

Out of the Fray

Game Design Document

A Platformer Game drafted by Mark, Lesia and Alvin
As part of Interactive Digital Media Master Studies

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Preface

The following game design document is a group of Trinity's student's genuine attempt at drafting a game using the following limitations:

Walking - Sliding - Explore - Dungeon - Tragedy - Forgiveness

The game we designed "Out of the Fray" is drafted from the limitations we have been given and the games the members have researched and or played. Early on in idea gathering, the team decided to focus on the platformer genre.

Platformer genre is chosen because the team interpretation of: "Walking, Sliding, Explore, Dungeon" allows for a game that focuses on movement rather than combat, simulation, and others. A game genre that arguably encapsulates this is Platformers.

Some released games the team have checked are as follows:

Game Titles	Extra Team Notes
Toree 3D, Toree 2	Speedy platformer, "Cheap but Fun".
Bomb Rush Cyberfunk	3D Platformers with arguably in-depth movement mechanics and iconic artstyle.
Penny's Big Breakaway	3D Platformers with arguably in-depth movement mechanics. There was advertisement and sponsorship on this game during its release window. Steamchart numbers show relatively low numbers compared to the top 10 performing games.
Ghostrunner	Platformer with combat mechanic. In certain maps, players are given the choice to close the distance with the enemies.
Pseudoregalia	Platformer with focus on movement and some consideration of combat.
Pizza Tower	Platformer with an arguably iconic art style. Good feeling of speed as well.
American Arcadia	Platformer with focus on satirical story. Platformer with an arguably iconic art style.

The game on the table above in general has "low" player counts (data provided by steamcharts, cited in Bibliography). As such, along with the suggestion that games cannot please everyone (Adams E. 2014) , the team chose the following approach to our game, with the following perspective:

"To pick a niche, don't be too normal and approach everyone. We want a game to gather an audience that really enjoys platformers".

Team Contributions

In this project, the team divided our efforts to cover more grounds, the following are the main responsibilities of each of the members:

Alvin	Mark	Lesia
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main Game Mechanic Design,• Main Player Progression Design• Story and Plot Highlights• Lore• Character Design Ideas• Information Hierarchy Suggester (For Audio and UI/UX)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Game Mechanic Design• Main Enemy Mechanic Design• Main Level Design• Collectible and Perk Design• Main Audio Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main UI/UX Design• Story and Plot Highlights• Character Design Ideas

Game Overview

1. Game Overview

Out of the Fray is a budget game for PC and console. Players play as the powerful Steam Knight Fray as he traverses and explores Dungeons at the ends of the earth's solar system and beyond. The Steam Knights are built with speed and strength, players micromanage their heat and thrust to gain momentum which they can keep with precise movements and sliding. Speed, momentum, and heat are key in reaching unreachable places and defeating enemies of humanity.

The player's ultimate goal is to find clues in each dungeon. Important clues are located near the end of the dungeon, with optional clues scattered throughout the gauntlet of rooms. The clues provide the player with valuable story insights, progresses Fray's journey, and perks players can use to customise Fray's abilities. These gauntlets of rooms are filled with platforming puzzles and enemy hordes relying on speed, momentum and sliding to defeat.

Out of the Fray uses crisp, easily distinguishable graphics along with responsive controls to give the game an easy to learn but hard to master experience. An experience for the casual audience and an engaging game for veteran platformer players. Following Bartle R. (1996) work on game audience, we are targeting achievers and explorers, who aim to master the game.

2. Vision Statement

The player should be afforded the following experience:

1. **Responsive** play originating from a robust and low cooldown movement mechanics.
2. **Open/Sandbox** way to solve platforming and combat puzzles.
3. **Exploration** of the world around them.
4. **Satisfying** feeling of speed and momentum.
5. **Constant Rush**.

Game Mechanics

As discussed in our preface, the team decided to go for a platformer genre, a game with heavy emphasis on movement and a game that is beginner-friendly but has a lot of depth for players who enjoy the platformer genre.

The following is the game mechanic concept we have drafted for our game:

1. The Movement Mechanics

Soldiers of the Steam Knight 1st Division are powerful, with a major flaw that players have to play around. Players have the following movement:

Walk

Players walk in the direction that is pressed on the keyboard or controller. Contrary to other games, players are unable to run.

Slide (Hold to keep momentum, for accessibility: toggle feature available)

Players can use sliding at any time. When the slide is active, it will reduce the friction the player has to the ground. If players are in collision with the wall, the slide does not make them fall, they latch to the wall and carry horizontal momentum to the direction they are walking towards.

Jump

Players gain a small vertical momentum. Doesn't consume thrust charge and heat. Can only be used when a player is touching a surface. (Surface includes the ground, the walls)

Players also have the following resources to use for their movement:

Thrust

Players have the ability to use thrust. Thrust is a capped resource that can be generated overtime and other means explained later.

Thrust gives the player directional momentum.

Using thrust will increase the Steam suit's heat value. Players can activate thrust at any movement state (walking, sliding, jumping, etc.).

Horizontal Thrust

Doesn't provide instant max momentum.

Must be [Held], when [Held], it accelerates till it reaches max momentum. When max momentum is reached, it will always give the player max momentum.

Vertical Thrust

[Tap], players can tap for a short burst of vertical momentum. Can be done mid-air.

[Charge], when players are on the ground, players can hold the button. The vertical momentum gained is relative to how long the button is held till a specific limit.

Heat

Heat is a resource that aims to limit the amount of thrust players can abuse.

If the player reaches the heat limit, no more "heat" will be generated from thrust.

This means players can infinitely boost. Overheating will not stop the player's movement.

(This is to make players feel in control of their movement).

Having high heat will cause the following:

Positives

The heat will create smoke around the player. The smoke will make the player harder to target from enemies.

Negative

The heat that is above the limit will now cause damage to the player's health.

Players cannot die from the health damage caused by heat. Players will be left with 1 health.

Important movement mechanic "verbs":

Momentum

Momentum refers to speed value towards a certain direction.

Friction

Friction refers to the amount of deceleration when a player stops adding momentum.

Meaning;

If a player is sliding, there is little to no deceleration as there is low friction.

If a player is walking after thrusting, there is plenty of deceleration because friction is now at normal state.

**Because "Walking" is part of our prompt, the team decided to make the player unable to sprint. But speed, which the team argues to be one of the difficulties and the appeal for platformers will be addressed by our interpretation of "Sliding". "Sliding" is interpreted by the team as "friction".*

With the following core movement mechanics, the team is hopeful that the system is approachable for beginners but with enough deep mechanics (thrust and heat micromanagement, sliding and map knowledge) for experienced platformers to use.

2. The Enemies

In Fray's journey across the solar system and beyond, he will face certain enemies along his journey, the following are the enemies and their categories:

*Telegraphed = shows UI elements that indicate to the player that an enemy is about to do an attack. For ranged weapons, red glints and red sniper targeting lights and for melee weapons, projection of rectangles on the floor that shows enemy upcoming melee hitbox.

Grunts - Common

Around the size of Fray.

Equipped with a semi-automatic rifle and a melee weapon.

1. When players are medium to far distance away, shoots semi-automatic rifle. Projectile speed of the rifle's bullet must be slower than the Fray's speed when at middling momentum. - When players are hit, deal minor damage, no stagger.
2. When players are close enough, use telegraphed melee. Their telegraphed melee can be countered if players melee or kick at the right time. - When players are hit, deal standard damage, no stagger but animation shows minor stagger.

Intention:

To make players keep on moving, to mark points of interest and to fulfil power fantasy.

Commanders - Mini-boss, Strong Posture

Larger than grunts. Distinguishable from grunts by having more armour detail and distinguishable colours.

Equipped with a semi-automatic rifle, grenades, and a melee weapon.

1. When players are medium to far distance away, shoots semi-automatic rifle. Projectile speed of the rifle's bullet must be slower than the Fray's speed when at middling momentum. - When players are hit, deal minor damage, no stagger.
2. If players don't move after a period of time, throw a telegraphed grenade that explodes after a few seconds of rolling on the ground.
3. When players are close enough, use telegraphed melee. Their telegraphed melee can be countered if players melee or kick at the right time. - When players are hit, deal major damage, minor movement speed reduction, animation shows stagger.
- 4.

Intention:

To make players keep on moving, to mark points of interest, to instil threat to the player's power fantasy.

Rocket Drones - Uncommon

Smaller units than Fray. Distinguishable by being robotic levitating units.

Will be destroyed in one [tap] melee attack.

Robots, equipped with missile launchers and gravitational magnets which allows the unit to hover.

1. When players are outside of close range, shoots a missile. The missile will track and home into the player's current position. Projectile explodes once it collides with a wall, floor, or ceiling. Only 2 projectiles can be deployed for each Rocket Drone before firing another. Projectile speed of the missile must be slower than Fray's speed when at middling momentum. - When players are hit, deal standard damage, minor movement speed reduction, animation shows stagger. Player can

- kick projectile to reflect it in the direction Fray is currently and target an enemy instead.
2. When players are inside close range, moves away from the player, Rocket Drones have no melee attacks.

Intention:

To keep players moving, to mark points of interest, to force the player to think and move tactically and prioritise targets, to instil threat to the player's power fantasy.

Railgun Guys - Uncommon

Larger than grunts. Distinguishable by carrying large energy packs on their backs connected to a railgun.

Equipped with a railgun and a heavy energy pack.

1. When players are medium to far distance away, locks on to the player using a guiding laser and tracks players movements. The guiding laser will then lock into place and show exactly the path the projectile will be fired, then shoots railgun. Projectile speed must be faster than Fray's speed at high momentum. Projectile will ricochet off of surfaces a few times before decaying - When players are hit, deal standard damage, minor movement speed reduction, animation shows stagger.
2. When players are close enough, use telegraphed melee. Their telegraphed melee can be counter if players melee or kick at the right time. - When players are hit, deal standard damage, minor movement speed reduction, animation shows stagger.

Intention:

To keep players moving but limit where they can go, to mark points of interest, to force the player to think and move tactically and prioritise targets, to instil threat to the player's power fantasy.

**Combat is not a core part of our mechanics but serves as an indirect method of telling players where to go, indirect (environmental) storytelling and a sense of "threat"/pressure.*

The team intends to teach movement as a way to dodge in a hidden way. To avoid it being too "trial and error" and frustrating as a result (Adams E. 2014), this mechanic is given a lot of leeway with projectiles being slower than middling momentum. This might change after user testing.

3. The Combat Mechanics

Other than the Soldiers of the Steam Knight mobility, their renowned power comes with their combat prowess. Risks are a big part of how we design these combat mechanics as risk must be accompanied by rewards to incentivize its use (Adams E. 2014). The following are the abilities the player has in their disposal to deal with their enemies:

Melee

Melee are fast attacks. Fray will retract blades from his arms and slash the enemies. Players can use melee at any movement state (walking, sliding, jumping, etc.).

Intention:

An attack that is low risk with relatively low payout.	
<p>[Tap] Melee</p> <p>Tap melee will lock and “teleport” the players toward the closest enemy to the player’s HUD crosshair, dealing damage to that single enemy.</p> <p>Players can teleport to the enemy irrespective if the enemy is higher or lower than him. This means that certain puzzles may put enemies like a ladder and players can keep on hitting enemies to climb up that part of the level.</p> <p>When melee collides with the enemy, the player’s <u>momentum</u> is lost, but melee deals increased damage.</p>	<p>[Hold] Melee</p> <p>Hold melee allows the player to slash in a circle hitbox around Fray. Allowing Fray to keep <u>momentum</u>.</p>
<p>Kick</p> <p>Kicks are slower attacks compared to melee. Fray will kick the enemy up to the sky, stunning them and opening them to melee attacks midair.</p> <p>Players can use kick when Fray’s in a state where legs are on a surface.</p> <p>Intention: An attack that is higher risk with high payout. (Player will be stuck in a longer animation compared to melee. However, it will kick the enemy upwards and can be combo-ed with melee attacks. As player can “teleport” to the enemy with melee, it gives player additional vertical height without spending thrust)</p> <p>You can get high vertical momentum by comboing an enemy midair with kick and melee and then use vertical thrust.</p>	
<p>[Tap] Kick</p> <p>Tap kick will lock and “teleport” the players toward the closest enemy to the player’s HUD crosshair, dealing damage to that single enemy.</p> <p>Enemies are kicked upwards and stunned. The kicked enemies are open for midair punches.</p>	<p>[Hold] Kick</p> <p>Hold kick will make the player into a “bullet” that players can control (with less turning speed) rather than “teleport”.</p> <p><u>Can pass through most enemies except enemies with [strong posture] tag. If passing enemies with [strong posture]. loses all momentum.</u></p>

Combat is not the selling point of the game, movement is. Because of this, the combat is highly dependent on movement, the following are the interaction between movement and combat:

Using melee or kicks will make the player lose all momentum. All that lost momentum is added to the player's damage.

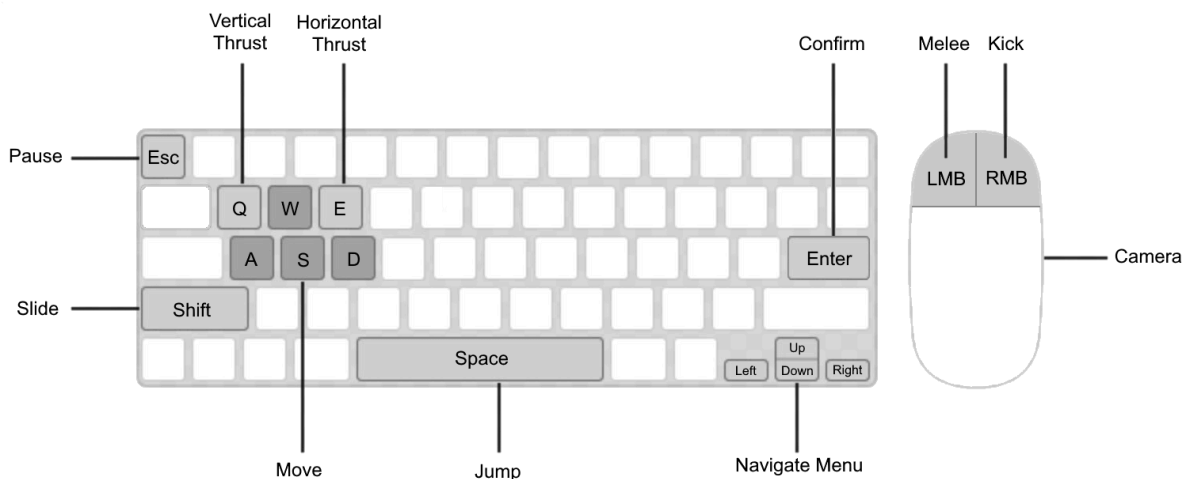
Intention:

Movement is important, this makes it so utilising movement will help other parts of Fray's skill set.

4. Key Bindings

It should be noted that the control layouts below are meant to be the **default** intended control schemes for the game. The player can change the keyboard and the controller inputs within the game's options menu, to make the game more accessible for them.

PC Key Bindings

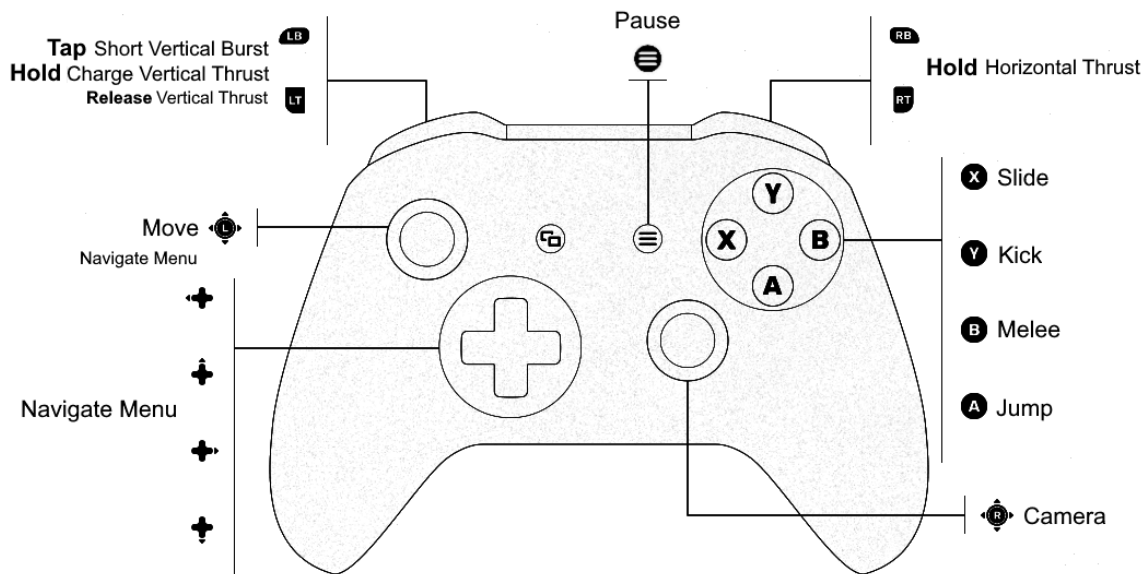


The default keyboard control scheme. The left hand is largely dedicated to movement. The default hand position is; Thumb on the Space Bar, Pinky on Shift and the Middle 3 Fingers on WAD as is standard in most other 3D games. These keys are for the essential movement basic essential movement mechanics and manoeuvring. The Right hand is dedicated to camera control, which is again another standard for 3D games on PC, and combat. Melee is seen as the primary attack, and kick is seen as being the stronger, more committal secondary attack, thus they are mapped to the Left and Right mouse buttons respectively.

The movement keys outside the default assumed finger positions are placed close to the default movement keys for easy and quick repositioning. D is the standard for moving down in 3D games, Q and E are essential movement key to interact with the mechanics of the game, but they're slightly less essential than the other movement keys.

The Escape, Up, Down, Left, Right and Enter keys are simply relegated to menu navigation.

Console Key Bindings



As movement is a main focus of the game, convenient button placements for the movement options are prioritised over the combat mechanics. The default assumed position of the player's grip will be the Left Thumb on the Left Control Stick and the index finger on the Left Bumper or Trigger for the left hand. For the right hand, the thumb should be on the A button, as jump is normally the most significant action in the platforming genre. The right index finger should be on the right bumper and the middle finger should be on the Right Trigger.

Due to the importance of thrust to the overall movement mechanics of the game, both the left and right triggers are used for easy access to the mechanic at all times.

The default mapping of Slide is mapped to X due to its relative proximity to the Jump (A) button. Using a default controller grip, if the player has their thumb on the X button, they can use the bottom of their thumb to immediately act out of a slide without having to reposition their thumb.

The attack buttons are mapped to Y and B since combat is secondary to the game, this will require the player to reposition their thumb. However, it shouldn't be a problem since the distance to reposition the buttons is minimal. Alternatively, they also have the option to switch to the claw grip (index finger on the ABXY buttons) to use the jump/slide/attack buttons simultaneously.

Game Story

A spark is needed to cause a chain reaction. This part of the document discusses the background to Out of the Fray, the reasons for the player's journey, to ground all decisions moving onward, as it is important for achievers and explorers (Bartle R. 1996).

1. Story Synopsis

The war veteran, Fray Hansen or Fray-073, is part of the Steam Knight 1st Division, the vanguard for the Humanity's Pioneer Corp. He is the first and the last of his kind. On an expedition trip, he and his division were ambushed, leaving only him behind.

Time passes, but Fray stays still. Development for the 3rd version of the Steam Knight is already underway as he mourns his old comrade. Many have tried to pull him out of his loop of despair, but to no avail until a peculiar expedition request appeared on Fray's desk.

The expedition's document was filled with peculiar symbols present in Pluto that were unearthed by the survey team. The next day, Fray agreed to join this expedition effort and his first ever expedition after the loss of his comrade had begun.

Little did Fray know that his expedition will lead him to bigger secrets and humanity's future threat.

2. Lore

To ground the story, gameplay and any future parts of the game, the following are important lore guidelines:

The setting of this game's story is set in future earth, year 2157, after the death of Fray's comrade. Humanity at this time has discovered space travel but never travelled much outside of the solar system.

1. This is because of the great loss that came from Fray's expedition and lack of current resources.
2. After the loss of Fray's expedition, earth focused their efforts on rebuilding and preparing for the unknown. Various scouting teams were sent to various planets to scrounge for useful resources. One scouting team managed to find important clues.

Before the death of Fray's comrade, the Pioneer corp is a company established through the combined efforts of various countries of earth. The goal was to go beyond the solar system and find new planets for humanity to colonise.

1. In order to go out of the solar system, humanity prepared super soldiers, these are the Steam Knights.
2. The Steam Knights are genetically modified humans wearing powerful Steam suits with great manoeuvrability and great combat abilities.

3. After the loss of Fray's expedition, the company manages planetary expeditions and mining. Using the profits and their discoveries to create the next generation of super soldiers.
4. The Pioneer corp since Fray's failed expedition has finished creating the second generation of the Steam Knights which address a lot of the weaknesses of Fray's suit and has started working on the third generation.
5. Fray's first generation Steam Knight suit is relatively analogue compared to the second generation Steam Knight suit.

"The Markers" is the name humanity gave to the enemy faction beyond the solar system.

1. "The Markers" name came from how most of humanity discovered them, through a mark in Pluto. That mark was also seen by Fray before in his failed expedition.
2. Humanity doesn't understand "The Markers'" arts, cultures, and languages. Various artefacts, enemy units and technologies by "The Markers" are given arbitrary names by humanity throughout the expedition.
3. "The Markers" have technology above humanity:
 - a. They possess great knowledge in gravity manipulation. Many of their technologies revolve around gravity and energy generated from gravity.
4. "The Markers" continuously spread their reach across the solar system, and they are territorial.
5. At first, when Fray entered "the Marker" temple in Pluto, the automated temple system acted as defence. As Fray continues to evade it and learn more about "The Markers" through "patterns" and advancing closer to "the Marker" home planet, the "Markers" start perceiving humanity as a genuine threat. This led to the ending sequence of the game.

3. Plot Highlight

In Out of the Fray, players play as Fray in combat missions but don't have agency in story decisions. This is to save time. This story is created within the boundaries of [tragedy] and [forgiveness].

Introduction - Introduction to Fray, Humanity, and tease of "The Markers"

The game starts with a flashback of Fray's failed expedition. The expedition ship was ambushed, the ship captain was assassinated, the ship walls were exposed. Fray alone was the last survivor and was able to fly back to earth using one of the remaining mini spacecrafts.

The First Step - Pluto and "The Marker"

Fray received expedition files which showed a marker that he is familiar with and decided to join the expedition. This led him to the first planet, Pluto. His exploration of Pluto led to the discovery of a "Marker" building.

Fray has multiple reasons to join the expedition:

1. As a way to avenge his friends.
2. As a way to escape from his regrets.

As the marker is a symbol he saw when he escaped from the ambush.

After Fray completely explored Pluto, humanity scavenged the building for any useful

technology. One of their discoveries is a tracker which led them to a planet beyond the solar system.

The Second Step - "Terra Firma"

Fray and a small crew of pioneers travelled beyond the solar system in a "suicidal" expedition. The tracker led the team to Terra Firma. Terra Firma's planet is lush and very reminiscent of the current earth. A few remnants of Fray's old expedition ship remained, Fray held out hope for any survivors but found no one.

However, Fray found a lead from one of the recordable logs. The logs is a conversation between someone who crash-landed in Terra Firma and another in a gas planet.

Fray state is:

1. Very fragile. Decided to go to the gas planet in hopes of saving someone.

The Third Step - "Nebulon"

Fray found one of the flying buildings in Nebulon. He faced "The Marker" enemies for the first time. In anger, Fray defeats a lot of "Marker" enemies and finds himself at a communications room, where he discovers a weapon looking contraption blueprint being shared. Fray unfortunately didn't find any survivors.

Fray state is:

1. Very brash, angry that he is unable to save anyone and that at first he is not combat ready as he was before.

The Fourth Step - "Inferno"

Fray asks his crew to fly him to inferno. In Inferno, after fending off hordes of "The Marker", he found the weapon he saw in "Nebulon". He destroyed it.

Unfortunately, beyond the skies, he saw a light glint from another planet close to "Inferno". He hijacks one "Marker" ship and makes his way to "Technos Prime" the home planet of the "Marker" to stop whatever it is.

Fray state is:

1. Panicked as if his advances on "The Marker" is about to bring the end of humanity.

The Final Step - "Technos Prime"

"Technos Prime" is a race against time, Fray rammed his ship to the building that held the glinting weapon. He rushed to the weapon to disarm it. He successfully destroys it. Hoping for a glorious end, he somehow still survived.

Through cutscenes, it is shown that Fray was able to escape from Technos Prime. By the time he was reunited with his crewmates, he realised that maybe there is a reason why his comrade saved him, to teach the next generation of earth's defenders.

He forgave his comrades for leaving him alone and moved on towards the future.

Game Progression

To make full use of the mechanics and the world created, proper game progression has to be set. The following part of the document sets out the game gameplay types and how story is applied to the game:

1. Gameplay Types

Story Mode

The developer-intended way of playing the game. Player will go through a gauntlet of planets with increasing difficulty, each with unique mechanics and each planet's level progresses Fray's story.

Upon entering Story mode, the player will load into a playable hub. In the hub, players can set their character's perks (obtained through exploration), character's look, additional lore (obtained through exploration) and a whiteboard where the player sees the progression of the story and a way to proceed to the next level to progress the story.

Levels that players have finished can be replayed again.

Arcade Mode

The "end-game" of Out of the Fray. The arcade game mode is unlocked from the start of the game. Arcade mode is a time attack gamemode. Players can enter any levels and planets they have gone through and can modify Fray with the perks they have unlocked in the story mode.

In the arcade gamemode, the intention is to allow for players to chase for medals, which gets better the faster they clear the stage and the more collectibles they collect along the way.

Completing arcade-mode and the various challenges will give players additional rewards in appreciation of their dedication to mastering the game.

2. Story Mode Planet Progression

As stated above, story-mode is the intended gameplay by the developers as it allows us to teach mechanics and let players learn about the world the team has created, the following are guidelines for the planets. [Dungeon] in the prompt is understood by the team as environments that are "enclosed".

Order	Story Relevance	Planet Theming	Planet Challenges
Fray's Failed Expedition Ship - "Trauma and Awakening"			
0	A flashback to Fray's pasts. To set the background of the world, the	Futuristic human ship. From the window is the planet "Terra Firma". Various parts of the ship	Basic movement tutorial (thrust, sliding, walking) with simple to no puzzles. Introduction of Enemy Grunts.

	[tragedy] that befell Fray.	have holes and in-flames. Intended to create an atmosphere of urgency and chaos.	
Pluto - "Isolation and Adaptation"			
1	Fray's first expedition after a long hiatus.	Cold and hard dungeon buildings of "The Marker" origin with low gravity areas.	Movement-based puzzles with occasional low gravity areas to teach the player, thrust, and heat management through trial and error. Introduction of drones.
Terra Firma - "Beyond the Solar System"			
2	Fray tries to rescue anyone he could still find.	A lush, Earth-like planet teeming with diverse biomes. Players revisit the futuristic ship tile set from the first region but this time with a variety of nature.	Momentum-based puzzle (destroying rocks to find new locations, higher momentum allows players to destroy certain rocks). If you are moving, the enemy's projectiles are too slow to catch the player.
Nebulon - "Lighter than Gas"			
3	Fray tries to find any survivors. Ends up finding plans for a suspicious weapon of mass destruction.	A gas giant with floating platforms and structures, surrounded by thick clouds and storms. High-altitude constructions. Players visit "Marker" styled buildings floating in the sky. Many tiles involve pitfalls that the player can drop on.	Emphasis on thrust management and vertical traversal. The introduction of enemies with laser weaponry necessitates quick, agile movements and the use of the environment for cover. Players must exploit the verticality to outmanoeuvre opponents and solve puzzles.
Inferno - "The Crucible of Thoughts"			
4	Fray in a panic decides to heat to this planet to put a stop to a weapon of mass destruction he	A planet of intense heat, magma flowing everywhere. Players visit "Marker" styled buildings with a	In certain areas, heat might passively increase and thrust will generate double the heat. Enemies can attack from unreachable areas. Players

	<p>thought he saw in Nebulon.</p> <p>Unfortunately, he saw a nearby planet charging an even bigger weapon.</p>	<p>darker colour scheme, and darker lighting.</p>	<p>can traverse faster or use the steam created from overheating to pass through certain puzzles.</p>
Technos Prime - "The Hopes of Redemption"			
5	<p>Fray crash-landed at "the Marker" home planet. Tries to destroy the weapon of mass destruction he saw in Inferno.</p> <p>Survives his mission till the end.</p> <p>Learns to forgive his comrades and look forward to the future.</p>	<p>Highly advanced technological planet, showcasing sprawling cities with towering skyscrapers, neon-lit streets, and an intricate network of gravity based vehicles and drones.</p>	<p>The player plays under a timer. Failing to reach the end in the allocated time will fail the run.</p> <p>Tests all the player's knowledge of the game and timings for thrust management is more "unforgiving".</p>

Level Design

1. Level Design Concepts

The following section is an in-depth planning of each level we plan to create for Out of the Fray.

"Trauma and Awakening" - (Tutorial Level)

- Starts with an enemy encounter (1-3 Enemy Grunts)
 - Player has to close the gap between Fray and the grunt(s), will be prompted to use the attack button while in range.
- Rush to Hanger, long corridor room, mean to encourage the use of horizontal thrust and slide in order to get to the Hanger quicker.
- While Fray is traversing the corridor, the ship starts to get a lot worse for wear and starts to tilt, making the corridor now a slope, leading to a (non-lethal) gap in the floor.
 - This will require either the use of horizontal thrust mid-air, or preserving momentum through sliding to cross the gap, as Fray's default movement speed alone will not be enough to cross the gap.
 - If the player fails, they'll be able to climb out of the gap and retry the jump as many times until they get it.
- Afterwards rubble falls on the ceiling in front of Fray, blocking the path to the Hanger, the rubble is too high for him to jump normally, but the player will be prompted to use a vertical thrust which will easily allow Fray to traverse over the rubble.
- Hanger Room - Combat Arena (3-5 Enemy Grunts) - Checkpoint saved
 - Room is built around taking advantage of the previously introduced mechanics (for example, 2 enemy grunts are shooting from above and Fray needs to either build momentum or use vertical thrust in order to get to them)
 - The kick button is prompted as an alternative attack.
 - After all enemy grunt units are dead, introduce an enemy commander, he counters you can deal damage to him until he (scripted) counters one of your attacks, ending the level. If the player's health reaches 0 alternatively, that also ends the level without a game over. (forced lost battle.)

Overall Difficulty: Very Easy

Pluto - "Isolation and Adaptation"

Overall design philosophy: Short straightforward levels, meant to ease the players into learning the mechanics and overall structure of the game, before seriously challenging them.

Act 1: Nuclear Winter

- Overall design is to give a constant rush/power fantasy to the player.
 - Simple rush to the finish.
- No required combat encounters.
- Introduction of slopes to be used as ramps (Converting Horizontal Momentum into Vertical Momentum).
- Introduction of Collectables.
 - Momentum puzzles or alternate paths.

Difficulty: Very Easy

Intended Completion Time: 2.5 Minutes

Act 2: Bad Reception

- Very Fast Paced
 - More thoughtful vertical platforming sections.
- 1 required Combat Encounter.
 - Introduction of the Rocket Drone.
 - 2 Grunts accompanying the Rocket Drone.
 - Intention is the player having to learn to balancing prioritising targets.
 - Combat Arena has a lot of cover to avoid missiles.
- Collectables are obtained through platforming challenges, and momentum puzzles.

Difficulty: Easy

Intended completion time: 1.5 minutes

Act 3: Cold Wires

- Slower Paced
- Larger focus on platforming puzzles and utilization of momentum rather than reaction based level progression.
- Puzzle Platforming Segments have a low gravity effect applied to the room
 - This is to make most of the challenge figuring out how to use your mobility to progress through the room, rather than making it a reaction based challenge.
- Requires competence with the interaction of the game's momentum and thrust mechanics.
- Collectables are found through largely just exploring secret segments and bonus rooms.
- Required Combat section with the arena based around to take advantage of momentum.

Difficulty: Easy

Intended completion time: 2 minutes

Act 4 Snowspeeder

- Very Fast Paced
- Similar to Level 1 structurally.
- Alternate routes depending on the vertical path the player takes.
 - Collectables placed as quick reaction based platforming challenges and are scattered throughout the alternative routes.
- Unique combat arena at the end:
 - Long Corridor where the grunts are riding vehicles at high speeds and are shooting at the player from them.
 - Rocket drones are as fast as the riding vehicles.
 - The player needs to catch up to the enemies and destroy them to finish the level.

Difficulty: Medium

Intended completion time: 3 Minutes

Terra Firma - "Beyond the Solar System"

Overall design philosophy: By this stage, we assume that the player is competent enough with the game, thus we introduce our final structural element and then start to challenge the player a bit more.

Act 1 - Sedgemire

- Slower Paced
- Large Focus on Puzzle platforming.
- Formal introduction of breakable surfaces
 - Signified by cracks on those surfaces
 - Requires enough momentum to crash and break through.
 - Required paths to progression are highlighted with a light shining through the crack
 - Secrets are more subtle, still showing it's a breakable surface with a crack, but no highlights.
 - Levels from this point on will now use cracks much more to hide collectibles and secrets.
- Collectibles are mostly hidden in optional breakable walls.
- Ends with a combat section where the player is incentivised to use the destructible environment to gain an advantage over the enemy.

Difficulty: Easy

Intended completion time: 2.5 Minutes

Act 2 - Transcension

- Fast Paced Level
- Variety Level
- Begins with a Speedy Reaction Platforming segment
 - Critical jump at the end of it where Fray jumps into a cracked wall
 - Player has to have enough momentum built up or at least use the horizontal thrust at the right time to break through

- Player dies if they fail to make the jump, the checkpoint is right before the jump.
- Leads right into a fast-paced combat section.
- Leads into a momentum puzzle to break through a wall
 - Is located in the same room as the combat encounter, but is only directed to the cracked wall after defeating all the enemies.
 - Players can skip the combat section with fore knowledge of where to go and solving the puzzle.
- Short multi-pathed level the player is encouraged to explore in
 - Most level collectibles are hidden here

Difficulty: Medium-Easy

Intended Completion Time: 4.5 Minutes

Act 3 - Depredation

- Fast Paced Level
- Objective is to activate 2 out of 3 switches before progressing
 - Each switch is locked behind a different path which is designed differently
 - Path 1 is a reaction platforming segment with enemies shooting at you from afar.
 - Path 2 is combat focused where the enemies serve as obstacles to prevent progression
 - Path 3 is a trap. It's puzzle focused, however you have 3 minutes after taking the path to complete the path before the player dies.
 - Each of the paths become inaccessible after completing each path
 - To get all the collectibles, the player has to revisit the level at least once to view all the paths.
- Ends in a short chase sequence similar to Act 1-4
 - Segment where the player needs to crash through objects using their high speed to negate the obstacle.

Difficulty: Medium

Intended Completion Time: 3.5 Minutes

Act 4 - Sledge

- Very Fast Paced Level
- Combat and Reaction Platforming Focused
- Many enemies sprinkled throughout the level, combat is recommended but not required until the end.
- Multiple paths, revealed by cracked walls to crash through with enough momentum/thrust.
- Collectibles placed along the paths being rewards for skilful platforming rather than being hidden away.
- Ending Combat Section similar to the ending of 2-1, however more Rocket Drones are placed, and destroying objects also destroys cover to hide behind for the Rocket Drones' missiles.
- Intended to give skilled players an earned power fantasy, while challenging the ability of others.

Difficulty: Medium-Hard

Intended Completion Time: 4 Minutes

Nebulon - “Lighter than Gas”

Overall design philosophy: Platforming becomes a lot more vertical. Competence with the game’s momentum and movement mechanics are required for the stage’s more vertical platforming sections, while also upping the ante combat-wise, Bottomless pits also become a prominent hazard in these levels. Usage of momentum and thrust to get as much height as possible is recommended.

Act 1 - Nimbus Ranger

- Fast Paced Level
- Momentum Based Platforming Focused
- Multipath Level
 - Upper Path: Safer to stay on, but difficult to get up to (requires proper use of momentum and thrust)
 - Middle Path: Default path
 - Lower Path: Biggest risk of falling into a bottomless pit as there are no other layers to catch you, however has the most collectibles too.
- Near the end: Introduction of the Railgun Guys.
- Players need to juggle behind uneasy footing and cover to hide from the Railgun Guy’s shots.
- Level ends when the Railgun Guy is defeated.

Difficulty: Medium

Intended Completion Time: 3 Minutes

Act 2 - Vertigo

- Slower Paced Level
- Entirely focused on low gravitational platforming.
 - The intention is for the player to get creative with the platforming mechanics to “break” the level and fly through long distances.
 - Giving the player puzzle platforming “tools” such as slopes and ramps, but never requiring any puzzles to be solved, the level design is meant to be a mechanical “playground”.
- Multiple paths with an evenly distributed amount of collectibles.

Difficulty: Easy

Intended Completion Time: 4 Minutes

Act 3 - Crash Landing

- Very Fast Paced
- Focus on Reaction Based Platforming and Verticality
- Collectibles are rewards for tricky platforming sequences and challenges, rather than secrets.
- Finale is similar sequence to 2-3
- Followed by a required combat arena encounter with the reintroduction of the commander.

Difficulty: Medium-Hard

Intended Completion Time: 3.5 Minutes

Act 4 - Escape Velocity

- Fast Paced
- Scenario is you're constantly falling and moving down.
- Focus on slopes and usage of slide and horizontal thrust to cross large gaps.
- Most challenge comes from dealing with enemy projectiles from enemies the player isn't intended to reach by out-maneuvring and outrunning them.
- Collectibles are obtained through skilful platforming rather than exploration.
- Time limit of 5 minutes
 - If the player dies, the time limit gets adjusted accordingly and gets set back to the nearest checkpoint
 - The player should never get placed in a scenario where they're given an impossible timer to complete the level, no matter what point they are in the level.

Difficulty: Hard

Intended Completion Time: 3.5 Minutes.

Inferno - "The Crucible of Thoughts"

Overall design philosophy: The fastest paced series of levels due to taking advantage of overheating from areas automatically building up the heat gauge, but it also is the most dangerous in terms of health management. Note that overheating will not take Fray's health below 1HP.

Act 1 - Fire Hive

- Fast Paced with Breaks
- Ample warnings about areas causing the heat gauge to increment.
 - In those areas, players are encouraged to act quickly as possible to get out of the area or solve the puzzle there.
 - Most collectibles are secrets in those areas.
- Several segments to build momentum and crash through cracked walls as bonus paths.
- Ending segment is a required combat section with a Commander and several Grunts.

Difficulty: Medium-Hard

Intended Completion Time: 5 Minutes

Act 2 - Breaking Point

- Extremely Fast Paced
- Reaction Based Platforming Level with little breaks from the Heat Gauge automatically incrementing.
 - Level design is geared towards only using thrust sparingly by building up momentum using slopes and sliding to conserve that momentum.
 - Health Recovery and Pickups are frequent to offset overheat damage.
- Enemies are scattered throughout the level.
 - Actively seeking out combat is detrimental due to wasting time on combat while the heat gauge is building.
- Alternate paths are available through cracks in the path that can be destroyed with

enough momentum conservation.

- Collectibles are located here, with others being skilful platforming challenges.
- Meant to be especially rewarding to those who have mastered the momentum mechanics (possible speedrunning achievement for beating the level in under 90 seconds while overheating?).

Difficulty: Very Hard

Intended Completion Time: 2.5 Minutes

Act 3 - Descent to the Core

- Very Fast Paced
- Reaction Based Platforming and Exploration
- Level starts with a sequence similar to levels 2-3 and 3-3 however a commander is another enemy the player has to deal with, and it takes place in an area where the heat gauge automatically increments.
- Level design from here is designed to be more vertical, while also using the auto incrementing heat mechanic for some vertical sections.
- Secrets and alternate paths through cracked walls.
 - Collectibles primarily located here.
- Required ending fight against 2 Commanders and 4 Rocket Drones

Difficulty: Hard

Intended Completion Time: 4 Minutes

Act 4 - Aggrovator

- Fast paced
- Momentum/Combat Focused
- The entire level is one huge combat arena designed to be a momentum playground that allows for creative routes to dodge enemy projectiles and reach enemies.
 - Designed to take full advantage of more momentum = more damage.
- Level Ends when all enemies are destroyed.
- Collectibles are scattered and hidden throughout the level through breakable surfaces and small platforming challenges.
- Meant to be a power fantasy level.

Difficulty: Medium

Intended Completion Time: 3 Minutes

Technos Prime - "The Hopes of Redemption"

Overall design philosophy: Meant to be the final test of all the players skills. Each level has a timer applied to give a sense of urgency, encouraging the players to go fast, and the challenges are supposed to leave little room for major errors.

Act 1 - Homecoming

- Very Fast Paced
- Similar start to the level structure of 4-4.
- Many jumps require proper usage of both momentum, sliding and thrust at the right moments.
- Few surfaces to break through using proper momentum and thrust.
- No exploration breaks, little to no branching paths.
 - Most collectibles are instead rewarded by even more challenging platforming sequences (if we'll even have collectibles at all, in these levels.
- No required combat sections, but wiping out the Railgun Guys will make level traversal a lot easier for the player.
- Time Limit: 5 Minutes
 - Same rules apply here as level 3-4

Difficulty: Very Hard

Intended Completion Time: 4 Minutes

Act 2 - Haste Freight Omega

- Fast Paced
- Combat/Momentum Platforming Puzzle focused
- Player needs to constantly build up momentum to escape rooms and progress to the next section.
- Enemies will try to halt your progression, so there's a delicate balancing act between building momentum and fighting enemies while still making it to the goal in time.
- Enemy placement has mainly high tier enemies (Railgun Guys/Commanders) incentivising the player to attack them using their already built up momentum to deal extra damage, and maintaining it throughout the level.
- Multiple required combat sections.
- Time Limit: 8 Minutes
 - Same rules as previously stated apply.
 - Each checkpoint is given after a required combat encounter.

Difficulty: Very Hard

Intended Completion Time: 6 minutes.

Act 3 - Red Shift

- Final Battle: Goal is to dismantle/destroy the weapon of mass destruction.
 - Phase 1
 - Fray must travel from and reach 3 panels avoiding obstacles and must use his momentum mechanics for dodging the weapon's defences.
 - Reaching the panels and then destroying them will lower a barrier,

- allowing Fray to damage the weapon itself.
- Phase 2
 - Fray must deal damage to the weapon, meanwhile taking potshots from traps and continuously spawning enemies.
- After destroying the weapon, Fray needs to escape Technos Prime as the facility he's in is imploding.
 - The player needs to be moving at max speed at all times, otherwise the blast will catch up to Fray.
 - The path will be constantly change as the facility is being destroyed.
 - E.g. a flat floor will suddenly become a slope.
 - The player needs to crash through cracked surfaces, and alternate paths that are being destroyed in real time.
 - No enemies firing, the blast and the changing level are the only threats.

Difficulty: Very Hard
Intended Completion Time: 8 Minutes

2. Collectibles and Perks

In order to reward players for exploring and mastery over the mechanics, the game will reward players with a variety of perks and additional lore.

In a level, players can expect the following:

6 Total Collectibles

3 Tablets - Unlocks Lore

3 Chips - Unlocks Perks players can use in Story and Arcade mode.

Perks are designed as sidegrades that are not necessary but allows for variety of gameplay and allow for skill expression, the following are examples with their intentions:

*Numbers are not final and will be adjusted after playtesting.

Speed Thrusters

Increases the momentum limit by 20% and max momentum thrust can give 20%.
Reduces the total thrust player can keep at a time by -20%.

Intention:

For players who are confident with their thrust management, they may opt to use this perk and push for faster clears of levels.

Comboing Fist

Fisting an enemy multiple times will deal increased damage up to a certain limit (By 20% up to 5 stacks).

Kick Fist

If the player kicks, a punch within a short period of time after the kick will deal increased damage by 100%.

Intention:

Slightly more risky with higher payout compared to Comboing fist as Kicks will make players stuck at animation longer.

Advanced Cooling

Heat Gauge increments at 50% of the normal rate.

Thrust Power weakened by 25-30% (-Acceleration -Max Speed)

Intention:

For players that either want more delicate control over their thrust or for players that end up overheating more often than they would like.

Thruster Fusion

Adds a new "Diagonal Thrust" that launches Fray forwards and upwards simultaneously.

Uses 50% more thrust and increments the heat gauge 50% faster.

Removes the Ability to use Horizontal and Vertical Thrust.

Requires the player to press both thrust buttons simultaneously.

Intention:

Adds an experimental new mechanic that alters how the player will traverse through the levels. This will require further testing and might be removed if the level designed doesn't allow it to work well.

Kinetic Energy Converter

Increases the damage bonuses from attacks with momentum applied by 100%

Reduces non-momentum based attacks damage by 25-50%

Intention:

Encourages the player to interact more with the momentum based damage mechanics by centring the playstyle around it rather than just static attacks.

Light Armor

Increases max base (walking) speed by 50%

Increases Damage Taken by 50%

Intention:

For advanced players that find the default movement speed of Fray too slow. This is going to break certain levels, but it is intentional.

UI

UI is an important part of the player experience. Its intention is to provide players important information for their gameplay while not distracting their gameplay. This is also partly to prevent trial and error creating frustration for the player (Adams E. 2014).

1. Intention and Importance of Information

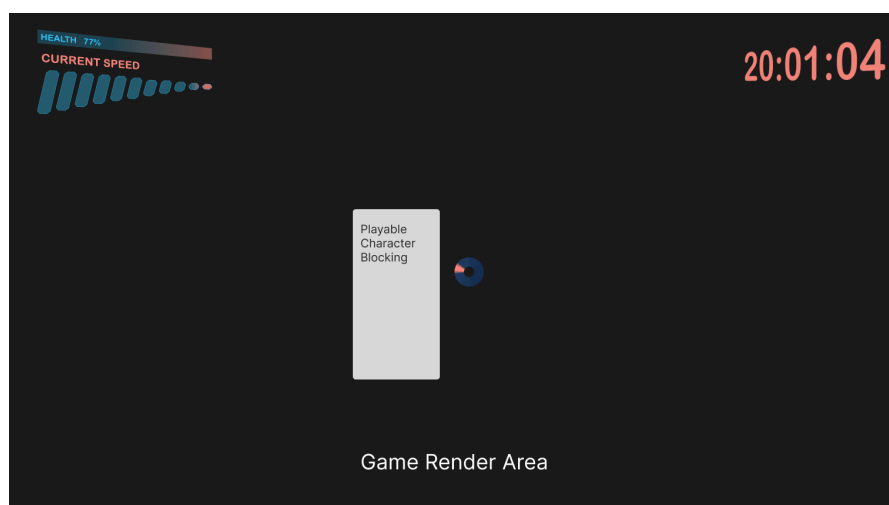
It's important that the UI is very intentional and for gameplay and story reasons, the following are the information that we think players should know when playing the game.

High Priority Information	Medium Priority Information	Low Priority Information
Thrust Meter (Important resource to play with game mechanics) Current Speed (Important for players to solve puzzles and beat levels faster) Current Health	Time elapsed since level start (For competitive players) Enemy Projectiles Enemy's Telegraphed Attacks Enemy Grenades Enemy Location	Current level and current planet.

These guidelines will guide the UI design and also how queues, visual, or audio is handled.

2. Design Drafts and Intentions

For the UI, we have decided that thrust meter, current speed, current health and time elapsed to be always shown in the UI. Enemy telegraphed attacks and projectiles are conditional UI elements that only appear when necessary.

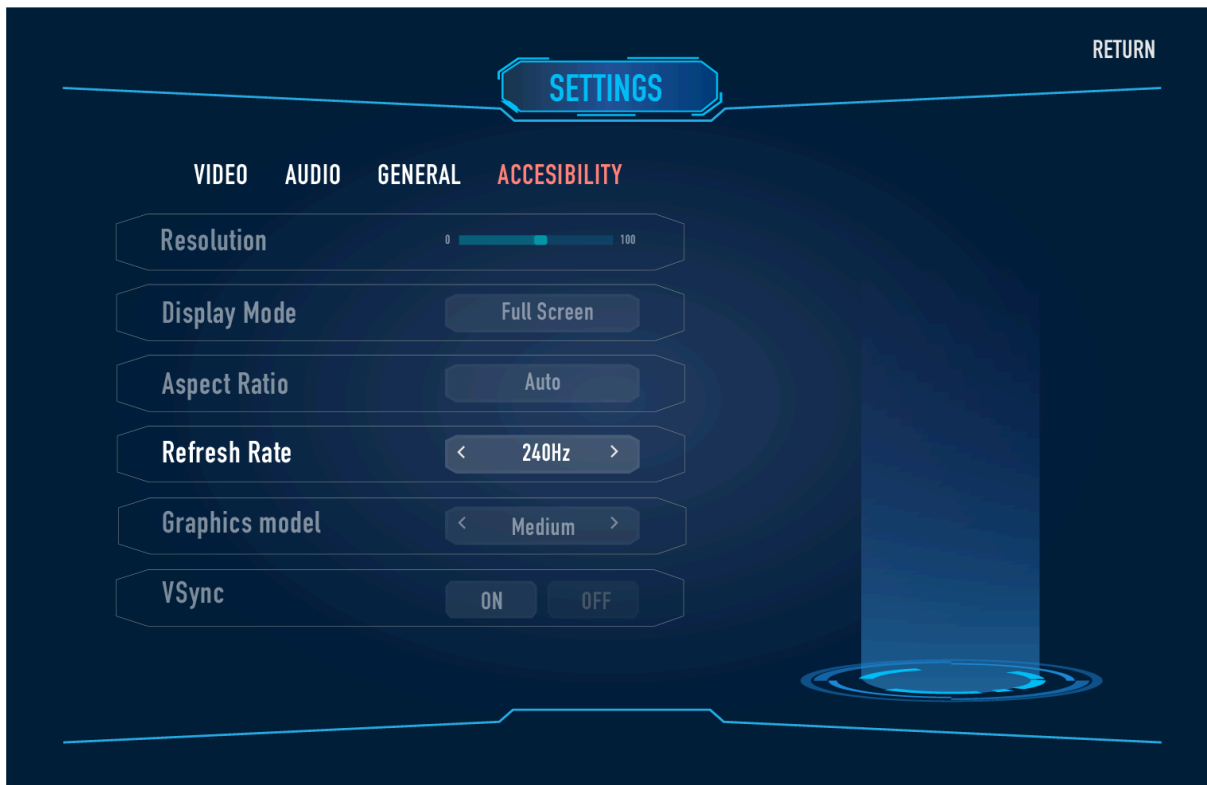


Element	Description
Health Bar	The health bar in the game is shown as a horizontal bar that fills up to show the player's current health. It decreases from right to left as the player takes damage, and the line segments help players quickly see how much health they have left. It also has a clear numerical percentage that shows the exact health left.
Speed Information	The speed metre is designed as a series of tapered blocks that light up sequentially to show the player's current speed. As the player speeds up, more blocks light up and the dots move forward, while slowing down dims the blocks in reverse.
Mission Timer	The mission timer is centrally placed within the player's view, counting the elapsed time from the start of the level.
Thrust Meter	The Thrust Meter is an O-shaped gauge that follows the main hero, Fray, and displays the status of his suit's thrust capabilities. This positioning allows players to quickly check their current status without being distracted from the core gameplay.

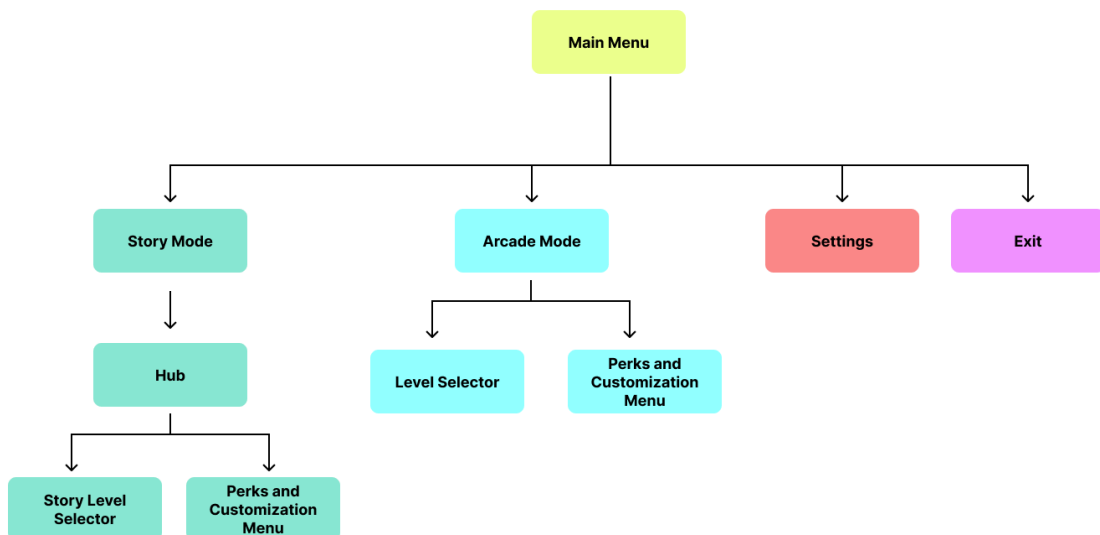
Intention behind specific UI positions and combinations:

Elements	Reason
Health is Smaller than Thrust. Moreover, Health is located near Thrust.	<p>Movement is the main focus of the game, hence speed is shown with higher priority.</p> <p>Health is important to a lesser degree.</p> <p>This is a nudge to the heat mechanic. If a player goes above the heat limit, overheat, player health will drain overtime. This health drain cannot defeat the player.</p>
UI Elements are flat colour and only have minor graduation near maximum value or minimum value.	<p>The intention is for the UI to not distract gameplay. By keeping UI elements flat colours:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. It will blend with fewer environments. 4. It will be less distracting. <p>With shading only reserved for maximum value or minimum value:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Gives players an easy visual cue for information that is important for gameplay.
UI Elements are only located at the upper elements.	<p>The gameplay of Out of the Fray is mostly grounded. (Players slide on grounds and flying is not a mechanic).</p> <p>Because the ground provides a lot of important information, the upper area of the game can be used for UI elements without restricting players.</p>
UI Elements are slightly skewed.	Skewed UI elements are intentional to give the game a sense of speed.

The following is the team's draft for the settings menu following our UI design.



3. Menu Navigations



Audio

Audio is another important queue the team plans to use to provide players with valuable information and make their experience less frustrating.

1. Intention and Importance of Information

Following our plans for information hierarchy, the following are our planned audio hierarchy:

High Priority (Essential Sound Effects - Has a Gameplay Purpose)

- Notice that Thrust has run out
 - Warn players that their main movement resource has run out.
- Heat Gauge
 - Overheat Warning
 - Notifies the player they're using too much thrust and is about to overheat, something they may want to avoid.
 - Overheating
 - Notifies the player to stop using thrust immediately as they are taking constant damage until Fray's suit cools down.
 - Heating Up
 - For use in world 4 to signify areas where the heat gauge will rise automatically without player input.
- Fray's Actions
 - Jump Sound Effect
 - Sliding Sound
 - Horizontal/Vertical Thrust Sound Effect
 - Important to know what action Fray is doing
- Landing Impact Sound
 - Player needs a confirmation that Fray is now grounded, allowing him to jump again
- Notice that Health is low
 - Warns players to be careful to not take any more damage since they are in big danger of dying.
- Fray Takes Damage.
 - Feedback for making an error.
- Level Complete Jingle
 - Let the player know they've completed the level.
- Other hazards

Medium Priority (Has a gameplay purpose, but not as important)

- Melee or Kicks Whiffing/Hitting
 - Confirmation that an enemy/object has/has not been hit.
- Enemy Projectiles
 - Bullet/Rocket/Railgun fired
 - Lets the player know about the immediate danger and what the projectile that's head towards them is.
 - Rocket Loading/Railgun aiming
 - Notifies the player that they're about to be attacked without visual queues.
 - Bullet Collision/Rocket Explosion
 - Notifies player that the projectile fired no longer exists and is now safe to possibly attack the current threat.

- Enemy Melee attack noises
 - Telegraphs the enemy's next move and pre-empts the player to dodge their attack.
- Obtained Collectible Sound Effect
 - Verifies the player has obtained the collectible/pickup without needing to double-check.
- Crashing through breakable surfaces
 - Lets players know they've opened up a pathway/alternate route/secret
- Enemy Aggro Noises
 - Lets the player know which enemy has noticed Fray and is attempting to engage combat with them.
- Enemy Defeat Noises
 - Alerts the player that the enemy is neutralised and is no longer a threat, so they can proceed onto the next enemy or progress through the level.
- Fray's Footsteps while moving
 - Base Mechanic, but doesn't require a button press (Players will likely already be aware of no special actions happening)
- Maximum momentum reached (Wind wooshing)
- Thrust Gauge fully charged
 - Notifies the player they can freely use thrust as it can't charge up any longer
 - Heat Gauge if near or is overheating, sound effects take priority until it is low enough
- Menu Sound Effects
 - Menu Navigation
 - Start/Select Levels
 - Quit Game
- Idle Sounds Fray/Enemies
 - For Fray
 - Adds more personality to the character
 - For Enemies
 - Lets the player know they're still alive
 - Adds unique personality to the individual enemies

Low Priority (Little to no gameplay purpose)

1. Background Music
 - a. Sets the tone of the level/story
2. Level Ambience
3. The Drone of the current map

2. Sound Inspirations and Sound Reference

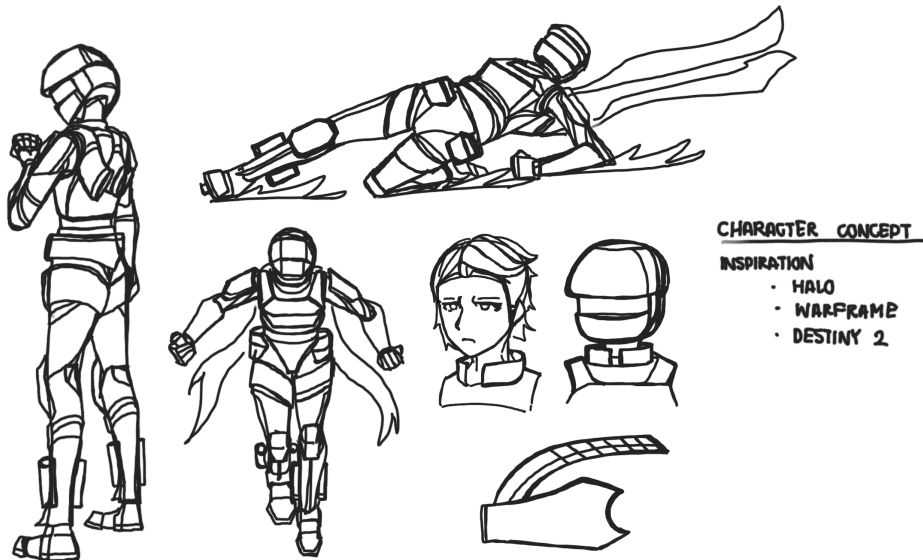
The following are additional guidelines the team has on how a sound effect should sound like:

- Thrust Reaching its Limit
 - It sounds futuristic like that to act as storytelling. The technology that is present inside of Fray suit. Maybe it sounded more trumpet-like or annoying because Fray's suit, despite being technological, is still analogue compared to the other suits.
- Overheat Warning
 - A slight alarm beep
- Overheating
 - A sound effect that sounds like the player is now getting lit ablaze, i.e. Pyro's Flame Thrower - Team Fortress 2
- Heating Up
 - Tea Kettle Sound Effect (May need tweaking to not be too annoying)
- Low Health Warning
 - A Fast Low Pitched Alarm Sound
- Jump
 - A very quick wind whooshing sound effect - Sonic Colours
- Slide
 - Drifting Sound Effect Perhaps one with sparking sounds to make it sound a little more futuristic while also emphasising speed - Mario Kart Double Dash
- Thrust
 - Sound of a Jet Engine breaking the surrounding wind/Wind Whooshing - Sonic Unleashed (Boost)
- Landing Impact
 - A Snappy but soft thud sound effect.
- Melee/Kick Whiff
 - Wind Wooshing sound effect to indicate a swing but not actually hitting anything.
- Melee/Kick Hit
 - A solid/sharp satisfying crack or striking sound effect - Zelda Ocarina of Time Enemy Damage Sound Effect?
- Enemy Gun Fired
 - Similar sounds to player weapons in FPS Games i.e. Quake
- Rocket Drone Loading
 - Loading Bullet Bill Sound Effect - Super Mario Galaxy
- Maximum Momentum Reached
 - Wind wooshing sound when in specific state - Team Fortress 2

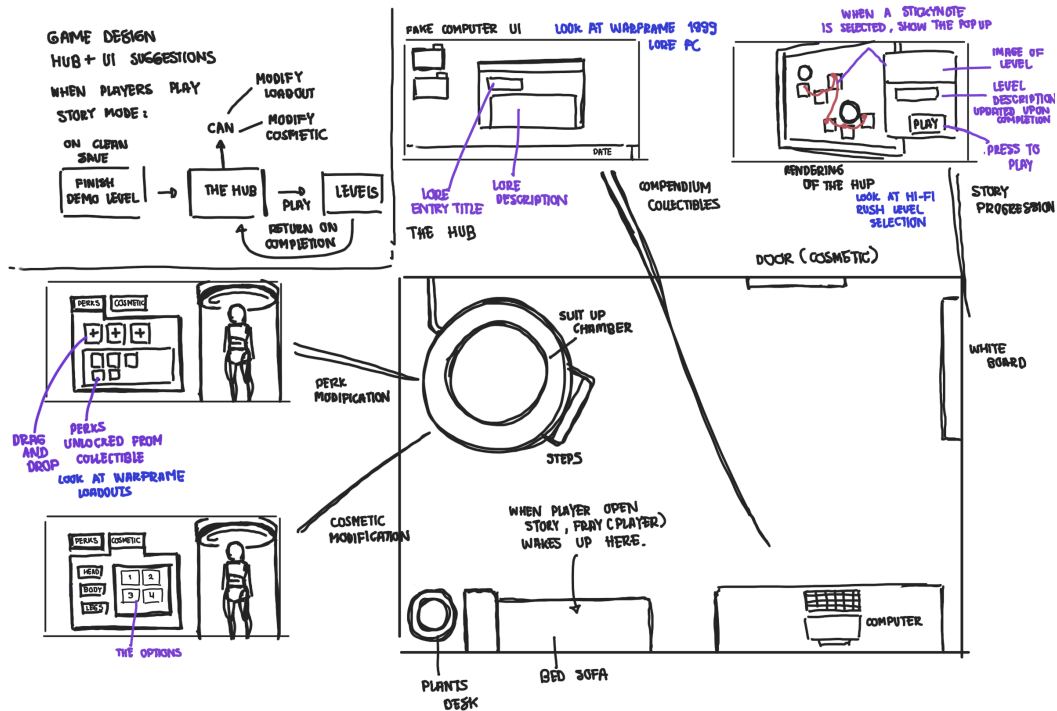
Visual

The following is the team's exploration to character design and certain elements:

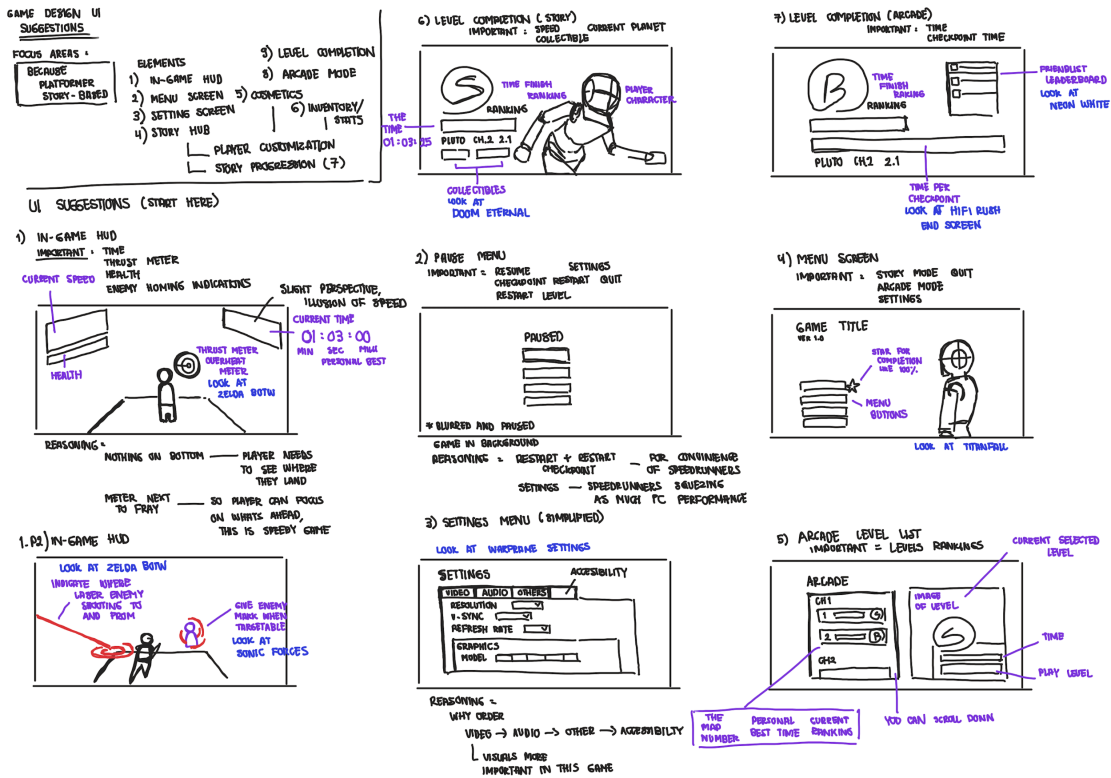
Fray's Character Concept:



Team's Exploration into the Hub in store mode and UI Elements:



Team's Exploration into UI Elements:



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