This is a template for a Game Design Document (GDD). As it's a template there are many elements that may not apply to your game, (if it's a fighting game or a puzzle-focused game). This is a starting point based on the games I've talked about in the book.

This document is a '*scope'* document, it outlines the main areas of the game and what making the game will entail for the developers. It's a blueprint for the game and will adapt and change over time ("we can't get the cooperative component to work right, let's drop that in favor of a more solid one-player experience" etc.)

There is no perfect GDD or Design document, as long as all the stakeholders (those involved in the design, publication and promotion of the game) can make sense of it and use it to understand their workload and who's doing what, that's good enough.

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Game Design Document:

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Cover: Logo/Image. As with the Design Document Example. Always good to have some exciting cover art.

Title: Awesome Name Here (check the name or a similar one is not already in use).

Version: (your team needs to know if the document has been updated and that they're looking at the most up-to-date copy).

Written By and Contact Details: who is the document's author (Art director? Producer?)

Header/Footer; each page should have the game title at the top and a version number. The footer should contain copyright information, page numbering and a date.

Overview: is this is an original game or a licensed property? If it's licensed how does the game fit with the licensor's directives and expectations (Would Batman ever be able to kill an enemy)?

List of Document Contents: (needs to be updated along with changes)

Team Roles: List the roles and titles of everyone working on the project.

Revision/Editorial: Using a product such as a google Doc or Microsoft Word, turn revision tracking on so that others can see who has made changes and what they are. The main editor/owner can accept/decline these changes in meetings with the other team members.

Game Objectives: List USPs (unique selling points) of the game in an 'elevator pitch' (something short) short-praragraph style. Think about what features of your game would be on the back of a retail box or mentioned in a review.

> **Genre**: Action, Adventure, Action/Adventure etc. If the game is not easily classified in a genre you can create one, but know that this can be confusing for others (e.g. 'exploration/walking' games as a genre did not really exist until advent of Gone Home, Proteus etc.).

> **The Big Idea:** What is the overall "bird's eye view" of the game? Give a short description of the main elements of your game "quest for revenge/power or romance/realtionships" etc.

> - Target Audience & expected ESRB/PEGI rating.
> - Game storyline/narrative or focus – what is the game about?
> - USPs/hooks – why would people play this game?

Platform: What platforms is this game to be played on? Remember that certain platforms have quality control and licensing requirements and/or costs (for example Microsoft require that developers have errors and omissions insurance which can be several thousand dollars).
> *To release on a console you have to pay a hardware license and if the game is for multiple international markets the game has to be submitted to foreign ratings boards which also is an expense.*

Technical Requirements: Will the game have multiplayer, cooperative play, uploading and downloading items, a store etc.?
> - Gameplay type descriptions: Stealth, driving, simulation. MoBA etc.

Story/Narrative: This can be short as the game hasn't been written yet, focus on the context of gameplay ('you are an assassin who can climb towers").

> - How does the player start the game? *(Tutorial? Jump straight in?)*
> - List of locations and relationship to the game concept *(different planets mean players can access different resources etc.)*
> - How does the player get from one location to the next? *(Fast Travel? Maps?)*
> - What is the ending and who or what is the player by the end of the game? *(Saved world/become super soldier/married soulmate etc.)*

Exposition: Are there cut-scenes? Are they skippable or QTEs (Interactive Quick Time Events)?

Controls: Diagram of the control scheme and control mapping for all platforms. List known controls of player movement

01/01/2016

Technology requirements: This is an overview for the design team, in larger, more complex games there is usually a Technical Design Document (TDD) which gets into details only programmers and software engineers love.

- o What game engine tools will this game use and what need to be built?
- o What is the implementation of the camera, game physics, enemies/bosses, and so on? And who is being tasked with the implementation? (Programmers, animators, graphic designers).
- o What is going to be created in-house and what is going to be bought in (physics engines, ragdolls, scripting etc.)?
- o What are the developer tools for Quality Assurance testing and 'cheat modes' for developer and testers?
- o What do you expect the PC specifications to be?

Camera: List camera types, (first person, third person, scrolling, locked etc.)

- o List occurrences where a unique camera may be used (for example the locked camera used in conversations by Bethesda games).

User Interface (HUDs etc.): list or show how game information is visualized for the player.
- o Include images of health, alignment, power, ammunition, money, count-downs/cool-downs, maps, relevant cockpit information, lives, weapon targeting and any special modes such as Batman's "Detective Vision" or slow-motion (Max Payne series).

Wireframe Player Screens.
Create a sketch or use wireframing tools to show interactions points between screens and navigation like you would when designing a website. Show connectivity between all game screens.

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High Level Player Interface:

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Title Screen, Start Screen & Idle: What do you want the player's first impression to be of the game? What happens when they hit 'play' and what happens if they leave the game alone?

- o List or title/start screen and storyboard any animation and graphics.
- o Detail what selection options are available to the player such as "new Game/Save/load game".
- o Are there naming conventions for game saves? Are they customizable?

Credentials: List what credit screens need to be shown when the game is booting up. What *must* be shown? (Publisher logo, Licensors, Third-party software manufacturers) *To see this start playing any game on any console and you'll see a list of credentials.*

The Option Screen: This can be multiple screens or just one depending on the platform and design choices of the game. PC games can get very advanced just on graphics and control settings.

- o Game Option:
  - • Video (brightness/contrast, aspect ratio etc.)
  - • Audio (environment audio levels, subtitles, speech etc.)
  - • Music (levels and customization)
  - • Control settings (alternative layouts rumble on/off)

Loading screens: Is there a loading screen (possibly hiding asset loading/game engine booting up) and what does it look like? Does it showcase beautifully rendered game assets (models of weapons, characters etc.) or give insight into the story or world?
(NAMCO had a patent on games being played in loading screens, until Nov 2015 no developer could have mini-games in their loading screens.)

Keeping Score: does the game have any rating system for the player such as a high score system? What is the use and/or value of a scoring system? Is it cashed in for equipment, better combat options or just for 'bragging rights'?

High Score/Leaderboard: If the game has one, what doe it look like? Is it only in the multiplayer mode or all player modes? Are player stats being tracked and displayed?

Game Overview.

Core Game Mechanics: Detail all 'core' (most often used, non-special move etc.) mechanics that are used in the game.

- o List interactive items (handles, platforms, boxes etc.)

World overview: Create a 'map' (wireframe or storyboard) of all game locations and where they interconnect or stack.

- o Audio- note any areas that require specific sound effects or music (i.e. different levels might be towns with a different music background, dark tunnel levels have very different sound effects).

The Levels: Create a detailed list of each of the games levels. Even an open-world game has levels or areas (underground caves, mountaintop villages, disused shelters).

01/01/2016

Player Progression Outline: How does the player navigate through the game? Detail every level and give estimated completion length.
- *'Beat charts':* Beat charts ensure that the player is never overloaded with things to do and ensures that content (story, combat, cut-scenes) are distributed in a way that engages the player.
- Detail every level and unique moments along with core gameplay (i.e. when player has collected a certain key they can unlock a door to a unique item).

Audio:
How much music and audio is in your game?
- Is music pre-composed or generated in-game?
- What are the special effects audio requirements (ray-guns versus real guns)?
- Explain tonality of music and atmospheric sound effects. Do different level have identifiably different audio 'feelings'?
- Do external game screens (Pause, load, title) require music?
- Is there voice-over?

FMV/Cut-scenes: does the game contain animation or cut-scenes for exposition purposes? Make a detailed list of all the video elements and where they will occur in the game. Also create short storyboards of each cut-scene, will they require in-game assets or new assets?

The Player.

Player character(s) (if applicable):
- Include early art/assets as well as character name and a relationship map.

Player matrix: detail player character and measurements (metrics) related to movement, combat/weaponry, special attacks, death states, health, and any idle animations.

Player skills: Does the player 'level up' in the game? If so how?
- Create a 'skill tree' diagram that outlines the player's upgrade options.

Inventory: Detailed list of any tools and proposed inventory items, anything the player will use (and assets need to be created for) as well as and how they will be used in the game (A button to activate spell. Special combo spell attacks, effects of healing potions, poisons etc.)

Combat: Storyboard any player combat and subsequent reactions (include combo attacks, defensive, weapon types and load outs).

- Create a weapon diagram tree. List elements of weapons from their ranges to how they are equipped, statistics modifiers and so on.

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Player or Enemy modifiers: Does the game create states where for periods of time or permanently the player, enemy or equipment baseline stats are altered? List what these are and their connection to the game.
   - Modifiers can be runes that power up a sword but also player health overcharged health, damage, shields/armor etc.).

Player/Enemy States: Does your game have a 'stagger' action or any aspects such as poisoning, freezing, shielding etc.?

Player/Enemy Death State: Does your player die? If so, what happens? How do the enemies die? Do bosses die differently to regular enemies?
   - List all characters and their death states. How does the player know an enemy has died or that they have died?
   - Is there a penalty for death (losing money, items or extra lives?).

In-Game Screens.

Save/Checkpoint: Does the game have any auto-saving function? Where in the game will the checkpoints (if applicable) occur? Is there a 'hard save' option? If so is it in-game or external and accessed via a menu?

Trophies & Achievements: Most games have trophy or achievement-style reward systems (they're mandatory on Sony and Microsoft consoles).
   - List what the games achievements are and how the player will earn them in-game. Remember you will need to create art assets for each of these 'badges' remember there are limits on consoles to how many you can use.

Economy/Currency: Does the game have a money-based system? How is the money spent by the character/player? How is it earned? Are there purchasable items (for in-game currently and real-world currency).
   - List purchasable items.
   - Show any 'store' interfaces? Is the store in-game or outside (i.e. in a paused screen where the game does not carry on).
   - Does the game provide expensive and/or cheap items that can be traded for other forms of loot?

Legendary Items and Collectibles: Create a list of all special items in the game and their action sets (more damage, more health etc.). How often are items found and where? Do bosses drop items or are the unlocked in the store at certain skill levels?

NPCs, Enemies, AI, Transport.

What rule sets do the enemies and NPCs have? Idle animations, attack modes or running away/cowering?

- o Detail all non-player behaviors (guard, quest-giver, store owner etc.)
- o Where do the enemies spawn (appear)?
- o Do enemies or fallen comrades drop items/loot?
- o How much experience/skill points are earned on defeating each enemy?
- o How does each enemy act (animations, AI)? Illustrate these actions.
- o Do NPCs follow the player, get out of their way etc.?

Location-based Enemies: does the game contain bosses or enemy types that only occur in certain areas or levels? Indicate where these are and which enemies the player will encounter.

- o Detail enemy attack or patrol patterns
- o How does the player defeat them?
- o How does the player know they are having an effect on the enemy?
- o Do bosses or certain enemies have special moves or weapons?

Hard Enemies or Bosses: Does the game have boss/harder than normal enemies?
What does the boss look like? How is it different from other enemies or NPCs?
Does the boss only exist in a certain location or is triggered after certain actions/stats?

- o Early art assets of all enemies but specifically bosses are useful for the team to get a sense of the overall game.
- o Is the boss encounter cinematic? Are they introduced by a cut-scene?
- o What is special about the boss and the player's interaction with it?
- o As with other enemies, list special moves, weak points, attack patterns.
- o Provide descriptions and imagery of NPCs and where they appear. List what function they serve in the overall context of the game. List what rewards or items they are associated with.

Transportation. Does the game have interactive modes of transport that the player can use? (bikes, hover-boards, tanks, cars etc.)

- o How does a vehicle work within the environment? (Can you run people over? Does the vehicle explode?).
- o What is the control mechanic for the form of transport? How does it differ from the regular player control? How do you transition from one control scheme to another?
- o Does the transport have abilities (tank, guns, make money etc.)?

Extra Content.

Elements that add depth or enjoyment to the game but are not required to complete or 'beat' the game.

Games within the game: Does the game contain any mini-games (such as card games, gladiator trials or speed trials etc.)? List the mini-games, their rule set and how they are played within the games setting (card games are in pubs, speed trials are in non-combat zones etc.)

- Do the mini-games use existing game assets (cars, people, and weapons) or is it completely separate (board games, card games)?
- Indicate location of games and how the player is introduced to them.

Extra Content: Will the game have DLC post-release? What form will this take and what are the expected delivery timeframes?

Extra Screens: Elements such as credit rolls, job titles, 'rewards (unlocked artwork, viewable cut-scenes etc.), bonus material (commentaries, making of video etc.). How is this accessed by the player and when?

Timelines: Create a brief overview timeline for game development and delivery. What is due when and who is responsible for making that deadline. Always pad timeframes, everything takes longer than expected.

- Create timelines for each discipline (programmers, animators, artists etc.).
- Learn to use excel or project management software such as Asana or Wrike.

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