

LD Jam 001 - Systemic AI Combat in Half Life 2

A Half Life 2 LD jam happening on the Discord: <https://discord.gg/geFkdZW5vp>

H A L F - L I F E ²



WHAT WE'RE DOING

- A **1-month level design jam**, starting **Monday 15th August**
- Everyone will aim to make a **short, fun Half Life 2 level**, sharing progress and tips as we go, and ideally, sharing gameplay videos and level files at the end
- **No competitive element**, no pressure or silly crunching on weekends - just having fun in our spare time, and seeing what we can come up with.
- **Don't worry** if you've never made a Half Life 2 level before - I'll provide a couple of starter levels that you can use as a starting point and reference, and those of us who are familiar with Hammer will also be on the discord to answer questions and share tips, etc!

RULES

- **(THEME)** The theme is “**Systemic AI combat**”. Your level must contain systemic combat between at least 2 AI factions (e.g. the Combine, rebel civilians and ally characters, zombies and headcrabs)
- **(STRUCTURE)** Your level must have some sense of a beginning, a middle and an end
- **(PLAYABLE!)** If you can't play your level, it's not a level :P It doesn't have to be big, or look nice - the focus is on creating something people can play, and that you can show to people, in action.

STRETCH GOALS

Bonus points if:

- You share progress and help others in the #leveldesign-jams channel on the Discord
- You share a gameplay video and editor / playable files (.vmf and .bsp) of your level at the end of the jam
- Your level feels like a small but fully playable thing
- Your level features combat between all 3 main factions (allies, combine and zombies)
- Your level features some scripting to create interesting situations
- You get feedback from someone playtesting your map before the end of the jam

TOOLS

- You'll need a copy of **Half Life 2** to take part. If you don't have it, I recommend buying The Orange Box, which comes with HL2, its two episodic follow-ups, Portal and Team Fortress 2 - it's £15.49 on Steam:
<https://store.steampowered.com/sub/469/>
- Its level editor Hammer comes free with it - you'll find the .exe in the “**Steam\steamapps\common\Half-Life 2\bin**” folder.
- But! You may also want to download **Hammer++**, which is a community-made update to the editor, which brings new features that make it feel less old (e.g. lighting preview in the editor, gizmo, better texture and model browser, etc):
<https://ficool2.github.io/HammerPlusPlus-Website/>

STARTER MAP

- My starter map is a quick level I've made to use as both a beginners' tutorial and a useful starting point to copy from / build upon, and start making your own thing as quick as possible. Most of the stuff in this level, you can copy/paste into your own levels, and you can see how I've done some basic scripting, etc.
- This **.vmf file** is the editor file, which you should place in the "**Steam\steamapps\common\sourcesdk_content\ep2\mapsrc**" folder, and open in the Hammer editor: <http://doublefunction.co.uk/files/hl2zoo004.vmf>
- This **.bsp file** is the one that you can play by placing it in your "**Steam\steamapps\common\Half-Life 2\ep2\maps**" folder, then typing "**map hl2zoo004**" into the console in Half Life 2 - Episode 2: <http://doublefunction.co.uk/files/hl2zoo004.bsp>
- And a quick youtube intro to this level and HL2 editing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h7HfKEQATU>



SUGGESTIONS

- **Keep your level small**, and give yourself time to **iterate** on it and make it better. Try to work as elegantly as you can, making something fun from simple ideas.
- **If you're new to hammer**, spend your first session just creating a big box room with a light and the player in it, that you can build and test in game. Remember that you can open up my starter map (or any other), and copy paste things (geo, props, entities) from there into your map. Also, ask questions on the Discord!
- **Make something playable quickly**, and give yourself the last week or two to focus on making it better
- **Visual quality is not important** - you can use dev textures or real textures, use props and meshes to sell ideas or even make things look nice - but I recommend keeping things simple and prioritising gameplay and the experience
- **Don't spend a silly / unhealthy amount of time on your level** - the 1-month duration is there so that no one is killing themselves over a weekend, and if this one goes well, there will be more jams in the future.

Take it easy, remember it's not a competition, and have fun 👍

- Steve