



CIS 5640: Introduction to Game Design

Assignment 6: Progression and Pacing

For this assignment, you will be thinking about how a game changes over time!

1. **Incremental games** focus on gradual progress through resource accumulation, upgrades, and automation. They often start with simple actions, such as clicking to generate resources, but gradually introduce new mechanics that increase efficiency and complexity.

For this problem, please play 20 minutes of one of the following games:

- a. **Cookie Clicker** (<https://orteil.dashnet.org/cookieclicker/>): Click to generate cookies, unlock automation, and optimize production.
- b. **A Dark Room** (<https://adarkroom.doublespeakgames.com/>): A text-based incremental game that evolves from resource management to exploration.
- c. **Candy Box 2** (<https://candybox2.github.io/candybox/>): Starts as a simple candy counter but expands into an RPG-like adventure.

After playing, analyze how progression maintains engagement by considering:

- New Mechanics: When did new systems appear? How did these affect gameplay and motivation?
- Pacing & Engagement: Did progression feel too fast, too slow, or well-balanced? What mechanics kept you engaged?
- Emotional Experience: Simply describe your emotional response over time. Also, mark key moments (e.g., unlocking upgrades, encountering challenges) to show how progression shaped your experience.

2. Play at least 30 minutes of any game of your choosing. Try to pick a game that you feel creates interesting variety in the feelings it gives players. As you play, pay attention to how you feel over time.

- a. After playing, please describe your emotional experience, for example:
 - i. Do you feel excitement, stress, satisfaction, frustration, or curiosity at different moments?
 - ii. Are there specific game events that trigger these emotional shifts?
 - iii. How does the game's pacing affect your engagement?
- b. Then, create a diagram mapping your emotional experience over time:
 - i. X-axis: Time played (0 to 30 minutes, or more if you like).
 - ii. Y-axis: A chosen emotional quality (e.g., excitement, stress, confusion, satisfaction).

Mark key moments on the timeline where something notable happened in the game (e.g., unlocking a new ability, losing a battle, reaching a plot twist). You may choose to create multiple diagrams if different emotions fluctuate independently.

3. Do the same things, but for your adaptation of Crazy Eights OR one of the games you've created for the Demon Director lab. Identify a problem, walk through all the above steps, then actually run your playtest with a group of playtesters. Add two additional steps:
 - a. **The Analysis:** What kind of feedback did you get? What did you observe? Was your hypothesis correct?
 - b. **The Iteration:** Based on your analysis, what would you do next to continue to improve the game?

This may seem like a lot of steps for one game, but I promise this is close to the actual professional experience of being a game designer. As you improve at your craft, you may begin to intuitively combine some of these steps in your head, but for now, try to be meticulous in practicing the full process.