Designer's name: Ian Cooke

Objective of test: to identify successful iconography for zeppelin stats

Method of test: Powerpoint with series of icons, each on a separate slide. Shown to testers individually with slightly differing context.

Question asked: What does this icon mean?

Testers: 2 personal friends, names omitted

Test Info: Tested in my dining room and den around 11PM on the night of Tuesday November 6th

Duration of test: 2 sessions of 5 minutes, about 25 minutes combined

Notes:

Tester 1: shown icons without visual context, gameplay context described

1. Increased HP or regen
2. Increased speed
3. ability to weaken/destroy a tower
4. not sure, some sort of retaliation ability?
5. gun firing, maybe increase in damage
6. not sure, half health? Hp meter?
7. another type of speed buff, or instant deployment to specific spot
8. damage increase or indicator for specific type of unit. Maybe melee unit?
9. healing potion
10. weakened defenses

Tester 2: shown icons w/ visual context of stat bar, gameplay context described

1. health bar
2. speed bar
3. some kind of bonus or ability, box opening to receive buff inside
4. not sure, either long range missile or flare to call reinforcements
5. blowing something up, cannon barrage

6. healing meter

7. some sort of dash meter? Bonus speed?

8. attack meter

9. healing/potion meter

10. armor break

Evaluation:

The one lesson most clearly learned from this playtest was that the simpler the icon, the better. Many of the designs that had added detail, regardless of the detail, gave incorrect impressions to the testers. The simpler designs such as the heart with plus or the cannon firing were much better at communicating a simple stat, and many of the more complex ones such as the tower under attack or the hp heart filled with liquid gave the testers the impression that they were related to some more complicated ability or power. Details would often give the opposite of the intended impression, such as the shield with cracks on it intending to represent armor or HP being identified as broken or damaged armor. The few details that stood out to them should be simplified and refined to communicate better, especially since the icons themselves will be much smaller on the screen than they were in this powerpoint. Readability can also be enhanced with the use of color.

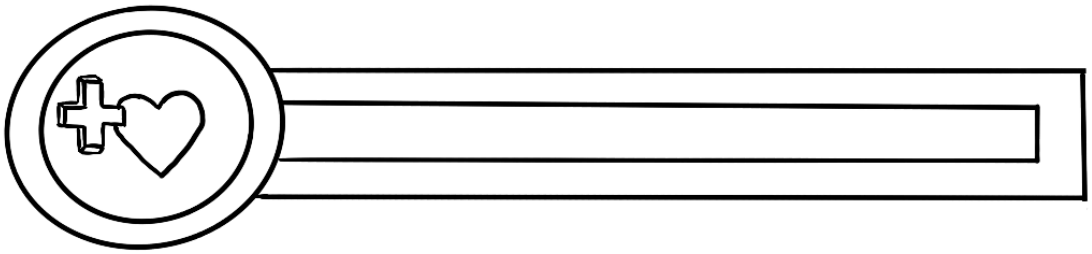
The differing amounts of context given to the two testers also made a large difference in how they interpreted the icons, although this to me says more about the testing process than it does the icons themselves. I believed it important to give the two of them the context they would already have when seeing these bars, but something as small as seeing the bar to which the icons would be attached made a huge difference. For instance, many of Tester 2's interpretations about the icons were related to them being special abilities or powers, like the icons found on a hotbar of an RPG or MMO. Tester 1, however, with the context of the bars interpreted many things to be ability charge or cooldown meters or resource bars. In hindsight, the bars themselves were still missing some context such as the segments, being partially filled, or the text and icons representing the cost. The icons will never be seen in game without all this context, so future playtesting may need to include more context or even be a series of questions asked while the game itself is being played.

The results of this playtest will be shared with the UI artist who created these prototype images, but the conclusion will be that they should be simplified and color coded to increase easy readability and communicate to players that these represent simple stats that can be upgraded with money. Most likely the final icons will be a heart for HP, a cannon firing for damage, and a zeppelin or simple shape with speed lines for speed. It is possible, although unlikely, that some of these unused icon designs can be used for further abilities or stats in semester 2.

Icons Presented:

Note that Tester 1 received these images without the added context of the circle and bar.

1:



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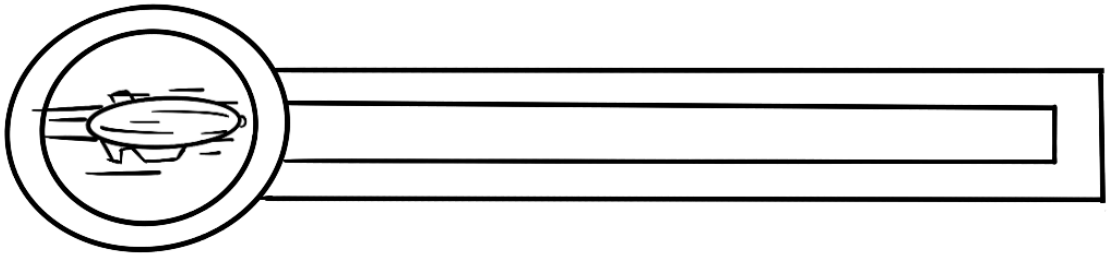

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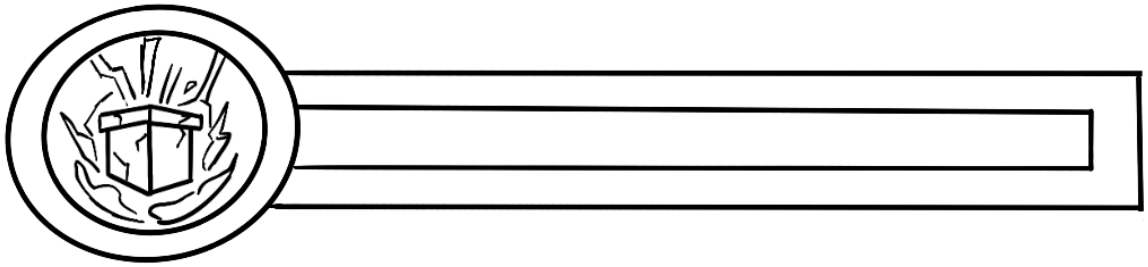

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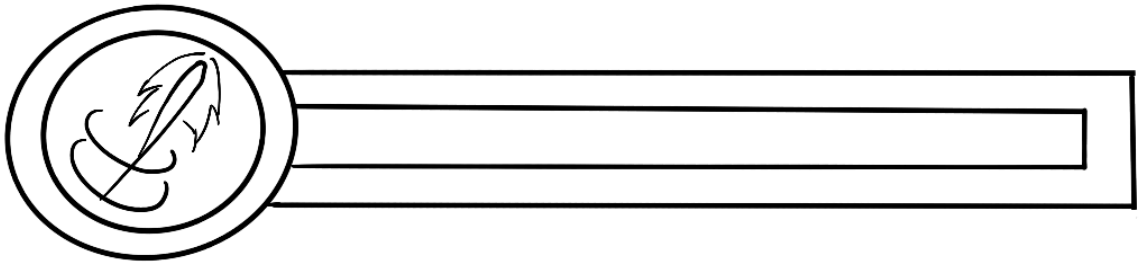

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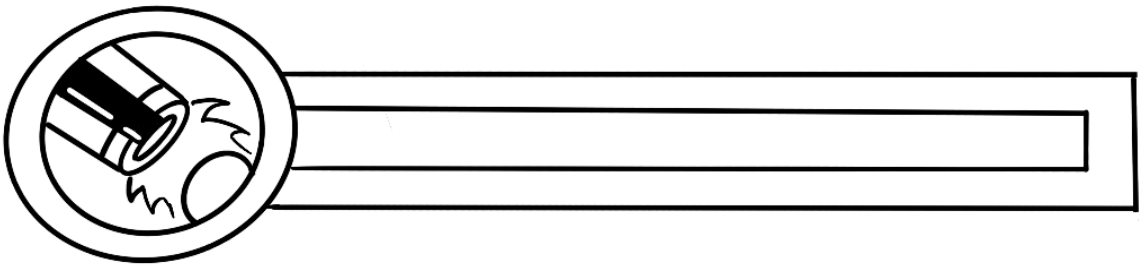

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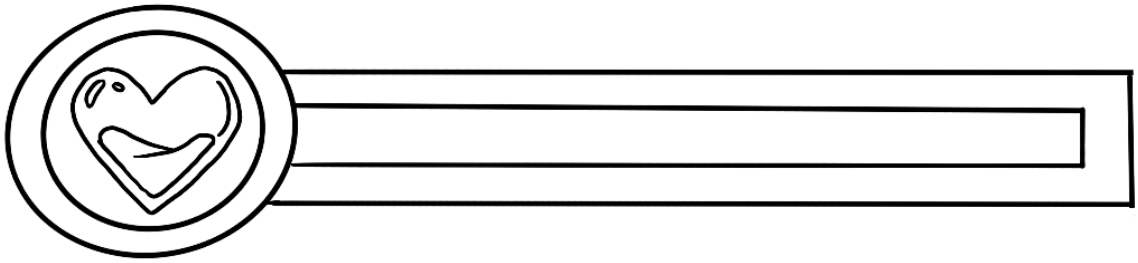

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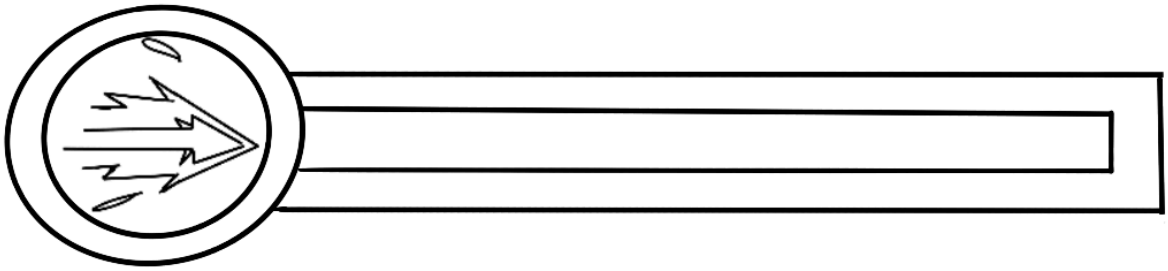

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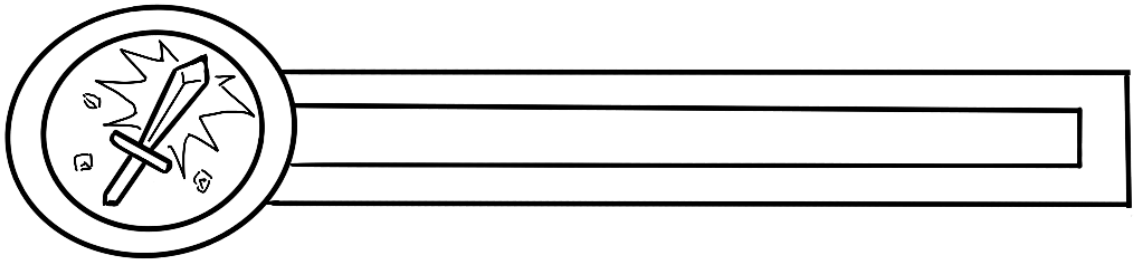

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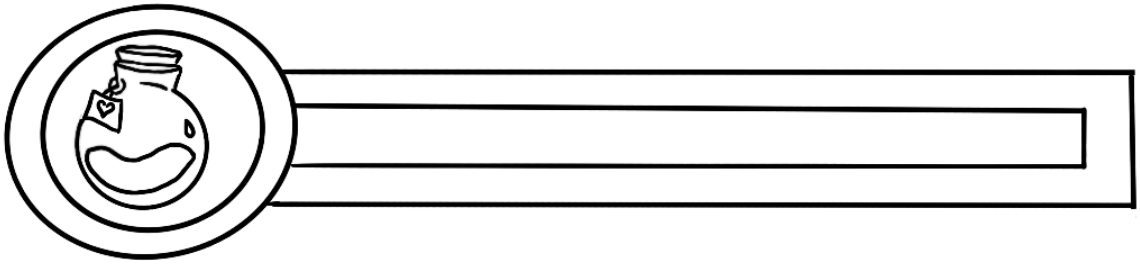
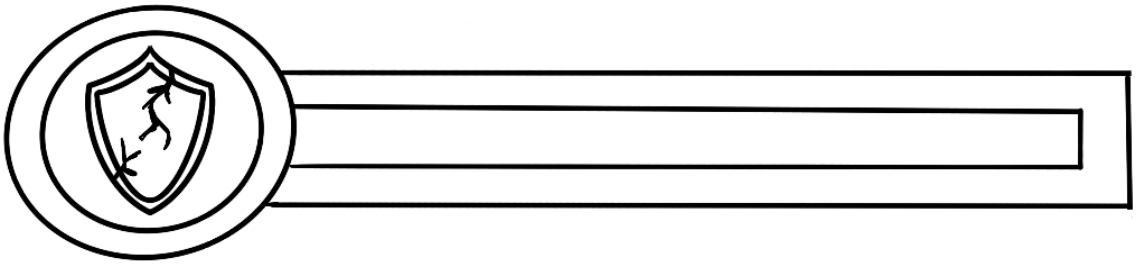
10: