

Games Design

Welcome to Games Design at Brunel and congratulations on securing your place on our programme.

We would like you to complete a short activity before you arrive as you will be discussing your answers in one of your first personal tutor sessions.

Your work will not be officially assessed however it will allow your tutor to get to know you better and help you prepare for your course.

Introduction

We'd like to welcome you to Games Design and Brunel University. We look forward to you joining us in September and to the next three years.

Games Design is a complex subject with many overlapping skills, all of which you will have a chance to develop throughout the course.

The first year will give you an introduction to all of the disciplines, after which point you will choose which area to specialise in.

The following pages give you a taster from each main pathway (Design, Studies, Technology, Art, and Sound and Music) and a starting point for the degree - we'd like you to read through them and undertake the task with all of its five components. They aren't too arduous and will help you start the course on a high note.

Once again we very much look forward to seeing you in September.

The Games Design Team

Brunel University London

Step 1 – Design

Chris Cox – Games Design Route Leader

Games Design is about creating the experience of a game through the rules and structure of that game. As an example in Overwatch (Blizzard, 2016) someone had to decide how much damage Hanzo's arrows did or how far Tracer can blink. That same person might also have to write the quest dialogue and map out the level plans and make sure the team you're working with understand those things.

1.

To be able to design games it's important that we have a broad range of experience and not just 'our game'. We imagine that you've played lots of games but here are some that we'd like you to play some of. The games we've chosen here are all *Free to Play* ones as we don't want you to have to pay out for anything where we can avoid it. Remember we're not asking you to 'like' all of these games but just to experience them.

Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Links (Konami, 2016) https://store.steampowered.com/app/601510/YuGiOh_Duel_Links/

Why: Card Mechanics are a great way of thinking about games.

League of Legends (Riot, 2009) <https://na.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/>

Why: The esports scene is interesting in all sorts of ways.

A Warmer Shade of Summer (52.6 Productions, 2021) https://store.steampowered.com/app/1639580/A_Warmer_Shade_of_Summer/

Why: A different style of game

Other Free games we'd recommend if you have more time:

DOTA / Team Fortress/ Clash of Clans / Candy Crush

When you play **any** game from now onwards (possibly for the rest of your life!) you should start to think about what the game is doing. How is it making you **feel** and how has the designer achieved that? What **rules** are in place that are making up the game?

2.

We'd also like you to read the following article, it's by no means 'everything' but it starts to give you an overview and a some good ways to think about things:

<https://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/tutorials/from-zero-to-pitch-a-walkthrough-for-game-designers--gamedev-6121>

3.

Play some proper, modern board games - ideally in person at a Board Game Cafe - go in and ask them for some good advice on a complex-ish board game produced in the last 5 years. Of course only do this if it's safe to do so - otherwise you could try something online maybe using Board Game Arena (<https://en.boardgamearena.com/>) or Tabletop Simulator on Steam. If you want a suggestion try Wingspan by the excellent Elizabeth Hargreave or Blood Rage by Eric Lang.

Step 2 – Studies

Marco Benoît Carbone – Games Studies Route Leader

Ever wonder why we love the games we play and want to make? How and why games are compelling and draw you in for hours? Or how they fit within the broader landscape of popular culture and society? Game studies allows you to think about the wide range of concepts and theories that contribute to understanding how games are made, and the role games play in our larger society.

1. To get you thinking and to get you writing, first play one of the following games and think about these questions:

Fortnite Battle Royale (Epic Games and People Can Fly, 2018)

Fortnite is arguably the most talked-about game of the year. Not only is it the most successful of an already over-populated new genre, but it has fuelled what seems to be a never-ending moral panic surrounding the negative effects of video games, particularly in children. Why is it so popular? Is it just because it's free, or do the aesthetics, gameplay and community play a role here? Is there any credence to the moral panic surrounding video games? If not then why did the World Health Organisation introduce "gaming disorder" as a mental health condition?

Spelunky (Mossmouth, 2008)

Spelunky is an indie platformer with procedurally generated level, originally released in 2008 (with later versions coming out in 2012). It is representative of a particular trend in retro platformers at time and draws its inspiration from a number of games from the past. What other genres does the game draw on and how has it impacted games which followed it?

Doki Doki Literature Club! (Team Salvato, 2017)

Doki Doki Literature Club! is not what it seems - it is a horror game masquerading as a visual novel*, so please do not play it if psychological horror is not something you enjoy. It plays with genre and it plays with the borders of the game world. How is the game innovative? How and why does it break the fourth wall? Where does the game world end? How does the game play with genre? What genre/s does it ultimately belong to? Can you think of other games that use similar techniques? How can you discuss the game's following and its cultural impact?

2. Pick one of these games, or one of Chris's list from the previous page, and write a short essay (500-700 words) about it, focusing on both the game itself and its impact on culture and society.

If you want some advice on how to start writing academic essays, how to reference the things you cite (games, articles, books), and generally how to improve your study skills, check out Brunel's ASK service at: <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/study/academic-skills>

*Apologies for the spoilers, but you might as well get used to it; we will be spoiling a lot of games in theory classes!

Step 3 – Technology

Mario Michaelides – Games Technology Route Leader

Inspired by the games you have played and written about in the previous steps, simply (!) design your own game for the Nintendo Switch that utilises the technology provided by the console (see the visual below to assist you). Please use the provided One Page Game Design Document attached (only) to communicate your game.



One Page Game Design Document

Name	Concept Sketch
Description and Objectives	
Mechanics	
Features & Unique Selling Point/s	Controls & Movement
Visual Style, Music, Sound etc. The "Feel"	Win State
	Lose State

Step 4 – Art

Thaleia Deniozou – Games Art Route Leader

For the final step of this task, you are asked to further consider the visual style of the game you designed on the previous step. Begin by further considering how you would like your game's assets to look like, based on your One Page Game Design Document.

1.

First, create a moodboard (a collection of images that convey the type of 'look and feel' you would like your game to have). Then consider what kind of key colours you would like to use for your assets and create a colour palette (a set of 5 main colours you will frequently use and which highlight the style of the visuals).

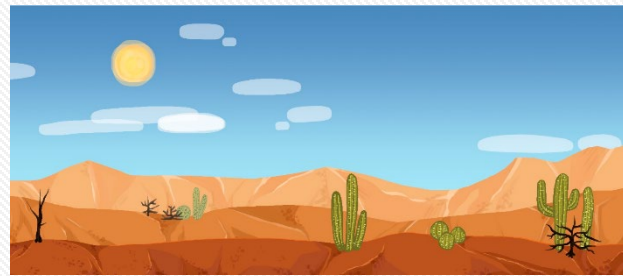
<https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel> (Adobe Color is a useful tool, to help you create your color palette).

2.

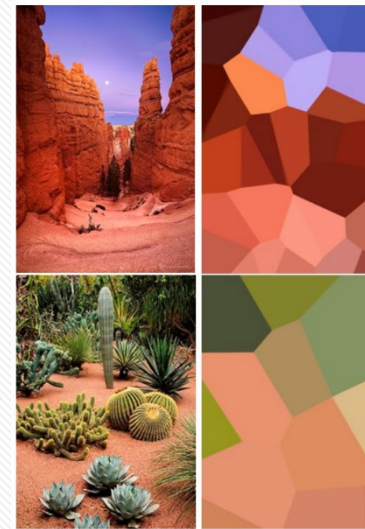
Then, create the main character of your game. You can either draw the character if you are comfortable with drawing (*digitally or by hand) or use collage if you are less comfortable with drawing. Consider the character's abilities, appearance and functions; the design can be as imaginative or as intricate as you would like (also the character does not have to be human).



Setting moodboard example



Final Asset



Color palette examples

*If you prefer to draw digitally and you have a software like Photoshop, GIMP, Krita etc. available to you, feel free to use it.



- This visual work was created by a games design alumna.

Step 5 – Sound and Music

Andra Ivănescu – Games Sound and Music Route Leader

For the final step of this task, think about the sound and music for your game, based on your One Page Game Design Document and the character created for the Art class.

1. First, think about the music for your game. You should have already mentioned some of this in the feel section of your game design document, but expand on this here. Think about the general soundscape and things like instrumentation, and musical style, but also specific considerations outside of the musical style, including genre, console, and players. Feel free to include brief examples from other games.*
2. Think about the sound effects for your game and if they're more naturalistic, put together a mixer using [BBC Sound Effects](#) to illustrate some of the most important sounds/soundscapes, or use [Chiptone](#) to illustrate it if your sounds are leaning more towards 8- or 16-bit. You can share a link to these, or more conveniently export them and include them on a PowerPoint slide, maybe even with your moodboard and assets.
3. Finally, what does your main character sound like? Are they voiced? Do they have a musical theme? Do they have specific attacks or non-violent moves associated with them? For some of the considerations that can go into this even if your game isn't dialogue-heavy or narrative-driven, check out this [Audio Development Overview](#) for League of Legends (Riot Games, 2009).



*If you already have experience with making music, by using your own DAW, by playing your own instruments, or both, please do!

