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I. Overview

Block the Block is a 2D cartoony, action-based puzzle game where the player herds colored blocks to colored exits by blocking their path. The blocks move through a maze of walls and follow the direction of the arrows on the wall they collide with. They also run into each other, reversing their current direction.

The overall mechanics of the game are intended to be very simple in nature. However, with different colored blocks (with unique attributes) and arrow-changing walls, a variety of maze levels can be produced to challenge the player (see “Game Elements”). Graphically, the game is also simple, formed of cartoony blocks. The music is upbeat and catchy, often causing the player to whistle along. The view will be top-down to best reveal the entire maze for the player to plot different strategies.

There is a campy, but epic, storyline (thin *Advance Wars: Days of Ruin*) that offers the player a small respite from playing the main levels. The story gives purpose to the player’s actions and is mildly entertaining with a laugh or two. In general, the story is about how the Block entities are oppressed by a tyrant figure into being mindless drones. They are to be saved by an unlikely hero, much like Shrek from the Shrek movies, and his intelligent but misunderstood friend. See “Story” for an in-depth review.

The target audience is intended for kids between ten and sixteen years old, but later mazes can offer mind-tingling trials for older people. *BtB* does offer a surprising amount of content and depth, but will most likely be played as a simple, quick time waster. Inspirations driven from more classic games like Lolo’s Adventures, Lemmings, Pac-Man and Bomberman.

II. Business

▪ Overview

The game is not intended for prosperity. Instead, the game is freeware. Also, both the code and design are offered to anyone who wants to review it. It is general learning material for how to design and develop a game. However, this does not limit any form of later sequel from collecting capital, should success of this game provide that opportunity (see “The Future of Block the Block”).

▪ Audience

Inspirations / Influences

The following is a list of current games / media that either inspired or influenced elements found in *BtB*.

- Mario series
- Kirby series
- Lemmings
- Lolo’s adventure
- Bomberman
- Advance Wars
- N (Flash game for the computer)
- Ballz from a TINS programming competition with the allegro.cc community.
- Shrek from DreamWorks Animation’s Shrek movies.
- Chip’s Challenge
- Bejeweled
- Puzzle Quest

Flock

Flock is a game where you use a spaceship to guide sheep to a given location. It has a comical overtone and is relatively cartoonish. The player has to solve how to get the sheep to their exits.

This game was recently announced in the 360 magazine as coming for the XBLA in December. This documentation was created beforehand. The similarity in core concept between *Flock* and *BtB* should be noted. An audience of *Flock* may transition to *BtB* well.

Target Audience

From the above sections, the target audience is relatively well defined. Younger people will probably get more enjoyment out of this game as well as fans of the

“Inspired / Influence” section. Lastly, people who enjoy the genre, action-puzzle, might want to give this game a try.

▪ **Advertisement**

Since the game earns no revenue, there aren't any funds for advertising. However, presenting the game publicly via word-of-mouth, forums and a website can manage to get a decent amount of people playing.

Forums

There are many forums for game development. This whole package is intended to be helpful to aspiring game developer / designer. It's simply a matter of finding the forums and offering the game for people to play.

Website

Having a devoted website to the game can't hurt. It looks more professional and “thought out.” Also, the game may find itself to people via random searches.

▪ **Legal Issues**

Music

All the music in this game is sampled from MIDI sequences provided by vgmusic.com. These pieces are all under Kirby games to keep consistency. The reason for this is due to the limitations in the music development department.

III. Game Mechanics

▪ Overview / Core Concept

The goal of the game is to get colored Blocks (see “Characters”) to enter matching colored exits (see “Exiting / Gateways”). Each level (see “Levels”) provides a different arrangement of objects and obstacles that the player will have to handle. The player will have to continually analyze the path of the present Blocks and figure out the optimal position to place their character to block the Block’s path, reversing their direction and sending them on a different path.

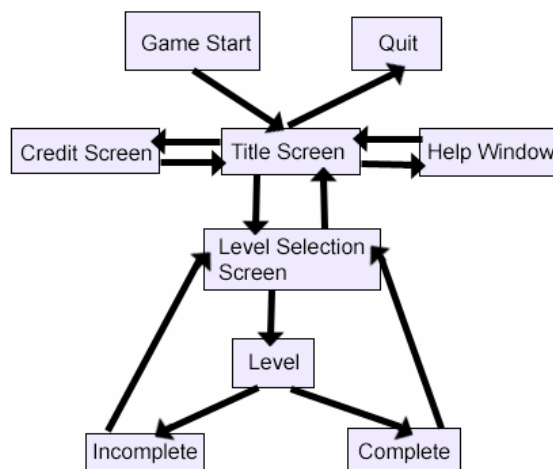
Depending on how they played the level, when completed, they will be awarded a certain amount of Block-Stars (see “Collecting Block-Stars”). These Block-Stars are needed to advance to later levels. The player may have to replay some levels to get enough Block-Stars to advance. However, the game is setup to allow several levels to be skipped, hopefully avoiding having to replay a given level (see “Choosing a Level” under “Game Progression”).

Certain optional levels tell a story that explains the purpose of doing the main objective. In these events, two characters share a lighthearted dialogue. Also, these scenes act as tutorials to introduce the player to new game elements.

The rest of the game is merely a tool to help navigate to the levels and inform the player of his/her stats. Other elements, like Turbo Mode (see “Modes”) give the game greater depth and pizzazz, but the core objective remains the same.

▪ Game State Flow

The following chart visually represents the flow of the game.



▪ **Starting the Game**

The typical way of starting up a game in Windows should be used: directly running the executable or starting it through a shortcut via folder or Start menu. There should be a vibrant, memorable Solo Games loading bar while all of the internal variables are initialized and/or loaded.

▪ **Saving / Loading**

To keep things simple and less complex, saving and loading should occur without the player ever knowing, so they don't have to worry about it. They can turn off the game when they feel like it and start playing from where they left off. To accomplish this, there can only be one set of saved data at a time (so no choosing a file to continue from, it's always a given file).

Saving

Every time the player enters the Level Selection Screen (see "Level Selection Menu"), the game should save. It should save the current contents to either a file made for Normal Mode or a file made for Turbo Mode (see "Modes"). The worst case scenario is if the player exits the program during the Level Completion Screen (see "Completing / Quitting" under "Levels"). In this case, they beat the level, but didn't go back to the Level Selection Screen to have it save.

Loading

Once the player selects Normal Mode or Turbo Mode from the title screen (see "Title Menu"), the corresponding single file of data should be loaded and the player will continue from the Level Selection Screen.

▪ **Controls**

Keyboard

The most common interface used with this game will be entirely through the keyboard. As usual, the controls need to be intuitive, simple and responsive. There are some codes that can be entered (see "Codes"), but they aren't considered part of the control schematic.

Menu Screens

- Up Arrow – Move up one menu option
- Down Arrow – Move down one menu option
- Enter – Choose currently selected menu option

Levels

- Arrow Keys – Move Blacky in the direction of the arrow if able to do so (e.g. no collision)
- ‘R’ Key – Restart the level
- ‘Q’ Key – Quit the level
- Spacebar – Speed up revealing rewards on completion screen

Story Events

- Spacebar – Speed up the text being written
- Enter – Move to the next dialogue. If no more dialogue, finishes the event.

Miscellaneous Screens

- Enter – Quickly advance to the next screen

Common

- Escape – Go back one layer if able to do so. If not, advance forward one layer. Example, going from Level Selection Screen to title screen or going from a level to Level Incomplete Screen.
- F1 – Open Help Window
- F4 – Toggle Window Modes
- F5 – Save Current State
- F6 – Load Saved State
- Alt-F4 – Immediately terminate program

Joystick / Controller add-on

If player has a controller hooked up to their computer, they are welcome to use it instead. This can make it feel more like a console. However, some of the options are missing from the keyboard controls. (Continue to next page...)



Menu Screens

- Up D-Pad / Analog – Move up one menu option
- Down D-Pad / Analog – Move down one menu option
- Button 2 – Choose currently selected menu option

Levels

- D-Pad / Analog – Move Blacky in the direction of the arrow if able to do so (e.g. no collision)
- Button 4 – Restart the level
- Button 3 – Quit the level

Story Events

- Button 4 – Speed up the text being written.
- Button 2 – Move to the next dialogue. If no more dialogue, finishes the event.

Miscellaneous Screens

- Button 2 – Quickly advance to the next screen

Common

- Button 3 – Go back one layer if able to do so. If not, advance forward one layer. Example, going from Level Selection Screen to title screen or going from a level to Level Incomplete Screen.

Mouse

The computer's mouse doesn't do anything in the game and should be invisible.

▪ Camera / View

Overview

In *BtB*, the perspective is eagle eye (as in, “above looking down”) over a 2D grid. Every object (see “Game Elements”) will always be visible on-screen. In other words, nothing will ever be off screen. This means that there is no requirement for the camera to move and/or scroll to see something not visible. This way, the player can easily map a strategy to “solve” the stage and doesn't have to worry about something out of view.

Intentionally Screwy

Like the many anachronisms found throughout the popular anime show “Samurai Champloo,” there are areas of the game where the perspective doesn't make sense, intentionally. The perspective is top-down, but special characters (see “Characters”) are in the side perspective commonly in platformers. The only point of this is to emphasize their importance as side characters.

With Emotes (see “Modes”) turned on, all Blocks have this side perspective except for Blomby.

▪ The Grid / Screen

Every level is constructed on a grid of tiles with a size of 32 x 32 pixels. The screen size is 640 X 480 pixels. The bottom row of the grid is reserved for the level GUI (see “Levels” below). Thus, the entire size of the level can be 20 x 14 tiles. However, a wall must border the outer edge, so technically the largest size is 18 x 12 tiles.

Every Block, other than Blacky, will always be aligned either horizontally or vertically with a row or column of tiles in the grid. They never move diagonally.

■ **Movement**

Player's Movement

Using the controls (see “Controls”), the player moves Blacky around a level. He should be twice as fast as the normal Block and the same speed as Blockster (see “Characters”) in all modes (see “Modes”). The player has free movement, so he’s not constrained to be aligned with any portion of the grid (see above).

If the player collides with a wall (see “Walls”) or a Block (see “Characters”), the player will not be able to move in that direction. However, the player can move diagonally and “slide” along a wall, allowing him/her to fit into narrow passages. Furthermore, if the player is barely blocked by a wall, like a corner, the game will attempt to figure out where the player is intending to go and move in a way that makes sense and gets the player around the corner.

AI's Movement

See “Artificial Intelligence.”

■ **Menus**

Title Menu

Opening Animation

After the game has loaded, a quick animation sequence introduces the Title Screen. It should be short and to the point. This helps the player transition from whatever they were doing beforehand into playing the game, hopefully adding a bit of anxiousness to get started.

The animation should focus around the main character Blacky. After the animation, Blacky should seamlessly sink back into the background shifting the focus to the title menu. Light-hearted, bouncy/catchy music should continue to lift the player’s spirits.

Activity

Once the player has been acclimated with the overall title screen, subtle activity should continue to pique the player’s interest. It’s important not to overdo it as that would distract the player from selecting an option. However, some activity keeps the title screen from being too humdrum and matches it better with the upbeat music.

Also, some activity may make the player wait to see what will happen. In this case, they should be treated to some footage of gameplay like many classic titles used to do (e.g. Super Mario Brothers). See following section “Gameplay Videos.”

Gameplay Videos

If the player waits a decent amount of time before interacting at all with the game, the game should present the player with a random video of gameplay. These videos shouldn't show a full story script or completion of a level. This is simply something that will give them a mere taste of what's to come.

Menu Options

The first bit of interactivity in *BTB* is through the selecting an option from the Title Screen. There shouldn't be too many options to keep it relatively straightforward. In addition, there should be a short message displayed somewhere that explains what selecting the option does.

- **New / Continue** – Since saving occurs automatically (see “Saving / Loading”), the player is presented with a direct definition of what they are doing by selecting this option. If they return to the game later on, it will say “Continue” instead of “New,” so they know they are continuing off their old game.

This is the normal type gameplay.

- **Turbo Mode** – This mode (see “Modes”) is only available after somebody beats the game (or cheats). The help message which explains the option should tell the player that they have to do this in order to unlock this menu. There should be a buzzer type sound when selecting it while it is locked. It should also have a different color when locked.

When the mode is unlocked, it should look like any other option with a help message of “Press <Enter> to Play!”

- **Credits** – This option opens the Credits Screen (see “Credits”).
- **Help** – Opens another window containing the help information for the game (similar to the readme file.)
- **Exit** – Terminates the program.

Level Selection Menu

Display

The “Level Selection Menu” is a mid-GUI that the player will constantly return to after every level. From here, they get to choose what level they want to play, view their stats, enter codes or return to the title screen (see “Title Menu” section). These are the items displayed on this screen:

- **Title** – At the very top of the screen rests the title of the game, “Block the Block.” This should be a bubbly, large title, maybe even pulsing for added effect.
- **Block Star Count** – The player’s total amount of Block-Stars (see “Collecting Block-Stars” for reference) earned thus far should be in plain view. The player should learn they are adding stars to this count after every level and that’s what unlocks the levels.
- **Block Star Stats** – Each level has a breakdown of what Block Stars they earned (see “Collecting Block Stars”). Near the level displayed, each of these stats should be visible. A difference in color should denote when a player has received the max count in that given stat. This way, they can easily find levels that need to be revisited to get the max count.
- **Levels** – All the levels are displayed on this screen. Since there are so many levels to choose from, not all will be included on the screen at once. Should display the level’s caption. If the level is a story script, it should be a different color to indicate so. The player should be able to scroll down and find whatever level they want to attempt. However, not all levels are immediately available. Levels that can’t be accessed will show one of the following:
 - *Block Star Count* - Shows how many *total* Block-Stars are needed for the level to be unlocked. Player should be able to tell through the GUI what the arbitrary number entails and how to acquire it (via beating the already unlocked levels). The phrase “Block-Star’s Needed:” should be visible.
 - *???* - One earns a lot of Block-Stars throughout the game (200+ required to beat the game), it’s best to hide the later numbers as to not intimidate the player. The “Block-Star Count” should be used for up to ten following levels then it should switch to “???”.
 - *Locked* - For special levels that require beating a given level specifically, they will just have the message “Locked.” However, “???” takes precedence so the player doesn’t know about the specifically locked stages for later on.
- **Modes** – There are two modes that can change gameplay or the way the game is played/viewed:
 - *Turbo Mode* – When the player chooses Turbo Mode (see “Menu Options” under “Title Menu” section), a message should be visible stating they are playing the game in Turbo Mode on this screen.

- *Emotes* – If the player enters the Emote code (see “Modes”), a message should be visible stating emotes are on.
- **Controls** – In a non-focal point of the screen, the controls (see “Controls”) for how to operate the menu should be visible.

Selecting a Level

The player can browse over the list of levels at their own leisure. They can scroll over locked levels too. If they try to select a locked level they should hear some buzzer-like sound, letting them know that they can't play that level. The player should also be able to return to previous levels should they wish to get more Block-Stars from it. See “Controls” for the exact controls used in navigating the “Level Selection Menu.”

Unlocking Levels

To unlock any given level, the player simply must earn a predetermined set of Block-Stars (see “Collecting Block-Stars”) for that given level.

However, some levels require a certain level to be completed beforehand. As explained above, these levels will appear as “Locked.” These special cases are intended to ensure a story sequence occurs before so the player knows what's happening or to require a level to be beaten before revealing a special storyline.

See “Special Levels” under “Game Progression”.

Codes

The player can enter codes on this screen that affect gameplay and art. Although not advertised, these options are available in case the player wants to play the game their way instead of being limited. See “Codes” below for the actual codes and their affect.

■ **Levels**

Overview

The main gameplay of *BtB* is in the levels. Each level is a unique assortment of any or all the elements (see “Game Elements”). They each have their own solutions and values to acquire Block-Stars (see “Collecting Block-Stars”). For a more in-depth look at the difficulty and what elements are in a given level, see “Game Progression.”

Starting Pause

At the beginning of the level, the player is asked to press any key to start playing. This gives them a chance to review the level beforehand and possibly come up with a strategy. They may even be able to solve it on their first try which will feel like an accomplishment.

HUD

Other than the level itself, there should be minimal distractions that don't have anything to do with playing the game. These are the elements that should be included:

- List how many seconds have passed since started level
- List how many times the player blocked a Block's path
- List the max amount of Blocks who have entered the correct gateway since starting the level.
- What 'R' and 'Q' do (Restart and Quit, respectively)

Level Sizes

For more information, see "The Grid / Screen".

Typically, the larger the level, the harder it is to complete, because there is more the player has to watch for. To help guide the direction of level creation, several different sizes are predetermined. This also makes balancing the difficulty curve somewhat easier.

- Small – 10 X 6
- Medium – 14 X 8
- Large – 16 X 10
- Extra Large – 18 X 12

Story / Tutorials

Certain levels are simply intended to introduce new elements of the game and provide a short and funny/dramatic dialogue between Blacky and his "sort of" friend, Boldy or with the villain Chip (see "Characters"). These levels require one less Block-Star to unlock as that of the level that introduces new elements. Sometimes, story can occur for no reason though, giving the player's mind a quick rest before continuing on, and hopefully, a good laugh too. Each story level will provide the player with one or two Block Stars, depending on its length or depth.

Graphically, there are two slots for the two given characters exchanging dialogue. Blacky should always be viewable, but if the other character is not there or leaves, there is functionality to hide that slot. Dialogue should appear on the main area one letter at a time, as if one character were actually speaking.

Different music can be played depending on the characters or the purpose of the story.

Below, there should be an area to literally demonstrate what one of the characters is explaining, if he is explaining something. This area can also be used to scroll

the credits on the final story sequence (see “End of the Game” under “Game Progression”).

For an overview of each story and its relativity to the levels, see “Story Events” under “Game Progression.”

Completing / Quitting

When a player finishes or quits a level, they should be presented with a screen that gives them a recap on how many Block-Stars they earned (see “Collecting Block-Stars”). This screen should give a comparison with their old score, highlighting better scores to emphasize they gained more Block-Stars to their total. Afterwards, they transition to the Level Selection Screen (see “Level Selection Menu”).

▪ **Exiting / Gateways**

Normal

Each Block has a color which determines which goal they should move towards. Each exit’s color corresponds with its Block. Should a Block ever arrive at the wrong colored exit, it will meet an “unfortunate demise” and the level will have to be replayed.

Special Case

During one level, the final stage, Boldy must first enter an exit to change it to a “Normal” exit. Until then, the gateway is a trap for all Blocks. Once Boldy enters it, the exit will be visually different to signal to the player that they can now guide the appropriate Blocks to that exit.

▪ **Unfortunate Demise**

Whenever any docile Block meets an “Unfortunate Demise,” the level will have to be replayed. The following lists the possible cases of an UD.

- Docile Block exits through the wrong colored exit
- Docile Block exits through a special exit (see “Exiting / Gateways” above)
- Blomby (see Characters) touches any docile Block
- Any docile Block falls into blava (see Traps)
- Blacky touches blava (see Traps)
- Chip (see Characters) touches Blacky or Boldy (see Characters)

When an UD occurs, all Blocks turn into a neutral color, signaling to the player that the level is resetting. This transition phase gives the player a moment to see what went wrong so they can hopefully correct their mistake.

■ **Collecting Block-Stars**

Every level requires a given amount of Block-Stars. Block-Stars are awarded by a player's performance in a level, giving a level a bit of replay value since the player may retry it to get a better Block-Star count. If the player is collecting the maximum amount of Block-Stars available each level, they'll likely be able to skip some levels entirely if they choose so.

These are the stats displayed alongside the level in the Level Selection Screen (see "Level Selection Menu"). The minimum for finishing any level will give the player at least three Block-Stars. The maximum depends on how many Blocks are in the level (see "Returning Blocks" below).

Blockades

Every time the player causes a Block to reverse direction by the usage of Blacky, it counts as one blockade. Each level has two golf-like par values. Every time the blockade count is equal or greater than a par value, the player is awarded one less star at the end. A player can get a maximum of three Block-stars (like gold, silver, and bronze) per level and a minimum of one. The stars are awarded after the level is completed successfully.

Getting higher scores here typically takes patience and careful planning to ensure the minimum amount of blockades.

Time

Like the Blockade system, there are two times that the player is trying to beat the level by. When the time is larger than these set times, they lose a star in this set. Once again, a maximum of 3 Block-stars per level with a minimum of one awarded at the end. The stars are awarded after the level is completed successfully.

These stars require a quicker pace and typically, ignoring how many blockades have occurred to ensure the Blocks get in the gateways as fast as possible.

Returning Blocks

Every time a Block is guided to the correct gateway and successfully exits the level, the player is awarded one Block-Star. This will be displayed in the GUI below (see "HUD" under "Levels"). If the player has to restart the level, the maximum amount returned thus far will be displayed. Should the player finish or quit the level, they will still acquire the maximum amount of Block-Stars they managed to return.

Thus, a player doesn't have to successfully beat a level in order to get a Block-Star. However, they must finish it to get the Blockade and Time Block-Stars. This is just in case the player needs an extra Block-Star or two to continue where they want.

Also, this isn't necessarily intuitive. It'll be a nice surprise if they quit a level.

Story

Going through any given story event will automatically give the player one or two Block-Stars depending on the length or depth of the script.

▪ **Modes**

Normal Mode

Overview

In normal mode, all speed values are preset by the game's designer. This is the first hurdle the player will have to get over before going into the advanced turbo mode.

Selecting

To turn Normal Mode on, the player must choose the option from the title screen (see "Title Menu").

Reward for Completing

On the final screen of Normal Mode, a message will display that Turbo Mode is unlocked. The player then returns to the Level Selection Screen (see "Level Selection Menu") and can continue to play Normal Mode or return to the title screen (see "Title Menu") to select Turbo Mode.

Turbo Mode

Overview

In turbo mode, all movement speeds are doubled. The pace at which altering walls (see "Walls") change is twice as fast too. By this time, the early levels are very easy in this mode and the player will quickly get to more challenging levels. However, the difficulty ramps up dramatically as more Blocks enter the fray.

Selecting

To turn Turbo Mode on, the player must choose the option from the title screen (see "Title Menu."). The mode must be unlocked beforehand.

A New Game

All stats are reset when the player firsts starts Turbo Mode. It's intended to be a whole new game, adding to the depth and replay value of the game.

Unlocking

To unlock Turbo Mode, the player has to beat the game on Normal Mode (see above). At the final screen of normal mode, the game will visually specify that Turbo Mode has been unlocked.





The player can cheat by creating a file with the name “turbo_unlocked.dat” in the same directory of the game. If this file exists, the game will allow the player to play Turbo Mode. This is “by design,” in an attempt to give player more flexibility with the game, should they want it.

Reward for Completing

At the end of Turbo Mode, the game will reveal the code to enter to turn emotes on.

*Emotes***Overview**

This is a special mode that doesn't affect gameplay and can be turned on in conjunction with Normal Mode or Turbo Mode. When Emotes are on, each block will have a different expression instead of the normal beady eyes:

- Blucky – Happy 
- Blocky – Sad 
- Blooky – Angry 
- Blockster – Extremely Happy 

Toggling

See section “Codes”

Unlocking

The player doesn't know they can put in a code to turn it on (see Toggling above). However, upon completing Turbo Mode, they will learn that they could've entered this code all along. Thus, new players may learn they can do it beforehand either via friends or if someone posts it on their website.

▪ Help

The player can view the Help window by selecting a menu option in the title screen (see “Title Menu”) or by pressing F1 (see “Controls”). The help window is just a large amount of text explaining the concepts of the game. This is also the readme.txt file. Any question the player has about how to operate the game should be covered in the Help window.

■ Codes

In-game codes allow the player more freedom to play how they want. However, codes are tempting to use, so they shouldn't be advertised upfront. Instead, the player must go the extra mile to learn them on their own (or accidentally find them). Codes also give the game greater depth.

Cheat Code - Type 'B' and then 'L' on the Level Selection Screen.

There is only one cheat code, but it completely breaks the game. This code gives you a free Block-Star every time you enter it, allowing the player to skip any or every level, except for locked levels.

Emotes - Type 'emote' on the Level Selection Screen.

Every time this code is entered, Emotes (see "Emotes" under "Modes" section) are toggled on/off. A message should be displayed informing the player whether or not the emote option is on or off.

■ Credits

Credits Screen

At the title screen (see "Title Menu"), the player can opt to view the Credits Screen. The purpose of this screen is to simply scroll all developers and other people who made the game possible. It should be minimalistic to ensure focus on the text. However, some activity would be nice to keep the player from getting bored in case they aren't reading certain sections of the credits. The activity should just be limited to the in-game characters doing something, maybe as simple as moving around. This continues the sense of a Block world.

Final Story Script

The credits are also scrolled at a slow rate at the end of the game. The music should be close to the normal story music, only more victorious and happy. The player can enjoy the story and it ensures that somewhere, the player had a chance to see the developer credits.

Also, since the credits are being scrolled, the player has a greater sense that he/she accomplished something. They know they have beaten this game.

■ Terminating / Quitting

There should be a common sequence or combination of keys pressed that immediately close the program. Otherwise, the player can exit the game via the title screen (see "Title Menu") or pressing escape several times (depending on which screen they are currently on).

IV. Artificial Intelligence

▪ Movement

Basic

All Blocks have an initial direction (see Characters section) and then are guided by wall-directions and the player. Each wall that a Block can encounter has an arrow that a Block will follow. If the Block runs into the player (Blacky) or any other Block, it will reverse direction. After any collision, with either Block or wall, the Block will pause for a brief moment and then change direction accordingly. This pause is to give the player a bit more of a chance to map things out as the events occurs.

Blocks are always aligned either vertically or horizontally with a row or column of the grid (see “The Grid / Screen”). They can never move diagonally.

Chip’s Advanced AI

Chip is the only Block in *BtB* that is smart enough not to fall into blava (see “Traps”). While the others will just mindlessly walk over the edge, Chip will reverse direction once he reaches a pit.

V. Graphics and Sounds

▪ Graphics

Overview

The graphics of the game are intended to be cartoony, vibrant, bubbly and/or bouncy. This is to make it more enticing to younger groups and keep the feel of the game lighthearted. Also, objects should be relatively 'cute' and dramatically expressional, often like cartoon characters.

Color

Blue is the overall color scheme for the game. Most colors in the game should be high in blue values. Blue often denotes sadness, so it's important to keep the blue colors relatively brighter.

Blinking

Since most of the Blocks only have eyeballs in which to personify them, having them blink periodically helps animate them. All Blocks should blink to make them seem more alive.

▪ Sounds

Sound Effects

SFX should be higher pitched and dramatic or over-the-top. Of course, more common occurrences, like a Block encountering a wall, should be more ambient sounds in the background (but still signaling to the player that something occurred).

Music

Music should be melodic and catchy, hopefully inducing nostalgia. It should make the player happy, almost willing to sing/whistle along or slightly bob their heads. Any specific themed music (like Chip's personal theme music) should be very dramatic and really shift the player to a given mood. There really shouldn't be any subtle, background music.

Need to be careful not to have annoying music!

VI. Game Elements

▪ Inanimate Objects

Walls

There are four different types of walls that provide the flow of the map. Given a certain wall, characters will react in certain ways when coming into contact with them. Blacky, the player, is free to move in any direction, but can't move through walls.



Blank

These walls are intended to inform the player that a Block cannot eventually touch them given any sequence of events. Having “direction walls” all over the entire level can be too daunting and difficult for the player to quickly make any kind of plan.



Direction

These walls have an arrow pointing up, down, left or right. When a Block runs into one of these walls, they change their direction according to the direction of the arrow.



Altering

These are Direction Walls that have changing arrows according to a set amount of time (faster in Turbo Mode (see “Modes”). There will only be two directions these walls can change between. The direction a Block takes after colliding with an altering wall depends on the direction of the arrow currently being displayed.

Story Note: These are malfunctioning walls according to the HBC (see “Head Block Committee (HBC)”)



One-way

These aren't walls, but perform the same function in directing traffic. They allow any Block to travel across them but only in the direction of the arrow. However, the arrow doesn't apply until the Block is fully on the tile. Basically, they're one-way paths on the ground. This is also the only direction-enforcing object that Blacky has to follow as well.

Story Note: In the story, one-way paths are arrows placed on the ground to direct flow and have surveillance on them. They were not placed by the HBC (see

“Head Block Committee (HBC)” with the intention to return the Blocks, but rather to catch the one who freed them.

Traps

Bridges

Bridges in the *BtB* world are only intended for the lightweight Blocks. This includes everyone but Blacky. Should he touch a bridge, in a set amount of time, that segment of the bridge will fall into the blava down below. Thus, they form a kind of one-way route for Blacky only, turning into a dangerous trap for everyone afterwards.

Since players can freely move over these bridges (as in vertically, horizontally or both) the bridge should look like the ground, only with a slight discoloration.

Blava

Just below the flat surface of the *BtB* world, lives a hot, flowing substance known as “Blava.” It appears to look like some form of slowly moving, blue blob. Should any given character, including Blacky, go over the edge, they will fall and meet an “unfortunate demise.”

Miscellaneous

Block-Star Icons

There should be a set of icons used in the GUI’s to clearly explain to the player how they got that Block-Star. There are several different methods for getting Block-Stars (see “Collecting Block-Stars”) and there should be an icon for each. The icon should have the Block-Star image in it somewhere.

- For Time Block-Stars, use a clock icon.
- For Blockade Block-Stars, use a vertical hand (like a cop telling traffic to stop).
- For simply a Block-Star count, use an X.

▪ **Characters**

Naming Convention

All characters in *BtB* have names that begin with ‘B’ and end with ‘y.’ In all cases but one, the second letter of their name is ‘l.’ Everything in block world is very, very similar with only slight differences. All the characters look almost identical except they have different color hues. Thus, their names are also nearly identical.

The names are typically a mesh of the word “block” and some other attribute that defines the character. Other than in the level title, their names are rarely spoken. This is inspired by the often unknown names of the ghosts in Pac-Man.

Gender / Race

Their gender is predominantly “male.” No female is ever mentioned or presented in the game, but that doesn’t mean they don’t exist in the *BtB* world.

When the word “block” is capitalized, it is referring to their species, the Block race.

Friends



Blacky

Blacky, the player’s character of the game, isn’t the friendliest of blocks (see “Blacky’s Background”). He does have one friend though, who persuades him to use his unfriendly nature to help guide the docile blocks back to their home location.



Boldy

Contrary to his name, Boldy (see “Boldy’s Background”) is neither old nor bold. Instead, he is an overdramatic, talkative, caring coward. He is the only one named without an ‘l’ for the second letter, symbolizing his distinction from the normal blocks. During key level transitions, Boldy acts as a guide to introduce new game elements and continue the storyline.

Boldy appears in the final stage during gameplay. This unique level requires you get Boldy into a gateway before the appropriate Block does. This adds a new layer of difficulty. Boldy starts by moving towards the **right** (as is the intentions of the character himself) and follows all other Block AI. Note that he cannot touch Chip or he will meet an UD (see “Unfortunate Demise”).

The Docile

These characters are about as far from intelligence as one being can be, basically a lemming in nature. However, the success or failure of any given level completely relies on what happens to these mute characters. Should any one meet an UD (see “Unfortunate Demise”), the player will have to replay the current level. They all have two eyes (helping personify them) and look in the direction they’re moving, except when Emotes (see “Modes”) is turned on.



Blucky

The first Block the player encounters is Blucky. He's a green block who always starts out moving **left**. His name comes from "lucky" and "plucky duck," the green cartoon character from Tiny Toon adventures. He is often the easiest block to navigate to his corresponding exit.



Blocky

The second Block encountered in *BtB*. Initial direction is **right**, opposite of Blucky, and his hue is blue. His name is the simplest without any combination of some attribute other than "block" itself. This comes from the idea of the in-game nature, which is an often blue overtone. Degree of challenge is almost identical to Blucky.



Blooky

The third Block introduces a vertical initial direction of **downwards**. This block is red. His name is inspired by the words "blood" and "spooky," which may be controversial considering the game is intended for a younger audience. However, neither his name nor the inspiration is ever focused on in-game, if even mentioned. Since he starts by moving vertical instead of horizontal, this can confuse players, increasing his difficulty level.



Blockster

The final, fidgety Block the player has to deal with is Blockster. He's a yellow block that starts by moving **upwards**. His challenge comes from his significant speed increase over all the other docile blocks. His name comes from "trickster."

Considering Blockster is twice as fast as all Blocks, he should appear half as often for balance reasons. In Turbo Mode, he is really fast!

The Aggressive

There's only one aggressive block, unless you want to count the main character, Blacky (see "Blacky's Background").



Blomby

This character poses a threat to all docile blocks. If he runs into one of them, he will light up and explode! He is colored black like Blacky with a little fuse on the top of his head-body. He will not blow up Blacky, so the player has to move in his path to prevent him from encountering a docile Block, causing an UD (see "Unfortunate Demise").

It should take a moment for him to light up before exploding to make him feel more like a bomb entity. There should be explosion sounds after he blows up and the Block that touched him should perish during this animation.

His initial direction is **downwards**.



Chip

Chip (see “Chip’s Background”) is the main villain of the story. He is a power-hungry tyrant who actively seeks to oversee every Block movement. He is outraged by the events that have occurred (see “Story”) and personally hunts the ones responsible. He is one of the three characters in the game who has a speaking role and tends to be very pompous and articulate.

Chip is present in two levels and is a threat to Blacky and Boldy. Should he touch either of them during gameplay, the level will be restarted. Chip has his own dramatic theme music and intense level music. He starts by moving **upwards**. He even has slightly modified AI (see “Chip’s Advanced AI”).

Consider him the boss of the game.

Note: Chip is named in reference to the popular game, Chip’s Challenge.

VII. Story

▪ Overview

In *Block the Block*, everything is about the animated block characters that live in this fictional world. The focus revolves around the unconventional hero Blacky, who unwillingly gets forced into wrangling escaped Blocks back to their homes via a friend's request. Blacky continually grumbles about wanting to enjoy his "morning bread" during his quest to restore order.

Boldy, Blacky's friend who brings the critical matter of the escaped Blocks to Blacky's attention, only provides tidbits of information at a time. He does this intentionally because he knows Blacky wouldn't accept if it was going to take too much time. After Blacky is strung along for so long, he begins to wonder how the Blocks escaped in the first place, which Boldy is hesitant to answer.

Eventually, Blacky manages to obtain the information from his friend. To his surprise, it was Boldy who originally set loose the various Blocks running freely. Boldy explains that he can't manage to get the Blocks back, so he had Blacky do it. He also explains that Chip, the president of the HBC (see "Lore"), is outraged by the Blocks' escape and is seeking the one responsible. Boldy wanted to return the Blocks in favor for the HBC. Naturally, Blacky refuses to continue cleaning up Boldy's mess.

However, Boldy mentions that a certain prowler, Blomby, has learned of the Blocks recent freedom and could be potentially dangerous to the bunch. Boldy manages to persuade Blacky into preventing Blomby from hunting the Blocks before it is too late.

Chip eventually comes into contact with Blacky, blaming him responsible for freeing the Blocks. Blacky refuses to take blame. Chip is convinced through a level where Blacky avoids Chip and manages to return the Blocks. Afterwards, Blacky explains that Boldy is the one who should be investigated. Chip orders Blacky to continue returning Blocks back home, which Blacky accepts, grumbling.

Blacky later runs into Boldy again, who is on the run. In a desperate attempt to win back his friend, he explains why he freed the Blocks. Boldy explains that Chip is the new president of the HBC, following his father's footsteps (a regular chip off the old block, a pun that Blacky tries to prevent from occurring). Ever since Chip became the president, the Blocks have been forced into following directions, not being allowed to think on their own. Boldy considered this a crime and attempted to rally the Blocks to protest. But, once they left their stead, they continued to act mindlessly, following the laid out directions and soon Blocks were all over the place, not in their designated areas.

Boldy explains that he's been trying to figure out how the gates that return the Blocks work, hoping to redirect them to a place where they can be free. He asks that Blacky continue doing what he's doing (which, he is reluctant to do) while he tries to figure this out. In the end, Blacky has a revelation and decides to favor with Boldy. He then has to prevent Chip from coming into contact with Boldy so he can complete his quest, which is how the last level goes.

Blacky finally gets to enjoy his morning bread in the final sequence.

Final Sequence

As mentioned in the Overview section above, Blacky finally gets to enjoy his "morning bread" at the end of the game. As the comedic, sarcastic overtone of this game goes, the final dialogue is recorded here for future reference:

Boldy: And Blacky, I owe you for all you've done. So, I prepared something special...

<a loaf of bread is revealed below>

Boldy: I call it a "morning loaf."

Blacky: For the first time in a while, I feel like smiling. That'd be difficult, considering I don't have a mouth.

Boldy: Yeah...how exactly are you going to eat this then?

Blacky:

Blacky: I'm going home.

The end

▪ **Lore**

The game's Lore section is intended to give designers a better understanding of the fictional world. This content may not be evident in-game but could reserve a place in the help screen or readme.txt file.

Blacky's Background

Blacky is a rough-around-the-edges, non-social being who does his own thing. He is not very knowledgeable on current events and prefers his own way. Blacky is big and Ogre-ish. In the game, he is unwillingly forced into being the hero. If it isn't apparent, Blacky was modeled after the Shrek character from the Shrek movies.

Blacky is often satirical in response and slightly uneducated. He typically says whatever is on the top of his head, not pronouncing every word or slurring them together (in one part of the story, he says "had've"). He has no sense of loyalty or respect, which quickly gets him into trouble with authority figures.

But it's all a persona really, because under that hardened shell is a reasonably caring being. He's simply introverted and acts all grumpy to ensure he doesn't have to interact with others. In the end, when he's asked how he feels about certain items, his silence or lack of remark answers for him.

One of his more innocent, child-like behaviors is displayed through his desire to "have" his Morning Bread (see "Morning Bread / Loaf"). It's like his favorite toy. But, as we find out at the end, he can't actually eat it.

It's also apparent in initial dialogue that Blacky knows Boldy. Boldy is a little bit blunter in stating their friendship, however. Blacky treats him more like an acquaintance. Somehow, they've interacted before the game's storyline occurs.

Boldy's Background

Boldy is the game's "nerd" character. Boldy really values his friendship with Blacky, even if he mistreats him in-game at first. His intentions are always good, but his actions can reflect badly on some.

Boldy has access to the HBC (see "Head Block Committee (HBC)") Laboratories. He does his constant research there and always tries to learn as much as he can. He's become a fan of HBC's ways.

When Chip (see "Chip's Background") takes lead of the HBC and changes things for the worse, Boldy reacts irrationally. He has a great sense of justice and decides on his own that something must be done. However, while he can be a persuasive speaker, he has no room for physical intimidation. His extra small size makes him incapable of pushing anyone around. Instead, he has to rely on carefully picked words.

Boldy is very helpful in learning anything about the HBC. He's like their personal database. Often he will mention things about the HBC which help the player. He's also very informed about current events, unlike Blacky.

The Daily Block

The *BtB*'s newspaper that informs its readers of current news. Blacky states that he doesn't read it simply because of its "ridiculous" name, but really he just doesn't care to be up-to-speed with everyone else. Boldy, on the other hand, reads it religiously.

The Daily Block is written and published by a subsidiary department of the ever-present HBC.

Blomby's Background

He is the predator of the *BtB* world. However, he may not be the only bad entity in the *BtB* universe, just in this particular game (along with Chip).

He is a mute, psychopathic criminal on the prowl to commit suicide, taking another life with him. He's had himself physically altered to have the capability of exploding. That's relatively extreme for a younger audience, but he's simply presented in the game as the "bad guy." He's like bomb-omb from the Mario universe.

Chip's Background

Chip is the son of the leader of the HBC (see below). He is also a dignified member of the HBC. He grew up as royalty and became spoiled and elitist. Although his father was a good leader with good morals, he had little time to properly raise his child.

Both Chip and his father are very proud characters. When Chip's father decides to retire just before the game begins, he feels it would be an honor to offer his position to his son. Chip has always had the power to tell people what to do just being his father's son. However, his spoiled cup overflows when he's granted the most powerful position in the *BtB* universe.

Naturally, he immediately begins to create drastic changes in the laws and regulations, getting away with it by presenting it as "for the Block's safety." These are all selfish laws that Chip hopes to use to amplify his own powers even greater.

At this point, he orders everyone around with little tolerance. Any disrespect is too insulting for him to allow mercy. He eventually believes his degree of power makes him superior in other areas as well, inclining him to personally arrest any offenders.

The best description of his dialogue is that of an older British Pilot.

Head Block Committee (HBC)

The HBC is the single, ruling power of the *BtB* world. They are a collection of older Blocks who feel they are entitled to declare and implement rules and regulations that everyday citizens must follow. Out of the leaders, there is one who is appointed President over them and can make more drafts single-handedly. However, the other leaders can band together to overthrow an insufferable dictator.

On the surface, the HBC has a surprisingly clean record. Most of what they institute acts in the best interest of the population. However, with as much authority as they have, it's easy to imagine they have some dirty secrets behind closed doors. What's presented in the game is more the potential the HBC has to create misery rather than revealing any actual wrongdoing. Perhaps their secrets could be unveiled in a sequel...

Morning Bread / Loaf

Bread

The only edible item ever mentioned in the game is "Morning Bread." And it is only mentioned by Blacky who wishes to "have it." He never says he wants to "eat it." This is all a setup to make the game end slightly comical when Boldy asks him how he's going to do it without having a mouth.

The intention of adding the word "morning" to bread is purely non-sensical.

Loaf

In the final story sequence, Boldy offers Blacky a loaf of bread which he calls a "Morning Loaf."

VIII. Game Progression

▪ Choosing a Level

A lesson the gaming industry has learned about puzzle games is that puzzles can be frustrating and can lose gameplay value if not giving the player an option. Essentially, the player should never be forced to play a level they are having a hard time with, or they could give up on the game altogether. So, for *BtB*, the player can actually skip levels if he/she does well enough in previous levels. This is kind of the new format of the Mario games, requiring a certain amount of Block-Stars to unlock levels.

Levels involving storytelling can be skipped as well, if the player doesn't want an introduction to the new game elements they are about to face. This helps the game not feel so linear.

▪ Levels

There are 60 levels in *BtB*, 19 of which are story / tutorial levels.

Difficulty

Since the target audience is for younger people, the first levels need to be easier than a designer would typically build. Later levels can pose more of a challenge and seemingly impossible levels should, at most, be secret levels. The following table is to provide a guide for the difficulty curve without boxing one into less design choices.

Level Range	Description of Difficulty
"1-5"	Minimal challenge, introducing easy game elements, no chance of failure, minimal chance of getting stuck
"5-10"	Easy difficulty, mixing early game elements, chance of failure to younger audience but shouldn't pose much to teenagers and up, fair amount of potential to get stuck
"11-15"	Relatively easy still, introducing medium game elements, chance of failure minimal but for all audiences, fair amount of potential to get stuck
"16-20"	More exciting difficulty, but still relatively easy, higher star counts require skill, mixing all known game elements, increased chance for failure and getting stuck

"21-25"	Medium difficulty, introducing Blomby, harder combinations of game elements, each level should challenge the player almost to the point where they fail it once, but understandably so
"26-30"	Medium difficulty, more blocks to wrangle, bridges, introducing any final game elements, more challenging
"31-40"	Linear difficulty increase to final stage.

Special Levels

As explained in “Unlocking Levels” of the “Level Selection Menu,” there are some levels that have to be completed in order to continue. These are those levels:

- When Chip first accuses Blacky of being the culprit, the next level involves Chip chasing Blacky. The story after that Chip realizes he isn’t the one to be blamed. The level where Chip is chasing Blacky should be completed before the following story occurs.
- The final level adds a new, relatively complex game element. The story explaining how it works should be mandatory.
- The end-game story shouldn’t be revealed until the final level has been completed successfully.

End of the Game

When the player beats the final level, they are given a special storyline. This story wraps up the game and plays victorious music that makes the player go “yeah, I beat this game!” Afterwards, they are presented with the four docile Blocks (see “Characters”) who all give a happy expression after a moment (whether Emotes (see “Modes”) are on or off). Then, depending on the mode, the player is rewarded with something. In Normal Mode, they are told that Turbo Mode is unlocked. In Turbo Mode, they are told how to turn on/off Emotes.

Ultimate Levels

After the player views the final sequence, they’ll notice there are still some levels that are locked, requiring a very large amount of Block-Stars. These are the **optional**, secret levels that should provide the player with extra challenge, giving the game greater depth. They should be epic in comparison to all the normal levels.

As per the Solo Games’ “running gag” of incorporating the word “Ultima” somewhere in each game developed, these should be titled “Ultima I”, “Ultima II”, etc.

■ Story Events

The following table shows where “story / tutorial” levels occur along with a description of what sequence occurs during the level. This is intended to map a sense of relativity with the *Overview* section under the *Story* heading. It also acts as a guide for when new elements can be used in the levels.

Level	Story	Description
1	Story 1	Introduction, explain main goal of levels
3	Story 2	Introduce Blocky, who moves to the right at the start
6	Story 3	Explain that blocks cannot go into the wrong colored exit, pressing R at any time will restart the level
9	Story 4	Introduce Blooky, who moves to the south to start with, talk about Block Stars
11	Story 5	Introducing Altering Walls, introduce the HBC
14	Story 6	Introducing Blockster, general chatting
16	Story 7	Introduce Blava
18	Story 8	Introducing Ghost Walls
21	Story 9	Explain that Boldy freed Blocks, Introduce Blomby
25	Story 10	Blacky meets Chip, who accuses him of freeing the Blocks
26	Story 11	Chip lets Blacky off the hook, Chip hunts for Boldy
28	Story 12	Boldy on the run, explain the goal
28	Story 13	About Bridges
31	Story 14	General Chatting, talk about freeing them through the exits (redirecting the exits)
34	Story 15	Blacky thinks to himself
37	Story 16	Blacky meets Chip, again
40	Story 17	Boldy has the solution!
40	Story 18	Chip is on your tail
X	Story 19	End of the Game

IX. Future of *Block the Block*

There is some room left for possible sequels in the future should development be considered. This will be likely if players generally enjoy the gameplay or want more to it. If the audience is relatively unresponsive, it's doubtful the sequel(s) will be made.

The current idea for a sequel is to take a lot of what Boldy said in the final sequence and make it happen. There are Blocks everywhere that now have the freedom to do as they please. The game should be more about taming the chaos rather than freeing the oppressed. We can have more villains, maybe even Pirate Blocks.

As for gameplay, some ideas not used here are as follows.

- Tunnels – Simply areas where the player can't see what's happening. They have to guess where the Blocks in the tunnel are and try to position the main character accordingly.
- Warping – Color specific warps that cause a Block to instantly disappear and then reappear to the matching warp when encountering one. In this case, the main character will have to watch greater areas of the screen and it creates more complex puzzles.
- Controlling more than one character – Either having a party of characters to use in levels or actually attempting to move more than one character in a level.
- Other Blockers – Mean Blocks who intentionally move into Blocks' paths to make them go the direction they want.
- Multiplayer – Having capability for more than one player to play the game at a time.

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