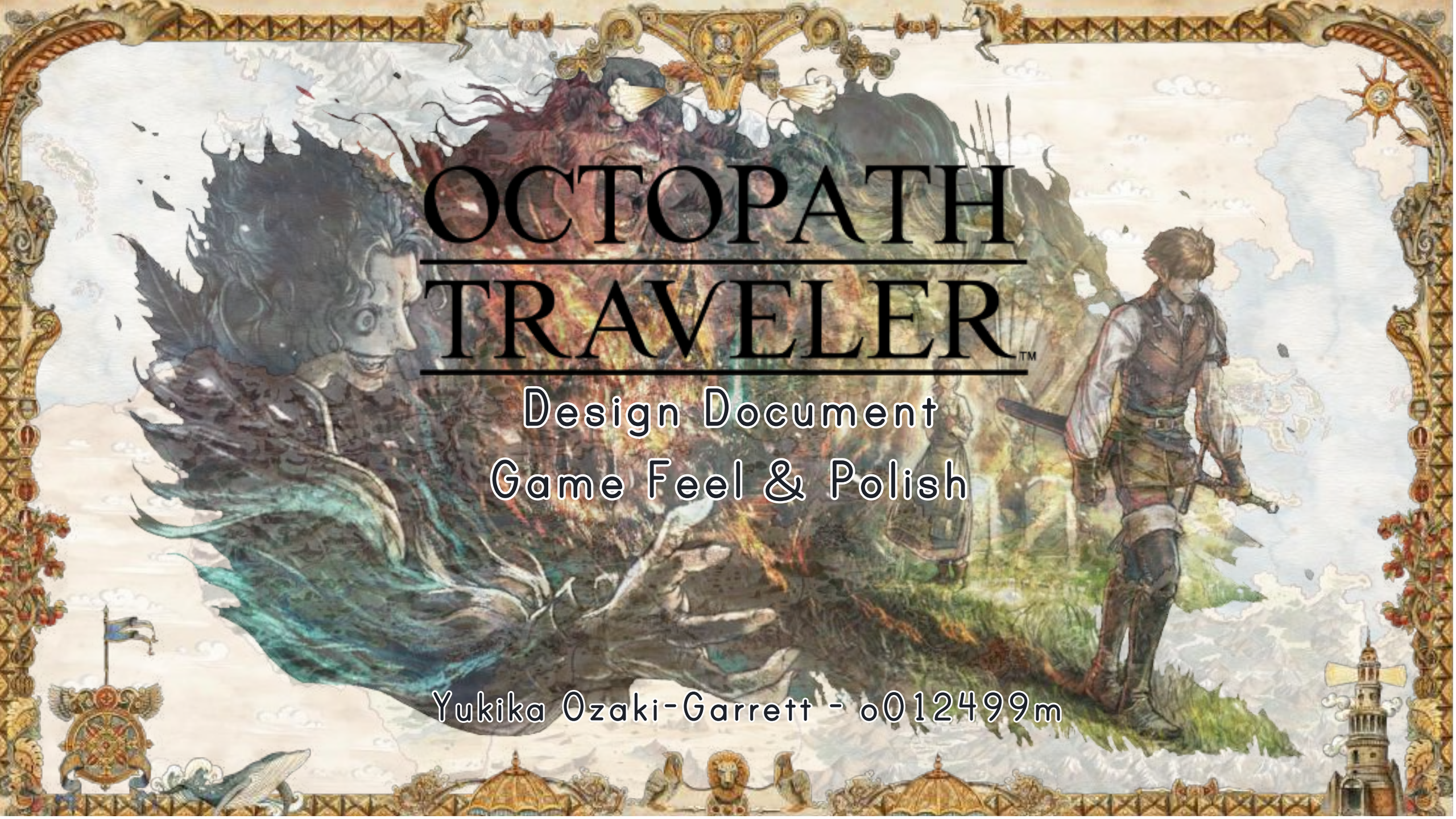

Design Document
Game Feel & Polish

Yukika Ozaki-Garrett - o012499m

Game Feel Analysis: Octopath Traveler II

Octopath Traveller II highlights how good game feel may be achieved in a turn-based system by using perceptual design rather than mechanical immediacy. Despite the lack of continuous player-controlled motion, the game creates a strong sensation of responsiveness by carefully balancing player intent, system restrictions, and feedback timeliness. (Swink, 2008) contends that game feel is essentially defined by the speed and clarity of feedback, rather than real-time control itself, and Octopath Traveller II demonstrates this notion by ensuring that every player input is quickly acknowledged via layered audiovisual signals. Menu navigation is aided by animated cursors, confirmation sounds, subtle camera emphasis, and UI motion, ensuring that player intent is never overlooked, even when the mechanical conclusion is delayed until later in the turn sequence. The game's simulated space is tightly confined yet immensely readable. Combat venues are spatially limited, yet enemy posture, facing direction, and micro-movements maintain a sense of causation between actions and results. When an enemy is struck, their body reacts by stumbling, staggering, or collapsing, strengthening perceived physicality without the need of physics simulation. This represents the guiding idea that simulated space does not need realism to be substantial; rather, consistency and symbolic motion enable players to mentally map cause and effect. The Break system is especially significant here because it converts abstract number thresholds into embodied state changes. When a Break happens, the increase of sound, animation intensity, and visual emphasis indicates a distinct transition in battle state, which is consistent with the Juicy Framework's emphasis on feedback coherence and attentiveness.

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Game Feel Analysis: Octopath Traveler II

In terms of polish density, Octopath Traveller II shows restraint rather than maximalism. Standard assaults are emotive but not overpowering, leaving contrast for crucial occasions like Breaks, Boosts, and finishing smashes. This selective exaggeration supports (Hutchinson, 2022) claim that JRPGs profit from symbolic exaggeration rather than constant spectacle, as emotional readability takes precedence over physical realism. Harmony between systems is particularly strong. HD-2D lighting, animation timing, UI motion, and audio design all reinforce a common feedback language. As (Kayser, 2019) points out in his HD-2D research, the merger of modern rendering techniques with retro readability works best when no element competes for attention, which Octopath Traveller II routinely does. Overall, these design decisions show that Octopath Traveller II views turn-based combat as a performative space rather than a strictly systemic one. The player is not merely delivering commands to be handled later but rather creating impactful moments through anticipation, clarity, and sensory payoff. This analysis directly informs my project's approach to combating polish, emphasising the importance of predictable mechanics and restrained exaggeration in maintaining readability while still providing emotionally satisfying interactions, as well as avoiding both under-polished minimalism and overwhelming spectacle.

Game Feel Analysis: Octopath Traveler II

From a polish evaluation standpoint, Octopath Traveller II has a strong Instantaneous Response (0.8), as player inputs are acknowledged instantly via multi-channel feedback despite delayed mechanical resolution. One of the game's distinguishing features is its predictability (1.0); damage values, enemy vulnerabilities, break thresholds, round sequences, and behavioural patterns are regularly shown, coinciding with (Juul, 2005) concept of transparent rulesets that promote mastery through transparency rather than surprise. The Break system, in particular, serves as a perceptual anchor, explicitly communicating moments of advantage via audiovisual escalation. Tangibility (0.8) is achieved through layered audiovisual exaggeration enemy flinch animations, impact particles, screen emphasis, and resonant sound design which supports (Hutchinson, 2022) claim that symbolic exaggeration in JRPGs frequently communicates emotional impact more effectively than physical realism. Harmony (1.0) is particularly good, with visual style, lighting, animation timing, user interface motion, and aural design all contributing to a single, coherent feedback language.

Game Feel Analysis: Persona 5 Royal

Persona 5 Royal takes a maximalist approach to game feel, leveraging intense audiovisual input to transform a menu-driven JRPG into a rapid, tactile, and continuously moving experience. While mechanically turn-based, the game achieves outstanding felt responsiveness because to near-instant feedback loops that prioritise player intent above mechanical resolution. (Swink, 2008) concept of "juiciness" is perfectly fulfilled here, with each button click instantaneously validated by motion, sound, colour, and UI distortion. The interface itself becomes a performative layer, guaranteeing that the player never receives a dead input or a confusing response. The input-response relationship in Persona 5 Royal is based on momentum. Menu transitions are lively, camera motions are aggressive, and activities link together smoothly, giving the impression of continuous flow. This is especially visible in the One More and All-Out Attack systems, which reduce downtime while rewarding smart decisions with faster speed. These mechanics are consistent with the lecture topics on contextual response, in which feedback not only validates input but also adjusts based on player success, rewarding mastery and agency. The end result is a system in which perfect play feels faster and more powerful, a key principle of a pleasant game experience.

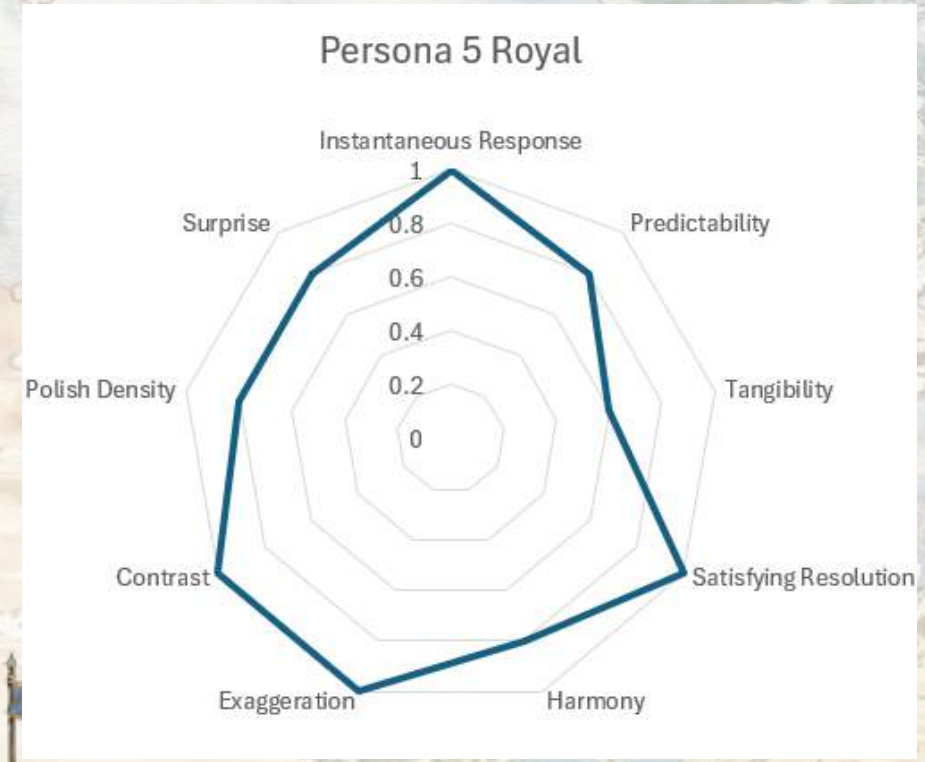
Game Feel Analysis: Persona 5 Royal

From a simulated space perspective, Persona 5 Royal prioritises symbolic clarity over physical realism. Combat venues are abstract and highly stylised, but movements feel impactful because to exaggerated animation timing, hit-stopping, and sound design. Tangibility here is expressive rather than grounded, which supports (Hutchinson, 2022) claim that modern JRPG aesthetics frequently prioritise emotional exaggeration over physical reality. Enemy reactions, screen freezes, and dramatic graphical overlays make attacks feel definitive even without actual force simulation.The audio design is inextricably linked to the game's overall mood. Sound effects are crisp, rhythmically linked with the animation, and hierarchically combined to prioritise player actions. UI noises serve as rule confirmation by reinforcing successful inputs and system transitions. Music dynamically complements tempo alterations, intensifying during conflict escalation and decreasing during the planning phase. This reflects the module's emphasis on sound as a rule-communication system, with music reinforcing both mechanical structure and emotional tone.

Game Feel Analysis: Persona 5 Royal

Persona 5 Royal strikes a delicate balance between polish and visual competitiveness. Predictability remains high because to consistent iconography, colour coding, and animation language, but the sheer volume of feedback might temporarily obfuscate information for inexperienced players. This supports (Game Design Foundry, 2022) warning that excessive layering can cause cognitive friction. However, the game compensates for this with strict artistic cohesion: all feedback pieces share a common visual language, keeping harmony despite intensity. Persona 5 Royal highlights how severe exaggeration can improve perceived responsiveness when accompanied by internal consistency. For my own project, it provides as an example of how aggressive polish can increase engagement while simultaneously emphasising the importance of judicious application to avoid exceeding strategic readability.

Game Feel Analysis: Persona 5 Royal



Persona 5 Royal performs exceptionally well in terms of Instantaneous Response (1.0), with nearly zero time between input and acknowledgement across all interaction layers. Predictability (0.8) remains good due to consistent iconography, colour coding, and visual grammar, albeit feedback density may temporarily conceal information for inexperienced players. Exaggerated motion, dramatic hit effects, clear aural cues, and dynamic camera framing create a significant impact despite the lack of physical realism. Exaggeration (1.0) and Contrast (1.0) are critical to the game's identity, while Harmony (0.9) is maintained by tight stylistic coherence. The game proves that maximalist feedback, when guided by a consistent internal language, does not degrade readability. Persona 5 Royal serves as a vital reference for my own project, demonstrating how excessive polish may increase perceived responsiveness and emotional connection. At the same time, it emphasises the value of restraint through coherence rather than reduction, which influenced my decision to use heightened feedback selectively rather than continuously.

Game Feel Analysis: Final Fantasy VII Remake

Final Fantasy VII Remake prioritises game feel in its real-time hybrid combat system, achieving a strong sense of physicality through resistance, animation commitment, and layered audiovisual feedback. Unlike typical turn-based RPGs, where input is abstracted through menus, FFVII Remake requires direct spatial control, which strongly aligns with (Swink, 2008) description of real-time game feel as the sensation produced by input, reaction, and context working together. However, reaction is purposely moderated rather than instantaneous. Player actions are limited by animation locks and recovery frames, which means that inputs are received instantaneously but resolved over time. This design decision introduces friction, which (Swink, 2008) describes as necessary for felt mass and inertia. Attacks seem heavy because they resist cancellation, requiring players to make decisions and absorb the consequences inside the simulated environment.This resistance is strengthened by hit-stop, a critical polish technique that temporarily stops motion at the point of impact. Hit-stop exaggerates contact while maintaining mechanical balance, allowing the player to experience power through temporal distortion. Importantly, hit-stop time changes with attack strength, generating an intuitive hierarchy of actions for players. This layered feedback translates abstract damage values into embodied sensations. Camera shaking, dynamic zooms, and enemy reaction animations help to anchor battle in simulated space, guaranteeing that every hit results in a visible and spatially coherent response. However, this density creates risk. According to (Game Design Foundry,2022), excessive visual layering can impair predictability, especially in large-scale interactions when particles, effects, and UI overlap. FFVII Remake occasionally hits this threshold, temporarily limiting rule readability during visually intense combat scenes.

Game Feel Analysis: Final Fantasy VII Remake

Sound design acts as a stabilising factor in this chaotic environment. Distinct audio layers express timing, impact, and success even when visual clarity is compromised. Sharp transients indicate hit confirmation, low-frequency hits emphasise weight, and melodic escalation contextualises danger. This is consistent with course discussions indicating that audio can maintain mechanical clarity while visual channels become saturated. Combat is shown metaphorically as a physical conflict rather than a symbolic abstraction. The treatment of people as physically vulnerable bodies is complemented by animation, sound, and camera work, ensuring a balance between metaphor and behaviour. FFVII Remake eventually displays both the power and risk of high-density polish: it achieves remarkable apparent physicality while emphasising the importance of carefully regulating spectacle to sustain comprehension an understanding that is directly relevant to my own work.

Game Feel Analysis: Final Fantasy VII Remake

From a polish evaluation standpoint, Instantaneous Response (0.8) is purposely regulated by animation commitment, sacrificing speed for weight. Tangibility (1.0) is particularly strong, thanks to enemy stagger states, hit-stop, camera shake, and extensive audiovisual feedback. Predictability (0.6) might suffer during visually dense interactions, validating the (Game Design Foundry, 2022) warning that excessive visual noise affects mechanical readability. Exaggeration (0.8) is used sparingly, while Harmony (0.8) is maintained by effective audio telegraphing to compensate for visual overload. This conflict between spectacle and clarity strongly influences my design philosophy. FFVII Remake indicates that, while rich feedback increases emotional impact, it must be carefully handled to maintain player comprehension, especially in systems that require strategic decision-making under pressure.

Game Feel Analysis: Dragon Quest XI

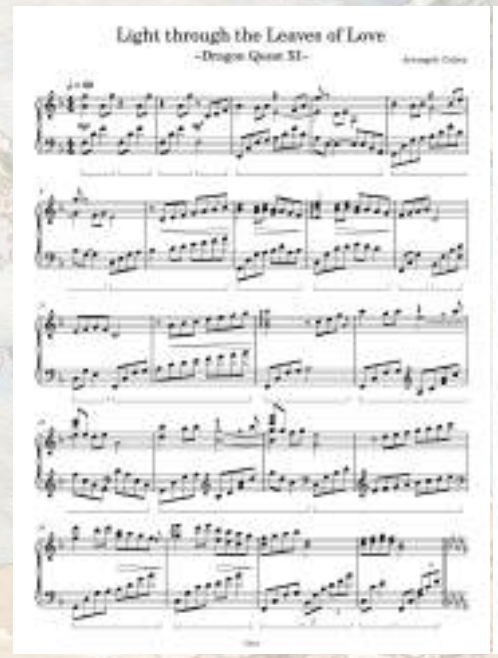
Dragon Quest XI showcases a purposefully conservative approach to game feel and polish, putting predictability, tonal consistency, and long-term mastery before sensory intensity. Its design philosophy closely resembles (Juul, 2005) concept of classical abstraction, in which clarity and rule transparency take precedence above expressive excess. This sets up the game as a counterweight to recent maximalist JRPGs.The input-response loop is intentionally paced. Delays between command selection and execution build anticipation without causing annoyance, indicating a reaction time tailored to emotional tone rather than speed. This pacing builds trust in the system, allowing players to prepare strategically without feeling pressured. As described in game feel theory, trust in outcomes is required for mastery, and Dragon Quest XI achieves this through consistency rather than surprise.Feedback systems are limited yet precise. Clear animation silhouettes, readable particle effects, and consistent aural cues favour understanding over feeling. Spatial stability further reduces cognitive load, validating the notion that limits determine sensation. By minimising unpredictability, the game provides a peaceful, deliberate atmosphere that encourages long play sessions.

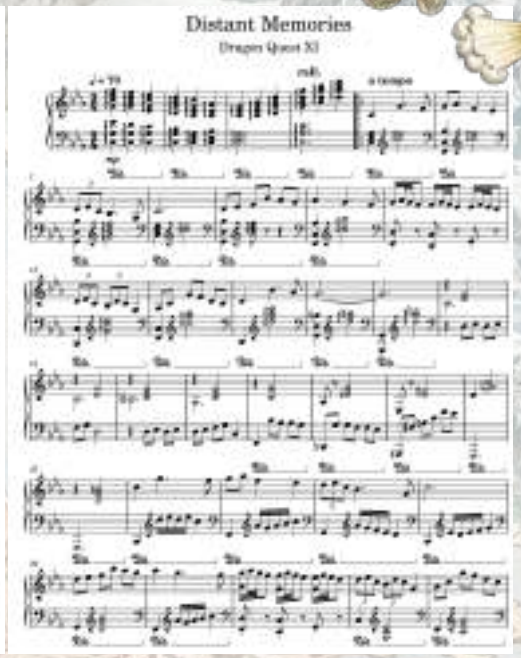
Game Feel Analysis: Dragon Quest XI

Dragon Quest XI is a purposefully restrained and traditional approach to game feel, valuing predictability, rule clarity, and tonal consistency over expressive juiciness. Its design philosophy is consistent with (Juul, 2005) notion of classical abstraction, in which mechanics are transparent, outcomes are steady, and player mastery grows through understanding rather than sensory stimulation. Player input is acknowledged consistently but without hurry, resulting in a measured input-response cycle that encourages long-term play. Context and reaction are intentionally conservative: actions resolve cleanly, consistently, and without dramatic embellishment, allowing players to gain faith in the system rather than relying on exaggerated audiovisual input. The game's virtual space is symbolic rather than physically based. Visually, characters hold geographical positions, but interactions do not imitate mass, inertia, or force. Enemy reactions are minor, with little knockback, stagger, or spatial displacement. As a result, perceived physicality is deliberately low. This design choice maintains metaphorical coherence by presenting battle as a strategic exchange of decisions rather than an embodied physical activity. Combat reads like an abstract set of principles rather than a simulation of violence. While this promotes clarity and long-term comprehension, it reduces tangibility.

Game Feel Analysis: Dragon Quest XI

(Swink, 2008) contends that insufficient input might make actions feel weaker than intended, even when mechanics work well, and Dragon Quest XI exhibits this trade-off. Attacks succeed quantitatively, but their impact is mostly represented through damage values and animation replay, not sensation.Juiciness and polish are limited, but exact. Feedback systems rely on constant silhouettes, solid camera framing, restrained animation, and a highly clear user interface rather than dramatic motion or layered effects. This method greatly improves readability during user testing because players rarely misread outcomes, threat situations, or turn resolution. Predictability is extremely high, which builds trust and decreases cognitive burden, especially during long sessions. However, the low density of polish lowers moment-to-moment thrill, especially for repetitive tasks, which might become emotionally flat over time.

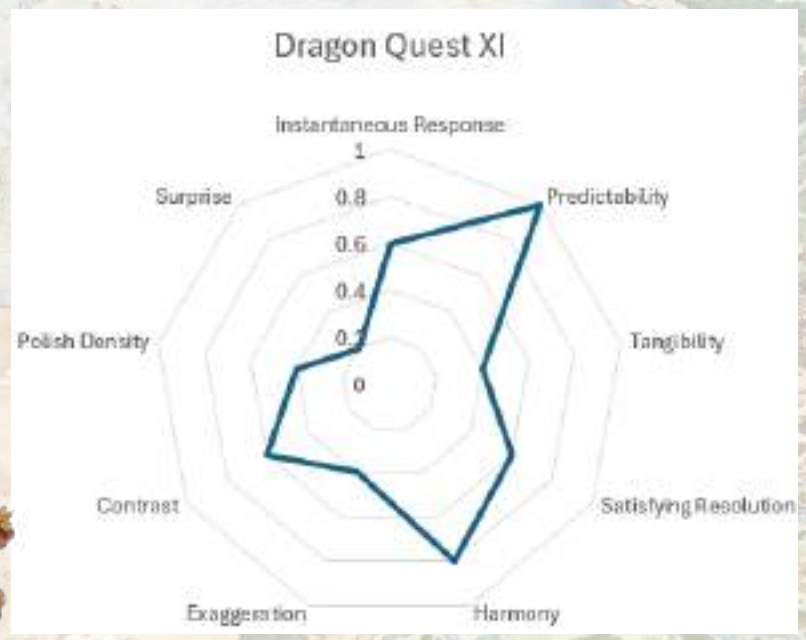




Game Feel Analysis: Dragon Quest XI

Sound design is essential for retaining clarity. SFX are modest but consistent, enforcing rules without distracting from the system itself. Audio cues affirm actions and consequences but rarely exaggerating their significance. Music prioritises tonal continuity above emotional peaks, creating a consistent mood that maintains the game's tempo and character. From a sound and rules standpoint, audio serves as a reinforcement layer rather than a primary feedback channel. Dragon Quest XI demonstrates how reduced polish density can preserve clarity and system transparency while sacrificing emotional resonance and perceived effect. The game serves as a warning that, while predictability and consistency are essential for strategic play, they may not be enough to sustain engagement without intentional exaggeration. For my personal project, this study emphasises the necessity of retaining clarity while bringing regulated juiciness to ensure that actions feel important without sacrificing readability.

Game Feel Analysis: Dragon Quest XI



Dragon Quest XI displays an extraordinarily great dedication to predictability, with Predictability evaluated at 1.0 due to its consistent clarity of rules, results, and system communication. Player actions resolve exactly as predicted, damage ranges are consistent, and enemy behaviour rarely deviates from established patterns. This is consistent with (Juul,2005) concept of classical abstraction, which emphasises consistency and transparency in order to build long-term mastery and player confidence. Instantaneous Response, scored 0.7, is purposely moderated rather than maximised. Inputs are consistently acknowledged, but execution is timed to promote anticipation rather than immediacy, reinforcing a deliberate, strategic rhythm ideal for classic turn-based play.

However, this constraint has significant implications for perceived physicality and involvement. Tangibility (0.4) and Polish Density (0.4) are intentionally lowered, resulting in minimal audiovisual emphasis during ordinary combat activities. Attacks are mechanically effective, but they frequently lack exaggerated animation, significant sound layering, and powerful enemies reactions. (Swink, 2008) argues that insufficient feedback can reduce perceived responsiveness even when systems perform properly, because sensation, not logic, transmits impact to the player. In Dragon Quest XI, damage is usually expressed through numbers and sparse animation rather than felt through timing, resistance, or audiovisual weight, which can lead to standard battles feeling emotionally dull over time.Despite this, Harmony remains high (0.9), because to good tonal consistency across images, music, and tempo.

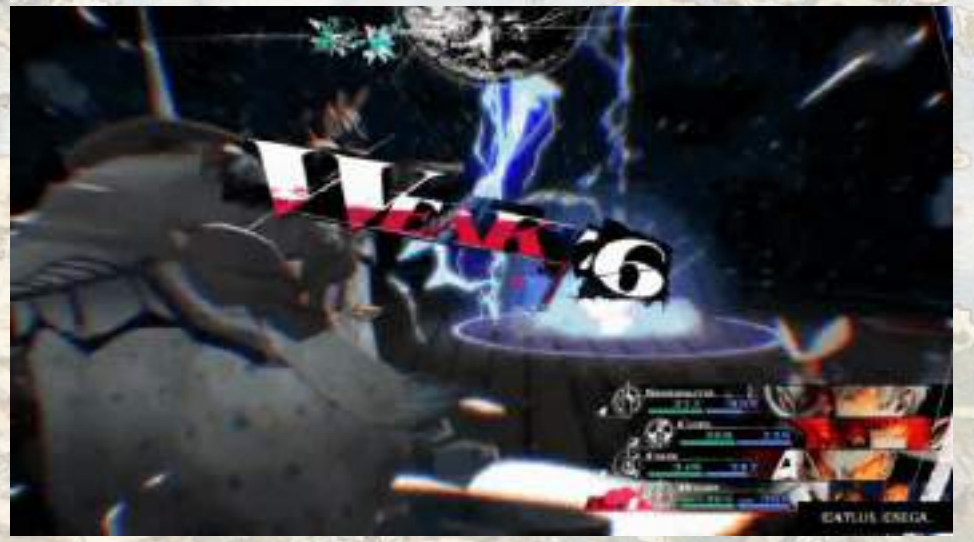
The constrained feedback language is used consistently, so that nothing feels out of place or inconsistent. Music, animation, and user interface maintain a peaceful, consistent pace that allows for extended play sessions without tiredness. This coherence is a virtue, but it also highlights a key limitation: clarity does not guarantee long-term commitment. Routine encounters risk becoming monotonous without intentional dramatisation or moments of heightened feedback, lowering their memorability and emotional effect.Dragon Quest XI serves as a warning tale for my own project about not polishing common actions enough. While predictability and tone consistency are important foundations, this analysis shows that expressive reinforcement benefits even highly readable systems. Routine combat interactions must nevertheless feel significant if the player wants to remain emotionally committed after multiple encounters. As a result, my design approach tries to maintain Dragon Quest's clarity while judiciously enhancing tangibility and feedback density at important moments, ensuring that predictability enhances rather than replaces engagement.

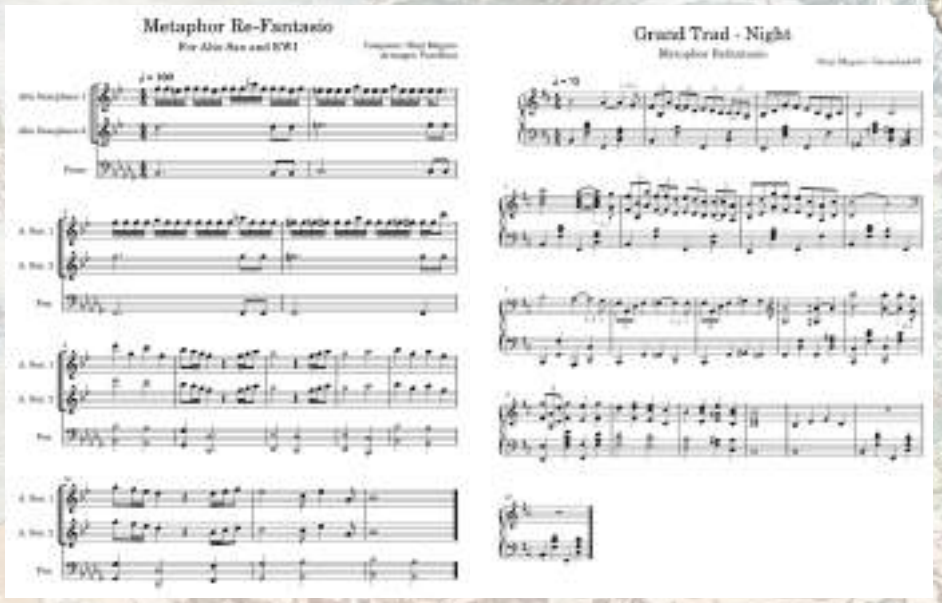
Game Feel Analysis: Metaphor Refantazio

Metaphor: ReFantazio uses stylisation, exaggeration, and dramatic feedback to provide turn-based battle emotional weight. Input confirmation is immediate and performative, consistent with (Swink, 2008) experience of instantaneous reaction even in a non-real-time system. Every player action is acknowledged with motion, sound, and visual punctuation, ensuring that purpose is recognised long after results are resolved. This enhances perceived responsiveness and player agency, which is a key principle of juicy design.Instead of simulation, the game uses metaphor to reinterpret conflict. Actions are not considered as physical events with mass and resistance, but rather as symbolic manifestations of intent, identity, and emotional strength. This metaphor enables the rules to permit exaggerated presentation while maintaining internal consistency. Simulated space is abstract yet coherent; characters inhabit a stylised arena where spatial logic exists to assist spectacle rather than actuality. Timing, rhythm, anticipation, and follow-through, rather than resistance or delay, are used to create perceived physicality. Exaggeration and staging are stressed over technical accuracy in animation, resulting in greater emotional clarity.

Game Feel Analysis: Metaphor Refantazio

Juiciness and polish predominate the experience. Camera cuts, visual transitions, motion trails, and animation timing emphasise anticipation and resolve, making each movement feel significant. Polish density is great, and layered audiovisual input reinforces hierarchy, threat, and importance. This density promotes emotional involvement while increasing the risk of visual rivalry. Excessive feedback, as mentioned in the Game Feel & Polish lectures and by (Game Design Foundry,2022), can weaken contrast and obscure mechanical clarity when numerous systems activate at once.

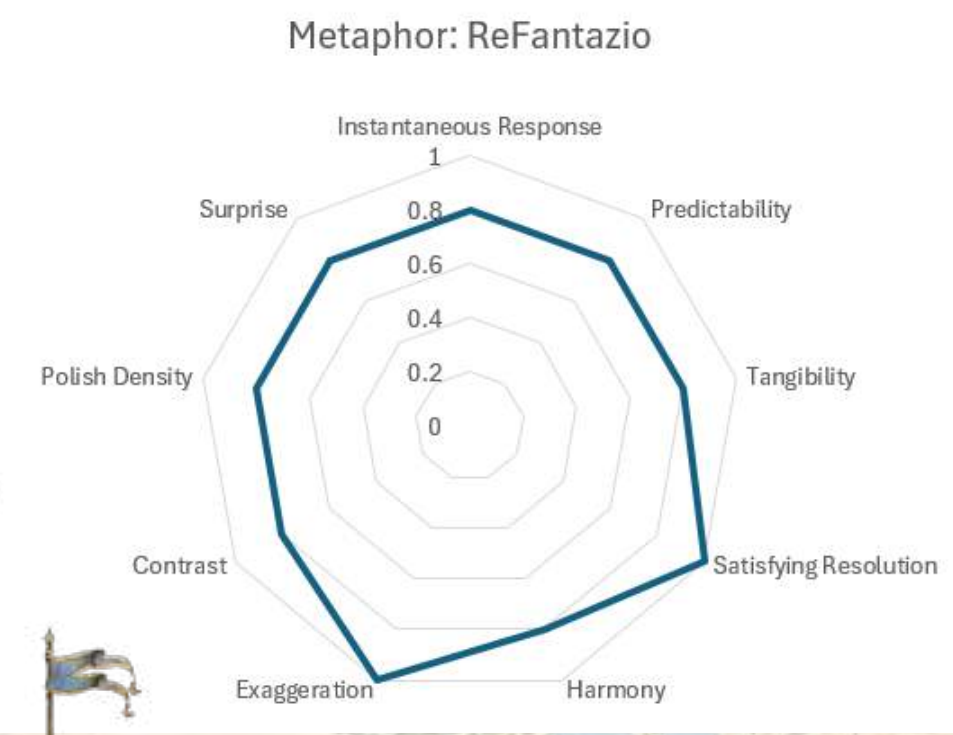




Game Feel Analysis: Metaphor Refantazio

Sound design is critical for retaining clarity in this density. Sharp SFX stingers affirm player input, and layered auditory cues convey importance, success, and danger. Sound serves as a rule-communication technique, establishing readability even when visuals compete. From a context-and-response standpoint, stronger acts regularly create stronger audiovisual responses, strengthening faith in the system. Music reinforces momentum and emotional tone rather than being neutral, so it adds to the performative framing of fighting. This design method places a strong emphasis on user testing. While skilled players might flourish in dense feedback systems, newcomers risk sensory overload. Metaphor:ReFantazio succeeds when it modulates intensity, using restraint and variation to maintain contrast and avoid tiredness. Moments of minimal feedback allow big acts to stand out, strengthening hierarchy while retaining readability. This data reinforces an important design lesson for my own project: exaggerated game feel can be quite powerful when combined with metaphor and rules, but it must be carefully balanced against clarity, predictability, and long-term usability. Exaggeration should aid comprehension and emotion, not overpower them.

Game Feel Analysis: Metaphor Refantazio



Metaphor: ReFantazio showcases a highly expressive, stylised approach to game feel, with Instantaneous Response (0.8) and Satisfying Resolution (1.0) serving as the foundation for its sensory effect. Player inputs are promptly acknowledged with powerful UI animation, camera framing, and audio stingers, ensuring that purpose is evident even before turn resolution. This confirms (Swink, 2008) emphasis on timely feedback as a critical component of perceived responsiveness, especially in systems with delayed mechanical effects. Each action culminates with great audiovisual punctuation, giving fight a feeling of closure and an emotional payoff that keeps momentum going.The game's identity is defined by exaggeration (1.0), which serves as a deliberate symbolic framing of combat rather than as cosmetic excess.

Actions are shown as theatrical performances rather than physical simulations, allowing the game to emphasise emotional clarity over realism. Tangibility (0.7) is thus communicated symbolically rather than physically: impact is sensed through timing, rhythm, and audiovisual emphasis, not resistance or inertia. This is consistent with (Hutchinson, 2022) description of modern JRPG aesthetics, in which exaggerated motion and emotive spectacle convey meaning more successfully than grounded reality.However, the high feedback density causes friction between expression and readability. Predictability (0.7) might suffer during longer interactions, especially when various visual effects, UI elements, and animations compete for attention. According to (Game Design Foundry, 2022), excessive layering can result in visual rivalry, which obscures essential information despite powerful underlying systems.

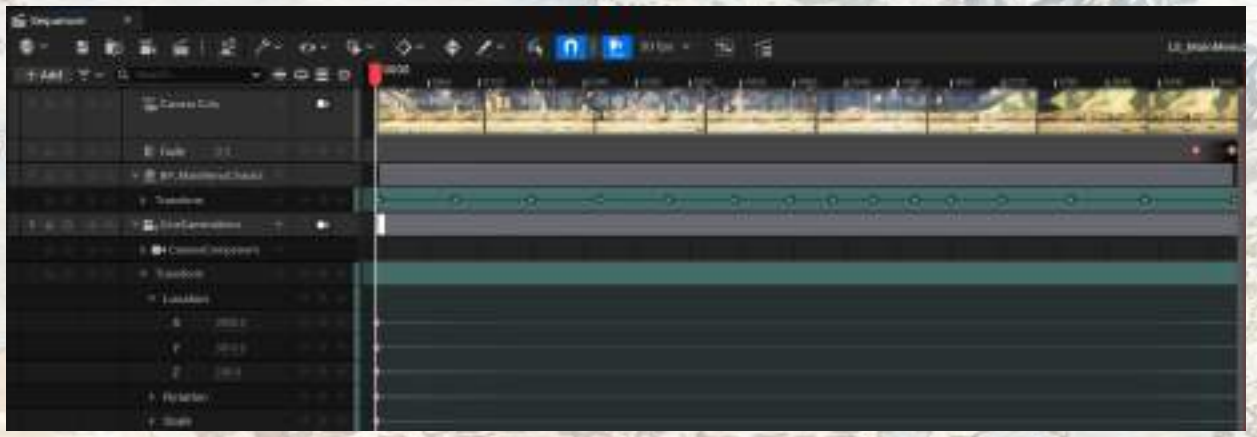
Metaphor: ReFantazio mitigates this risk with high Harmony (0.8). retaining thematic coherence throughout its visual and aural languages so that, even when dense, feedback is stylistically cohesive rather than chaotic.This analysis directly informs my design intentions. Metaphor: ReFantazio shows that stylisation and exaggeration can significantly improve engagement in turn-based systems, but only when feedback density is carefully controlled. Expressive polish is most successful when used in a clear hierarchy, ensuring that focus is reserved for crucial occasions rather than being maintained constantly. In my own research, this translates into a controlled exaggeration strategy using increased audiovisual feedback to reward critical actions and state changes while maintaining clarity and predictability throughout normal play. In doing so, expressive polish becomes a tool for comprehension rather than a distraction.

Design Justification: Main Menu

Full Main Menu Video
https://youtu.be/Hxeyn5fEL04

The main menu was purposefully created as a diegetic system embedded within the game environment rather than a separate interface layer, with the specific goal of establishing game feel, tone, and systemic trust prior to the player performing any mechanical action. This decision is based on (Swink, 2008) thesis that game feel begins with the initial interaction, where responsiveness, context, and clarity build player expectations. By placing the menu within a playable area using Unreal Engine's Level Sequencer, the menu serves as an extension of the game's simulated space rather than a pause in play. This supports (Juul, 2005) concept of a coherent rule world, in which all player-facing states, including menus, follow the same internal logic and narrative.Rather than displaying static panels or abstract UI elements, the menu is shown as a looping cinematic sequence of the player character going through the world. This method is consistent with the HD-2D design principles mentioned by (Kayser, 2019), which combine restricted motion, layered lighting, and spatial depth to communicate atmosphere without overpowering readability. The camera moves slowly and deliberately, avoiding abrupt cuts or violent motions that could distract or weary the player. This restraint is deliberate: the menu is intended to express tone and tempo via ambient input rather than direct engagement. Swink describes this as passive game feel, in which sensation is communicated by motion, music, and context rather than explicit input-response cycles.

Design Justification: Main Menu



From a polish standpoint, the Level Sequencer provides exact control over timing, animation blending, and loop consistency. The loop is carefully designed to exclude visible seams, allowing the pattern to continue forever without drawing attention to its artificiality. This improves perceived quality because visible looping mistakes or sudden resets would undermine immersion and destroy the idea of a dynamic environment. The utilisation of in-world lighting and depth-of-field reinforces spatial coherence, which is consistent with (Kayser, 2019) examination of how HD-2D environments leverage modern rendering techniques to increase emotional involvement while maintaining clarity.Sound plays an important function in strengthening this experience. Rather than a high-energy musical cue, the menu use muted ambient noise that reflects the surroundings.

This design decision is influenced by (Square Enix, 2025) description of Octopath Traveler's audio philosophy, which uses music and atmosphere to enhance long-term involvement rather than rapid excitement. The lack of abrupt auditory stingers or confirmation sounds at this stage precludes early juiciness, ensuring that heightened feedback is saved for moments of player action later in the experience. This chosen restriction creates a distinct feedback hierarchy, which is repeated in the Juicy Framework analysis, with small states receiving mild reinforcement and major transitions receiving higher audiovisual emphasis.The diegetic menu also improves thematic consistency. The player character's movement, posture, and animation timing are all compatible with in-game exploration, ensuring that the menu does not introduce any conflicting control fantasy or visual language. (Hutchinson ,2022) discussion on symbolic clarity in JRPG presentation is especially pertinent here: the character's motion is readable and emotionally neutral, allowing players to imagine themselves in the role without being distracted by exaggerated expressions. This symbolic restraint makes the menu feel like a tranquil entry point rather than a performative extravaganza, which promotes long-term usability.

Design Justification: Main Menu

From a gameplay perspective, the menu communicates responsiveness without requiring direct input. Even before interaction occurs, the game's subtle animation loops, environmental motion, and ambient music indicate that it is active and reactive. This is consistent with the Juicy Framework's emphasis on ambient feedback, in which the world communicates state without requiring explicit player action. The end result is a menu that feels active rather than static, increasing faith in the system and closing the cognitive gap between interface and gameplay. Unlike traditional menus, which suspend the game's fiction, our solution ensures that players are never pulled from the simulated environment. This design decision explicitly addresses the dissonance issues raised in (Design Doc, 2018) examination of Octopath Traveller, where strong mechanical identity was sometimes compromised by fractured narrative cohesion. By integrating the menu within the universe, my approach eliminates this separation, guaranteeing that presentation, rules, and fiction are all consistent from the start.

Overall, the main menu serves as an opening game-feel statement. Before the player makes any mechanical action, it builds tone, tempo, and systemic trust using diegetic presentation, restrained polish, ambient feedback, and consistent audiovisual design. This ensures that when juicier feedback systems are eventually included in combat and interaction, they seem earned and relevant rather than overdone. The menu thus plays an important role in setting expectations for the entire experience, promoting polish, coherence, and emotional consistency from the very first moment of play.

Design Justification: Battle Transition

Battle Transition Video

https://youtu.be/kXfWV1KPff8

The change from exploration to turn-based fighting was seen as one of the most important moments for preserving game feel and player trust, as it represented a significant shift in rules, input expectations, and cognitive concentration. In many turn-based RPGs, this transition is handled with abrupt scene cuts or generic fade-outs, which risk fragmenting the player's feeling of simulated space and undermining the world's perceived continuity. To mitigate this risk, I designed the transition as a highly expressive, symbolic event rather than a neutral technical procedure, ensuring that the change in status is felt, understood, and emotionally registered rather than simply seen.The glass-shatter transition was directly inspired by Octopath Traveller, but was modified to match my own systemic and technical limits within Unreal Engine 5. Rather than instantly transitioning to a fight scene, the game captures the player's final exploration camera frame with a Scene Capture 2D component and Render Target, which is then re-presented with a fractured material and physics-enabled geometry. This method maintains visual consistency at the exact point of transition, ensuring that the player perceives the combat encounter as originating from the world they were previously inhabiting rather than replacing it. (Juul, 2005) concept of coherent rule worlds is especially pertinent here: even if the underlying rules vary dramatically, the visual language and spatial reference stay consistent, preventing the encounter from feeling arbitrary or disconnected.

Design Justification: Battle Transition

From a context and response standpoint, the transition serves as a clear and rapid indication that a new rule set has been implemented. (Swink, 2008) contends that a pleasant game experience is dependent on the system's capacity to respond to user context with clarity and intent. The shatter effect serves as a strong punctuation point, indicating that exploration rules have been paused and combat rules are now active. Importantly, this feedback is not designed to be subtle. In response to this risk, I purposefully wrote the transition as a very expressive, symbolic event. (Hutchinson, 2022) underlines that symbolic exaggeration frequently communicates state change more effectively than realism, especially when clarity takes precedence over simulation accuracy. The increased severity of the glass break is not intended to convey real destruction, but rather to symbolically reflect the breach between systemic levels.Audio is similarly crucial in promoting this transition. A layered glass impact and spatialised shatter sound are activated at the precise frame of visual fracture, ensuring multimodal feedback consistency. This meets the Juicy Framework's emphasis on multi-channel confirmation by avoiding ambiguity and guaranteeing that the transition stays readable even if the player's visual attention is temporarily diverted. The sound design is purposefully concise and decisive, eliminating long reverb tails that could muddy the distinction between exploration and conflict. This constraint promotes harmony and refinement by preventing feedback from overlapping with the beginning beats of battle music.

Design Justification: Battle Transition

Maintaining virtual space continuity after the shift was a top technical and design concern. To do this, the player's world transform, orientation, and pertinent exploration state are saved using a special Game Instance before combat begins. When battle is resolved, this data is reapplied, returning the player to the precise geographic context from which they were extracted. This method emphasises consequence and locality: engagements feel more related to specific locations rather than occurring in an abstract battle layer. (Juul, 2005) emphasis on rule consistency is reinforced here, since the environment recalls the player's location and progress rather than resetting or abstracting it.

Before Battle

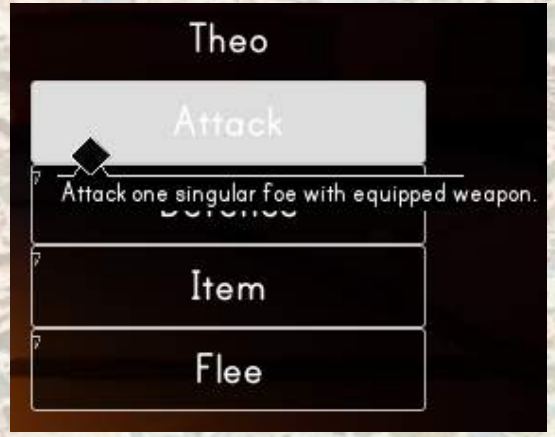
After Battle

To help with consequence and progression, a centralised Trigger Manager system was built to log completed encounters. A battle trigger cannot be retriggered once resolved, ensuring that player action has a real impact on the world. This decision builds trust by aligning player expectations with system behaviour. (Swink, 2008) observes that game feel quickly deteriorates when systems behave inconsistently or contradict player knowledge. By limiting repeated confrontations in the same location, the transition adds narrative and mechanical weight, transforming battle from a recurring interruption to a resolved event. To reduce perceptual friction, the transition's timing and tempo were repeatedly adjusted in Polish. Early prototypes demonstrated that too-long shatter animations lowered momentum and too-short ones decreased impact. The final design strikes a mix between anticipation and immediacy: the player is given just enough time to process the break before entering conflict. This is consistent with (Swink, 2008) notion of anticipation as a factor influencing perceived weight and responsiveness, even in non-real-time systems. Instantaneous response is purposely regulated to promote clarity over reflexive immediacy. Importantly, this transition indicates how spectacle can be employed to enhance comprehension rather than novelty. While visually appealing, the glass-shatter effect is inextricably linked to systemic meaning: it conveys rule change, maintains spatial context, and reinforces consequence. Harmony is maintained by using consistent visual language, acoustic constraint, and metaphor alignment. The end effect is a transition that seems written, planned, and rewarding, guaranteeing that the player enters combat already familiar with the game world's logic and tone, rather than being disoriented by abrupt abstraction.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Attack)

Attack Video

https://youtu.be/kXfWV1KPff8



The attack action is the central expressive unit of the turn-based combat system, so it was considered as the key location for establishing game feel, perceived physicality, and player trust. In a turn-based environment, responsiveness cannot be communicated through continuous input or real-time control; instead, it must be represented symbolically using timing, audiovisual feedback, and spatial metaphor. My design approach consciously adheres to the principle defined in Octopath Traveler's battle design (Design Doc, 2018), in which response is expressed at the point of intent rather than damage resolution. This ensures that, even when outcomes are delayed due to turn order, the player is instantly acknowledged by the system.The target-selection phase serves as the initial reinforcement of player intent. Cursor movement, enemy highlighting, and confirming sound effects all react instantaneously to directional input, guaranteeing that every button click results in a visual and auditory response. This quick affirmation develops trust before any animation occurs, supporting (Swink, 2008) claim that game feel begins with input acknowledgement rather than outcome. By stressing responsiveness at this point, the system avoids the classic turn-based issue of players feeling alienated from their actions due to delayed resolution.Perceived physicality during an attack is created by symbolic spatial motion rather than mechanical need. Before launching an attack, characters reposition themselves using NavMesh-driven movement, visually reducing the distance between the attacker and the victim. Although this movement has no effect on battle calculations, it roots abstract damage numbers in simulated space, creating the sense that actions are performed on something rather than at an interface. (Swink, 2008) refers to this as tangibility through motion, in which even non-functional movement contributes to the feeling of weight and intention. The spatial method enhances cause-and-effect, ensuring that attacks appear targeted rather than haphazard.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Attack)

Animation timing is critical to the impression of impact. Rather than stressing speed, attack animations emphasise anticipation, contact, and follow-through, drawing on classical animation ideas that prioritise contrast and timing above realism. This technique is consistent with (Hutchinson,2022) description of shonen-inspired exaggeration, in which emotional clarity and symbolic motion convey strength more effectively than physical correctness. In my implementation, tiny pauses before impact and clear stance changes during execution convey a sense of commitment, making each action seem deliberate. This calibrated resistance reinforces perceived weight while preserving clarity and pace.

Sound design is crucial for strengthening assault feedback. Each attack is blended with unique sound effects that convey strength, contact, and success. These sounds are deliberately prioritised above music at the point of impact, ensuring that auditory clarity enhances rule comprehension. According to Square Enix's description of Octopath Traveler's audio philosophy, sound should support mechanics rather than overpower them (Square Enix, 2025). By allocating stronger, sharper sound effects to higher-impact assaults and subtler hints to simple activities, the system creates a clear feedback hierarchy that players can learn intuitively over time.

Exaggeration is used selectively while judging juiciness. Attack actions are given greater visual and audible prominence than navigation or menu interactions, but less than win or lose statuses. This hierarchy illustrates the Juicy Framework's emphasis on feedback proportionality, which ensures that heightened reactions remain meaningful rather than becoming noise. Particle effects and camera movement are purposely constrained at this level, ensuring readability during multi-enemy confrontations and preventing visual rivalry, an issue raised by (Game Design Foundry, 2022) while studying high-density combat systems.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Attack)

Predictability is an important design aim. Despite the creative animation and music, attack consequences are always clear and consistent. Damage indicators, hit reactions, and adversary responses adhere to predefined visual conventions, reducing ambiguity. This uniformity improves user testing outcomes by eliminating misinterpretation and allowing players to immediately correlate input with mechanics. According to (Juul,2005), rule openness is critical for maintaining long-term involvement, especially in strategy-driven systems where trust drives decision-making.Importantly, the attack mechanism was designed with scalability in mind. While the current implementation concentrates on basic attacks, the underlying framework allows for future development into abilities, magic, and status effects without adding inconsistent feedback rules. This forward-thinking approach represents a recognition that game feel is a systemic quality that must remain consistent as complexity grows. According to (Design Doc, 2018), the strength of Octopath Traveller is not simply its instant feedback, but also its constancy across an increasingly complex battle cycle. In essence, the attack action achieves game feel by striking a careful mix of responsiveness, symbolic physicality, and restrained exaggeration. The system communicates impact and intent while retaining clarity by rooting abstract physics in spatial motion, animation timing, and layered sound. This design strengthens player trust, encourages strategic play, and lays a solid framework for future combat development, guaranteeing that expressive polish enriches rather than obscures understanding.

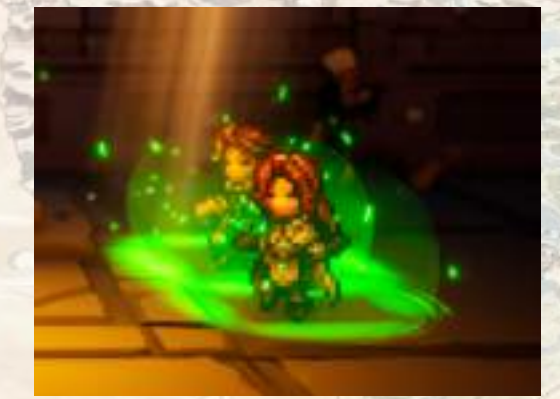
Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Defence)

Defence Video

https://youtu.be/p2e_IaoxLbQ

The defence action was created to be a purposefully restrained alternative to the expressive attack system, with a focus on rule transparency, predictability, and long-term player trust rather than rapid sensory delight. In turn-based combat, not every action should fight for attention or spectacle; instead, successful game feel is achieved by contrast and hierarchy. Defence thus serves as a balancing mechanism within the fight loop, supporting strategic readability and pacing rather than moment-to-moment excitement. This approach is consistent with (Juul, 2005) claim that explicit, intelligible rules are critical for retaining player engagement in abstract systems, particularly those based on planning rather than reflex. Defence uses a transitory damage-reduction condition rather than changing permanent statistics or providing hidden modifiers. This option ensures that the action's effect is predictable and easy for the player to reason about. During early testing, other techniques including stat changes or stacking bonuses were considered, but these approaches introduced extra opacity, making it difficult for players to track cause and effect. In contrast, a simple, time-limited defensive posture supports (Swink, 2008)

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Defence)



From a gameplay standpoint, defence purposely diminishes juiciness and tangibility when contrasted to offensive actions. There is no exaggerated forward movement, no loud contact sounds, and no dramatic camera emphasis. This constraint is not unintentional; it represents the concept that feedback should scale in accordance with intent and consequences. In my project's Juicy Framework analysis, heightened exaggeration is reserved for critical moments of change, like as victory, defeat, or big conflict outcomes. Defence, on the other hand, is a form of preparation and prevention. Its objective is to reduce future impact rather than create an immediate one, and the feedback language reflects this. Visual feedback for defence emphasises posture and state rather than movements. Subtle animation adjustments convey a cautious attitude, indicating a shift in preparation without breaking the fighting flow. These animations depend on (Hutchinson, 2022) discussion of symbolic clarity in JRPG character design, arguing that extreme realism is unnecessary as long as meaning is plainly discernible. The defensive position emphasises vulnerability management rather than hostility, making the metaphor of "bracing" or "preparing" immediately understandable. This symbolic technique reinforces perceived coherence while avoiding visual rivalry or noise.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Defence)

This restrained mindset is supported even more by sound design. Defensive actions produce softer, lower-intensity auditory signals than attacks, reinforcing the notion that the player is adopting a defensive state rather than exerting power. These sounds are purposefully brief and subdued, ensuring that they acknowledge input without conflicting with enemy actions or music. (Square Enix, 2025) description of Octopath Traveler's sound design highlights the importance of aural longevity and functional clarity; the defence noises in my project adhere to this advice by remaining informational without becoming repetitive or tiring over longer play periods. Predictability is critical to the defensive action's effectiveness. During early development, a technical fault enabled defensive states to persist longer than planned, resulting in inconsistent damage reduction. Although mechanically modest, this flaw had a disproportionately detrimental influence on perceived responsiveness and trustworthiness. Players were unable to forecast results accurately, undermining their trust in tactical decision-making. Resolving this issue by explicitly resetting defensive states at the appropriate time restored clarity and supported (Swink, 2008) claim that consistent system behaviour is essential for game feel. Once resolved, defence became a dependable strategic choice rather than a source of uncertainty.

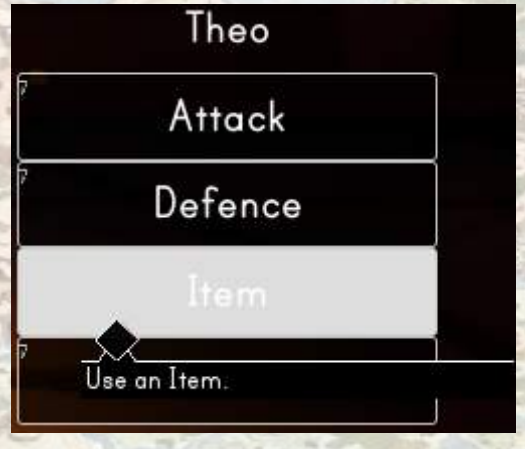
Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Defence)

Importantly, the defence action influences pace and emotional modulation. In contrast to the passionate anticipation and release of attack animations, defence adds a moment of calm thought to the fight loop. This is consistent with (Design Doc, 2018) examination of Octopath Traveler's battle tempo, which found that varying action intensity helps to reduce tiredness throughout prolonged confrontations. By reducing feedback density during defensive turns, the system preserves contrast, ensuring that aggressive actions remain impactful rather than being diluted by frequent exaggeration. From a user testing standpoint, the clarity of defence outcomes has proven more valuable than visual appeal. Despite the lack of explicit UI text, players consistently understood when defence was active, how it affected damage taken, and when it expired. This supports (Juul,2005) notion that effective rule communication reduces cognitive load, allowing players to focus on strategy rather than interpretation. The limited feedback also avoided misinterpretation; players did not confuse defence with avoidance, evasion, or healing, which can happen in systems with too similar visual language across actions. he defensive system also contributes to overall combat harmony by enhancing role separation between activities. Attacks seem proactive and expressive, things feel restorative and supportive, and defence feels careful and controlled. This distinction is consistent with (Game Design Foundry, 2022) guideline on preserving understandable action taxonomy in RPG systems. The battle system remains intelligible as complexity increases by ensuring that each action category communicates its intent using a different feedback language. In conclusion, the defending action demonstrates how diminished juiciness can be a strength rather than a weakness when combined with systemic intent. Defence reinforces predictability, trust, and strategic depth via restrained animation, subdued sound design, and transparent gameplay. Rather than competing for attention, it adds contrast and structure to the fighting loop, ensuring that expressive acts maintain their impact. This design choice exemplifies a mature application of game feel theory, in which polish is judged not only by intensity, but also by how well feedback aids understanding, decision-making, and long-term involvement.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Item)

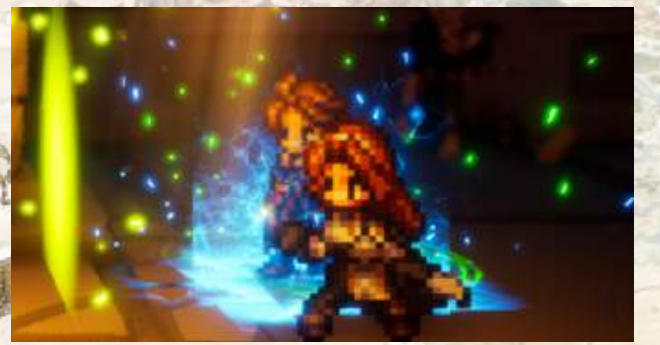
Item Video

https://youtu.be/Uz1atHZkPmk



Item usage in the turn-based combat system was regarded as a separate type of player action, with its own feedback language, metaphorical framing, and rule communication. Unlike attacks or defensive acts, things fall somewhere between strategy and recuperation, frequently serving as corrective tools rather than symbols of dominance or control. As a result, their game needs to value clarity, stability, and emotional reassurance over spectacle. This section delves into how item interactions were adjusted to maintain feedback integrity and build player trust through deliberate restraint and distinctiveness. Early incarnations of the item system highlighted a significant game feel issue: healing operations elicited audiovisual input designed for attacks. Despite being mechanically correct, the mismatch between purpose and feedback dramatically reduced perceived responsiveness. According to (Swink ,2008), game feel is defined not just by whether a system works, but also by whether the response feels proper in relation to player expectations. In this scenario, intense music effects and impact-driven animations undermined the restorative goal of healing, causing cognitive dissonance and reducing rule comprehension. This revealed an important principle: feedback errors are not neutral; they actively undermine trust.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Item)



To remedy this, item logic pathways were completely independent from offensive action pipelines. This separation allowed for the creation of an item's own audiovisual identity, free of inherited preconceptions about effect or aggression. From a rules standpoint, this decision underscores (Juul, 2005) emphasis on transparent systems with outputs that are not only dependable but immediately legible. When a player selects a healing item, the system now conveys restoration using softer animation timing, subdued auditory cues, and non-aggressive visual effects, ensuring that purpose, action, and response are all in sync. Healing, in particular, was reframed as a sensation rather than a just numerical correction. The animation timing was modified to emphasise relief and recuperation over hurry. Instead of sharp anticipation or forceful touch, healing activities employ smoother motion and gentler pacing, supporting the metaphor of stability rather than exertion. This is consistent with (Hutchinson, 2022) explanation of symbolic clarity, in which extreme realism is unnecessary as long as emotional purpose is clear. The lack of violent motion or abrupt camera emphasis distinguishes healing from attack, reinforcing categorical clarity within the battle system.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Item)

This difference relies heavily on sound design. Healing items produce gentler, harmonically stable sound effects that contrast sharply with the harsher transients employed in attacks. These sounds are intended to fit neatly into the existing mix while avoiding frequency overlap with damaging SFX or combat music. (Square Enix, 2025) discusses RPG audio design and emphasises the necessity of sound as a rule-communication layer, especially in dense systems where visual attention can be divided. In this situation, sound indicates not just the occurrence of an action, but also the nature of the activity. A player can identify effective healing using audio alone, reinforcing multimodal clarity. From a juiciness and polish standpoint, item use is purposefully less emphasised than offensive behaviours. Particle effects are constrained, camera movement is limited, and animations favour clarity above flare. This constraint adheres to the Juicy Framework's feedback hierarchy principle, ensuring that heightened responses are reserved for critical periods of change, like as high-damage assaults or conflict resolution. In contrast, things serve as system stabilisers, and their lower polish density keeps them from competing visually or emotionally with more significant acts.

Finally, the item system encourages overall battle harmony by using the same metaphor across mechanics. Attacks convey power and determination, defence conveys preparation and caution, while things convey care, recuperation, and correction. This separation ensures that no action category overlaps or contradicts the others. As (Game Design Foundry, 2022) points out, polish is most successful when it explains meaning rather than enhancing everything equally. In this regard, the item system shows rigorous polish, with constraint utilised to preserve clarity and long-term usability.In conclusion, item interactions were modified to emphasise feedback integrity, metaphorical clarity, and player trust. By separating item logic, rewriting audiovisual signals, and purposefully reducing dramatisation, the system assures that healing and utility activities are acceptable, readable, and emotionally beneficial. This design underscores the concept that achieving a successful game feel is about connecting sensation with intent ensuring that every response feels proper, relevant, and reliable within the context of the overall fighting experience.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Flee)

Flee Video

https://youtu.be/-svld43YkeE

The flee command was purposefully created to serve as a high-risk, emotionally charged action rather than a guaranteed escape route. Fleeing has a distinct structural function in turn-based RPGs, representing a refusal to engage, a tactical retreat, and an awareness of peril. As a result, the game's feel must effectively communicate uncertainty, consequence, and suspense, ensuring that the decision to flee is significant. This section looks at how the flee mechanic was designed to balance justice and emotional impact using controlled randomness, feedback clarity, and disciplined polish. At the mechanical level, escaping is based on a probabilistic success check, with a clear distinction between success and failure outcomes. Importantly, failure results in the forfeiture of the player's turn, reinforcing the notion that attempting to escape is in itself a costly action. This is consistent with (Juul, 2005) notion of meaningful choices, in which actions must have obvious prospective repercussions in order to maintain strategic relevance. By imposing a concrete cost for failure, the flee order avoids becoming a dominant tactic and instead serves as a calculated risk.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Flee)

From a gameplay standpoint, the major difficulty was to ensure that uncertainty did not lead to misunderstanding or apparent unfairness. (Swink, 2008) underlines that even randomised systems must appear responsive and understandable or risk losing player trust. To remedy this, the flee action gives rapid and clear audiovisual feedback for both outcomes. When the command is selected, the system replies with discrete anticipation cues, modest animation modifications, and audible signals to confirm intent before resolution occurs. This ensures that the player feels validated even before success or loss is decided. Following a successful escape, feedback is decisive and conclusive. Visual transitions are clear, while aural cues convey relief and resolution with minimal flourish. This validates Swink's concept of satisfactory resolution, in which an action is completed with a strong sense of closure. The return to exploration maintains spatial continuity by restoring the player to the correct world state, reinforcing escape as a viable outcome rather than a reset or abstraction. This consistency supports (Juul, 2005) emphasis on rule dependability and world coherence. Failure feedback is purposefully subtle but obvious. Instead of harsh punishment or overdone effects, failure is communicated by subtle audiovisual cues that clearly indicate a loss of action without overwhelming the user. This moderation is critical: excessively strong feedback may discourage experimentation, whereas insufficient feedback may generate confusion. The chosen balance guarantees that failure is both consequential and fair, fostering trust in the system's norms. According to (Game Design Foundry, 2022), negative feedback must explain consequences without alienating users, particularly in systems that rely on recurrent decision-making.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Flee)

Sound design is critical in differentiating flight outcomes. Success and failure are reinforced by contrasting audio signals that convey both emotional state and mechanical consequence. Success employs softer, resolving tones, but failure uses lower-intensity indicators that indicate stress without violence. This method is consistent with (Square Enix ,2025) theory that sound should serve as a rule-signaling layer, strengthening player comprehension even when visual attention is divided. In this setting, auditory clarity ensures that players can promptly understand the outcome of their decision. From a juiciness and polish standpoint, the flee action is on an intentionally lower level of exaggeration than attacks or triumph situations. Particle effects are modest, camera movement is controlled, and animation emphasis is limited. This hierarchy guarantees that fleeing does not visually compete with decisive combat acts, maintaining its place as a last resort rather than a means of expressing authority. The Juicy Framework highlights that not all actions should receive similar feedback density; in this case, restraint maintains clarity and emotional contrast throughout the battle loop. Emotionally, the flee mechanic creates tension by forcing players to commit while hesitant. Even in a turn-based system, the chance of failure adds suspense to the game and increases participation. This is consistent with (Hutchinson, 2022) discussion of emotional readability, in which uncertainty itself becomes a communicative instrument. The slight delay between command selection and consequence resolution allows anticipation to build, supporting the impression that the player has taken a risk rather than executing a straightforward order.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Audio)

Full Music:

https://youtu.be/FexqHhYCBRE

Audio in turn-based combat was designed to be a significant contributor to the game's atmosphere rather than a passive background layer. While visual feedback transmits movement and impact, sound offers immediacy, hierarchical clarity, and emotional reinforcement, acting as both a mechanical anchor and an emotive amplifier. This approach is consistent with (Swink, 2009) notion that game feel stems from the close coupling of player input, system reaction, and perceptual feedback, regardless of whether the underlying mechanics are instantaneous or delayed. In turn-based environments, when actions are handled sequentially rather than in real time, audio is significantly more important for conveying agency, verifying purpose, and reinforcing narrative and mechanical states. Octopath Traveler's layered and loop-safe battle soundtrack (Square Enix, 2025) had a significant impact on the development and implementation of combat audio, as did Nishiki's notion that each piece should work as both a solitary emotive moment and as part of a larger musical arc. To implement this in the game, the fight track was designed with numerous layers that could be dynamically blended or reduced based on the current combat situation. The establishing phase (0:00-0:30) employs spiccato short bows with a 16th-note ostinato, accompanied by low, long-bow strings. The goal here is not to create theme excitement, but rather to indicate rhythmic continuity and tension without overpowering the player, establishing a baseline anticipation while retaining cognitive bandwidth for future player actions. From a juiciness standpoint, this quietly primes the player, conveying that battle is occurring even before high-impact actions take place.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Audio)

The theme introduction (0:30-1:00) has a solo violin performing Theme A overlaid over the established ostinato. This stage establishes a detectable feedback hierarchy, allowing players to distinguish between key events (attacks, skill picks) and background motion. The solo violin serves as both an emotional cue and a rhythmic guide, assisting with simulated space and timing: assaults are timed with musical phrase, heightening perceived physicality and lending weight to symbolic gestures. (Hutchinson, 2022) debate on shonen-inspired symbolic clarity emphasises timing and exaggeration over literal realism. Each strike communicates intent, impact, and resolution through auditory cues and attack animation, ensuring that delayed turn-based mechanisms remain relevant. The expansion and dramatic lift stages (1:00-1:50) feature legato strings, octave doubling, and register alterations. Importantly, these alterations do not raise tempo or clutter rhythm; rather, they enhance emotional intensity and spatial depth. From a Polish viewpoint, this validates the (Game Design Foundry, 2022) idea that audiovisual exaggeration should improve clarity and concentration rather than competing for attention. Subtle dynamic shifts, harmonic movement, and textural layering generate perceived tension and escalation, directing the player's attention to critical times such as high-damage abilities or enemy vulnerabilities. The final variation and reset phase returns to the basic layers, ensuring that looping does not grow tiresome while maintaining emotional cohesion. This aligns with Square Enix's approach to combat music longevity, ensuring that repeated confrontations remain emotionally powerful without overstimulation.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (Audio)

SFX were also viewed as rule-communication tools, important for both game mood and strategic clarity. Each assault, skill, or status impact generates unique, context-appropriate audio feedback. Layered sounds express hit intensity: bigger hits have resonant, low-frequency signals, whereas lesser attacks have higher-pitched, piercing stingers. This multi-channel redundancy adheres to the Juicy Framework's principles (confirmatory feedback, attention guiding, and proportional emphasis), guaranteeing that players may quickly see the effect of their input. For example, when a target is defeated, a brief impact stinger combined with a visual flinch indicates closure, meeting (Swink, 2008) need for satisfying resolution even in delayed turn-based dynamics. Spatial audio was used strategically to improve immersion and the apparent virtual space. Audio panning and minor volume shifts reinforce enemy positions, allowing gamers to instinctively link sound with location without the need for explicit visual confirmation. This is consistent with (Kayser, 2019) findings on HD-2D readability: spatial cues in many sensory channels lessen cognitive load, allowing the player to receive feedback swiftly while maintaining strategic focus. In terms of juiciness hierarchy, audio is carefully scaled in comparison to other combat elements. Routine actions standard attacks or movements are moderately reinforced, but crucial outcomes, such as break statuses, win/loss events, or recruitment, are accompanied by more pronounced auditory cues. This proportionate technique ensures that feedback is useful while avoiding sensory fatigue. Subtle ambient cues, such as a small swell of strings or faint environmental sound effects, give ambient input, keeping the fight world dynamic even when there is little action, in line with the Juicy Framework's emphasis on ongoing world reactivity.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (win & lose)

Win Video
https://youtu.be/Zy2taRag-fU

Lose/Game Over Video

https://youtu.be/STLa0_u89j4

Win and lose states are the last stages of the turn-based combat loop, therefore they were handled as crucial points for reinforcing game feel, emotional payoff, and systemic trust. While strikes and moment-to-moment actions demonstrate responsiveness, the conclusion of conflict decides whether the encounter feels meaningful or insignificant. (Swink ,2008) highlights satisfactory resolution as a key component of game feel, suggesting that players need clear, emotionally legible evidence that their actions were successful or failed. In a turn-based system, where work is divided into numerous turns rather than continuous input, this sensation of closure is extremely significant.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (win & lose)

The victory state was created to relieve accumulated tension. Throughout fight, audiovisual feedback develops anticipation with layered music, rising animation, and symbolic exaggeration. After victory, this tension is resolved with a significant shift in both sound and visual language. Combat music fades smoothly into a brief victory cue rather than fading ambiguously, ensuring that the user receives rapid auditory evidence of success. This is consistent with Square Enix's approach to fight resolution in Octopath Traveller, in which victory themes serve as emotional punctuation marks rather than extended celebrations, maintaining tempo while providing satisfaction. Visually, the victory state values clarity and hierarchy over spectacle. Enemy defeat animations are allowed to finish completely before control is restored to the player, ensuring that outcomes are clear and conclusive. Damage numbers, hit reactions, and enemy deaths are set up to avoid overlap, preventing visual competition at the resolution stage. This constraint is based on the Game Feel & Polish paradigm, which shows that excessive feedback at terminal stages can actually lessen impact by confusing the player's comprehension of what caused the outcome. By streamlining the last stages of fight, the game ensures that the player's triumph is easily attributed to strategic decisions rather than wild audiovisual noise.

Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (win & lose)

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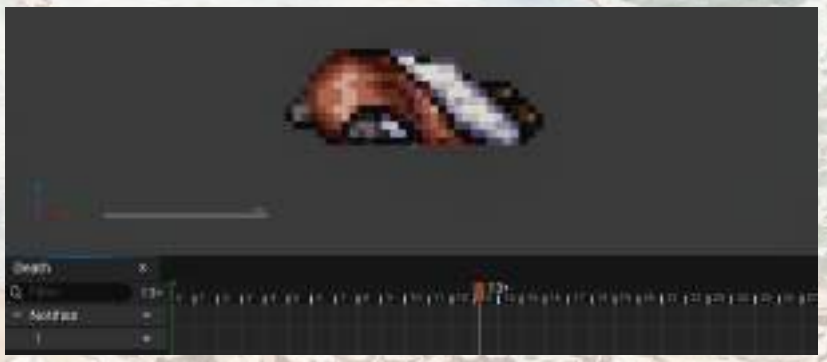
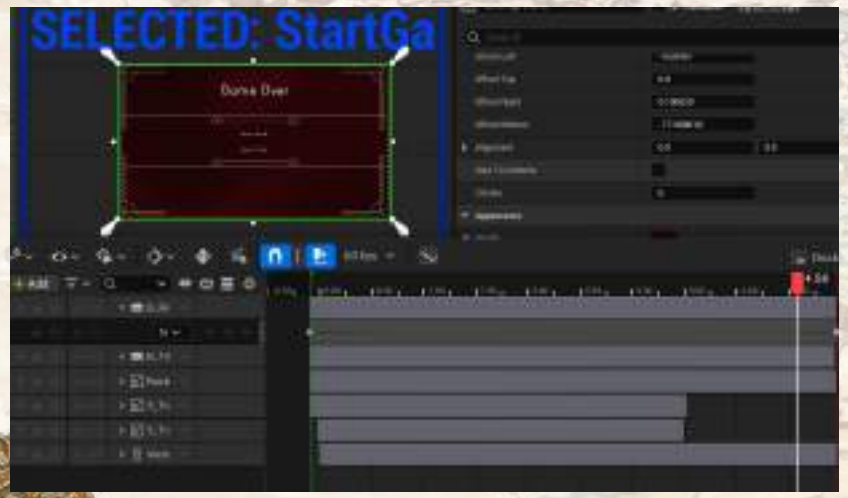
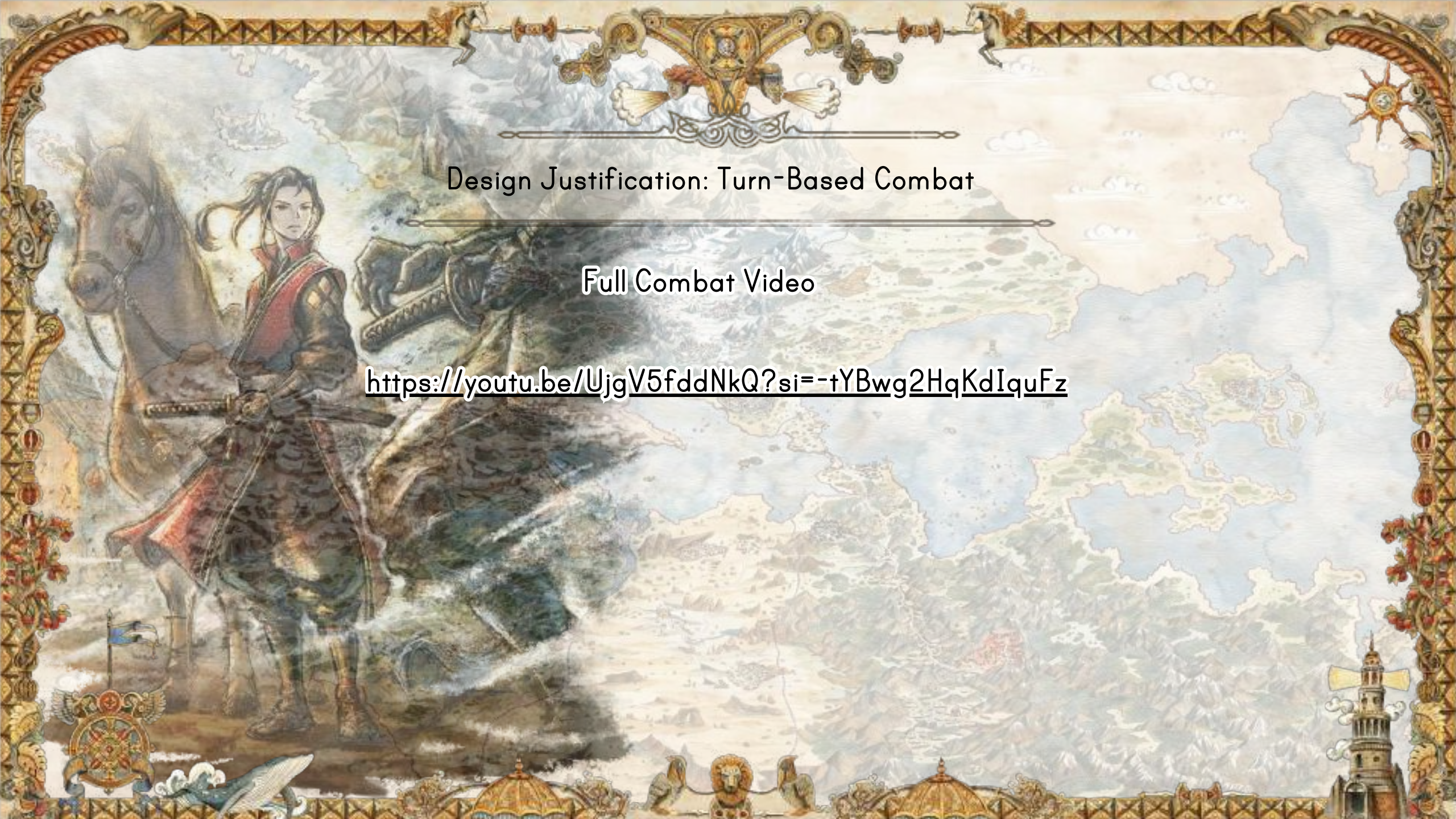
Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat (win & lose)





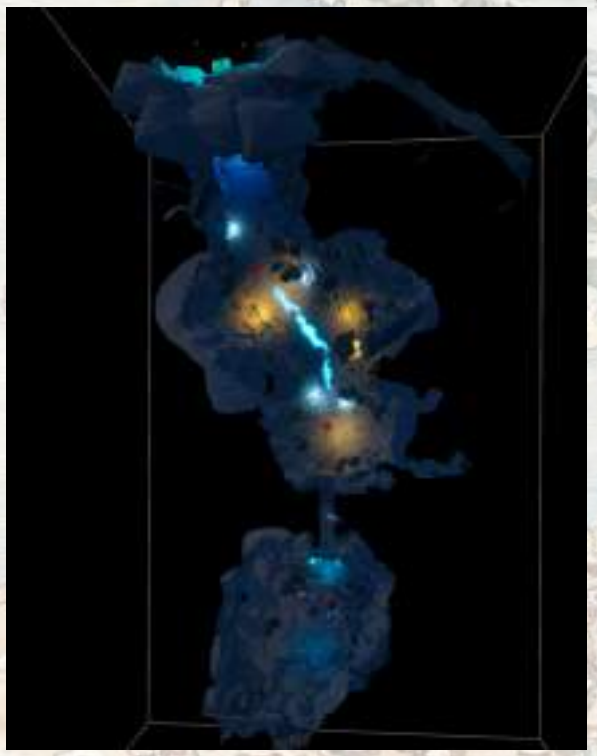
The lose state was tackled with caution, as poorly handled failure can erode player motivation and trust. Rather than viewing defeat as merely punitive, the system strives to express loss accurately, respectfully, and without undue frustration. When defeated, combat audio quickly stops and is replaced by a muted, low-intensity cue that conveys failure without being overly dramatic. This decision avoids emotional manipulation by dramatisation and instead adheres to (Juul, 2005) emphasis on rule openness and justice. The player realises that they failed because of the system's rules, not because of inaccurate feedback or abrupt tonal shifts. Visually, the loss condition reduces juiciness rather than increasing it. Character motions slow or collapse into static defeat positions, particle effects stop, and UI elements fade gradually. This decrease in feedback density emphasises emotional weight through absence rather than excess. (Swink, 2008) observes that resistance and delay can increase perceived weight; thus, the lack of responsive feedback conveys finality and consequence. The player is given a minute to contemplate failure before being presented with the option to retry or return, allowing for cognitive and emotional space rather than instant reengagement.



Design Justification: Turn-Based Combat

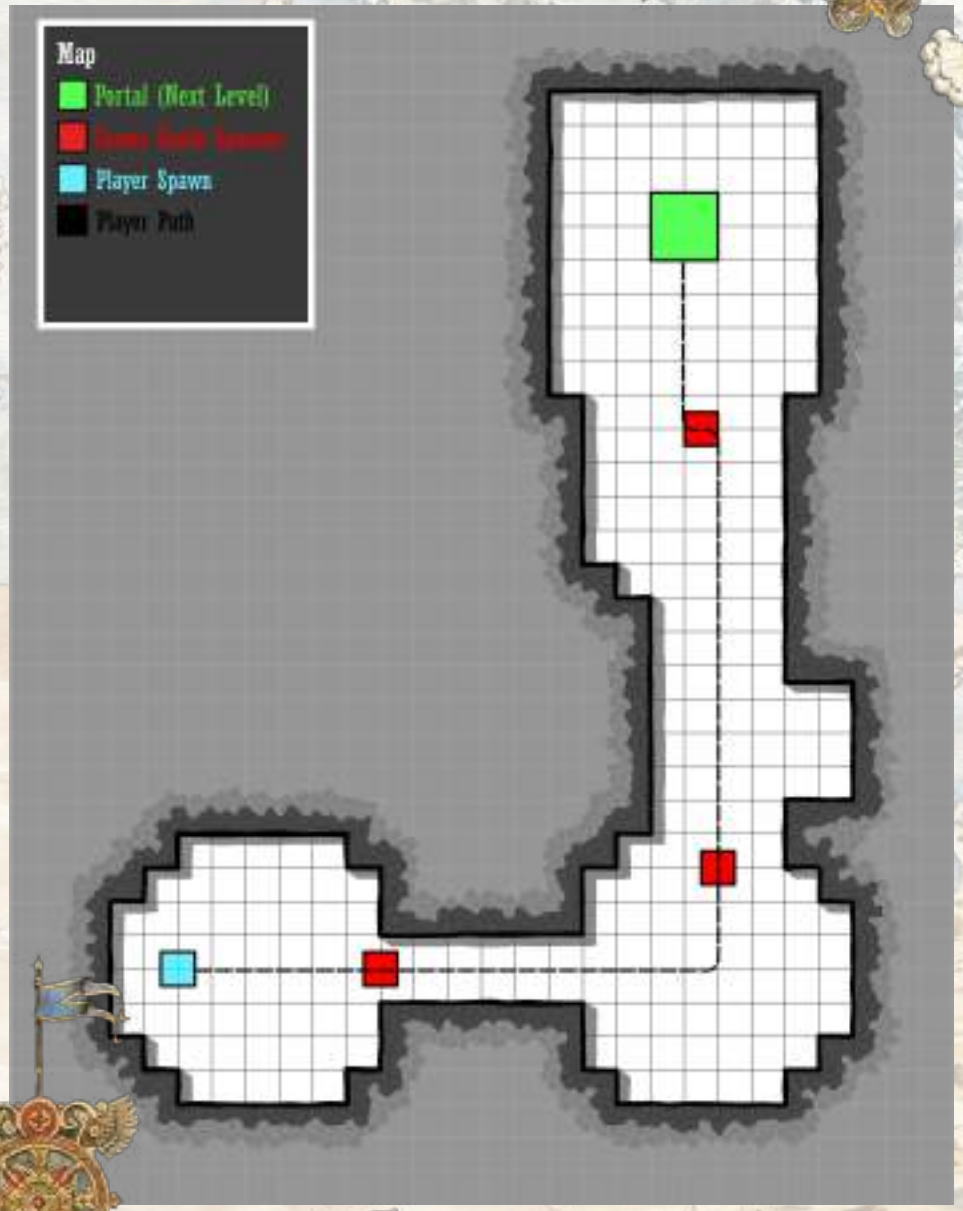
Full Combat Video

https://youtu.be/UjgV5fddNkQ?si=-tYBwg2HqKdIquFz



Gameplay Experience: Exploration (Cave)

Exploration in the cave area was purposefully intended as a written gaming experience rather than a neutral navigation space, with a focus on spatial readability, emotional pacing, and environmental direction. From the start, the cave was conceived as a system that communicates rules, threat, and progression through spatial design rather than explicit instruction. This approach is consistent with classroom discussions on environmental storytelling and player guidance, in which level geometry, lighting, and spatial rhythm serve as main communicative tools. The cave creates a clear experience foundation by stressing blockouts and flow mapping over visual refinement, ensuring that polish encourages understanding rather than compensating for imprecise design.



Gameplay Experience: Exploration (Cave)

The cave's design language is based mostly on environmental metaphors. The environment is meant to seem restricting and oppressive, reinforcing concepts of isolation and vulnerability without relying on obvious narrative exposition. Low ceilings, uneven terrain, and irregular wall shapes provide the idea of a threatening environment that must be explored with caution.(Juul, 2005) concept of coherent rule worlds applies here: the cave is visually expressive, yet its spatial logic is consistent. Hazards, pathways, and encounter zones have regular spatial patterns, making the world feel learnable rather than arbitrary. This consistency fosters player trust by causing tension to arise from expectation rather than uncertainty. The cave's juiciness is purposely reduced when contrasted to battle areas. This intentional limitation reflects the recognition that not all game states benefit from a high feedback density. (Swink, 2008) observes that excessive feedback might reduce contrast, making important moments seem less substantial. By keeping exploration feedback minimal, the cave leaves room for more aggressive responses during fight transitions or planned occurrences. Polish is thus applied through consistency and cohesiveness rather than spectacle, promoting long-term attention and avoiding excessive stimulation.

Gameplay Experience: Exploration (Cave)

Full Cave Video

https://youtu.be/gJ-844k5ylM

Despite its limited interactivity, the cave maintains a strong sense of physical presence in virtual space. Uneven ground subtly influences movement speed and camera motion, giving the feeling that the player is traversing a physical world rather than sliding across a flat plane. Despite the fact that they have no effect on core mechanics, these micro-responses add to perceived physicality. This is consistent with (Swink, 2008) statement that slight changes in motion and timing can have a substantial impact on how "real" a space feels, independent of technical complexity. Crucially, the cave's exploration design promotes emotional pacing throughout the whole gaming cycle. It serves as a tension-building environment, preparing the player for combat encounters without overwhelming them. The controlled rhythm of navigation, along with restricted input and clear spatial logic, generates a sense of discomfort that builds gradually rather than abruptly. This balance ensures that exploration feels planned and authored, reinforcing immersion and narrative tone while avoiding explicit storytelling.

Gameplay Experience: Exploration (Town-Dialogue & NPCs)

NPC Interaction Video

https://youtu.be/3__W5D1LISY

Town exploration and NPC interaction were intentionally designed as active gameplay systems rather than passive narrative delivery, positioning towns as mechanical and emotional breakpoints within the broader RPG loop. In contrast to combat and dungeon spaces, which prioritise tension, commitment, and consequence, towns are structured to provide relief, reflection, and reorientation. This design philosophy aligns with (Design Doc, 2022) analysis of JRPG town spaces as pacing regulators, where reduced mechanical pressure allows players to re-engage with the world, reassess goals, and rebuild trust before re-entering higher-stakes systems. As such, town game feel prioritises clarity, warmth, and consistency over intensity or spectacle.NPC placement and behaviour were authored to support the illusion of a lived-in environment rather than a static quest hub. Characters are distributed across the town with consideration for sightlines, spatial density, and thematic clustering, ensuring that the environment feels populated without becoming visually noisy. Each NPC operates on a simple but effective movement loop walking, pausing, and resuming, which introduces ambient motion into the simulated space. This continuous, low-level activity reinforces the perception that the town exists independently of the player, aligning with (Swink, 2008) assertion that game feel can be communicated through world responsiveness even in the absence of direct input.

Gameplay Experience: Exploration (Town-Dialogue & NPCs)

To preserve interaction clarity, NPC movement is intentionally paused during dialogue initiation. This decision reflects a deliberate balance between liveliness and readability. (Game Design Foundry, 2022) highlights that excessive motion during dialogue can introduce friction, drawing attention away from text and emotional content. By freezing NPC motion at the moment of interaction and resuming it immediately afterward, the system ensures that conversations remain legible and focused without permanently sacrificing the sense of a dynamic environment. This context-sensitive response strengthens player trust by ensuring that the system behaves predictably during moments of attention-sensitive interaction. Dialogue itself is treated as a tactile, interactive system rather than a passive information dump. The typewriter text effect introduces pacing and anticipation, reinforcing the rhythm of conversation and encouraging players to engage with dialogue as a temporal experience. This aligns with (Swink, 2008) discussion of anticipation as a contributor to perceived responsiveness: even minimal delays can enhance engagement when they are clearly motivated and player-controlled. Importantly, players are given the option to bypass the typewriter effect and instantly reveal full dialogue text. This dual-mode approach accommodates different playstyles, supporting both immersion-focused players and efficiency-driven players revisiting familiar spaces. By allowing player agency over pacing, the system avoids dialogue fatigue while maintaining expressive potential.

	---	DialogueText	NextRow
2	Guard_Greeting	Halt. Ramshorn isn't kind to the careless, state your business and keep your blade sheathed.	
3	Guard_Guidance	If you're looking for trouble, you'll find it beyond the old pass. If you're looking for work... ask quietly.	Guard_Guidance_1
4	Guard_Guidance_1	The bells ring at dusk. Miss the gates, and you'll be sleeping with the wolves.	
5	Guard_Greeting_Alt	Passing through, are you?	Guard_Greeting_Alt_1
6	Guard_Greeting_Alt_1	Then don't give us a reason to remember you.	
7	Townsfolk_Greeting	You've got the look of a traveller.	
9	Townsfolk_Dialogue	Most people don't come to Ramshorn by accident.	Townsfolk_Dialogue_1
9	Townsfolk_Dialogue_1	They come looking for something.	
10	Aristocrat_Greeting	Mind your manners. Ramshorn still honours its old families.	
11	Aristocrat_Dialogue	Our influence isn't as visible as it once was	Aristocrat_Dialogue_1
12	Aristocrat_Dialogue_1	But it hasn't vanished.	
13	Aristocrat_Greeting_Alt	An outsider wandering the upper road?	
14	Aristocrat_Dialogue_Alt	Curiosity can be a dangerous habit.	
15	Child_Greeting	Whoa... are you really an adventurer?	
16	Child_Dialogue	I wanna leave Ramshorn someday.	Child_Dialogue_1
17	Child_Dialogue_1	Just to see what's past the hills.	
18	Merchant_Dialogue	Trade keeps this town breathing.	Merchant_Dialogue_1
19	Merchant_Dialogue_1	Without it, Ramshorn would fade fast.	
20	Merchant_Dialogue_Alt	Looking to buy or just browsing?	Merchant_Dialogue_Alt_1
21	Merchant_Dialogue_Alt_1	Either way, don't block the stall.	
22	Elder_Dialogue	Ramshorn has stood longer than most remember	Elder_Dialogue_1
23	Elder_Dialogue_1	This land was shaped by patience.	Elder_Dialogue_2
24	Elder_Dialogue_2	And patience always demands a price	
25	Elder_Greeting_Alt	You walk like someone burdened with choice.	Elder_Greeting_Alt_1
26	Elder_Greeting_Alt_1	Those choices echo longer than you think.	
27	ShadyNPC_Greeting	Best keep moving.	
28	ShadyNPC_Dialogue	Keep your voice down.	ShadyNPC_Dialogue_1
29	ShadyNPC_Dialogue_1	Ramshorn runs on more than honest work.	ShadyNPC_Dialogue_2
30	ShadyNPC_Dialogue_2	Just don't ask who pays the cost.	
31	Theo_Dialogue	...Huh. Didn't expect company out here.	Theo_Dialogue_1
32	Theo_Dialogue_1	Guess I misjudged this cave.	Theo_Dialogue_2
33	Theo_Dialogue_2	Before you say anything -	Theo_Dialogue_3
34	Theo_Dialogue_3	I had the situation handled.	Theo_Dialogue_4
35	Theo_Dialogue_4	Still... walking alone's starting to get dull.	Theo_Dialogue_5
36	Theo_Dialogue_5	You're heading to the next village, aren't you?	Theo_Dialogue_6
37	Theo_Dialogue_6	Good. Saves me the trouble of pretending I'm lost.	Theo_Dialogue_7
38	Theo_Dialogue_7	Name's Theo. I fight well, travel light, and don't complain.	Theo_Dialogue_8
39	Theo_Dialogue_8	Try to keep up.	
40	Traveller_Dialogue	Ramshorn's just beyond this bend... if the path hasn't changed again	
41	Traveler_Dialogue_1	Careful once you're inside. A town built on trade always has ears where you don't expect them.	

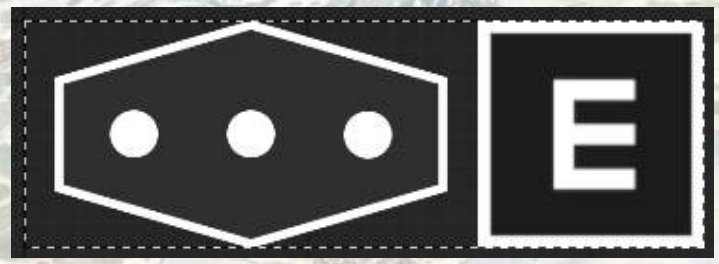
42	Villager_Woman_Dialogue	Strange folk pass through these days. Some looking for coin, others for answers. I just hope they leave us our peace.	
43	Villager_Woman_2_Dialogue	I sell bread by the square every morning. If the ovens go cold, you know something's gone wrong.	Villager_Woman_2_Dialogue_1
44	Villager_Woman_2_Dialogue_1	Still... there's comfort in routine. Even when the world beyond the gates feels restless.	
45	Villager_Woman_3_Dialogue	My husband says danger only comes if you invite it. I'm not sure I believe that anymore.	Villager_Woman_3_Dialogue_1
46	Villager_Woman_3_Dialogue_1	Best to keep your eyes open, traveler. Trouble rarely announces itself.	
47	Priest_Dialogue	The gods listen quietly. It's we who forget how to speak to them	
48	Priest_Dialogue_1	Many come here seeking forgiveness. Fewer come seeking understanding. The two are not the same	
49	Priest_Dialogue_2	This town stands because faith binds it tighter than stone.	Priest_Dialogue_3
50	Priest_Dialogue_3	Whether that faith is in gods, people... or oneself, I leave for you to decide.	
51	Guard_Dialogue	Ramshorn's quiet, but don't mistake that for weakness.	
52	Guard_Dialogue_0	We've had reports from the caves lately. If you're heading that way, stay alert.	
53	Guard_Dialogue_1	Travelers come and go. My post stays the same.	Guard_Dialogue_2
54	Guard_Dialogue_2	Still... some faces linger longer than others. Makes you wonder why.	
55	Guard_3_Dialogue	If you're looking for trouble, you won't find it here.	Guard_3_Dialogue_1
56	Guard_3_Dialogue_1	And if trouble's looking for you... well. Best be prepared.	
57	Children_Dialogue_0	Mister, miss- did you come from outside Ramshorn?	Children_Dialogue_1
58	Children_Dialogue_1	I heard the world's bigger than the hills... but I can't see past them.	
59	Children_Dialogue_2	I play by the gates sometimes. The guards say I shouldn't.	Children_Dialogue_3
60	Children_Dialogue_3	But if I wait long enough, I get to see new faces come in!	
61	Children_Dialogue_4	My mum says I shouldn't talk to strangers.	Children_Dialogue_5
62	Children_Dialogue_5	But she didn't say I couldn't ask where you're going.	
63	Children_Dialogue_6	Do you think heroes get tired?	Children_Dialogue_7
64	Children_Dialogue_7	If they do... I hope someone helps them rest.	
65	Gaurd_Dialogue_Theo	Another traveler picking up strays, I see	Gaurd_Dialogue_Theo_0
66	Gaurd_Dialogue_Theo_0	Just make sure this one doesn't start trouble in Ramshorn.	

Gameplay Experience: Exploration (Town-Dialogue & NPCs)

NPC visual design adheres to (Hutchinson, 2022) framework of shonen-inspired symbolic clarity, emphasising readable shapes, expressive stance, and tonal consistency over realistic detail. This method ensures that players may quickly deduce an NPC's role, temperament, or narrative function without having explicit exposition. From a gameplay standpoint, this decreases cognitive strain and interpretive ambiguity, allowing players to digest social information as fast and easily as mechanical feedback. Symbolic exaggeration here aids comprehension rather than spectacle, ensuring unity across the town's audiovisual language.

From a simulated space standpoint, the town maintains internal consistency across all systems. NPC conduct, dialogue timing, sound design, and spatial layout all contribute to the same emotional contract: this is a safe, readable, and socially active setting. The concept of coherent rule worlds, as proposed by (Juul, 2005), is supported by behavioural consistency rather than mechanical complexity. The town behaves exactly as the player expects it to, allowing gamers to unwind without losing interest. To summarise, town exploration and NPC contact serve as a well balanced game feel system that prioritises clarity, warmth, and apparent vitality. Through regulated juiciness, symbolic visual design, variable dialogue pacing, and rich information density, the town transforms into an emotionally nourishing location that supports the broader gaming loop. This section indicates that polish is defined by appropriateness rather than intensity: input is used to boost comprehension and emotional tone, ensuring that the town feels alive, welcome, and mechanically trustworthy without overpowering the player.

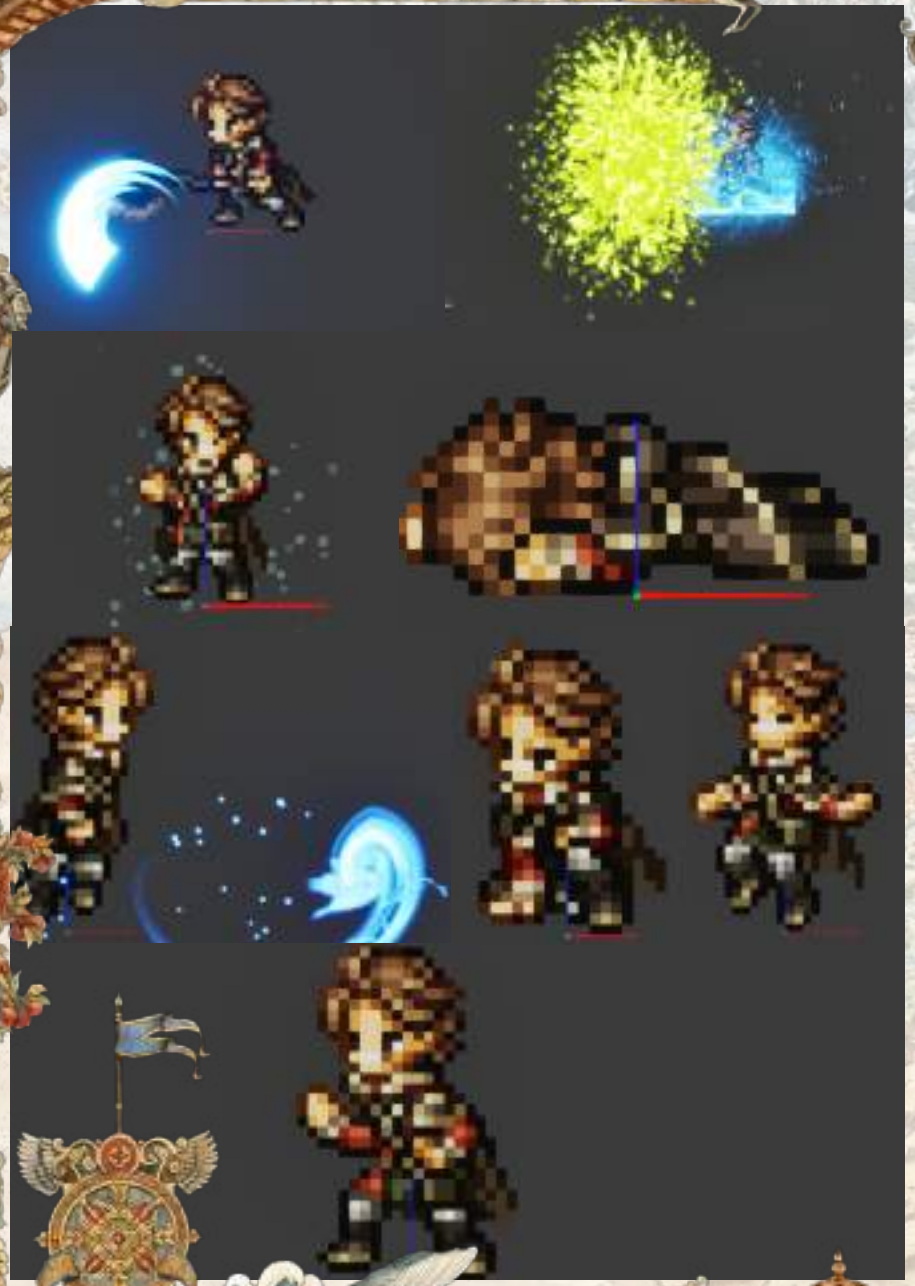
Gameplay Experience: Interaction & Readability



The NPC interaction UI was redesigned to directly address the clarity and onboarding issues discovered during testing. Previously, interaction was based on player assumptions, which created additional friction and disrupted flow. The redesigned widget now displays the needed input alongside the interaction prompt, effectively communicating affordance and reducing guesswork. This is consistent with (Swink, 2008) idea of unambiguous feedback, which states that player actions should always result in clear and expected replies. By making interaction needs visible at a glance, the UI promotes concentration of attention and decreases cognitive load, allowing players to remain engrossed in the world rather than the control scheme. The widget's visual language was also consistent with the dialogue and combat interfaces, ensuring thematic and aesthetic cohesion throughout systems. This uniformity adds polish by making the UI feel like a natural extension of the world rather than an overlay. Overall, the revised interaction UI improves accessibility, welcomes new players, and reinforces the game's overall vibe by ensuring that intention, input, and reaction are always clearly linked.

Gameplay Experience: Party Members

Party members were supposed to be dual-purpose systems, acting as narrative companions during exploration and mechanically legible characters during turn-based battle. This dual position provides a typical issue in party-based RPGs: retaining companions' emotional presence while avoiding spatial noise, visual clutter, and rule ambiguity. My implementation prioritises harmony and predictability by having party members contribute to player comprehension rather than competing for attention. Follower characters are designed to be unobtrusive during exploring. They keep regular trailing offsets, avoid aggressive route correction, and don't block the player's forward view or environmental markers. This design decision echoes (Swink, 2008) emphasis on decreasing friction in moment-to-moment navigation, where needless collisions or camera interference can degrade perceived responsiveness even when input systems are technically good. By keeping followers present yet non-intrusive, the method fosters the feeling of camaraderie without requiring cognitive or spatial management from the player.



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Gameplay Experience: Party Members

Despite this constraint, party members continue to contribute to ambient input within the simulated environment. Subtle movement, spacing variation, and idle behaviours indicate that these characters live as independent entities rather than static attachments to the player avatar. This is consistent with the Juicy Framework's idea of ambient reactivity, in which the world communicates vitality without conscious engagement. Importantly, this input is intentionally low-density, retaining the town and adventure areas' readability while establishing emotional continuity between solo and group play. The move from exploration to battle causes a noticeable difference in the function and presentation of party members. When followers enter battle, they snap into established combat postures with uniform spacing and orientation relative to foes and the player character. This adjustment is more than just cosmetic; it serves as a vital reading signal, indicating that party members have transitioned from narrative presence to mechanical actors. (Juul, 2005) concept of rule clarity is especially pertinent here: changes in behaviour are strongly linked to changes in rules, ensuring that the presentation accurately represents system state.

This spatial reorganisation greatly decreases visual clutter during combat. By establishing stable fighting formations, the system prevents overlapping silhouettes, animation rivalry, and confusing targeting zones, all of which are commonly emphasised in (Game Design Foundry's , 2022) research of turn-based readability concerns. Each party member occupies a predictable visual lane, allowing players to swiftly and confidently determine turn order, target selection, and attack outcomes. This predictability facilitates strategic decision-making by reducing perceptual overhead. From a gameplay standpoint, the precision of party positioning improves perceived physicality. Even while battle follows symbolic rather than physically realistic laws, the clear separation of characters within the combat space gives the idea that actions are performed by distinct entities rather than abstract UI elements. (Swink, 2008) observes that apparent weight and tangibility can arise from spatial organisation alone, even in systems lacking real-time physics. By placing party members in consistent, understandable locations, the fighting system obtains a better sense of structure and intent.

Gameplay Experience: Party Members

The sound design adds to this harmony. Party members do not introduce excessive audio cues while exploration, reducing audio clutter, but they do receive sharper action-confirmation noises during fighting, which corresponds to their increased mechanical relevance. This context-sensitive audio response facilitates rule communication by ensuring that sound reinforces system state rather than acting as a constant, undifferentiated layer. Overall, party members act as stabilising factors in the game's experiencing structure. They increase emotional engagement while maintaining clarity by using limited exploring activity, precisely defined fighting positions, and consistent audiovisual language. This design ensures that new characters offer expressive and tactical depth while maintaining predictability, readability, and player confidence. As a result, party members improve both the narrative texture and mechanical readability of the experience, adding significantly to the overall polish and game feel.

Playthrough video

Game Evaluation: Playtest

1. On a scale of 1 (Not Responsive) to 5 (Super Responsive), how responsive did the game feel when selecting actions in combat?

2. Did attacks and abilities feel impactful when they resolved? Why or why not?

10 Responses

1		Yes, the VFX makes the hit feel strong
2		The particle effects and animations all added weight to the motions
3		Yes, I do think it would be cool if you added a screen shake when you attack/are attacked.
4		Attacks and abilities had cool effects that made them feel very impactful and entertaining
5		Yes, attacks felt impactful due to the anticipation in the animations and the clear hit confirmation through sound and visual effects. Even basic attacks felt meaningful.
6		yes the combination of animation timing and audio made attacks feel powerful
7		Very responsive overall the slight delay before attacks resolved actually helped build anticipation
8		Yes attacks felt impactful through sound, animation, and clear damage feedback
9		Yes, attacks felt weighty, especially due to sound and animation timing
10		Very responsive every input felt acknowledged immediately

3. How clear was the feedback for damage taken, enemy attacks, and low health states?

10 Responses

1		Very clear
2		Perfectly clear, I understood everything I was reading
3		Clear, it was obvious who I was attacking/attacking me.
4		UI was easy to read and damage was communicated well. The only thing that would be nice to see is the HP of enemies to keep track which ones were hurt
5		Very clear. Damage numbers, enemy reactions, and low health indicators were easy to read and never confusing.
6		extremely clear enemy attacks and damage states were always readable
7		clear and consistent
8		Very clear, I always understood what happened and why
9		clear and readable at all times
10		excellent! damage, enemy intent, and health states were easy to read

4. Did the sound effects enhance your understanding of what was happening in combat?

10 Responses

1		Yes
2		Yes
3		I wasn't able to hear the SFX.
4		Sounds effects were pretty cool
5		Definitely. Sound effects made it immediately clear when attacks landed, when damage was heavy, and when enemies acted.
6		yes
7		Yes it did
8		sound effects strongly supported combat
9		sound effects made combat much easier to understand and added a lot of polish
10		sound effects significantly improved combat comprehension and impact

5. How effective were the animations and visual effects at conveying weight and consequence?

10 Responses

1		Very effective
2		Very effective, made the combat feel impactful, however I do feel like they move a little slowly.
3		Good.
4		Animations worked pretty good
5		Animations conveyed weight well, especially through timing and follow-through. Attacks felt deliberate rather than floaty.
6		very effective animations clearly communicated consequence,
7		animations conveyed weight well through timing rather than excessive effects, which suited the style
8		very effective
9		animations conveyed consequence clearly without cluttering the screen
10		animations clearly conveyed weight and intent, especially during attacks

6. During exploration, did interacting with NPCs feel smooth and intentional?

10 Responses

1		yes
2		Yes! It felt natural, like a living breathing town
3		Yes.
4		Yeah, talking to NPC worked well and was fun
5		Yes, interacting with NPCs felt smooth and intentional. Prompts were clear and dialogue transitions were clean.
6		NPC interaction felt natural and smooth, with no awkward pauses or confusion
7		NPC interactions felt intentional and polished, not rushed or unfinished
8		yes
9		Felt smooth and fun
10		NPC interactions felt smooth, readable, and well integrated into exploration

7. What moment in the game felt the most satisfying, and why?

10 Responses

1	Using the potions
2	Combat felt good, I really liked the defence and healing effects.
3	Talking to the NPC's. The animation for the speech bubbles was smooth.
4	Attacking the enemies with cool attacks, but also exploring the city, love the cats
5	The transition into combat felt very satisfying, especially how it visually connected exploration to battle.
6	landing a successful attack and seeing the enemy reaction was consistently satisfying
7	Winning a combat encounter and transitioning back into exploration felt very clean and rewarding
8	exploring the enviroments felt amazing and felt really good
9	The VFX in combat
10	Combat transitions with the glass break

3. What moment felt the weakest in terms of feedback or clarity?

10 Responses

1	when entering the castle, the camera as mostly blocked by the walls only small amount is visible
2	Exploring the town felt difficult due to the way sight is given to the player. When I'm behind objects, I have a very limited view of where I am, my surroundings and where I am going.
3	The attacks didn't feel that weighted.
4	Hard to keep track of damage done to the enemies
5	Nothing stood out as particularly weak; overall feedback felt consistent.
6	some areas with collision issues
7	n/a
8	no major issues stood out
9	Getting stuck due to collision issues
10	No clear weak moments

. Is there anything you would change to improve the overall feel of the game?

10 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1		Maybe when entering a new area, the camera shows whats in it
2		Pet cats.
3		Add in arrows above the enemies head when you've selected them, it might make it more obvious who you've selected to attack.
4		Not reeally, well impressed with the overall execution, great job!
5		Minor polish additions would be nice, but the overall feel is already very strong.
6		more enemy types
7		more variety but overall really good
8		possibly more dramatic effects later
9		Mostly just more content
10		more content

Game Evaluation

Peer playtesting yielded consistently good results, demonstrating that the game's combat and exploration mechanisms effectively convey responsiveness, clarity, and impact. Across all replies, perceived responsiveness during turn-based combat was highly scored (predominantly 4-5), with players regularly stating that inputs seemed instantly acknowledged, even when action resolution was purposely delayed to generate anticipation. This demonstrates that the combination of predictability and rapid response was effective, in line with game feel theory, which values clarity and anticipation above raw speed. Attacks and abilities were frequently described as impactful, with visual effects, animation timing, and sound design all cited as important factors in perceived weight. Several players notably stated that even basic assaults seemed relevant due to strong hit confirmation via audio-visual feedback, emphasising the need of layered feedback density in turn-based systems.

Game Evaluation

Feedback clarity was rated as a key strength of the experience. Players regularly indicated that damage numbers, adversary intent, and low-health situations were simple to read and never confusing, indicating high rule clarity and effective UI prioritising. Sound effects were also found to dramatically improve combat comprehension, allowing players to comprehend when attacks hit, when damage was severe, and when foes acted. Animations were praised as good at conveying consequence without overwhelming the screen, with some players praising the use of timing and follow-through over overdone effects. Exploration and NPC interaction were both positively welcomed, with exchanges regarded as fluid, deliberate, and polished. Town spaces were viewed as "living" environments, and conversation exchanges, particularly speech bubble animations, were emphasised as pleasurable moments of feedback and polish. Combat transitions, healing acts, and visually exaggerated attacks were notable highlights, all of which contributed to an emotional reward and gratifying finish.

Game Evaluation

The areas for improvement were small, with a focus on spatial clarity over essential systems. Several players noted camera blockage in crowded surroundings, especially when entering new areas or navigating behind huge objects, implying that camera framing and ambient occlusion may be improved for better spatial readability. A few gamers suggested further feedback changes, such as optional screen shake, better enemy selection cues, and visible enemy health, to improve perceived physicality and combat readability. Requests for more content variety, such as opponent types and later-stage visual escalation, were also received. Overall, playtest feedback indicates that the existing implementation has a high level of game feel and polish, with requested modifications being incremental refinements rather than fundamental design concerns.

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