



Gold Belt Ninja Guide

Activity 03: Alpha Phase





ALPHA PHASE

It's time for development! Your prototype has proved that your project's foundation is solid; now you can build it out! The **Alpha** phase is for building the mechanics and content that your players will spend most of their time with.

In this phase, the placeholder assets and code from the prototype will be replaced with final assets. This is where the bulk of the gameplay will be developed.

Features outside of the gameplay, such as music, sound effects, and navigation screens, will be completed in the Beta Phase.

As you are building your project, utilize feedback from Code Senseis or other Ninjas who playtest your project. Once your project can be played from beginning to end without bugs, you can move on to the Beta phase!

VISUAL DESIGN

An important part of the Alpha phase is creating the visual design of your project. The visual design is the overall “look” of the project, including the art style and theme. Creating a unique visual design involves considering how the different assets that are used will fit together, and making sure they feel cohesive.

It's important to make sure your project has a well-defined **theme**. Notice the different themes of these Gold Belt projects and how they convey their project's unique identity.



images used from Gold Belt projects created by ninjas at Code Ninjas centers

When a project does not have a well-defined theme, it will look less enticing to players and may even feel less fun to play! Notice how this project made by a Code Sensei has a theme that isn't strongly defined by the assets used.

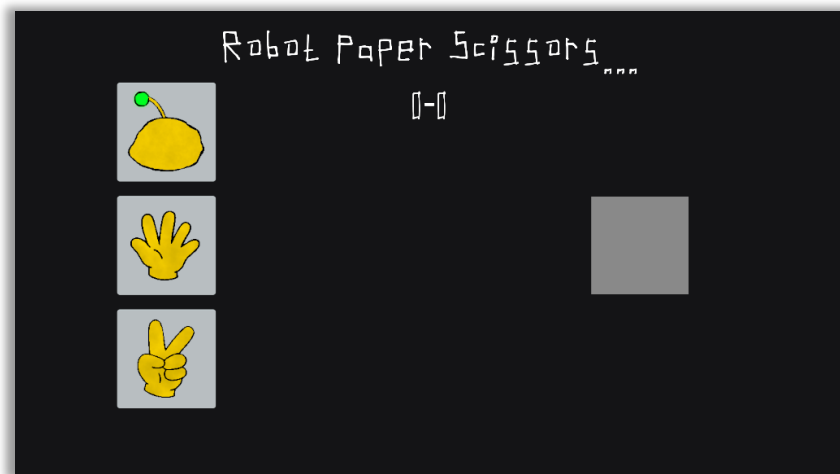


image used from a personal project created by a Code Sensei

Now that you are expanding the core gameplay beyond your prototype, you will refine your theme and consider what assets you will use to represent it. Use the following questions to guide your thinking:

- What types of objects and environments will the user interact with?
- Will the theme be consistent for the entire project or change across levels?
- What assets will be needed to fill out your project's world?

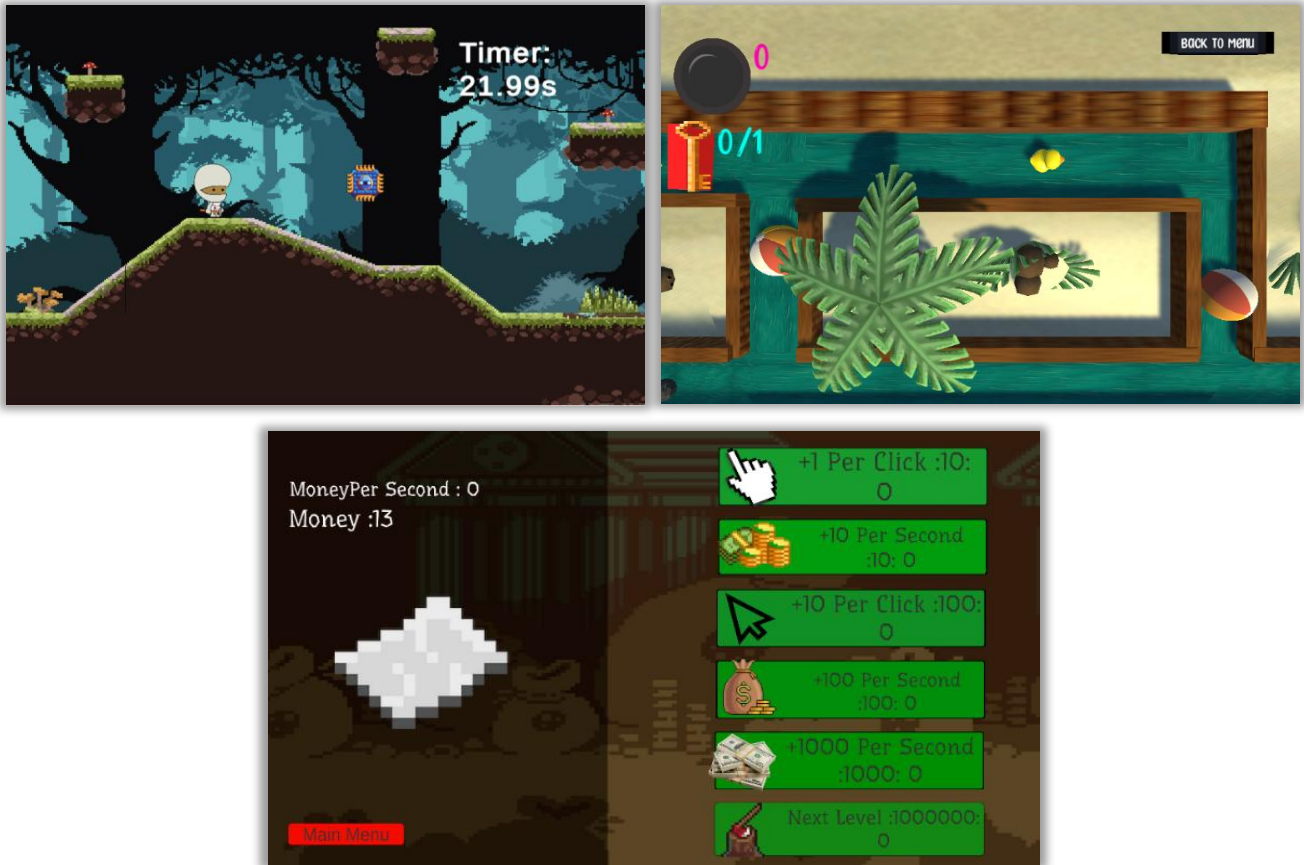


Ninja Planning Documents

Complete the **Alpha Phase - Visual Design** portion of your Gold Belt Ninja Planning Document to think through the visual design for your project.

VISUAL CLARITY

Another important aspect of visual design is **clarity**. The user should be able to understand what they can interact with, where they can go, and what they should avoid. Notice how the different assets are used in these Gold Belt projects to communicate with the user.



images used from Gold Belt projects created by ninjas at Code Ninjas centers

Poor visual clarity gets in the way of players enjoying your project. What the player is looking at and how they can interact with it can become unclear. Notice how this example from a Code Sensei's project shows these pitfalls.

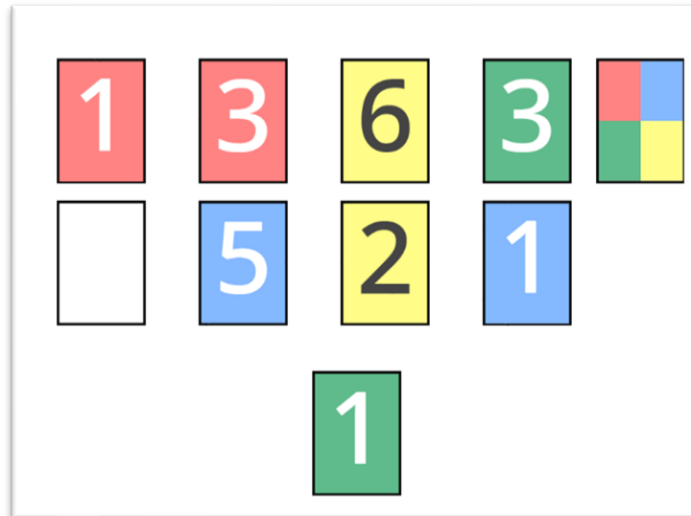


image used from a personal project created by a Code Sensei

As you think about visual clarity in your project, consider how your assets will look together in-game, as well as how the assets will help the user understand where to go and what to do.



Ninja Planning Documents

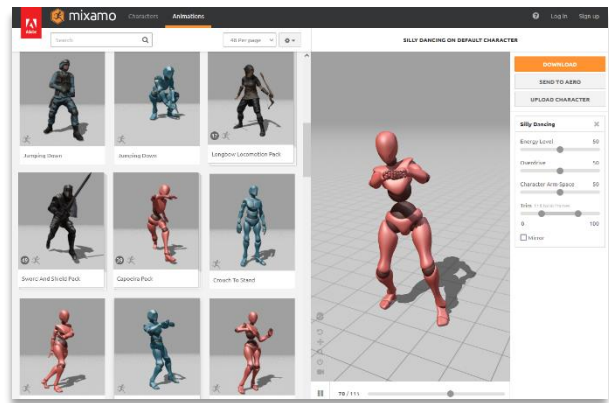
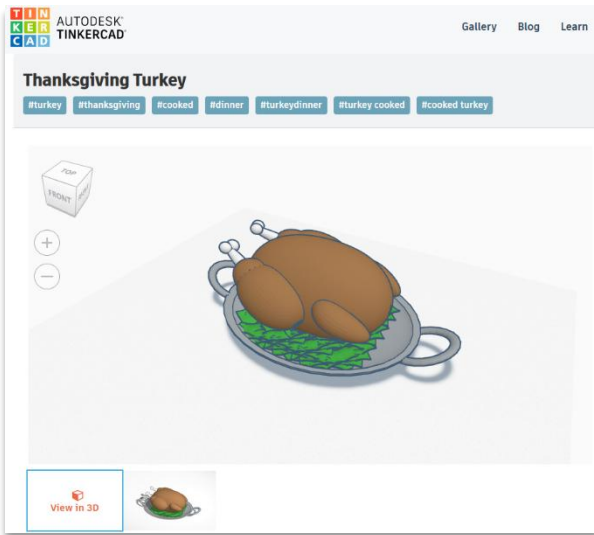
Complete the **Alpha Phase - Visual Clarity** portion of your Gold Belt Ninja Planning Document to think through how you can make the game elements visually clear in your project.

ASSETS

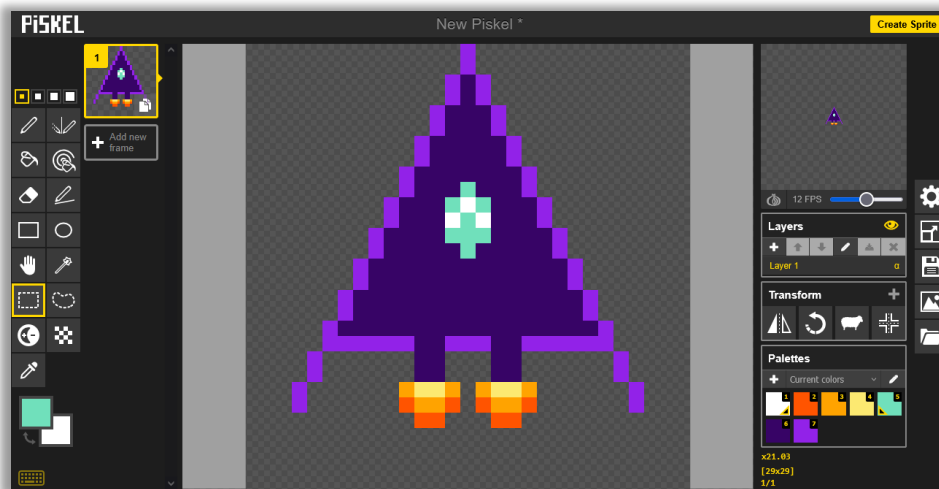
Create or modify assets to use in your project. To customize your Gold Belt project, be sure to modify any assets you find online to match the style of your project!

A great place to find assets that are free to use is <https://opengameart.org/>. This is a great resource for downloading 2D and 3D assets, and even music! If you do use assets, keep track of where you found them so you can credit the original creators.

If your project is in 3D, use **Tinkercad** to create models and **Mixamo** to find free animations for your characters.



If your project is 2D, use **Piskel** to create your own pixel art characters, objects, and environments. Refer to **Platinum Belt Activity 00: Catch the Stars** for Piskel guidance.



To learn more about making assets in these programs, follow these tutorials:

- **Tinkercad:** <https://www.tinkercad.com/learn/designs?collectionId=OSZ5W2BL1W5N51F>
- **Mixamo:** <https://helpx.adobe.com/creative-cloud/help/mixamo-rigging-animation.html>
- **Mixamo with Blender:** <https://rebusfarm.net/blog/how-to-use-mixamo-with-blender-full-beginner-guide>
- **Piskel:** https://www.ourfaveplaces.co.uk/site/assets/files/20234/pixel_art_on_piskel_-_nvm_education_resources.pdf



Ninja Planning Documents

Complete the **Alpha Phase - Assets** portion of your Gold Belt Ninja Planning Document to research, create, and modify the assets that you will use in your project.



Pause for **Sensei Stop #1!**

Check in with a Code Sensei before moving on. Show them your completed planning document sections and the **assets** you will use in your project.

Describe how you'll implement your visual design to create a clear display for users.

ASSET IMPLEMENTATION

Now that you've planned out your visual display, visual clarity, and your project assets, it's time to apply them to your prototype!

Decide whether you will continue building on your existing **Godot project** from the Prototyping phase or **create a new project**. Start to replace the basic shapes from your prototype with the updated assets that you've selected to bring your visual display to life. Continue to build out your project to refine the basic mechanics; the bulk of the project should be created by the end of this phase.

Once you've added a variety of assets to fit your project's theme and have fine-tuned the mechanics, check in with a Code Sensei and move onto Playtesting below.



Ninja Planning Documents

Complete the **Alpha Phase – Playtesting** section of your Gold Belt Ninja Planning Document. Be sure to have at least one Ninja and one Code Sensei playtest your project!



Pause for **Sensei Stop #2!**

Show your Code Sensei your completed Planning Document sections.

Discuss with a Code Sensei your playtest feedback and the changes you plan to make in the Beta phase.

Afterwards, record Dev Diary #3 and complete the Alpha Phase Checklist.