

How To Pitch Your Game Effectively

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As somebody who is participating in this jam, you are most likely very, very excited to pitch a million game ideas that have been living in your head rent-free.

Congratulations! This is a great thing. Now, let's figure out how to compress this into something tangible, and in scope!

At the beginning of BUGJam, you will have the opportunity to pitch your game idea for all members participating. Let's walk through how to effectively communicate your ideas in a concise manner.

tl;dr

1. Keep your idea short and realistic
2. Simplicity is better
3. Scope so tiny you could barely consider it a game

The art of a good elevator pitch

It is important to come in with the expectation that your game pitch may not be accepted. However, you can increase your chances of people getting on board if you do the following:

Keep the idea short and realistic.

People often stop listening to an idea you are pitching if it isn't compelling within 5 to 30 seconds. That's not a lot of time! The crux of how you should be pitching a game is how to capture everybody's attention with about 3-4 game mechanics that are simple and scalable.

Consider the following pitches:

1. "Guys, I have an amazing game idea that will blow your pants off. What I have here is a entirely open world RPG, with a skill tree for super dynamic gameplay and each character has like 5 skill trees that they can spec into! Also we'll have 4 main characters where your dialogue choices will affect the game world's story and progression, and also there will be

dragons!!! Also you'll have like elemental powers and that fits into the lore I have here that I've pre-written - trust me this is going to be a great game - here's the lore document I've written up which should give you a good sense of how gameplay should be handled..."

2. "You are controlling a luggage bag and hurtling through the airport terminal to ensure you make it to your flight on time. You'll have to swerve your way around a bunch of idiots standing around and try not to hit them, while simultaneously getting to your airplane as fast as possible, because time is money! The slower you go, the less money you'll make in total. Between flights, you'll be able to buy a variety of shop items that increase your stats so you can make it through an increasingly more difficult set of locales."

Option number 1 may sound exciting, but not only is it completely impractical to implement in a short amount of time, the gameplay is not focused, and overall way too vague - none of the mechanics are explained in a clear way. Many people are good at sniffing out something that is unrealistic and you'd likely be faced with a lot of friction.

Looking at option 2, this may overall sound a little less exciting and grand, but for the purposes of BUGJam, it is much more realistic and in scope with two concise game mechanics that can be easily expanded on while not over-explaining everything. This can also open up to other members of your team contributing their own interpretations and suggestions for how these simple mechanics could be expanded, and thus feel more organic, rather than your teammates feeling like they're just making a game that you hold all the ideas for.

Simpler is better.

It is extremely easy to get excited about your pitch and start to add in a bunch of mechanics that you feel are absolutely necessary to the final product. It happens to everybody and unless you're a seasoned game developer, it will happen quite a lot. The best way to mitigate this is to think about what actually makes a game, a game.

For instance:

From option 1: "each character has like 5 skill trees that they can spec into!"

Think about the gameplay implications of what this would need:

- Multiple characters with distinct character designs, separate animations, individual abilities
- How many movements will need to be animated by the artists
- From a game design perspective, how each skill could potentially throw off the balance of the game
- How much different dialogue, character writing, and story would go into everything
- Much, much more to consider

Versus: "there will be one playable character, and they will use a sword as their weapon of choice"

- One character and character design

- Basic walk cycle, a couple of attack animations
- Game balance centered around one character
- Much less storyboarding

Try to think about how your ideas could impact your team down the line. A month is a very, very short time to build a game, and your mechanics should reflect as such.

Scope tiny, scale up later.

Obviously, the goal of a game jam is to make a game - so we may assume that there will be a product to play at the end. The biggest complexity lies in *how much of a game* you'll see at the finish line.

When working with a lot of people, a lot can go wrong.

When working by yourself, a lot can go wrong.

Therefore, it is safe to set your expectations to be at the **most minimal product you can bear to think of**. The harshest would be to assume that the output is a barely playable, ugly, no audio game, but you still have a win and end condition nonetheless.

So, how does this relate to the bullet point above? Great question -- **by scoping for a game that is barely playable, you can only go up**. Say you have a 3D shooter. What can you make that could technically be considered a game? The character could be locked into place and can only rotate around while shooting a horde of enemies?

Once you have the most basic of basics down, you can start to add more. Adding feels good. Subtracting does not. Crossing off a to-do, knowing it's all done, feels infinitely better than calling your team and telling them that a leaderboard may not be in the cards.

When you pitch your game, this is what you should have in mind. Remember, this is not a way to ensure that your game will suck. This is so you can set expectations, so that inevitably, down the line, you'll have more mechanics that you can incrementally add throughout the game jam.

Hopefully with this advice you have a much better understanding of how to make an effective game pitch! Good luck jamming!

Revision #3

Created 2025-12-28 17:48:13 PST by a_kimb0

Updated 2025-12-30 13:18:00 PST by a_kimb0