

# Game Design Document 101

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The game design document clearly articulates your ideas for a game. They are a standard way to share your ideas before initiating any kind of interactive project. For this course, you are really making a mini-design documents. As stated in the syllabus, you can choose to make a game instead of making a game design document for your midterm project.

Unlike some design documents, you will not concern yourself with too much technical specification or over articulate your audience. Your design document should follow the “**Jaffe**” **model** for this class - concise and to the point. To make a film analogy, your **mini design documents are treatments**, not production scripts. Please refer to the design document grading criteria for more details about expectations.

Anything you read about game design documents will emphasize the concept that they are "living documents." For this course, your document will inform your final game "product" in the class. Please design accordingly.

## Resources:

Like most free markets, the web abounds with good and bad advice about articulating your designs. There is no sure, step-by-step process for communicating this information. There is also no single correct format. Instead, I suggest you review some of the heuristics and opinions provided by people involved in game design and choose one that matches your style:

## General Sites:

- Review **Gamasutra** and **Game Career Guide** for opinions on game design docs from industry professionals. The article, The **Anatomy of a Game Design Document** has been a standard among instructors for years.
- This also seems like a good time to meet Brenda Brathwaite via her blog entry on game design documents: <http://bbrathwaite.wordpress.com/2008/11/30/creating-a-game-design-document/>



More examples and tips on writing are available at **GameFiction.com**.

## Samples:

Through the generosity of practicing designers, a few quality game design documents are available online.

- David Jaffe's Calling all Cars: <http://criminalcrackdown.blogspot.com/2007/02/calling-all-cars-game-design-document.html>
- The Grim Fandango GDD/Puzzle Document, Tim Schafer et al: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/8350715/Grim-Fandango-Puzzle-Document-Original>
- Al Lowe has made his epic GDD's available from a few of the Leisure Suit Larry games: <http://www.allowe.com/gamedesign/>

## Templates:

- A solid template for Word 2007. It is clearly too much information for your assignments, but it should give you a point of reference and perspective: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC300004661033.aspx?CategoryID=CT101172331033>
- This is another MS-Word Game Design Document Template by Chris Taylor: <http://www.gameblender.org/gbcp/docs/design/MasterDesignDocument.doc>
- Tom Sloper's Template: <http://www.gamedev.net/reference/articles/article243.asp>

## Other Resources:

Here's some reading and resources I gave my former students:

- [http://aii.lgrace.com/documents/html/GDD\\_samples.htm](http://aii.lgrace.com/documents/html/GDD_samples.htm)
- [http://aii.lgrace.com/documents/html/Game\\_Design\\_Document\\_Resources.htm](http://aii.lgrace.com/documents/html/Game_Design_Document_Resources.htm)

Please feel free to be graphical in your game description.