

# Playtesting

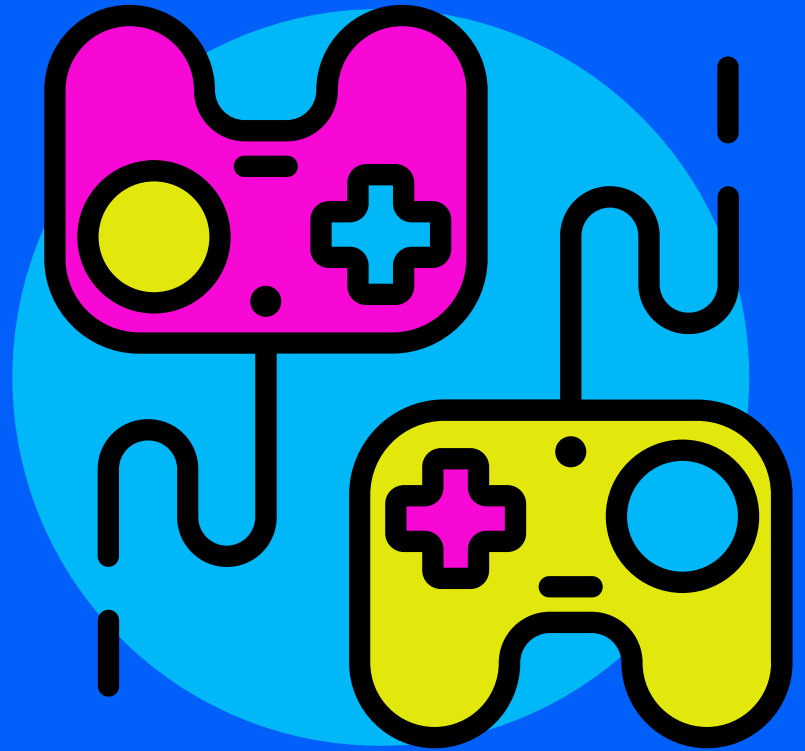
Playtesting is an important step in developing games, and a great way for students to learn how to give and receive feedback. Here's a multi-level approach:

## Early and often

Once students have a draft of their game to play, it's ready to test. Nothing should be considered "final" about the game at this phase. The goal is to learn from players what is working and what can be improved about a game.

The simplest approach is to have students pair up to test each other's games. Students should each have a chance to introduce their game (one minute), and then to watch it played (5 minutes), and then discuss feedback (5 minutes.) These times are suggestions, what works for your students may be different. If time allows, students will benefit from pairing up more than once to get more perspectives and see patterns in the feedback.

It can help to demonstrate the process for the class. A volunteer student can introduce their game, and then you as the teacher would play the game (a big screen helps here) and then model the types of feedback to give.



## Levels of Feedback

Depending on the depth of discussion you feel is appropriate for your students, you can use any of these formats, or a mix of them, to structure the process. Here are three levels of feedback that get progressively more involved:

### Level One: Simple and Open-ended

Students give a "Glow and a Grow" for their feedback. What's something that works well, and what's something to change or improve?

## Level Two: Digging Deeper

A specific set of questions can help designers get more direct feedback on their games. Consider: *What parts of the game were the most fun, and why? What parts of the game could be clearer or easier to understand? What was the most memorable part of the game, and why?*

## Level Three: Put the Rubric in Play

For more advanced students, consider giving them the same rubric you would use to assess the final game. Each item on the rubric can be a discussion point and should describe what different levels of good look like. Here are some categories to consider:

*Navigation: How well developed was the path through the game? How clear was it, and how fun was it to traverse?*

*Story: How did the narrative play out in the game? What environmental or implicit techniques were used to help tell the story?*

*Purpose: If the game was intended to inform or persuade, how well did it accomplish that? What did the player learn or see differently?*

*Difficulty: How well did the game progress in challenging the player? Were there moments that felt “unfair” or less interesting?*

*Choices: What types of choices were offered to the player, and how meaningful were they? Can they pick their own paths, or have multiple endings?*

Using a rubric during playtesting empowers the students to focus on what you deem important in the project. Introducing the rubric earlier in the project is a good idea, because students can use it to notice how these concepts emerge in other games. Ultimately, it will help build their vocabulary to analyze games beyond just “it’s fun.”

## Five Star Tip!



It’s important to explain, and even model, being a good observer. When a student is watching someone play their game, it can be very difficult for them to not jump in and direct the player. You might hear things like “You’re going the wrong way” or see students directing others through the level. Students won’t learn as much from the playtest in those cases. Give the observer a job to do- watching the player’s reactions to things, taking notes on their experience- and only helping when a player is truly stuck.