Prior to designing your own game with the Game Design Document (GDD) template, complete steps 1 and 2 (and read step two before you begin step one):

Remember to aim for really enjoying every stage of game development, especially in the beginning. “You’ve got to find the fun really early, and someone’s got to play your game and smile… quickly.” (Ben Tritian - RPG Core Combat Tutorial) Brainstorming and research should feel motivational and inspiring, and getting fast functionality at the cost of getting everything right early on is the next step.

1. Research 3 games in the same or a similar/related genre (don’t feel limited by current well established genres, use them for inspiration - see step 2 before starting step 1) that you like something about. Describe what it is you like about them, and what you don’t like about them. For example:
   1. Final Fantasy XII:
      1. Like:
         1. Narrative: There is a compelling morally laden and relatable story behind the characters and their struggles.
         2. Characters: Character magic abilities are extremely customizable, each character has a background story and their interaction with the game writes their current story.
         3. Combat: Character parties are interchangeable. Combat proceeds at a pace that is neither rushed nor static to allow for real-time strategy.
         4. Experience: Characters gain experience at a good rate, both characters and magic orbs are levelable.
         5. Weapons/Attacks: Weapons are interestingly related to the character, for example Cait Sith's megaphone weapons and Casino feeling limit breaks, Cloud’s are sword based.
         6. Enemies/AI: Enemy forms change in terms of scale, artwork, difficulty, attacks, and attack strategies. There are enemies that require massive investment in terms of research and acquiring items and experience that are optional but yield incredible rewards.
         7. Artwork/Music: the artwork is beautiful and varying from industrial to exotic and lush. Battle effects are beautiful and scale from a sword swipe to summoning demons and dragon animations.
         8. World: the open world is immense but not at the cost of each place having a reason for being in the narrative and having unique reasons to go there. The characters can be optionally picked up by going to places that you are subtly led to by the narrative in the open world like Yuffie’s hometown. Some characters are entirely optional.
         9. Other: Minigames like chocobo racing and the Golden Saucer arcade games are compelling and the rewards beneficial enough to the main story that they are worth playing even if they weren’t enjoyable. Minigames add depth and reality to the main game and fun to the more serious experience of being in the drama of the main game.
      2. Dislike:
         1. Weapons: Weapons cannot be customized.
         2. AI: enemy AI is relatively static and inflexible once you are fighting an enemy.
         3. Other: sometimes the level’s artwork and pattern is frustrating in so far as you cannot see where to go or how to get there, the pointer hint hand breaks the magic absorption of the game when you use it.
   2. Bioshock
      1. Like:
         1. Narrative: The scene and the story is a compelling morally laden and mystery oriented narrative where you discover the world through the artwork and scenery as you move through the game as well as dynamic tapes that play as your playing the game.
         2. World: The world is exotic and dark, it feels like a horror story fish tank in a good way, very unique artwork that tells a story as you move through the world.
         3. Combat: Combat is intense and interesting, often difficult enough that regenerating does not take away from the stress and fear and conquering fiero emotions that happen as you fight.
         4. Characters: The main character and the villains are compelling and scary, you are invested in the story throughout the game.
         5. Experience: Character abilities are customizable and depend on moral dilemma like choices. Leveling is not automatic but happens when events are achieved.
         6. Enemies/AI: Enemies are really scary, ranging from easy to very difficult to kill. Boss battles are fun but scary and stressful to get through. AI is extremely flexible in its strategies.
         7. Artwork: Music and art all tell a story, with graffiti on the walls and enemy conversations forwarding the story as much as the audio tapes you discover in mystery like fashion. Very immersive and interactive storytelling.
         8. Weapons/attacks: attacks are good and interesting, being able to do things like freeze enemies or set them on fire or take them over adds to the old timey guns and drills you use as weapons.
         9. Other: minigame puzzles are present in an explainable way.
      2. Dislike:
         1. World: It is not open world, but contained in levels.
         2. Battle: battle is main character or main character and an ally you cannot control, sometimes too fast paced to the point of being stressful, although this adds to the games mood.
         3. Weapons/Attacks: Guns and abilities are not as customizable as I would ideally like.
         4. Artwork/Music: Music does not vary much, it is either old timey and creepy or scary.
         5. Experience: It would be nice to have some automatic and constant leveling for guns, health, abilities, etc.
         6. Other: Mini games puzzles feel like work and take away from the main game.
   3. Rogue Galaxy:
      1. Like:
         1. Narrative: Can’t really remember the narrative, leveling and playing minigames overtook me, but it had to do with being a space pirate looking for an eden.
         2. Characters: Characters were interesting and unique, but their interaction with the narrative not as saturated throughout gameplay and adventure as FFXII or Bioshock.
         3. World: The world as I recall was fairly open, but you had to load levels before you could move around.
         4. Combat: Combat was interesting and exciting, not turn based but strategies preceding combat for NPC characters in party make combat really fun, generally relaxed pace for combat and strategy driven, but being able to move around and shoot/slice away made combat more real and interesting than turn based, more absorbing and compelling.
         5. Artwork/Music: Artwork was unique and interesting, unified in style. Space like music joined this to make the narrative world more enveloping.
         6. Experience: I can’t really remember what leveling up did as far as abilities, but I think it was pretty standard rpg.
         7. Enemies/AI: AI was relatively static as I recall, but varied enough to make it fun to kill them.
         8. Weapons/attacks: Weapon combining was an awesome part of the game, and attacks damage and special effects varied with the new weapon abilities appropriately.
         9. Other: Mini Games were so absorbing, especially the chess like creature insectron games where you bait for particular creatures then breed and level them up.
      2. Dislike:
         1. Narrative was confusing and not really memorable.
         2. Combat: No direct control over party members during combat was a little annoying.
         3. Characters: Character background story and current role in narrative was more cartoonish than real.
         4. Artwork: Artwork style seemed a little blockish and fast and ready at times. The same was true of the music, much more megaman or mario than FFXII or Bioshock art saturated story and world.
2. As you research and write your likes and dislikes, take notes of ideas that occur to you for your narrative, artwork, etc. for your game. The format and completeness of these notes doesn’t matter, just brainstorm at this point things you would like to explore further as they occur to you. For example:
   1. Narrative: An escape from oppression narrative that tells a story parrelling a real struggle of a time, in particular our time, occurs to me. The rich control everything, and use and abuse the poor to continue living their lives of extravagance. The escape from a situation where life is routine and locked and your abilities to do something unique and interesting are being used for nefarious purposes by the rich controlling class seems like a good narrative to explore.
   2. Artwork: Because my artistic abilities are limited, perhaps using my doodles as gigantic structures like castle-like buildings would be a good option, or as graffiti.
   3. Characters: I like having a love story between a roguish girl and an escaped prisoner like character being a part of the main narrative.
   4. Experience: Constant experience leveling seems best to me, with character properties, abilities, magic, and weapons being levelable. Having a type of abilities that only level or become available after game events like boss battles is something worth exploring or including.
   5. Combat/AI: First person combat seems to make strategy decisions in combat a little harder to implement in a smooth way. Perhaps overhead third person combat is the way to go for an rpg this first attempt.
   6. Weapons/Attacks: Guns, swords, magic! I like being able to take over, train, breed, and level up enemies. Perhaps an ability where you can actually transfer control over to an enemy and then after the battle get them as a trainable character/pet would be a great ability to drive the game forward, it could even effect and add to the main characters ability leveling up tree.
   7. World: Open world seems best, maybe a separate spirit realm that you gain access to after taking over a teleporting enemy type where orbs are places you can teleport to would be worth exploring.
   8. Other: Mini Games are a must. I always liked the combat chess like minigame in Rogue with the captured bugs, we could do this with the captured creatures that you take over in battle as the main minigame. Baiting creatures was also an interesting part of the game, having something where you buy a certain bait, leave in a certain location, and get a certain type of creature to raise and feed like a chocobo and level up is something that I must include, as well as a narrative related reason to be doing these things.
3. Now, fill out the game design doc:

## **Project “Escape From Terminus” 1-Page GDD**

*Final Fantasy Meets Rogue Galaxy*



**Genre:** RPG, 3rd person fixed Camera RPG.  
**Target Audience:** T for Teen.

**Controls:** Mouse & keyboard and controller

**Thematic Setting:** Medieval fantasy post apocalyptic space age

**Tech Stack:** Unity 5+, Adobe Creative Cloud, Blender, Gimp, Audacity

**Platform(s):** Steam

**Game Moment:** (Start with a small moment of gameplay that reflects the core of your gameplay - don’t worry yet about inventory, story, dialogue, etc. that don’t play a role in this moment - this could be a level, a mystery discover answer, a puzzle to solve).

Fight enemies, buy bait, bait then collect a creature to enter into the arena, enter it.

4. Pause in game design, setup project and version control, create simple level for combat sandbox, work towards prototyping this game moment. Use Onion Design principles (explained in class), so that the core of the game experience that happens first and then repetitively (combat and movement in this case) is prototyped first, and then rechecked with every new layer (abilities, inventory, etc). Two reasons for this - the game should be awesome even if you don’t get those stretch features and shippable, and the game experience depends on the core being good since all other parts of the game are premised on this part being good.

**Game Summary:** Escape From Terminus is a Final Fantasy style RPG with a central minigame where you collect and play small creatures in a chess like game similiar to Rogue Galaxy’s Insectron minigame. You are a gun magicker, one of seven slave races on planet Xeno-8, who will befreind a builder and a wrecker to complete your party for the game moment. In the game moment, you will collect Fyres, little creatures that you will enter into a minigame. Win the mingame to be able to defend yourself from the creatures outside the citiwalls with the grandprize, the Hunter’s Dream gun. In general you win new weapons and ability through the minigame. The ultimate goal is to bring down the planet capital Vanista and free all the slaves. Along the way you befriend a Fyre and see that they too are slaves and become a champion to making the games voluntary.

**Core Player Experience:** Acheiving freedom and opportunity from positions of constrained possibilities where the way out is strategic leveling and battle.

**Central Theme:** Escaping from oppression.

**Design Pillar:** Leveling up persistence to be able to fight free of the chains of bondage and servitude.

**Anticipated Remarkability:** Seemless and compelling integration of Fyre arena and Main gameplay.

**Anticipated Steam Early Access Launch date:** Q4 2018 or earlier

**Feature Development Priorities:**

* Real-time combat with tons of different enemies to smash
* All the required RPG abilities and stats (upgradeable)
* Level building and game progression
* Minigame capability
* Branching dialogue system
* Inventory (including minigame), loot, usable items

**Comparative Products:** Final Fantasy VII, Rogue Galaxy, FF Tactics.

Tips:

Get comfortable in the editor! Use unity shortcuts in the editor!!! Qwert buttons to resize and what not. Shift key for faster movememtn. the v and the left mouse click to make ramps and blocks snap their vertices together. Etc.

Player experience: Think of mood tone feeling - an adventurer in medieval times amongst warring factions, a survivor, scavenging and building tech in the future? Then at early stages, think is my run funny, heroic, etc? Do the enemies give the tone and mood of threatening, lonliness, surving, etc.? Oppression? Stressed?

Theme - story, characters, artwork, atmos, envo, lighting, music - all should support the player exp. You’re going for - the theme allows you and enables you to build the player experience.

Features - Mechanics, tuning, etc. Fallout - scavenge materials, build out base, build out defensive materials in base - this enables you feel more like a survivor.

Development - Priorities, Resources: Do we spend a lot of time doing x? What is the MVP? Minimum amount of stuff to make and have our game still be deployed?

Marketing - needs to be consistent with the player exp. And all previous elements: Survivor exp. Funny and comical exp. Etc. Videos, Images, Artilces, messaging, Media contacting, say something about your exp. Making player feel powerful, clever through strategy, making palyer feel frantic. Shadow of the colusses - player feels epic. Or you could make the player feel Godlike. Flying is a mechanic, player feeling like superman is a player exp.

Define your player experience in 1 to 4 words.

Escaping captivity by befreinding and helping other being escape from captivity. Let’s use scale. You’re both a God and a slave. Animations can be zooming down to little arenas. What are the players? Are they dragons?

After making a sandbox scene with basic movement, it’s time to make a mindmap:

<https://mm.tt/1007718107?t=LLbd8x05Y4>

Combat is core

Combat occurs in a level

What kind of level should we make?

We need to know our Art direction

Art direction concept document (different than the art design document that describes exactly what and how to create art assets).

Go online on google images, find games you like, find images you like, photoshop them together. Summarize the art direction, explain what you like about the images you choose.

Three levels at which you need to be working: project manager, coder, artist - really at all times.