

Game prototype

Idea

As a prototype for our game we propose a board-like version of our game that focuses on the decision-making process and quick-events of the running phase.

The player has to move his character across a randomly generated labyrinth, while being chased by the Slender Man and making fast paced decisions.

The Slender Man is not shown explicitly inside the labyrinth. Instead, the player has a head start value that can be increased and decreased while running inside the labyrinth. If the head start value of the player reaches 0, the Slender Man catches up to the player and the game ends. Furthermore, the distance of the Slender Man to the player character is reflected with the usage of sound events.

To prohibit the player to run endlessly inside the labyrinth, the Slender Man moves slightly faster than the player character and the head start of the player is decreased every 30 seconds or every few turns of the player.

When encountering a tile with a decision to be made (e.g. a crossroad or an event), the player has 5 seconds to quickly orientate himself inside the labyrinth and move the player according to his decision. If the time limit is up, the player gets a penalty to his head start and is moved automatically by the computer player.

To abstract the procedurally generated labyrinth, we create a small labyrinth randomly from a set of predefined tiles and a rough general structure defining a few choke points that divide the labyrinth into different segments. In order to generate enough room to implement circles in the labyrinth we propose a size of 6x7 tiles.

After generating the labyrinth, we place a random selection of obstacles on the chokepoints and put the appropriate items in the segments. For harder levels we can also put the appropriate items in prior segments in order to force the player to use the circular design of the labyrinth and backtrack to previous segments. This way, the player first has to find the corresponding item to progress to the next segment of the labyrinth. Carrying multiple items is hard for the player and additionally decreases the head start of the player, but offers the possibility to quickly cross to another segment without having to run a longer way.

Obstacles and Items inside the labyrinth include:

- Cobwebs -> Torch
- Barricades -> Axe
- Hole -> Rope
- Sign Door -> Sign Key
- End Door -> Letter
- Slope -> Ladder

Different tiles of the labyrinth can boast challenges and decisions to be made for the player, in which random dice rolls abstract the success and failure of the player. Rolling a 1 or 2 lets

the player fail the event and decreases the head start of the player, while rolling a 6 represents a great success and increases the head start.

In order to challenge the player with navigating inside the labyrinth and to implement a fog-like mechanic, we decided to turn around tiles behind the player and only show the player tiles around the currently active tile.

Experiences playing the prototype

Since we didn't implement the temple-Run-like gameplay aspect of our game to the prototype, we had a problem to let the Slender Man catch up to the player and let the player fail during the run. We solved this issue by enforcing randomized dice rolls that can hinder the player and limiting the maximum amount of movement the player can perform inside the labyrinth.

Making the player lose head start based on time is a bad idea and head start should instead be deducted by turns taken. Losing one head start every 3 turns seems to be a good amount.

Finding the right amount of items and obstacles placed in the labyrinth while still providing enough space to walk around is hard. Often decisions seem to be a bit trivial for the player.

Since a player has to turn the tiles in order to simulate the fog, the fast pacing of the running phase couldn't be realised.

Lessons learned from creating the prototype

Coming up with a good approximation of the original game idea and core details that is still fun to play and challenging in a physical format is no trivial task.

A difficult aspect of our game to implement physically proved to be the Temple-Run-like gameplay where the player has to dodge obstacles along the way. Instead, we decided to focus more on the decision making and orientation aspect of our game, while abstracting the skill based dodge-mechanics with random dice rolls.

Implementing the general idea of randomized levels and the decision making process was relatively easy to accomplish with the help of randomized labyrinth-tiles that can be extended with special items after labyrinth generation.

Coming up with sensible map sizes was harder than initially expected, since the generating algorithm needs to have enough space to come up with interesting labyrinth patterns that lets the player have many decisions and to hide the obstacles and keys in the different segments of the map, while still keeping the generated labyrinth structure manageable for the player to navigate.

We have to give more thought for the implementation of quick time events and make the gathering of items not a best case scenario in every case.

Design revisions

We propose that the Slender Man character moves slightly faster than the player to prohibit the player to run endlessly inside the labyrinth, if played flawlessly.

Limit the amount of options to choose from during the quick time events to better incorporate the simultaneous dodging of obstacles along the labyrinth.

Making the quick time events meaningful is important for the final game. In order to not make picking up items trivial and a best case scenario every time, we propose the implementation of traps along the items that could set the player back.