

Design an enemy for Geometry Wars

Pairs, 20 minutes. Add one new shape to Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved. It must ask the player a question that no current enemy asks, be readable in one second, and be fair. Then test it on the class (one minute per pair).

Enemy name _____

Sketch shape and colour; show it moving, and its telegraph

1 • Look Shape and colour. Distinct from the roster?	
2 • Behaviour One movement rule, one threat rule.	
3 • Question The one skill it tests that no current enemy does.	
4 • Telegraph Anticipation → main → dissipation.	
5 • Counterplay How a skilled player beats it, or uses it.	
6 • Risk–reward Score value; what it tempts the player to risk.	
7 • On the curve When it first appears; which enemy it combines with worst.	
8 • Sound Spawn cue and death sound.	

Worked example: the Shepherd

Look	Yellow chevron. Never touches you; keeps its distance.
Behaviour	Orbits about a third of a screen away. Every 3 seconds it pulses, shoving nearby enemies towards you.
Question	Target priority: can you spot the harmless thing that is really the threat?
Telegraph	A yellow ring grows for 0.6 s with a rising whine; the pulse; the ring fades.
Counterplay	Kill it first, or stand so the pulse feeds the crowd into your stream of fire.
Risk-reward	Worth 200, but chasing it pulls you away from safe space.
On the curve	After Grunts are mastered. Worst with Grunts; harmless with Wanderers.
Sound	Rising whine before the pulse; a soft bell when it dies.

You can try it: tick "Shepherd" in the Geo-lite prototype on the lecture slides.

TEST QUESTIONS (THE CLASS ANSWERS)

- **Readable?** Shown the sketch for one second, can the room say what it does?
- **Fair?** If it kills you, will you know why, and blame yourself rather than the game?
- **New?** What question does it ask that the roster does not already?

AFTER CLASS: AN ARCADE TEARDOWN

Pick another arcade-style game (Robotron: 2084, Asteroids, Vampire Survivors, Nex Machina, Tetris...) and answer each question in one or two sentences. This is the same reading we did of Geometry Wars.

Question	Ask yourself
Core loop	What does the player do every few seconds? What makes each pass harder or worth more?
Verbs and controls	How many inputs? How independent are they? Where does the tactical depth come from?
Roster as atoms	List the threats. What single question does each one ask?
Difficulty dials	Which of quantity, frequency, new types and mixes does it turn, and when?
Fairness	How does it warn you? Do deaths feel like your fault?
Score and risk	What does the score system reward? What does a late death cost?
Feel	Which effects are informational, and which only aesthetic? Does any effect hide the game?
Replay	Why press retry? Leaderboards, short runs, mastery, variety?