

## **Game Development: Alpha and Beta Testing**

By now, you should have much of the playable parts of your game programmed so that it can be tested. This test version is called a **prototype**. This prototype is a working game that can be played and tested. Although it is not ready to be sold, or to be seen by the public, the **prototype** version of the game can be tested for gameplay and playability. Additionally, problems, or errors in the program can be detected during this process. Programmers and game testers call these **bugs**. Sometimes the word **glitch** is also used.

Testing in the game design industry includes a first test, called **alpha testing**. This is usually done by testers working for the game company. A game development company will not want anyone outside of the company to see a product that is of poor technical quality. They also want to protect their original concepts and programming from being copied. Hence, the details of a game are usually kept as a secret among the people within the company who worked through the concept and game development phases. So for security, initial **alpha tests** are done within a company.

In addition to technical bugs and glitches, the alpha testers will carefully review gameplay and the playability and **critique** the product that they see. To **critique**, different than criticism, means to study a creative product very carefully and make fair and productive suggestions of how it can be improved. Remember, alpha testers consist of members of the design team. They all have the same goal of completing a high quality product that will sell to the public, so it is important that alpha testing be done positively and productively.

**Alpha testing** for your game will be done by your classmates. They are qualified to do this because they know the game design process in the same way that you do. They will use an *alpha [testing form \(open this link\)](#)* to document what they observe during the test. Try to have at least three different alpha tests completed for your game. The alpha testers may see things that you never noticed or thought of. Study what they say about your game, and then use that information to make decisions for improving your game. You may find alpha testing to be very “eye opening”. The identified problems are studied, and solutions to those problems are created and then applied to the correct and improve the prototype. This process of searching out problems and making corrections for them is called **troubleshooting**, or **debugging**.

Once it is decided that the prototype is playable and can be seen outside of the company, further testing can be done by people from the public who are knowledgeable in computer/video games. This select group of people outside of the company conducts a second round of testing, called **beta testing**. The **beta testers** will report information back to the company, often through electronic surveys, emails, and even phone conversations. The information that they return to the company may be used for further development of the game before the final version is packaged and sold.

**Beta testing** for your game will be completed by students from your school who are not in a game design class. Most students have experience playing games, so they can **critique** the gameplay and playability without knowing the game design process. It is important to remember that a game company wants to make a profit by selling a game. Imagine that the students who are beta testing your game represent the target group of people who may buy your game someday. Their opinion is important, and you may find yourself making more changes to your game after they test it. Give them access to your game and this [beta testing form](#). After beta testing, you should make further corrections, changes, and improvements to your game.

[Alpha Testing Form](#)

[Beta Testing Form](#)