

Design Document for:

Challenge

“The Future of Fighting Games”™

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Challenge History

This page includes notes on version histories.

Version 1.10

Initial Version with some minor changes for better communication.

1. I rewrote the section about what systems the game runs on.
2. I incorporated feedback from the team into all parts of the design however no major changes were made.
3. Just keep listing your changes like this.

Version 2.00

Mathematical modeling and design revision leading to character creation overhaul and premade character design.

Included in the changes are:

1. Premade Characters outlined as if player created
2. Abilities stream lined for faster more intuitive creation
3. Added Ability Activation Descriptions

Game Overview

The “Challenge” Philosophy

Disassociation of Authorship

While a few fighting games have allowed players to customize their avatars, with the online possibilities next gen consoles provide it is time for a fully customizable fighting game. Players will choose not only their avatars appearance but their fighting style and statistics as well.

New Mechanics

Players know how fighting games work and quickly master combos, resource bars and special moves. With the Tumbler mechanic players will be forced to think about what they and their opponent are doing in new and fresh ways. Easy to learn, difficult to master is the mantra of Challenge.

Player Adaptive Game Play

Players are able to customize every aspect of their character, allowing them to prepare for variables unique to them. Players can even create defensive or aggressive fighters as well as fighters who do better in the last half of a match or focus more on special moves.

Common Questions

What is the game?

Challenge is a side view fighting game. The players build their own customized fighter and battle against players online, in the room or against the computer. Players can also select from a selection of pre-made characters designed with the same character creation process. In addition the players must adapt their fighting style and tactics based on their opponents build.

Why create this game?

A strong love of the fighting game genre coupled with a desire to create a game all fighting game players can get behind is the core impetus for “Challenge”.

Where does the game take place?

The game takes place in varying fighting locations across several universes in various real, magical and sci-fi locations.

What fighter customizing options do I have?

The players will select a “body type” from a set of templates that describe their varying physical attributes such as striking power and jump height. They will also choose a martial style such as Kung Fu or Medieval Combat. In addition the player will select a metaphysical art such as Necromancy or Super Science.

How many pre-made characters will there be?

The game will ship with a roster of characters with each of the different martial and metaphysical arts. This will allow players to quickly jump into game play but still feel as if they can create something unique on their own.

What have you drawn on from other fighting games?

Each character has a selection of kicks, punches & throws based on their martial art that are based on real world and fictional martial arts styles. They also have a selection of special moves that require triggering actions (button presses) or specific pre-requisites (tumbler level).

What's different?

In addition to the typical fighting game the players must also manage a tumbler that makes certain abilities available. As a player fights he will attempt to use martial attack combinations to spin his own tumbler. On each side is a list of three mystical attacks available to the character, the highest side having the strongest or fastest attacks. Some mystical or martial attacks will instead spin opponent's tumbler down, causing them to lose access to their more powerful abilities. Characters deal varying amounts of damage on each level of the tumbler based on the martial art they select. This makes managing both your own and your opponent's tumbler very important.

Feature Set

General Features

Player Created Fighters
New Game Play Mechanics
Intense 3D Graphics & Effects

Multiplayer Features

Available on next gen platforms
Online play designed to overcome lag issues
Online access to new levels, character options & art styles

Editor

Millions of possible character options
Intuitive character creation process

Gameplay

Players build their own fighters and take them online
Online rankings show the best fighters and their builds
Continued support for game balance after shipping
Fast and tactical fighting
Online tournaments, winners gain access to unique character options
Dozens of styles & weapons to choose

The World of “Challenge”

Overview

A cataclysm of unthinkable proportions has left a dangerous weapon tumbling across multiple timelines of mankind. The device tears through each world leaving only remnants of what was riding the wake of the disaster. In these ripples of destruction only the one possesses the device can stop it... and return their world into existence.

Infinite Worlds

The game world consists of an infinite number of possible locations from an infinite number of worlds. Fighters arise and fall on the collided worlds collectively known as Shard, a plane of existence caught in the wake of the unknown disaster.

Heroes Arise

New heroes (player characters) arise and fall constantly in the combat worn world. Some will die, some will flourish.

The Physical World

Overview

Shard is an infinite flat plane created by the smashing together of worlds from an unknown number of universes. As the unknown weapon falls through time, space and the fabric of reality it smashes worlds asunder and drags fragments with it. A mad scientist's laboratory could find itself next to an ancient temple along a frozen river. The combinations are not only infinite, but fluid. The world shifts and changes as pieces of Shard are shifted, destroyed or added randomly.

The following describes the key components of the physical world.

The Chain Tower

Of all the locations of Shard only one is stationary. The Chain Tower is located at the “center” of Shard. Perhaps it is the first of all the worlds destroyed, but at the towers peak is a chain of energy arching off the horizon. Where it leads is uncertain, but many a hero has attempted to battle his way up the tower to find out... none have returned.

Level Selection

Players choose one of the levels to fight at or select on randomly. Players who play in tournaments online must battle their way through The Chain Tower in player vs. player matches. In the single player storyline the player chooses which location to move to next and does battle with the hero from that realm on his way to The Chain Tower.

Weather & Day/Night Cycle

The weather on shard can be set to a specific condition or randomly determined. High winds, rain & darkness can all be a factor in game play. Some characters can even change the weather. Shard has no sun, instead the world randomly cycles between day & night.

Rendering System

Overview

Challenge will be played in a 3D Environment with a camera set to build a 2D view of the fight, in the traditional sense. Some special moves or dialogue moments move the camera into a close up position or pan out to give a better view of the level.

2D/3D Rendering

Challenge can be easily developed with a variety of 3D engines, Unreal 3 or XNA could be used to quicken development time if the production house does not have its own engine.

Camera

Overview

The camera will be set at a straight on side view of the action. As the characters get closer to each other the camera will zoom in and zoom out when the characters are further away.

Special Moves

When a character uses a particularly powerful special move (one on last tier of his ability tumbler) the camera zooms in to look at the character head on.

Start of Battle

The camera does a brief fly through when a battle starts, highlighting the theme and art of the level.

Game Engine

Overview

The game engine will need to be designed for simplicity and motion flow. Player input needs to translate into on screen motion as quickly as possible, allowing response time to be paramount in the engines goal.

Art Direction

The art direction of Challenge needs to focus on smaller, less realistic and more animated appearing textures. In addition special effects (such as fireballs) need to conserve processing power, limiting how many are on screen at a time.

Weather

The engine needs to be able to render weather effects, such as rain or wind and its effect on the environment. Small puddles need to form on the ground and players need to shake off water when they get hit. Pre-match idle motions can add to this realism. In high winds the character and environment needs to react to this.

Collision Detection

Collision detection should be paramount among the engines priorities, as it is the basis for all mechanics within the game.

Lighting

Overview

Challenge will need to make use of dynamic lighting, as a lights position and intensity is a fairly small amount of data to send over the internet.

Character Lights

Characters will have lights attached to the character models (usually on the hands), allowing for quick “lighting changes” over the network when special attacks are made. This will create more dynamic graphics without much information flowing over the network.

Ambient Light

While levels will have environmental lights, the levels ambient light will need to decrease and increase in response to player interaction. When a character performs a special move (raising their light intensity) the ambient lighting will decrease, drawing attention to the characters.

Game Characters

Overview

Challenge will ship with premade characters for quick gameplay, however the character creator will be of utmost importance. Players will build their characters by making several selections. Included in the game are eight premade characters (perhaps more) who are designed to highlight the variety of fighters that players can make.

Premade Characters

Whirly Bird – A young girl lost in the jungles of her home planet when her father's research helicopter crashed. She is homage to Tarzan and uses a Helicopter Blade as a giant sword.

Sister Ignition – A half demon catholic school girl from a world in which an Apocalypse of biblical proportions merged heaven, hell & earth.

Golosius – A Futuristic Gladiator from an alternate timeline where the Roman Empire never fell. He uses an electric spear and net to do battle.

Avalon – A wizard from an Arthurian world. Like Merlin, this character has a variety of weather control and shape shifting magic.

Detective Brenner – A cop from Go City, combining both Dick Tracy and gritty cop movies. He is a pugilist who can really take a beating.

Captain Crimson – A super hero possessing super strength, speed & flight. He represents spandex & capes with underwear on the outside.

Patient Zero – A super zombie from a world over run with a plague. Slow but strong, Patient Zero wrestles his opponents to the ground and deals damage with his claws & teeth.

Slaa – A lizard man from a future of global heat waves and post apocalyptic conflict. He uses his tail and blinding speed to his advantage.

Player Driven Character Design

Players being their design of their fighter by selecting one of 5 body types with unique statistics. All statistics are rated on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest.

Punch Damage is the amount of damage a character does when punching or using mystical abilities generated from the characters arms.

Kick Damage is the amount of damage a character does when kicking or using mystical abilities generated from the characters legs.

Throw Damage is the amount of damage a character does when throwing/grappling or using mystical abilities generated from the characters center body.

Weapon Damage is the amount of damage a character does when punching or using mystical abilities generated from the characters weapon or mimic a weapon.

Physical Defense is a characters natural resistance to physical damage.

Special Defense is a characters resistance to special abilities and powers.

Jump Height is the height a character jumps.

Speed is how fast the character moves and the speed at which they make martial strikes.

Body Type	Punch Damage	Kick Damage	Throw Damage	Weapon Damage	Physical Defense	Special Defense	Jump Height	Speed
Hulking Male	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1
Medium Male	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2
Thin Male	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Medium Female	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2
Thin Female	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3

The player is then taken to a costuming interface. As many costume assets as possible need to be developed before the game ships but more being added through digital updates after. A full list of options would take up far to much space in this document, but the player needs to be able to select shape, texture major coloration and minor coloration. They need to have options for Hair & Face, Shoulders, Legs, Belt, Boots, Arms, Wrists, Gloves and back accessories.

The player then selects a martial art. This is how the character physically fights and determines which rig goes into the character model. It controls how fast attacks are made as well as adding bonuses to physical attacks.

Savage characters bite & claw their way to victory.

Pugilism includes boxing or any other form of fisticuffs.

Medieval Weapon includes a variety of bladed or blunt weapons including Maces, Swords, Daggers and Clubs. This can also include body parts, like tails or mechanical arms.

Kung Fu represents any of the martial arts that focus on leaping and quick powerful strikes.

Reach Weapon artists use weapons that give them an added advantage of range against their opponents such as staves, spears and chains.

Karate represents martial arts that focus on punches and low kicks, striking decisive blows.

Kick Boxing includes any martial art that uses the strength of the legs and flexibility to deal devastating blows with the knees, feet and shins.

Wrestling includes any art that grapples and throws ones opponent.

Martial Art	Punch Damage	Kick Damage	Throw Damage	Weapon Damage	Physical Defense	Special Defense	Jump Height	Speed
Savage	+1	+1	+1	-1	-1	-1	+0	+1
Pugilism	+2	-1	+0	-1	+2	-2	+0	+1
Med. Weapon	+0	+0	-1	+1	+0	+1	+0	+0
Kung Fu	+0	+0	-1	-1	+0	+0	+2	+1
Reach Weapon	+0	+0	+1	+2	-1	-1	+0	+0
Karate	+1	+1	-1	-1	+0	+0	+0	+1
Kick Boxing	-1	+2	-1	+0	+1	+0	+0	+0
Wrestling	+0	-1	+2	-1	+1	+0	+0	+0

Characters with weapons can select from a wide variety of weapons and more can be uploaded all the time. These weapons are ornamental, reach and medieval weapons function differently, but all medieval weapons function just like all other medieval weapons.

Each player then selects a primary special ability, called Mystical Arts for ease of creation. Each art has 3 abilities. As the player's tumbler rotates to the right higher arts become available (as well as the character doing more damage). Each art also has a series of special effects for the player to select from.

Tumbler Level	Primary	Secondary
1	None	None
2	Alpha	None
3	Alpha	Alpha
4	Gamma	Alpha
5	Gamma	Gamma
6	Omega	Gamma

The player then selects a secondary special ability. The player gains access to secondary abilities later in the tumbler and never gets the Omega ability. The secondary ability cannot have the same originating location as the Primary.

Abilities become available at different levels of the tumbler as shown on the chart. Abilities also require the player to choose a location the attack will come from. This has both an aesthetic and mechanical effect. The player needs to make a punch/weapon/kick or throw attack to activate the power. This is called the Originating Location Attack (OLA). The motions required to activate the power are shown in brackets after the description.

Each Ability will also have various special effects, options for how a character flies, or what element they harness, ect. These are purely cosmetic and more options can easily be added after the game ships through downloads. As a characters tumbler spins the effects of their powers grow in intensity.

No ability can ever go above 5; it is in a player's best interest to maximize their characters so that bonus abilities are not wasted.

Flight - The ability to float above the ground and ignore gravity

Alpha- The character automatically activates their flight ability, gaining a Jump of +2.

Gamma- The character flies across the screen, striking his opponent.

[Charge Away, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 2 Special

Range: Screen, Horizontal Line, Mid Hit

Omega- The character flies up into the air and crashes down on his opponent.

[Charge Down, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 4 Special

Range: Half Screen, Parabolic Leap to target's location, High Hit

Speed – Bursts of incredible speed, flashing attacks and motion

Alpha- The character automatically activates their speed ability, gaining a Speed of +2.

Gamma- The character dashes at his opponent across the screen.

[Forward, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 3 Special

Range: Screen, Horizontal Line

Omega- The character lets loose a flurry of attacks on his opponent.

[Press OLA 5 Times in 2 seconds]

Damage: 5 Special

Range: Melee

Elemental – Harnessing Fire, Stone or Ice

Alpha- The character sheaths themselves in their chosen element, gaining a Physical Defense bonus of +2.

Gamma- The originating body part (or weapon) flares with the element, striking or slamming the opponent.

[Forward, Down, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 3 Special

Range: Melee, Mid Hit

Omega- The character summons elemental rain, crashing about his opponent.

[Back, Down, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 5 Special

Range: Screen, Vertical Line, High Hit

Arcane – Necromantic or Mystical magical abilities that warp reality

Alpha- The character shields themselves in their chosen mystic energy, gaining a Special Defense bonus of +2.

Gamma- The character lets loose a wave of magic, tossing the opponent away from them.

[Down, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 2 Special

Range: Melee, Low Hit, Target moved back full screen if not blocked, half screen if blocked wrong location, not at all if fully blocked.

Omega- The character unleashes a blast of magic at his opponent.

[Down, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 4 Special

Range: Screen, Horizontal Line, Projectile, Mid Hit

Fury – A welling anger that can't be controlled.

Alpha- The character brims with rage, gaining a Throw Damage bonus of +2.

Gamma- The character lets out a flurry of blows.

[Press OLA 3 Times in 2 seconds]

Damage: 3 Hits, 1 Special Each Hit. Low Hit, Mid Hit, High Hit.

Range: Melee

Omega- The character unleashes his rage, grabbing his opponent striking him savagely several times.

[Forward, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 5 Special

Range: Melee, High Hit

Strength – Augmented physical strength within one body part.

Alpha- The character brims with rage, gaining a Punch and Kick Damage bonus of +1.

Gamma- The character unleashes a devastating strike.

[Charge Back, Forward + OLA]

Damage: 3 Special

Range: Melee, Punch = High Hit, Kick = Low Hit, Weapon = Mid Hit, Throw = Mid Hit

Omega- The character pounds the ground, knocking his opponent off his feet.
[Charge Down, Up + OLA]
Damage: 3 Special and Knocks Opponent Prone
Range: Screen, Low Hit.

Spirit – The character gains power from some holy source.

Alpha- The character shines with holy power, gaining a Physical and Special defense bonus of 1.

Gamma- The character defends with a holy shield.
[Charge Block]
Effect: The character counts as blocking all levels, after the first block he is returned to regular blocking and must release the block button and recharge to gain this effect again.

Omega- A spectral force throws the opponent into the air.
[Charge Down, Up + OLA]
Damage: 3 Special and Knocks Opponent Prone
Range: Half Screen, Low Hit, target is thrown into the air and then prone.

Technology – The character has some gadget or series of devices that help him fight.

Alpha- The character sparks with energy or electricity gaining a Weapon Damage and Throw Damage Bonus of +1.

Gamma- The character teleports behind his opponent.
[Back + Block + OLA]
Effect: The character teleports behind his opponent (block value capped at 5 for 1 second).

Omega- The character release a blast of energy.
[Charge Down, Up + OLA]
Damage: 4 Special
Range: Screen, Mid Hit

User Interface

Overview

With a game this reflex intensive the player will need a simple representation of his information and his opponents status.

Health Bar

The player will have a health bar with his character portrait on it. This health bar will be a simple red affair with a frame customized to his character creation choices. It will need to reside in the upper left (or right) corner of the screen.

The Tumbler

The player will have a tumbler on the lower corner of his screen. This tumbler will have 6 sides and each side will be emblazoned with the different abilities he has available to him at that level. As he is hit with his opponents special moves his tumbler will move up and down, shifting his statistics and available powers.

Dealing Damage

Overview

Each martial and special move has a set amount of damage it deals, modified by the opponents defensive rating. Each player has 100 Health Points and loses them when they are struck by an unblocked attack. As a characters tumbler spins higher they both deal and receive more damage. Blocking characters typically take no damage, but can if the tumblers are high enough. If any value in between bars such as this

$| [\text{Defenders Tumbler Level}] - [\text{Defenders Physical Attack Stat}] |$ should be less than 0 the value is 0 instead.

Martial Attacks

TOTAL DAMAGE TAKEN =

$$| ([\text{Attackers Physical Attack}] + [\text{Attackers Tumbler Level}] + [\text{Defenders Tumbler Level}] - [\text{Defenders Physical Defense}] - [\text{Defenders Block Value}]) \times 5 |$$

So a Medium Male character with the Savage Fighting Style and 1 tumbler level punching a Thin Male with a Pugilism Fighting style and a 2 tumbler level would deal 5 points of damage.

$$\text{Math: } | (3 + 1 + 2 - 5) \times 5 |$$

Some characters may not be able to damage others until they have forced their opponent's tumbler higher! They will also need to use special attacks.

Special Attacks

TOTAL DAMAGE TAKEN=

$$| [\text{Attackers Physical Attack}] - [\text{Defenders Physical Attack}] - [\text{Defenders Block Value}] | + | [\text{Attackers Special Damage}] [\text{Attackers Tumbler Level}] + [\text{Defenders Tumbler Level}] - [\text{Defenders Special Defense}] |$$

Blocking Attacks

To block an attack the player must be holding the block button. In addition they must select to block High, Mid or Low. To block High the player presses up or forward while holding block. To block Mid the player presses back or no direction while pressing block. To block low the player must press down while holding block.

If the player is blocking the correct height when he is hit by an attack (determined by the collision engine) the players block value is 10. If he is blocking at the wrong location his block value is 5. If he is not blocking his block value is 0.

Attack Types

Each type of attack has a priority. When two players both attack the one with shorter range takes effect if both are in range during their animation. Punches have the shortest range, followed by throws, then kicks, weapons and finally reach weapons. These are all "melee" range attacks.

Musical Scores and Sound Effects

Overview

Players should have access to dozens (if not more) “theme songs” that are played for them when they win. These short tunes only over ride the zones music after the match.

MP3

To save space each song should be saved in MP3 format. Players could even be allowed to upload their own music (which would only play on their system, not their internet opponents).

Music Tie Ins

Famous “fight” songs could be used. If the rights to “Eye of the Tiger” or “We Will Rock You” could be procured the game would benefit immensely and have a strong marketing position.

Single-Player Game

Overview

Players could engage the computer in single player one off bouts or attempt to guide their character through the world of Shard and finally to the Chain Tower to do battle with its denizens. Fighting games are traditionally light on storytelling but the inclusion of a custom created character would aid in the disassociation of authorship.

A hero would climb the tower and claim the power of the mysterious device for himself and save his world... leaving the others to tumble for all eternity. An in game movie showering the hero with dark praise.

When the player does win, the next time he plays the single player game the character he previously beat the game with is the new final fight, a dark version of himself holding sway over the remnants of creation.

Multiplayer Game

Overview

Challenge is about the multiplayer experience on next gen platforms. The players have the ability to custom craft their fighters and take this extension of their creativity online to beat up the creations of others.

Max Players

All games are 1 on 1 fights between two players. However the online system hosts server side tournaments starting on the fly between 8, 16 or 32 players in single elimination.

Internet

To avoid lag being the deciding issue in most battles Challenge would require a server to host games on. Each player would be ranked according to his connection speed (low, medium & high) and matched against similar opponents.

Servers

A player is allowed to save 3 characters using each of his gaming accounts (xbox live for instance) and the characters (not the player) are rated on wins/losses. Lag and Character rating are taken into account when the computer creates random matches.

Platform Systems

Each platform has its own dedicated online game matching system, depending on the platform the game is developed for each would need its own matchmaking and ranking code.

Persistence

It would also be possible to build a persistent world for the players to walk around in and challenge one another. The world would dynamically create the field the players fight on, perhaps spicing things up from simple flat ground. Players could fight on rocky cliffs or shallow water that effect players collision, movement speeds or even damage in some cases.

Saving and Loading

Players could save any number of characters on their home machine (space provided) but they would need to be limited for server side character saving.

Character Rendering

Overview

The base 5 body types are the only 5 character models the game needs. However this quickly becomes much more complicated when the hundreds of attack movements and special abilities must be rigged and animated.

Allowing 1 rig for each martial arts style to be fit into all 5 body types will help speed up development time. A detailed and comprehensive motion capture session may be needed to quickly produce and properly animate the game.

An “animated” art style with cell shading and smaller texture sizes will help keep the artists requirements in check and free up engine time for particle effects.

Appendix

These appendix's have not been created yet, but would be needed for the game to go into production.

“Character Animations”

“Character Creation Assets”

“Level Assets”

“Character Weapon & Ability Customization”