

# PROJECT STEPS Process

## Documentation

[Optional: Game image]

### Description

Write a basic summary of your game's description here – could be the same as the one on the main download page (itch). This can change over time!

[Link to download]

### Playtests

#### Internal Developer Playtest (Week 4)

[Optional: screenshot]

Build used: Paper prototype (link currently unavailable)

#### Setup

Playtest Goal: How does the time travel concept feel?

Pre-playtest Instructions:

This is a turn-based strategy game with time travel. You will be controlling the blue units and attempting to eliminate all of the opposing units without all of yours also being eliminated. The winner is the last team standing. You cannot move diagonally, and, for the purposes of this playtest, attacks will always hit and deal one point of damage.

You will have a tracking sheet to help you keep track of your units' HP and types. You will also have the ability to force any unit to move forward or backwards through time by one turn, by expending one of the Time Points on your sheet.

Please think out loud as much as you can, in a stream-of-consciousness manner if possible. I will not use any of your thoughts against you if you wish to share what you're thinking strategically. However, I will also not be allowed to answer any questions.

## Learnings

Somewhat unclear - the players often forgot that the time travel was a mechanic.

Testers seemed to appreciate that the system had strategic depth, while also saying that it currently felt very “solvable.”

I expected players to be more eager to use the time travel, honestly.

I am going to see if adding a system with more depth and unit differentiation encourages people to use the time travel mechanics. Same with perhaps adding better context to the ability.

## External Developer Playtest (Week 7)

[Optional: screenshot]

Build used: <link>

### Setup

Playtest Goal (i.e.: what are you looking to find out?):

**Have the changes I made to combat made the game feel less predictable? Does having set characters and a scenario make you value them more?**

Pre-playtest Instructions (intro to game, any prior information needed, details to ignore):

**This is a turn-based strategy game with time travel. You will be controlling three agents of STEPS as they go about a mission to assassinate a historical villain. You will have access to a number of handouts if you need to remember the rules, and your characters' information is written in the same place.**

**Please think out loud as much as you can - best case scenario is that you never shut up. I will never use anything you say against you strategically, as I will be playing in the way that the eventual AI would. Share your thoughts and plans at the beginning and end of your turns if you can. However, be aware that I cannot answer any questions.**

### Learnings

What was the answer to your goal/question?: **Seemingly, yes to both**

What did your tester enjoy? What did your tester not enjoy?: **The tester enjoyed the setting and scenario a lot, but seemed to feel like he didn't get enough information, and felt like things were organized strangely.**

Did anything surprise you?: **The tester didn't seem interested in picking up other weapons as he went, seeing it as a “downgrade” from his cyberpunk tech.**

**Goals:** 1: Make information clearer. 2: experiment with ways to make found weapons more viable. 3: find a way to emphasize time travel better.

## Target Player Playtest (Week ?)

[Optional: screenshot]

Build used: <link>

[Optional: link to playtest video]

### Setup

Playtest Goal: Do action points make the time travel more viable?

Pre-playtest Instructions (intro to game, any prior information needed, details to ignore):

**Welcome to Project STEPS. This is a turn-based strategy game with time travel. You will be controlling three time-traveling cyberpunk vigilantes as they go about a mission to assassinate a historical villain. You will have access to a number of handouts if you need to remember the rules, and your characters' information is written in the same place.**

**Please think out loud as much as you can - best case scenario is that you never shut up. I will never use anything you say against you strategically, as I will be playing in the way that the eventual AI would. Share your thoughts and plans at the beginning and end of your turns if you can. However, be aware that I cannot answer any questions.**

**<Show the playtester the basics of controlling Roll20 so that it doesn't hold up the playtest>**

### Learnings

What was the answer to your goal/question?:

Action points are definitely the way to go. Offer a lot more freedom.

What did your tester enjoy? What did your tester not enjoy?

Sam enjoyed the action points system a lot, as well as the time travel. The only things that stood out as frustrating were times when I did not make certain bits of important information clear.

Did anything surprise you?

Sam found a way to stunlock the entire map pretty quickly.

Goals: Smooth out a few rough edges where Sam had trouble understanding things.

Experiment with different amounts of action points (should I have more than the others?).

Make the time control stuff less easily exploitable.

# Process Journal

## Week 2

I did not make much initial progress due to problems with my health. I took some time to better solidify the idea in my head, primarily, and leaned further into the concept of “TBS but with time travel.”

## Week 3

I focused primarily on producing the necessary materials and a very basic ruleset. I got two sets of meeples 3D printed and began to construct a paper prototype. My main goals are going to be about testing the basics of my ruleset.

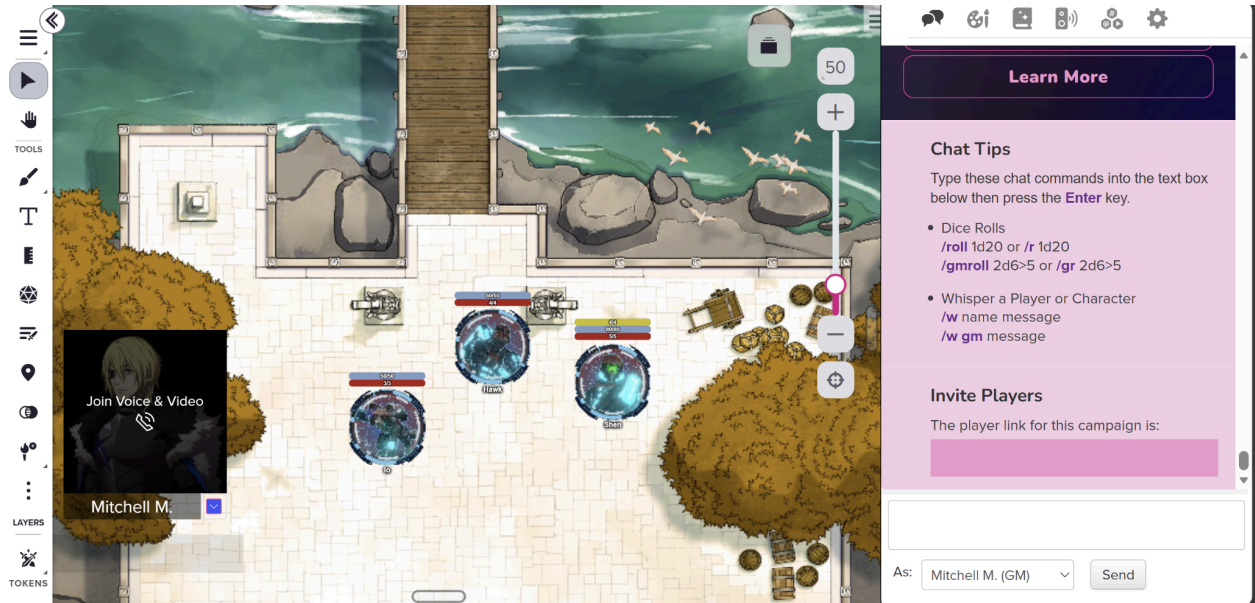
## Week 4

I ran two playtests, and noticed a couple of important things. Mainly, my system was too simplistic to really capture peoples' interests for long, but it had a good “core” that showed promise. I am going to try and digitize the prototype next, I think, so that I can create a deeper system without people getting lost in the weeds.

## Week 5

I didn't do much direct work on this prototype per se, but I still progressed towards my goals. I focused primarily on learning Unreal Engine so that I could try and digitize my prototype there. Goals are relatively unchanged, although perhaps more “focused” in that I want to get a better sense of Unreal's systems for movement and control.

## Week 6



My third playtest was this week! I spent most of the week buzzing about trying to put the game into Roll20 while also meaningfully changing the game to get more information. I added new mechanics for movement and firing, and focused on the “narrative” aspects since that seemed to really draw the attention of the class last time. Instead of generic pieces, we now have three cyberpunk commandos: Shen, Hawk, and Io. (I honestly really like Io as a character).

I think now the narrative and game design feel pretty inseparable. Under the hood, all that’s really changed is the addition of stats, variable weapon damage, and variable hit chance. Even then, the hit chance calculation is just copied from the way *XCOM 2* handles it.

My playtester said that he felt like the game didn’t present enough information. So, I’m going to make the information clearer, and also try and develop a simple character sheet to help make it easier to keep track of things. As I’m writing this, I’m about 60% of the way through putting a simple one together in HTML.

## Week 7

[Optional: screenshot]

Had two playtests this week: Abigale and Sam. Abigale had an interesting bit of insight, and said that the original system discouraged the use of the time control abilities, so I switched to ability points. Sam played the AP build and thought it was a positive shift.

Added AP and developed a new system to keep track of it.

Try an automate parts of the sheet so that I can talk less and that information is clearer.

## Week 8

[Optional: screenshot]

Spent too long automating the sheet, honestly. Spent three entire days working on nothing but this. Also gave lo additional action points.

Automated large parts, but realized that some parts can't be automated how I want.

Stop trying to automate stuff. Focus on more practical stuff, like a standardized decision tree for the AI.

## Week 9

[Optional: screenshot]

This week, I developed a decision algorithm for one of the enemies, and began the process of making information available through map callouts in the world. I also trimmed down some descriptions that were odd, which will hopefully make the time travel stuff less confusing.

My hope is that doing this will make the game more approachable for new players.

Next week, I will finalize the AI's decision making.

## Week 10

[Optional: screenshot]

This week, I primarily focused on making a rulebook. I wanted to make sure that a new player could reasonably understand the game, even if they did not have familiarity with Roll20. I also made full decision algorithms for all four of my enemy types.

The design itself did not change much, other than better documenting things.

Next week, I will probably begin digitizing it into Unreal Engine, seeing as the term is now over.