How to survive Global Game Jam

By Taro Omiya (Omiya Games)

What is Global Game Jam?

- A game jam held around the world, where participants challenges themselves to create a game in 48 hours.
- Registration *is* required!
  - SUNY Albany: http://www.igda.org/blogpost/1230644/205480/Registration-is-now-open
  - Other locations: http://globalgamejam.org/2015/jam-sites

Rules

- Work alone or in a team.
- Create a game in 48 hours.
- All code and assets must be open-sourced.
- Everything is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International
- ...But your team holds the rights to develop the game for a commercial release!

Most Important: Have FUN!

- Making games is fun!
- Walk in with excitement and anticipation
- No point going into it worried
- Which leads to...

Second Most Important: Learn!

- Just started?
  - Learn how to use a tool
  - Learn how to work towards a deadline
  - Learn to complete a game
- Already experienced?
  - Learn a new tool
  - Make something new and different
  - Experiment!

It’s OK to fail!

- Global Game Jam is NOT a competition
  - It's a shared experience.
- It’s OK to not finish game by the deadline
  - Check out other game jams listed in Compohub.net

Time Management

- Time management is the most important skill in any game jam
  - Have at least one person managing time for your team!
- Best way to save time is preparation
- Know what takes up time, and plan accordingly

Plan to Stay Healthy

- Account for 16 hours you'll be sleeping
  - **Sleep is mandatory!!!**
- Account for 5 hours spent on eating

Plan for Bundling

- Account for the 1 hour taken from compiling for all platforms
- Always submit at least 1-hour before submission time
  - Historically, Global Game Jam's submission website bogs down during the submission period for USA.

Total Time

- Account for 16 + 5 + 1 + 1 = 23 hours.
- Total dev time: 48 - 23 = 25 hours.

How to be Prepared

- Know/learn what tools you'll be using for Global Game Jam
- There's a lot of resources out there!
  - http://www.reddit.com/r/gamedev/comments/18e38t/pocketknives_for_game_developers/

Tools to look for

- Game engine (Construct 2, GameMaker, Unity, etc.)
- Art tools (GIMP, Paint.net, Aesprite, Blender, etc.)
- Sound creation (BFXR, Audacity, etc.)
- Music composer (LMMS, Garage Band, etc.)

Back to Time Management

- I divide my development phases by half-days
  - First half-day is brainstorming, team-building, and prototyping
  - Second half-day is feature implementation
  - Third half-day is level construction
  - Last half-day is polish

Phase 1: Brainstorming

- Enter with an open mind
  - Enter Global Game Jam *without* a game idea
- Why?
  - Your game should be based off of the theme announced the minute the event starts
  - That game you wanted to make forever will most likely NOT fit with the theme
  - Also, it makes you open-minded to other games, like walking simulators

Phase 1: Brainstorming

- Scope properly!
  - Time AND resources are short, so start small!
  - Don't make games like Halo, World of Warcraft, etc.
  - Angry Birds is fine. Heck, mobile games are the perfect scope for Global Game Jam
- Aim to make a demo, minigame or experiment

Phase 1: Brainstorming

- I don't recommend writing a design document
- Game idea should **always** mention how the game is going to be played
  - E.g. "platformer", "twin stick shooter", or "control bunch of synchronized characters at once while taking advantages of their strengths"

Phase 1: Brainstorming

Method 1: Brain Dump Method

1. Grab a pen and lots of paper
2. Set a timer to one-hour
3. Write out as many single-sentence description of a game as possible
4. After an hour, put your pen down, and select your favorite idea

Phase 1: Brainstorming

Method 2: Peter Molydeux Method

1. Ask a crazy, useless question
    a. e.g. what will it be like to throw your own head?
2. Brainstorm on a game mechanic that attempts to answer this question

Phase 1.3: Team Building

- Present your game idea!
  - Keep it short and simple
- Don’t have a game idea within the 1-hour mark?
  - Join in a team!
  - Make it clear to the team what you are capable of
- Haven’t made a game before?
  - Just ask the organizers: they will help!

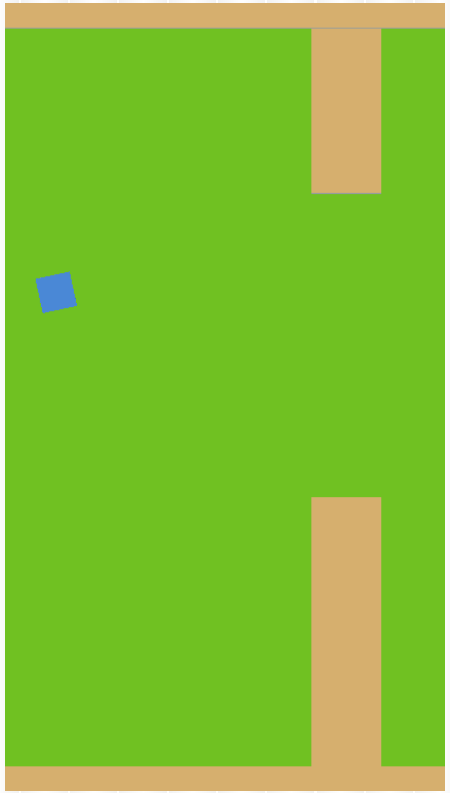
Phase 1.3: Team Building

- Build a team off of game ideas
  - Every member should be excited, and more importantly, inspired by the game idea
- Don’t make the team too big
  - I recommend 3 to 5 members
- Determine what job each team member will focus on
  - I recommend an artist, coder, and audio designer

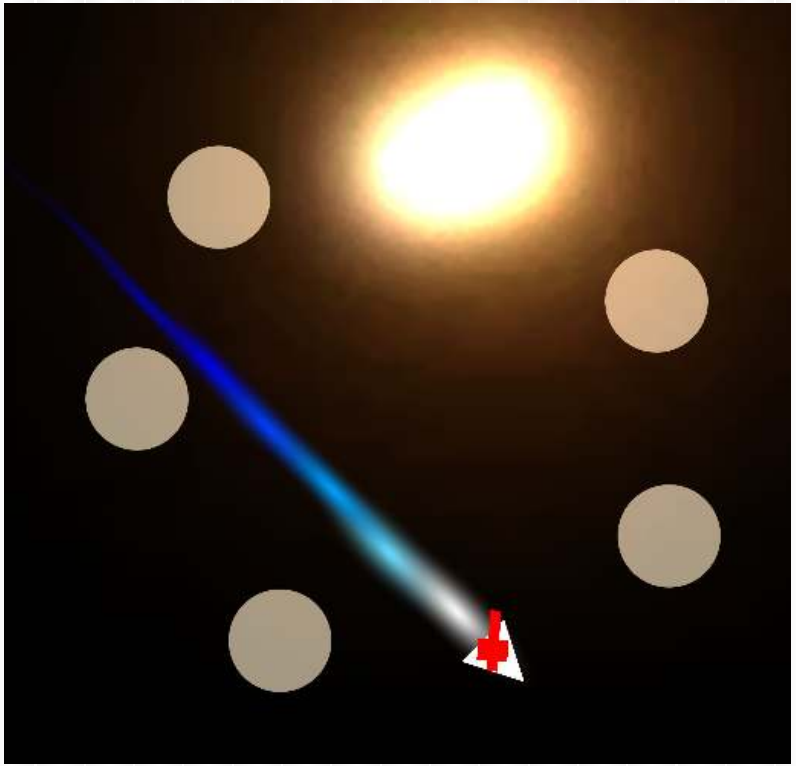
Phase 1.6: Prototyping

- Easily the most important 3 hours you spend in Global Game Jam!
- Learn to "fail faster"
  - Extra Credits video: http://youtu.be/rDjrOaoHz9s
- Basically, make a demo of the game idea really, *really* fast
- Then play the demo, and see if it’s fun

Phase 1.6: Prototyping



Phase 1.6: Prototyping



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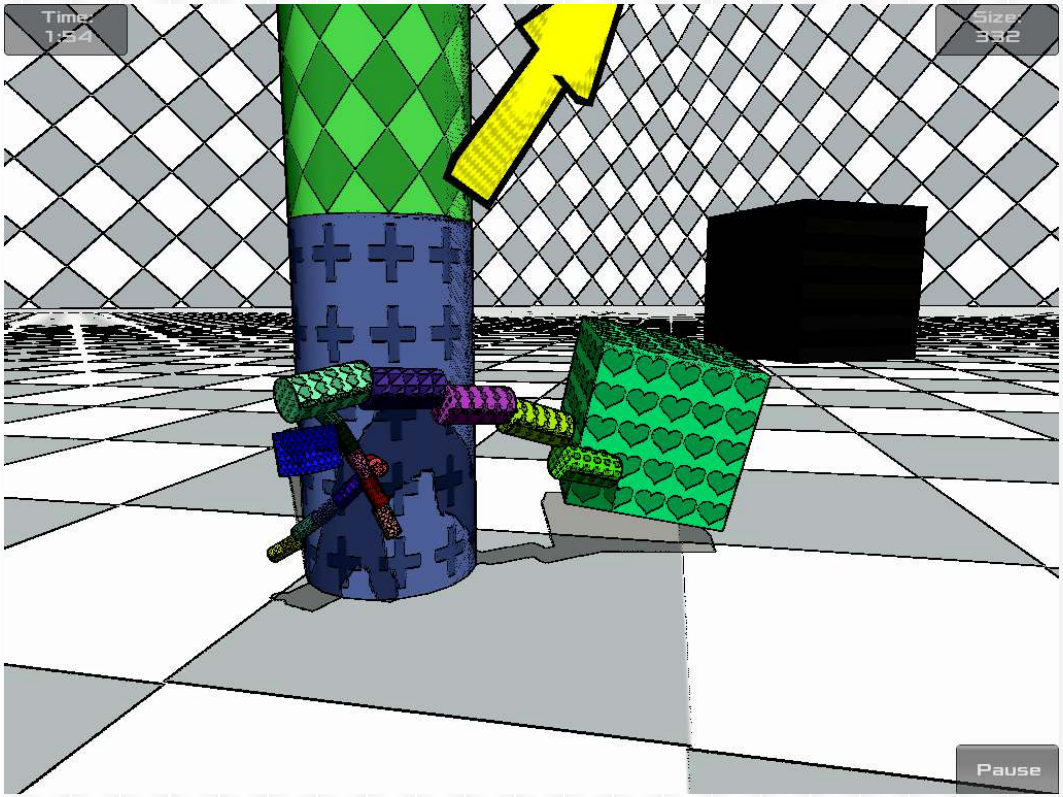

Phase 1.6: Prototyping

- Put something playable together fast!
  - Presentation quality isn't important
- Prototypes verifies whether your game is fun or not
  - Don’t be afraid to throw out a prototype, and move on to the next game idea.
- Sometimes, the best games are created out of accidents!

Phase 2: Feature Implementation

- Write up a list of features to implement your game.
  - Recommend using a task tracker, like Trello
- Determine which features are going to be the most important
- Start implementing the highest-priority features within half-a-day
- Treat each feature like a prototype:
  - Develop it quickly, and test if it improves the game
  - If it takes too long to make a feature, drop it, and move on to other features in the list

Phase 3: Level Construction

- For designing levels, I use pencil and graph paper
  - I usually sketch out either the aerial or profile view of the level, even if it’s in 3D
- What is the "story/experience" you want to convey in this level?
- Design the middle and last levels first

Phase 3: Level Construction

For the first few levels:

- 1st level provides instructions on basic movement controls and complete a level.
  - Do NOT assume the player knows how to play FPS, platformers, etc.
  - Make the first level wide, simple, and focused

Phase 3: Level Construction

- 2nd level provides instructions on a game mechanic unique to this game
  - Also lets them practice movement a little more
- 3rd level is the selling point: "BAM! THIS is why you want to play this game!"
  - Make the first 2 levels short enough so they can get to this level within 5 minutes.

Phase 4: Polish

- Replace all placeholder sound effects and graphics
- Add juice!
  - Juice it or lose it: http://youtu.be/Fy0aCDmgnxg
- Adjust the level difficulty
- Bug fixes

Phase 4.5: Submission

Follow the instructions given by the organizers to bundle everything listed below into a single ZIP file, and submitted to globalgamejam.org

- Required:
  - Game Title
  - Description
  - Project code and assets
  - Instructions on how to run the game, play the game, and compile code
  - Executable binary (or any way to run the game)
- Optional:
  - screenshots
  - trailers

Other Advice

- Make sure your team member's understanding of the game idea and features are consistent
  - Doubts and uncertainty aren't good!
- Divide jobs based on category of work
  - e.g. one person focuses on programming, one on sound effects and music, and one on artworks

Other Advice

- Have a person keep track of the project schedule
- Bookmark websites to get graphics, sound effects, scripts and music
- Always have graphics and sound, even if they are placeholders!

Questions?

Stay tuned for list of super-useful resources following Q & A

Game Engines

- Construct 2 (for 2D)
  - https://www.scirra.com/construct2
  - No programming!
- GameMaker (for 2D)
  - https://www.yoyogames.com/studio
  - GameMaker scripting language
- GDevelop (for 2D)
  - http://www.en.compilgames.net/
  - No programming!

Game Engines

- Unity (for 3D & 2D)
  - http://unity3d.com/
  - C#, Javascript, or Boo
- UDK (for 3D & 2D)
  - https://www.unrealengine.com/products/udk
  - C++, Unreal script, Blueprint
- Unreal Engine 4 (for 3D & 2D, only free for students)
  - https://www.unrealengine.com/what-is-unreal-engine-4
  - For students: https://education.github.com/pack
  - C++, Blueprint

Game Engines

- RPG Maker Ace Lite (for RPGs)
  - http://www.rpgmakerweb.com/download/free-programs/rpg-maker-vx-ace-lite
  - No programming!
- Ren'Py (for visual novels)
  - http://renpy.org/
  - Ren'Py's easy-to-learn scripting
  - Unless you want to muck around with its Python code…
- Twine (for text adventures)
  - http://twinery.org/
  - No programming!

Graphics (for 2D)

- GIMP (like Photoshop, all platforms)
  - http://www.gimp.org/
- Paint.net (like Photoshop, only Windows)
  - http://www.getpaint.net/
- Krita (great tablet support, all platforms)
  - https://krita.org/
- MyPaint (great tablet support, all platforms)
  - http://mypaint.intilinux.com/

Graphics (for 2D)

- Aseprite (great for sprites, all platforms)
  - http://www.aseprite.org/
- Inkscape (vector art, all platforms)
  - https://inkscape.org/en/

Graphics (for 3D)

- Blender (for...everything 3D, all platforms)
  - http://www.blender.org/
- 3DTin (simple 3D tool, online)
  - http://www.3dtin.com/
- MakeHuman (make humans, all platforms)
  - http://www.makehuman.org/

Audio

- BFXR (sound generator, anything Adobe AIR supports)
  - http://www.bfxr.net/
- Audacity (audio editor)
  - http://audacity.sourceforge.net/
- LMMS (music composer, all platforms)
  - https://lmms.io/

Free Resources

- Art (Kenney): http://kenney.itch.io/kenney-donation
- Art: http://opengameart.org/
- Sound Effects: https://www.freesound.org/
- Fonts: http://openfontlibrary.org/
- Music (Kevin MacLeod): http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/
- Music (DST): http://www.nosoapradio.us/