

REMNANTS OF TIME

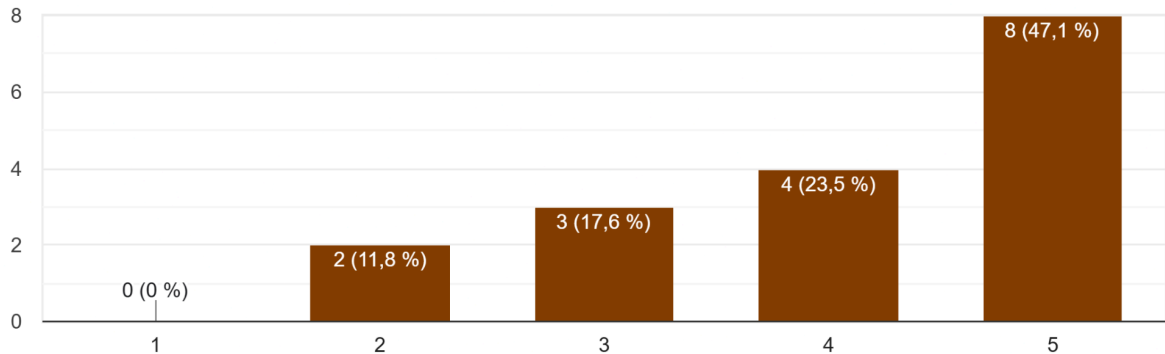
Chapter 5: Playtesting

Playtesting Process

As part of our playtesting phase, we conducted 17 playtests with friends and family across one weekend. The majority of our playtesters were in their twenties, with 8 of them being between 22 and 25, with the remaining 23.5% being 31 or older (with 17.6% testers within their forties). 41% of the testers said they were male, the rest was split evenly between female and non-binary/diverse. In general, they had a lot of gaming experience.

Gaming experience

17 Antworten



The playtests were either conducted live or online. For live playtests, we took notes while observing our playtesters play the game. For the online playtests, we asked playtesters to record their playtesting session if possible. After the playtest, the playtesters were asked to fill out a form about their experience playing the game.

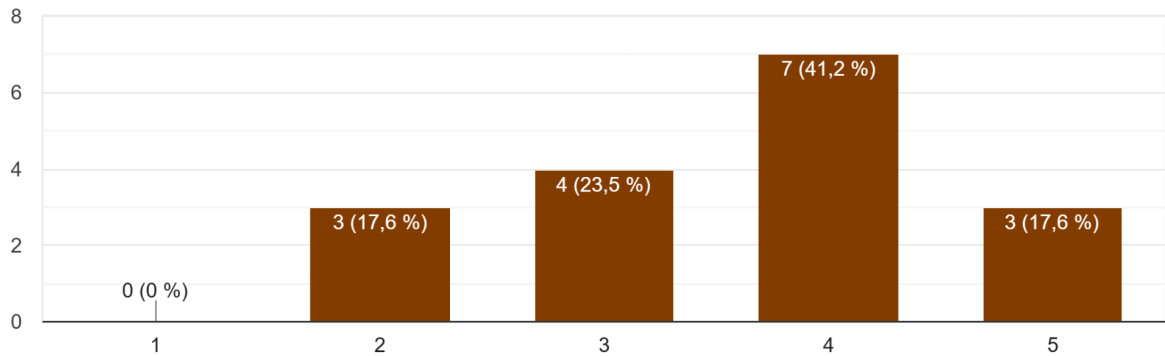
Since it is recommended to playtest early and often, we had a small playtesting session even before the alpha release to test the basic controls and idea of the game. This already proved useful in finding the direction of further development.

Playtesting Results

The reviews for the game were generally positive.

How fun was the game?

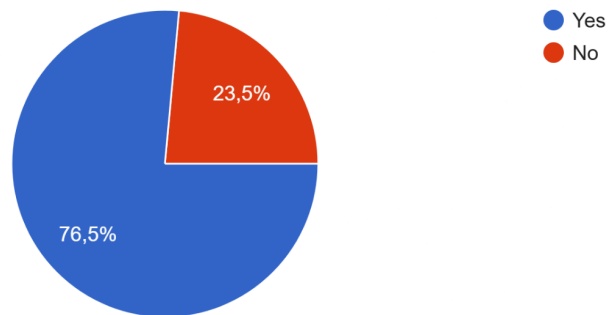
17 Antworten



Puzzles were deemed difficult, but generally enjoyable. However, the majority of playtesters were confused by at least one room. The primary cause for confusion was the lack of understanding in how our game's mechanics work.

Where there any rooms that confused you?

17 Antworten



Enemy sections received mixed reviews. An equal amount of playtesters found them either difficult, medium, or easy. After the first few playtests we noticed that the enemies were too easy, so we updated our game version to account for that. This might be one reason for the large difference in enemy difficulty recorded by our playtesters.

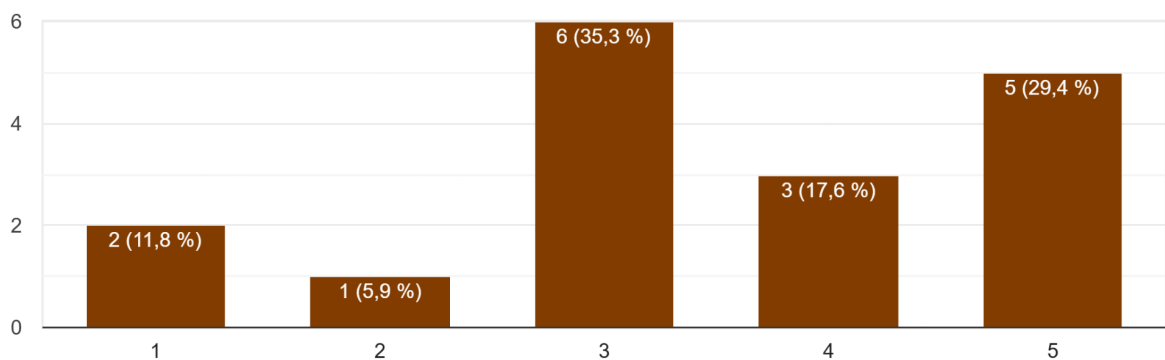
The boss was deemed difficult, and received mixed reviews. Some players didn't understand how the decision making of the boss works. Others struggled to figure out what to do, but were pleasantly surprised when they did find out. The playtest was invaluable to find out that the boss was not as intuitive as we might have thought.

Many experienced difficulty learning the controls. While we attempted to introduce the mechanics through tutorial-like rooms, many playtesters still took a long time to understand how the mechanics worked and when and how to use them. This is quite a big problem, since we mostly had people with quite a lot of previous gaming experience testing our game. People who don't play games as often would probably understand even less, leading to frustration.

When asked if people liked the stealth or combat sections more, the results were pretty mixed. That might show that we found a good balance between the two. (1 = purely combat, 5 = purely stealth)

Did you prefer combat or stealth in enemy sections?

17 Antworten



Playtesting Feedback

The primary feedback we received is that our game is not as intuitive as we thought. This goes both for the introduction of the mechanics, where our tutorial-like rooms failed their purpose by not explicitly introducing the player to the desired mechanics, as well as the unintuitive room progression. Early in the game you come into a maze with paths into different directions. Each direction ends with a lever that, if activated, tells the player the number of activated levers. However, there are no hints that they are used to open the boss door in the bottom left of the maze, leading to confusion in the players. This can be improved by adding explicit explanations and by restructuring the overall dungeon room layout.

The mechanics should get introduced better. People often had a rough idea of what their abilities did, but struggled to get a full understanding or even mastery. This can be improved by a better introduction of each mechanic, making their use more clear and letting players master them through a better layout of the rooms. Playtesters suggested adding explicit visuals telling players which buttons to press to perform the desired mechanic when first encountering a challenge designed to be solved by that mechanic. In addition, the room layout could be

improved by having more small rooms, which require the use of the mechanics, and only introduce bigger rooms once the foundational knowledge of the mechanics are set.

Visually the game doesn't communicate enough information. Because the visual difference between past and present is not stark, some players have expressed difficulties in keeping track of the timeline they are in. Similarly, interactable objects have unique sprites and visual effects that trigger when interacted but players found them inadequate and ended up taking multiple attempts to understand what the interaction was doing.

Some players lost their sense of direction. Possible solutions might include wayfinding methods such as color coding individual rooms, or other ways of showing them where they are like a minimap, or restructuring the dungeon layout in a way that such things are not necessary in the first place. One playtester suggested blocking access to rooms where the puzzle has already been solved.

We currently have no way of active healing in the game. This might have led to some frustrations as it feels bad to die, even if you respawn in the same room and don't lose progress. Multiple playtesters suggested adding a way to heal.

Finally, some playtesters suggested improvements to our menus and user interface. One issue many people faced is that after dying, they accidentally returned to the main menu instead of trying again from the room they died in, thus losing their entire progress, which was frustrating. Another issue is our not fully thought out accessibility. Our introductory cutscene features a flash visual. While we included an option to deactivate screen flash effects, we did not indicate as such, so first time players who might need to deactivate screen flash effects would not know unless they first explored the settings.

Future Plans

In hindsight we see that an approach where you have multiple separate playtesting sessions with an ever increasing amount of playtesters is immensely helpful. In the time between these sessions it would have been possible to make things more clear or fix bugs that everybody experienced. This way the feedback would not focus on the same things over and over again, but find increasingly small problems that might have gone unnoticed now. Therefore we plan to do another playtesting session after we implement the following changes we deem necessary after this playtesting phase.

As stated before, the core problem of our game so far is that players don't fully understand our game. To solve this for the mechanics, we want to add more explanatory cutscenes and better visuals, e.g. making it visually more clear which objects are interactable and what interacting with them will cause. When it comes to our levels, we want to improve wayfinding by adding both natural and artificial wayfinding cues. We also want to improve the progression of our game by restructuring our room layout.

On the visual effects side, we plan to add a screen wide tone mapper to clearly distinguish when the player is in the past, giving the player a reference always at hand more prominent than the progress bar at the edge of the screen. And for the sprites we want to add more animations that jump to the eye and clearly indicate the status of the object, be it a lever, an energy pillar or a door.

Finally, we want to improve our bossfight and enemy sections as many people considered them not as fun as the puzzles. For the boss, the main problem seems to be the lack of understanding, so we want to add hints to players on how to fight the boss, e.g. by making it clear in the present time that traps exist in the past or by showing that the boss can be stunned by traps.

Conclusion

While we expected that our game might not be as intuitive as we might think, some of the results were nevertheless a little sobering. However, the results are generally positive, and the majority of the aspects that were considered negative can be improved by better visualisations, explanations, tutorials, and cutscenes. Our plans for the upcoming milestone are thus to improve on the understandability of the game and test this rigorously.