

# Game Design Proposal - ETEC 565S

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# Pokédemic

## Purpose

We are proposing a game that helps instill values of safety and caution within players during a time of pandemic. Our hope is to help the players experience the feelings of anxiety that can accompany such an event (in a fun way) and learn the types of skills and activities they would need to keep themselves healthy and mentally well during such an anxious time.

## Premise

The game is set in a modern urban environment (using Pokémon characters to keep the feeling light and fun) during a pandemic situation (similar to current COVID-19). The players act to control the Pokémon characters in an effort to make it through each day while staying as healthy as possible to progress to the next day.

## Objective

Players have an exposure meter that is increased by risky/unsafe behaviour such as not maintaining social distancing or a lack of PPE. Players also have a steadily increasing stress meter to represent the toll that living during a pandemic can have on an individual. Players must progress through levels as safely as possible, trying to minimize exposure while maximizing mental health. The goal is to complete each level with as low of an exposure rate and as low of a stress level as possible.

## Challenge

The game would include different locations that the players would need to navigate - based on regular urban situations (grocery store, park, public transit, and office/school). Each of these locations would have 4 different 'levels' to complete based on the phases of re-entry. The character must navigate the world, maintaining social distancing to avoid increasing the exposure meter. Each level within each location would be progressively more difficult because there would be an increasing number of 'infected' people to navigate around and there would be more problems they would encounter that would increase their stress levels.

## Story

There will be very little story element to this game, but there will be random events (BBQ's, rallies, job interviews, etc) that arise in the character's life where the player must choose between a risk of exposure versus a decrease in their stress levels.

## Character

To increase the 'fun' element of the game the player will be able to choose one of the three original Pokémon Red and Blue starter Pokémon ; Charmander, Squirtle, and Bulbasaur. Based on their selection, other NPCs (non-playable characters) in the game will include the other two Pokémon that were not selected. Throughout the game scene, the player will be able to collect items to lower their stress levels and pick up items to reduce their exposure rate. The player will also be able to collect coins with their player image to raise their level and evolve. By evolving, the player can increase their strength and lower their exposure rate, however this will also lead to an increase in the rate that their stress levels increase by.

## Players

- **Number** - Pokédemic is a single player game.
- **Role** - there will only be one role in the basic version of the game, that of a single Pokémon character attempting to make it through the levels. This role will be changed in an 'expanded version' (explained below in 'Play').
- **Invitation to play** - this will come from a startup screen with the game logo. There will be an instruction to "Press Spacebar to Begin Game"
- **Player Interaction Pattern** - single player vs. game

# Play

Each level will have both a starting point and a finishing point that the player will need to get to as efficiently as they can - keeping their exposure and stress levels as low as possible. But within that structure, there is a significant amount of autonomy given to the players for them to decide how to go about doing that. They will have the freedom to move about the location map as they please and explore and interact with the surroundings and discover how the different objects and characters in the game will influence their exposure and stress levels. We purposely plan on NOT including an instruction page or legend to encourage players to explore and find out what their interactions with different NPC's and objects will do for them.

In our game design we also were desiring to communicate the value of empathy. We became concerned that our narrative of avoiding people who may be sick during a pandemic may cause the player to view suffering individuals as the "villains". We felt this may possibly remove empathy for them and so we are proposing a second play mode. This second mode will let the player take control over someone who is already sick and may be in the unfortunate position of putting others at risk. The proposed alternative experience will bring a new perspective for players of the game and expand their playstyle. Their goal in this 'expanded version' would be to now make it through each day by infecting others as little as possible - while maintaining their own mental health.

## Procedures

**Starting action:** The game is launched and the player can progress through the starting screens to begin play by pressing the spacebar button.

**Progression of action:** The player controls their movement through the use of the arrow keys (up, down, left, and right). One keystroke will move the character one step in the desired direction; due to issues with collision detection, holding down arrow keys will not continue moving the character in the intended direction. There are two meters respectively representing the exposure to the virus and the stress levels of the player in each level. The stress meter increases with each step the player takes to represent the fear experienced over going out in public during the pandemic. It is wise to progress quickly and minimize your exposure to the virus. A player should plan out their actions and make sure they are not wasting time as they pick up resources and progress through the level.

**Special actions:** A player can level up and evolve their Pokémon within the level by collecting the corresponding Pokémon items (ie. Charmander levels up by collecting Charmander items). Leveling up your Pokémon increases the rate their stress meter rises but decreases their exposure rate. We felt this represents the increased responsibility of adulthood which can increase your stress level but allows you to make wiser choices in regards to hygiene and social distancing practices.

**Resolving actions:** The game can be won by progressing through the level without either stress or exposure meter reaching 100. If either the stress meter or the exposure meter reaches 100 the game is lost.

## Rules

### Defining Objects

Various objects exist in the game that have a direct impact on the player's exposure and stress levels. They are listed in the table below:

| Object (Exposure) | Effect  | Object (Stress) | Effect               | Object (Stress)         | Effect  |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Squirtle          | Increases exposure meter by 10                                      | Toilet Paper    | Reduces stress by 10 | Apple                   | Reduces stress by 5   |
| Bulbasaur         | Has a 50% chance to increase exposure level by 5-10 points          | Paper Towel     | Reduces stress by 12 | Milk                    | Reduces stress by 10  |
| Pidgey            | Has a 50% chance to increase exposure level by 3-4 points           | Bread           | Reduces stress by 8  | <b>Object (Special)</b> | <b>Effect</b>   |
| N95 Mask          | Cuts the exposure increase in half. Integrity fails after 100 steps | Soda            | Reduces stress by 2  | Charmander Token        | Increases Level Up meter 5 points until the Level Up meter is 45, then increases by 2 |

### Restricting Actions

Players are restricted to the confines of the grocery store - they cannot move through solid walls or through NPCs in the store.

Players must also make it through the checkout to win the game. Players must walk over items to collect them.

## Determining Effects

A level is complete when a player reaches the exit before their exposure rate meter reaches 100 or stress & anxiety meter reaches 100. If either of these meters reaches 100 before the player reaches the end of the level, the game is over.

A player can level up and evolve their Pokémon to a stronger and more physically-resilient form by collecting tokens that represent their Pokémon. Once the Pokémon is levelled up they reduce their exposure meter increasing by 50% for Charmeleon and 33% for Charizard. Their stress level increases at a faster rate in these new forms.

| Form       | Stress Increase per step |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Charmander | 0.25                     |
| Charmeleon | 0.5                      |
| Charizard  | 1.0                      |

## Win Condition

Player navigates all 4 phases of social reopening without their exposure meter or their stress level meter reaching 100%.

## Resources

Proposed items are marked with an asterisk (\*)

- Personal Protective Equipment - have limited lifespans and run out after a specified amount of play time.
  - Masks (N95 Mask / Medical Mask / Homemade Cloth Mask)
  - \*Face Shield
  - \*Nitrile Gloves
- Cleaning Supplies - also helps with player's exposure rate to decrease.
  - \*Lysol Wipes
  - \*Hand Sanitizer
  - \*Bleach
  - \*Ethyl Alcohol
- Comfort Items
  - Toilet Paper
  - Paper Towels
  - Bread
  - Fruit
  - Milk
  - Soda/Pop
  - \*Hockey Stick Social Distance Uniform

## Credits:

### In-game background images sourced from:

[www.pngwing.com](http://www.pngwing.com)

[www.hiclipart.com](http://www.hiclipart.com)

### Sprite Image sourced from:

Toilet paper <https://www.iconninja.com/toilet-paper-lavatory-paper-paper-toilet-icon-897551>

Apple [https://www.kindpng.com/downpng/JJmbi\\_transparent-apple-clipart-hd-png-download/](https://www.kindpng.com/downpng/JJmbi_transparent-apple-clipart-hd-png-download/)

Milk [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Milk\\_ballonicon2.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Milk_ballonicon2.svg)

Soda [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soft\\_Drink.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soft_Drink.svg)

6-Pack <https://pixabay.com/vectors/six-pack-beverages-drinks-soda-25200/>

Bread <https://publicdomainvectors.org/en/free-clipart/Bread-clip-art/83296.html>

### Sounds sourced from:

Collision Alert <https://www.myinstants.com/instant/metal-gear-solid-alert/>

Evolve [https://www.myinstants.com/instant/Pokemon\\_level-up/](https://www.myinstants.com/instant/Pokemon_level-up/)

Item Pickup <https://www.myinstants.com/search/?name=mario+coin>

### Music sourced from:

[https://downloads.khinsider.com/game-soundtracks/album/Pokemon\\_red-green-blue-yellow](https://downloads.khinsider.com/game-soundtracks/album/Pokemon_red-green-blue-yellow)