CALYPSO

LIFE BALANCE GAME

GBDA 302 - Global Digital Project

Usability Tests and Pivot Strategy

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CALYPSO
PLAYTEST OBSERVATION FORM

Name of game tester: _____

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in our playtesting, my name is _____ and you'll be testing a prototype of our game -Calypso-. We are still in the early stages of development, so we are open to any suggestions and comments to help improve our game.

What kind of games do you usually play?

What do you like about them?

Play Session - In Game Observation:

[tester starts to play the game]

We encourage you to think out loud, and make comments on what choices you are making including what uncertainties you may have.

Some questions during play session can be: [make it conversational]
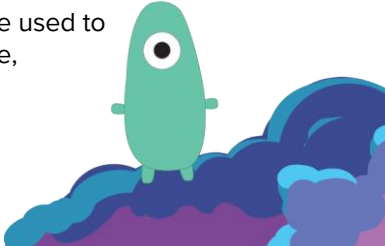Does the navigation make sense? Why did you choose to click there?

Discussion:

What was your first impression?
Are there any particular aspects you found satisfying?
Were you able to learn how to play quickly? (should we include more instructions?)
Did you know where to click? Was anything confusing?
Were the mini games interesting?
Can you describe the objective of the game?
Any information you would have like to know before starting to play?
Do you think the game is appropriate for children?
If you could change one thing what would it be? Anything you would like to see added?

Wrap Up:

Thank you for testing our game, your feedback is appreciated and will be used to improve the final game design. If you would like to see the finished game, we can send you a link when it is completed. =)
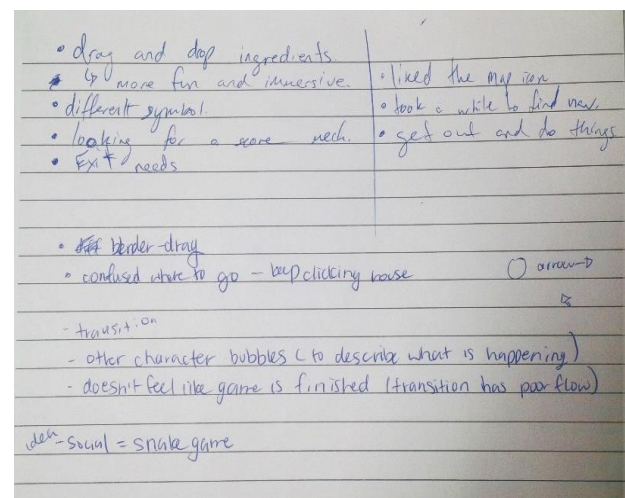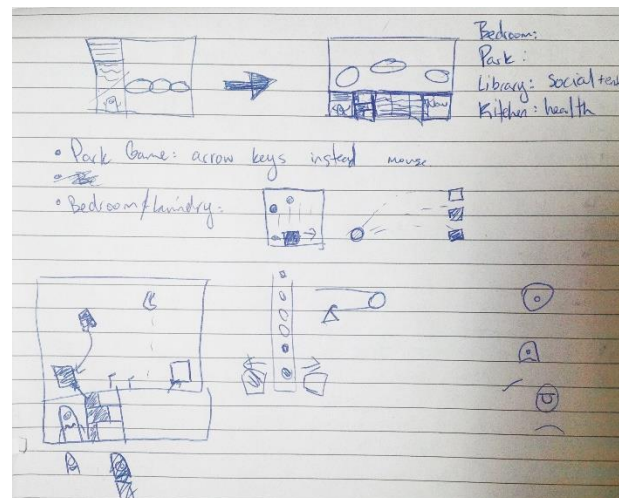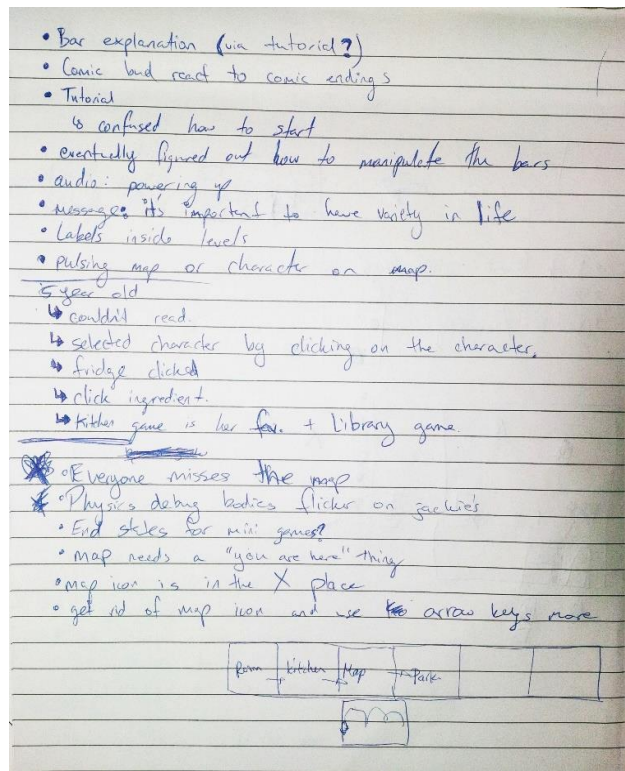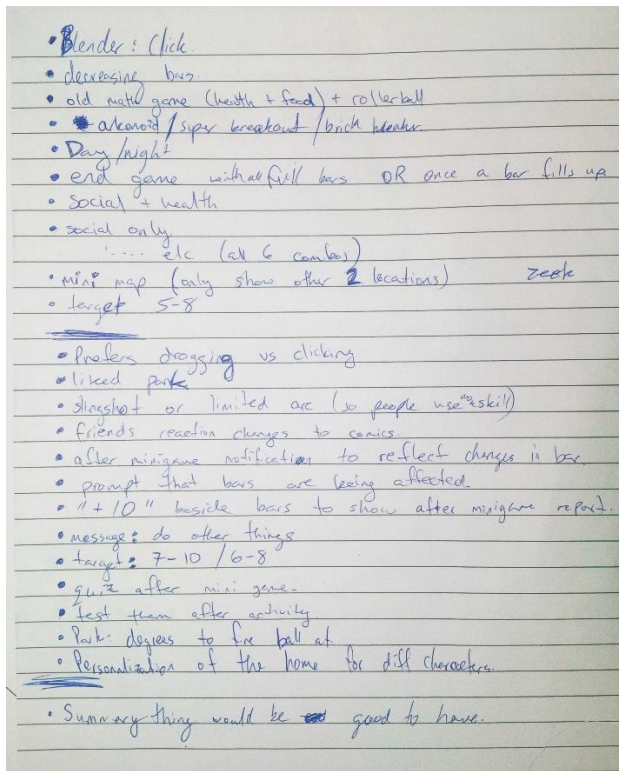
Email: _____

Usability Tests

Copy of Notes taken during the Playtest

To maintain a more personal conversation with the play testers, it was decided to follow the above script, but also make more questions up as the conversation continued. Handwriting the notes was a quick way to jot down notes while keeping a more intimate connection with those who tested. Some sketches for changes were also made while discussing with the testers. In total, there were **thirteen** different people interviewed for the play tests.

The following are results from 5 different testers (non-GBDA) from the playtesting done at the Games Institute:

- Blender: Click
- decreasing bars.
- old math game (health + food) + rollerball
- asteroid / super breakout / brick breaker
- Day / night
- end game with all full bars OR once a bar fills up
- Social + health
- social only
- ..... etc (all 6 combos)
- mini map (only show other 2 locations)   Zeek
- target 5-8

- Prefers dragging vs clicking
- liked park
- slingshot or limited are (so people use "skill")
- friends reaction changes to comics
- after minigame notification to reflect changes in bar.
- prompt that bars are being affected.
- "+10" beside bars to show after minigame report.
- message: do other things
- target: 7-10 / 6-8
- quiz after mini game.
- test them after activity
- Park: degrees to fire ball at.
- Personalization of the home for diff characters.

- Summary thing would be good to have.

- Bar explanation (via tutorial?)
- Comic loud react to comic endings
- Tutorial
  → confused how to start
- eventually figured out how to manipulate the bars
- audio: powering up
- message: "it's important to have variety in life"
- Labels inside levels
- pulsing map or character on map.

5 year old
  → couldn't read.
  → selected character by clicking on the character.
  → fridge clicked
  → click ingredient.
  → Kitchen game is her fav. + library game.

- Everyone misses the map
- Physics debug bodies flicker on Jackie's
- End styles for mini games?
- Map needs a "you are here" thing
- msg icon is in the X place
- get rid of map icon and use arrow keys more

| Room | kitchen | Map | Park | | |

- Park Game: arrow keys instead mouse
- Bedroom / laundry:

Bedroom:
Park:
Library: Social tester
Kitchen: health

- drag and drop ingredients.
  → more fun and immersive   • liked the map icon
- different symbol.   • took a while to find map.
- looking for a score mech.   • get out and do things
- Exit needs

- border drag
- confused where to go — keep clicking house   ○ arrow→

- transition
- other character bubbles (to describe what is happening)
- doesn't feel like game is finished (transition has poor flow)

- Social = snake game

The following notes were also handwritten, but were typed up for legibility purposes. This includes 4 responses from GBDA classmates, and 4 people from the Games Institute:

- some players instinctively used arrow keys instead of clicking
- Steve: suggested tutorial, complained the map was not obvious, bars could be flashier and should be explained in the tutorial
- Susan: tried to click many more things like the kite, table sign in park, picture frames, TV in bedroom, didn't know what she was supposed to be doing, said game needs motivation, suggested fun and silly ingredients for the smoothie game
- Austin: ball firing on exit click bug, no clear message taken from the game, suggested a tutorial that gives a backstory on the character, be sure arrows on click points are consistent
- Mishaal: didn't notice map, thought kite was a mini game, didn't notice bars, lacked purpose or goal or motivation
- Jason: bars provide purpose but need to be explained and players need to be motivated, guy in library's hover feature is creepy, map not noticeable, exit button should be renamed, suggested the bedroom mini game be more fun and complicated than the rest but the player can only access them when their other bars are full to a certain level. Suggested we rename library to school
- Victoria: move the map, suggested adding badges or unlockable outfits to motivate players to complete the mini games, said intro was needed, difficulty should be increased
- Pierson: tried to use keys, not immediately apparent what is clickable, objective would have been nice to know, suggested a time limit or sense of time passing (i.e. his mom is gone for the weekend and he's responsible for himself or something), game needs end state, said we need to show the player on every screen
- Noah (age 7): very confused, clearly needed directions, games didn't work so he got bored, liked the ball game

Feedback from Professor Jennifer Whitson and Steve Wilcox

On Friday, February 26th, Professor Whitson and guest speaker Steve Wilcox reviewed the first prototype of our game and provided relevant feedback that will be used to make iterations on the game.

Steve Wilcox:

Why is the character so invested in video games? It would be good to provide a backstory or narrative as to why he is there. Also, don't push the stereotype that the video game players are sitting in a dark room and anti-social. Video games that take place outdoors do not necessarily convince me to want to go outside. What are you missing out by not playing outside? How can real life knowledge or lessons be incorporated to teach player how to achieve a more balanced life? The planet seems uninhabited at the moment, maybe have friends or other characters at the other locations. What is he missing out social-wise? It would be good to add animations to show that were are other people in the world. For the mini games, what do you want the player to

leave with and incorporate into everyday life and how to form good gaming habits? Also, there is a continuity issue with day and night skies.

Professor Jennifer Whitson:

For the kitchen mini game, look into other cooking games, ingredient mixing games, and what make them pleasurable or what makes clicking games fun. Instead of a store, change it to getting ice cream at the mall or go to library, and make it less lonely. There is a lack of social interaction. The permanent side bar showing the character status is a good thing to build into the UI. Also, why do you need to click to go to a location, and click again to start the game, there is an extra unnecessary screen that doubles the time that takes to get to the game (unless instructions would be displayed there). Need to make more characters in the environment. What are the health bars going to be categorized as; do games affect only one bar at a time and deplete others? Try using pulses to indicate where to click.

Pivot Strategy

Summary of Results

The following are eight responses from the test session, the other 5 responses are summarized in the section "Ideas for Revision":

Steve: Steve suggested the introduction of a tutorial. He also complained the map was not obvious; that bars could be "flashier" and that all elements should be explained in a tutorial. He thought some players would use arrow keys instead of clicking and was right.

Susan: Susan tried to click on many more objects including the kite, the table sign in the park, the picture frames, and the Television in the bedroom. In addition, Susan didn't know what she was supposed to be doing, and thought the game needed motivation. She also suggested fun and silly ingredients for the "smoothie" game.

Austin: When in the park scene, players enter the mini game by clicking on the ball. When users exit the mini game, the ball is a projectile and shoots towards the exit button. This was clearly a bug. Austin saw no clear message taken from the game and he suggested a tutorial that presents a backstory on the character. He also added that arrows on click points should be consistent

Mishaal: Mishaal didn't notice the embedded map. He thought the kite was a mini-game in itself. He didn't notice the "bars." Overall, he thought the game lacked purpose or a goal or motivation. He was right.

Jason: Jason suggested the bars provide purpose but need to be explained and players need to be motivated. He noted that the character in the library's "hover" feature is "creepy." Jason also noted that the map was not noticeable. He thought the exit button should be renamed. He also suggested the bedroom mini-game be more fun and complicated than the rest. He felt that the player should only be able to access them when their other bars are full at least to a pre-determined level. He also suggested that we rename the library to "school."

Victoria: Victoria thought that we should move the map and further suggested adding "badges" or "unlockable" "outfits" to motivate players to complete the mini-games. She thought an introduction was needed and that the games' difficulty should be increased.

Pierson: Pierson tried to use keys and noted that it was not immediately apparent what is clickable. He further added that an objective would have been nice to know and suggested a time limit or sense of time passing (i.e. his mom is gone for the weekend and he's responsible for himself or something). Finally he noted that the game needs an end state. He also thought we need to show the player on every screen.

Noah (age 7): Noah was very confused and clearly needed directions. Some of the games didn't work so he got bored. Nevertheless Noah liked the ball game.

Visual Documentation
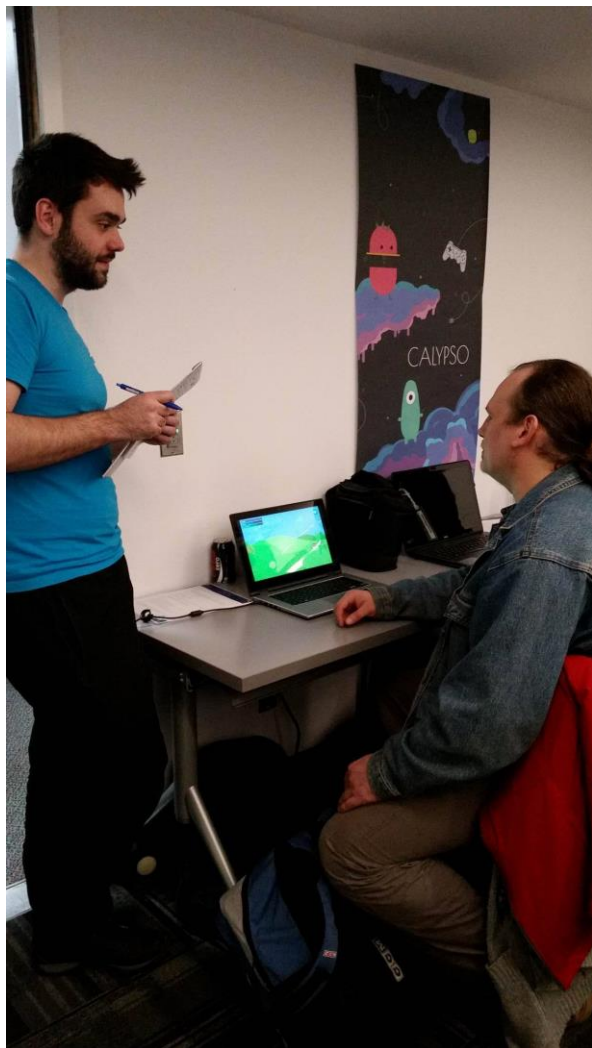
Ideas for Revision

Generally, some sort of instructions or tutorial are needed to explain the game controls and the bars and buttons. Many players were confused on how to begin playing the game. For the library location, the character should react to the comic ending choices. The purple character on the library chair should laugh or make some gestures with arms and possibly feet creating more of a sense of a live being. Most players eventually figured out how to manipulate the bars and buttons but more design work needs to be completed.

It might be appropriate to add an "audio" cue. Such a cue could communicate what is happening with the bars (power up sounds or depleting or warning sounds etc.) This would enhance the overall experience. Virtually everyone understood the life balance message embedded in the game. Regarding the locations, a few players did not make the connection that home was "where

they came from" when first clicking the map. (home > map > home > map > park). This can be better displayed by changing the user flow structure or adding an indicator icon.

Virtually all testers tried to click on the "character" to select their character rather than the arrows (no one clicked on the arrows to choose the character even the page was not live yet). A few testers while playing in the "kitchen" scene clicked on the fridge since it is the biggest object in the scene. The size of the object on screen is an influence. There was mixed feedback on "ingredient" selections for this mini game. Half of the testers said they would prefer dragging (more immersive and interactive/fun) and the other half preferred clicking on the ingredients.

The top right corner of the screen is a poor location for the map. Nearly all testers missed it and clicked around the house until they got bored and then tried to find a way out. This was surprising to us since the top right corner is where people usually look to exit something. A map icon would make sense since players are trying to exit their current location. There should be a "you are here" notation so players can easily see what location they are currently at. This would prevent players from accidentally navigating to their current location rather than advancing into the game.

The player experience would be enhanced by adopting a few simple ideas. For example, we need to adopt end states for the game as a whole. Once one bar fills up calculate a score or once all bars are full end the game with a message reflecting on the results and how they could have achieved a more balanced life in all categories. Similarly there is a need for an "ending" for the mini games. For example, in the kitchen, on the counter, there is a blender and players can add ingredients from the open fridge. You click on the blender to start the mini game and it shows the open blender. The premise of the game is to promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyle balance. There are health, social and entertainment bars on the top left corner. We need to decide how to end the game - when the health, social and entertainment bars are full; or when only one is full?

Clearly "Life Balance" needs more interactivity. Perhaps the enhancement of the arrow keys would be appropriate. This might make it easier to navigate and be more intuitive.
Testers concluded that our target audience were children ages 5 to 10, rather than our intended market of ten to thirteen. Children of all ages, including 10-13 and 5-10, for that matter, learn quickly and are at the point where they learn new things and form habits quickly and with ease. The continuous and rapid development of technology is affecting not only the types of media people use, but also adolescents' online and offline habits.   Children and young teenagers are most affected by it.

Final Reflection and Next Steps

In conclusion the usability test was very informative and helpful. Almost all of the testers seemed to come to many of the same conclusions. The first and most obvious enhancement would be to make the map icon more visible and more intuitive. Also, the simple addition of a "you are here" notification makes great sense. It was also clear that there are a few bugs and these need to be addressed. Shooting ball when exiting a level was mentioned more than once. The addition of an interactive side bar would increase functionality and usability. The health bars need some work to look more interesting since it should be the focal point of the main takeaway. Perhaps an image that fills up or some other creative enhancement. The game also requires end-states and objectives to enhance the game experience. Finally, the introduction of a user guide and prompts would help make the game more "playable." Overall, however, the feedback was excellent and suggestions in general were very helpful and useful.

Link to Most Updated Prototype

http://bo.ro/302