

GEM – Phase 2 Postmortem

Overall, I feel this project went very well, the game overall being much improved. Many of the first steps for this overhaul were determined by my post-mortem from the original project, which led to some near-immediate improvements in quality. For instance, swapping out the time-based grading system for lives and limited moves greatly decreased players' impulses toward brute-force solutions and caused them to think more critically, as I had hoped. While I was initially resistant to redesigning levels due to my struggle getting them to exist in the first place during the first version of the project, retooling and reorganization was much easier than expected due to mechanics and concepts being preestablished, and progression was much improved. Visual and aural effects and additions, such as camera shake, background debris, and unique impact sounds improved game feel and made player actions feel impactful. Simple tutorialization was added to guide players while still letting them learn and discover for themselves, and overall UI improvements smoothed out the experience. All of these developments greatly elevated users' experience, with which I am quite satisfied.

That said, much as I tried, not everything is perfect. One of my largest obstacles was my past self, the previous version not following certain coding and design practices that I now understand should be standard – I stand by my belief that going back and refactoring the project wouldn't have done me much good considering my goals and specialization, but it was inconvenient. I also wish I had been able to do more with the storytelling and establishing a unique atmosphere, as my lack of artistic chops kept the visuals simple and story conveyance explicit. UI layouts are much improved, but their animations are somewhat basic (due largely to my own limitations of knowledge and time), and some such as menu deployments aren't as snappy and responsive as I'd have liked. While physics and feel were much improved, and I tried to alleviate these issues as much as possible, certain puzzles are still possible to softlock and/or can be thrown off by Unity's physics causing objects to catch on small corners. Finally, I do wish I had more time to create more versatile and accessible settings. With all of this said, though, I try not to let these issues get me down – I did my best with the time and resources I had, and the game is better than it was.

I feel that this project has helped to reinforce my understanding of and approach to the game development process. On a concrete skills level, I improved my UI animation and implementation knowledge, got better with visual and audio effects, practiced creating and

reviewing test forms for the forums, and overall strengthened my knowledge of making games feel good to play. In terms of more personal soft skill improvements, my ability to plan, prioritize, and manage implementation of new features has developed, as have my creativity in finding UI/UX solutions, parsing of user engagement, and objective assessment of my work. All in all, I feel this project was productive, enlightening, and quite enjoyable.