



Learning through failure: Why you're not making enough games

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Start with a counterargument

GDC 2010 rant: Please Finish Your Game

http://chrischecker.com/Please_Finish_Your_Game



My position

- Everything he says is true
- BUT
 - Not all games are worth finishing
 - The best way to make a great game is to first make a lot of not-so-great games
- Every time you make a game
 - You learn something
 - You have something you can revisit



The “magic spark”

- Some games deserve completion
- How do you identify which these are?
 - Only by making a lot of games
 - You can't polish every single one to completion
- What if you don't know?
 - Put it to one side
 - Come back later



Revisiting an old idea

- WSAF game: May 2008
 - <http://www.draknek.org/flash/wsaf/>
 - Not fun
- Dropple: June 2009
 - <http://www.draknek.org/games/dropple/>
 - Addictive



Learning from mistakes

- Platformers I have made:
 - Blobber: February 2007
 - Clockspider: November 2007
 - Mindbender: Nov 2007 – June 2008
 - Crybaby: November 2008
 - Robo-Jimmy: April 2009
 - Doppelganger: January 2010
 - Flippy gets Lost: January 2010
- Each time the code gets less hacky



Saying “this is done”

- I am fairly terrible at this
- Have a deadline
 - Stick to it
- Don't finish for the sake of finishing
- Four choices:
 - Release when no longer interesting
 - Release when “good enough”
 - Release when polished and complete
 - Never release



Release everything

- You should have a portfolio of games
 - Even the failures you're ashamed of
- For yourself
 - Reminder of accomplishments
 - Inspire new games from old
- For others
 - So they can see what you've made



Fail early, fail often

- Your game does not need to be good
 - If it's not, move on
- You can even make it intentionally bad
 - Klik of the Month
- When you've made a game, ask:
 - Is it as good as you were expecting it to be?
 - Is it worth spending any more time on?



Prolific indie game developers

- Cactus
 - <http://cactusquid.com/>
- Increpare
 - <http://www.increpare.com/>
- Somehow manage to make experiments that don't feel incomplete
 - Not the same as “entirely fulfills potential”



A game every week

- Experimental Gameplay Project 1.0
 - <http://experimentalgameplay.com/>
 - http://www.gamasutra.com/features/20051026/gabler_01.shtml
- Jayenkai
 - <http://www.agoameaweek.com/>
- NMCCoy
 - <http://nmccoy.net/>

From prototype to success



- 2D Boy
 - Tower of Goo
 - 4 days development
 - World of Goo
 - Massively successful
- Petri Purho
 - Crayon Physics
 - 5 days development
 - Crayon Physics Deluxe
 - Grand prize winner at IGF 2008



Themes / Prompts

- Experimental Gameplay Project
 - <http://experimentalgameplay.com/>
- Wednesday Workshop
 - <http://socoder.net/index.php?forum=25>
- Video Game Name Generator
 - <http://norefuge.net/vgng/vgng.html>



Online competitions

- Ludum Dare
- PyWeek
- Klik of the Month
- TIGSource
- Do you need an excuse?



Conclusion

Go make some games

Fail early, fail often