Fun, not frustrating

Make your games better by focusing on the user experience

Catt Small @cattsmall

Hello!

I am Catt Small and I like video games
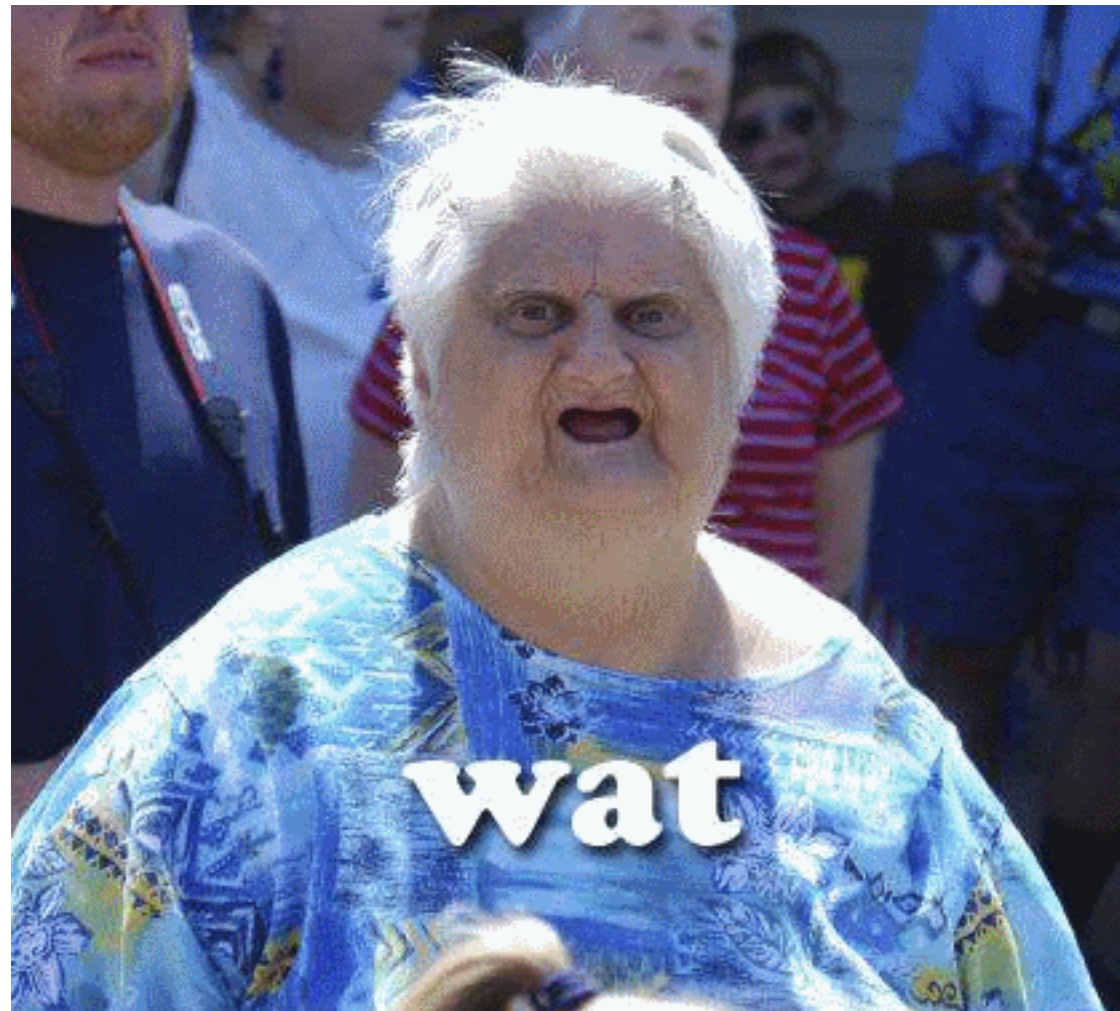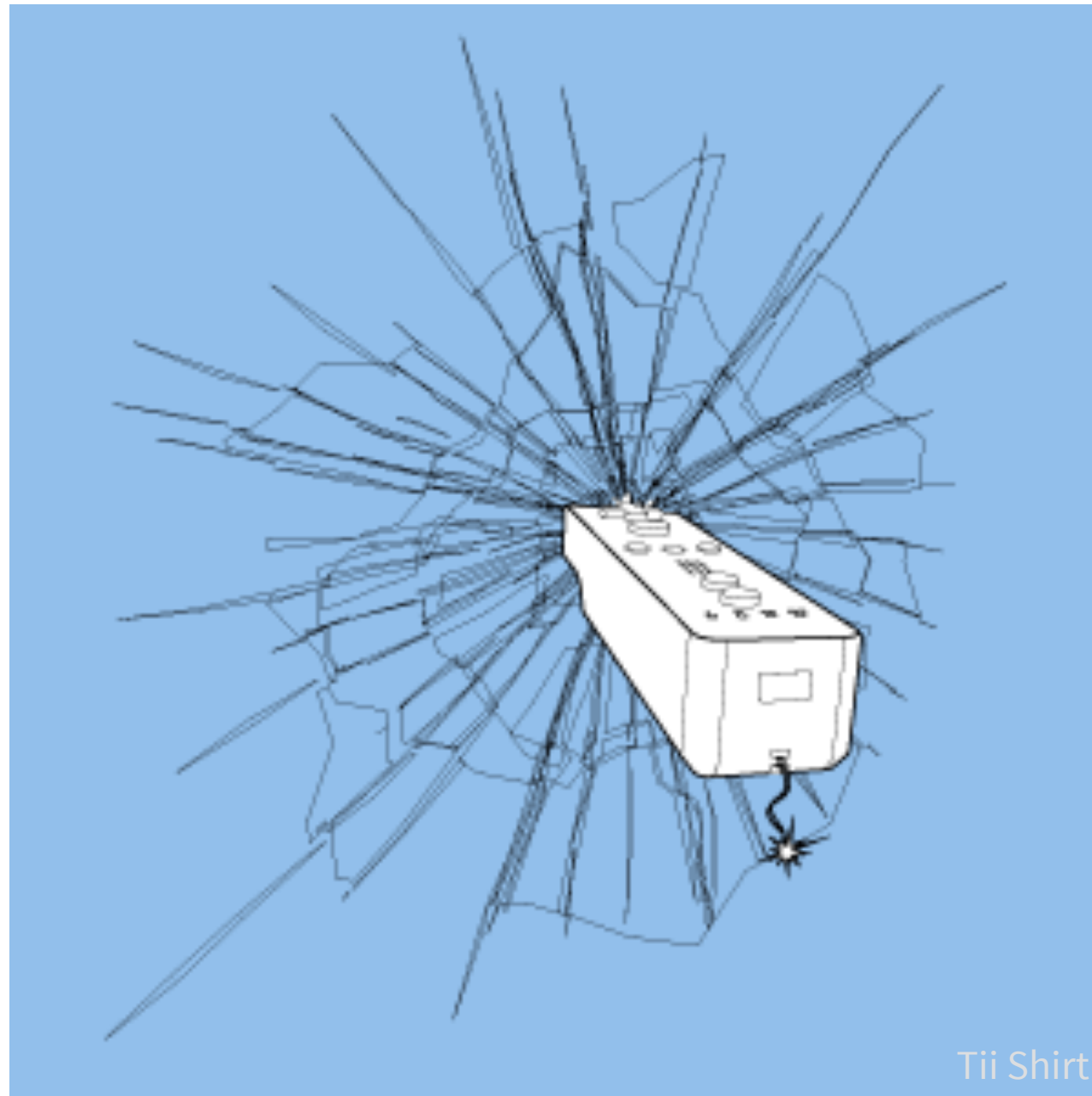
I'm a UX designer, teacher, and game maker

UX?

Jurassic Park

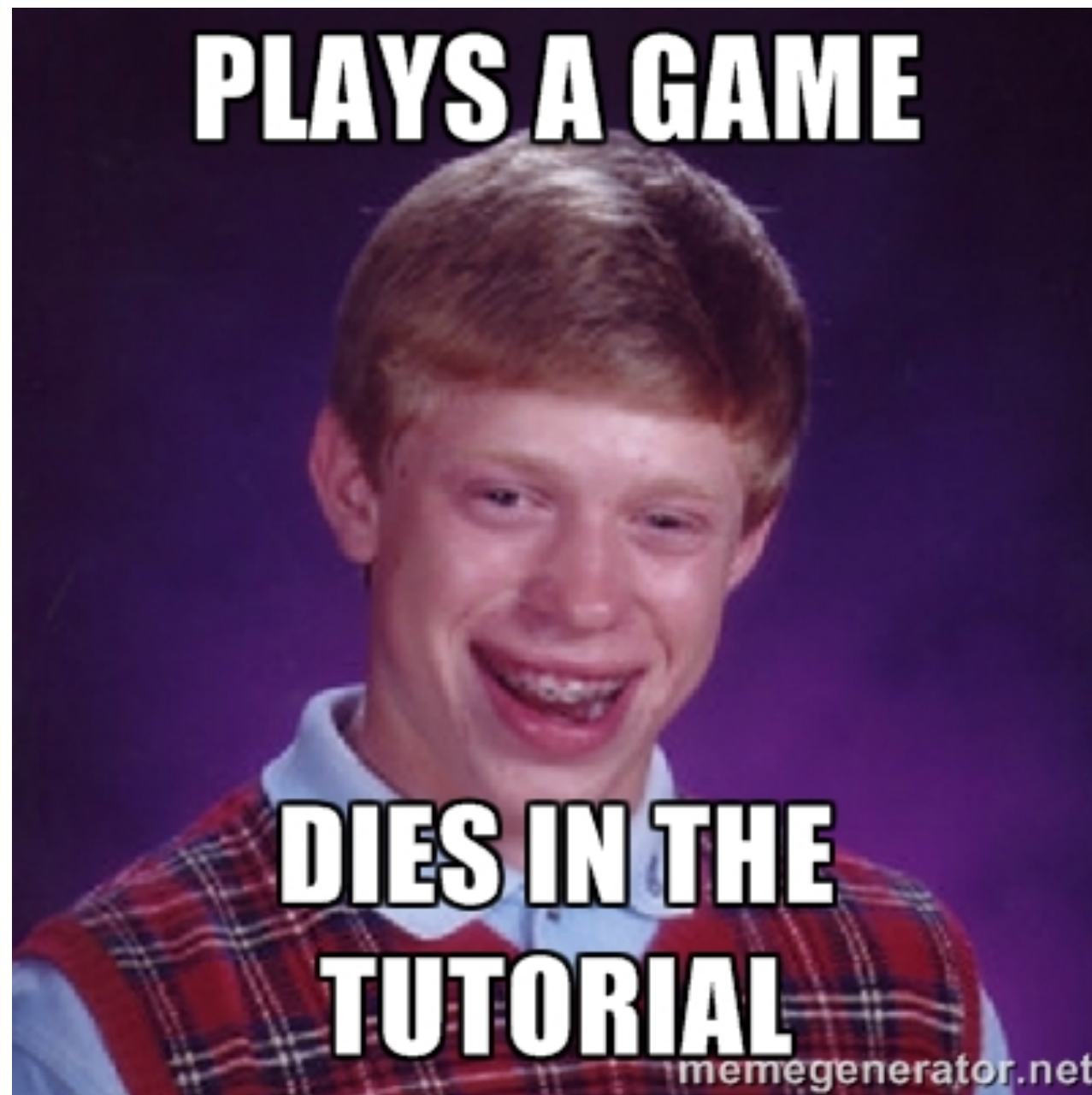UX (user experience) design focuses on how people interact with machines

Tii Shirt

Video games need UX design as much as websites & apps

Common UX frustrations in games

PLAYS A GAME

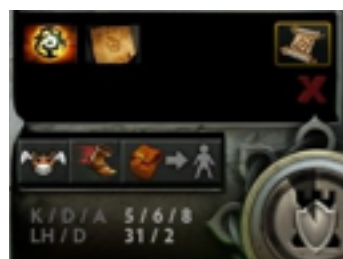DIES IN THE
TUTORIAL

memegenerator.net

Dota 2

Tutorial levels are long & very different from the actual game

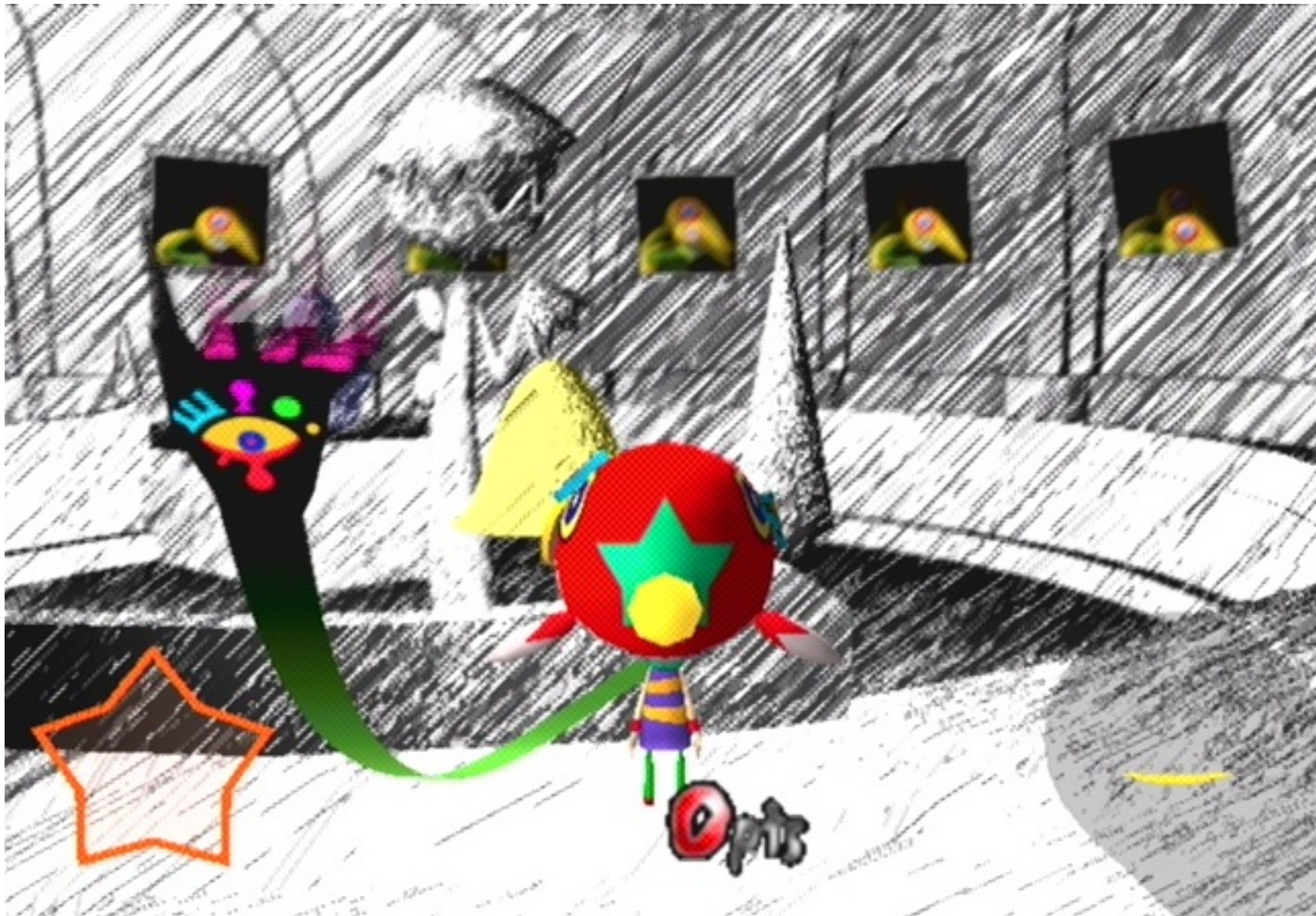Players learn important mechanics through word-of-mouth

- Quick Shop queues items for you to buy
- Courier buttons bring items to you
- Circular button makes your tower invincible

Stretch Panic

Players are thrown into the game with little explanation

✔ Jet Set Radio
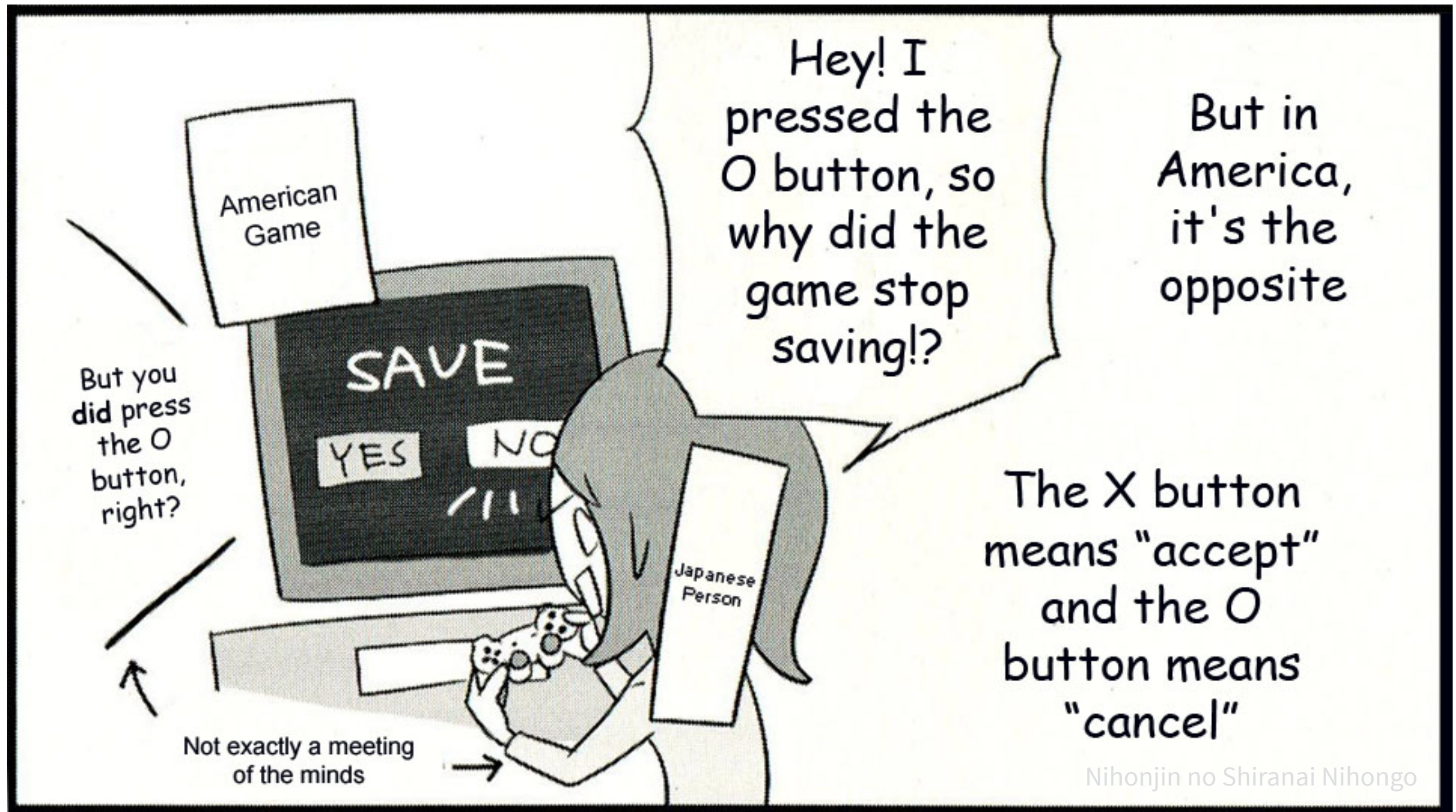
Players copy NPCs to learn how to play

✔ Rayman Legends

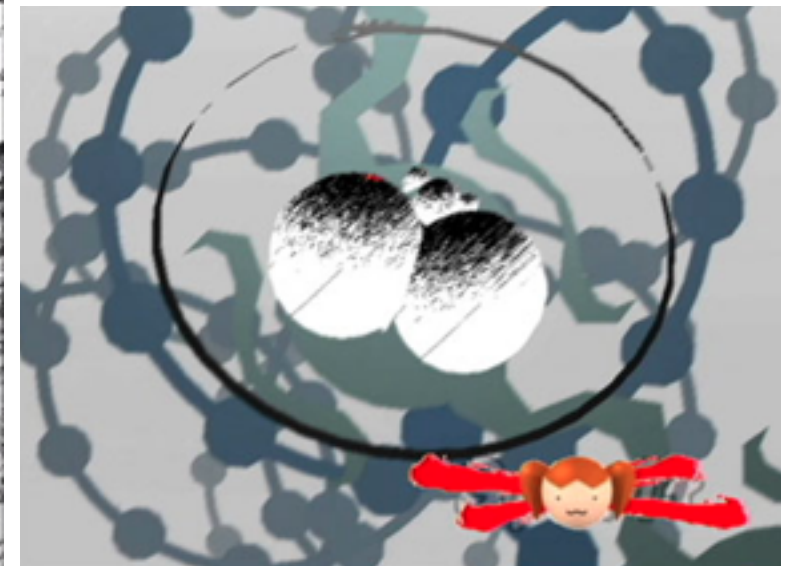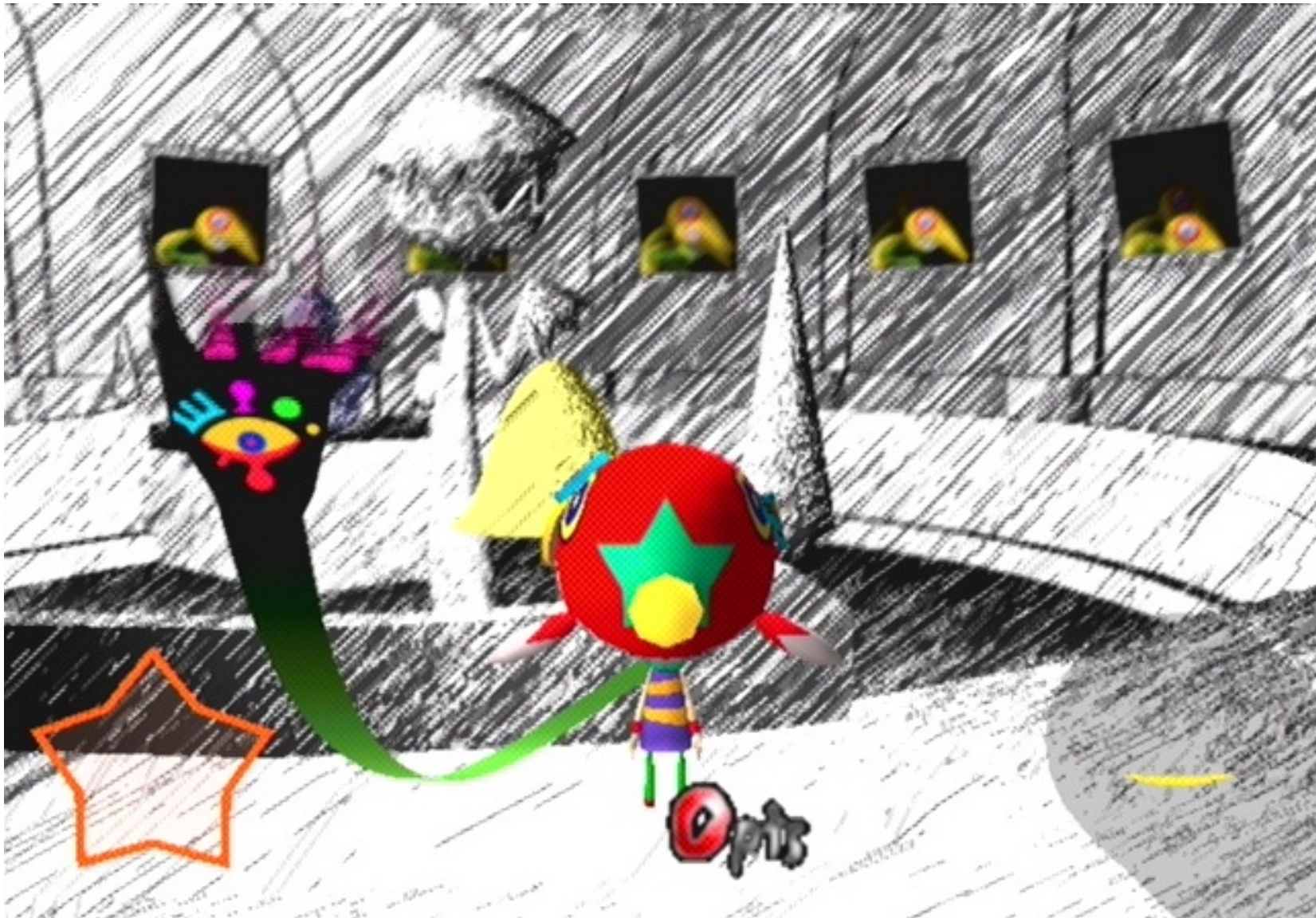Players are shown controls as they walk through the level

Inconsistency

#UXinGames

Stretch Panic

Several different art styles in the same game

Pokémon X/Y

Pikachu gets a voice actor, but other pokémon don't

Pokémon X/Y

Users are given dialog choices, but the plot doesn't change as expected

I'll just use my remote, here! Click-click!
And the power is ON!

✅ Prism Shell
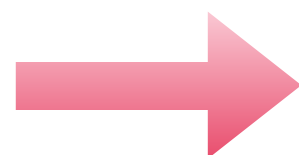
Rethink inconsistent parts of your game

Kudos to Xer Gata for this. Xer's Twitter: @xergata

#UXinGames

Confusing interfaces

Massive Interface Fail
gamedesignreviews.com/reviews/mass-effect-interface-fail/

Dota 2

The shop menu is hard to navigate

Buy everything

Find stuff

Avoid this mess like the plague

See item recipes

??? (magnified)

#UXinGames
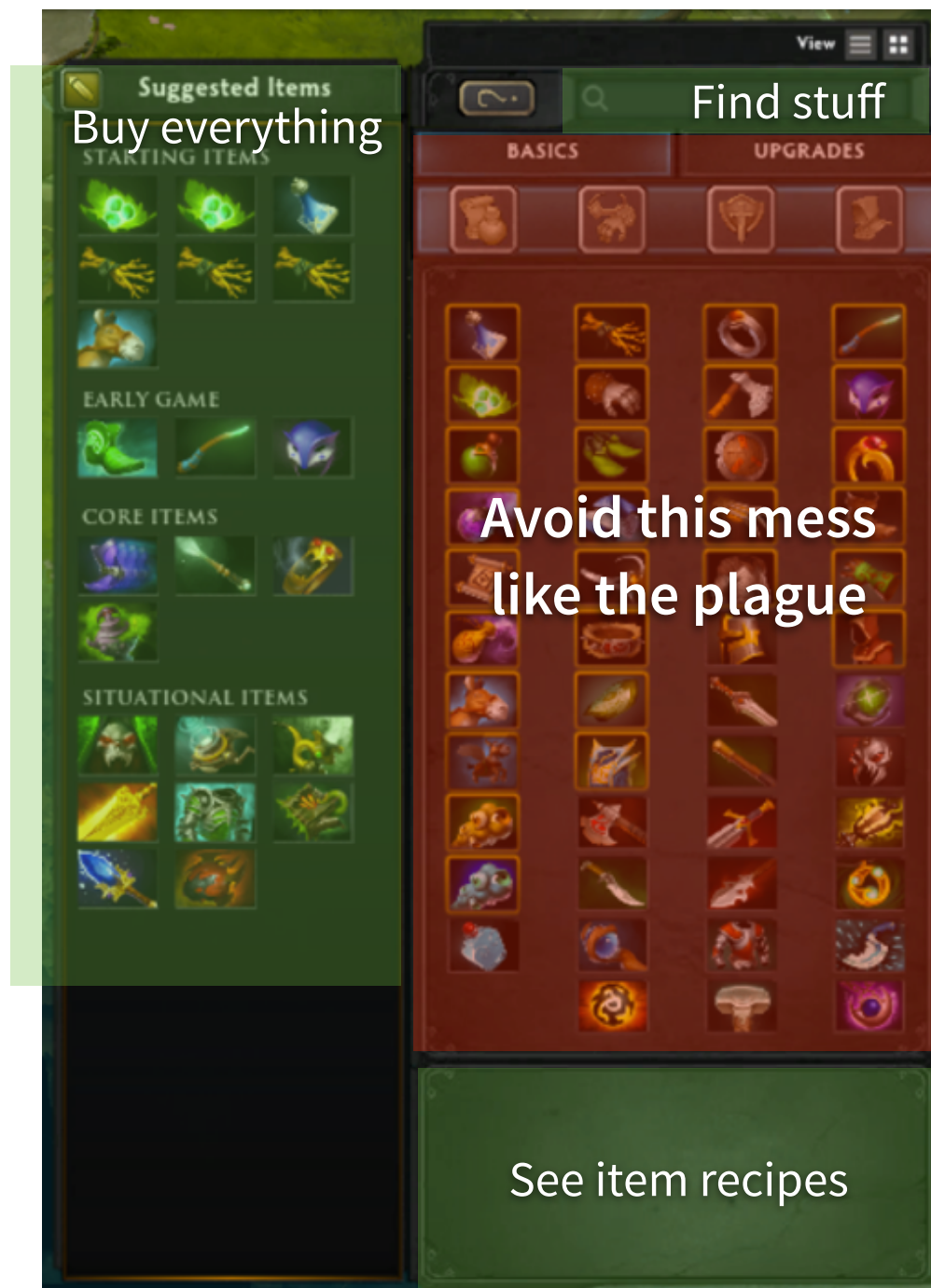
✔ Al the Chemist

Separate menus based on purpose

✔ Borderlands 2

Organize items and menus by type
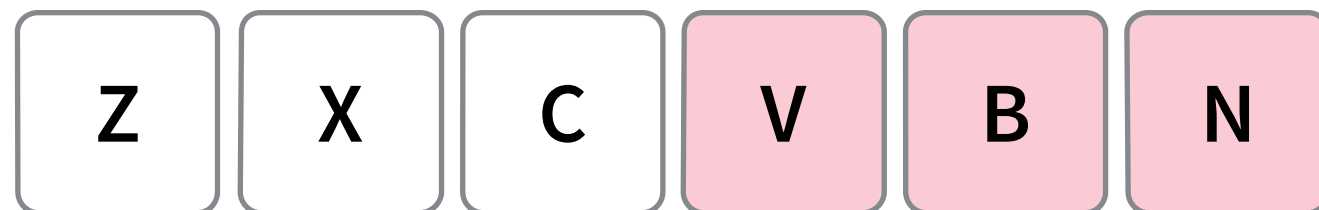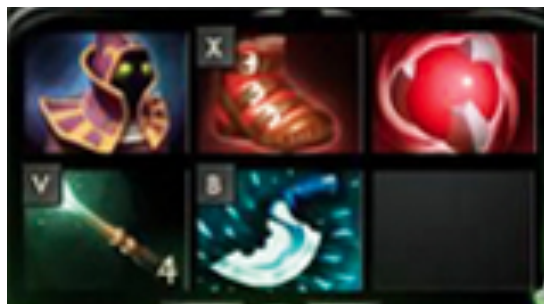
Complicated controls

Simraceway pedal-free controller

Dota 2

QWER attacks are listed across like on a keyboard

| Q | W | E | R |

Items are listed 3 in a row, unlike on a keyboard
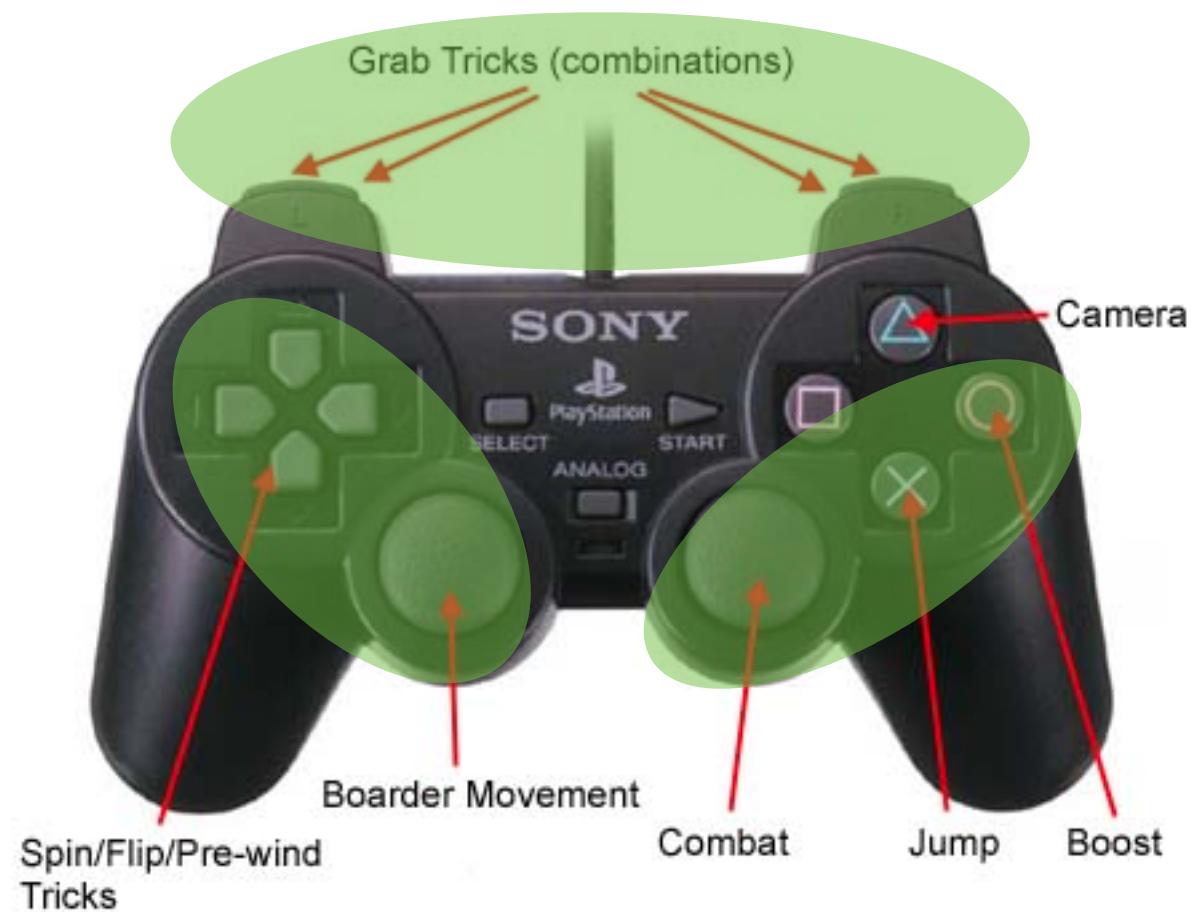

| Z | X | C | V | B | N |

Dota 2

Important controls are on different parts of the screen

The actual battle

✔ SSX Tricky

Map similar interactions to similar input areas

Grab Tricks (combinations)

Camera

Boarder Movement

Spin/Flip/Pre-wind Tricks

Combat   Jump   Boost

✔ Tales of Graces: F

Link related interactions together

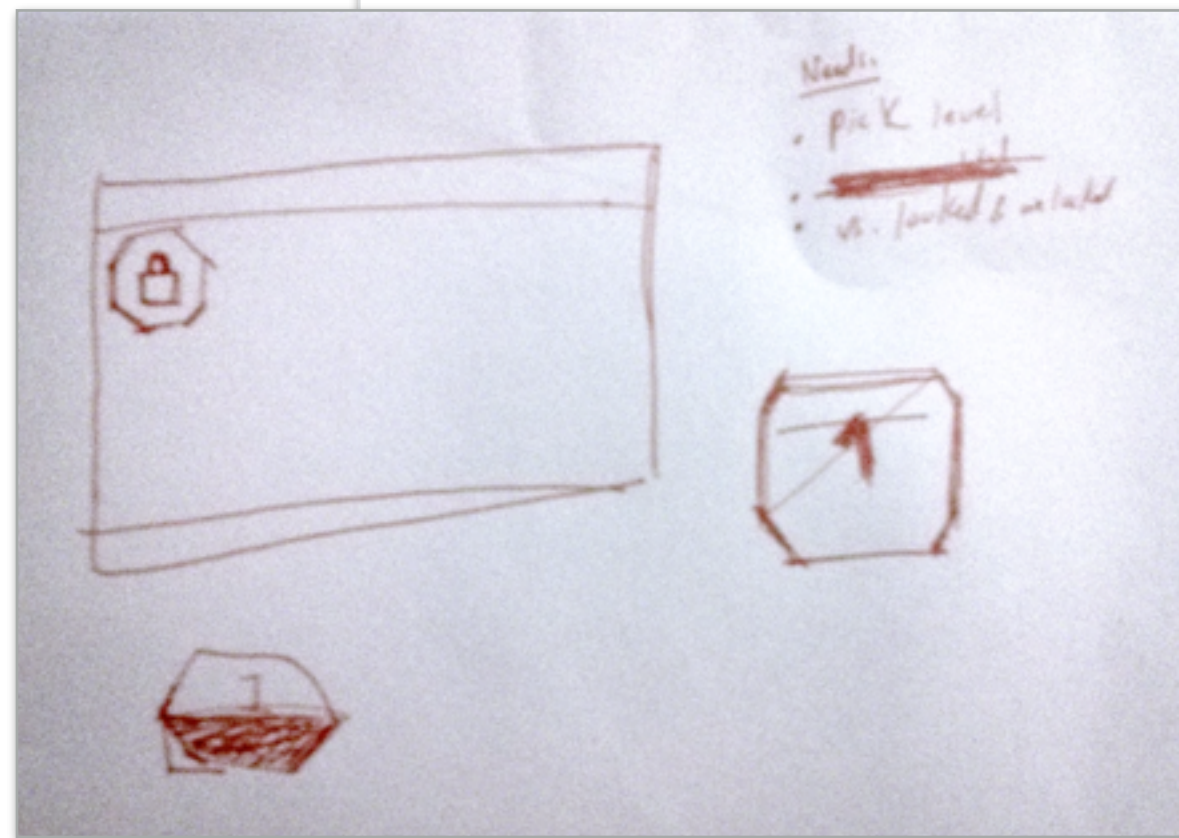# Ways to prevent UX problems in your game

Do research

- What is your game's core differentiator?

- What have others done that you can improve upon?

- What are common conventions you can use to familiarize players?

Sketch, then prototype

- Visualize solutions without wasting time

- Explain concepts faster with less repetition

http://konigi.com/tools/graph-paper

Document everything

- Write a design document to prevent feature creep

- Why does each feature exist — why is it important?

- What would the game be like without each feature?

Be consistent

- Define your game's tone

- Emulate the tone in the game's UI & art

- Create interaction patterns

- Link related interactions so controls are less confusing

Test your game often

- Put your game in front of as many people as possible

- Even a few people can reveal common pain points

- Ask your friends and family — they want to help you

- Rethink features if they keep frustrating testers

Don't be afraid of criticism

- Feedback is necessary for improvement

- Almost no game gets everything right the first time

- A dose of humility will save you many headaches

- It takes time to find good solutions

Thank you!

Tweet me: @cattsmall

Questions?