

Dave's Drawn Adventures

Design document (full version)

by Arseniy Klishin

Contents:

The main idea..... 3
Gameplay 3
Why this game is going to be needed..... 4
Story..... 5
Combat system 6
Enemies..... 7
About levels 8
 Puzzles9
Development schedule..... 10

The main idea:

Dave's Drawn Adventures is a 2d platformer about a little human-like cartoon called Dave, drawn with a pencil in a copybook.

The story of the game is about a young boy (and later a young man and an adult) who draws cartoons and the world they live in, when he gets bored. Dave actually symbolizes the boy himself, while the levels and events there tacitly show his emotional experience. The main enemies represent the people who hurt the boy's feelings, and the friends he saves during the game are the people he loves in real life.

Gameplay:

Levels of the game are the spreads of a copybook with drawn platforms and other objects (described in "Story" and "About levels" sections). Each level has an exit door and the next level begins after a player goes through it. If the player has to complete some specific goals in order to finish the level, the door will remain closed until they are completed. A level is not necessarily situated on a single spread – there is a possibility to use multiple spreads and switch between them using some certain points on the pages, like hatches and doors (they look slightly different from the previous type of doors in order to keep it clear for the player).

Dave has a melee weapon – a pencil with an eraser on its end. He holds it with the eraser frontwards. Besides that, Dave has a ranged weapon - vials with correction fluid. Vials are grenade-like weapons. Weapons are described in details in the "Combat system" section.

Dave takes damage when he touches his enemies and while his health level is reducing, he is slowly getting erased from the copybook. Dave's health level is displayed with the brightness of his coloring – that shows the measure of him being erased. For the player's convenience there is a health bar in the left upper corner of the screen in a form of hand-written numbers (from 0 to 100). Dave has an ability to cure himself by using lead of his pencil to color up his shape. This side of the pencil will be grinding off after every usage. The current sharpness of the pencil is shown in the right upper corner of the screen. It is visually represented as a pencil-drawn strip which is reducing after each treatment. There will be pencil sharpeners situated in difficult areas of the game – a player will be able to restore the pencil sharpness level by using them.

In order to complete a level, the player has to achieve one or several objectives from the following list (the first one is necessary for each level of the game). The list of the objectives will be announced to the player in the beginning of each level.

Level objectives classification:

- 1) Reach the end of the level (that means finding the door which leads to the next level)
- 2) Rescue a friend (erase a rope tied around him/her, a cage padlock, etc.)
- 3) Erase all the enemies on the level
- 4) Defeat the boss

Gameplay sketch:



Besides classic jumping through platforms and destroying the enemies, gameplay also includes solving puzzles (see “About levels” subsection *Puzzles*).

Why this game is going to be needed:

A huge demand of retro-genre games appeared in recent years (2008-2011). Particularly it concerned 2d-platformers with original content. Games of this genre not only comprise fresh quality content but give the player an opportunity to get the same experience he had while playing an 8- or 16-bit console in front of his TV-set years ago.

It is appropriate to enumerate following projects which belong to this genre as the successful ones: Braid (2008), Blueberry Garden (2008), And yet it moves (2009), Lucidity (2009), Shank (2010), Super Meat Boy (2010), Limbo (2010), Outland (2011), Death and the Fly (2011), Fancy Pants Adventures (2011).

Games, where events take place on a piece of paper with “drawn” objects have also obtained popularity recently. The examples are: Blueberry Garden (2008), Crayon Physics (2009), Line Rider (2008-2009), Your Doodles are bugged (2011), Fancy Pants Adventures (2011), a great number of games on mobile platforms like Slice it!, Doodle Jump, Parachute Panic.

Development of the project like this does not cost a lot, while it belongs to the intersection of two popular subgenres, which makes it a potentially successful product.

Story:

The story of the game is generally about the boy growing up and it involves different important periods of his life. The game cartoon character is called Dave, while a person who is drawing Dave according to the story, is called “the boy” or “the artist” further in the document.

There are 5 stages (periods) like this in the game, each of them consists of 5 levels. The ending of each stage symbolizes the ending of a phase in the boy’s life.

Every next level of the stage is more difficult than the previous one. Every next stage, in general, is more difficult than the previous stage. A list of possible enemies for each stage can be found in the section “Enemies”.

The list of stages in the game:

1) Kindergarten

Stage symbolizes: a child is exploring the world.

About stage levels: drawn in a childish way. Not too difficult in terms of playing. There are many different objects of the world around that mean a lot for children, like flowers, trees, cars, toys, animals. The atmosphere of these levels is kind and cheerful. Gameplay of these levels is oriented more on solving puzzles – there are not many enemies there.

Atmosphere¹: 0

Objectives on the last levels: There is an objective of saving another cartoon on the last two levels of the first stage. This symbolizes the boy finding his first friends.

2) Elementary School

Stage symbolizes: the boy is having a very hard time studying mathematics. Teacher doesn’t like the boy and often humiliates him in front of the class.

About stage levels: decorated with mathematic formulas, geometric figures, graphs.

Atmosphere: 2

Objectives on the last levels: defeat the “boss” enemy that symbolizes his math teacher. This victory means one of the first times when the boy overcomes serious difficulties in his life (the boy managed to resolve his math problems and the teacher stopped bothering him).

3) High School

Stage symbolizes: the boy is being pestered by a bully.

About stage levels: levels are decorated with attributes that represents school life – private lockers, school bags, basketballs, school desks, items from school cafeteria – like trays, bowls with grayish-green food, lunchboxes. Sometimes there are giggling cartoon-girls drawn on the background.

Atmosphere: 3

Objectives on the last levels: A “boss” on the last level of the stage represents the bully. The victory over him symbolizes the victory over the person who oppressed the boy in the real life.

¹ - in terms of scale, where 0 is cheerful and light-hearted mood, and 5 is a depression

4) College and the first job

Stage symbolizes: on this stage the artist is already not a boy, but a young adult. He studies in college and works in a fast-food restaurant to pay for his education and these are very hard times for him.

About stage levels: decorated with attributes which belong to higher education, mixed with attributes standing for job in fast-food restaurant. The first are difficult long formulas, quotes of philosophers and scientists, and the second are: ridiculous colorful uniform, deep fryers, bills, etc. This stage is the most depressing of all presented in the game.

Atmosphere: 5

Objectives on the last levels: enemies are attacking Dave in waves (like in zombie-shooting games) on the last level of the stage. There are 6 waves on this level and the quantity of the enemies grows with every wave. Beating this level means the end of this difficult period in the artist's life and symbolizes his graduation.

5) Maturity

Stage symbolizes: a grown-up business life which is not easy for the artist to adapt to, and the search of love and happiness. On the last level of this stage, Dave finds a dirty café with a beautiful young woman Betty working there. The objective of the last level is to rescue her from her evil boss. Betty represents the artist's beloved woman. After the rescue, they finish the last level together by quitting the location – this is a happy end for the game, which symbolizes the wedding of the artist.

About stage levels: Urban, except the last one. These levels are the most confusing in the game, close to labyrinths – it will not be easy to find the café. Levels are decorated with big houses, platforms made of bricks, smokestacks, cars (drawn in grown-up style, not like in the Kindergarten level) and neon signs. The last level is taking place in the café where Betty works.

Atmosphere: 3

Objectives on the last levels: find the café and rescue Betty.

Combat system:

There is a melee and a ranged weapon at the disposal of the player.

Melee weapon is a pencil with an eraser on the opposite end. There are two ways of using it for attack – *erasing* and *pushing*.

Erasing activates if the player holds LMB and makes up- and down- mouse movements repeatedly. In that case, animation of Dave moving his pencil in a way like he is erasing something is shown.

If the eraser touches an object that is “pencil-drawn” at the moment of this attack, then that object is getting wiped off from the screen. That process is accompanied by a typical sound for it. It is only possible to erase objects in the direction Dave's looking at the moment of the attack.

Pushing activates if a player presses RMB and makes an abrupt movement of the mouse in any of these four directions: up, down, left, right. The direction of the attack depends on the direction

of the mouse movement. Every direction for this attack needs a unique animation, except left and right – they are symmetrical.

This attack is pushing an opponent in the direction of the attack and also causes him take small amount of damage (since the attack is made by an eraser part of the pencil).

Ranged weapons are vials with correction fluid.

Vial is a strong weapon that makes a lot of damage. Vials can be found on difficult levels.

The following conditions activate ranged attack: player holds a keyboard button set for this attack (default key: Q), and after that a parabola describing a flight path of a vial appears. Player can change the parabola by moving a mouse. After a satisfying flight path is found, player presses LMB which causes the vial to be thrown at a set trajectory. The vial moves according to the trajectory until meets the first non-background object and damages this object (unless it is a part of location). The player is able to harm himself as well, using the ranged weapon. Player can cancel the vial throw by releasing the button set for ranged attack.

Enemies:

Regular enemies in the game are various objects with legs or wings, depending on whether they are of ground or flying type. These objects are the drawn versions of the items that hurt the artist in real life, directly or associatively. For instance, on the Kindergarten stage, enemies for Dave are healthy food (because it is very tasteless) and shadows (because he is a little afraid of darkness).

Dave can destroy his enemies by erasing them, though usually it is not necessary unless specifically stated in the objectives of the level. Contact with enemies harms Dave, and the amount of damage depends on the enemy. Some of the enemies are able to shoot (they are italicized in the list below).

Objects representing enemies on different stages:

1-st stage: different types of healthy food, cough syrups, soaps and sponges, shadows.

2-nd stage: “F”s, rulers and protractors, x and y (variables), homework copybooks.

3-rd stage: *pen bodies (shooting with chewed paper)*, *cigarettes (attacking with smoke)*, ointments for acnes, chewed gum.

4-th stage: burgers, mops, *ketchup bottles (shooting with ketchup)*, textbooks, *alarm clocks (shooting with sound waves)*.

5-th stage: for all levels of the stage except the last one: hats, briefcases, electricity bills, *business card holder (shooting with cards)*, staplers (opening up quickly and shooting with staples), smoke clouds. Last level is taking place in the café, and the enemies are: cups of coffee, *toasters (shooting with toasts)*, crumpled napkins, cutlery.

Enemies are divided on three basic classes: *ground type*, *flying type* and *bosses*.

Ground type enemies:

Ground type enemies are the objects from the list of possible enemies with legs (unless it is not something that can move without legs, like smoke cloud). This kind of enemies hurt Dave harder than the flying-type enemies, but weaker than bosses.

Ground type enemies' tactics is to run towards Dave if they only have a melee attack, or on the contrary, if they have a shooting ability they try to keep the distance and shoot. Enemies who are able to shoot still harm Dave if he touches them. Ground type enemies start to attack once Dave is in their scope (enemies with shooting ability have a bigger scope). Unless ground-type enemies see Dave, they are just wandering on their platform.

Flying type enemies:

Flying enemies are the objects from the list of enemies. Species of this type have wings. Their attack strength is relatively weak, but they are more difficult to destroy than ground-type enemies. They fly above the platforms where the player cannot reach them with the pencil and go in a power dive when the player is in their scope. The player has to hit them with a ranged weapon or to knock them down with pushing-attack at the moment when they are close, but not close enough to hurt Dave.

Bosses:

Bosses are the enemies that have a unique behavior and the player has to reveal a special strategy for each boss in order to defeat it.

Example: the final boss on the second stage is the bully. He has a “pen-drawn” shield. Shield is normally directed towards Dave, and he can't harm the bully because of that. Eventually, the bully attacks – he runs towards Dave. In case Dave doesn't evade the attack, he takes a lot of damage, but if he jumps over the opponent at the right time, he will be able to hit the bully's vulnerable back.

About levels:

Stages' atmosphere should strongly differ, because at different times the artist is being in different mood. For instance, when he is delighted, he draws friendly landscapes with small amount of enemies for Dave, and the gameplay is more oriented on solving puzzles than on fighting. When the artist is depressed, he draws more aggressive locations. Atmosphere type for different stages can be found in the *Atmosphere* subparagraphs of “Story”. The atmosphere type is also stressed with background music: there is a calm, cheerful soundtrack on peaceful levels, and the more aggressive the environment is, the heavier and more disturbing the music gets.

Since the main subject of the game is growing up, level content changes, depending on problems and feelings the boy experiences on current life phase (stage). Important information about stages content can be found in *About stage levels* subparagraphs in “Story” section.

The level number is displayed in the right lower corner of the screen, where the field for a page number in a copybook is usually printed.

All the permanent (non-erasable) items of the location are “pen-drawn” and they are blue. Everything that is erasable is “pencil-drawn” and is black.

There are lakes of correction fluid situated on some levels. Falling down in one of these lakes means the character’s being completely erased (destroyed). Dave may use lakes with correction fluid to push his enemies there.

To diversify the gameplay, there are puzzles on different levels.

Puzzles:

Most puzzles are based on erasing objects (ropes, obstacles, etc.).

Examples:

1) There is a log hanging above the platforms. It is too high to jump on it for Dave, but at the same time the gap under the bridge is too long to jump across. The only way to pass this part of the level is to erase the rope holding the log on the left, using upper pushing attack, then walk across the log and erase the right rope, or simply jump on the next platform.

2) Reinforcing squads of enemies attack you near the door to the level exit which is blocked with obstacles. Dave has to fight back to keep safe, but he also has to find time to erase the obstacles, or he will never finish this level:



3) There are a lot of enemies running towards you through the bridge that is situated over a correction fluid lake. Instead of fighting them, Dave can erase a rope, that is holding the bridge and they will all fall into the lake.

Development schedule:

Required staff: 2d-level designer, artist/ animator, programmer, composer.

Level designer tasks:

1) Create prototypes of all levels (25) and pass them to the artist and to the programmer for implementation (1.5 months)

Total: 1.5 months.

Artist/animator tasks:

1) Draw all the characters and enemies, create all the required animations for them and pass the result to the programmer (1.5 months)

2) Draw the levels using prototypes received from the designer (1.5 month)

Total: 3 months.

Programmer tasks:

1) Implement all game features and possibilities on the test levels set (2.5 months)

2) Create working models of the actual levels using the prototype received from the designer (1 month)

3) Compile the whole project with images and animations received from the artist/animator (2 weeks)

Total: 4 months.

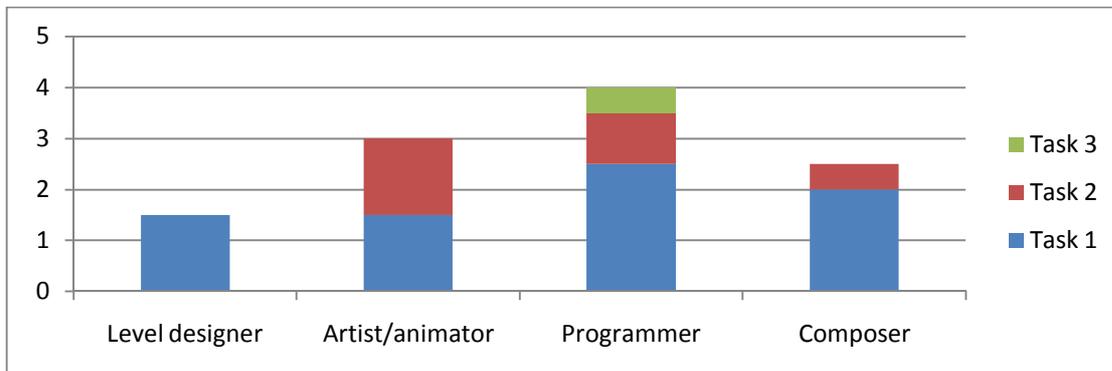
Composer tasks:

1) Write background music for every stage of the game – that makes 5 different themes and create variations for every level. That means 25 tracks in total (2 months)

2) Record/collect from free sources other sound effects required for the game (2 weeks)

Total: 2.5 months.

In this project parallel working is possible without idle periods when staff members are inactive because of waiting for another specialist to finish his job.



Total: 4 months of work on development.