JORDAN MECHNER'S
20 TIPS ON MAKING GAMES

1. Prototype and test key game elements as early as possible.

2. Build the game in incremental steps. Don't make big design documents.

3. As you go, continue to strengthen what's strong and cut what's weak.

4. Be open to the unexpected. Make the most of serendipity.

5. Make sure the player always has a goal (and knows what it is).

6. Give players clear, continuous feedback as to whether they're getting closer or further from a goal.

7. Sometimes a cheap trick is better than an expensive one.

8. The moment when the game first becomes playable is the moment of truth. Don't be surprised if it isn't as much fun as you expected.

9. Listen to the voice of criticism — it's always right (but you have to figure out in what way).

10. Your original vision is not sacred. It's just a rough draft.

11. However much you cut, you'll wish you had cut it sooner.

12. Don't be afraid to consider BIG changes.

13. Draw inspiration from life and primary sources, not just other games and fiction.

14. Develop personal practices that remind you to step back and see the big picture (engage the right side of your brain).

15. Work on paper, not just on screens.

16. Constraints are your friend. They force you to seek creative and elegant solutions.

17. When you discover what the heart of the game is, realign everything to support it.

18. Put your ego aside.

19. Keep a journal.

20. Nobody knows what will succeed.

Jordan Mechner is an author, graphic novelist, screenwriter and video game designer. His games include Prince of Persia, Karateka, and The Last Express.

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