PRISON SANDBOX GAME

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

A top-down sandbox prison escape simulator
where every decision rewrites the world.

Genre
Sandbox / Strategy / Simulation / Stealth RPG

Engine
Unity 2D (URP)

Target Platform
PC (Windows)

Development
Solo Developer

Prototype Target
6 Months

1. Core Concept & Vision

A sandbox prison survival and escape simulator where the player manages daily life, builds alliances, navigates danger, and discovers multiple escape routes entirely on their own. Every decision permanently affects relationships, suspicion, and available opportunities. The prison is a living ecosystem — not a backdrop.

1.1 The Premise

The player arrives at a medium-security prison and has one ultimate goal: escape. How they achieve it — or whether they achieve it at all — is entirely up to them. The game provides no hand-holding beyond a short introductory tutorial. Escape routes, social networks, economic systems, and hidden mechanics must be discovered through observation, experimentation, and failure.

The game is not structured around missions or a story campaign. It is a simulation that runs independently of the player. Guards patrol, gangs scheme, prisoners fight, and events unfold whether the player acts or not. The player is simply one inmate inside a machine — learning to use that machine against itself.

1.2 Game Pillars

- Freedom of Choice — Multiple escape routes, dynamic alliances, and emergent strategies. No single 'correct' path.
- Living Prison Ecosystem — NPCs operate on schedules and agendas. The prison changes organically.
- Risk and Reward — Every action carries consequence. Information, contraband, and relationships all carry danger.
- Permanent Consequences — Deaths, betrayals, and discoveries are irreversible. The world does not reset.
- Replayability — Different backstory, different NPCs, different escape opportunities. No two runs are identical.

1.3 Tone & Presentation

The game is semi-dark and gritty. Prison life is harsh, and the environment should reflect that — but nothing is shown explicitly. Violence is implied or shown in brief, stylized animations. Mature themes are handled with restraint: suggested through dialogue, rumors, and consequences rather than graphic depiction.

Art Style:	Top-down 2D, cartoony but grounded — not The Escapists' bright cartoon style, but expressive characters with distinct silhouettes and a muted, desaturated palette.

Combat Style:	Fast, decisive — 'Hitman meets old GTA.' Fights are dangerous and brief, not a central loop.
Discovery:	No in-game hints for most systems. Players piece together mechanics through play.

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2. Time & Action System

The game runs on a structured day-phase cycle. Time only advances when the player takes meaningful actions. This creates a turn-based-feel within a living world — every AP spent is a deliberate decision.

2.1 Day Phases

Morning	Roll call and breakfast. Guards are alert, patrols are heavy. Limited free movement.
Midday	Work assignments and yard time. Maximum guard presence. Best for NPC interaction and jobs.
Afternoon	More freedom. Trades happen here. Gambling opens after lunch.
Night	Lowest guard presence, but higher alertness. Prime time for crafting, digging, and stealth.

2.2 Action Points (AP)

Each phase grants a set number of Action Points. AP is the resource that gates most player activity.

Day Phases (each)	4 AP per phase
Night Phase	8 AP — crafting, digging, stealth operations

- Consuming AP: Moving between zones, talking to NPCs (Gossip action), searching objects, crafting, digging, gambling, and most interactive events.
- Free actions: Checking the Whispers tab, reviewing inventory, pausing to observe NPC movement.
- Phase Advance: When the player expends all AP or chooses 'Wait,' the phase advances. A new set of AP is granted. Time passing may trigger scheduled events.

2.3 Energy Meter

Separate from AP, Energy represents the player's physical and mental stamina. It carries over between phases and accumulates throughout the day.

High Energy (70–100)	Normal AP, higher success chance on physical actions, reduced bully harassment chance.
Medium Energy (30–69)	Standard gameplay — no bonuses or penalties.
Low Energy (15–29)	Slower movement animations, reduced AP next day, more vulnerable to bullies.
Critical Energy (0–14)	Major AP reduction, high vulnerability, risk of triggering 'Mental Collapse' depression event.

Energy Recovery Methods

- Mess hall food — free, limited quality, small recovery
- Coffee — moderate boost, available in mess hall or stolen from kitchen
- Energy drinks — good boost, bought from gang shops or stolen
- Contraband drugs — large boost, but repeated use permanently lowers Energy cap
- Sleep (end of night phase) — baseline natural recovery

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3. Escape Systems

There is no single escape. There are many — each requiring different resources, relationships, timing, and knowledge. Most routes are never revealed to the player. Discovery is intentional: the game rewards observation, experimentation, and social intelligence.

DESIGN RULE: Only the tunnel route is introduced via tutorial. All other escape methods must be discovered organically through gossip, exploration, or NPC interaction.

3.1 Tunnel Escape (Tutorial Route)

The most grounded escape method. Requires patience, tools, and discretion.

Requirements

- Digging tool (improvised spoon, trowel, or crafted spike)
- Cover item (poster, cardboard sheet, or blanket) to hide the hole each night
- Specific dig locations — only certain spots are structurally weak. Player must discover them.

Mechanics

- Progress saved nightly. Player digs 10% per 2 AP spent during Night phase.
- If not covered before day shift: 15% chance per night that guards find the hole during patrol.
- If an NPC tattles: hole is discovered immediately, sealed, all progress lost.
- Escape triggers at 100% progress if the route leads outside the fence perimeter.
- Some routes have dog patrols at the exit point — requires a bypass solution.

Ally Mechanic

- Recruited allies can dig their own parallel tunnel from their cell, meeting the player at a designated merge point.
- Ally digs independently — player only needs to check in to assign the task (1 AP).
- For stealth-focused players: if the player's heat level is low enough, the ally can simply appear at the laundry room or designated rendezvous point without active digging.

3.2 Laundry Disguise Escape

Craft a convincing laundry worker uniform and slip out through a checkpoint during a shift change.

Requirements

- Full laundry uniform set (shirt, pants, ID lanyard) — requires 5 cigarettes from gang shop or materials to craft
- Correct timing — checkpoints are only relaxed during shift changes
- Route knowledge — player must discover which exit the laundry staff use

Easter Egg

> **WARNING:** If the player attempts to flee through the main gate during a riot without a laundry or guard disguise, they will be shot. The disguise is mandatory for the main gate riot escape.

3.3 Guard Disguise Escape

The most difficult disguise route. Requires stealing or crafting a full guard uniform plus an authentic ID badge.

- Multiple crafting steps and high stealth requirement
- Guards may recognize discrepancies in the uniform up close
- Works best during shift changes or riot chaos

3.4 Parole Meeting Escape

If the player has maintained an exceptionally high reputation with guards, they can manipulate the parole system to walk out legitimately.

- Requires sustained high Guard Respect score over many in-game days
- May require forged documents or a bribed official NPC (lawyer, administrator)
- Longest route but lowest risk of discovery

3.5 Sick Bay Escape

An opportunity escape triggered by a specific environmental event — the nurse-guard affair.

Trigger Conditions

- Player must be in the sick bay (injured, faking illness, or post-fight)
- One of the 2–3 'affair-eligible' guards must be on sick bay duty
- Affair event has a 30–40% chance of triggering per eligible guard visit

Mechanics

- Guard and nurse exit to a side room — indicated by a heart icon and dialogue cloud above the door
- Player is uncuffed and free for 2 AP slots
- AP Slot 1: Steal medical supplies, unlock a cabinet, or prepare an exit
- AP Slot 2: Execute escape if fully prepared, or return to bed
- If caught outside the bed on AP 3: immediate punishment — solitary or privilege revocation

Blackmail Variant

- If the player has a camera (contraband), they can photograph the affair (costs 1 AP)
- Photo can be used to blackmail the guard for access, delayed investigations, or rare items
- Brutal guards: ignore blackmail, beat the player, confiscate camera → sent to solitary
- Coward guards: comply but may later hire gang members to retaliate
- Lazy guards: comply fully, may even actively help

3.6 Warden Key Escape — Chaos Route

If the Warden is killed outside his office, the prison immediately enters full chaos mode.

- Triggers the Riot system (see Section 7)
- Player must have prepared an escape route in advance — tunnel, disguise, or main gate
- 8 AP available during chaos before the prison begins to stabilize

3.7 Warden Office Kill — Easter Egg Ending (Extremely Difficult)

> **EASTER EGG:** This is the rarest, most difficult escape in the game. Most players will never find it. It must not be documented in-game.

The player sneaks into the Warden's office (heavily guarded, requires key or vent access), assassinates him silently, and loots a unique escape item — the Master Key, Car Key, or Main Gate Override Code (randomized per playthrough).

Access Requirements

- High-ranking guard keycard OR guard uniform with stolen ID badge
- OR rare maintenance tunnel / vent route (discovered through in-world clues)
- Must enter during a specific time window when the Warden is alone

Execution Rules

- Only silent weapons work — shiv, garrote, or poison. Any loud kill triggers immediate lockdown.
- After kill: player must escape before morning roll call — one night window only
- The looted item bypasses all standard locks and security checkpoints
- If the player is still inside at dawn: auto-capture and execution cutscene

Discovery Hints (Scattered In-World)

- Guard break room dialogue (only audible in disguise): 'Old man keeps the master key in his desk... lose that and we're all screwed.'
- Hidden diary in guard barracks: 'No one's crazy enough to try... but if they did, the warden's key opens everything.'
- Whispers tab: single, rare rumor — 'They say if you get past the warden himself, there's a way straight out.'

3.8 Dog-Patrol Routes

Certain escape exits have guard dog patrols. Dogs detect by scent and can detect the player through foliage or around corners.

- Distract with meat (stolen from kitchen, bought from shop, or crafted)
- Mask scent with chemicals, mud, or a specific crafted item (discovered through trial or rumor)
- Wait for dog off-duty window (varies per day)
- Bribe the kennel master guard (rare NPC event)

- Ally option: an ally can handle dogs while the player moves through (ally removed from the run after this)

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4. NPC System

The prison is populated by a finite, pre-generated cast. Every NPC is unique and carries permanent consequences when removed. The world does not endlessly refill — the prison can genuinely collapse if enough people die.

4.1 Population Structure

Active Prisoners	50 — all unique, with names, traits, schedules, and agendas
Reserve Prisoners	50 — pre-generated, enter via weekly bus arrivals (limited pool)
Active Guards	8 — on active patrol rotation
Reserve Guards	5 — called in as replacements; also finite
Staff NPCs	5 — Warden, Doctor, Nurse, Kitchen Manager, Maintenance Officer. No reserves. Never killed by design.

FINITE WORLD: Once the reserve pool is exhausted, no more replacements occur. A prison depleted enough will collapse into chaos — by player design or neglect. This is intentional.

4.2 NPC Core Stats

Strength	Governs brawl damage and physical intimidation effectiveness
Intelligence	Affects crafting speed, information quality, and plan complexity
Wealth	Starting resources, trade prices offered
Reputation	Standing with the general population — affects gossip reliability

4.3 Personality Traits

Each NPC has 2 traits maximum, drawn from the following pool. Traits govern AI behavior, dialogue tone, and reaction thresholds.

Greedy	Will do almost anything for cigs or dollars. Bribery is highly effective.

Loyal	Will not betray allies or friends. Stays true to their gang or friend group.
Tattler	High tattle likelihood. Will report to guards for minor offenses.
Sneaky	Can pass information, steal, or move without detection. Gossips may be deliberate misdirection.
Violent	High aggression. May join fights unprovoked. Will escalate minor conflicts.
Cowardly	Easily frightened. Avoids confrontation. May panic and expose secrets under pressure.
Lazy	Reduced work output. Guards with this trait have relaxed patrol patterns.
Connected	Has off-prison contacts. Can source rare items or information.

4.4 Guard Types

Lazy Guard

- Patrol routes are short and predictable
- Can be bribed with dollars or small amounts of cigarettes
- Will look the other way during minor infractions
- Affair-eligible — may participate in the nurse affair event
- If blackmailed: complies, may offer active help

Coward Guard

- Avoids conflict, backs down from direct confrontation
- If blackmailed: complies but panics and may accidentally reveal the situation to other guards after 2–5 days
- Under extreme pressure: may hire gang members to deal with the player — 10–15% chance per day after blackmail
- Responds to indirect threats more than physical ones

Brutal Guard

- Aggressive, unpredictable, does not respond to bribes
- If blackmailed: immediately beats the player, confiscates camera, sends to solitary
- Low respect level for most prisoners — respect meter starts lower
- Will stage 'accidents' for prisoners whose respect falls below threshold
- Cannot be talked down — must be avoided, framed, transferred, or removed

4.5 Guard Respect Meter

Each guard maintains a Respect value toward each prisoner (0–100). This is separate from the player's global reputation.

80–100	Guard is cooperative. Will ignore minor infractions. May share useful information.
40–79	Neutral. Standard patrol and enforcement behavior.
20–39	Hostile. Increased searches, rougher treatment, shorter patience.
10–19	Aggressive. Will involve other guards in confrontations. May begin planning.
0–9	Critical. Guard will schedule an off-screen 'accident' for the prisoner within 1–3 days.

4.6 Guard Removal Rules

Maximum kills (no capture)	2 guard kills maximum before capture is guaranteed
First kill	Can be staged as an accident — no forensics triggered
Second kill	Forensic team dispatched in 5–7 in-game days from discovery
Third kill	Capture guaranteed regardless of method or evidence handling
Transfer (max)	2 guards can be transferred per playthrough via specific quest events
Total removal	Up to 4 guards removed in a single run (2 kills + 2 transfers)

4.7 Gang Structure

The prison contains 4 independent gangs, each with 6 members. Gangs are rivals with one another and maintain their own territories, shops, and power structures.

Gang Composition

- 1 Leader — controls gang entry requirements and high-tier quests
- 1 Shopkeeper — manages the gang's contraband shop. If killed, shop closes 3–5 days.
- 4 Members — varying loyalty, strength, and agendas

Joining a Gang

- Each gang has a unique method for earning respect — no two gangs require the same approach
- Player can join one gang per run, or remain fully independent
- Gang membership provides protection, shop access, and potential escape assistance

- Being in one gang lowers respect with rival gangs automatically

Gang Shops

Each gang sells a different category of contraband. Shop inventory and prices shift based on gang health, supply events, and faction tension.

4.8 Independent Prisoners

The 26 non-gang prisoners include a mix of neutral characters, bullies, informants, and quest NPCs.

- 3–5 Bullies (see Section 5)
- 2–4 natural informants (high Tattler trait)
- Remainder are neutral with personal agendas and optional side quests

4.9 NPC Schedules

All NPCs operate on soft 4-phase schedules that can shift based on events:

Morning	Cell block, breakfast queue, roll call
Midday	Assigned work area or job site
Afternoon	Yard, common room, gambling area, trades
Night	Return to cell — some have deviation behaviors

4.10 NPC Death, Replacement & Consequences

Prisoner Death

- Stealthy kill with no witnesses: no immediate consequence. Body discovery timer begins (see Section 6).
- Witnessed kill: instant reputation drop with nearby NPCs. Possible guard involvement.
- Gang member killed: that gang's respect drops. Retaliation event may trigger within 1–3 days.
- Shopkeeper killed: shop closed 3–5 days. New member may or may not take over.
- Replacement: a reserve prisoner from the pool enters via the next bus arrival.

Guard Death / Removal

- See Section 3.7 for guard kill rules and forensic timers.
- Reserve guard fills the role after 5–7 days.

- All 5 reserve guards used: prison begins operating with reduced patrol coverage permanently.

Staff Death

- Doctor and Nurse cannot be killed — attacks auto-fail, player is punished.
- Warden death: triggers either chaos (outside office) or Easter Egg ending (inside office).
- Kitchen Manager death: mess hall quality degrades, some food bonuses removed.

4.11 Gang Violence & Hit System

Gangs do not only fight at the player's direction. Faction tension builds between rival gangs and can result in scheduled hit events.

Hit Scheduler Logic

- Faction Tension between gang pairs rises from: member deaths, shop theft, territory encroachment, player framing.
- When tension exceeds a threshold, a hit is queued for a 2-day window.
- The Whispers tab may surface a rumor: 'Something's going down near the yard tonight.'
- Player can: intervene, warn the target, bribe the attacker, or let it happen.
- Successful hit: target removed, tension cools. Botched hit: guards investigate.

4.12 Guard-Staged Accidents

When a guard's respect for a prisoner drops below 10 and that prisoner has recent disciplinary history, the guard may arrange an 'accident' — handled entirely off-screen.

Next day, the Whispers tab updates:

> **WHISPER (italic):** "Rumor has it that [NPC Name] met with an unfortunate accident..."

- Player can prevent this if warned in advance: raise the guard's respect, move the prisoner, or get the guard transferred.
- Player can exploit this: deliberately lower a guard's respect toward a rival NPC.
- Guards cannot be hired or directed by the player to do this — it must emerge from the mechanic organically.
- Quest Hook: Gangs may ask the player to investigate or avenge these accidents, or to engineer one for them.

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5. Bully System

Bullies are a constant low-level threat — more irritating than dangerous. They waste time, steal resources, and block the player's path at the worst moments. Dealing with them early is encouraged but never forced.

5.1 Structure

- 2–4 active bullies at any time, with 1 designated leader
- They are not gang members and operate independently of faction politics
- They target the player more frequently when: energy is low, reputation is low, or the player is caught alone

5.2 Harassment Types

AP Theft	They corner the player — lose 1 AP that session.
Item Theft	They take a low-value item if the player doesn't resist.
Path Block	They physically block a route, forcing a detour or confrontation.
Extortion	Demand cigarettes or dollars on a timer; ignore at your own risk.

5.3 Resolution Options

- Fight back — win and they back off temporarily. Lose and suffer injuries.
- Pay them off — cigarettes end harassment for 1–3 days.
- Distract — use a staged event, noise, or NPC interaction to slip away.
- Use gang protection — a gang you've joined can ward them off.
- Get a guard involved — frame them, report them, or bribe a guard to punish them.
- Kill the leader — bullies permanently stop. High risk, permanent solution.

5.4 Leader Mechanics

- Beating the leader: bullies avoid the player for 3–5 days, then retaliation planning begins.
- Killing the leader: bullies are permanently demoralized. They disperse and stop harassing.

5.5 Easter Egg — Become a Bully

EASTER EGG: By performing a series of 'dirty' actions and befriending the bully leader through specific favors, the player can join the bully group and harass other prisoners. This unlocks a unique escape route during riot and special bully-path dialogue.

Unlock Conditions

- Complete specific favor quests for the bully leader
- Must have low-morality actions already in the player's history
- High intimidation or strength stat

Benefits

- Random prisoners give cigarettes out of fear
- Guards ignore some minor crimes
- Bully crew assists in certain fights
- Exclusive riot escape route with bully group

Drawbacks

- Some gangs actively target the player
- Certain NPCs refuse to trade or share information
- Higher guard scrutiny on criminal behavior

NOTE: Tutorial will introduce bullies early and subtly encourage the player to resolve the situation — teaching combat, bribery, and distraction mechanics in a low-stakes context.

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6. Economy & Contraband

The prison runs on a layered economy. Common dollars handle daily needs. Cigarettes are the real currency for anything dangerous or valuable. Cigars are so rare most players will finish a run without ever seeing one.

6.1 Currency Hierarchy

Dollars ($)

- Earned from prison jobs (kitchen, laundry, maintenance) — $20–$35 per shift
- Paid for simple quests and favors

- Used for: basic food, low-tier tools, minor bribes, entry-level gang interactions

Cigarettes (Cigs)

- 1 cig = $30 in trade value
- Earned from: gambling wins, dangerous favors, stealing, gang jobs, smuggled contraband
- Used for: special weapons, unique crafting materials, high-level guard bribes, gang shop premium items, important quest costs
- Scarcity is intentional — players should feel the weight of every cigarette spent

Cigars (Ultra-Rare)

- 1 cigar = 100 cigarettes
- Only available from the Warden's possession (stolen, won, or earned through secret quest)
- Can purchase: unique escape tools, full protection contracts, rare smuggling operations
- Most players will finish the game without ever holding one

6.2 Jobs & Income

Kitchen Duty	$25 per shift — risk of 'accident' staging events
Laundry Work	$20 per shift — access to laundry room (escape value)
Yard Maintenance	$22 per shift — outdoor access during midday
Workshop	$30 per shift — crafting materials available to steal
Medical Assistant	$15 per shift — sick bay access during day

6.3 Crafting System

Crafting is exclusively a Night phase activity. Items require specific materials and sometimes a crafting location (cell, workshop bench, laundry).

Example Crafting Recipes

Toothbrush + Razor Blade	Shiv — quiet, low durability, high damage
Pipe + Cloth + Tape	Club — medium damage, loud, durable
Blanket + Rope	Garrote — silent KO, low durability
Wire + Battery + Switch	Stun Device — one-time guard stun
Cloth + Dye + Thread	Laundry Disguise (partial) — requires full set

Industrial Chemical + Container	Body Dissolve Solution — see Section 6.5
Lime + Water	Body Preservation — extends discovery timer
Metal Scrap + Wood	Tunnel Brace — prevents tunnel collapse in rain

6.4 Contraband & Cell Searches

Guards conduct random cell raids. Confiscated contraband is lost permanently.

Detection Avoidance

- Craft a hidden stash box — concealed under the sink. Items inside are not found during standard raids.
- Stash box has limited capacity and must be crafted during Night phase.
- Advance warning options:
  - Complete a specific NPC's quest — they warn you each morning about that day's raid schedule
  - Find a guard schedule chit in the break room — reveals the next day's search window

6.5 Body Disposal Tiers

When a prisoner is killed and the player needs to manage the evidence:

Tier 1 — Quick Hide	Dumpsters, lockers, grass patches. Body found in 2 days. Gossip spreads.
Tier 2 — Better Hide	Gang stash areas, restricted rooms. Body found in 3–4 days.
Tier 3 — Preservation	Apply lime/chemical craft. Adds 2 days to the above timers.
Tier 4 — Dissolve	Rare crafting recipe. Body is never found. After 3 days, prison records the prisoner as 'escaped.' Gossip fades.

GUARD EXCEPTION: Permanent disposal does NOT apply to guard bodies. Even with dissolve, a missing guard triggers investigation within 1–2 days. Only an accident-staged first kill avoids forensics entirely.

6.6 Guard Body Rules

Staged Accident (1st kill only)	No investigation. Treated as genuine accident by prison records.
Standard Hide	Body found in 2 days → forensic team dispatched (5–7 day arrival).

Better Hide	Body found in 3–4 days → forensic timer starts from discovery.
Dissolve (applies to prisoners only)	NOT applicable to guards. Missing guard triggers investigation regardless.
Day 1	Guards notice the guard is missing. Prison alert level rises, patrols tighten.
Day 2	Active search begins. Body found if hidden in standard spots.

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7. Riot System

The riot is not just a dramatic event — it is an escape vehicle. It can be triggered deliberately by a clever player, accidentally by a reckless one, or emerge organically from prison population collapse.

7.1 Riot Trigger Conditions

- Prison population drops below 30 active prisoners
- Warden is killed (instant riot regardless of population)
- Specific scripted quest event completes
- Hidden Riot Meter reaches 30+ (see below)

Hidden Riot Meter

Each prisoner death	+1 to meter
Gang leader killed	+5 to meter
Guard killed	+8 to meter
Warden killed	Instant max — riot immediately
5+ deaths within 3 days	+10 to meter
Shop closed (murder/event)	+2 to meter
Natural daily decay	-1 per day (tension cools slowly)

DESIGN NOTE: The riot meter is never shown to the player. They experience it only through escalating Whisper tab rumors and NPC behavioral changes.

7.2 Riot Sequence

1. Announcement — After 1 AP is spent on first action of the riot phase: 'The prison has gone into chaos. Riots are happening. Stay safe.'
2. Takeover Announcement — A prisoner faction leader makes a broadcast: 'This prison has been acquired by [Gang Name]. We run things now.'
3. 8 AP Window — Player has 8 AP to escape, fight, loot, or wait.
4. Prison Restoration — If player does not escape within 8 AP, prison stabilizes. Some facilities closed 3–5 days. Reduced population. Changed guard dynamics.

7.3 Obstacles During Riot

2 Brutal Guards	Positioned at 3 possible escape routes. Must be fought, killed, or removed via allied gang.
1 Lazy Guard	Can be bribed (cigs) or distracted. Will not fight player proactively.
Gang Crossfire	Prisoners are fighting each other. Player can use chaos but risks injury.

7.4 Escape Routes During Riot

- Pre-built tunnel — instant escape if progress is at 100%
- Main gate with Master Key — requires the key from Warden or another source
- Main gate with Laundry/Guard disguise — Easter Egg: attempting main gate without disguise = player shot
- Unguarded side exits — specific to quest-triggered riots

7.5 Bus System & Population Control

The player can manipulate the prison's intake of new prisoners to accelerate population collapse.

Default Bus Schedule

- Bus arrives every 7 in-game days, bringing 1–3 new reserve prisoners

Player Manipulation

- Speed Up: Bribe warden staff, forge paperwork → bus arrives early
- Delay: Sabotage road approach, cause violence near intake gate → bus skips a visit
- Cancel: Stops bus entirely — only affects prisoner replacement, not guard reserves

Consequences of Bus Cancellation

- Population declines faster — riot threshold approached sooner

- Gang prices rise as supply tightens
- Guards increase patrols as 'incidents' spike

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8. Gossip & Whisper System

The prison's information economy is as important as its physical economy. Players who read the room, learn who to trust, and act on good intelligence will always be ahead. Players who ignore gossip — or trust the wrong sources — will be blindsided.

8.1 Whispers Tab

- Always accessible — a persistent notification panel in the UI
- Every rumor is tagged with: source NPC name, their faction, and a reliability indicator (blank until the player learns that NPC's trustworthiness over time)
- Maximum 5 active whispers — new high-priority entries push out old low-priority ones
- Player tip on first open: 'Prison rumors aren't always true.'

8.2 Gossip Sources

Passive (Automatic)

- Triggered by world events: deaths, gang conflicts, transfers, escape discoveries
- Player proximity to conversations during Day/Afternoon phases
- Weather info sourced from break room TV

Active (Player-Initiated)

- Approach any talkative NPC → 'Gossip' action → costs 1 AP
- Success rate influenced by relationship level and bribe amount
- High-respect allies provide specific, accurate intelligence
- Low-relationship NPCs give vague or deliberately false information

8.3 Source Reliability

Honest NPC	80–90% truth rate. Accuracy improves with friendship.
Sneaky NPC	50% truth. Deliberately misleads outsiders. May be running a con.
Habitual Liar	20% truth. Spreading misinformation is their prison entertainment.
Paranoid NPC	Tells truth but frames everything as a conspiracy. Hard to parse.

Loyal Gang Member	Accurate about their own gang, biased or silent about rivals.

8.4 Verification

- 'Verify' action costs 1 AP and narrows the time/location window of a specific rumor
- Requires either high relationship with source OR a second NPC corroborating the same info
- Spending a cigar with a high-tier NPC can unlock exclusive intel unavailable through normal channels

8.5 Player Gossip Planting

The player can actively spread false information to manipulate NPC behavior.

- Bribe a habitual liar to spread a target rumor — 1–3 cigarettes
- Convince a gullible neutral NPC to repeat something — free but unreliable

Use Cases

- Distract guards to a wrong location — buys free movement in a real area
- Trigger a gang conflict — one gang believes the other is planning a hit
- Frame a prisoner — plant suspicion so a guard or gang 'handles' them

8.6 Escalating Whispers (Riot Warning)

Riot Meter 10–15	'People are getting jumpy. Something's off.'
Riot Meter 15–22	'Three guys gone in a week. Guards are nervous too.'
Riot Meter 22–29	'Someone's going to snap. I'd stay out of the yard tonight.'
Riot Meter 30+	Riot triggers next phase.

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9. Combat & Stealth

> *Combat is not the primary loop — it's a last resort and a risk tool. Stealth is the preferred language of this prison. Fights are fast, dangerous, and carry lasting consequences.*

9.1 Combat Philosophy

'Hitman meets old GTA.' Encounters are resolved in 3–10 seconds of real-time animation with outcomes heavily influenced by stats, weapons, and positioning.

- Never a button-mashing minigame
- Tap attack: quick strike, low noise, moderate damage
- Hold attack: heavy swing or grapple — more damage, more noise, possible knockdown
- Behind target + interact: stealth takedown prompt (KO or kill)

9.2 Stealth Mechanics

Vision Cone	Guards have a forward-facing detection zone. Angle and range vary by type.
Hearing Radius	Noise events (running, locker search, fight) have a radius. Guards investigate source.
Suspicion Meter	Accumulates from: restricted zone access, running near guards, suspicious items visible.
Crouch	Reduces noise output and vision cone detection range. Costs extra AP if maintained long.

9.3 Weapons

Improvised Shiv	Quiet, high damage, breaks after 3–5 uses. Best for stealth kills.
Club / Pipe	Loud, medium damage, durable. Best for open brawls.
Garrote	Silent KO. One-time use per craft. Requires behind-target positioning.
Guard Baton	Stolen from guards. High stun, loud. Creates suspicion if seen holding it.
Stun Device	Crafted, one-time use. Stuns guard briefly. No permanent harm.
Fists	Always available. Low damage, medium noise. Reliable in desperate situations.

9.4 Health & Injury

- Health damage from fights carries over between phases if not healed
- Mild injury: reduced movement speed, -1 AP next phase
- Moderate injury: must visit sick bay — loses 1–2 days of active play
- Severe injury: risk of death if left untreated

9.5 Body Management After a Kill

- 'Hide Body' prompt appears immediately after a kill
- Valid locations: dumpsters, lockers, grass patches, laundry carts, behind furniture

- Capacity: most spots hold 1 body. Industrial dumpsters hold 2.
- Dragging a body costs 1 AP and creates noise (guards may investigate)
- Body placed in rival gang territory: that gang is flagged as suspect by guards

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10. Special Mechanics

10.1 Sick Bay & Medical Staff

Healing

- Player is sent to sick bay after losing a fight or triggering an injury event
- Healing takes 1–2 in-game phases depending on severity
- While in sick bay: player can overhear NPC gossip and trigger special events

Staff Rules

- Doctor and Nurse cannot be killed — attempts auto-fail with immediate punishment
- Doctor: follows rules strictly. Can be bribed only with high-value items.
- Nurse: more flexible. Can be won over with cigarettes, personal favors, or helping NPC acquaintances.

10.2 Weather System

Clear	Standard conditions. No gameplay modifier.
Rain	Guards shorten outdoor patrol routes. Tunnel walls are unstable — collapse chance without braces.
Fog	Outdoor stealth is significantly easier. Vision cones reduced.
Storm	Possible power outage event. Some electronic locks temporarily fail.

- Weather info available from break room TV (accurate) or gossip (sometimes wrong)
- Rain probability is low per day — not a constant threat

10.3 Gambling

- Available in yard or common room after the lunch period (Afternoon phase)
- Card games and dice — player vs. NPC or small group
- Win or lose: dollars or cigarettes

- High-stakes games can involve gang oversight — losing badly may trigger debt consequences
- Gambling skill can be influenced by Intelligence stat

10.4 Animals & Pets

Rare companions found through specific events or quest rewards. Each provides a passive utility.

Rat	Delivers written notes between the player and allies during Night phase. Enables coordination without AP cost.
Cat	Passive — distracts guards who approach the player's cell during surprise raids.
Bird	Found in yard. Can carry small contraband between yard area and a cell window.

- Animals must be fed — failure to do so over 3–4 days causes them to flee
- Animals can be discovered by guards if the cell is searched without the stash box protecting them

10.5 Happiness & Mental State

A slow-burning background meter that reflects the player's mental wellbeing. It changes significantly only on major events, not as a constant drain.

70–100 (High)	Faster healing, bonus to social interactions, reduced chance of harassment.
30–69 (Normal)	Baseline gameplay. No bonuses or penalties.
15–29 (Low)	Slower movement, reduced AP next day, UI shows passive negative thoughts.
0–14 (Critical)	Risk of Mental Collapse event. Whispers tab shows: 'You've been awfully quiet lately...'

Happiness Recovery

- Successfully completing a quest or escape preparation milestone
- High-quality food, entertainment, or contraband items
- Gaining respect or friendship with another NPC
- Winning a fight or overcoming a bully

Happiness Drops

- Being beaten — moderate drop
- Sent to solitary confinement — significant drop
- Losing an important ally — moderate drop
- Failed escape attempt — significant drop
- Witnessing or experiencing major violence events

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11. The Warden

> *The Warden is the prison's ultimate authority — and its most dangerous NPC. He is almost never seen. His presence is felt through rules, routines, fear, and the secrets he keeps buried.*

11.1 Warden Behavior

- Remains locked in his office 90% of the time — a powerful off-limits zone
- Leaves only for scripted events: formal inspection, VIP visit, major riot intervention
- When he moves through the prison, all guards subtly shift position — visually communicating his authority
- His office contains the master key / car key / override code (randomized per run) and the architect NPC's secrets

11.2 Killing the Warden — Outside His Office (Chaos Route)

- Can only happen when the Warden leaves his office during rare scripted events
- Any method (player, gang, scripted event) that kills him outside triggers instant full chaos
- Prison enters Riot state immediately — see Section 7
- Master Key / escape item is NOT obtainable this way — player must have a prepared escape route

11.3 Killing the Warden — Inside His Office (Easter Egg)

See Section 3.7 for full mechanics. Summary:

- Requires covert entry, silent kill, and immediate escape before morning
- Rewards the player with an escape item that bypasses all locks
- One night window — dawn means execution

11.4 The Warden Kill Quest

This quest is the rarest unlock in the game. It is accessed through exactly one of three paths:

Path 1: Player Backstory

- 'Wrongly Framed' backstory — the Warden is personally responsible for the player's imprisonment
- Quest is available from Day 1 but completing it is still extremely difficult

Path 2: In-Prison Event

- Warden personally orders the punishment or death of a key NPC ally
- Quest unlocks as a revenge arc through the gossip system

Path 3: Rare Gossip

- An outside faction's message reaches the prison — there is a bounty on the Warden
- Only surfaces if the player has Connected NPC allies and very high relationship scores

DESIGN NOTE: No gang or guard will openly support the warden kill quest. It is a solo player endeavor. NPCs who know about it will distance themselves.

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12. Player Backstories

At the start of each run, the player selects a backstory. This determines their starting perk, resource advantage, and optionally unlocks a unique hidden quest.

The Rich Fraudster	Perk: Receives $200 per week from a contact. Attracts more bully/gang attention. Easy early-game economy.
The Drug Dealer	Perk: Crafting bonus — contraband recipes use fewer materials. Higher chance of supply bust events targeting player.
The Murderer	Perk: Intimidation bonus. Weaker NPCs back down from confrontations. Guards monitor player more closely from Day 1.
The Ex-Cop	Perk: Can identify corrupt vs. honest guards quickly. Most prisoners distrust player at start — reputation begins lower.
The Secret Agent	Perk: Stealth bonus and faster disguise prep. Can use a unique 'Intel Gather' action to reveal guard patrol patterns. Certain gangs distrust agents by default.
Wrongly Framed	Perk: Starts with an ally NPC inside the prison. Unlocks the Warden Kill quest from Day 1. Begins with a personal vendetta that NPCs may pick up on.

DESIGN NOTE: Backstory determines starting flavor and minor mechanical advantage — not a locked skill tree. All escape routes remain accessible to all backstories.

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13. Notable NPC Backstories & Quests

Key NPCs have personal arcs that interact with the game's systems. These quests are optional but carry meaningful rewards and consequences. They cannot be replayed if the NPC is killed.

13.1 The Architect in Solitary

The most significant NPC in the game — and the most hidden.

- Former accountant and architect for the Warden — knows the building's secret passages and financial corruption
- Has been locked in solitary confinement for years — the Warden keeps him isolated to hide evidence
- Player must discover his existence through rare gossip or specific guard interactions
- Freeing him requires a unique combination of access, trust, and resources
- Reward: He can reveal hidden tunnel routes, the layout of the Warden's office, and optional documentary evidence
- Can be rescued during the player's own escape — he escapes with them

13.2 The Gang Aspirant

- A prisoner with ambition — wants to overthrow his gang's current leader and take control
- Player can help engineer the takeover: gather evidence, set up confrontations, sow doubt in the gang
- Success: new gang leader is installed — better prices, new escape assistance option
- Failure or betrayal: aspirant is killed or exiled, the player loses standing with that gang

13.3 The Stash Keeper

- Hid a contraband stash years ago. Needs help retrieving it from a now-dangerous location.
- Player choice: return the stash (earn loyalty + share of contents) or steal it (lose that NPC permanently, keep everything)

13.4 The Lovelorn Inmate

- Wants to see his wife during a conjugal visit — requires convincing or bribing a guard to arrange it
- Reward: long-term ally, possible access to outside contraband through his wife's smuggled package

13.5 The Romantic Duo

- Two prisoners want private time together — player must guard the room from bullies and passing guards for 2 AP
- Reward: both become reliable allies. They will share information and assist in low-risk escape tasks.

13.6 The Nurse Admirer

- A prisoner wants to impress the nurse — player acts as a subtle intermediary
- Reward: indirect medical supply access, occasional tips about sick bay schedules

13.7 The Private Cell Ambition

- One prisoner desperately wants a private cell — requires manipulating the prison's room assignment system
- Player can help through bribing the right staff member or getting the current occupant moved

13.8 The Conjugal Coordinator

- Similar to the Lovelorn Inmate but requires longer diplomatic work with a specific guard
- The guard who grants conjugal visits may be the same guard involved in the nurse affair — layered tension

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14. Development Roadmap

> *The game is developed solo. Scope is the primary risk. Every feature is categorized: Prototype (must ship with playable loop), Post-Prototype (Phase 2 after loop is working), and Future (expansion content).*

14.1 Prototype Scope (Months 1–2)

Build a playable vertical slice with a real game loop. Fun before features.

- **Core AP system (4 phases, 4 AP day / 8 AP night)**
- Energy meter affecting next-day performance
- Player movement in a 3-room greybox map (cell, laundry, yard)
- Basic economy: dollars from 2 jobs, cigarette purchase at 1 shop
- Tunnel escape route — fully playable with cover, detection, and progress
- Laundry disguise escape — simplified version
- Sick bay opportunity event (nurse affair)
- Gossip / Whispers tab — source-tagged, 1 truthful and 1 lying NPC
- 8–10 NPCs with basic schedules and 1 quest each
- Bully system — 2 bullies, 1 leader, 3 resolution methods
- Autosave using PlayerPrefs
- Simple tutorial sequence

14.2 Post-Prototype Expansion (Months 3–4)

- Full prison map (cell blocks, yard, kitchen, laundry, infirmary, workshops, admin wing)
- 50-NPC active roster with traits, full schedules, and unique agendas
- 4 gangs with shops, respect systems, and faction tension
- Guard AI: 3 types, patrol state machine, suspicion system
- Riot mechanic with full 8 AP window and consequences
- Guard kill rules, forensic timers, accident staging
- Body disposal tiers (all 4)
- Blackmail / camera mechanic
- Bus population system with player manipulation
- Weather system with gameplay effects
- Gambling minigame

14.3 Future Features (Months 5–6 and Beyond)

- Dog patrol escape routes with bypass mechanics
- Guard disguise escape
- Parole route manipulation
- Warden Easter Egg ending (full implementation)
- Solitary NPC (The Architect) — full questline
- Animals / pet system
- Happiness / mental state meter
- Player backstory selection screen
- All 6+ NPC personal questlines
- Post-escape endings based on who lived and died
- Full audio design and SFX pass

- Polish, balance, closed beta testing

14.4 Scope Guard Rules

> **RULE:** No new mechanic is added until existing ones are fun and working. Every new idea goes to the 'Future' category first.

- If a new feature requires new UI + new AI + new items simultaneously → post-prototype by default
- Build one escape route at a time, fully test it, then move to the next
- Keep NPC AI simple until combat, stealth, and economy are stable
- Commit to source control regularly — never let unsaved progress be a risk

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15. Systems Summary at a Glance

Quick Reference: What Interacts with What

System	Connects To
AP & Energy	All player actions, escape timing, crafting, guard interactions
Gossip System	Riot warnings, NPC deaths, escape hints, gang hit scheduling
Guard Respect	Staged accidents, bribery success, patrol aggression, transfer opportunities
Gang System	Economy, escape assistance, NPC deaths, faction tension, riots
Bully System	Tutorial mechanics, energy drain, AP loss, Easter Egg path
Economy	Crafting, bribery, gang access, gambling, contraband searches
Riot Meter	Population count, NPC deaths, warden status, quest events
Body Disposal	Forensic timers, gossip, population count, guard investigations
Happiness	AP capacity, social success, bully vulnerability, mental events
Escape Routes	NPC allies, disguise crafting, tunnel progress, riot timing, key items

This document covers all major systems as designed through the initial planning phase. Systems marked for post-prototype or future phases are fully designed here for reference but are not in initial scope. Development order and scope is governed by Section 14.