



Enter The
FICKLEZONE

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Master your environment!

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Overview

High concept / One liner

Adapt and create your own winning conditions with Fickle Zone, the revival of the classic tactical RPG formula. Your actions depend on the terrain, but you can change it!

Genre

This game is a classic representative of the genre **Tactical RPG**.

Target audience

At the first approach, the game can be a bit difficult (because tactical without challenge are not funny) but with a little involvement, **everyone can finish it**. There is also very hard annexe mission for hardcore player but they are not obligatory.

Due to the presence of combat involving light violence the game would surely be rated 12+.

According to the Quantic Foundry system, the game involve:

- **Mastery** with strategy and a bit of challenge
- **Creativity** with design
- **Immersion** with story and fantasy

Target platform

The **PC** is a platform adapted to this type of game (and it just need the mouse to play). The **Switch**, and its portable mode is a good choice too, because the game has simple graphics and short play sessions.

But considering a release on other platforms in order to reach a wider audience is also possible.

Intention

Promise

In a modern but crazy and off-set world, you will need to **adapt yourself to the environment**. Mastering it will be the key to your victory over your enemies.

In a second step, in addition to mastering it, you will have to learn to **modify this environment** to your advantage in order to create ever more numerous and powerful opportunities.

From a narrative point of view, the game has a similar approach to south park: the **modern world**, apparently coherent but which is upset by lots of **crazy events**, both unrealistic but not shocking in the diegesis of the game. All playing on criticism with an **irreverent humour** (but without being as trashy as south park).

Pillar

- **Strategy:** Fickle Zone is a **classic tactical RPG**. This will require **reflection, anticipation** and a **good knowledge of the game mechanics** to progress.
- **Adaptation:** The ability of units to have different skills **depending on the nature of the terrain**. For example, if you have two units, the number 1 on dirt and the number 2 on grass, 1 can make a straight line attack on three tiles and 2 can heal himself. But if they switch their position, 1 can adopt a strong defensive pose and 2 can make a ranged attack on a tile.
- **Mastery:** The possibility of **modifying this terrain** by tile, which should add great depth in terms of gameplay and a variety of approaches to the battle. Note that hazards will change the terrain against your will.
- **Humor:** The story, the artistic direction and the ambience are **wacky** and **parody**, even **satirical**.

Tetrad

Technology: the game does not require a lot of resources, it would be in **isometric view** and not in 3D. It can be very well adapted to a joystick as to a mouse. It could perfectly well be done in Unity.

Mechanics: single player, turn-based game where you control a team of various units on a checkered terrain against enemies with the primary controls to move use skills.

However, this last command will be defined here both by the nature of your character and by his environment, that is to say the nature of the tile on which he is (dirt, grass, water, etc.).

Another important point: system of **modification of the environment** by the units, which, linked to the first mechanics explained, will add a whole depth to the gameplay that will become **systemic**.

Narration: as in all RPG, the story is **classic**, importance of the **characterisation** of the characters and their **relations**. Development of the story mainly through dialogue (with artwork of the characters) and some staging in the places where the fights take place, with basic reusing of combat animation.

Aesthetics: environment only shown via the combat screens, therefore by chunk, and by the navigation map between the different levels.

Simple graphics from the SNES / early Playstation era, **colourful**, with a nice appearance, happy ambiance and with fairly fine decorations.

Sometime the tone of the game may be darker to immerse the player in more dramatic moments.

Like in a lot of RPG, the different environments must be various to give to the player the impression of travelling.

Scope

Fickle Zone features a fairly **long main storyline**, to which are added dozens of **side quests**, some being multi-part and developing a storyline, others being short and ad hoc. The objectives of the missions will be varied in order to avoid repetition (area protection, use of specific skills, etc.). It will be possible to play a **six units** each with their own personality and skills.

For a demo version, two different battle map with 3 unit are enough to show the concept and prove the potential for variety of situation.

References

Final Fantasy Tactics and *Into the Breach* for mechanics and aesthetic.

Earthbound / Mother 3 and *South Park* for universe, narration and ambiance.

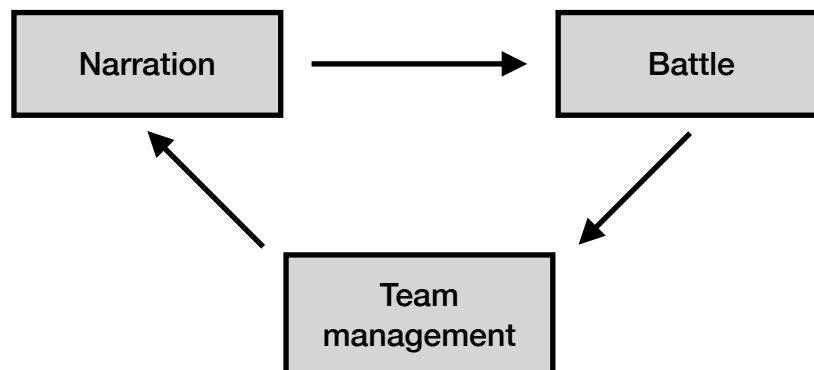
Proof of concept

The basic mechanics of tactical RPG have proven that they were solid for many years already, in games like *Fire Emblem*, *Final Fantasy Tactics* or *Front Mission*.

This type of irreverent humour and offbeat story are popular, as series like American cartoon show.

Game Loop

Macro



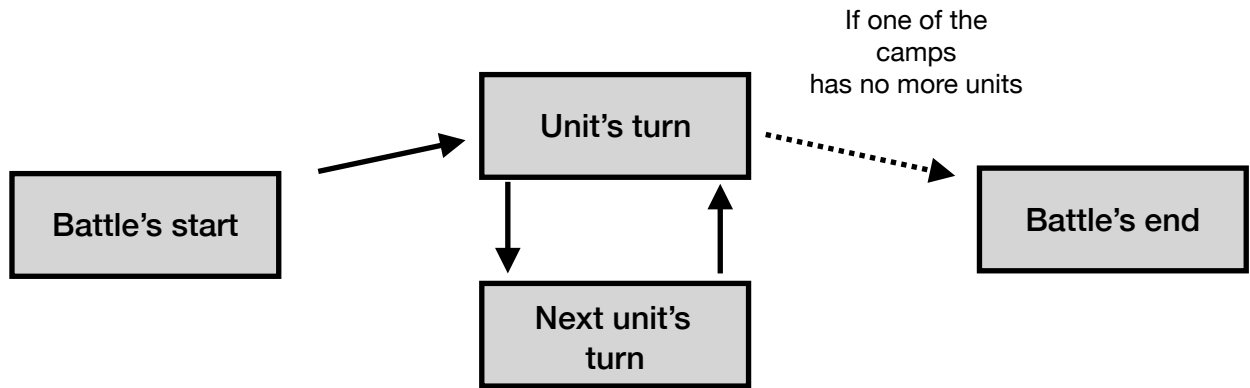
Narration: like in a few Japanese RPG, the scenario is **basic** and is the starting point of the game. With a poor staging, he still has the role of introducing the battle and determining a common thread allowing to situate our progression in the game. It must still be relatively pleasant to follow in order to maintain the player's interest and encourage / reward his progress.

Battle: introduced by the narration, there are the **battle phase**, that is to say the heart of the game. This is the longest phase of the loop and the one where the player will encounter both **difficulty** and **accomplishment**.

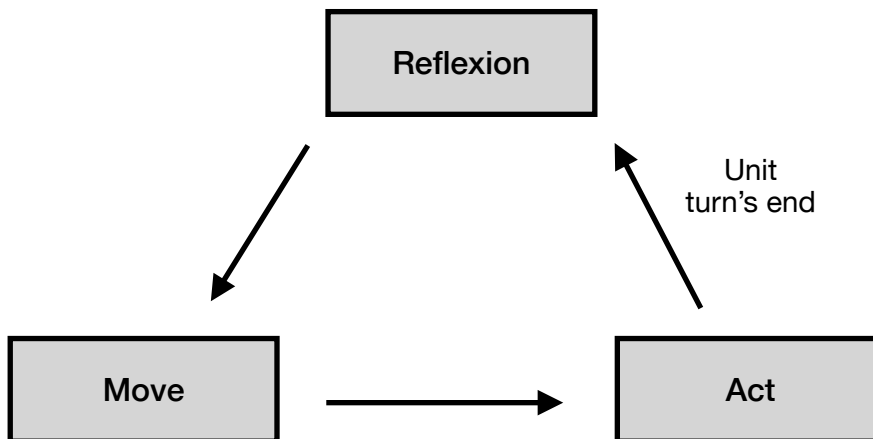
Team management: if you win the battle, you obtain XP and skill points. So the logical continuation is to use it to manage our team to **upgrade** and **personalise** it. This is a pretty important phase because upgrade our team allows the player to **renew the gameplay** (by learning new skills) and give the pleasure to choose his approach options during battle. The management and improvement of the team can also be a reward stronger than the scenario for some player.

Micro

This loop is the micro of the Battle phase from the macro loop.



We can make one more zoom in the micro loop of a battle. Here the loop of the turn of each unit:



Reflexion: this is the only challenging phase of the battle. We can distinguish two situations of reflections, that made in reaction to an adverse action and that made in anticipation of an adverse movement.

The following phase will depend of the situation, because it's possible to move and act in the desired order.

Move: in this type of game, the position of units are very important, because your action as limited range and pattern.

Act: the principal feature to pursue your goal: kill ennemis. It's in this phase where you can do damage, heal your unit, change environment, etc.

Note: Move and Act can be exchanged depending on the situation and the will of the player.

Mechanics and metrics

World mechanics

There is three principal screens where the game takes place:

- The **world map** where you can choose your challenge or go manage your units. This screen is a simple country map, with just some points (which are city or battle area) and line between them (the road to move from one point to another).
- The **team management** screen where you can upgrade them, see their statistics, etc.
- The **battle area** where the battle takes place. There is a lot of different battle area, with different metrics and mechanics.

Battle areas have an approximately rectangular shape (with outgrowths depending on the landscape), divided in multiple square which forms a **grid** on which **each unit occupies a tile**. Vertically, the height of the tiles is variable and represents the reliefs that we can find in natural landscapes.

One other important world mechanic is the **type of tiles** depending on the nature of the terrain. This is important because unit's action depend on the tile's nature.

Possible tile's nature: dirt, water, sand, grass, wood, stone, gravel, ice, snow, tar, metal, other (natural), other (unnatural).

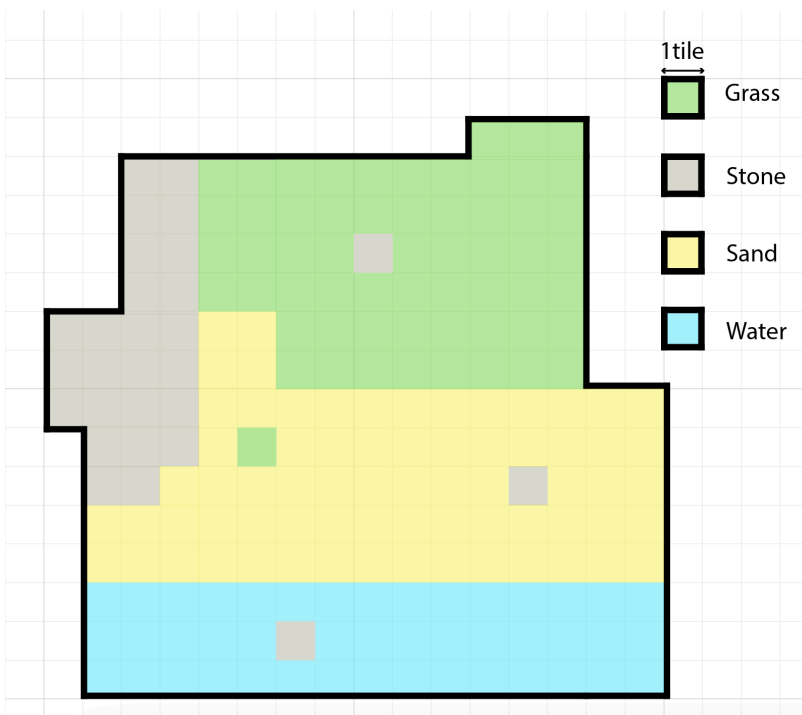
Related to this mechanic, hazard can come to change tile's nature. If it starts to rain, some tiles will become water tile.

Enemies: each battle, there are a little more numerous and have the same characteristics and skill's type than your team.

World metrics

Battle area : average of 14x14 tiles, with 1 tile equivalent to 1x1 meter.

Height : from 0.5 to 10 meters (the base unit for height is 0.5 meter, 0.5 being here the sea level)



*Figure of a battle zone seen from above
(here a beach)*

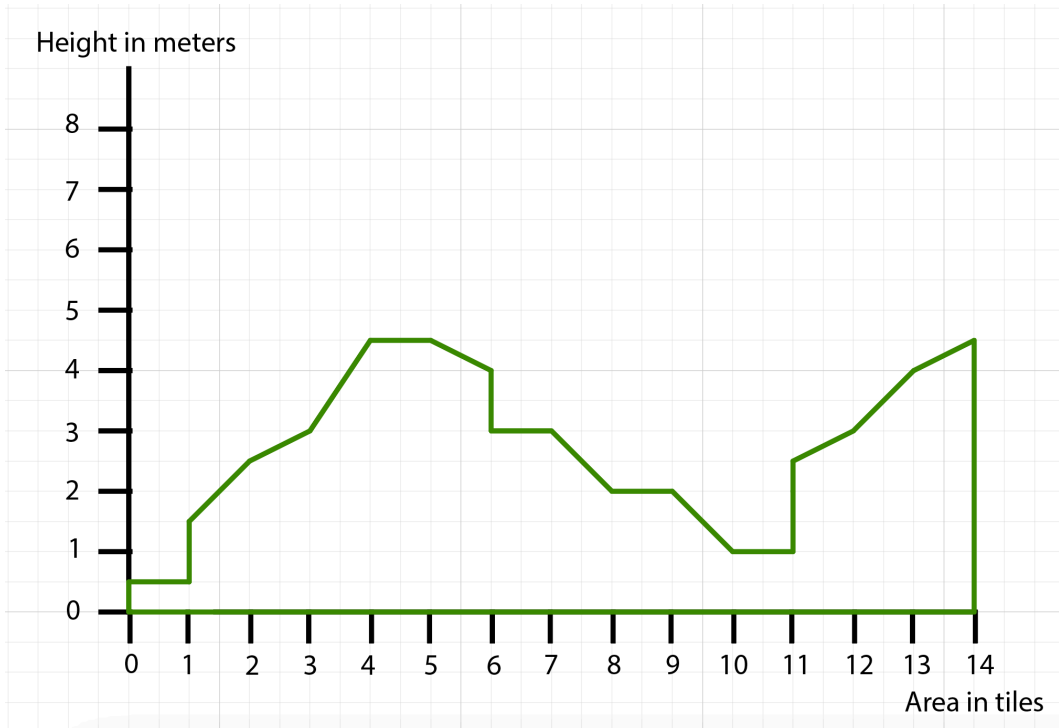


Figure of a battle zone seen from one side (here a hill landscape)

Player mechanics & metrics

There is no direct control of units, the player just give them order. He commands turn after turn a squad of maximum 6 units. If a unit reach 0 Life point, it quits the battle but can be reuse the next battle. If your entire team die, you restart from before the mission.

All the units have the same base of mechanics:

- **Moving**
 - Choose a tile within reach
 - The unit go automatically at this tile
- **Use skill**
 - Select a skill
 - Choose the target(s) within reach
 - The unit cast the skill
- **Wait** (do nothing instead of moving or use skill)

Note: if you don't move at the beginning of the turn, you can move after casting your skill.

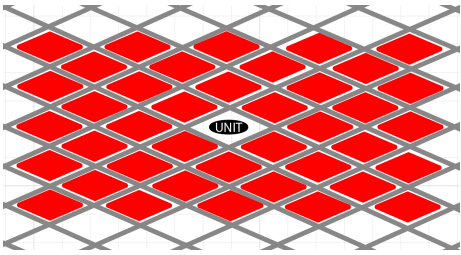
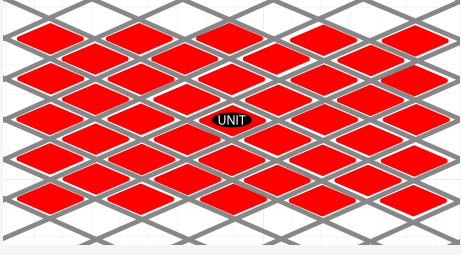
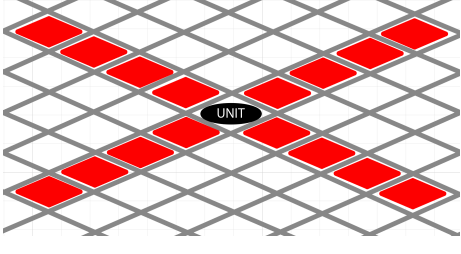
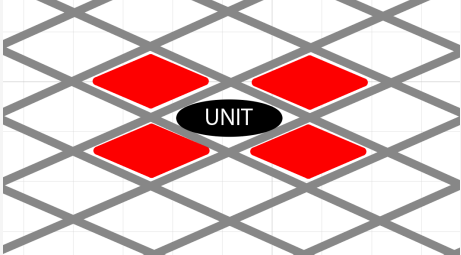
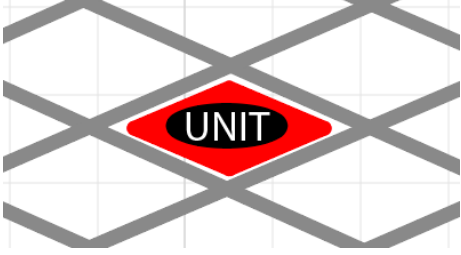
About skills

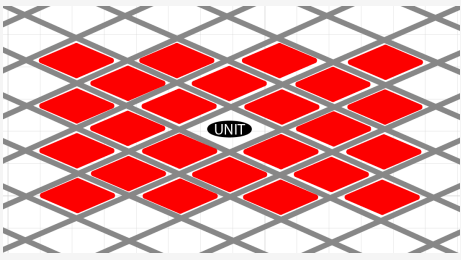
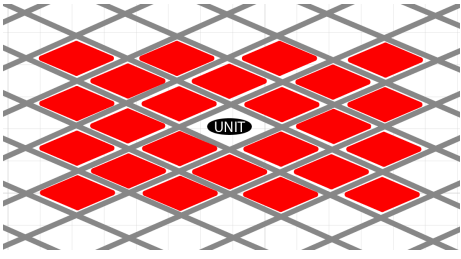
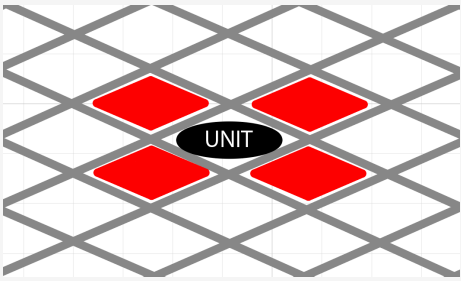
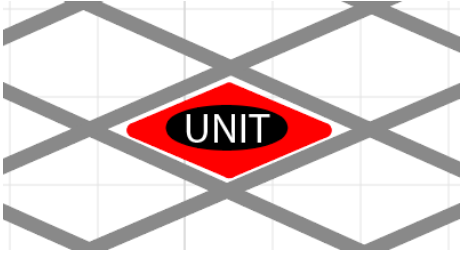
Skills are different for all your 6 units, but they are built in the **same way**.

It's mainly the effects that change depending on the condition.

All units have the same skill's number, the skill "FICKLE!" and have all their skills unlock from the beginning. To use this skills, the player just has to choose them like the action "Move".

Considering all of this, here we will see only one character's skills.

Skills (& condition)	Effect	Range	Feedback & Gamefeel
<p>FICKLE!</p> <p>(No condition)</p>	<p>Turn a tile's nature into another (you choose between water, stone, grass, dirt, sand, tar or metal)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The word "FICKLE!" appears large on the screen, with a funny little melody. The appearance of the selected tile change in a little cloud of smoke
<p>Refreshing water</p> <p>(Be on a water tile)</p>	<p>Restore few Life Point of 1 target</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soothing sound of water Small stars emanate from the targeted unit
<p>Rock throw</p> <p>(Be on a stone or gravel tile)</p>	<p>Hit 1 target</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animation of a ridiculous throw of a little rock with a funny high sound Animation of the targeted unit who just rub its head after being hit
<p>Leaf tickling</p> <p>(Be on a grass or a wood tile)</p>	<p>Move a unit to the top of the action order</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little flute melody Funny animations of tickling and laughing
<p>Dig</p> <p>(Be on a dirt tile)</p>	<p>Avoid all skill until the next unit's turn</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeated sound of scratched ground Animation of the units scratching the ground, Diving and disappear in a dust cloud

Skills (& condition)	Effect	Range	Feedback & Gamefeel
<p>Snowman</p> <p>(Target a snow or ice tile)</p>	<p>Create an entity who can hit at 1 tile range each turn of the unit who create it</p> <p>It disappear after taking 1 hit</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animation of a snowman emerging from the ground (like a mushroom that would suddenly grow) • Sound of a bell
<p>Quicksand</p> <p>(Target a sand tile)</p>	<p>Prevents a unit from using the move command on its next turn</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprite of the target half buried in the ground • low-pitched sound while the target sinks into the ground
<p>Street punch</p> <p>(Be on a tar tile)</p>	<p>Hit 1 target</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animation of a punch like the dragon punch of Ryu in Street Fighter • Small pause during the animation of the punch (when it reaches its target) to increase the impact of this one
<p>Heavy muscle</p> <p>(Be on a metal tile)</p>	<p>Power and Resistance up for 3 turn (not combinable)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funny animation of the unit who show his muscle to the player with a malicious smile on his face • Sound of sniggering
<p>-</p> <p>(Be on an other natural floor tile)</p>	<p>Random effect (based on one other skill)</p>	-	-
<p>-</p> <p>(Be on an other unnatural floor tile)</p>	<p>Random effect (based on one other skill)</p>	-	-

Note: all your units will have various skill's effect to avoid soft lock.

Unit's statistics, level up and skill upgrade

The first statistics is the level of the units. It starts from 1 and is limited to 99. Units gain level by winning battle (one or two battles needed to gain one level).

The following table are more parameters than metrics but can help to understand how the game works.

Statistics	Value	Description
Power	10-15	Determine the amount of damage the unit can apply
Resistance	10-15	Determine the amount of damage the unit take
Speed	10-15	Determine the unit order in the unit's order list
Life points	40-70	Determine how much damage the unit can take before dying
Move	3-4	Determine how many tiles the unit can cross with the Move action
Jump	2-4	Determine the difference between height of unit and the height of the tile where it wants to go that it can pass

Note: these value are at lvl 1, at the beginning of the game.

The value is between the two numbers depending on the unit.

Statistics	Value evolution with a level up
Power	+ 1 to 5
Resistance	+ 1 to 5
Speed	+ 1 to 5
Life points	+ 3 to 7

Skill can be upgrade by skill points (gained after battle), and it's improve its range or power, depending on the skill.

Character / Controller / Camera

Character

You control a team of **6 characters** who will join your group as things progress.

This team is **motley** and is composed by as many humans as animals or humanoid and strange creatures. They will all have **developed personality** and identity during the narration phases.

There is two representations in the game: the little sprite during battle, who has 4 variants depending on the camera's angle, and an artwork in a drawn style.

Sprite:



Sprite link:

https://www.reddit.com/r/earthbound/comments/6tfhol/remade_some_more_sprites_from_my_terrible/

Artwork:

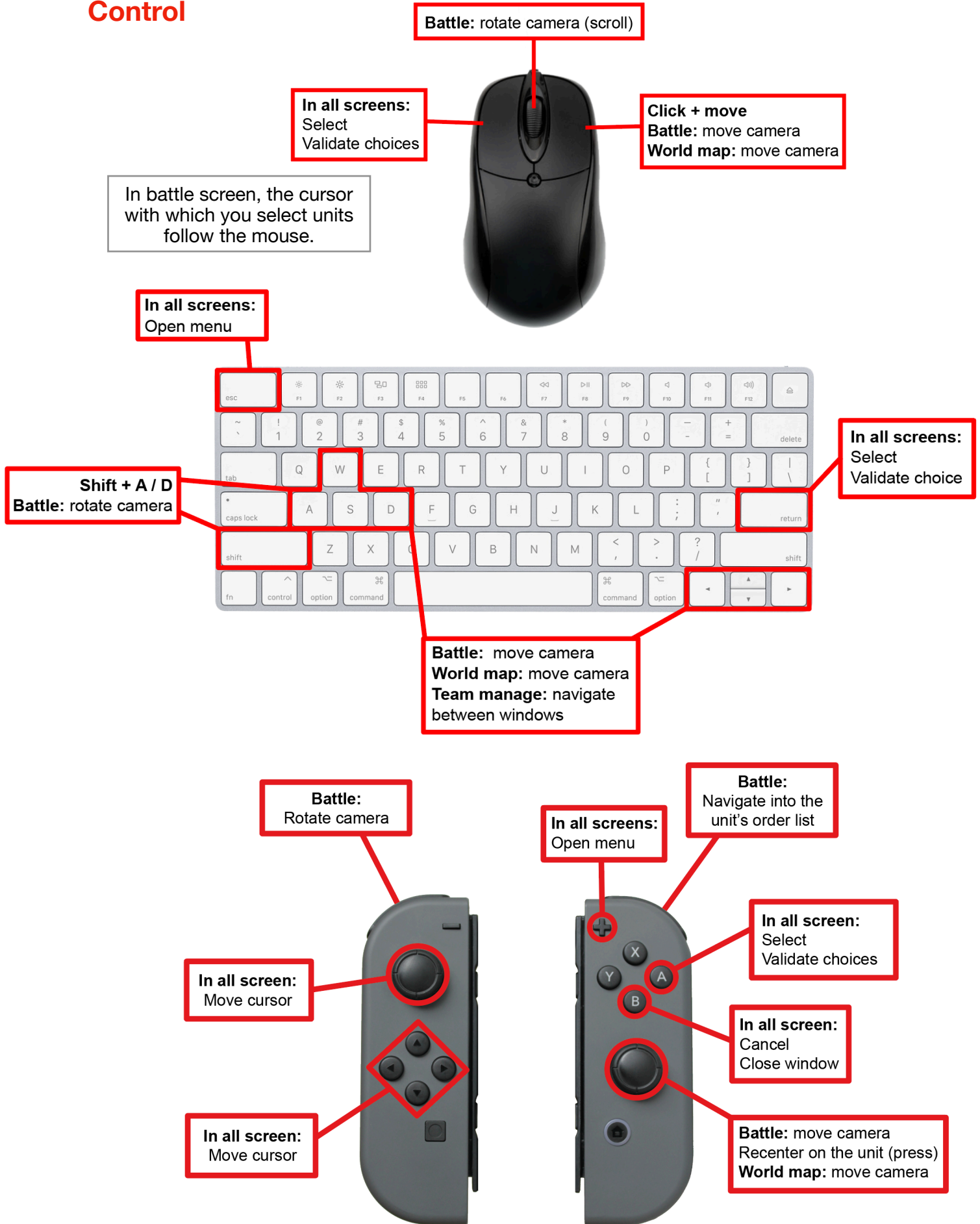


Artwork link :

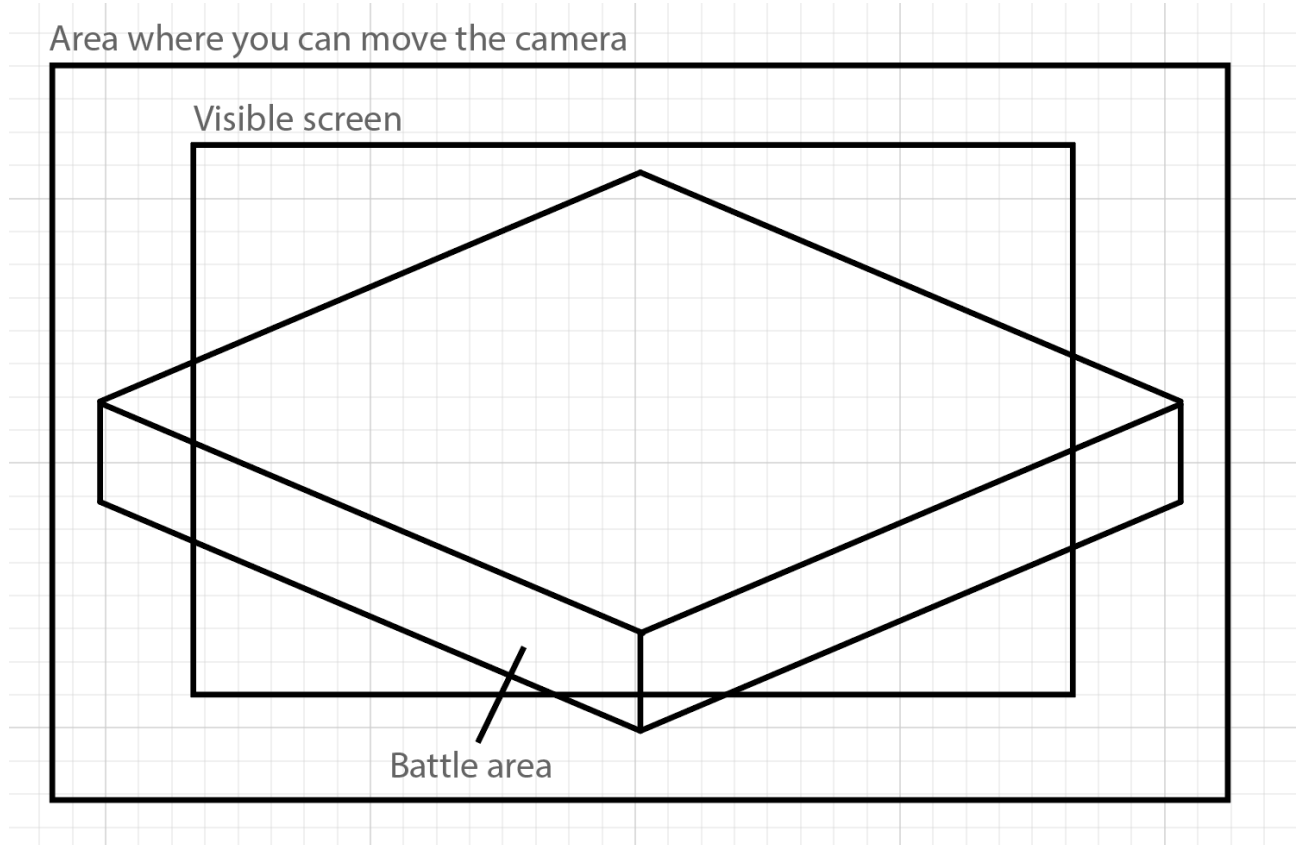
<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/echoperson/artbound-a-collection-of-earthbound-fan-art/description?lang=fr>

Note: character's sprite will be animated. All these image are fanmade and are just representative of the style, there aren't the final visual.

Control



Camera

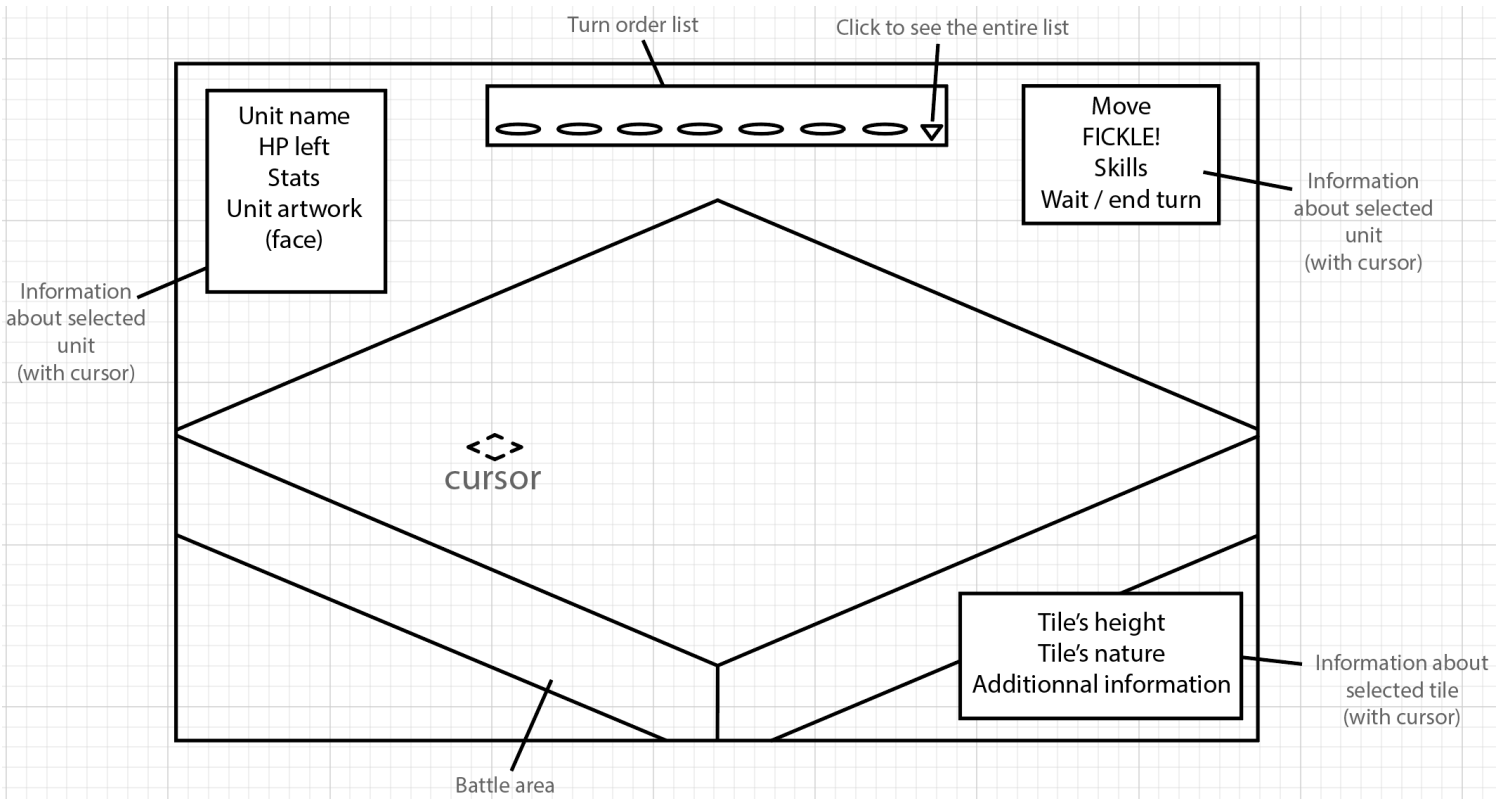


It's possible to move the camera **up**, **down**, **left** or **right** to see correctly all the terrain.

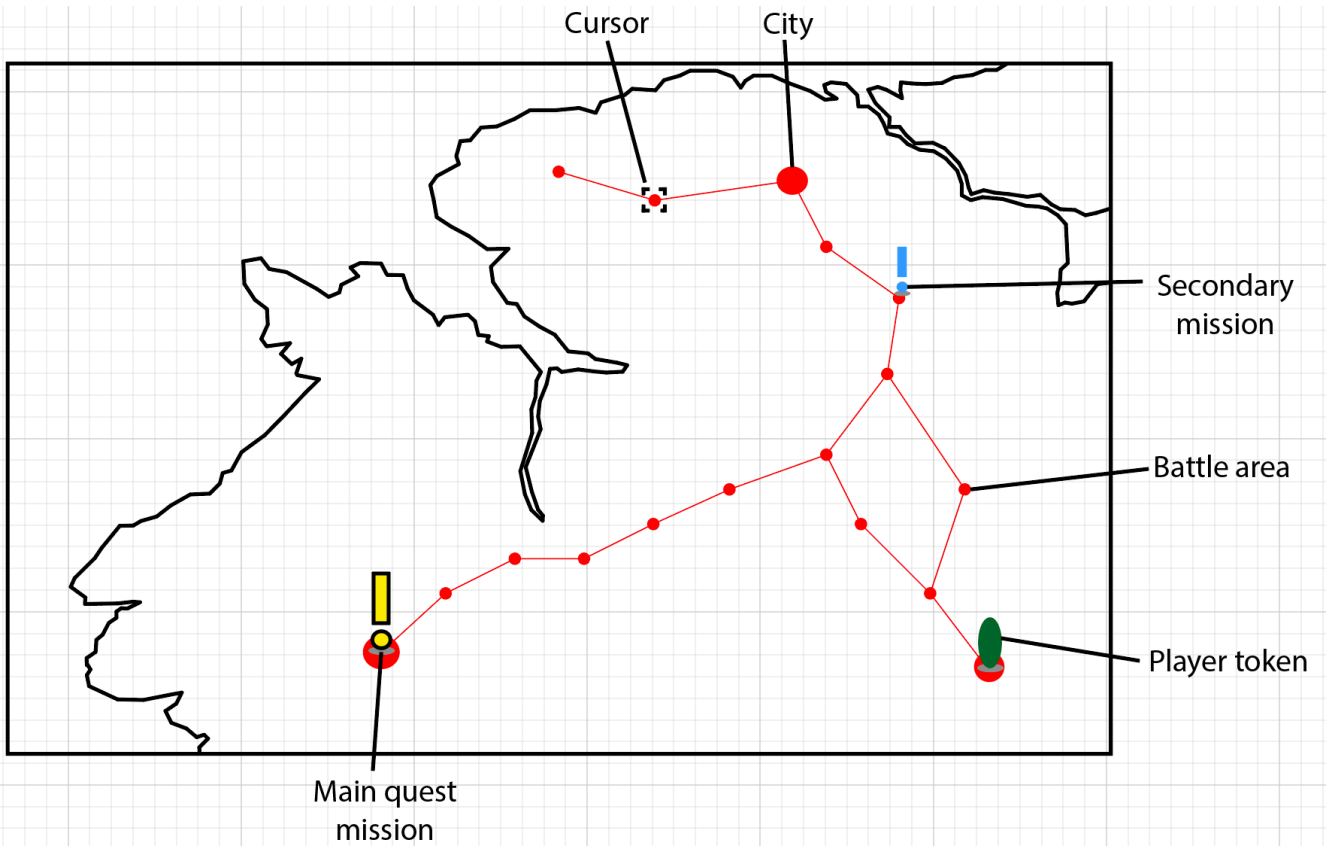
To maintain visibility even with the relief, you can rotate the terrain by 90° , so there are **4 possible viewing angles**.

UI, sign and feedback

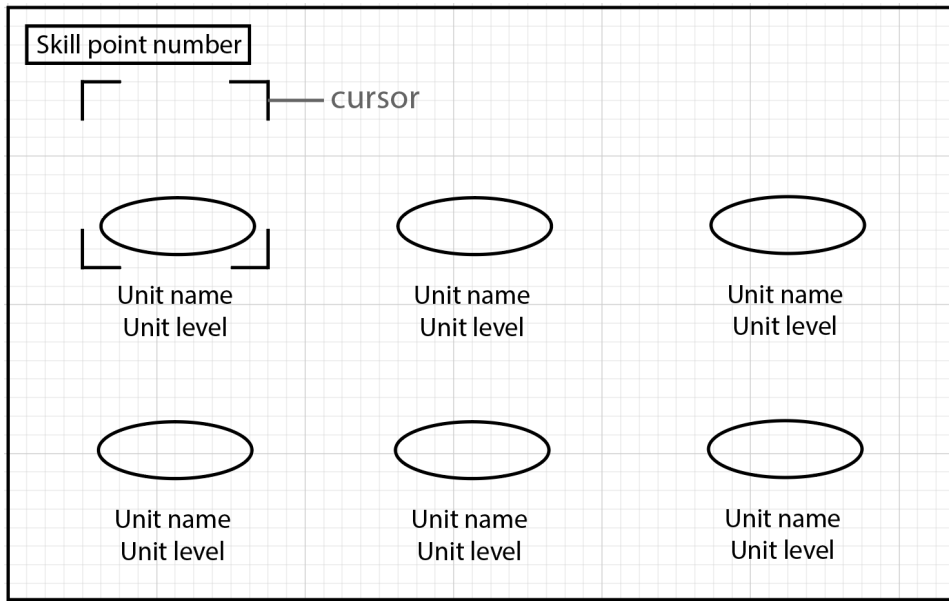
UI Battle screen:



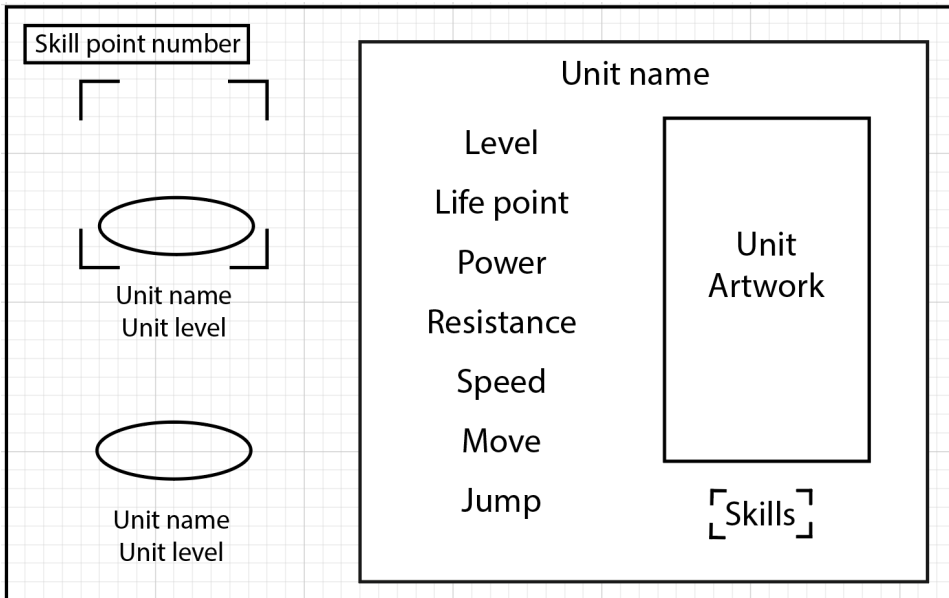
UI World map:



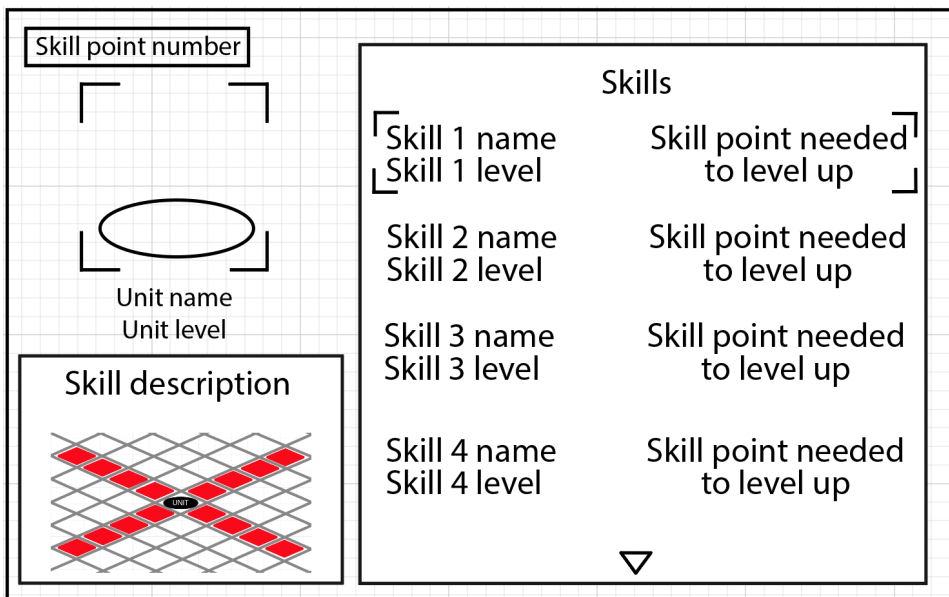
UI Team management screen:



Select a unit

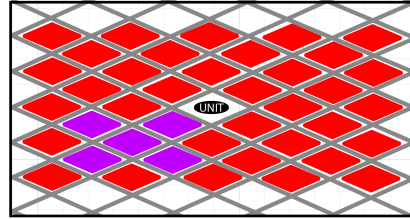


Select Skills



Sign:

- When you choose an action like skill or move, the tiles within reach are highlight in red.
- The tile(s) targeted with a skill are purple.



- In the Team management screen, the skills that can be upgrade are white and the other are grey.

Feedback:

- In all the game, select something (a unit, a window, a parameter,...) give a validation sound feedback.
- As you can see in the player mechanics, all skills have special animations and sounds of the unit's sprite who cast or be hit by a skill.
- When a unit reach 0 life point, there is a visual (animation of taking damage and fall) and audio feedback (like a cry of pain).
- The Game Over has a dramatic melody has feedback and "Game Over" appear on the screen.
- When the player win a battle, "Mission Complete" appear on the screen, with a victory melody.

Global Game feel:

In this type of game with **indirect control**, the game feel doesn't come from the fluidity of action. It principally is an **accomplishment feeling** when you master the battle mechanics to smartly kill your enemies. The feedback of a succeed hit, with a bigger feedback if it kills, strengthens this winning sensation.

The **ambience**, colourful, with moments as funny as creepy and with a lot of quirky situations, can get to the player a feeling of being in a know area, **comfortable**, but can **surprise** him.



Examples of various environment, classic in this type of RPG (from *Mother 3*)



Example of battle (left) and story progression by dialog into the battle area (right)
(from *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance 2*)



One turn later



Example of area variations due to hazard
(here the water in *Into the Breach*)

Sources cover pictures

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