

## Worked Example Script

### **Preamble**

For this worked example, we'll be performing a quick usability evaluation of the 1995 Super Nintendo game "Yoshi's Island". In real-world circumstances, I would insist on *at least* half-an-hour of evaluation, but due to time constraints, we're going to take about 10 minutes, and focus on making sure that the game is accessible to first-time players, while still remaining enjoyable.

The participant I've selected epitomizes our target audience for this game. He's a game-player who owns a Super Nintendo and he has played the preceding title in this series. However, he has never played this game before, so his input will be untainted by prior experience. Now, if you'll excuse me, I will fetch our participant.

### **Introduction**

Hello, [participant], thank you for agreeing to participate in this experiment. We've invited you here today to try a new video game developed by Nintendo. The game is called "Yoshi's Island" and it is the sequel to Super Mario World. By playing the game and sharing your thoughts with us, you'll be helping us to identify issues with our game's design.

I want to emphasize that the purpose of this experiment is to analyze the game, not you. If you should become stuck or frustrated at any point, do not feel upset. This merely reflects a problem with the game, which is exactly what we're seeking to address today.

Nevertheless, if you find yourself becoming uncomfortable during the test, you are free to quit at any time. Do you understand? [Wait for affirmation.]

### **Explanation of Equipment**

You'll play the game on this screen, using this gamepad.

[Aside to audience] In a real test, you would want to test using the same equipment that a player would use at home, in order to maintain the validity of your results - however, it was necessary to make a few compromises for the sake of this example. In this case, the player will be using a generic PC gamepad, which approximates the feel of a real Super Nintendo controller.

[Return to participant, and instruct him on the use of the PC gamepad.] Do you understand? [Wait for affirmation.] Good.

### **Explanation of Experiment Procedures**

As a participant in this experiment, you will be asked to perform several tasks within the game. While you attempt these tasks, I would like you to "think aloud" - to vocalize any and all thoughts you have as you play. We've found that having

participants think aloud provides us with an enormous amount of information which we simply cannot get any other way.

I realize it may be awkward to speak and play at the same time, but I think you'll find it's very easy once you become accustomed to it. If you forget to think aloud at any point during the experiment, I will remind you. Would you like to demonstrate how to think aloud?

[If the participant requests a demonstration, do a quick demo.]

We want to see how our players interact with our games in a natural context. Because of this, I cannot provide you with any help once you begin your tasks. However, I encourage you to ask your questions anyways, as these can give us further insight into your thought process. When the experiment is concluded, I will be happy to answer any remaining questions you might have.

Your tasks will be given to you one at a time on a piece of paper. After each task is completed, I will give you your next task. Do you understand? [Wait for affirmation.] Good.

Do you have any further questions? [Answer questions.] Good. Then, let us begin the experiment.

### **The Participant's Tasks:**

1. Welcome to Yoshi's Island. Please begin a new game using whatever method you wish. Then, watch the opening cutscene.
2. After the opening cutscene, you will be automatically placed in a tutorial level. Please complete this tutorial level using whatever method you wish.
3. Following the tutorial level, you will find yourself in the world select screen. Please select the first level, and complete it using whatever method you wish.

### **Post-Test Procedures**

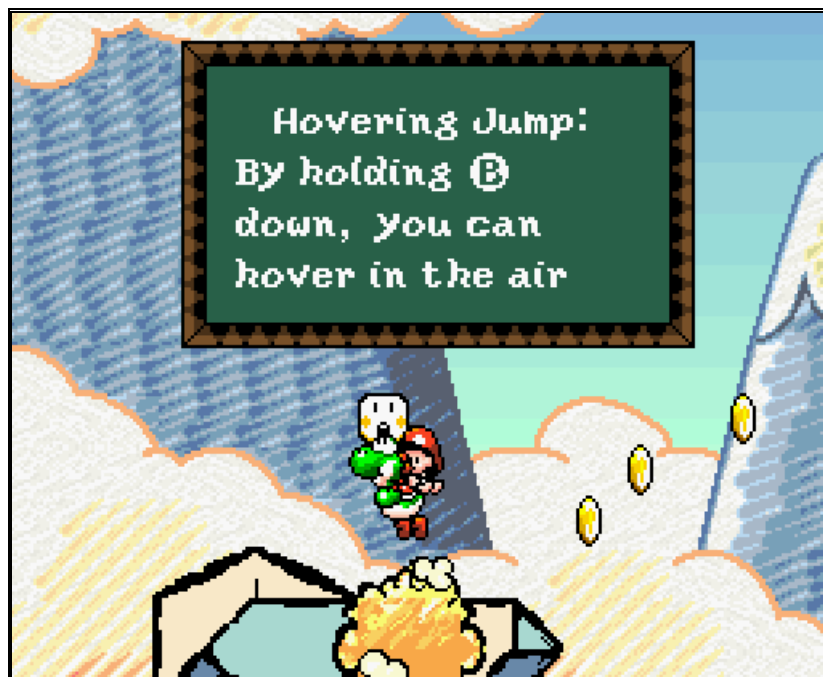
[Once the participant has completed his final task.] Good job. That was your last task. But before I let you go, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your experience.

- Did you enjoy playing Yoshi's Island?
- Is there anything about the game you particularly liked, or that stood out in your mind?
- Similarly, is there anything about the game you particularly disliked? Could you suggest how this might be improved?
- [Here, you can ask any other questions which arose in your experiment. Such as "I noticed you had trouble with... can you explain why?"]
- Any final comments?

## Conclusion

I hope that this example has reinforced the message of my presentation and handout. Because gaming is not motivated by external tasks, I can afford to keep my task descriptions very general; I have basically just asked the player to play the game in whatever manner comes naturally. After all, if the player is not allowed to play the game in a manner that he enjoys, it defeats the purpose of playing the game altogether. The completion of tasks is a secondary objective (albeit important). The true purpose of the tasks is to force the player to experience the game. Based on the player's reactions and comments as he plays, we can learn a great deal his emotional state, and his attitude towards the game.

Yoshi's Island - the game which we have just evaluated - is widely considered to be a classic, since it provides copious amounts of both hard and easy fun. The process of learning (which I identified in my handout as a crucial component of "hard fun") is immediately obvious within this game. "Helper blocks" are strewn throughout the game, and help the player to acquire new skills in an unobtrusive way. Challenges which require the player to use these new skills are often nearby, forcing the player to internalize this learning before he can proceed.



A helper block teaches the player to perform a floating jump.

These learned skills can be reliably built upon in the future - creating ever more complex challenges - in a process that developers refer to as "layering".

The game's easy fun comes from its distinctive "hand-drawn crayon" graphics, memorable soundtrack, vibrant characters that shrink, twist, squish and rotate, and its beloved, iconic protagonists, Mario and Yoshi.