

Game Prototype (Midterm & Final)

Grading guide for students of Lindsay Grace

Game Prototype: Digital or Non-Digital:

Your game design assignment will be graded as follows:

- **50%: Original Game Design.** An original game design is one that vastly improves an existing experience or for which few if any other examples exist.
- **50%: Fit, finish and quality of prototype.** A high quality prototype is one that provides clear evidence regarding the potential success or failure of your game.

All games must be documented (digital or analog), so please allow time for photography, video, screenshots, etc. Documentation is about 20% of the Fit/Finish grade, depending on the project. Some projects will be much harder to document than others. Click here for a [good example of non-video documentation](#). Take screenshots, show your process (when appropriate) and show people having fun playing your game.

Please keep in mind that these projects should reflect at least 3-4 weeks of work from a group . For a 3 credit hour class, 4 weeks means you've spent at least 12 hours in design, development, and documentation.

This is a 500 level class (or above), while you are not expected to be experts, you should expect to work hard to make an A project. The best strategy is to apply the experiences you've earned in other courses or in your focus of study (e.g. write a script, use software you know, play to your strength and experience) and extend it into the design and implementation of a game. You will find that a team of people with diverse experiences and skills serves you best for this project.

A good project will have been playtested, refined more than once and is generally fun, interesting and new to most people. The reason we cover so much theory is that theory can form the springboard from which your ideas fly. If you are completely stuck, or not sure why your game just isn't working, try to evaluate the varied formal structures we've discussed in class. Are you helping the player achieve a flow state? Are you applying most of Brian Sutton Smith's rhetoric's of play, or are you too heavily waited in one of Caillois's dimensions? Use our in-class theory as a way to test your designs concretely.

Lastly, give yourself time to evaluate the game. Waiting until the last minute won't help you, however committing to building the game early over an intense period can help. This is the model for game jams, and there something to forcing the game to work under tight deadlines that can help. Depending on how you work, it might be better to make a game over an intense weekend well before the project is due, then give yourself time to refine it, revise it and document it.

Board Game | Card Game

If you choose to create a board game or card game prototype, the game must be presented as closely as possible to the finished product. As mentioned, it should also be an original design. This means the following:

*Original board and pieces. You may not reuse any physical item from an existing game. This includes timers, tokens, cards, buzzers etc. The fabrication of some items may require support from specialized individuals, if those people are not in your group please credit them when displaying your game.

*Game pieces must be near finished state. Cards and boards must be digitally printed (see print center) and reproducible, for example. It is fine to use a high quality hand process to complete game pieces (e.g. painting, wood sculpture, 3D print), but please make sure that the final product is converted to a digital medium for easy reproduction and appropriate finish.

Hand drawn markers on cardboard is appropriate for a first draft, but not for a final product to be graded. Please use digital printing processes for a professional look.



The images above demonstrate the level of expectation for quality board game prototypes.

Consider visiting the following resources:

- A simple eHow on the [very basic mechanics of making a board game prototype](#)
- The [Board Game Designer's forum](#) (section on [prototyping](#))
- This is a good article on the experience of paper prototyping (your first phase before your game is prototyped for us): http://www.gamasutra.com/features/20050913/sigman_01.shtml
- A nice dev diary from [David Bowman at Certain Affinity](#), outlines how they incorporate board game design and paper prototyping into the design of a XBOX 360 game.

Digital Game

If you have never made a digital game before, it can be a quite an undertaking. If you and everyone on your team has never made a digital game, you may want to start with a board or card game first.

Digital games should be presented as closely as possible to the finished product. A vertical slice is acceptable (and probably appropriate) for both the midterm and the final project. To receive full credit for the assignment, the game must completely demonstrate the bulk of gameplay experience and provide at least 5 minutes of entertaining gameplay. These 5 minutes exclude any startup screens, cinematics or non-play experiences. You may choose any game engine and any appropriate game environment. All games must be playable in class and must be accompanied by a demonstration video that clearly indicates the gameplay experience. The demonstration video can be as short as 1 minute.

Digital games don't have to be screen based, nor do they have to be wholly digital (hybrids are ok).



Sample student work shown above, created in the same timeline you have.

Here are a few examples to support your understanding:

- A [nice dev diary by a student](#), with similar constraints to you - 3 weeks, one group, high ideas for their roundabout. This is a great example of documentation too - we get the dev and design stages and have nice, clear photography of the game being played.
- [The Unfinished Swan](#): Demonstration Video and vertical slice
- J' Blow's (from Braid) [prototypes for other games](#): Good demonstration of functional prototypes
- Gallery of [digital prototypes from my former students](#)
- The [experimental gameplay project](#) is a wonderful ongoing exploration in new ways to play (lots of prototypes)
- A wonderful overview of the [experimental gameplay project](#) (think Crayon Physics) and [rapid prototyping](#) (under 7 days rapid)
- The [Global Game Jam](#) has lots of prototype examples too