try and change the world. We are ripping off the competition so exactly that I can’t believe it. The world will be shocked at how we are using an existing engine with new art.

### **Philosophical point #2**

Our game only runs on Compaq computers. The reason for this is such and such. We believe the world is coming to end anyhow so what difference does it make?

### **Philosophical point #3**

When you create some of these overarching philosophical points about your design, say whatever you want. Also, feel free to change it to “My game design goals” or whatever you like to call it.

## Common Questions

### **What is the game?**

Here is your elevator pitch. Make it short and concise as this is just a glance over of the game. For each aspect you will further explain in detail later in the appropriate section. Writing-wise it should be approximately one paragraph but when read it should be able to be said within 30 seconds to 1 minute. You’re focusing on the hook of the game, not the detailed elaboration.

### **Why create this game?**

This is a brief summary of why we are going through the long and arduous journey of game development. With a reason, or mission, to create this game, we will help increase our focus and give more reason to give it our all for longer. It is well proven that working for reasons aside from money helps fuel the worker better and entertainment is a small but important reason.

### **Where does the game take place?**

Knowing where the game is taking place would help begin to give it form. Does it take place on earth? Does it take place in space? Inside our body? What Era and location range does this take place? Era will give you a good idea of technology level. Location range is vital for design restrictions. Not all games take place on the entire world. Some don’t even ever touch the planet. Maybe you’re focusing on a specific country. Don’t get too lengthy yet. You still want to keep a short summary and go into more detail later.

### **What does the name of your game mean?**

The name of your game can help you further identify your focus. Giving it meaning helps since this is the first chance to catch some players’ attention. Also, it may help you slow down and really think of a name that you are proud of and want to stick with. It may not mean much to some players but, especially to a developer, you’ll want something that isn’t so bad that you shudder every single time you hear the name. Also, sometimes it can give you little trivia to feed during the interview to give your fans a little something extra to be giddy about.

### **What do I control?**

This is another vital question everyone should be able to answer with ease. Do you control a specific character? The beast/vehicle the character rides in? Do you control an entire platoon? If you cannot control anything then you are simply making a movie with a lot of extra hassle. If control shifts, be sure to note that briefly as well (such as party arrangement or character dying and becoming replaced). Don’t forget commonly overlooked details such as mini-games.

### **How many characters do I control?**

This is another vital question that will usually be very brief. Do you control 1 character at a time? Do you control a small party? When you have more than one player character at a time (RPGs, RTS, etc.), this will become more important. Don’t get too carried away with detail yet as that time will come later.

### **What is the main focus?**

What is the focus of the game that you are making? Is it to tell a story? Are you showing off graphic capability? Are you trying to invoke a particular reaction or feeling from your player? Give us an idea what your primary goal is so that when push comes to shove, we know what the most important priority that cannot be sacrificed is.

### **What’s different?**

What are you doing differently from everyone else on the market? If you are not doing anything unique, you’re already giving up your chance to shine. Even an engine demo has features to focus on (yes, you can talk about your engine if the game mechanics and story are common fanfare). Remember not to get too carried away. Keep it short and simple. One solid paragraph should be a good amount. If you have nothing then you need to go back to the drawing board and spend more time thinking about it.

### **What is your projected SAM ratio?**

This is a story telling design tool that is very important for game design. SAM stands for “Setting : Avatar : Mechanics”. The important thing to remember is the ratio these share for your storytelling. While it is possible to have a game without setting or avatar (such as Tetris), you cannot have a game without mechanics or it would not be a game. You do need to be aware of how important each of these are for your game to give a guideline of emphasis on each detail. This is a projection and may change along the way but it gives you a solid starting point of your priorities that the team can be aware of. Do briefly explain as you have a separate section later to further explain your ratio later on.

### **What are your milestones?**

It is important to get an expected guideline of when your project will be completed. Dates very rarely fall under when originally predicted but an initial estimate is much more helpful for organizing the pace and what is feasible for the team. Feel free to add additional milestones that fit the needs of the team.

**Pre-launch preparation** – January 1, 2000

**Project start date** – January 1, 2000

**Prototype completion date** – January 01, 2000

**Alpha completion date** – January 01, 2000

**In-house toolkit completion date** – January 01, 2000

**Beta completion date** – January 01, 2000

**Public releasable toolkit completion date** – January 01, 2000

**Project completion date** – January 01, 2000

## Game Design Mission Statement

The game design mission statement is your set of rules to approach your game design behavior. These will be the core game design philosophies that you hold strict guidance for all of your game design. This is very important to establish and ensure the team knows and follows it very early on so they know what your core principal design philosophies are. Some have even referred to these as “Game Design Commandments” as these are the strict rules for your design that should not be allowed to be broken at any time. The best statements are the ones that are lenient but direct. In this point you will list them out as bullet points and go into detail of further explaining later (remember, you’re trying to keep things short, simple, and direct here so they can quickly find their references at the top). You should have a good dozen here.

###### Players Do; NPCs watch

###### All items have relevant purposes but none are not required to proceed to the next step

###### No Forced Failure

###### The overall mood and tone will be clear and consistent

###### “Biggest gun in my inventory” is not always the best answer.

Marketing Plan

## Target Audience

Who is your target audience? Which demographic are you planning to develop for? Which particular group or interests are you planning to target? This is something the entire team needs to know. You do not have to end up with the correct results but an approach that the entire team is aware of will make the development process much smoother.

## Marketing Intentions

What are your marketing intentions? What is your marketing strategy? There is too large of a market out there for us to rely on word of mouth and expect to rely on just the cornerstones of our game. It is better to have some strategy and approach planned instead of something prepared last minute. It also gives the team a good idea of what to salvage during development to help succeed with you marketing intentions.

## Advertising

What is your plan to advertise your game? You need to know how you will be approaching this. What theme will you have for your advertisement? What message do you plan to convey? Games have grown large enough to have advertisement in every and all mediums.

## Comparable Products

This is where you should or have already done your research on what else is on the market. You need to know what is out, how well they have done, what makes them unique. You do not want to end up with copyright infringement after all of the hard work to complete a full game. This will also help you better understand accurate predictions of how well this game can do. It may also point out weaknesses of the genre to give strength to your game. Effective research done here will help propel you above all others in your genre.

**Feature Set**

## General Features

127 worlds

23 cities per world

Large boss battles with several sequences per boss

Amazing processor power to hit 12,800 polygons per character

718 different weapons

Port versions for various gameplay systems.

Mutant fiddle players

## Multi-player Features

64,000 player server databases

128 player live playing session

16 computer LAN session

## Editor

Event editor

Tileset editor

Battleground editor

Random name generator

Avatar Editor

Frilly Dress editor

## Game play

3-D Joystick movement

SIXAXIS controls

Voice recognition

Camera response

Turkey guns

**The Game World**

#### Overview

This is an overview of your game world. Summarize the characteristics of it. What are the highlights of the terrain? What are the key points of it? Below is where you’ll go into detail of these significant locations and why they are vital to your game world.

### Location #1

This is where you will go into detail of why this location is important and what history it may have. Was there an important war fought here? Was the savior of all creation tickled until vanquished the evils of the world? Even if with a minor location (according to the history of the game world), you should cover why the player is here or the events that caused the player to enter this location. You are still going to keep it to a summary and not go into the finer details. You will reach that in the next section.

### Location #2

Keep us engaged with the next location. If you don’t have a second one, then you are thinking too large scale for your first location and need to break it down more. There is no harm in covering the grand scale’s identity (such as the entire planet) but if you don’t have a secondary place the game is taking place then you probably need to plan out your game world more and give it a little more depth.

### Location #3

Just keep on listing your major locations.

## The Physical World

#### Overview

Here is the overview of your game world. Summarize what all is to follow. Down in the section below is when you will get to finally dive in with all of the glorious detail of your world. Do not forget your minor locations unless you have many locations (then it would be recommended to create a minor location appendix).

### **Key Locations**

Cover the details and let your design soar. The emphasis here is to cover all of the design details the level designer will need to know. Any history about the locations that has not been covered already should also be covered here.

### **Travel**

Describe the way your character(s) will travel from location to location. Don’t forget that travel during gameplay must also be discussed here.

### **Scale**

Describe the scale that you will use to represent the world. Scale is important!

### **Objects**

Describe the different objects that can be found in the world.

See the “Objects Appendix” for a list of all the objects found in the world. That is what it is there for.

### **Weather**

Describe what sort of weather will be found in the world, if any. Otherwise omit this section. Add sections that apply to your game design.

### **Day and Night**

Does your games have a day and night mode? If so, describe it here.

### **Time**

Describe the way time will work in your game or whatever will be used.

## Rendering System

#### Overview

Give an overview of how your game will be rendered and then go into detail in the following paragraphs.

### **2D/3D Rendering**

Describe what sort of 2D/3D rendering engine will be used.

## Camera

#### Overview

Describe the way the camera will work and then go into details if the camera is very complicated in sub sections.

### **Camera Detail #1**

The camera will move around like this and that.

### **Camera Detail #2**

The camera will sometimes move like this in this special circumstance.

## Game Engine

#### Overview

Describe an over of the game engine.

### **Game Engine Detail #1**

The game engine will keep track of everything in the world like such and such.

### **Water**

There will be water in the world that looks awesome and our game engine will handle it beautifully.

### **Collision Detection**

Our game engine handles collision detection really well. It uses the such and such technique and will be quite excellent. Can you see I am having a hard time making up stupid placeholder text here?

## Lighting Models

#### Overview

Describe the lighting model you are going to use and then go into the different aspects of it below.

### **Lighting Model Detail #1**

We are using the xyz technique to light our world.

### **Lighting Model Detail #2**

We won’t be lighting the eggplants in the game because they are purple.

# **The World Layout**

#### Overview

Provide an overview here.

### World Layout Detail #1

Put in details to describe your world layout. It is hard for the characters to do anything if there is no world. And if this is a space game then describe the universe you smarty pants.

### World Layout Detail #2

Are we teleporting? Are we walking? Is there only one continent? Is the world just a giant ocean? What is your team going to need to know about the world layout?

# **Game Characters**

#### Overview

Over of what your characters are.

### Creating a Character

How you create or personalize your character.

### Enemies and Monsters

Describe enemies or monsters in the world or whomever the player is trying to defeat. Naturally this depends heavily on your game idea but generally games are trying to kill something.

# **User Interface**

#### Overview

Provide some sort of an overview to your interface and same as all the previous sections, break down the components of the UI below.

### User Interface Detail #1

This is another vital aspect of game design. This is how the game communicates to the player the information needed that the gameplay action does not show or things that could be shown but are more easily understood with iconic references (such as other avatars’ locations or a compass pointing towards the treasure). Common examples are: health, magic, currency, in-game compass, inventory, and collectables.

### User Interface Detail #2

Does your U.I. do anything neat or cool? Does it have any interesting features like dynamic pulsation to the beat of the player’s heart? Does the H.U.D. move around to where it’s most convenient? The designers and programmers need to know.

# **SAM Ratio**

#### Overview

This is a story telling design tool that is very important for game design. SAM stands for “Setting : Avatar : Mechanics”. You do need to be aware of how important each of these are for your game to give a guideline of emphasis on each detail. This will point out what are your priorities and what can be set to the side. A traditional jRPG may have a strong ratio of 2:4:1 while a traditional platformer may go in a completely different direction with 2:1:8. Puzzle games can easily even go to 0:0:1. This is a projection and may change along the way but it gives you a solid starting point of your priorities that the team can be aware of.

**SAM Ratio – 1:1:1**

## Setting

Go into detail of why you chose setting to receive the rating that it received. Explain the impact it will have on the other two aspects. You are always working with a finite number of sources no matter how you split it up. If you rated it high, explain why the setting is important. Explain why the atmosphere and the mood are so important to warrant this high rating. If it has a low rating, explain why setting is taking a backseat to the others. Is it more about the avatar? Is the game really about playing with a particular mechanic? Hopefully you thought this through and can explain your reason carefully. Think thoroughly on your value for this as some may argue a game like Tetris still has an abstract setting (and while mood does fall into this category, others have ground to explain a value of zero as well).

## Avatar

This is explaining the detail of why you chose the value did for your avatar. Is your game very character driven? Does your game revolve around how the character grows? Is there a big emphasis how the player will have a particular character interact with the environment? How about the multiplayer experience, if there is one? Explain your value and how you came to it. Very few games have this

## Mechanics

The mechanics is what makes the game interact with the player. This cannot be a zero (while the other two have reasons and examples of how they can be zero). This is about the player’s interaction. If there is no interaction than it is simply not a game (it could be a story/video told through a console, for example). Explain how important the mechanics are for this game and their perceived value in resources needed for this project.

# **Weapons**

#### Overview

Overview of weapons used in game. This section can sometimes be omitted for games that don’t use weapons (such as Tetris). There are some games, such as RTS games, where this will be large enough that you will have just the topics and break it down in an appendix for the individual weapons.

## Weapons Details #1

A general description of the relevant details here as you will probably have a spreadsheet of content keeping track of the specific individual values. If you have a bunch of weapons, you may just want to break them into categories here and create a weapons appendix.

## Weapons Details #2

What kind of weapons do you have? Plasma swords for your cavemen? Knights going against a rail gun? Pteradactyls vs. nukes? It’s your game so you should know.

# **Musical Scores and Sound Effects**

#### Overview

This should probably be broken down into two sections but I think you get the point.

## Red Book Audio

If you are using Red Book then describe what your plan is here. If not, what are you using?

## 3D Sound

Talk about what sort of sound API’s you are going to use or not use as the case may be.

## Sound Design

Take a shot at what you are going to do for sound design at this early stage. Hey, good to let your reader know what you are thinking.

# **Game Design Mission Statement**

#### Overview

These are the over-arching rules outlining the key principals for how you will design the gameplay, the levels, the feel of the game, the interface, the controls, etc. These are the ones most important to your design that your team must follow. They should be loose but direct and never contradict. These are all listed above so simply go into more detail here. These explanations should be very clear as you want each and every member of your team thoroughly understanding and following each and every one of these. If you ever have to make a change to this, make sure your entire team is promptly notified of it.

### Game Design Mission Statement #1

We want our players to do all of the cool and interesting stuff that makes them want to play our game. Who wants to do boring stuff like running lame, uninteresting errands anyways? The player gets to do all of the cool stuff so they will show their friends and tell everyone how we have the coolest game ever!

### Game Design Mission Statement #2

Key items are so last millennium. If there is an object to pick up, there is a reason it can be used that doesn’t point out exactly what it is for. Let the player figure it out and be creative. We’re tired of red key into red door item mechanics and want to create our own solutions. If we give them all of the answers then it is not as fun or as rewarding compared to the player figuring it out.

# **Single Player Game**

#### Overview

Describe the single player game experience in a few sentences.

## Single Player Experience

Here is a breakdown of the key components of the single player game.

### Single Player Game Detail #1

### Single Player Game Detail #2

## Story

Describe your story idea here and then refer them to an appendix or separate document which provides all the details on the story if it is really big.

## Hours of Game-play

Talk about how long the single player game experience is supposed to last or what your thoughts are at this point.

## Victory Conditions

How does the player win the single player game? Even impossible games like I Wanna Be The Guy have eventual victory conditions. Poorly designed games that have no eventual ending dropped out of fashion at the end of the 8-bit era. Do not forget this and if it must be done a specific way, make it clear and apparent to the player (not necessary for a “good ending” vs. “best ending” situation…more specifically look at Super Ghouls & Ghosts for an example of what NOT to do).

# **Multi-player Game**

#### Overview

Describe how the multi-player game will work in a few sentences and then go into details below.

## Max Players

Describe how many players can play at once or whatever.

## Servers

Is your game client-server or peer to peer or whatever.

## Customization

Describe how the players can customize the multi-player experience.

## Internet

Describe how your game will work over the Internet.

## Gaming Sites

Describe what gaming sites you want to support and what technology you intend to use to achieve this. Perhaps Dplay or TCP/IP or whatever. It is probably a good idea to break the tech stuff out into a separate area, you decide.

## Persistence

Describe if your world is persistent or not.

## Saving and Loading

Explain how you can save a multi-player game and then reload it. If you can or why this is not possible.

# **Character Rendering**

#### Overview

Provide an overview as to how your characters will be rendered. You may have decided to include this elsewhere or break it out to provide more detail to a specific reader.

### Character Rendering Detail #1

### Character Rendering Detail #2

# **World Editing**

#### Overview

Provide an overview about the world editor. Is it going to be for dev team use or public use? If it is public use, is it going to be separate or in-game? If this is a MMO, how will patches and expansions be implemented?

### World Editing Detail #1

### World Editing Detail #2

# **Future Section**

## Sequel plans

Do you have any big plans for the sequel? It is not too early to begin preparing such plans. Having a plan for how the sequel will grow will be very vital for keeping the series alive. Also, if you are writing this before discussing with investors, this will be another vital section to inform them with. Plans for the future do help a lot as they can see how well you have thought this out.

## DLC plans

#### Overview

Do you have plans for DLC? In what ways would it work? How will you host the DLC? You need to know this now so that you can prepare the development accordingly. Even if the DLC of particular sections do not get used, it will be MUCH harder to implement after release if you don’t accommodate for it before release.

### DLC Feature #1

We will have downloadable skin colors because we want to have purple mutant fiddle players.

### DLC Feature #2

We want to have mount armor because people will buy it and give us money even though it does nothing.

## Future Features

#### Overview

Many times this turns out to be a holding pin for brainstorming of other ideas that can be done since development is usually more about trimming down and giving up features rather than adding, however sometimes there are gems that sparkle when given enough polish. Also useful for keeping track of who the idea came from when planning further for it, especially for the sequel.

### Future Feature #1

Our game is going to make ninja penguins appear from the ceiling when the player starts pressing the X button too many times because they will never expect it and it will get them to tell their friends about it.

### Future Feature #2

We’re going to read the player’s mind and make appear exactly what they want to see because our programming team is just that good.

# **Extra Miscellaneous Stuff**

#### Overview

Drop anything you are working on and don’t have a good home for here. Each game is different so it isn’t unusual to have something here. Such as if traveling the lands is a big part of the gameplay you might want to add details about the navigation and really explore into it and how it will work so the players don’t get lost.

## Junk I am working on…

### Crazy idea #1

I am reading your mind and telling you a crazy idea but not that idea, try the next one. It has more melons.

### Crazy idea #2

We will have them eat mushrooms to grow and grow large. The turtles can be stopped if jumped on top of. If the player touches a fire then the player can shoot fireballs.

# **“XYZ Appendix”**

Provide a brief description of what this appendix is for and then get down to business and provide data to the reader.

Here are a few examples of some of the appendices in my latest design…

# **“Objects Appendix”**

# **“User Interface Appendix”**

# **“Networking Appendix”**

# **“Character Rendering and Animation Appendix”**

# **“Story Appendix”**

Okay, that’s it. I wanted to spend more time on this and really make it a great roadmap for putting a game design together. Unfortunately it would take a ton of time and that is something that we don’t have enough of in this business. I think you get the idea anyhow. Also, don’t get the impression that I think a design should provide the information in any particular order, this just happened to be the way it fell out of my head when I sat down. Change this template any way you want and if you feel you have improved on it, send it back to me and I can pass it out as an alternative to anyone that asks me in the future.

Good luck and all that!

Chris Taylor