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BA COMPUTER GAMES DESIGN

Level Design & Development

Advanced Level Design Principles

Exploring Techniques, Methods, and Best Practices



Computer Games Design
Advanced Level Design Principles

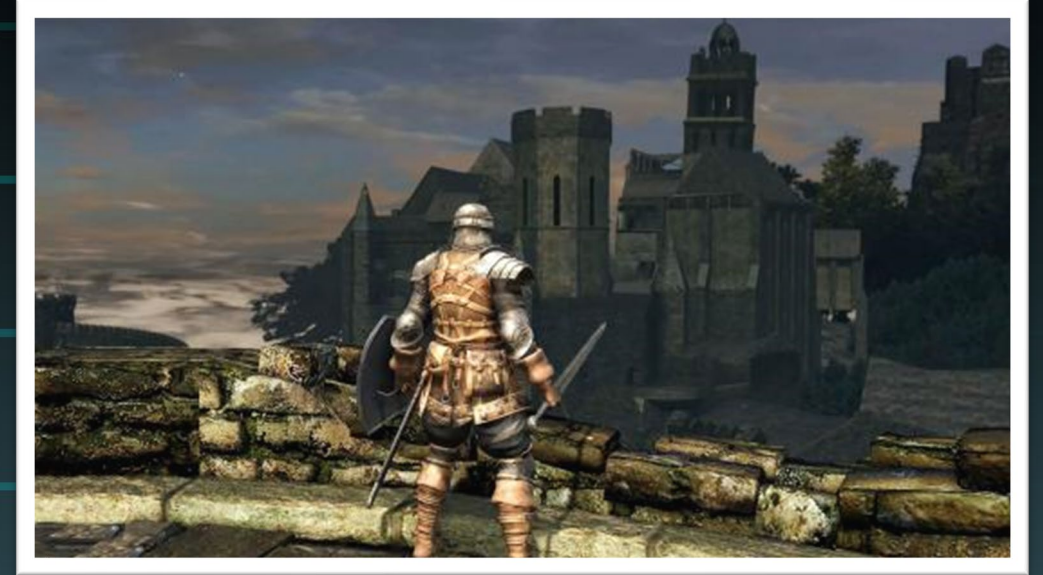
Advanced Level Design Principles

Introduction



Introduction

- Level design is the process of creating environments, challenges, and gameplay experiences within a game.
- Well-designed levels enhance immersion, gameplay flow, and player engagement.



Example: The interconnected world design of **Dark Souls**, which encourages exploration and discovery while maintaining a strong sense of place.



Advanced Level Design Principles

Understanding Player Navigation & Flow



- Directing players naturally through environments using visual cues, lighting, and spatial design.

Techniques you could use:

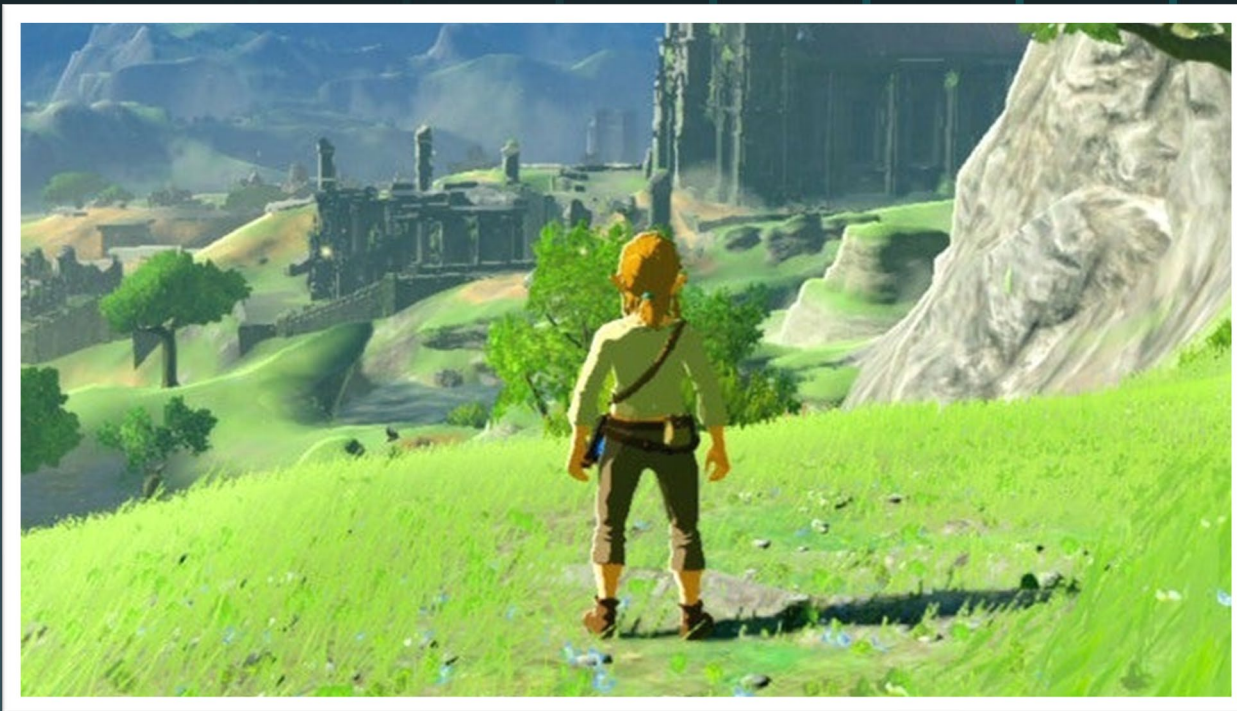
- Landmarks and waypoints
- Environmental storytelling
- Leading lines and focal points



Example: **Half-Life: Alyx** uses light sources and enemy placements to guide players through the level intuitively.



- Balancing open and enclosed spaces, strategic enemy placements, and pacing.
 - This can add variety to the experience and be an easy method for introducing new visuals/set pieces to the player.



Example: **The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild** balances large open spaces with strategic enemy encounters and landmarks to encourage exploration.



- Using the environment to tell a story without direct exposition.

Examples:

- Ruined buildings hinting at past events
- Items placed strategically to suggest recent activity
- Hidden lore elements within the level

Environmental Storytelling



Example: **Bioshock** conveys its dystopian narrative through scattered audio logs, environmental details, and set dressing.



Example: **Resident Evil 4** balances intense combat sequences with slower, puzzle-driven exploration to maintain engagement.

- **Pacing Types:**
 - High-intensity combat vs. quiet exploration moments
 - Puzzle sections vs. action sequences
- **How to Control Pacing:**
 - Using level transitions and bottlenecks
 - Introducing dynamic events



- Making levels feel alive through dynamic environments and scripted events.



Example: **Red Dead Redemption 2** features a living world where NPCs react dynamically to player actions, creating a more immersive experience.



- Balancing maps for fair play, movement, and power-ups.
- Avoiding Dominant strategies and ensuring a level playing field is important.



Example: **Counter-Strike** maps like Dust II use symmetry and choke points to ensure competitive gameplay.



- Finding and fixing design flaws before final implementation.

Common Adjustments:

- Adjusting difficulty curves
- Improving visibility and navigation
- Enhancing engagement through feedback

Playtesting and Iteration



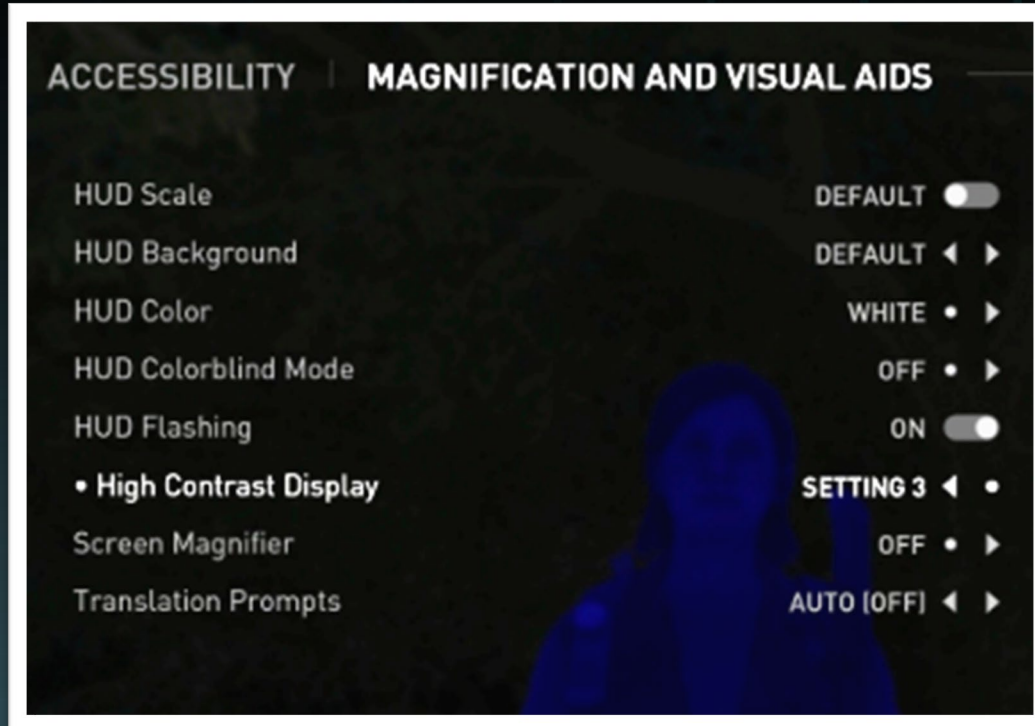
Example: **Portal** underwent extensive playtesting to refine its puzzle complexity and player guidance.



- Ensuring levels are playable for all users.

Methods:

- Colorblind-friendly design
- Subtitles and adjustable difficulty settings
- Clear signposting and assistive navigation tools



Example: **The Last of Us Part II** includes extensive accessibility options.



- Comparing open-world freedom with controlled linear pacing.
 - Consider player engagement.
 - Environmental storytelling can be used to help with this.. And pull players towards or away from certain areas..
 - Reward exploration!



Example: **The Witcher 3** balances open-world freedom with structured quest zones.



Example: **DOOM Eternal** uses
verticality for fast-paced movement
and combat.

- Using height differences for exploration and combat.



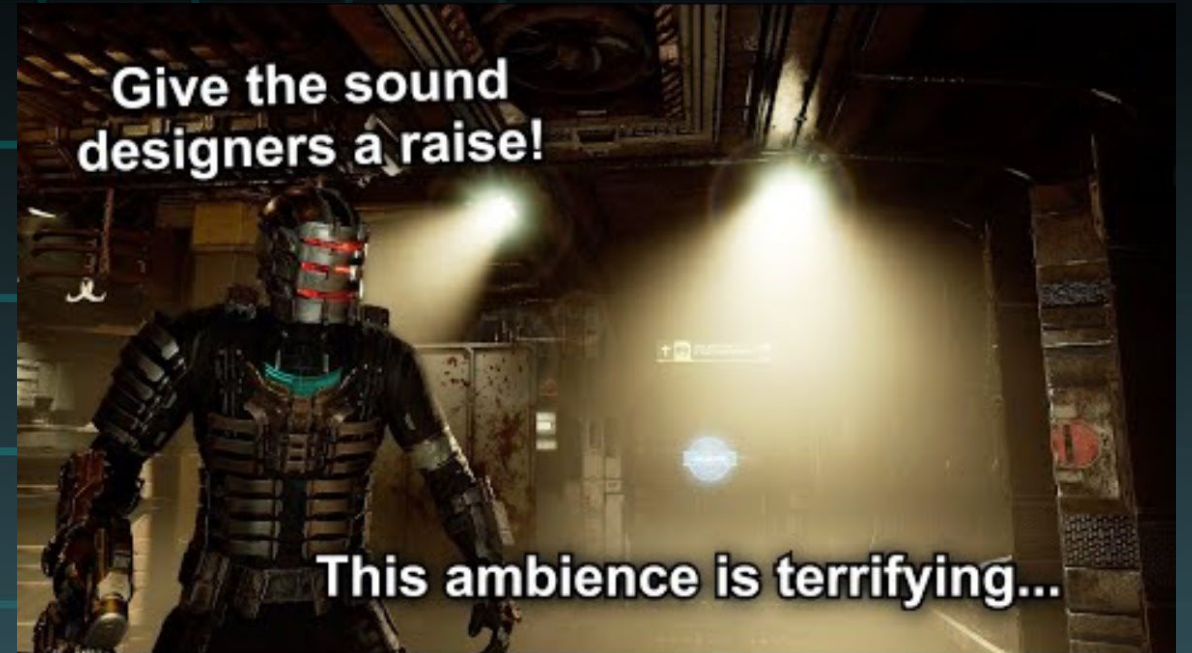
- Using light to guide players and set atmosphere.



Example: **The Last of Us** uses lighting to highlight paths and evoke emotions.



- Enhancing immersion with directional sound cues and dynamic music.



Example: **Dead Space** uses sound design to build tension and direct the player.



Key Takeaways:

- Strong navigation guides players intuitively.
- Environmental storytelling deepens immersion.
 - Pacing keeps gameplay engaging.
- Iteration ensures polished experiences.



Any Questions?