

Press play: design a game concept

In groups of 4–5 you will be dealt one of these five concepts. Design its world, story, player choices and interaction mechanics so they work together, build a short pitch deck as you go, and pitch it in five minutes.

1 · **Lost Memories** Narrative-driven adventure

You are an amnesiac explorer trapped on a mysterious island that holds the remnants of a lost civilisation. Uncover your own identity by exploring and making choices that shape the story.

- **Story:** a rich backstory pieced together through exploration and dialogue; every encounter reveals lore.
- **Agency:** whether to trust certain characters, or explore certain areas, leads to different endings.
- **Interaction:** ancient artefacts, environmental puzzles and NPCs give clues; the island reacts to your choices.

2 · **Shattered Alliance** Strategic role-playing game

Political intrigue in a kingdom on the brink of civil war. You are an advisor to the ruler, navigating alliances, relationships and strategy to prevent, or enable, the kingdom's collapse.

- **Story:** intrigue, betrayal and diplomacy; every character has their own motives and the plot adapts to your alliances.
- **Agency:** siding with one faction shifts the balance of power; multiple endings follow from political decisions.
- **Interaction:** dialogue choices, tactical battles, resource management, negotiation, persuasion and covert operations.

3 · **The Echoes of Eden** Post-apocalyptic open world

Survive on an Earth where nature has reclaimed the ruins of civilisation, and uncover the mystery of humanity's downfall through hidden relics and ancient archives.

- **Story:** non-linear and found through environmental storytelling
- **Agency:** rebuild civilisation or embrace the wild; help NPC factions or exploit them. Decisions have long-term effects.
- **Interaction:** scavenge, craft, build settlements, clear ruins into safe zones, restore lost technology.

4 · **Echoes of the Past** Time-travel puzzle adventure

A historian finds a device that moves between the eras of a mysterious city. Solve puzzles, meet historical figures, and change the present through what you do in the past.

- **Story:** how history shapes the present; clues gathered across time periods.
- **Agency:** save or sacrifice key historical figures, and the present-day city changes with you
- **Interaction:** change objects in the past to alter the present; influence key events through NPCs in different eras.

5 · **The Veil** Psychological horror RPG

A detective investigates disappearances in a haunted town, confronting their own fears and the town's strange inhabitants, where reality and the supernatural blur.

- **Story:** reality and nightmare intertwine; the town's dark secrets surface through exploration and dialogue.
- **Agency:** moral dilemmas (whom to trust, what to sacrifice) change the story, the town's fate and the protagonist's mind.
- **Interaction:** a psychological stress system; hallucinations, shifting environments, and trust versus suspicion with NPCs.

Five steps, one pitch deck

Timings are a guide. Add each slide as you finish its step.

Step	Decide	Put on a slide
1 • Brainstorm 5 min	The overall feel of your game. • How do the setting, characters and gameplay interact?	Nothing yet: talk.
2 • World 15 min	Size and scope: a vast open world, or a smaller, intimate one? How does size change exploration and progression? • What does the world look like: cities, wilderness, ruins? • How do its geography and architecture reflect the story? • What environmental storytelling could you add: landmarks, relics?	A map or sketch, key locations and the visual theme.
3 • Narrative 15 min	The narrative arc. Linear or non-linear? How much control does the player have? • What are the key beats (beginning, middle, end)? • What is the player's objective? Who do their actions affect? • Multiple endings? Which choices lead to them? Where is your bottleneck?	A 150–200-word plot summary with the key twists. You will say it, not read it.
4 • Agency 10 min	Where players make meaningful decisions, and what those decisions change. • Alliances, moral choices, relationships? • How does the world or its characters change? • How many endings or consequences?	3–5 key choices and how each affects the outcome or the world.
5 • Interaction 10 min	Mechanics that fit the world and support the choices. • What makes exploration interesting: puzzles, collecting? • How do players affect NPCs or the world: dialogue, objects? • What mechanic only makes sense in your concept: time travel, stress, survival?	3 mechanics, each with how it fits the story and player agency.

THEN ONE LINE, ON ITS OWN SLIDE

Our theme is _____, and _____ is the mechanic that makes you feel it.

STEP 6 • PITCH • FIVE MINUTES, FIVE SLIDES

1. **The world:** map, size, key places, visual theme.
2. **The story:** your plot summary, told rather than read.
3. **The choices:** 3–5 choices and what they change.
4. **The mechanics:** 3 interactions that fit the world.
5. **The theme:** your one line.

Audience: each group asks one question. Where is the bottleneck? Which mechanic carries the theme? Where do the parts disagree?

COHERENCE CHECK BEFORE YOU PITCH

Check	Ask yourselves
Thematic coherence	Do the world, story, mechanics, sound and UI all say the same thing? Is anything pulling against the rest?
Structure	Linear, tree, branch-and-bottleneck or open world? Can a team actually build it?
Agency and guidance	Do choices have consequences players can see? Will players know where to go without being herded?
Norman	Is it clear what players can do (visibility), do controls match results (mapping), does every action get a response (feedback)?

Worked example on the slides: The Last Lighthouse (small island, branch-and-bottleneck, theme: a light can guide or lure).