

# **A Squirrely Story**

## **Game Design Document**

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**Game Studio 2, 2025, Section 3**

**Team 2**

**Sprint 9**

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|---|--------------|
| <b>Intent.....</b>                      | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>Target Audience.....</b>             | <b>2-3</b>   |
| <b>Monetization.....</b>                | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Context and Content.....</b>         | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>Gameplay.....</b>                    | <b>3-4</b>   |
| <b>Platform Creation.....</b>           | <b>4</b>     |
| <b>Tail Whip.....</b>                   | <b>4</b>     |
| <b>Player Motivation.....</b>           | <b>4-5</b>   |
| <b>Game States.....</b>                 | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>Mechanics and Systems.....</b>       | <b>6</b>     |
| <b>Core Game Loop and Features.....</b> | <b>6-7</b>   |
| <b>Other Features.....</b>              | <b>7</b>     |
| <b>Game Engine.....</b>                 | <b>7-8</b>   |
| <b>Aesthetic Direction.....</b>         | <b>8-10</b>  |
| <b>Game Design.....</b>                 | <b>8</b>     |
| <b>Art Direction.....</b>               | <b>9</b>     |
| <b>Sound Direction.....</b>             | <b>9-10</b>  |
| <b>Sources.....</b>                     | <b>11</b>    |
| <b>Concept Art .....</b>                | <b>11-13</b> |

## **Intent:**

The game we intend to make is a fun, slow, and exploratory platformer which targets children in the range between 8-14. We intend to appeal to this demographic through a simplistic, pixelated filter, and low poly art that is easy on the eye and gives off a light-hearted feeling. Set in a forestry setting, the game's protagonist will be a Squirrel named Spire. By choosing the Squirrel, we can create and develop mechanics based on characteristics of the animal. Our game will feature the ability to create platforms for the player to use, which will be created by throwing acorns. In addition, the player will be able to use a tail whip ability to interact with objects to solve puzzles. The intention is to create a fun, puzzling platformer that stimulates the players brains while also providing a laid back, relaxing experience.

## **Target Audience:**

The target audience for our game will be children to early teens. We will achieve this target age through a light-hearted, simplistic art style and a varying difficulty in puzzles for the age demographic. With an ESRB rating of E for Everyone, the intent is to engage with the players with fun and inviting mechanics which they can master as they play throughout the game. A large focus of the game will be exploring throughout the forest and collecting objects scattered around it. As such, players who enjoy exploring a large world at their own pace, finding and collecting things as they go will gain a satisfying feeling from playing these games.

## **Monetization:**

Since our game is being made purely for the passion of the project. The team at Jonathan has decided that the best option would be to release this title for free on the site Itch.io. The perfect part about Itch is that it allows anyone to download our game for free, building up our reputation as a studio. This will lead to a growing fanbase that will want more products from us which we will be able to deliver through the aid of their donations on our current title.

## **Context and Content:**

Our game takes place in a forestry area which is inhabited by various animals. The player will assume the role of Spire, a squirrel who's magical staff has been taken by a Mischievous Owl. During their journey, the player will go about utilizing their power to create platforms, whipping their tail, and solving puzzles put together by their nemesis to prevent the player from reaching them. Through the player's efforts, they will thwart their nemesis plans and recover their belongings.

## **Gameplay:**

Players will explore a large, open world level with the goal to collect trinkets scattered around the map. These trinkets will be stuck behind some sort of challenge; some may only be collected after completing a challenging platforming section, while others will be locked behind a puzzle the player has to solve. These trinkets can be collected in any order, and will often have

multiple routes to collect. Players will be able to take the path they wish to explore the area using the abilities they have.

### **Platform Creation Ability:**

The player will explore the level with the use of their platform creation ability. This will assist them in crossing gaps, and reaching greater heights. Around the world, players will be able to find and collect acorns. These acorns can be thrown by the player after being picked up. After a certain time after being thrown or when hitting another object, the acorn will magically turn into a platform that the player will be able to jump onto after a certain distance or when hitting another object. This ability will allow the player to cross gaps too large to previously jump over and scale heights they once could not. The platforms will remain in place until the player either resets the puzzle, or walks a certain distance away from the platforms.

### **Tail Whip Ability:**

The player will be able to interact with various objects in the world which will be crucial towards solving tasked puzzles. These various objects will include buttons, stones, and collectibles for the player to pick up. The tail whip ability will be used for interactable items which the player can use to solve puzzles.

## **Player Motivation:**

The player's motivation is derived from the goal to complete puzzles, and master platforming with the platform creation system. The player's motivation can also come from side goals which include picking up every collectible in the game, and exploring every bit of the world. The charming art style combined with the lighthearted music will keep the player engaged while not overwhelming or intimidating them. Lastly, their main quest will be a great motivator as they get to recover their staff, and take down the Mischievous Owl.

## **Game States:**

### **Beginning**

- The player begins at the main menu.
- When the game begins the player spawns inside their home.
- The player leaves their home and begins exploring.

### **Exploration State**

- The player will discover puzzles upon exploration.
- Trinkets can be found through exploration.
- The player can create platforms to travel further distances, and reach high vantage points.
- Tail Whipping on specific objects will interact with them, either triggering an event, or moving an object.
- Tree Tunnels will be used to access higher points on the map

## End State:

- The player has completed a series of puzzles, allowing them to save their friend.
- They proceed to the credits, and are brought back to the main menu.

## Mechanics and Systems:

The following are Core Game Loop Features which will be implemented into the game. Each of these features are tagged with a risk assessment which declares how risky it may be to implement a feature.

## Core Game Loop and Features:

- **UI** LOW
  - Main Menu
  - Settings Menu
  - Game Completed Screen
  - Credits Screen
- **Player Movement** LOW
  - Walk
  - Run
  - Jump
- **Platform Creation** LOW
  - Phantom Platforms
  - Acorn Limit

- **Tail Whip** LOW
  - Interacts with Puzzle Objects
  - Spins the Player
- **Puzzle Room Entrance** MEDIUM
  - Entering a closed off puzzle room
  - Resets on entry unless completed
- **Music/Sounds** MEDIUM
  - Main Theme
  - Gameplay Theme
  - Movement Sounds
  - Acorn Sound Effects
  - UI Effects
  - Platform Sounds
  - Cell Sounds
  - Object Sounds
  - Leaf Sounds
  - Tail Whip Sound

## Future Plans:

These features were too far out of scope for the project, but if the project continues would be added.

### Climbing MEDIUM

- Areas for the player to climb trees like a squirrel

### Level Boss HARD

- A boss to end out the level
- Player uses platforms to avoid the boss's obstacles
- Boss swoops in and tries to knock the player down
- Player reaches the end and wins the game.

### Sap MEDIUM

- Slows players down
- Sticks objects to floor/wall/ceiling

### Burrows LOW

- Will allow for quick travel in the trees.
- Can bring the player to previously inaccessible areas.
- Currently partially developed, but put aside due to not having time to better utilize the feature.

## Game Engine:

A Squirrely Story will be developed in Unreal Engine 5.5.1., utilizing Microsoft Visual Studio 2022 for programming scripts in C++, as well as the built in Blueprint system in Unreal. Using Unreal Engine as our engine is great for our team, as our artists and programmers are more comfortable creating products for the platform. In addition, should any issues arise, there are extensive resources that can assist in solving any problems. Further, the engine provides the team with a great learning opportunity to get better acquainted with it as it becomes an industry standard.

## **Aesthetic Direction:**

The direction of *A Squirrely Story* will be simple, yet charming. Combining pixelated graphics and a pleasant sound direction, our goal is to keep the players relaxed while they explore the forest and reclaim their trinkets.

## **Art Direction:**

The art direction of our game is aiming towards a low-poly simplistic art style that visually grabs the player. This artistic style is valuable to the player experience because it keeps everything visually distinct, so there is less chance for confusion. In addition, this art style will be able to target our targeted age range for our project as it isn't too complicated, and the colors are vibrant to positively influence the player's emotions.

The game will be taking place in a forestry area working from the ground up into the trees where there are connecting bridges from one tree to another. Aside from dwellings on the outside, there will also be openings in the trees for the player to enter and investigate.

Art assets are made in Maya, Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to create our low-poly aesthetic. Creating models in Maya will be very beneficial for implementing them in Unreal Engine.

### **Sound Direction:**

The sound of the game is intended to immerse the player into the woods, and shrink them down to feel like a squirrel. Our intention is to create sounds that not only provide feedback, but feel accurate to fit with the sound. The game also takes those tiny noises that many drown out, such as the leaves crinkling. With serene music playing during the player's adventure, they'll feel immersed into a calm, yet alive atmosphere.

### **Music:**

- Main Gameplay Theme
- Menu Theme

### **UI:**

- UI Button Press

## Sound Effects:

- Acorn Collection
- Acorn Throw
- Acorn Hits Wall
- Platform Creation
- Jump Sound Effect
- Landing on Ground
- Walk Sound Effect
- Run Sound Effect
- Tail Whip
- Capstan Rotating
- Cell Door Raise
- Cell Door Close
- Leaf Scatter
- Leaf Crinkle
- Object Hit
- Object Sliding

## Sources:

- *"ESRB Ratings | Entertainment Software Ratings Board."* ESRB Ratings, 12 Feb. 2025, [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)
- *Quantic Foundry*, 8 Nov. 2022, [quanticfoundry.com/](http://quanticfoundry.com/).

## Concept Art:





