

## Our Art Style

We mentioned last week that we were implementing a new background that mimics an alien world. When placed in the scene, this new background had a stark contrast with the build objects that we needed to address. The background has a much softer and pastel color feel while the build objects are much more bold. In principle, this is fine as the background should not overshadow the foreground elements. However, the build objects did have to be adjusted to pop out even more against the background colors. Now the build objects have a bit more depth to them visually and really stand out from the background scene.

Along with the build objects, we wanted to add a more 2D feel to the alien and the spaceship so they integrated into the world better.

## Playtesting Our Revisions

On Thursday, we went back to the Children's School for a second round of playtesting. Between the new theme, a more polished interface, the click-and-drag mechanic, and better tuned physics, the game was considerably easier for kids to understand. The new art style also seemed to be a big hit: one kid exclaimed "I like this game!" before he'd even really started to do much except look at it.

The playtest reminded us that we can't take certain vocabulary for granted. The term "UFO" was unknown to at least one kid. "Spaceship" turned out to be a more widely understood term.

Kids found some of our earliest levels to be challenging already, so we'll be looking for ways to simplify things and guide them through the experience. Fortunately, even when stuck, kids seemed to stay invested in the game, still wanting to rescue the alien and move on to the next level. This was an encouraging sign for the appeal of the theme and also meant that the "toy-like" aspect of the interactions (like hitting blocks together) was fun.

## Contrasting Cases

On Wednesday, we had a very helpful meeting with HCII to discuss some ways that we can further emphasize contrasting cases in our design. Essentially this means a side-by-side comparison of structures that are the same in all except one aspect, so that a child can judge which structure is more stable based on that single difference. We've been trying to work this into our level designs, but HCII raised some alternative approaches we'll also be considering early next week as we move into the second half of the project.

## Preparing for Halves

This upcoming Monday we have our halves presentation for the ETC faculty, project clients, other students, and guests. Halves is the major milestone at the halfway point of the project and it should show significant progress towards the end deliverable. These presentations are fifteen minutes long, so it's a small window of time to talk about the past eight weeks.

Halves is an interesting time because by this point you're fully committed to the broad characteristics of the product you're making, but it's also a time to assess where you're at and see what are the most valuable adjustments you can make for the second half of the semester.

We will be posting our halves prototype on our project website on Monday for anyone who would like to see the current state of the game.



## Calendar

October 24<sup>th</sup>

Half Presentations  
-Mid-Semester Presentation.

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>

Final Presentations



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