

# Brightseeker (pre-alpha v0.0.0.6)

Playtest and Gameplay Report  
Session BRISEK001



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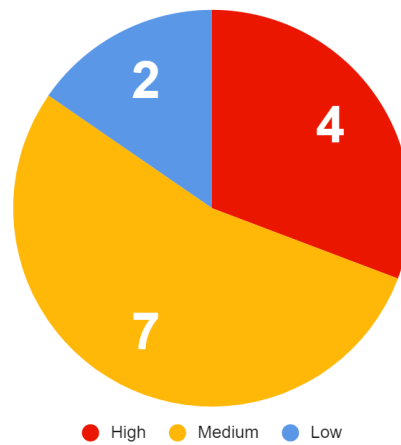
# Executive Summaries

## Usability Findings Executive Summary

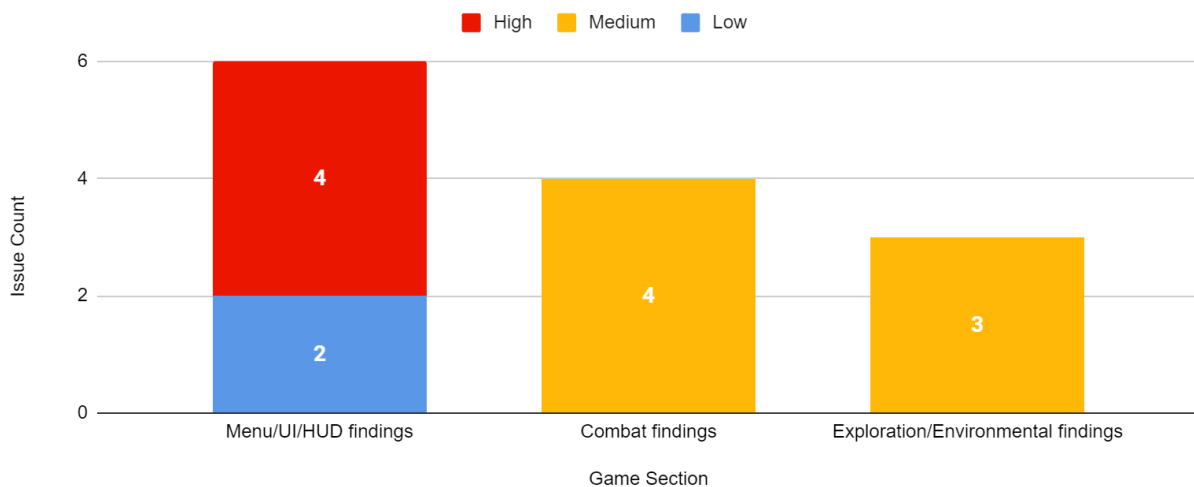
Brightseeker (pre-alpha v0.0.0.6) playtest session (Session BRISEK001) uncovered 4 high-priority issues, 7 medium-priority issues, and 2 low-priority issues.

The highest priority issues are a result of critical incidents that prevented player progress due mostly to system Menu/UI/HUD confusion.

Issue Count by Priority



Issue Count and Priority by Section



These results were generated following an analysis of two think aloud user/player tests, each lasting about 60 minutes.

## Gameplay Findings Executive Summary

Players love the teleport mechanic. The feel of moving fast throughout an environment is a highlight for the players. Additionally, the consistency and predictability of the teleport mechanic meant that players felt comfortable using it both to traverse the environment when not in combat and to dodge enemies when in combat.

However, players strongly felt that the slow projectile attack and the slow shield did not satisfy the otherwise quick-and-nimble promise made by the teleport and the quick melee swing. The projectile attack felt in all ways a weaker combat choice than melee, meaning the players felt that melee was a required form of combat rather than one they chose to use. The shield felt inconsistent both in timing projectile reflections and in aiming projectile reflections, and so the shield was rarely used.

Data (additional data accompanies specific Gameplay Findings in subsequent pages)

- [P02] The dash/teleport seems good to use because it's predictable. The player character always travels a set distance. It also generally gets you out of the way of danger. [44:56]
- [P03] Players incorporated the teleport into combat very naturally. During combat players were rarely not teleporting.
- [P03] The player loves the way the teleport feels. "This seems like a lot of fun. I just want to go fast like Sonic." [12:52]
- [P03] "[The teleport] seems to be the draw right now...I want to incorporate this [in any way] that's possible. Platforming, melee, attack, laser blast, I want to do [the teleport] every time." [14:22]
- [P03] "[the teleportation] is my favorite part of the gameplay so far. I want to incorporate it with everything." [47:23]

## Introduction

Brightseeker (pre-alpha v0.0.0.6) is an action RPG with fast paced combat set in a futuristic/fantasy world.

Combat is a core element of Brightseeker. Therefore, the players' response to all combat mechanics (defensive, ranged attacks, melee attacks, and dodging/teleportation) are critical.

Secondarily, the the playtests will uncover insights regarding the following objectives:

- Do players understand the HUD elements, specifically the HP meter and the energy/spark meter?
- Can players discover the tooltips? Once discovered, do players find them useful?
- Do players enjoy moving the player character around in the game world?

## Methods

Two playtests were conducted using semi-scripted interviews and think-aloud protocols in addition to a playtest with the moderator as a player. Players played the game as the moderator watched and asked periodic questions focused on the research objectives.

The questions asked, as well as supplemental material, can be found in the [Playtest Protocol](#) in the [Appendix](#).

Participant codes and timestamps are included with each piece of data using square brackets at the end of each data string.

- P00 data can be found in this playtest recording: <https://youtu.be/D9KDi0375eM>
- P02 data can be found in this playtest recording: <https://youtu.be/r-7VLMcefKI>.
- P03 data can be found at this playtest recording: <https://youtu.be/xHop7jaO02U>

Players played Brightseeker (pre-alpha v0.0.0.6) from the local computers and shared their screen with the moderator via Discord.

Target population	36-49 year-old gamers who play PC video games on keyboard & mouse more than once per week and are interested in playing action/adventure games
Playtest sessions	3
Players per session	1
Playtest session length	P00 (moderator) = ~60 minutes P02 = ~60 minutes P03 = ~60 minutes
Remote or Local	Playtests were conducted remotely
Build state	Pre-Alpha v0.0.0.6
Moderator	Caleb J. Ross
Analysis methods	Video recording, audio recording, affinity wall, analysis of critical incidents

## Recruiting method

A participant survey was used to gather qualified users for this test. The full survey can be found in the [Appendix](#) under [Participant Survey](#).

## Summary of participants

### Participant 00 (P00) summary

Gender	Male
Age	38
Gaming devices played	Computer with a game controller, Portable console (Switch

more than 1x per week	[portable mode], PSVita, Nintendo 3DS), Console (Xbox, PlayStation, Wii, Switch [docked mode]), Retro consoles (PS1, Xbox or earlier)
Familiarity with isometric, action games with RPG elements.	Very familiar
Relevant experience	Moderator for this playtest

Participant 02 (P02) summary

Gender	Male
Age	36
Gaming devices played more than 1x per week	Computer with keyboard and mouse, Console (Xbox, PlayStation, Wii, Switch [docked mode]), Virtual Reality on computer (Oculus, VIVE, PSVR)
Familiarity with isometric, action games with RPG elements.	“I tend to shy away from RPGs because of the time investment...[Do I play] action games? Definitely. The closer it gets to RPG the less likely I am to put time into it.”
Relevant experience	Has worked in application and productivity software support for 15 years, fixing bugs and “making software better.”

Participant 03 (P03) summary

Gender	Male
Age	36
Gaming devices played more than 1x per week	Console (Xbox, PlayStation, Wii, Switch [docked mode])
Familiarity with isometric, action games with RPG elements.	Not very familiar. The term RPG is generally a “red-flag” due to its association with JRPG and the turn-based mechanics that are prevalent with JRPGs.

# Findings

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## Prioritization Logic

Issues have been prioritized based on the anticipated impact on the player's experience, based on an adapted version of the userfocus decision tree.

**High** - A persistent and/or difficult to overcome issue with a core feature that will severely impact progress. Issues regarding real-world currency or in-game equivalents are always a high priority.

**Medium** - An issue that may be persistent or difficult to overcome but will not prevent progress.

**Low** - An issue with a secondary feature that is not persistent or difficult to overcome but may affect players' opinion of the game.



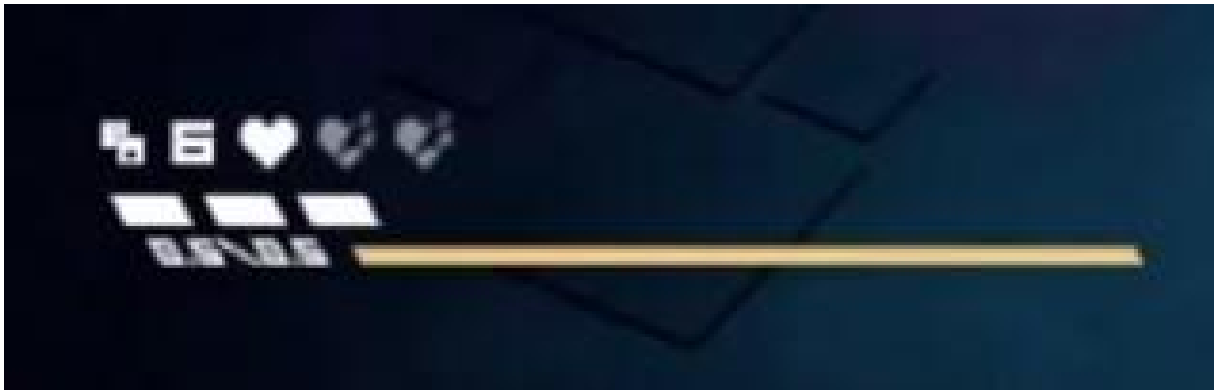
## Usability Findings

### Menu/UI/HUD findings

The power coin counter value in the Coin, Revive, Health, and Spark (CRHS) HUD can be interpreted as a lives count.

**Priority: High**

- **Cause:** The space distance between the coin icon and the coin count is the same as the space between the coin count and the heart icon.
- **Impact:** The player may make combat gameplay decisions based on incorrect information.
- **Suggestion:** Add more space between the coin count number and the first heart on the left. Review a gestalt principle called "proximity" for more information on this design heuristic: ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles\\_of\\_grouping](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_grouping))



*Fig. The negative space between the coin icon, the coin count, and the first heart is the same.*

#### Data

- [P02] When asked about the player's understanding of the lower-left HUD elements, the player is not concretely sure what each icon and meter represents [21:39]. "The six I would hope is lives. The hearts I would think is three hearts in a life."
- [P03] By the end of the playsession, the player did not figure out what the coin icon in the lower-left HUD meant. [46:18]

## Menu/UI/HUD findings

### Text box options and menu navigation is confusing for controller users

**Priority: High**

- **Cause:** Menu items do not consistently highlight when gamepad buttons are pressed.
- **Cause:** No menu item is highlighted at all when a user first opens a menu (the Shop menu seems most impacted by this behavior)
- **Cause:** Menu options are not labeled for gamepad players.
- **Impact:** Players are unable to reliably navigate menus
- **Impact:** Players are unable to reliably select a desired menu item
- **Suggestion:** Designate the action buttons for menu items with gamepad button shapes and names (based on the type of gamepad used by the player, as recognized by the game). Also, ensure that the currently-selected item is visibly selected.



*Fig. Item options lack a highlight to show the player where the cursor is.*

#### Data

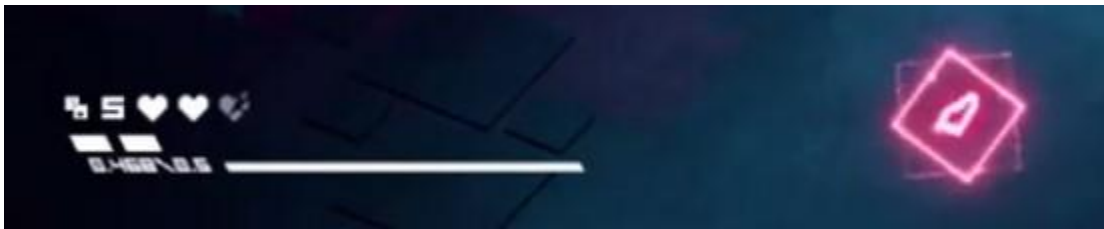
- [P02] The player expresses frustration with the lack of consistency with navigating the shop menu using a controller. Upon entering the shop, no options are highlighted to orient the player in the menu. The close “x” is highlighted around the character which is different from the other menu highlights, which are around the entire icon. There’s no cancel-out option on the controller (the player assumes it should be “B”), meaning a controller player must use the keyboard to exit the shop. “To me, it looks like the developer never plays with a controller.” [27:55]
- [P02] When viewing a lore text box, the player expected controller button prompts considering he was playing with a controller. “I would have expected it to say ‘A’ for Leave...since I am using a controller” [08:47]
- [P02] When reading a dialog box with Accept and Leave options, “there’s no button [icons]. I’m going to assume A is Accept and B is leave.” [26:30]

## Menu/UI/HUD findings

The Coin, Revive, Health, and Spark (CRHS) HUD elements are confusing

**Priority: High**

- **Cause:** The revive heart icons are not filled when the player acquires a pink heart powerup from the battlefield (as the players assumed should happen).
- **Cause:** The rhombus health meter refills when the player acquires a pink heart powerup from the battlefield (as the players did not expect to happen).
- **Cause:** CRHS elements appear on-screen at unpredictable times for unpredictable durations
- **Impact:** Players associated the heart icons with player health
- **Impact:** Players are unable to make stats-based decisions confidently
- **Suggestions:** Either reverse the functionality of the heart vessels and the rhombus vessels to align with the heart-shaped pickup, or change the heart-shaped pickup to something rhombus shaped



*Fig. The health pickup matches the life iconography rather than the health iconography.*

### Data

- [P02] “This game does seem to like to hide the HUD. I swear I’ve made the HUD appear a few times, but it keeps disappearing.” [40:10]
- [P02] Regarding the HUD, “things are not self-explanatory, that much.” “I did not find the HUD that intuitive.” [47:18]
- [P03] When asked to interpret the lower-left HUD elements, the player responded with “I don’t know. I imagine the heart things would be your health, but I don’t know. I honestly don’t know what they do.” [28:33]
- [P03] The player did not figure out what the meter bar below the health rhombuses meant. [46:30]
- [P03] “With all the action going on [the HUD elements are too small to notice]” [29:16]

## Menu/UI/HUD findings

### The flyout HUD descriptions are confusing

**Priority: High**

- **Cause:** Flyout menu (accessed by pressing LT on an Xbox controller) provides the same icon for both the Revives description and the Player Health description.
- **Impact:** The player is unable to use the flyout menu to understand the CRHS HUD elements, meaning the purpose of the flyout menu is compromised.



*Fig. The Player Health and Revives icons are the same.*

#### Data

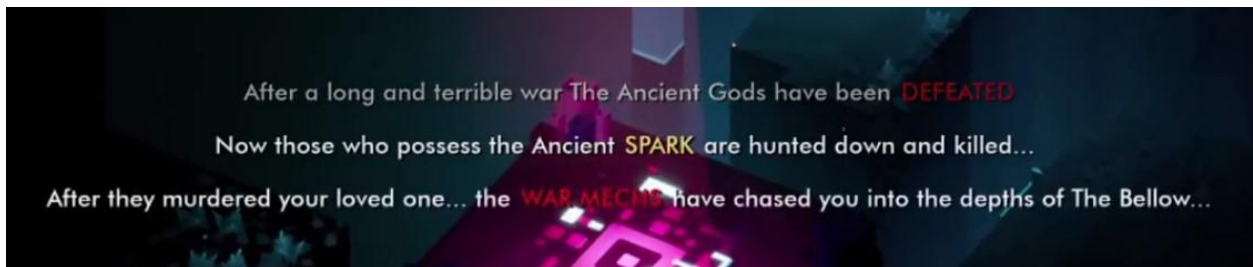
- [P02] The player expresses confusion regarding the perceived importance based on the position order of the elements in the the flyout menu and the icons in the lower-left HUD [53:08]
- [P02] Player suggests that LT in the corner should be shown as a button icon to prevent confusion. "LT could stand for lieutenant or something." [50:04]
- [P03] The player did not figure out what the white and red squares are in the top-left under the "LT" string [46:37]
- [P02] Player does not know what the small white square under LT means. The player acknowledges seeing a red box in this space before, but admits to also not knowing what the red box indicates. [49:53]
- [P02] The player expresses confusion regarding the inconsistency between icons in the flyout menu not matching the icons in the lower-left HUD [51:02]

## Menu/UI/HUD findings

### The opening text is non-skippable

**Priority: Low**

- **Cause:** Pressing any gamepad button does not allow the player to advance through the intro text
- **Cause:** The player receives no designed feedback that the text is unskippable
- **Impact:** Player control is constrained
- **Impact:** The player may attempt to press multiple buttons in order to skip the text, meaning the player's expectations are not being met many times in short succession.
- **Impact:** Players may become frustrated with the game's refusal to allow them to play as they desire (review a UX heuristic called "User control and freedom")
- **Suggestion:** If the design intent of the game is such that players should not be able to skip text, incorporate feedback to let players know that text cannot be skippable. For example, if a player presses a button during a text scroll, display a "X" or □ in the lower-right corner of the screen.



*Fig. This text scroll is unskippable and provides not system status feedback when users attempt to skip by brute forcing various button presses*

#### Data

- [P02] The player disregards lore that they consider unimportant. When asked how importance is determined, the player responded "there's nothing in here that looks like a button press...it's not instructional" [09:08]
- [P02] Non-skippable text is frustrating to the player [49:15]

## Menu/UI/HUD findings

### Purchasing items in shops is unsatisfying and confusing

Priority: Low

- **Cause:** The feedback after purchasing an item is limited to a change in the number value.
- **Impact:** Players may accidentally purchase a single item twice.
- **Suggestion:** the player should feel like the increase in stats is meaningful and celebratory (sound, lights, etc)



*Fig. The player accidentally purchased two of a single item because of the lack of feedback upon purchase.*

#### Data

- [P02] When in the shop, after buying an item. "I don't like that..[there needs to be] a sound or an animation, something to indicate that I bought it." The player inadvertently purchased two of a single item in the shop. [29:17]

## Combat findings

### The shield is an unreliable tool in combat

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** The success rate for using the shield to reflect projectiles feels inconsistent.
- **Cause:** A successfully aimed reflected projectile with the shield feels inconsistent.
- **Cause:** The effect of a reflected projectile colliding with the enemy is not made transparent to the player, nor does practice with the shield expose the player to the impact.
- **Impact:** The shield is a difficult tool to learn.
- **Impact:** The player is unmotivated to learn how to use the shield effectively



*Fig. The reflected projectile bypasses the originating enemy*

#### Data

- [P02] “I don’t think shield does anything to these [melee enemies]” [24:29]
- [P03] The player attempted using the shield and blast only as a last resort. “The only time I considered [using] the shield and blast was when I felt like I was getting completely owned...or the boss where I knew I couldn’t get near him to hack [at] him...the only way I could get close to him was to blast him” [48:20]
- [P02] “I’d honestly rather dodge than shield,” [19:08] spoken during combat, but emphasized later in more general terms indicating the overwhelming preference for transport vs. shield as a means of evading incoming fire.
- [P03] The player assumes a reflected projectile would collide with, and cause damage to, the originator of the projectile [32:28]
- [P03] The player expresses confusion about how to control the shield both in terms of timing the reflection of projectile attacks and how to manipulate the angle of the reflected projectile. The player references the pink arrow at the player character’s feet as an indicator of the reflected projectile direction. [31:52]
- [P03] “The shield just slows me down.” [25:05]
- [P02] “The shield, I feel, is almost completely useless.” [54:44]
- [P02] Player expects that the reflected enemy projectile, if the shield is angled correctly, should collide with the originating enemy and cause damage to that enemy. [19:32]

## Combat findings

### Progress toward defeating a mob during a combat encounter is hard to gauge

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** The CRHS HUD elements are physically distant on-screen from the intense combat.
- **Cause:** The nimbleness of the player character's transport ability implies a level of agility that the players don't feel is reflected in other character movements such as the shield use and the projectile attack.
- **Impact:** The player doesn't feel validated after a successful battle.
- **Impact:** The player feels as though a defeated mob is more luck than skill.
- **Suggestion:** The pink flash that extends horizontally from the health bar upon hit is a good indicator, but it's lost during action. Consider what Hyper Light Drifter does in that there are multiple points of feedback when the player character takes damage: 1) the screen shakes, 2) the health bars flash a very bright and contrasting yellow, 3) The screen edges pulse with a red vignette. <https://youtu.be/Yb3MuQrBRfQ?t=124>

#### Data

- [P02] In response to the moderator asking if the player looked forward to enemy encounters: "Once I did it a few times, I wouldn't say I looked forward to it anymore because, it was just the same-old, same-old." [56:31]
- [P03] "I want to go fast...and I can't do that right now with the melee attack and the blaster attack. That's what it feels like right now." [13:23]
- [P02] The player feels overwhelmed by the number of enemies in a mob, but does acknowledge that this is likely due to their own skills and not due to problematic game design. "This is a lot of guys, and I don't feel like I know what I should be doing correctly. But that's probably me." [20:56]
- [P02] The player feels as though they weren't good at the game, but the player did complete the scenario. When the moderator pressed on this, the player expressed that both 1) not knowing how much health and lives they had left in the middle of the battles and 2) taking more damage than he suspects the agile character should take, made the player feel like they weren't playing well. [01:05:33]
- [P03] The player recognizes the melee enemies as being smaller than the projectile enemies [09:26]



## Combat findings

### The penalty for death is unclear

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** The fade-to-gray upon death (just before using a revive) does not impact the game session other than a temporary slowdown.
- **Cause:** Revive use is automatic
- **Impact:** The player isn't sure what impact a death has on gameplay.
- **Impact:** The player learns that death does not have an immediate impact on progression.

#### Data

- [P02] Player assumes the fade to grey is "low on health" rather than a full death prior to being revived. This confusion is expressed multiple times during the playsession. The player doesn't get the sense that a life has been lost because there's no removal of the player from the action. [14:40] [15:49] [16:18] [16:38] [24:43]
- [P03] "I unknowingly used a revive." The player notices that health has been restored and that the screen states "Revive Used" but the player assumes the revive use was initiated manually by the player and not automatically used upon death. [10:34]

## Combat findings

### Player health status is difficult to monitor during combat

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** The CRHS contains the player's only way to keep aware of player health.
- **Cause:** The CRHS HUD elements are physically distant on-screen from the intense combat.
- **Impact:** Making quick decisions based on the amount of remaining health is difficult..

#### Data

- [P03] During combat, what is the player using to interpret how much health you have and how many revives you have left? "Nothing...I see it in the bottom corner of my screen [when not in combat], but when the action's going on I don't got time to focus on that." [12:30]
- [P03] After the player's first full death (all hearts gone), when asked if the player recognized how close they were to death just prior to dying, the player said "I wasn't" [10:19]
- [P02] After the player restored health at a health station, the moderator asked where health is showing in the HUD, the player responded "I assume the hearts." [11:10] This confusion regarding where health is shown and what the elements of the HUD represent is consistent during the playsession.[18:19] [19:59] [47:40] [49:28]
- [P03] The player never found themselves relying on the lower-left HUD information to make play decisions. "When the action's going on, I don't have time to look at it." The player does glance at it prior to going into the boss battle. [44:42]

## Exploration/Environmental findings

### The gameplay purpose of breakable objects in the environment isn't clear

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** Action game conventions have taught the player that they will be rewarded for exploring the objects in an environment.
- **Cause:** Players interpret that the particle effects that spray from a destroyed box refills the spark meter, but the players aren't able to consistently and confidently confirm this.
- **Impact:** Players will become frustrated when their exploration is not rewarded.
- **Suggestion:** Reward the player for exploring the mechanics of the objects in the environment. But not every box needs to produce a reward; RNG rewards can be enough to motivate players.



*Fig. The player is destroying a breakable item in the environment, but receives no noticeable benefit.*

#### Data

- [P02] After breaking a box, the player says “I feel like I should leave those alone and not even touch them,” yet the player continues to break the boxes. Breaking the boxes is something the players feel compelled to do. [35:55]
- [P02] The player breaks a box and expresses disappointment about finding nothing in the box. The player repeats throughout the playsession this desire to be rewarded for this type of exploration [12:13] [15:06] [32:17]. Later the player does notice that the particles that disperse upon destroying a box seems to recharge the spark meter [22:37] “When I’m full [of spark energy] maybe the boxes shouldn’t drop the sparks like they do.”
- [P03] The player breaks the box objects in the environment “hoping to find something, like health or increases to HP...or something like that” The player references rupees in The Legend of Zelda and Orbs in God of War [19:06] [36:32]

## Exploration/Environmental findings

### The impact of battlefield pickups is not transparent

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** Particle effects can be mistake for loot
- **Cause:** items inside chests are often obscured by the environment. This isn't inherently bad, but in this case it is confusing to the player because the HUD feedback and impact of collecting a pickup is not obvious to the player.
- **Impact:** The player is unsure if they should prioritize collecting loot in relevant gameplay scenarios.
- **Impact:** The player is unaware of any progression based on loot (ex: coins).
- **Suggestion:** Emphasize the impacted HUD element when loot is collected. Currently the game does offer minimal visual feedback, but this feedback should be exaggerated more, perhaps.



*Fig. The player grabs a battlefield collectable, but the feedback in the hud is minimal.*

#### Data

- [P03] The player tried to collect the remnants of the body from a dead enemy “When I saw the remnants of the body I would assume to go collect pieces from it.” [04:59]
- [P02] After destroying a gold box, the player recognizes that they were rewarded for something, but could not recognize what the reward is. [23:08] A few seconds later the player notices that the coin count has increased, but doesn't notice that the increase was related to acquiring the item in the gold box.
- [P03] The player did not recognize the purpose or immediate effect of the collectible (the coin collectable, in this case). The player assumed it was worth collecting, however “If it's glowing, it's got to be good.” [22:57] [26:37] [31:17]

## Exploration/Environmental findings

The containment vessel interactions can be mistaken for the health refill stations

**Priority: Medium**

- **Cause:** The containment vessel panels share shape and size similarities to the health refill stations.
- **Impact:** Players may base play decisions on an expected upcoming health refill station that turns out to not be a health refill station.
- **Suggestion:** Make the health stations better signify health, perhaps by incorporating the same heart-shaped icon that's used for the health pickups on the battlefields. Could a version of this pickup hover and spin above the health stations?



*Fig. Containment vessel panel*



*Fig. Health refill station*

Data

- [P03] The health refill stations blend in. "I'm unknowingly stumbling upon the health refills." [07:33]
- [P02] The player expresses confusion about what the interaction panels in front of the blue containment vessels does. "Everytime I see these now I think [they are] health, because the first one was...they almost need to be more distinct." [30:52]

## Gameplay Findings

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Players found that movement throughout the environment feels suspect given the narrow pathways, sharp internal corners, and steep drop-offs

### Data

- [P03] The player expresses a fear of falling over the edges of platforms (during teleport) [18:49]
- [P02] Regarding movement, "I keep getting stuck on these edges." [10:59]
- [P02] Regarding movement, When the moderator asks how the player found general movement. "It seemed fine other than when I kept getting caught on the ledges when going to a narrower spot...the game did not want me to cut the corner...I'd get stuck, and it would slow down my movement...and it would pull me out of the game." [45:59]
- [P02] The player turns away from the Cave Beast arena before initiating the battle due to a perceived dead-end [34:50]. The player required moderator help to recognize that it was not a dead end.
- [P03] "Another reason I'm clearing [out the boxes in the environment] is that I don't want to get stuck against anything," presumably when in combat encounters. [21:08]

Melee combat feels like a required form of combat rather than one that the player chooses.

#### Data

- [P02] The player would prefer to use ranged combat but feels that melee is essentially required (because of the confinement to the battle arenas and the large number of enemies) [53:32]
- [P02] When asked about preference between melee and ranged attacks: “It feels like I have no choice but to do [melee].” The player credits this feeling to the number of enemies. “When there’s that many [enemies], doing [ranged attacks] is not going to work very well...[Ranged attacks] are now powerful enough or fast enough to kill that many [enemies].” [31:42]
- [P03] Shortly after learning the projectile attack, the player states a desire to melee instead. Does this indicate that the projectile attack isn’t enjoyable enough? [06:10] Shortly after, the player is delighted when the melee attack is introduced [07:07]
- [P02] The player changes tactics from melee to projectile “I forgot I could shoot them. That’s the problem. I’m trying to melee the guys you’re not supposed to melee.” [17:50]
- [P03] “I feel like the blaster is still kinda worthless at this point, or at least I don’t want to use it at all...all I want to do is dash and melee at this time” said after upgrading the projectile speed at the shop. [23:26] The player does acknowledge their general preference for melee combat in other similar games.
- [P02] The player hunts for a pattern in the projectile enemy’s firing rate. “I feel like I never know when this guy’s gonna shoot. Is he shooting in patterns I’m missing?” [17:24]
- [P02] Player senses auto-aim is helping with projectile attacks, but doesn’t recognize until much later in the playsession that the pink square around enemies indicates when and for whom auto-aim is active. [11:41] then recognizes the pink square at [18:58]
- [P03] The player desires a slightly faster blast. “I feel like if I got good at this game I could be pulling off tricks” and a faster blast would lean into this potential for “tricks” [13:08]. The player does acknowledge that a leveling up system (which comes later in the shop) could provide this faster blast.
- [P03] “The melee attack was a good partner, or compliment, to the dash” [41:34]
- [P03] “The blaster and dash [together] didn’t feel good” [41:19]

## Limitations

This Brightseeker (pre-alpha v0.0.0.6) user playtest report is limited in one, inconsequential way. The sample size is less than ideal (we would prefer 5-7 participants). However, given the consistency of issues across the two participants + one moderator as well as the pervasive nature of the issues, the limited two-person participant size + one moderator is suitable enough to instill confidence in the findings.

## Conclusion

Overall, how successfully do players of Brightseeker (pre-alpha v0.0.0.6) understand the game HUD and menu systems related to the game's focus on combat? Are players able to utilize the HUD and menu systems to make contextually important combat decisions during combat encounters.

Both players expressed considerable confusion regarding many of the HUD elements. The causes of this confusion can be grouped into three categories:

1. Some HUD elements don't adhere to principles of proximity to indicate their relationship to each other
2. Battlefield pickups iconography does not consistently reflect the iconography used for similar elements in the HUD
3. Menu systems don't consistently respond to controller input nor are controller input icons represented when the players use a controller

Regarding combat, players loved the teleport mechanic because it allowed the players to move swiftly through the gameworld. However, players strongly felt that the slow projectile attack and the slow shield did not satisfy the otherwise quick-and-nimble promise made by the teleport and the quick melee swing. The projectile attack felt in all ways a weaker combat choice than melee, meaning the players felt that melee was a *required* form of combat rather than one they *chose* to use. The shield felt inconsistent both in timing projectile reflections and in aiming projectile reflections, and so the shield was rarely used.



# Appendices

## Additional Playtest data

### General

- [P02] P02's professional experience in application and productivity software support provided a lot of valuable insight into the menu system design. Though P02 commented on the IU design throughout their playtest, a lot of detail begins at 01:00:52.
- [P03] When jumping into the boss arena, the screen slowed and faded to white as though he died [36:14]. Possible bug?

### Input

- [P02] The player expresses difficulties with the button inputs regarding which buttons perform which actions. "Maybe the shoulder button is the biggest thing throwing me off...The shield as 'Y' would be more intuitive because then it's all the face buttons." [18:36] Are there conventions or gestalt principles at play that should dictate a change in which buttons perform which actions. For example, all arms mechanics (melee, projectile, shield) reserved for face buttons with movement (teleport) reserved for shoulder buttons?
- [P02] "There's almost too many buttons too quickly for me to get used to them...I need more battles than just one for each [button/new mechanic]" [14:45]. Later the moderator asked the player about this desire: "One guy, then three guys, then a whole bunch of guys...the number of guys in the mobs, I find it hard to pay attention to what button you're even pressing." [59:30]

### Teleport

- [P03] When asked about expectations of the teleport's use other than travel, the player expects it to have combat use at some point in the game. "I feel like a 'perfect dash' [mechanic]...would give me the advantage" [13:51]. Or a 'perfect dodge' [51:24]. Shortly later the player explores the controller to realize that pressing two buttons (teleport and melee) allow him to use the teleport during combat in the way he was desiring [15:16]

### Leveling Up

- [P03] The player expects consistent leveling up to be present throughout the game [53:45]
- [P03] Though the player expressed many times that the projectile attack is not one they prefer to use, they did acknowledge that perhaps the projectile attack would be OP by the end (after it's been leveled up), based on tropes in other video games. [35:52] This understanding of eventual power, though, wasn't enough to encourage the player to use the projectile attack. "Even if it gets OP, I'm going to forget about it...it's no fun" [43:40]
- [P03] The player assumes a melee charge attack might be forthcoming as a power-up. "I want to do that as well." [15:52]

- [P03] When asked if the player expects that the game will cater to the desire to be fast and be more nimble and be more aggressive with melee, the player says “I think so...maybe because it’s early in the game [I’m not seeing it yet, because] you’ve got to earn your reward.” [24:33]
- [P03] “I’m not seeing that reward [for using the shield to reflect]...maybe you have to level up the shield...I’m not enjoying the shield yet.” [27:32]

## Playtest Protocol

### Research Objectives

Per the developer, combat is a core element of Brightseeker. Therefore, the players’ response to all combat mechanics (defensive, ranged attacks, melee attacks, and dodging/teleportation) are critical.

Secondarily, the the playtests will uncover insights regarding the following objectives:

- Do players understand the HUD elements, specifically the HP meter and the energy/spark meter?
- Can players discover the tooltips? Once discovered, do players find them useful?
- Do players enjoy moving the player character around in the game world?

### Introduction [script]

Hi, my name is Caleb Ross, and I’m here to understand how players will play an in-development video game. The specific game in question is called Brightseeker. This interview and play session will last between 45-60 minutes, with probably 35-45 minutes of gameplay, during which time I may ask you questions, but I’m going to try to remain silent and simply observe as you play the game. Throughout this session, I’d like you to speak out loud as you play. Verbalize your thoughts using as much detail and with as much frequency as you are comfortable.

After the allocated gameplay time, I’ll have you exit the game and we’ll use the rest of the time for a more traditional interview format, during which I’ll ask you questions about what you just played. And please know that I am not part of the development team. I did not make this game. So please don’t worry about hurting my feelings. I want you to be comfortable with being as honest as you can. After all, I’m here to learn from you.

Similar to that note about not hurting my feelings, please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers today, and we’re not testing how good you are at this game or games in general.

A couple of final things before we start. To the extent possible, I will take your comments to be confidential. I will aggregate all the comments from several interviews I’m conducting so that your comments are not easily traced to you. If I quote you in my final report, I will do so without identifying your name or any personally identifiable information. If there’s anything you really don’t want on the record, even if it’s anonymized, please let me know that, too. Also, this

interview is entirely voluntary on your part – if for any reason you want to stop, please let me know. We can end the interview at that point with no repercussions for you of any kind. I can also throw out anything you’ve told me until that point.

Oh, and by the way, do you mind if I record our audio conversation as well as video of your gameplay?

Do you have any questions for me? All right, then, let’s proceed.

### Pre Interview / Warm up

Do you often play action games with RPG elements, specifically top-down or isometric games? Examples: Bastion, Hyperlight Drifter, Path of Exile, Grim Dawn.

- IF YES: What are some of your favorite games of this genre?
  - Tell me about the most recent action games with RPG elements that you played?
  - Thinking back to when you first started that game, did you find the game difficult to learn in any way?
- IF NO: what has kept you from playing action games with RPG elements games?

### Brightseeker Tasks

#### Acquire the sword

All of the following should be experienced by the player prior to acquiring the sword.

I might ask (post-play):	I will observe:	This answers:
Give me your thoughts on the teleportation, or dash, mechanic. Do you have any thoughts on this system in terms of how it feels to use?  Tell me about character movement other than teleportation.	Does the player have difficulty navigating the gameworld?	Does the movement feel good - walking and teleportation - or is frustrating in some way (eg. cooldown between teleports is too great)?

#### Reach the shopkeeper

All of the following should be experienced by the player prior to reaching the shopkeeper.

I might ask (post-play):	I will observe:	This answers:
When did you find yourself using the HUD?	Does the player verbalize (think aloud) an understanding of the HUD systems?	Is the HUD understandable to the player - HP bar, energy/spark bar - do they know what those things do/mean?

<p>Think back to a time when the HUD didn't perform how you anticipated it would. Walk me through that.</p>	<p>Does the player notice when HP and spark decrease/increase and does the player recognize why?</p> <p>If the player dies, do they know how many lives they have left?</p> <p>Do players question the purpose of any of the HUD elements? If so, are they able to figure them out (either through tutorialization or exploration)?</p>	
<p>Why did you choose to access the HUD in the way you did (ie, did the player manually open the TAB/L1 mode?) If so, why did you choose to do so and keep it that way?</p>	<p>Does the player ever hover over the UI elements to reveal the tooltips?</p> <p>Does the player switch between HUD modes using the TAB/L1 key?</p>	<p>Can players discover the tooltips? Once discovered, do players find them useful?</p>
<p>Did you prefer melee combat or ranged combat in general situations? Why?</p> <p>What played into your decision to use melee combat or ranged combat during an enemy encounter?</p>	<p>Do players combine melee and ranged attacks or do they stick to just one of them (eg. just use melee to defeat enemies)?</p>	<p>Do players understand the benefits and compromises of one combat method over the other?</p>
<p>What played into your decision to use the shield?</p> <p>Did you enjoy using the shield? Why?</p>	<p>Do players use the shield to deflect projectiles or just block them?</p>	<p>Does the player understand the shield ability after it is introduced?</p> <p>Do players feel comfortable using the shield?</p>
<p>Why did you explore the gamepad/keyboard in lieu of a tutorial?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was it a problem with the tutorial pacing?</li> </ul>	<p>Do players figure out some mechanics (eg. the shield) on their own before they are introduced by the tutorial?</p>	<p>Are the combat buttons intuitive enough for the player to self-discover?</p> <p>Do players feel comfortable exploring the gamepad/keyboard?</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Was it regarding a concern with not having been taught enough about the mechanics by the time those mechanics are introduced?</li></ul>		
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**Debrief Questions:**

- Does the player prefer playing with keyboard and mouse or with a gamepad? (And Why?)
- What did you think overall about what you played of Brightseeker?
- Anything you particularly liked about what you played?
- Anything you particularly disliked about what you played?
- Did you look forward to enemy mob encounters? Why?
- What was confusing about what you played?
- Do you have any questions or things you've wanted to say?

**Conclusion**

Thank you – those are all the questions I have for you. If anything else occurs to you after I leave, please don't hesitate to let me know by email. I may be in touch with you again to ask a few follow-up questions. If you'd like, I can send a version of the report that we'll write based on this interview. Do you have any questions? Thanks again!

## Participant Survey

### Sign up to help make games better!

Thank you for your interest in signing up to playtest!

We regularly invite people of all ages, abilities and video game experience to play games

Please fill out the following form if you would like us to reach out to you for upcoming playtest opportunities.

\* Required

First Name \*

Your answer

Last Name \*

Your answer

I'm signing up on behalf of... \*

...myself (and I'm over 18)

...my child (because they're under 18)

Your contact email address \*

Your answer

Your contact telephone number (not required if you can be contacted reliably via the email address listed above)

We prefer a cellphone number because we might contact you via text message.

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \*

This information is used to assign a demographic age group when research studies require such grouping.

Date

mm/dd/yyyy

Gender \*

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Select the gaming devices you actively play more than 1 hour per week. Kindly note that there are no wrong answers, as we are looking for participants with little or much experience with gaming. \*

Computer with keyboard and mouse

Computer with a game controller

Portable console (Switch [portable mode], PSVita, Nintendo 3DS)

Console (Xbox, PlayStation, Wii, Switch [docked mode])

Touchscreen (iPad, iPhone, Android)

Virtual Reality on computer (Oculus, VIVE, PSVR)

Virtual Reality with a mobile (GearVR, Daydream)

Retro consoles (PS1, Xbox or earlier)

... I play less than 1 hour a week

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### What genres are you interested in playtesting?

Please be honest, there are no wrong answers as we are looking for a wide range of participants!

... on console or PC? \*

Please be honest, there are no wrong answers as we are looking for a wide range of participants!

- Action-Adventure
- Card Games
- Casual/Party
- Fighting
- Hidden Object
- Horror
- Multiplayer-only/MOBA
- Platforming/Running
- Puzzle
- Racing/Karting
- Role-Playing (RPG)
- Shooter (First/third-person)
- Singing/Dancing
- Sports
- Strategy/Management
- Story-driven
- I don't want to playtest for console or PC



... on mobile or tablet? \*

Please be honest, there are no wrong answers as we are looking for a wide range of participants!

- Action-Adventure
- Card Games
- Casual/Party
- Fighting
- Hidden Object
- Horror
- Multiplayer-only/MOBA
- Platforming/Running
- Puzzle
- Racing/Karting
- Role-Playing (RPG)
- Shooter (First/third-person)
- Singing/Dancing
- Sports
- Strategy/Management
- Story-driven
- I don't want to playtest for mobile

In what language do you usually play videogames? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite game of all time?

We know it can be hard to choose, but you have to pick one!

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Because of any physical, cognitive or emotional condition, do you/your child

often experience any difficulties in playing video games?

Why do we ask this? Game developers are often interested in making their games more accessible to persons with impairments, and we therefore seek individuals with whom to collaborate on improving these games. You are not required to disclose an impairment, however we request that you make us aware of any physical access requirements you may have, if you're invited to playtest.

- Yes
- Not at this time (or I prefer not to say)

Are you, or any member of your immediate family, involved in the games industry or games media?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever playtested for us?

- Yes
- No

Is there anything else we should know about you?

Your answer

While playtests would ideally occur in-person, we must often resort to playtesting from home. Do you consent to participating in an at-home playtest? \*

At-home playtesting requires 1) that you stream your gameplay to the playtest moderator using Discord via PC, 2) that you have a microphone and headphones which can be used to communicate with the playtest moderator, and 3) you understand that your screen will be recorded during the gameplay session.

- Yes
- No

I confirm I would like to receive emails about attending game research opportunities (including playtests) with Caleb J. Ross. \*

Please contact Caleb J. Ross at [caleb@calebjross.com](mailto:caleb@calebjross.com) if you have any questions or would like to withdraw your consent at a later point.

- Accept and sign me up!

Submit

Page 1 of 1

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of [calebjross.com](https://calebjross.com). [Report Abuse](#)

Google Forms

## Participant Consent Form (unsigned)

### You've been selected to help make video games better!

You are receiving this email because you've previously indicated your interest in participating in a playtest. You have been selected to be a participant in a playtest on the following date and time.

[DATE OF PLAYTEST] at [TIME OF PLAYTEST INCL. TIMEZONE].

This consent form must be completed by [DATE OF RETURN] in order to participate in the playtest scheduled for the date and time listed above.

\* Required

First Name \*

Your answer



Last Name \*

Your answer

I'm signing up on behalf of... \*

- ...myself (and I'm over 18)
- ...my child (because they're under 18)

Your contact email address \*

Your answer

While playtests would ideally occur in-person, we must often resort to playtesting from home. Do you consent to participating in an at-home playtest? \*

At-home playtesting requires 1) that you stream your gameplay to the playtest moderator using Discord via PC, 2) that you have a microphone and headphones which can be used to communicate with the playtest moderator, and 3) you understand that your screen will be recorded during the gameplay session.

- Yes
- No

### Consent to use your participation in research studies (including playtests).

We're glad you are excited about helping make video games better! This section outlines how we may use your information and for how long that information is stored.

### What information is being collected

During a game research study we will record video and audio from the study, including the answers you give to questions and what happens on the computer screen. We will also be taking notes to record your comments and actions. If you have any questions about the information being collected, please contact the name listed at the end of this form.

### How will information be shared and stored

Caleb J. Ross, game developers, or other parties (for the purposes of case studies and professional portfolios) may be watching the recording live, or at a later point. These recordings may be uploaded to video storage sites such as YouTube, but will never be listed as Public, and will only be listed as Unlisted. Any data will be anonymized if included in any research reports we publish, and will not include your name or image. Video and audio recordings will be deleted if you decide to withdraw your consent.

By submitting this form I consent to the following (please check all boxes) \*

- I consent for people to observe my on-screen actions during the research.
- I consent for the session to be recorded.
- I consent for the other parties, including but not limited to game developers and Caleb J. Ross, to view the recordings in the future (recordings will be scrubbed of any personally identifiable information.)

I confirm that I agree to the all of the terms listed on this page. \*

Please contact Caleb J. Ross at [caleb@calebjross.com](mailto:caleb@calebjross.com) if you have any questions or would like to withdraw your consent at a later point.

Accept

Submit

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