

# Playtesting Report - Fruit Smashers

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# 1 Overview

To gain additional player feedback and better advocate for the player, we conducted formal playtesting sessions.

We wrote a script (similar to the one in *Game Design Workshop*) to guide each session. One of the sessions was conducted with a group of 4 testers, and a second was conducted with a single player who played against the AI. All of the testers were students (and none are taking this class). At the beginning of each session, we asked some introductory questions, and we requested that the players “think out loud” during the gameplay. We then allowed the players to play the game, without giving them further instructions. Afterwards, we held an open-ended discussion and also asked some prepared questions. We offered the playtesters beverages and snacks.

## 2 General Comments

These observations and comments were made during the gameplay portion of the test.

- When the menu is shown, everyone can move through menu items, which creates confusion.
- With no prior instructions, players understood what to do after approximately 3 minutes.
- Streets a bit narrow.
- “It’s fun to drive on garbage.”
- “I die so easily. I drive too bad.”
- “The AI is stalking me.”
- “Do you get any points for killing other cars?” (No)
- It’s not very easy to use the hand brake.
- “The game is a little bit addictive.”
- “Game is quite quick.” (5 AI players in game)
- “The layout of buttons on the controller is nice.”
- “1v1 game is smoother than 3v3.” (because of the fps)
- “I am learning how to play.” (relatively steep learning curve)

## 3 Questions

The questions and answers from both sessions are summarized below:

1. Overall, what were your thoughts about the game?
  - “Cool”
  - “The beginning was confusing.”
  - “Hard to defend. Easiest way of defending is to crash your own fruit stand.”
  - “Playable.”
  - “AIs are not that bad, mainly when they attack.”

2. Did the game drag at any point? Was it boring?
  - “No.”
  - “I was getting more excited over time.”
  - “Quite bad physics.”
  - “Hard to control.”
  - “Lots of bugs.”
  - “When I crash to the other player, I have a feeling he doesn’t takes more damage.”
  - “Too repetitive game. No twist, jump, quest You can’t do many strategic moves.”
3. Were you able to learn how to play quickly?
  - It took approximately one game for the majority of players to understand the game mechanics and fully start to enjoy the game.
4. What is the objective of the game? Was your current objective always clear?
  - “The objective was to crash other fruit stands as devastatingly as possible and defend or sabotage your own.”
  - “Yes, it was clear.”
  - “Not at the very beginning.”
  - “Yes since the 2nd game.”
  - In the top corner, defending / attacking roles switch immediately during the round change. This can be confusing if you were not sure if you were an attacker or a defender the previous round.
  - “You can have different colors of the navigation arrow for defenders and attackers.”
5. What was your strategy?
  - “We didn’t really have the strategy as it was a bit difficult to get to the fruit stand and we were busy killing the other team.”
  - “None. It’s hard to do create some strategy as there is not a lot of possibilities for strategy making.”
  - Some players started to sabotage their own fruit stands.
6. Are there any loopholes in the system? Strategies that are unfair?
  - “You can bump into your own fruit stand.”
  - “The fruit stand can be smaller so it’s harder to hit. That would help the defenders.”
7. Did you use any power ups? Is it clear what each of them did?
  - 1 person learned how to use 3 of them after approx. 3 minutes. The rest of players didn’t understand the power ups until the end of the first game.
8. How did the controls feel? Were you able to drive easily, or did they feel unintuitive?

- “I was missing the handbrake for drifting.” (he just didn’t know it existed)
  - “Feels a bit like it doesn’t have wheels.”
  - “Cars on the fruit felt differently.”
9. Is there anything that you did not like about the game? If so, what?
- “Name the maps in the map selection menu”.
  - “Falling on other cars during the reset.”
10. Do you have any ideas for improving the game?
- “Add slopes and more interesting terrain.”
  - “Improve the controls.”
  - “Add slopes and more interesting terrain.”
  - “Add some strategic elements,” like jumps or loading a fruitstand onto your car so other players are chasing you. Crashing into buildings should damage the car slightly.
11. How would you describe this game to someone who has never played it before? What would you tell them?
- “Team arena car game.”
  - “Enjoyable social game experience.”
  - “Mixture of the Capture the flag and Rocket league.”
  - “You are driving the car around, trying to crash some stuff on the map. You are alternating between attacking and defending the stuff.”
  - “The bots are surprisingly difficult to beat.”

## 4 Play Matrix

We also presented the Play Matrix to players and asked where this game would be located compared to other games they had played (Figure 1 on the following page). All participants placed Fruit Smashers on the “Physical Dexterity” side of the matrix, and the game tended toward the “Chance” end of the matrix. This suggests that, to make the game more friendly toward these playtesters, we should try to make the game less random and more predictable, and we should reward players more for good decision-making than for controlling the car well.

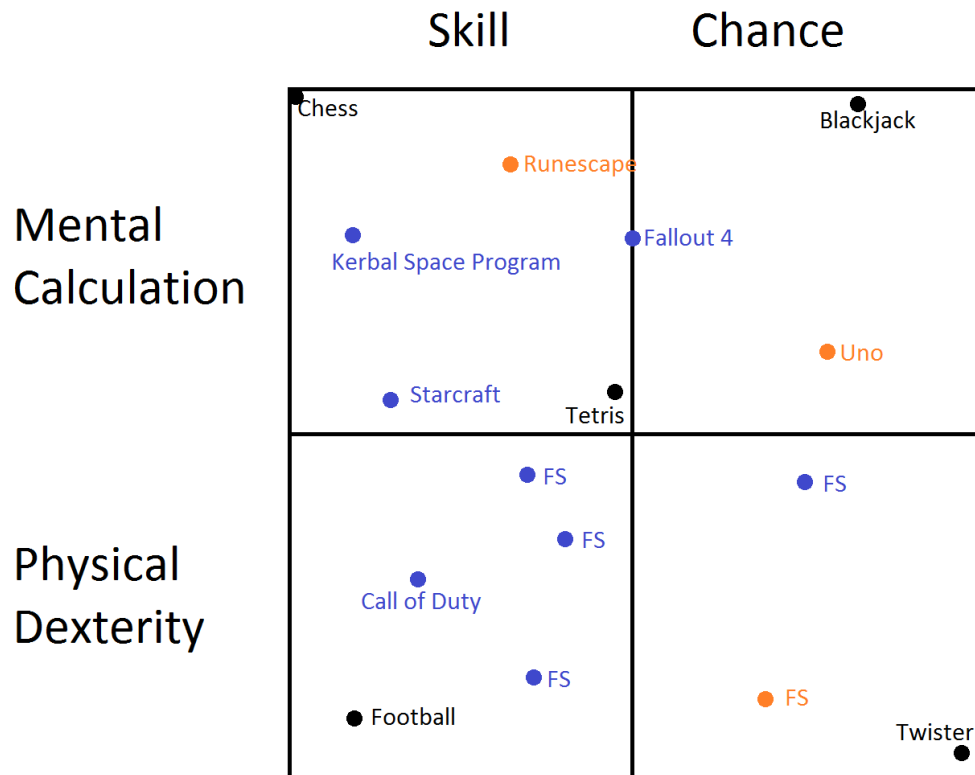


Figure 1: Play Matrix with results compiled from both sessions. Reference games are in black, the first session is blue, and the second session is in orange. Fruit Smashers is denoted 'FS' and tends more toward the “Physical Dexterity” and “Chance” quadrants than other games.

## 5 Changes

Overall, we found several informative trends and useful suggestions from the playtesting session. Based on the comments and our current timeframe, we are making the following changes to the game:

- Confirm everything in the main menus with the 'A' button consistently.
- Display a toast at the beginning of the game with the controller number (indicated by the controller light), to help players figure out which viewport is theirs.
- Mark a section of the main menu as “Keybindings” so that players can lookup the controls.
- Add a health indicator floating above all cars that varies from green to red, so that players know the health/damage of everyone else.

- Reduce friction of walls slightly, so it is harder to get slowed-down by buildings.
- Randomize the reset position slightly, so that players are unlikely to be stuck even after resetting the car several times.
- Indicate the position of players who are outside of the minimap by projecting their position to the edge of the minimap.
- Show a toast message when a defender crashes his own stand to display how many points the enemy team gained.
- Display an initial toast telling players what to do at the beginning of the game.
- Change the navigation arrow from yellow to red/green, depending on attacker/defender role.
- Tune the steering/drift controls more, to make the vehicle feel more controllable.
- Add a fixed point penalty when a defender destroys his own stand.