The basic principles of Level Design
Who Am I?

➔ Creative Director at Freesphere Entertainment Ltd an independent studio based in Warrington.

➔ 10 years plus video game industry experience.

➔ 4 years working in the written press for Inside Mac Games & Mac Gamer HQ.

➔ 7 plus years as a designer on 6 released titles.

➔ Started working on Necropolis Suite in March 2021 and have since grown the products visibility and the team to support it.

➔ WAGames host, The Level Design Lobby contributor & speaker in education.
Scaling

➔ Import a scaled correctly test character in the editor.

➔ Use this a point of reference for scaling your world and its content correctly.

➔ Learn to work in METERS.
Landmarks

➔ Showing landmarks can be used as foreshadowing for an objective/quest.

➔ These are usually locations in your world that stand out visually.

➔ Can help orientate the player in the world.

➔ Framing is important when showing a landmark as you can hint to the path.
Lighting

➔ Guide the player.
  ◆ Exit(s)
  ◆ Path Guides
  ◆ Enemy introduction

➔ Highlight important areas.
  ◆ Brightly lit areas for objectives or resources.
  ◆ Darkness for stealthy players.

➔ Lighting helps set the tone for an area.

➔ Be sure to use this in your Blockouts.
Colour Theory

➔ Can help create the mood of an area.
➔ You can use colour to draw the players attention.
➔ Use it to make your level easier to read.
➔ Work with artists to find a consistent palette.
Symmetry

➔ The use of symmetry is a great tool to help the player understand a space very easily by making it quick to read.

➔ Can be used to draw attention to a goal.

➔ Using too much symmetry can get the player(s) lost - mazes!
Signage

➔ Signage placed throughout your game world is a great way to guide a player to their objective.

➔ Using real world signage is a good way to communicate with the player.
Environmental Storytelling

➔ We don’t always have to tell the player what is going on in the world. We can use environmental storytelling to do this for us.

➔ Can be used to communicate with the player on a subliminal level.

➔ Contextual to the narrative and theme of your level.
Multiple Paths

➔ Supporting multiple pathways to an objective is a great way to encourage the player to explore your world.

➔ Offers great agency to the player.
Vertical Lines

➔ Vertical lines makes you look up.

➔ Horizontal lines makes you look across.

➔ Diagonal lines makes you look up and out.

Use them together to guide the eye.
Research! Research! Research!

Fail to prepare...
...prepare to fail
Paper Design

➔ Quickest way to mapping out an area.

➔ Easiest way for your team to visually understand progression through a map.

➔ Quick iteration.

➔ It’s only a guide, level design is an iterative process.
Blockout

After paper designs comes blocking out in 3D using basic shapes.

➔ Speed
➔ Quick iterations
➔ “Feel”
➔ Scope
➔ Setting up interesting scenarios for the mechanics of your game.

All techniques explained in previous slides could be used here.
Get People To Play Your Level

→ It’s never too early to ask people to play your level.

→ Without critical feedback how do you know you’re on the right track?

→ Stand back & watch see how players interact with the level (take notes).

→ Refrain from force guiding players during play test. It’s not telling you anything.

→ Listen don’t speak (no backseating).
Iterative Life Cycle

Iterative Based Approach

- **Discovery**: Creative discussion of ideas and findings.
- **Creation**: Create experimental/brief version of Blueprint, Gameplay, or Narrative.
- **Feedback**: Group discussion via Skype or Slack.
- **Implement**: Test anything and everything.
- **Tracking**: Implement changes and additions to design, map, code etc.
Thanks for reading, if you have any questions you can reach me at @markgregory on Twitter & Instagram.