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

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Why try to be good?

- Your first games will suck
    - If you aim for excellence, you will fail
- So embrace that failure!
    - Aim low
- Every time you make a game
    - You learn something
    - You have something you can revisit
    - You gain some perspective

Failing in different ways

- You didn't work on what you wanted
- You only worked on what you wanted
- Spent all the time on technology
- Too long making levels
- Game isn't fun
- Game is too fun

Failing in different ways

- Too much time tweaking values
- Controls are horrible
- Game is too easy
- Game is too hard
- Didn't have enough time
- Had too much time
- Underestimate the complexity of your idea
- Major bugs in your code
- Major bugs in someone else's code

Failing in different ways

- Learning a new language/engine
- Not choosing the right tool
- Aiming too high
- Aiming too low
- Attacking a difficult problem
- Not challenging yourself

Failing in different ways

- Team members let you down
- Not finding a team
- Not adding particle effects
- Spending all your time on particles
- Not adding sound
- Spending all your time on sound
- Real-life commitments

Fail quickly

- The best way to make a great game is to first make a lot of not-so-great games

- Don't work on one failure for too long

- Ideally they'll be "complete" failures
    - But moving on is more important
    - This is yet another skill that will improve

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

- Compromise on features, not time

- 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
- To prioritise development

Small scope is good!

- These Robotic Hearts of Mine
  - First version made in 4 hours
- Not the Sharpest Sword in the Box
  - Almost didn't make it
- Shit Snake
  - A trivial snake clone

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.agameaweek.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

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

Online competitions

- Ludum Dare
- Super Friendship Club Pageants
- Klik of the Month
- TIGSource
- Many more!
- http://compohub.net/

Upcoming competitions

- Now – 23rd: Braingale: ARCADE
- Now – 31st: TIGSource: 2012 Apocalypse
- Now – 31st: EGP: 5 Buttons
- 5th, 7AM: Timezone Lottery Klik Jam #9
- 17th: Klik of the Month #54
- **17th – 19th: Ludum Dare 22**

Themes/Prompts

- Experimental Gameplay Project
  - http://experimentalgameplay.com/
- Video Game Name Generator
  - http://videogamena.me/
- Game Idea Generator
  - http://www.streamingcolour.com/blog/game-ide
- Themes from past competitions

Go make some games

Fail early, fail often