Experimental Level Design Documentation Template

Super mario Maker

-Scramble Mountain-

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Contents

High Level Overview

The main inspirations of this level are as follows:


SUPER MARIO WORLD

- The level that I am creating is based in the style and uses the mechanics of "Super Mario World."
- Basing the main mechanics of the Level around the "ON/OFF Switch", a mechanic that originated in the game.
- Telling a story through use of environments and set pieces.

SUPER MARIO BROS AND THE MARIO FRANCHISE

Since this game will be made in Super Mario Maker, the level will take a lot of design inspirations, design fundamentals and lessons from the Mario franchise, some of these will include:

- The rule of 3. Teaching the players mechanics in incrementing groups of 3, beginning with an easy task and bumping up the difficulty
- Classic linear and more adventurous level layouts
- Using the "Kishotenketsu" structure to create interesting level layouts and pacing.
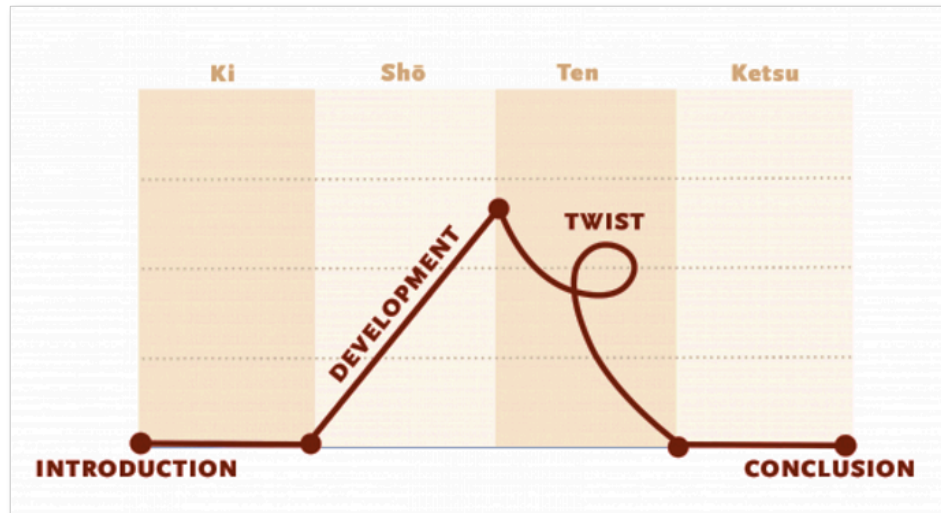
KEY ELEMENTS

Here I will list the key elements to be explored and found in my level:

- Using clever use of levels and sub-levels to create the illusion of ascending a mountain, starting the level at the base of the mountain and ending at the peak.

- Using the existing mechanics in the Super Mario World style to create an intermediate skill level course for the player to complete.
  - Using the ON/OFF blocks, Spiny Shells and other items and enemies to create various iteration on the ON/OFF block formula, creating new and interesting ways to play the level with a similar mechanic.
  - Creating small amounts of backtracking while teaching the player how to use the levels to reset if that have failed the puzzle or to explore new options.
  - Using various mechanics and player abilities to create combos
  - Creating an illusion of choice while maintaining freedom and enforcing a set path

LEVEL GOALS

Level goals and its objectives:

LEVEL GOALS

No.	Objective
1	Creating the illusion of ascending a mountain through use of the Main Level and Sub Level
2	Making use of the limited space given with the two sub levels I can use to create an interesting world
3	Teach the player using the rule of 3 and the "Kishotenketsu" structure in the mechanics of the level
4	Creating a challenge for intermediate players who have a decent understanding of the main mechanics and are ready to learn more nuanced mechanics
5	Maintaining an overall theme in the creation process and making sure that it comes across in the final product

LEVEL OBJECTIVES

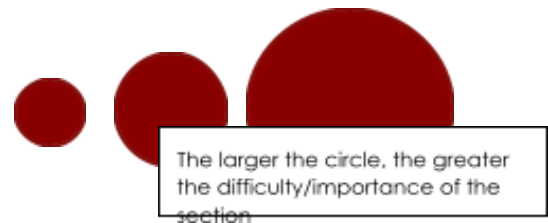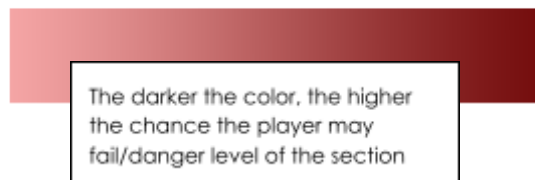| No.	Objective
1	Use/learn the skills and mechanics in the level to complete each puzzle and reach the goal at the end of the level
2	Making sure the level has plenty of hidden secrets and optional harder challenges that rewards the player with Coins, Power-Ups, and other rewards
3	Giving the player power-ups when necessary and making sure giving the player said power up does not break or ruin the flow of the level

EXPECTED PLAYER EXPERIENCE

For the Player Experience section, these are some of the ideas and expectations that I expect a player to feel during the level and as it progresses:
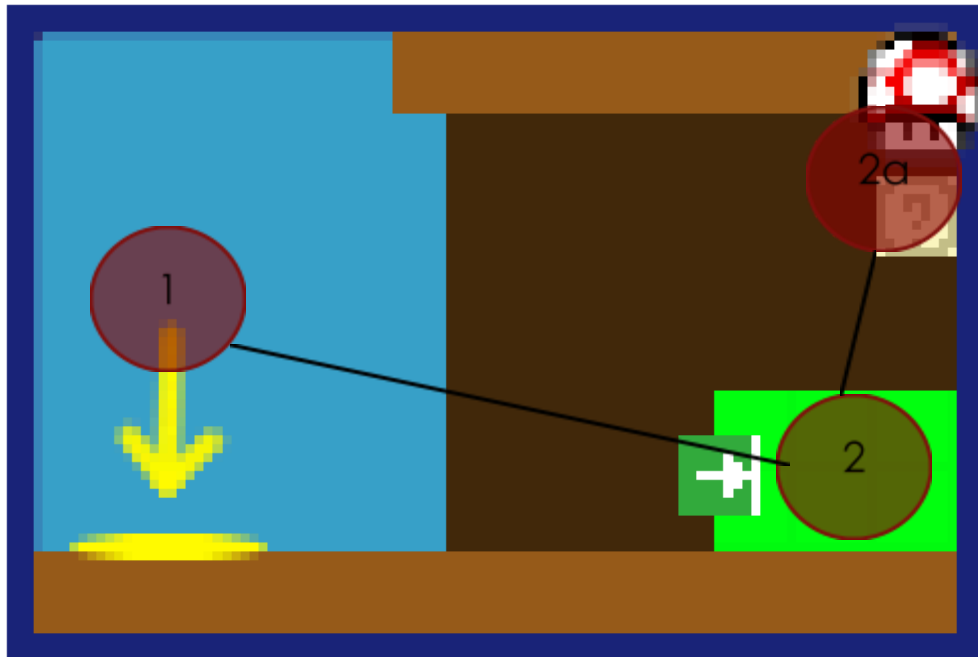
EXPECTED PLAYER EXPERIENCES

No.	Player Experience
1	The player should feel like they are ascending a mountain via caves and above ground passages
2	A Medium to slow paced level, making use of a variety of mechanics working in tandem, keeping the player thinking about their next move and how to apply what mechanic to what location
3	The player has the option to move most of the time, however there are section in the level in which the player will have to maintain timing, beats and a slower speed in order to sufficiently progress in the level
4	Ramping difficulty challenges followed by periods of breaks to let the player relax a little before taking on the next puzzle when clearly marked
5	Learning new ways to combine different mechanics and items already in the game and automatically applying them in the level

BUBBLE MAPS

KEY

The darker the color, the higher the chance the player may fail/danger level of the section

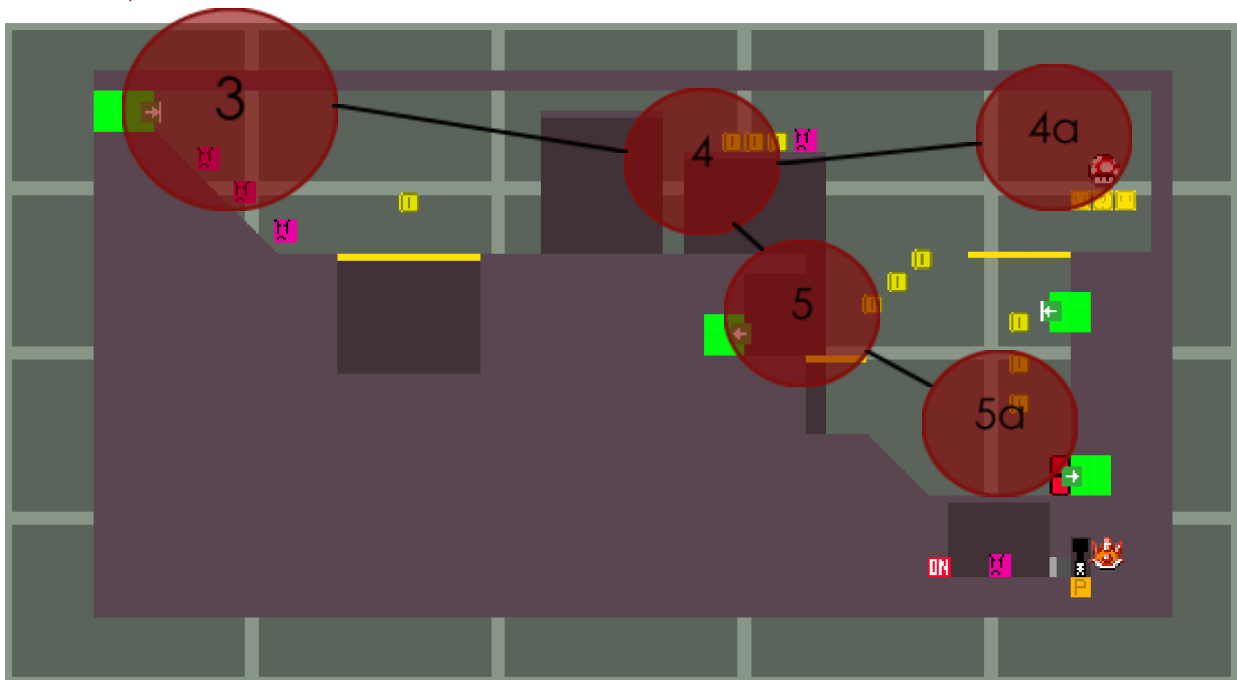The larger the circle, the greater the difficulty/importance of the section

MAP START AND INTRO

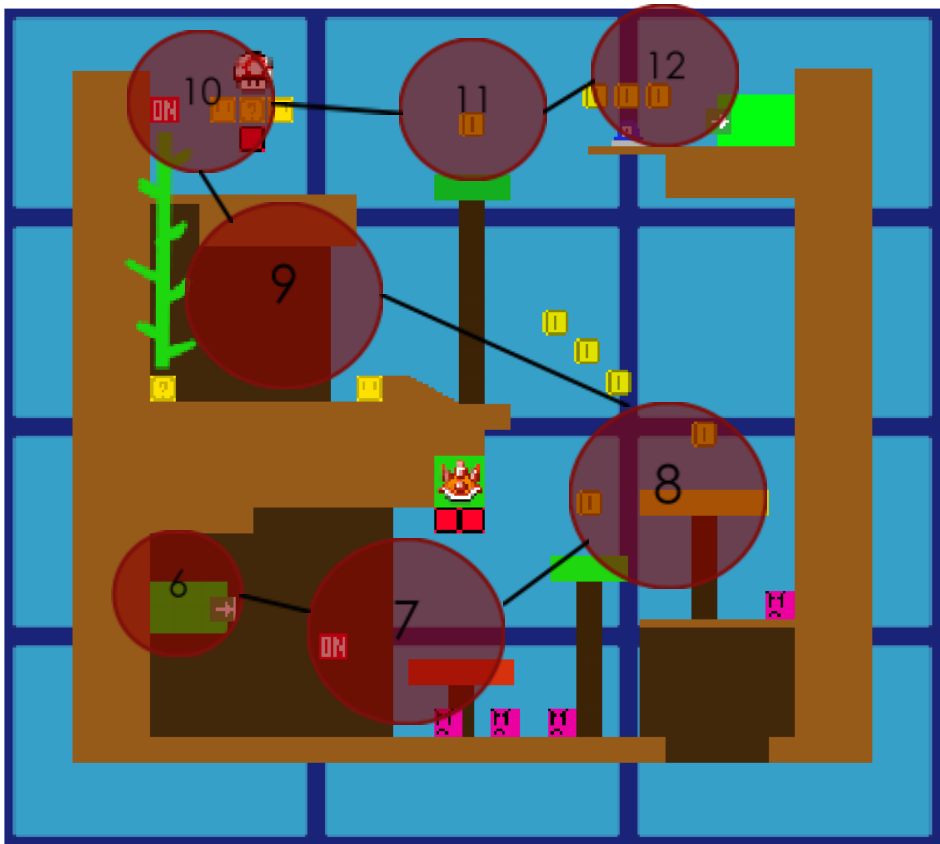1. Player Starts
2. Player walks towards the pipe and enters
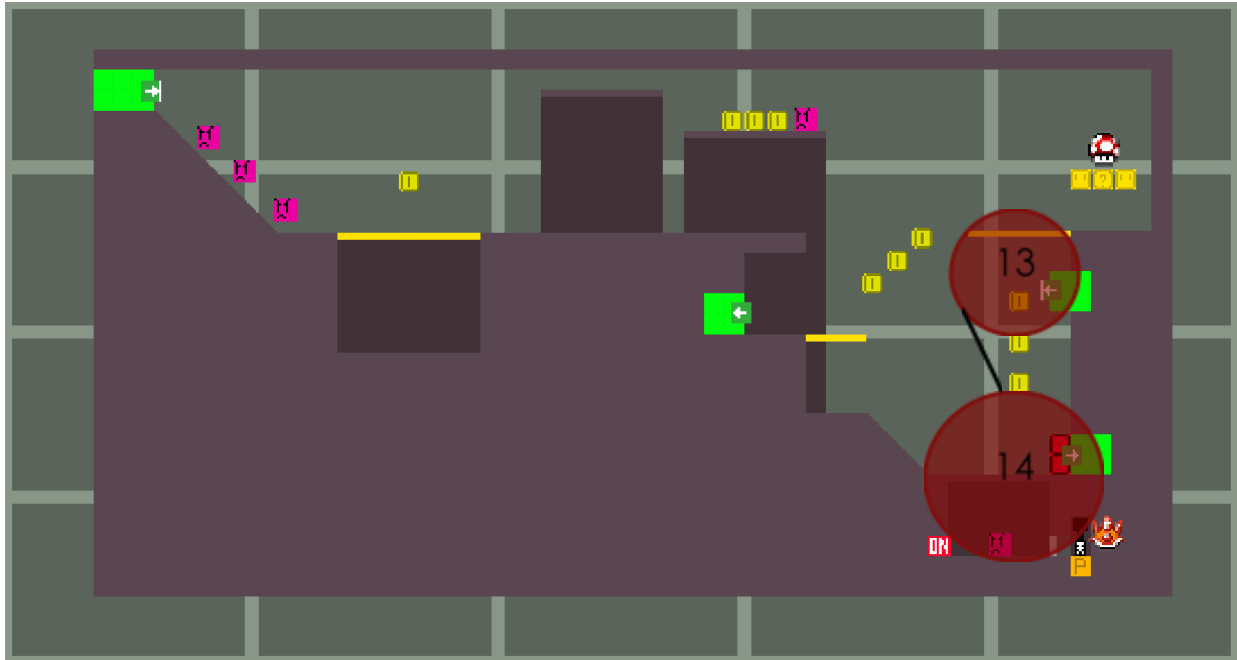   a. Player has the choice to jump over pipe and get a hidden Super Mushroom

3. Player enters the new area, slides down slope to defeat the line of enemies
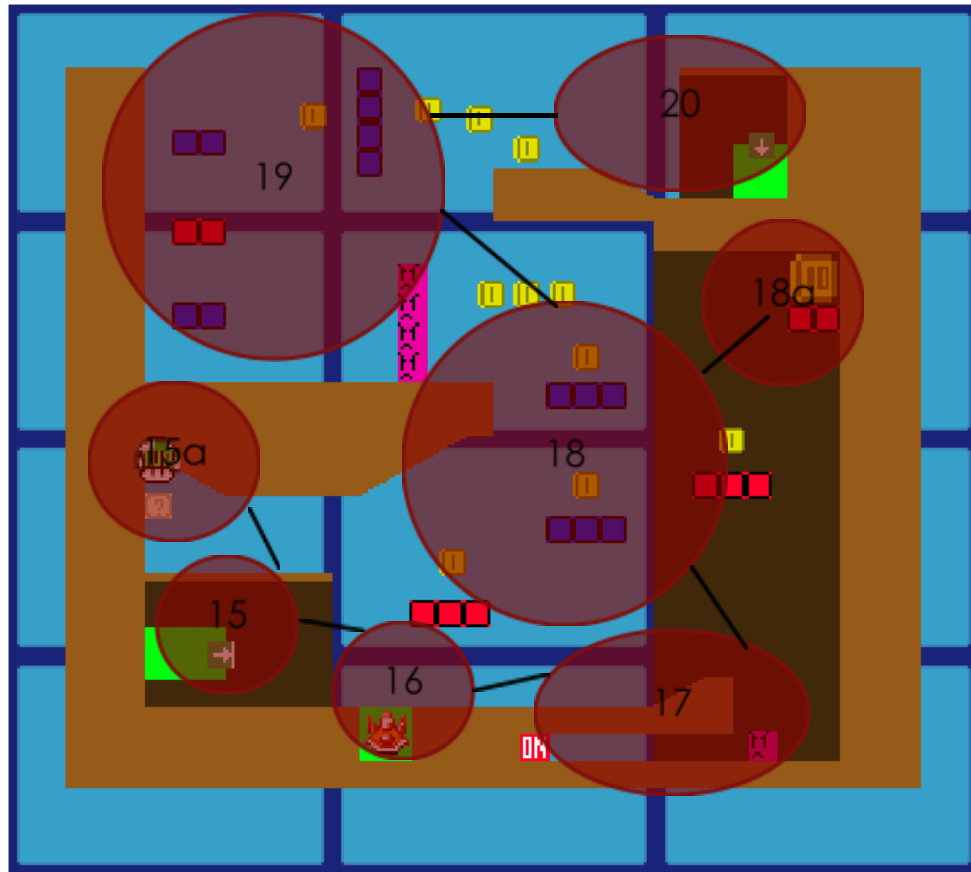4. Player continues over the bridge, can jump to grab coins

      a. Player can jump gap to grab coins and a super mushroom
5. Player jumps down into hole, seeing a branching path, player can enter pipe
      a. Player can continue down to see the next area and puzzle

6. Player enters new area, cannot go back
7. Player is introduced to the on/off block, and after the enemies are dealt with can use it to spawn a spiky shell from the pipe player can pick up the shell and take it with them
8. Player jumps up the platforms to higher ground
9. Player uses the shell to activate the ? block spawning a vine the player can climb
10. The player is given the choice to use the on/off block to give them access to a super mushroom
11. Player jumps across gap
12. Player jumps again over and can grab the p switch or activate it, then the player enters the pipe
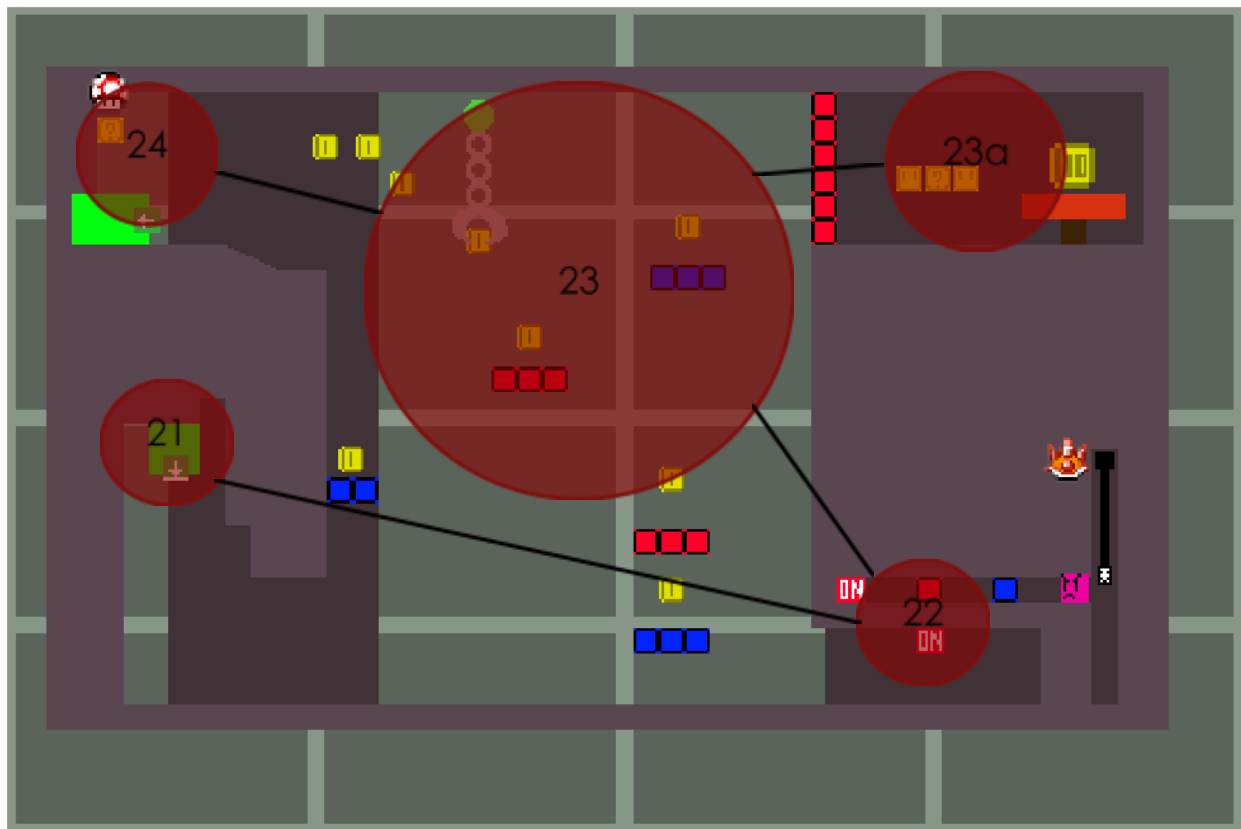
13. Player exits pipe either with the p switch or with the p switch active
14. Player falls, p block allows the cannon to fall and fires a shell, activating a on/off block and allowing the player to progress

15. Player exits pipe
    a. Player can jump up to grab a hidden one up
16. Pipe spawns a spiny shell, player can pick it up
17. Player puts spiny shell in the hole, creating a timer for the on/off block as demonstrated in previous level
18. Timer starts to change the on/off blocks, player has to jump up
    a. Player can grab a 10 coin for doing a harder jump
19. player has to do some harder jumps and time a jump through the blocks
20. player enters pipe

21. Player exits the pipe and falls down, then makes their way to the right
22. The player hits the ON/OFF switch to help the shell make its way across, the shell then creates an irregular rhythm for the jumping section
23. The player jumps up the blocks in a very difficult fashion, and can swing from the claw obstacle
    a. The player can continue right to get a power up and a 10 Coin
24. The player can get a super mushroom and enters the pipe

25. Player exists pipe, the cannon launches a shell that creates an irregular ON/OFF rythym
26. The player falls down and defeats the enemies
27. The player can do a difficult jump to get a 10 Coin, and continue with the level
28. The player uses the irregular rhythm to jump up small blocks
29. The Player enters the pipe

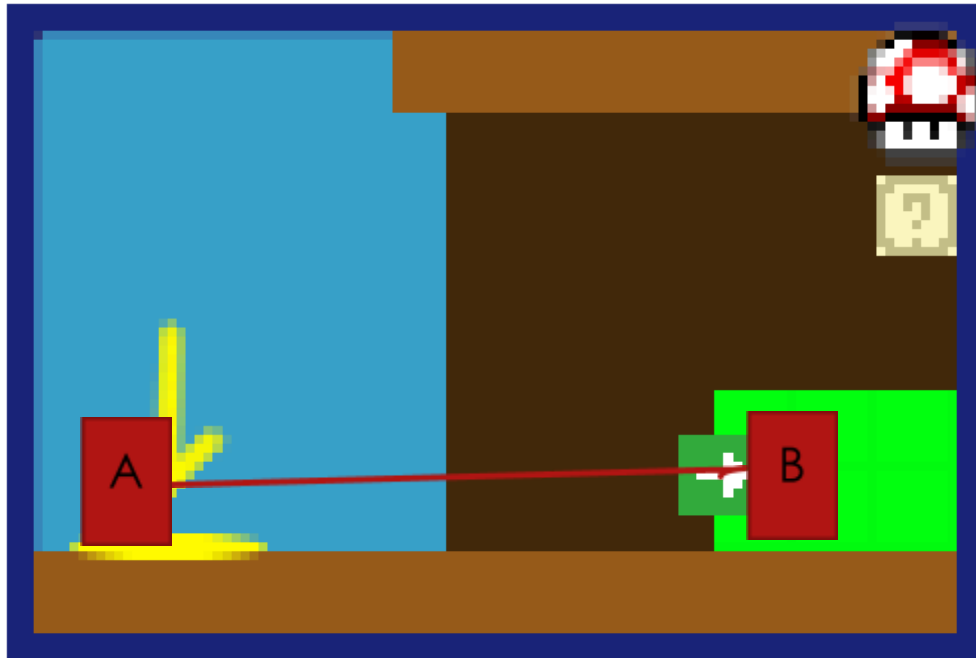1. Player Starts
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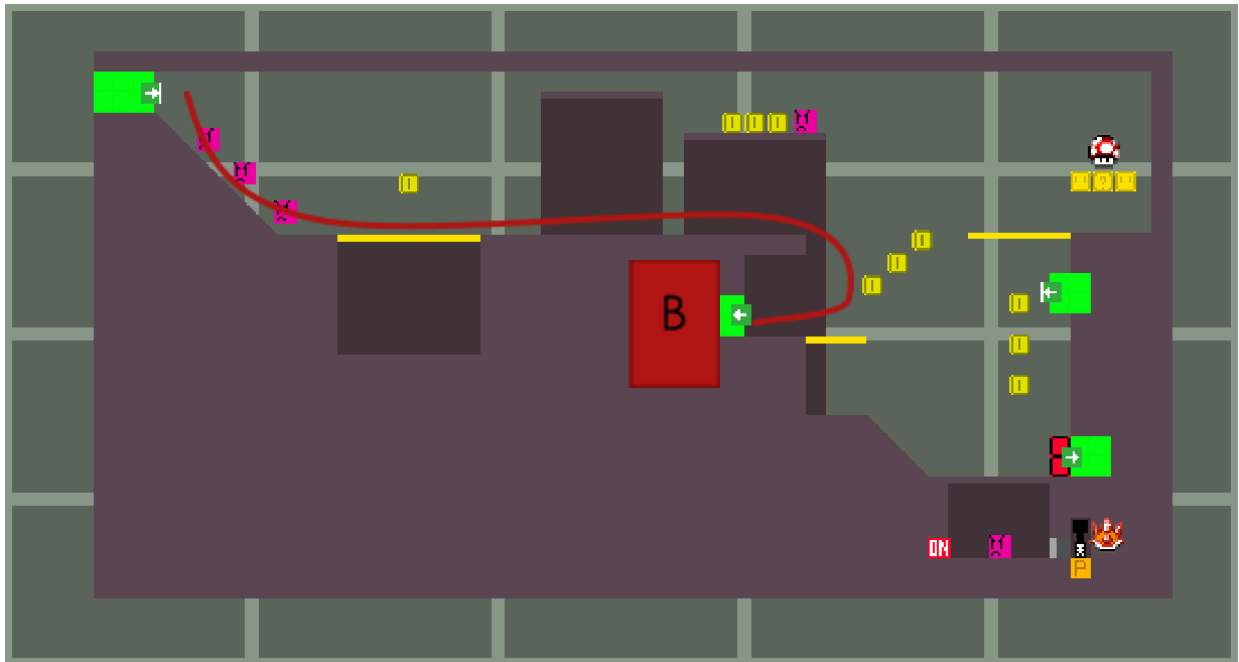
29. The Player enters the pipe

MAP OVERVIEW

PLAYER PATHS

MAP START AND INTRO

FIRST SECTION, FIRST VISIT

Second Section

THIRD SECTION

Fifth sec tion

Rewards will be imperative to a players experience, acting as a reason to keep moving forward, and a way for the player to overcome a certain obstacle, or even just to ensure the player that they are going the correct way

It is important that rewards are used in a way that helps the player in some way, and that the reward should be greater or equal to the effort needed to achieve them.

Icon	Pickup and Purpose	Placement and Requirement

|		
	Coins – Grants the players more score and adds to the overall coin count. 100 Coins give the players a 1-Up Mushroom	Found mostly in item boxes, scattered across the map to guide the player and as stand in for P blocks when a P switch is used
	Super Mushroom – Grants the player access to the "Super Mario" form, giving the player an extra hit before having to respawn	Found in item boxes before or after particularly taxing and difficult challenges, giving the player a sense of safety while setting them up for the next challenge
	1-Up Mushroom – Gives the player an extra life.	Found mostly in Hidden Blocks or as a reward for collecting 100 coins
	Large Coins – Grants the player an increased amount of coins then usual	Found mostly in challenge areas, or in secret areas only reachable in certain ways or using certain items/mechanics
	Spiny Shell – Used to block damage, defeat enemies or to complete puzzles	Mostly found dropped from pipes or fired from cannons for the player to use or to automatically work after a challenge has been completed
	P Switch – Used to change coins to solid blocks, or solid P blocks to non-solid P blocks, allowing the player to travel through them	Found at the end of challenge areas as a way to keep the player moving forward, they infinitely respawn on screen change, allowing the player to try as many times as they need.
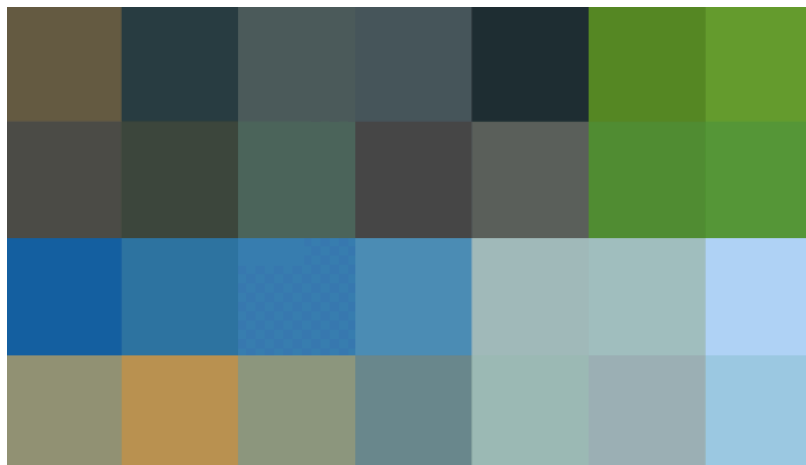
As this is a Super Mario Maker level attempting to add a higher caliber of difficulty to levels normally found in Mario Games, players will have an immediate bias to the difficulty, taking it less seriously or speeding through too fast and making carless mistakes.

No.	Issues
1	Getting used to the level pacing, when to run, jump and use items strategically
2	Players using the items in a unintended way, or losing the items before they are meant to be used and subsequently stop playing the game, thinking they are softlocked
3	Figuring out where to go next, or somehow skipping sections of the level
4	Failing the level due to time constraints, as the level requires complex jumping

TESTING PLAN

Testing will be mostly conducted through in person testing, in which I will ask people I know of varying skill levels to play through the level, while I take notes on their reactions and thoughts while playing the level. I will then use these notes to create changes to the level to make it harder, easier or fix the level in ways to help future testing, which will be noted down and made evident in the change log.

Testing Plan and Things to look out for

| No.	What to look out for
1	If players are failing or succeeding too often or too easily in any one given section besides specific cases in which it is meant to be hard or easy
2	If there are any sections in the game which are broken due to the introduction of hidden rewards or power-ups. (for example, if a koopa shell is needed for a section, yet a fire flower is provided, giving the incentive to use it to defeat the koopa, not dropping the koopa shell and soft locking the player)
3	If there are any misplaced terrain, blocks or any item/device that affects the intended route or stops the player from progressing
4	Areas in which the player can get softlocked or lock progression indefinitely until the game is reset
5	If areas with signposting or encouragement to behave in the section in a certain way is misleading or outright harmful the player
6	If the overall placement of enemies is natural
7	If the player is having fun while playing the level
8	Any other complaints or feedback the player can provide

| No.	Question	Answer
1	Were there any sections in which you felt were too difficult, or too easy?	
2	Did you feel like you accessed a good amount of hidden sections or secrets?	
3	Did the level feel challenging enough?	
4	Was the level pacing natural enough? Did you feel like there were enough breaks in between harder sections?	
5	Did you feel like you were heading in the correct direction each time you entered a new level?	
6	Were there any sections that you think could be made easier or more difficult by changing some of the geometry of the landscape?	
7	Were there any areas in which you were softlocked or progress was impeded in anyway?	
8	Overall, did the level feel fun? And, did it feel like an original Mario Level?	

CHANGE LOG

SHOW IMAGES OF YOUR LEVEL AS IT PROGRESSES HERE.

Here, I changed the place in which the P Switch resides. Most times when people would jump onto the bridge they would immediately activate the P switch and not know what to do. Also the coins sometimes stopped the player from moving, stopping progress in the entire level.
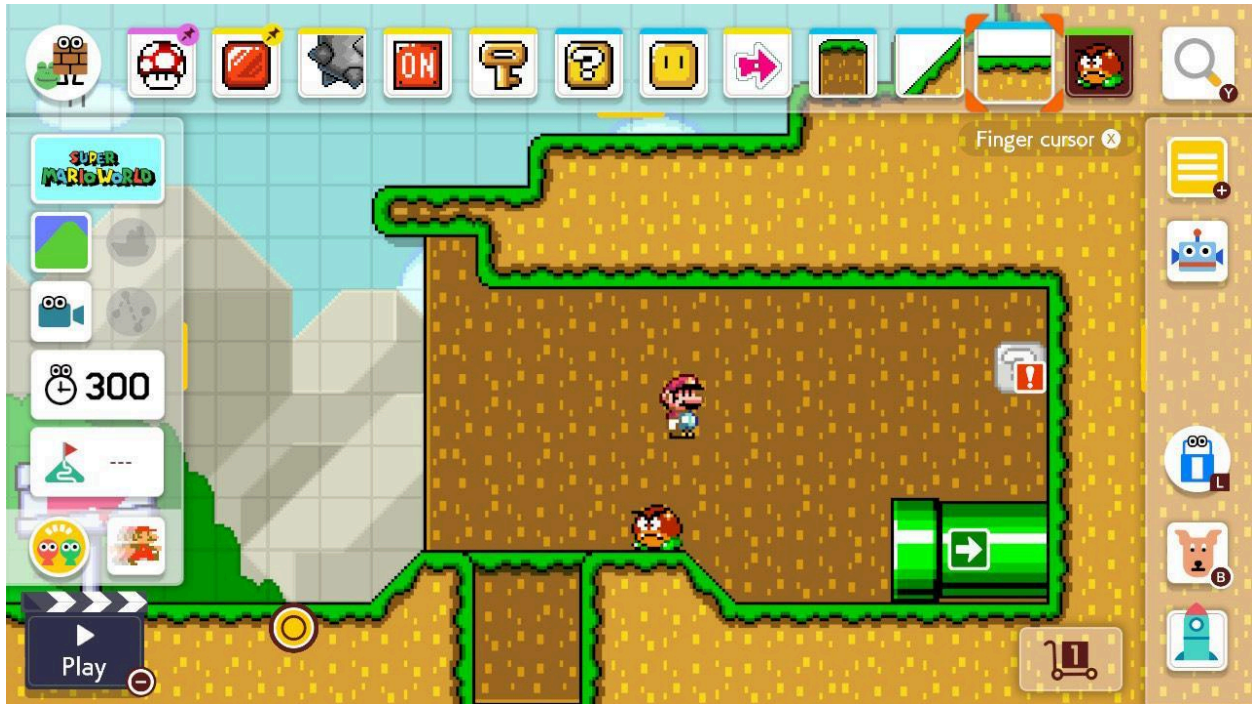
Here I changed the start of the level to be a little more interesting, leaning into the theme of the mountain a bit more.
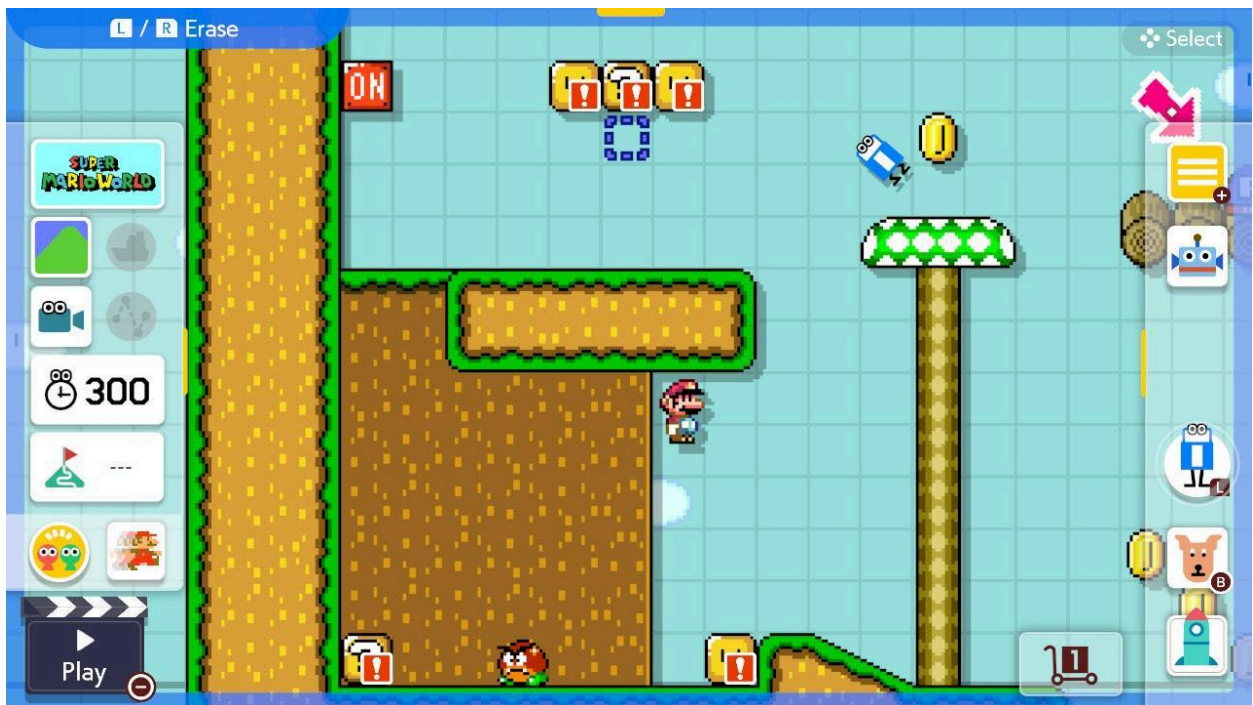
In this section, I changed the way the player interacts with the vine. The On/Off switch is now easier to miss, and the ? blocks have been moved over to allow for more room. Combined with the previous changes.