

Leaves of Fate Playtesting Bible

Inspiration

This playtesting schedule and format draws heavily from Colleen Macklin and John Sharp's book [Games, Design and Play](#), as well as Valve's playtesting philosophy outlined in Mark Brown's article [Valve's "Secret Weapon"](#). We intend to playtest every week to get as much feedback throughout the process as possible.

Time & Place

Playtests will be held on **one day every week from 1-3pm** in two on-campus Tech Suites. Refer to the Playtest Schedule below for the specific days and rooms for each week.

Each playtest will take no more than 30 minutes, including introductions, the actual playtest, and a brief discussion period afterwards. This will let us hold 4 playtests during each session.

Timing Approximations:

1. Introduction - 5 minutes
2. Playtest - 20 minutes
3. Discussion - 5 minutes

Notetaking

One playtesting team member will be present in the room during the playtest and act as a "notetaker". They should be constantly taking notes during the playtest, focusing their attention on player behaviors, actions, and spoken feedback.

During the discussion period, the notetaker should ask questions to determine the intent of observed behaviors, actions, and probe at the playtest's purpose.

Picking Playtesters

Playtesters sign up using this [SignUpGenius form](#).

Remember to find playtesters which fit the intended audiences for each playtesting session.

Also, be wary of picking repeat playtesters. They may provide helpful information to guide more low-level aspects of game design, but they will also have a bias and existing impressions left by previous playtests. Ideally, include a mix of both repeat and first-time playtesters.

Playtesting Setup & Process

Room Setup

1. Set up a computer in the playtesting room (if using a laptop, plug in a charging cord).
2. Set up at least three chairs in the room: one chair for the playtester to sit in, and two chairs for the notetakers positioned so that viewing the game is easy.
3. Start the game on the computer.
4. Connect a controller to the computer and confirm it interfaces correctly with the game.
5. Connect headphones to the computer and confirm they output the game's audio correctly.
6. Set up the playtesting notes spreadsheet on your phone, laptop, or other digital device.
7. Set up a bowl of candy/snacks. These can be eaten by the playtesters if they want.

Once Playtesters Arrive

1. Welcome the playtesters into the room. Be friendly! Tell them they are welcome to eat the candy/snacks provided.
2. Tell playtesters the approximate time the playtest will take, including the discussion period afterwards.
3. Write down demographic information in your playtesting notes spreadsheet:
 - a. Experience with games
 - b. Experience with action-platformers
 - c. Age (to see how well the narrative meshes well with people of different ages)
 - d. Emails (for potential follow-ups)
 - e. Major (to see if they are an IMGD major or not)
 - f. Anything else that may be relevant to the playtesting data
4. Introduce the game as a “fantasy platformer” and provide some brief narrative context. You may omit information as required for the purpose of the playtest.
5. Tell playtesters that you will not be able to clarify game controls or how to progress unless they are *very* stuck on a section of the game.
6. Give playtesters the controller, headphones, and permission to play the game.

During the Playtest

1. Be taking notes, all of the time. Pay attention to player behaviors, action, and any spoken feedback.
2. DO NOT interfere with the playtest in any capacity unless the playtester is unable to continue with the playtest without help. As a rule of thumb, do not speak during the playtest. Specifically, do NOT do any of the following:
 - a. Ask questions during the playtest
 - b. Respond to the playtester's spoken feedback or questions during the playtest
 - c. Guide the playtester through a segment they are struggling with
3. If and only if the playtester is stuck on a specific section of the game and the notetaker is certain the playtester cannot proceed without help, you may provide a hint or guide the playtester through the section.

After the Playtest

Make sure to follow these directions in **this exact order**.

1. Discuss the playtest with the playtester.
 - a. Follow up on interesting or unexpected behaviors, actions, or spoken feedback that occurred during the playtest.
 - b. Ask questions which help to answer the playtesting session's purpose.
2. Next, ask for any last thoughts or comments regarding the playtest.
3. Lastly, ask if the playtester would like to be credited for their playtest in our game's credits. Note that their playtesting data will remain anonymous, this is simply a way to thank them for their work.
4. Thank the playtester for their time and let them know that they are welcome to sign up for another playtest, if they want to.
5. Guide the playtester out of the room.

Playtest Schedule

Playtest 1 (1/22, Internal): UH 347, UH 349 (3-5pm)

- Intended audience: Core team, game developers
- Are the controls intuitive and reactive?
- Is navigating the area fluid?
- Is talking to characters engaging?

Playtest 2 (1/29, Internal): UH 347, UH 349, UH 249 (unused)

- Intended audience: Core team, game developers
- Does the core game loop reinforce the aesthetics & narrative?
- Does gameplay make players feel excited and cozy?

Playtest 3 (2/05, External): UH 347, UH 349, UH 249 (unused)

- Intended audience: Game developers, experienced gamers, target audience
- Does gameplay feel smooth?
- Do any segments clash with the rest of the game?
- Is the narrative coherent and engaging?

Playtest 4 (2/11 & 2/12, External): **W:** UH 248, Library Tech Suite 217 (Ben's reservation) |

R: UH 347, UH 349

- Intended audience: Gamers of different skill levels, target audience
- Is the complete game experience engaging and immersive?

Playtest 5 (2/18 & 2/19, QA Test): **W:** Fuller Lower (Colloquium, **12-1pm**) | **R:** UH 347, UH 349, UH 249 (unused)

- Intended audience: game developers, gamers of different skill levels, target audience
- What major or minor bugs, issues, and tweaks remain?

Playtest 6 (2/25, QA Test): UH 248, Library Tech Suite 217 (Ben's reservation)

- Intended audience: game developers, gamers of different skill levels, target audience
- What major or minor bugs, issues, and tweaks remain?