

Don't Look Down

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Conception

Elevator Pitch

Don't Look down is a 3D PSX-inspired horror game where the player must make it through various horrific environments and challenges in order to figure out how to get out of this seemingly never ending construction site.

High Concept

Don't Look down is a 3D PSX-Inspired Horror game. The player must navigate an immersive and creepy environment while solving puzzles and avoiding a stalking monster in order to escape the hellish and never-ending construction site they seem to be trapped in. The player must make use of a hammer and torch they find in order to navigate through the darkness and make it past challenges and obstacles that seem to not want them to escape this place.

Game Design & Conception

The game is heavily inspired by classic PlayStation 1 and 2 horror games like Silent hill or the condemned series, taking inspiration specifically from the world building and environment that had to be on point due to the graphical limitations of the time.

While these graphical limitations were a hinderance at the time, I am now going to take advantage of them to create a nostalgic and creepy atmosphere.



As you can see here, the textures and the models are all very low resolution and low poly. This design choice while making it easier to design a coherent looking game also puts more emphasis on having to build a spooky atmosphere through lighting and sounds.

This allows for more creative decision making while developing levels and said environments.



As I cannot focus on graphics to create a spooky environment I will be putting more of an emphasis on 'game feel' and polish in order to achieve the effect I want on the player.

Another big inspiration for me for this game is 'The Heilwald loophole' it is an indie PSX inspired horror game similar to what I strive to create. Due to the limitations of the graphics the game puts a massive focus on sound and using it force the players emotions in places where they need to act calm and so forth.

Executive Summary

This document will go over the key points that will be required In order to make 'Don't look down'. In order to create Don't look down in a successful way the game needs to heavily focus on atmosphere through its environment, sound, and lighting. As well as this, the gameplay should tell a story of life, death, and grievance.

Don't look down is a first-person 3D horror game where the player will have to make sure of their hammer and torch in order to navigate horrific environments and monsters in order to escape this liminal hellscape they have somehow stumbled upon. Can they find out what has happened to them and will they ever see home again.

This game is intended for audiences of age 16+ as the themes and content within the game may not be suitable for those of a younger age. This project will develop a prototype of this game that should last approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Design Pillars



Fear

Throughout the game, everything the player interacts with or experiences should contribute to this over looming fear of what could happen next. The sounds that play, objects that move, mysterious events that happen, should all contribute to making the player feel uneasy.



Unknown

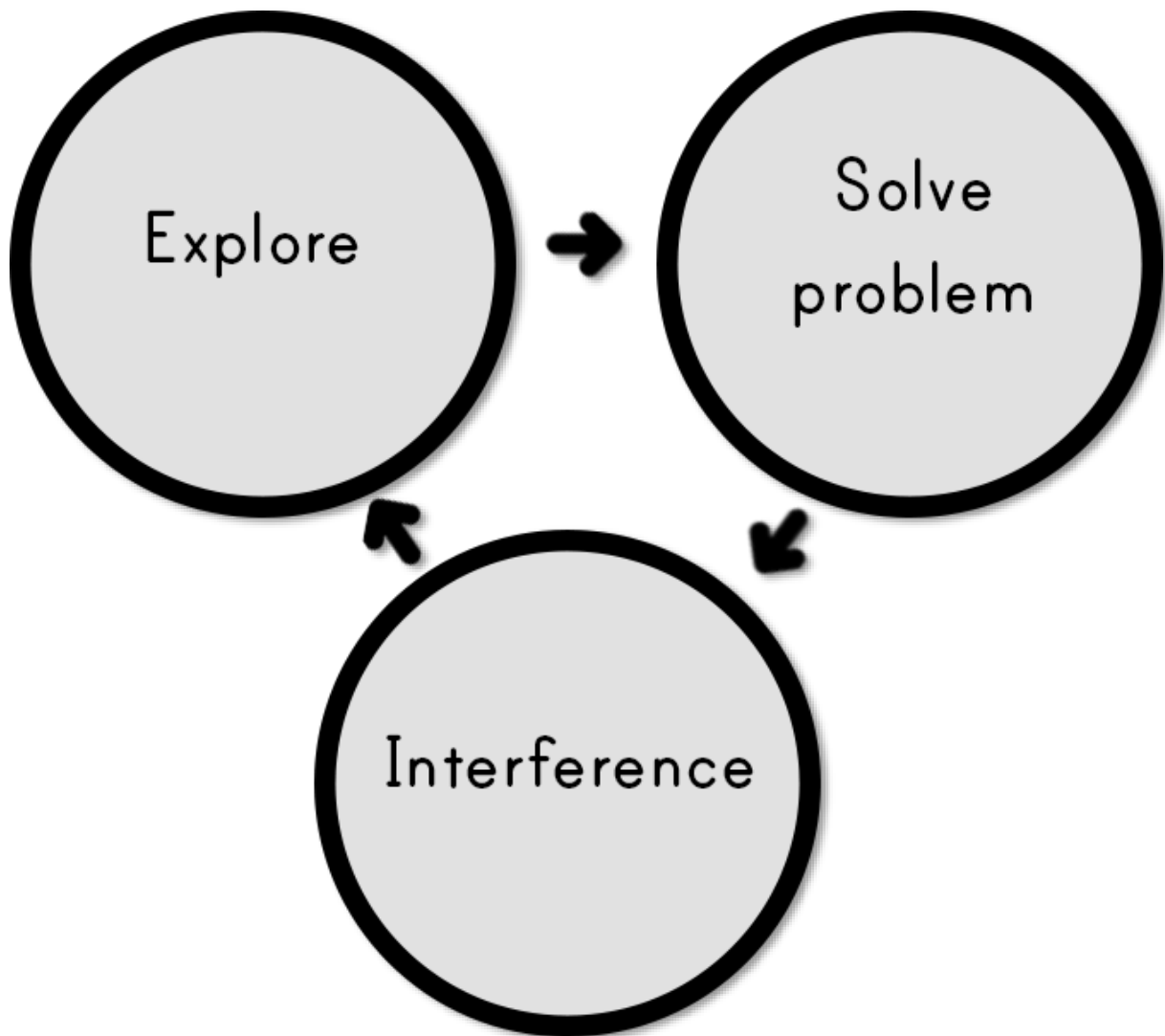
A lot of the game the player should be trying to find out why they are in this place, what happened to them, where are they. The player should be kept out of the dark of the most important details, only finding little hints and clues about what has happened to them, hopefully piecing together what has happened by the end.



Exploration

Throughout the game the player should be pushed to explore every part of the levels as they can, to try and find answers and secrets that could potentially help them later on or even find secrets that could help them currently.

Core Loop



Explore

Throughout a lot of the game, the player will need to explore the levels in great detail in order to progress through the level as well as find hidden narrative elements, gameplay hints or things to collect, like keys or batteries. This will take up a big chunk of the core gameplay loop as problems and interference link directly into each other.

Solve Problem

The player will usually be presented with a challenge or problem while they are exploring each level, this could be some sort of platforming or logic puzzle or an enemy patrolling around looking for them. The player will have to use a variety of creative solutions in order to solve or get past these challenges so they can progress further through the game.

Interference

Usually after they have solved an issue, the player will be presented with some kind of interference to their progress, that provides a challenge but usually does not require as much as problem solving to get around. For example, after the player finds a key they need in order to progress throughout the level, they will be presented with a loud noise and the monster walking through the door they originally entered through and have to return to, in order to progress through the level.

Story and Narrative

The game takes place in some sort of liminal space that takes form of an abandoned construction site of some kind of skyscraper. However, there does not seem to be any way of going down this construction site.

The aim of the game's narrative is to serve as a metaphor for accepting death and sort of grieving. The main character from the beginning of the game is actually dead, but they are not supposed to be aware of this to begin with because they are refusing to accept this as a possibility.

Throughout the game the player will encounter notes and recount their own thoughts about what is happening that will clue the player in on the grim reality they are facing.

Towards the end of the game will hopefully serve as the player finally accepting their fate and moving on to the afterlife.

Environmental story telling

The main reason for this construction site never going down is because the entire place is meant to represent the stairway to heaven, the higher the player goes the closer to acceptance they are and the closer to the afterlife they have gotten.

The further the player goes up in each level the more subliminal and wackier the environments will become. The environment will become less like reality to hint that they are moving away from life.

Spoken story telling

Throughout the game the player will encounter things that may cause them to speak a voice line about their past, giving the player information on the person they are playing as, as well as perhaps hinting towards what is actually happening, slowly getting closer to what happened before they got to this place.

Additionally story telling features

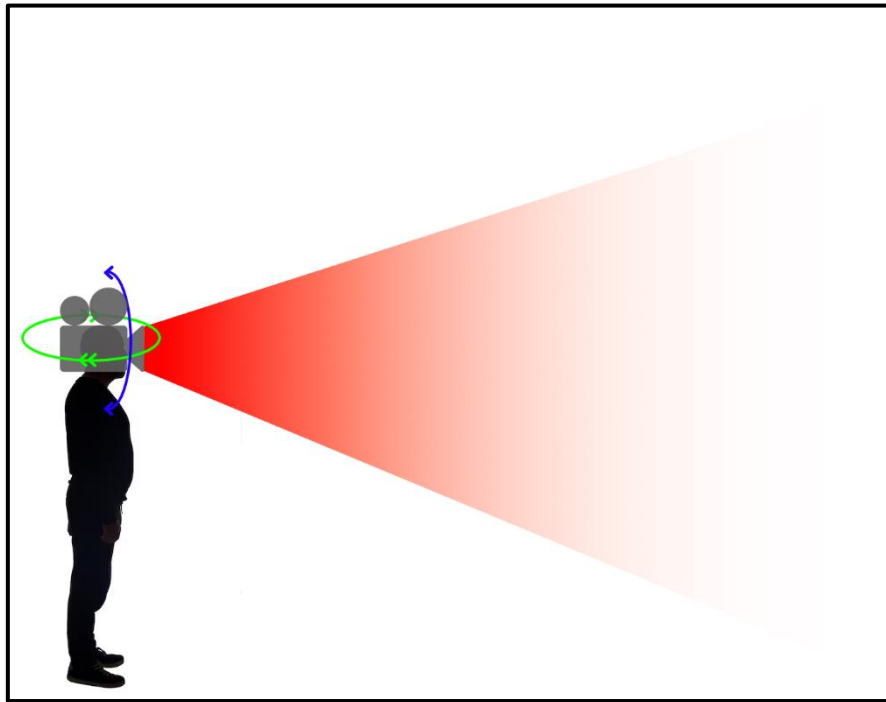
The monster that will be stalking and chasing the player throughout the game, will actually be the dead body of the player. This will be revealed at later stages of the game when the player is closing in on the ending and has finally realised, they are actually dead.

The reason the monster is chasing the main character is because it is trying to show the player and force them to accept the harsh reality.

Mechanics

Camera movement

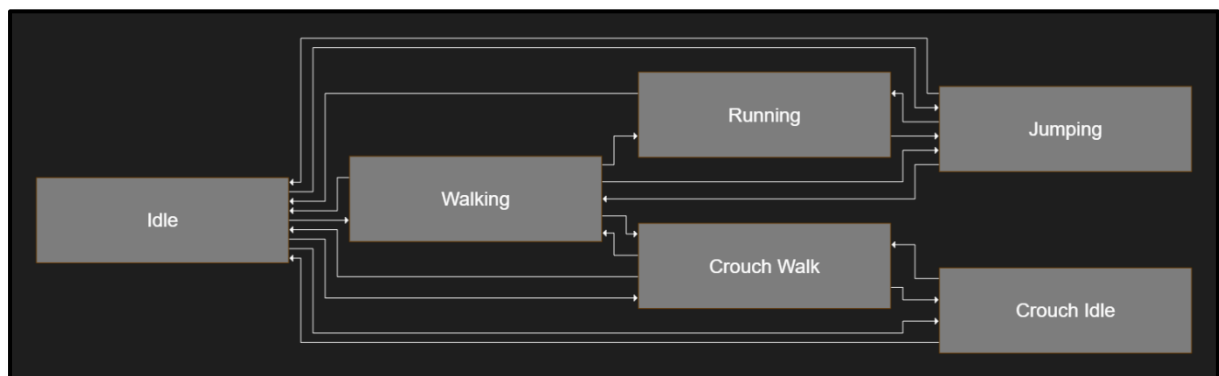
The camera will be a first-person camera, so the camera will be positioned within the head of the



player character. The camera will be controlled with the **Mouse** and let the player look 360 degrees on the **X-Axis** and **180 degrees** up and down on the **Y-Axis**, this is to simulate realistic human looking angles in regard to a neck and eyes. The player will be able to move on both axis simultaneously to have diagonal movement also.

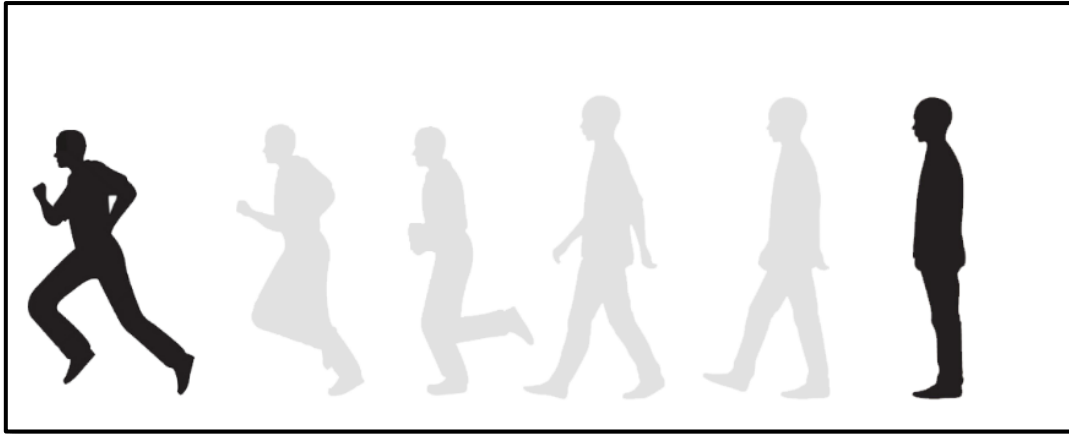
Player movement

The player will have various states of movement, from Idle, walking, running, jumping, crouching and crouch walking.



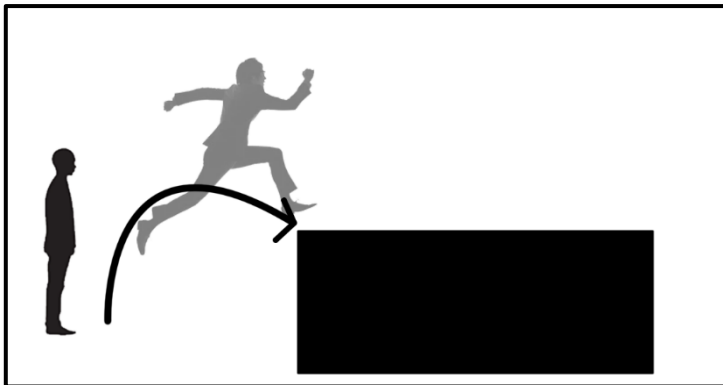
These forms of movement will all be necessary for the player to traverse the environment and progress through the game.

Walking & Sprinting



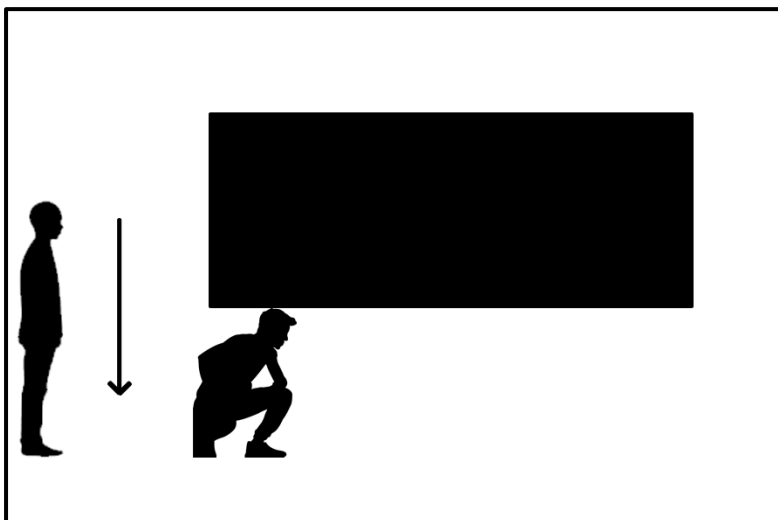
The player will walk at a set speed, however if they press and hold down the **Shift** key, they will move at **1.5x** the set walking speed. This will allow them to get places quickly. However, doing so will drain the players **Stamina** and if their stamina hits 0 they will be unable to run until it has at least hit 50% full again.

Jumping



If the player presses the **Space** button they will jump to an okay level into the air. This will be used to get over various blockages or obstacles hindering the player's progress. The player will only be able to jump once before hitting the ground as to emulate realistic movement.

Crouching



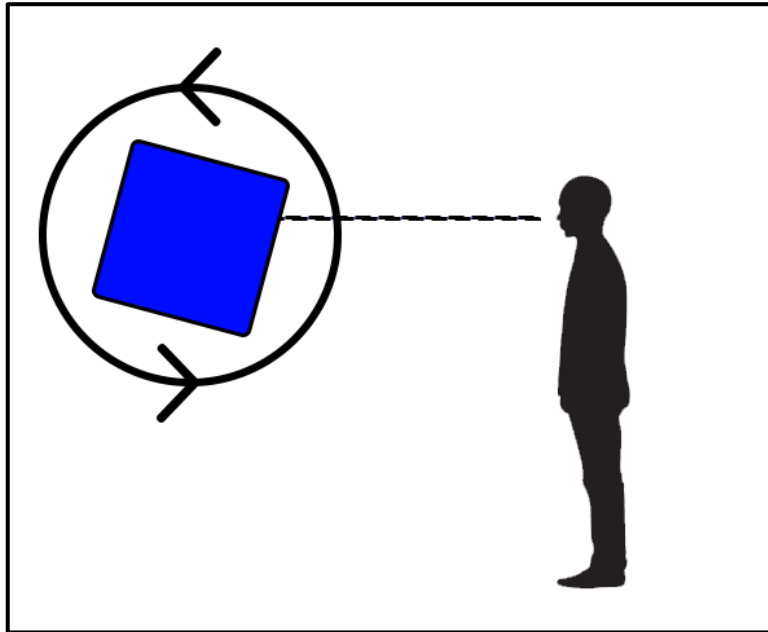
As well as this if the player presses the **CTRL** button they will be able to crouch to around half of their original height. While in this height their movement speed will be decreased but they will be able to fit into spaces they normally would not be able to.

While the player is underneath an object, they should not be able to uncrouch similar to how a real person would interact with

this kind of environment.

Additional Player mechanics

Physics Objects

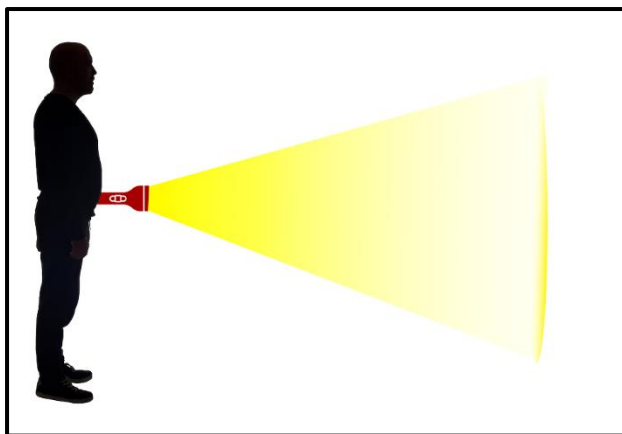


If the player presses the **E** key, they will be able to interact with various objects surrounding them. This could be to move it somewhere else to solve a puzzle, or simple to just look at it to find some hidden details. As well as this, if the player holds down the **R** key, they will be able to rotate the object around and look at it in greater details.

While the object is picked up, the player will use the **mouse** to move it around and while rotating they will use the **mouse** to rotate the object.

As well as this if the player presses **Right Click** while holding an object, they will throw it.

Flashlight

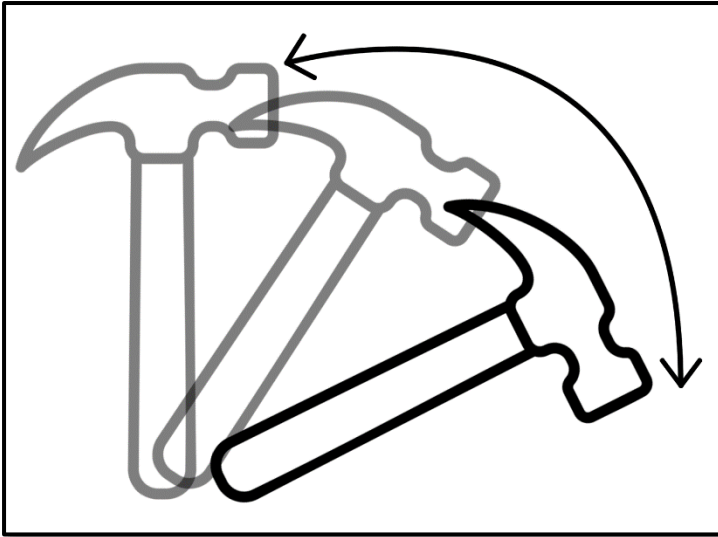


During the game the player will come across a flashlight. This will allow the player to see in dark areas where they would not normally be able to quite as well. If the player presses the **F** key while the flashlight is equipped this will turn it on and illuminate in a cone in front of the flashlight.

However, while the flashlight is turned on it will drain its battery. Once the battery is drained it will automatically turn itself back off.

The battery will only be able to recharge with the collection of batteries. These batteries will fill up the flashlights charge by **25%** on each collection however this number is variable.

Hammer



The player will also have access to a hammer throughout the game. When the player presses **Left click** this will swing the hammer forward in quite a rigid motion. This hammer will be used for mainly the destruction of certain objects that can block the players path like boxes, windows, and wooden planks. This hammer can also be used to hit the monster however, it will not do much damage and be greatly discouraged.

Switches

Throughout the game, the player will be presented with various switches, levers and pressure plates. These will trigger doors, puzzle elements and the like.

Levers

A lever when interacted with using the **E** key will toggle permanently changing whatever it is affecting in game until it is interacted with again.

Pressure plates

A pressure plate can be triggered by standing on it or leaving an object on top of it. The thing it is affecting will only be affected while there is something on top of it. The second something leaves the pressure plate the affected object will revert back to its original state.

Ladders

Additionally, the player will be able to find ladders around the levels to traverse with. If a player walks in front of these ladders and presses **E** they will start climbing it. While on the ladder the player can only move up and down, however if they press **Space** (The jump button) they will be able to launch themselves a tiny bit away from it.

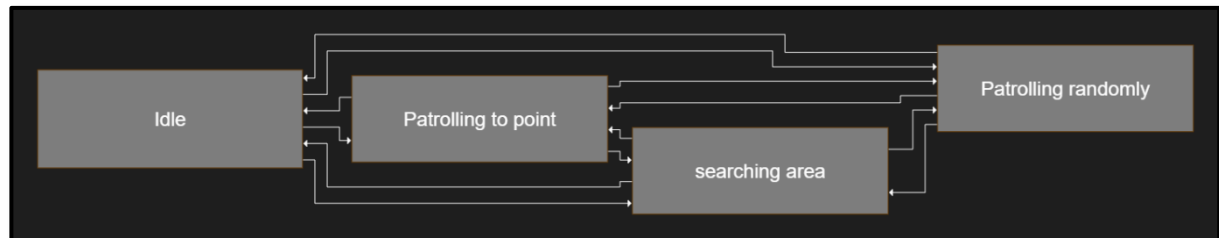
Animated Skeleton

Throughout the game the player will encounter an animated skeleton that will serve as an advisory to the player. The goal of this animated skeleton is to obstruct the players path and deal damage or kill the player.

Skeleton movement

The skeleton will have different movement states that can be preset.

- Idle
- Patrolling to point
- Patrolling randomly
- Searching area

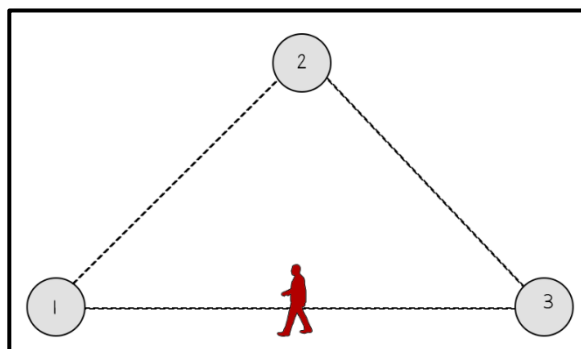


These will be used and or changed based on conditions that are met usually, directly involved in level progress or what is currently needed to obstruct the player the most.

Idle

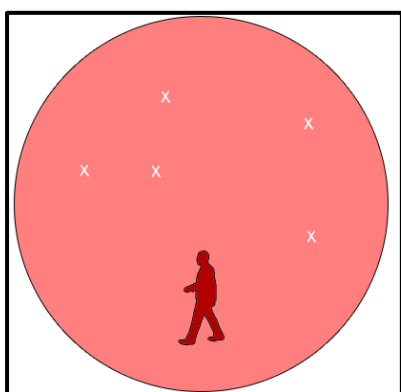
While the skeleton is in its **idle** state, it will stand static in one place, unless it sees the player then it will attempt to follow and attack the player until the player is out of sight.

Patrolling to point



When the skeleton is in this state, it will patrol to a set number of points that are pre-determined in the level. When the skeleton reaches a point, it will stay there for a few moments before moving onto the next one. It will loop around these points endlessly or until it is told to stop by some external factor. In this stage it will also follow and attack the player if it sees it, returning to its patrol path if the player leaves its sight.

Patrolling randomly



In this state, the skeleton will patrol to random points within a radius from their starting point. Like the previous state, this will be endless unless interrupted externally and the skeleton will move and attack the player if seen.

Searching area

In this state, when the skeleton loses sight of the player it will patrol randomly in the area it last saw the player for a short amount of time, before returning to the state it was in prior to the chase.

Skeleton Attacks

When the skeleton is chasing the player, it will also attempt to attack it by swinging its arm at them. The skeleton will do this when within **0.5** meters of the player however this value is variable.

The skeleton will have to hit the player 3 times in order to kill them and reset the player back to a checkpoint.

Skeleton Stun

Throughout the game the player will also be able to pick up a hammer that they can use to destroy objects as stated before. However, if the player hits the skeleton with the hammer the skeleton will be stunned for 1 second and be in an 'enraged' state. During this enraged state the skeleton will move a little bit faster than previously and also not be able to be stunned.

This enraged state will last about 5 seconds and then return to its normal behaviour. While it is enraged it will always know where the player is. The time it is enraged may change in iterations later on.

Extra interactable objects

Throughout the game, the player will be able to find various objects that they can interact with, that might tell them something about what is going on.

Notes



Around some of the levels the player can find **notes**. Scraps of paper that have a person writing on. A sort of diary accounting their days, hinting that maybe someone else is around the mysterious place you are currently trying to escape.

These notes could have information regarding the world building, the player or even useful hints and tips in order to progress through certain puzzles and challenges.

Batteries

Throughout the game, the player will be able to find batteries that will allow the player to recharge the torch they are using. This will be an important mechanic as the player will require the torch to see in dark areas.

UI Design

Main Menu

The main menu serves as the starting screen for the player. They will have a few options to choose from here but as this is a solo project they will be limited. The player will have to select from

- New Game
- Continue Game
- Options
- Credits
- Exit Game



Red borders: The red borders represent a danger zone. Nothing within the UI should be placed here as it can often conflict with various TVs and their margins. This is in order to keep the user experience as good as possible and have the game be as playable as possible on all platforms.

Grey background: The grey background is representative of imagery or a 3D scene that is placed behind the main menu.

In this menu the bulk of the information is kept on the left hand side of the screen, mainly being the buttons.

New Game will clear the players current save if there is one and load the starting level of the game.

Load Game will load the most recent save data and load the appropriate information to make sure the player can continue with their playthrough.

Options will put the player onto a new menu which will allow the player to tweak various settings like Sound, Video, Gameplay and Controls.

Credits will take the player to a menu that shows the credits of those who contributed to developing the game.

Exit game will close the .exe file.

Options Menu



Video will take the player to the video options, that will allow the player to modify the resolution as well as the window mode that the game takes place in, there will however be a minimum resolution as to not cause issues with UI scaling in the future.

Audio will take the player to audio options, here the player will be able to modify the **Master** volume as well as modify different elements of the volume individually, including **Speech**, **Sound Effects** and **Music**.

Gameplay will have options that involve key gameplay aspects, like turning on subtitles and and changing brightness and contrast.

Controls will display controls but also provide an option for the player to rebind any controls to suit their needs.

Main menu will redirect the player back to the main menu/starting screen.

HUD



The hud here wants to be kept as simple as possible due to horror games requiring a certain level of immersion, so I have gone with a simple approach here.

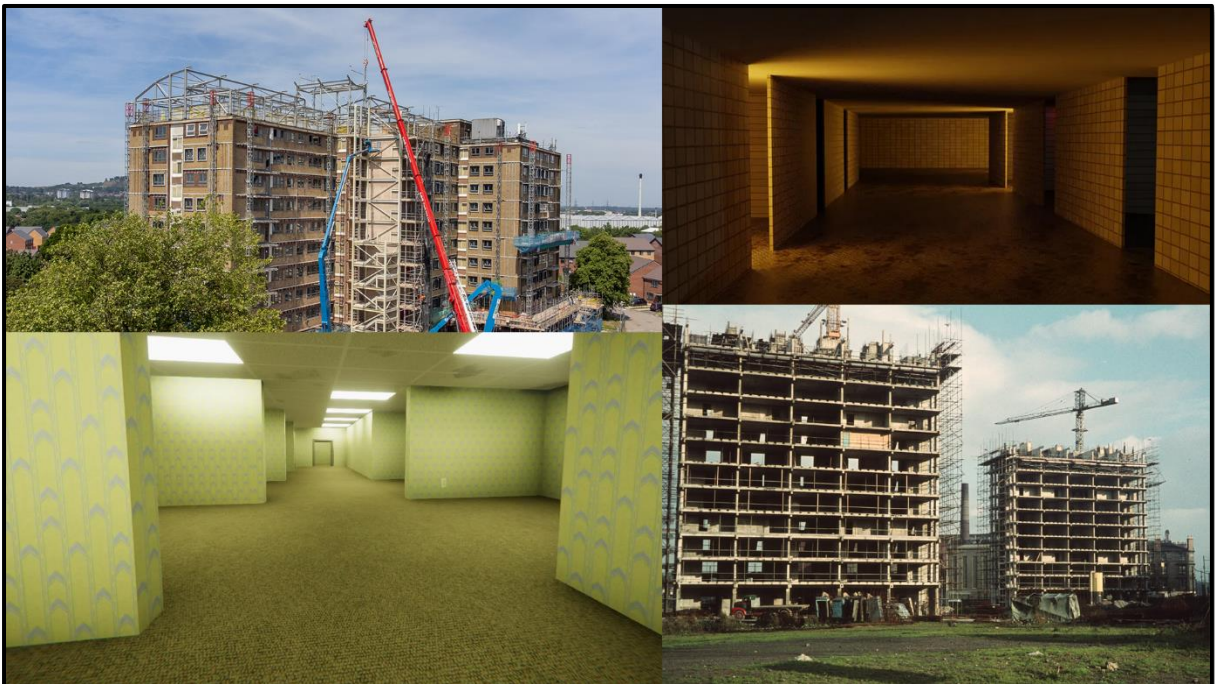
The top left contains a small and simple bar to display the amount of battery the player has left in their torch. As well as this the battery will only show up while the torch is turned on.

Environment Design

As the game is inspired by PSX horror games, the environment will be striving to look like games similar to Resident evil, Silent Hill, and Dino crisis. This means a lot of blocky, polygonal shapes.



As well as this a majority of the environment will be set in an abandoned construction site, but I will be taking inspiration from existing liminal spaces in order to confuse and scare the player as things are acting as they shouldn't be.



Throughout the environment, I will be using atmospheric fog to obscure the players vision, this is similar to games of the time such as Silent Hill who used the fog to have only the player surrounding the character to be rendered. While I don't have this limitation like older titles, I wish to put it in as I believe it would help build up the atmosphere.

Level Structure

The levels throughout the game will all be contained in a persistent level, to easily load and unload them through **Level Streaming**. This will allow a reduction of loading times as well as the ability to quickly remove elements of levels in order to trick the player and build atmosphere.

Each level will be built up primarily of two stages. An exploration stage and a challenge stage. The exploration stage will mostly be peaceful and lack a significant fail state, to give the player some time to feel safe and get used to their surroundings, however the challenge state will be used to invoke emotion and change their state of mind rapidly.

In the challenge stage in a level some kind of puzzle, obstacle and/or challenge will be presented to the player.

Towards the beginning of the game the player will be presented more with non-lethal puzzles that require them to interact with objects or find a key in order to progress, where as the later stages of the game will focus a lot around the **Skeleton** that will be harassing and stalking the player. These two elements of a challenge stage will be experimented with and iterated on throughout development so multiple types of challenges may be presented to the player at the same time.

Each level, will take approximately 5 – 10 minutes to complete and hopefully provide the player with some kind of horrific experience and challenge.

There will be more detailed documentation presented later to go into detail on these challenges and flow of the levels.

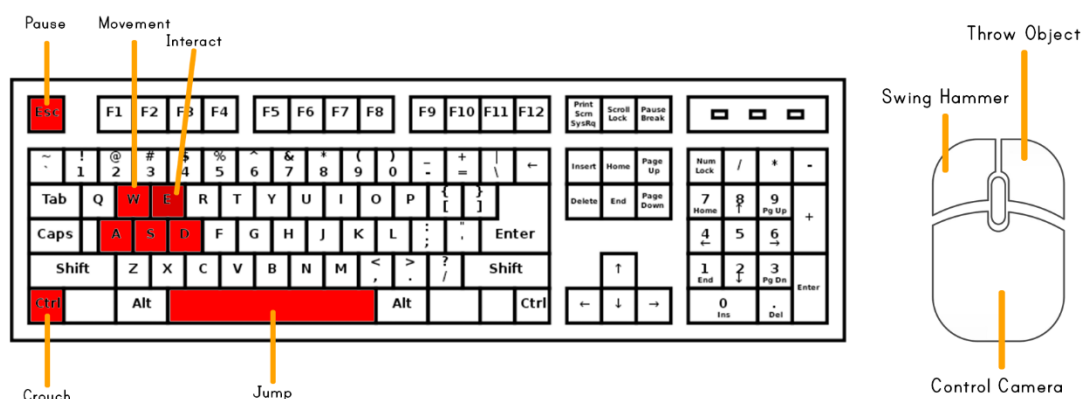
Audio

The audio throughout the game should be somewhat realistic as what you would expect to hear from things in real life or expected to hear from underlying knowledge.

However, as we are going for a retro PSX style vibe with the game, it may be useful to bit crunch sounds and make them sound a little ‘crunchy’ compared to their real-life counterparts.

Music in this game will be used however sparingly in order to invoke emotions of **calm**, **intensity**, and **creepiness**. Music will not be used persistently throughout the game as that will take the player out of immersion.

Controls



These will be the default controls used throughout the gameplay, however ideally the player will be able to manually re-bind all control but the camera controls.

Technical Specifications

Any documentation is going to be produced with **Adobe Photoshop**, **Adobe Illustrator**, and **Microsoft Word**.

Game scripting and development is going to take place using **Unreal Engine 5**, **Autodesk Maya**, **Adobe Photoshop**.



Audio and sounds are going to be mostly sourced however, they will be modified using **Audacity** and **Adobe Audition** where needed.

MVP

The minimum viable product for this endeavour will be a fully playable prototype, with all mechanics implemented. As well as the post processing and graphic limitations added into the game.

Ideally, there will be 20 minutes of gameplay using the level structure previously discussed.

Narrative elements do not need to be present for the MVP as well as this assets can be limited or greyed out if there is not enough time for asset creation.