

# The Design Document

## What is it?

### **Developmental Role:**

It helps the team of designers and programmers or the astute individual create the game. It keeps everyone on the same page during the project development.

### **Sales Role:**

It helps the sale of the game to a publisher. It should be used to convince the publisher that it is a winner so they may fund the project.

## Some basics

**Include imagery** – the more the better to describe your design idea

- Character sketches
- User interface diagrams
- Special type fonts
- Screen shots from prototype
- + any other images to support your message

### **Protect your rights**

- clearly identify your game design as YOURs
- include a statement that asserts your copyright ©
- hand out copies of design docs to officials and make a note who that was
- request the company to sign a nondisclosure agreement (NDA) beforehand

## Main forms of Design Documents

**A) High Concept Document:** sales pitch (usually 2-3 pages)

**B) Game Treatment:** sales > publisher interested > meeting scheduled (usually 10-20 pages)

**C) Design Script:** record of your game's design; more a record of design decisions made or not made yet. Used in team to communicate and clearly follow game idea.

## A) High concept document

(sales tool primarily + video game resumé)

- point is to QUICKLY convey and PITCH game
- communicate rapidly and clearly idea of game
- details less essential
- make sure you convey 'how much fun the game is going to be'

## What to include in High Concept Document

### **Title of Game**

**Statement:** 1-2 lines maximum stating game idea

**Features:** rest of 1<sup>st</sup> page includes list of features (no more than 10 features)

**Overview:** (2<sup>nd</sup> page) summarize the following

- Player motivation: what player is trying to accomplish
- Genre
- License: if using a game engine, for example, list it here
- Target customer: who will purchase it? Audience
- Competition: you should research your competition and list or note that there is nothing out there like it yet

Unique selling points: how it stands out; what is new about it!

Target hardware

Design goals: aims for game as an experience beyond FUN. Is it PULSE-POUNGING EXCITEMENT, SUSPENCEFUL, HUMORFUL, STRATEGIC CHALLENGE, etc. + list how it will achieve the goals exemplified.

Further details: additional not mentioned. Character notes, artwork, music, plot or other interests. Don't make it long and boring or trying to hard.

## B) Game Treatment (summary)

**Title page:** title and tagline

**Summary:** list of important 'what to know' about your game

**Game overview:** broken into sections

High concept: identical to high concept document above

Genre

Hooks: attactor for user

License

Gameplay highlights: list of elements (10-20) that describe experience

Online highlights (if online or multiplayer)

Technology highlights

Art and audio highlights

Hardware

**Production details:** who develops it and when, what it will cost to develop...

Current status of game

Development team

Budget

Schedule

**Competition**

**Game World**

Backstory (characters and world)

Objective

Characters

Mission or story progression

## C) Design Script

See Chris Taylor's template:

[www.designersnotebook.com/ctaylordesign.zip](http://www.designersnotebook.com/ctaylordesign.zip)

## References

Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams on Game Design: New Riders