



Possessed: EOTA - Alpha | UX + Game Design Case Study

Exploring concepts and refining gameplay



Concept exploration for Possessed: EOTA

The World of Possessed: Enigma Of The Ancients

Each year, video games redefine the limits of virtual interactive entertainment. The potential for new gameplay, worlds, and stories is bound only by a game developer's imagination.

As a passionate gamer, I've always been drawn to titles like *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, *The Witcher 3*, and *Red Dead Redemption 2*. While their combat mechanics were impressive, what truly captivated me was their masterful world-building and the sheer depth of exploration they offered. I could spend countless hours wandering through these immersive landscapes, not to complete quests or objectives, but simply to experience the worlds themselves.

When I delved into coding and game design, my ultimate aspiration became clear—to create a virtual experience that could evoke the same sense of wonder, freedom, and immersion that these games provided. Sometime later, I began developing *Possessed: Enigma Of The Ancients*.

Possessed: EOTA aspires to be an ambitious open-world, story-driven RPG that blends strategic hack-and-slash gameplay with deep narrative design. Players will step into the role of a conflicted tribal warrior, tormented by visions of his fallen enemies, unsure whether they are ghosts or manifestations of his own guilt.

The game delves into the lifestyle of a Germanic tribe, striving to deliver an authentic and immersive medieval combat experience. Players must carefully prepare for battle, master the art of dark druid magic, and navigate a world where every decision can mean the difference between survival and demise.

After 6 months of development, I was ready with an Alpha version - a working prototype that intended to provide players an unrefined but accurate gameplay experience of the final product.

Design Challenge

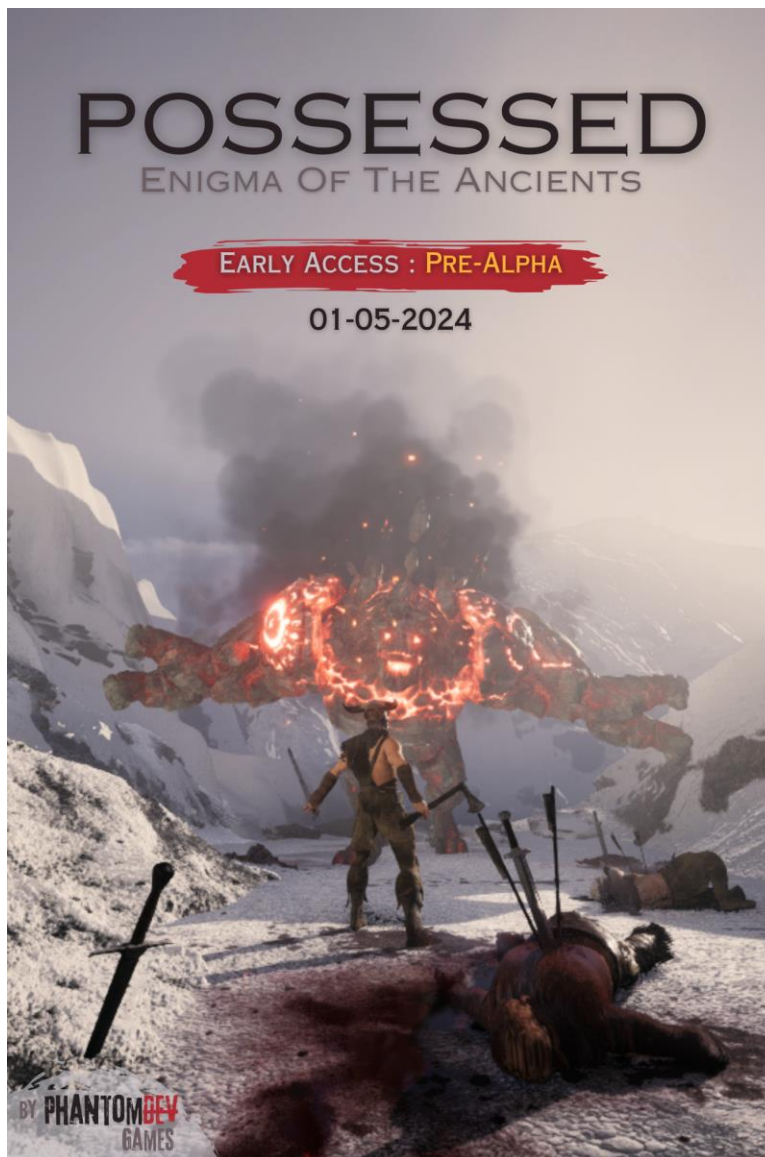
Before releasing the playable beta version of *Possessed EOTA* on Steam, I wanted to combine my passions for UX and game development, and explore how I could enhance the player experience of the alpha version of *Possessed: EOTA* through user research and game design.

Understanding Possessed: EOTA & its Players

Player User Research

As the game's developer and an avid gamer, I held a personal opinion on the existing gameplay when I finished up with the alpha version.

So, to holistically gather user feedback and find **potential areas of improvement**, I decided to conduct a **pre-alpha test release** with the game locally on May 1st, 2024.



Pre-Alpha Release Poster with concept art posted on social media on 20th April 2024

I gathered 12 participants from GDC and Comic-Con India, who play tested the game over a span of 3 weeks. This group comprised of four players expert in similar games and eight casual PC gamers.

“It’s a game that immerses me into its world... especially with its combat style. Weapons have weight and every attack/move feels like a commitment.”



A player fighting with a mace in Possessed: EOTA.



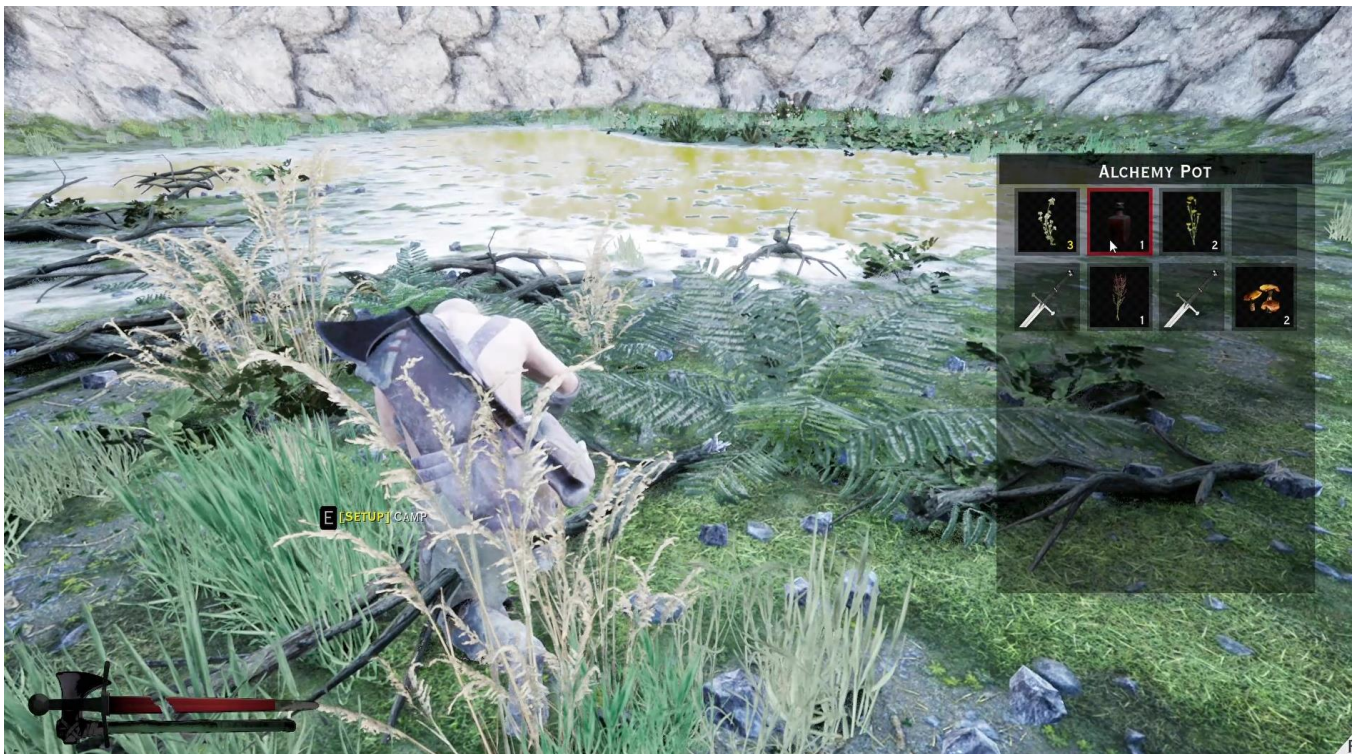
Getting ambushed by enemies when the player is under prepared in Possessed: EOTA.

Player Motivations

Generally, research showed that players are motivated to play *Possessed* for its strategic combat and immersion into its world. It's built to be aesthetically charming, and challenging at the same time offering escapism from the chaos of reality.

"You can explore new areas, pick flowers for brewing potions OR find crafting materials for your armor, maybe sharpen your sword AND then ...go fight. The game wants us to prepare for every battle and I love doing it."

Quantitative research shows that players most value immersion, whether that be through using crafting, exploration, or preparation for combat.



Player brews health potion from collected ingredients

Top Three “Most Favorite Gameplay Elements” from Play-testing survey

- I. Battle Preparation (players prepare beforehand since they can equip only two weapons and two potion types in combat mode, one primary and one secondary— 4.7)
- II. Equipment and Combat (variety in weapons with different attack animations for each — 4.64)
- III. Exploration and Crafting (brewing potions, picking ingredients, enhancing weapons — 4.38)

Gameplay elements rated on a weighted scale from 1 to 7, inclusive.

This is further supported qualitatively — testimony from survey participants showed that players enjoy discovering rare ingredients and crafting specific potions and weapons for different enemy types. They get to have the thrill of figuring out the various weaknesses of these enemies and prepare a strategy for them accordingly.

Players enjoy these activities without feeling the pressure of time constraints and take their time with battle preparation before entering any combat zone.

*“It feels like I’m playing The Witcher in a world like Skyrim dressed as Kratos.
Something I didn’t know I wanted.”*



In the game The Witcher 3, players experience similar mechanic of battle preparation (collecting ingredients and brewing potions when meditating/resting).

Pain Points / Areas of Improvement for Players

In order to identify pain points in the Pre-Alpha/Alpha version, I utilized the insights I gained about player motivations to direct discussion around specific moments where Battle Preparation, Equipment Management, and Crafting were disrupted.

Satchel has No More Capacity

From research I learned that the most common pain point for the play-testers was when their 'satchel' inventory is full.



"Satchel" inventory from Possessed: EOTA (Alpha).

The 'satchel' is the player's primary place to store items. Any plants they pick up or weapons they carry are placed in the 'satchel' inventory by default. Players are constantly moving items within their inventory slots depending on the current task; however, in most cases, the players end up over-encumbered.

75% of survey participants (9/12) stated that they experienced 'Running out of space in their inventory' while playing the Alpha version.

Inventory (Satchel Capacity) Management

In PEOTA (Alpha), the maximum number of slots that players have in their satchel was 8 slots. However, 4 of those slots would be occupied by equipped items that the player would be carrying to battle.

This reduction to 4 item slots further limits what the player can carry, and by extension, limits the player's ability to **'craft'** and **'prepare items for battle'**.

Reduced inventory capacity often presented situations where the player was forced to drop lower priority ingredients or one of their equipped weapons which took away their freedom of choice in terms of combat styles and crafting. Considering the fact that the game's play-testers showed a strong **'exploration and crafting'** culture and love the different **'equipment and different combat styles'**, restricting the number of items they can carry is intrusive to their enjoyment of the game.

“Sometimes, I avoid carrying a secondary weapon so that I'm able to pick up more stuff. But then I have less choice in combat and facing different enemy types with the same weapon gets boring.”

Problem Statement

The players of *Possessed: EOTA* aim to be opportunistic as they craft items and explore their surroundings. However, the current inventory capacity limits their ability to do so easily. Players often feel frustrated when forced to sacrifice equipped weapons or potions for new items, creating a dilemma where they must carefully prioritize what to carry.

Additionally, they need a system to store equipped weapons and potions that is outside of the satchel, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in exploration and engage with random events (such as brewing potions at a camp site fire) without restriction.

Hypothesis

If the players have an expansion to their inventory (in addition to the satchel); they would need to forfeit items less frequently. This would give them greater confidence in being prepared for any items or situations they come across.

Also, it is more realistic for a tribal warrior (the main playable character) to NOT carry weapons in his satchel because large weapons like claymores and axes can't fit in a small satchel on his body. If the players are able to carry weapons only on their body, that would solve two problems at once.

Proposed Design Solution

The “Equipment Slots” Feature

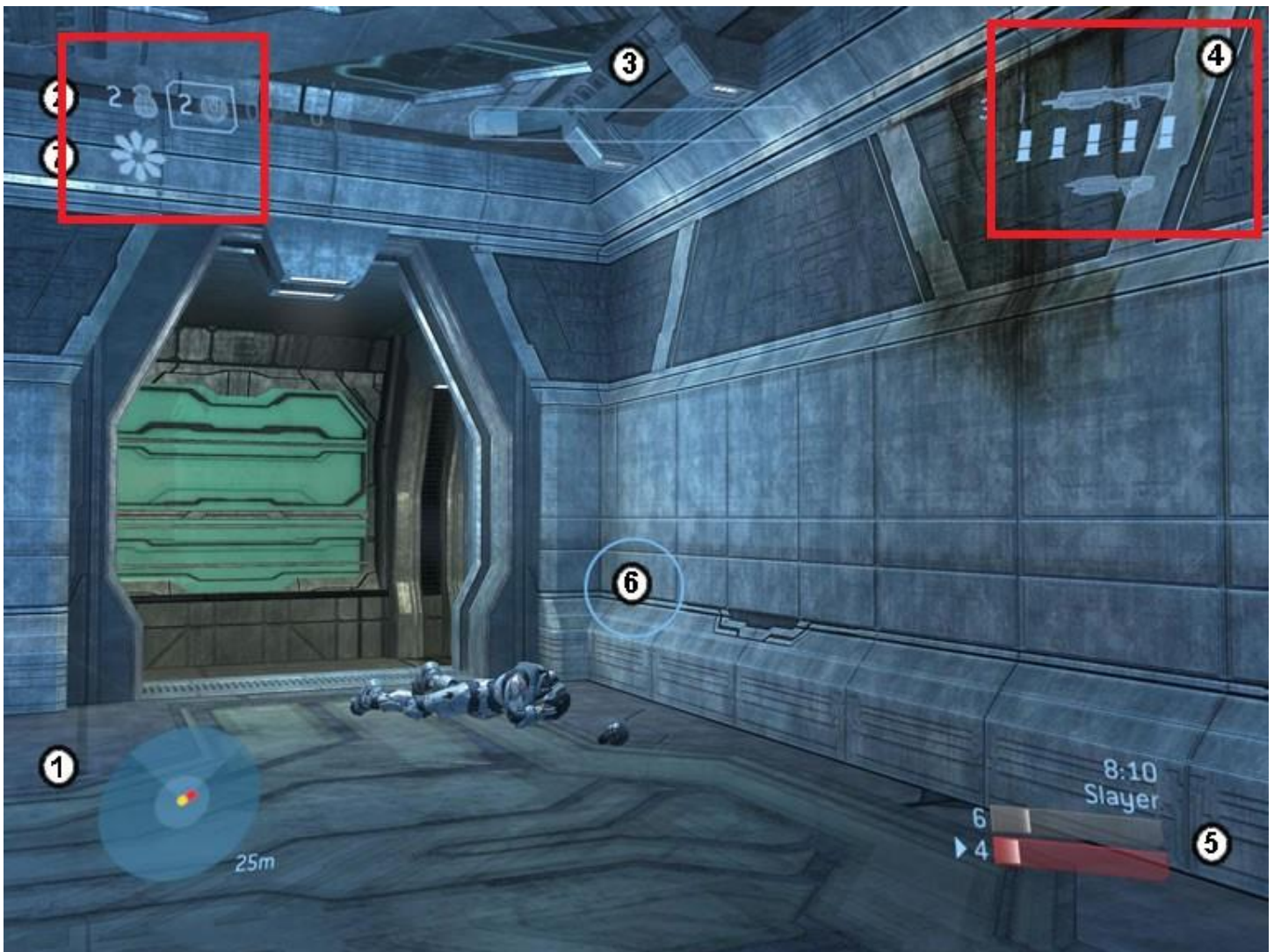
Players will be presented with four new slots outside of the inventory called the Equipment Slots (2 ‘equipped weapons’ and 2 ‘equipped potions’ slots). These slots will be allotted as below.

Equipped Weapons Slots:

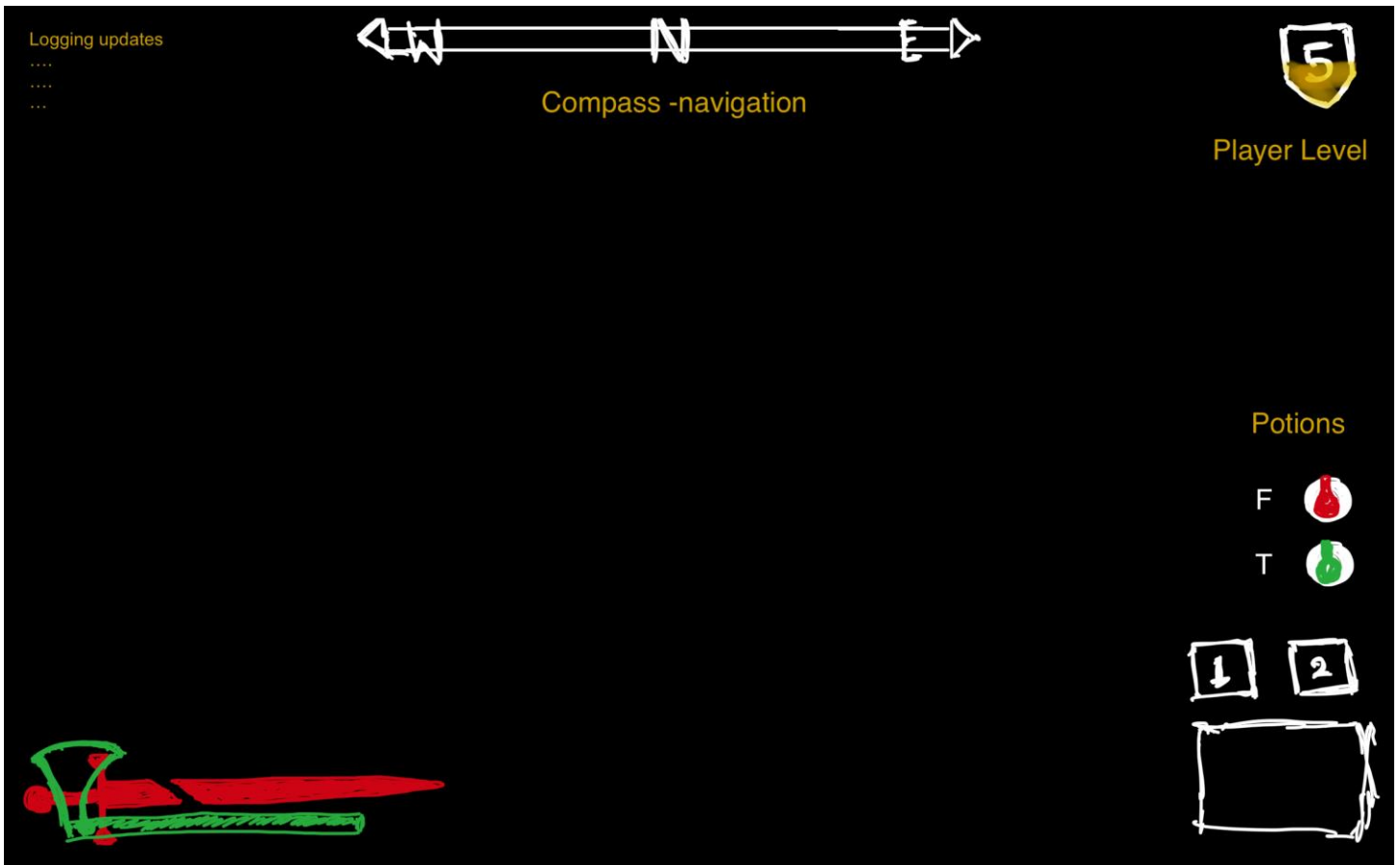
1. Primary Weapon slot : *Equip using ‘1’ Key on the keyboard*
2. Secondary Weapon slot : *Equip using ‘2’ Key on the keyboard*

Equipped Potion Slots:

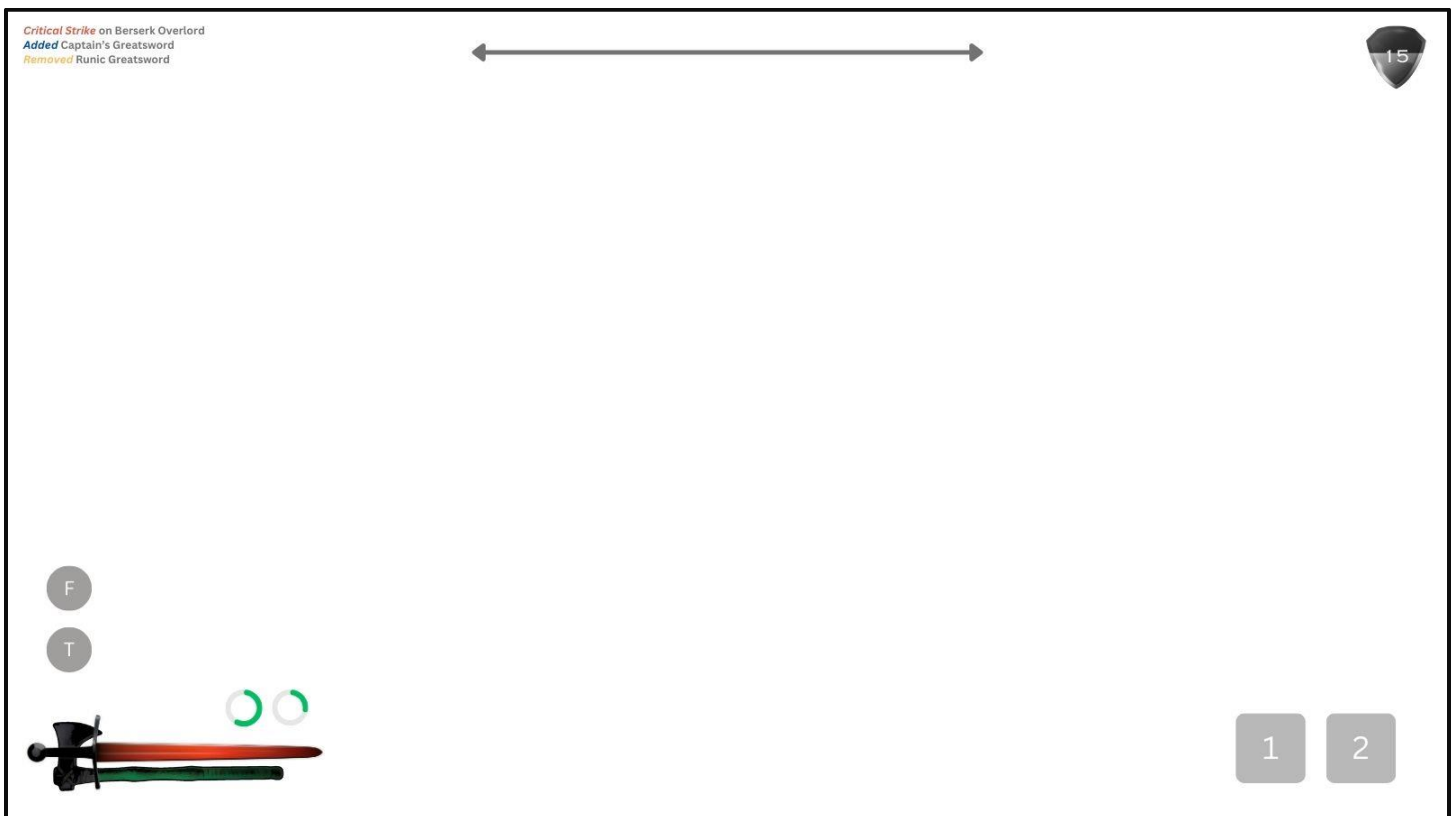
1. Elixir (Primary Potion) slot : *Equip using ‘F’ Key on the keyboard*
2. Tonic (Secondary Potion) slot: *Equip using ‘T’ Key on the keyboard*



The “Equipped Weapon Slots” from the game Halo 3 (where every type of weapon has its own slot)



Rough Design of the HUD UI depicting 'Equipped Potion and Weapon' slots



High Fidelity design of the HUD UI with the desired Equipment slots

The **equipment slots** serve two purposes:

- 1) Additional inventory to the overall carrying capacity (Solution for lack of inventory space)
- 2) Indicator of current equipped items on HUD UI (Player's motivation of combat immersion)

Equipment Slots — Additional Inventory

The 'Equipment Slots' free up 4 more slots in the 'satchel' inventory. This way, the satchel will be primarily used for alchemy and weapon crafting ingredients or for quest items.

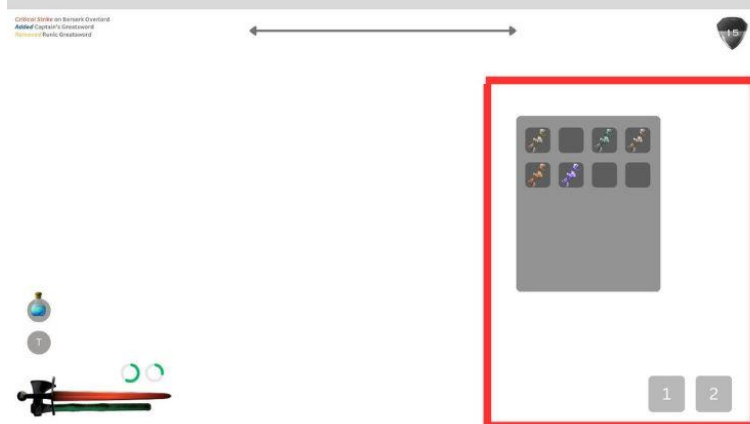
Weapons, when picked up, will be directly equipped in their respective equipment slots.

While potions will be directly equipped if the 'equipped potion slots' are empty. If they are full, potions will be stored in the satchel. Potions can also be unequipped and stored into the satchel.

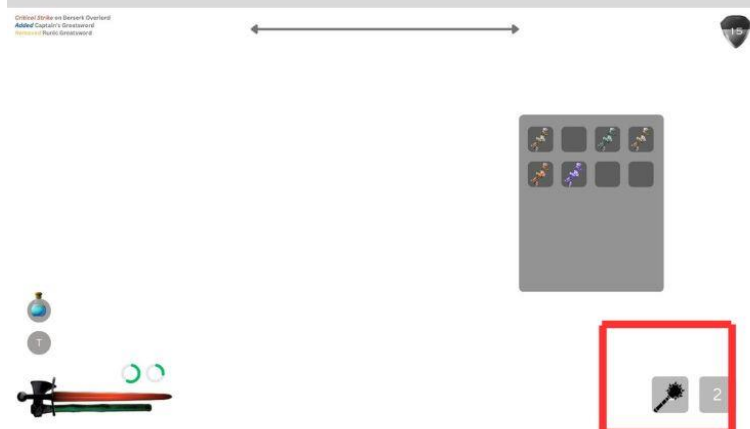
Additionally, any item equipped from the satchel will be taken out of it and placed in the inventory slots.

Equipment Slots — Additional Inventory UI Flow

Weapons are placed directly in the Equipped Weapon slots and NOT stored in the Satchel Inventory

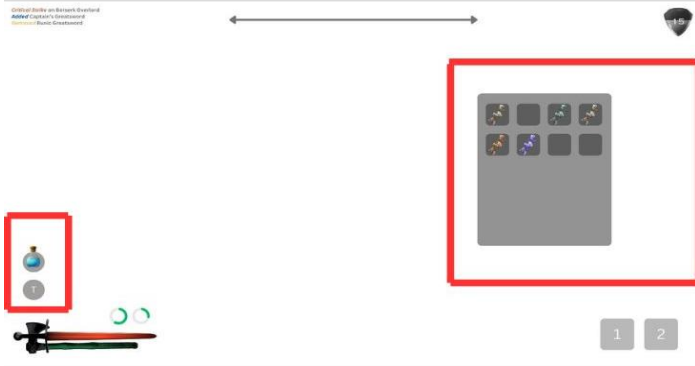


1. Weapon is picked up.

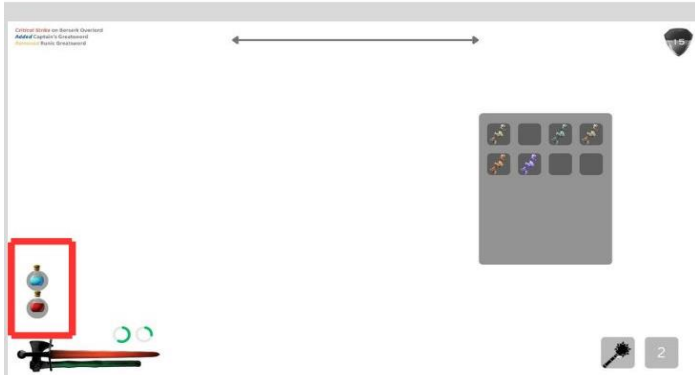


2. Even if, there is space in the satchel, **weapon should be equipped and go in the weapon slot.**

Potions are placed directly in the Equipped Potion slots and NOT stored in the Satchel Inventory

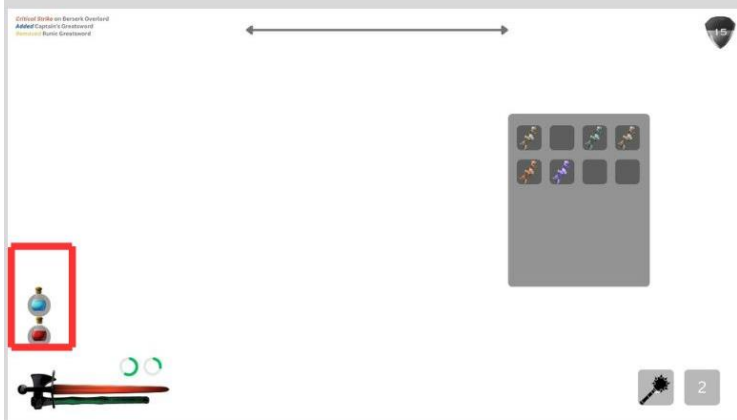


1. Potion is picked up.

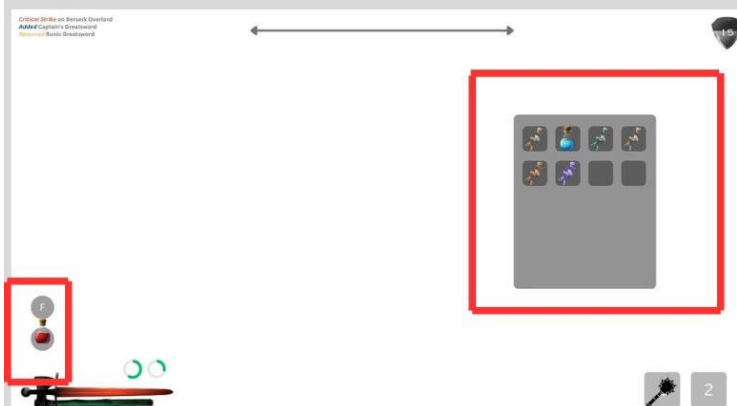


2. Even if, there is space in the satchel, **Potion should be equipped and go in the Equipped Potions slot** (if there is a potion slot available)

Potions can also be unequipped and stored in the Satchel Inventory whenever the user wants.



1. Potion is selected.



2. **Potion is stored in the satchel inventory** (if there is a space available)

Equipment Slots — Indicator of current equipped items

Additionally, the inventory slots indicate which weapon is in use currently.

When the slot item is used (e.g. weapon is drawn out or potion is consumed), its slot will glow slightly brighter, differentiating it from the other slots.

This will add to the user experience and increase the level of immersion.

Equipment Slots — Use Indicator UI Flow

When the slot item is used , its slot will glow slightly brighter

Calicut Strike on Berserk Overlord
Adapt Captain's Greatsword
Berserk Rune Greatsword



1. Weapon is equipped but not drawn..



Calicut Strike on Berserk Overlord
Adapt Captain's Greatsword
Berserk Rune Greatsword



2. Player draws out the weapon.
The selected **weapon's slot color glows** (animated icon)



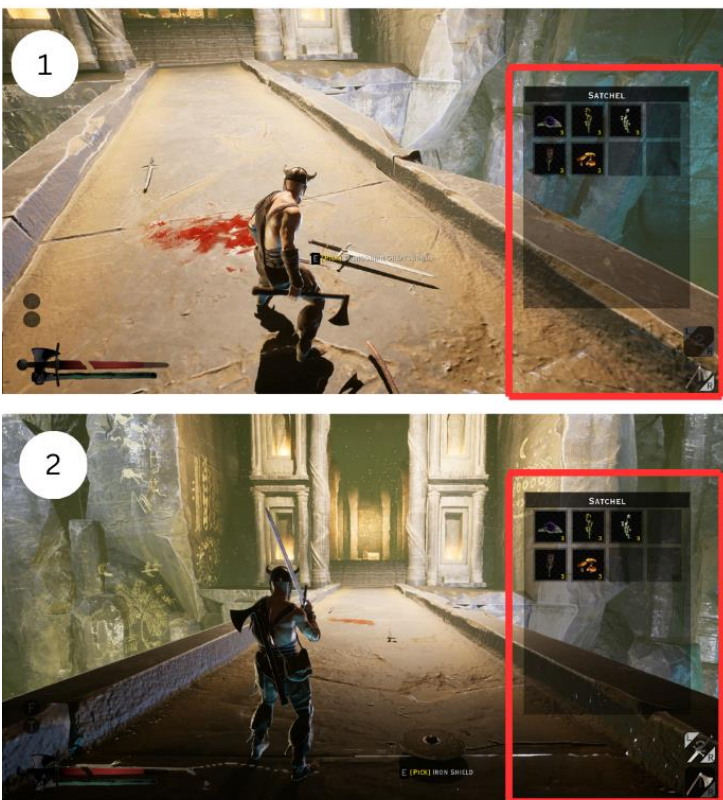
Measuring Success

I have now implemented this feature into the Beta version. I used Unreal Engine's Widget Blueprints for implementing the events that switch the status of the Equipment Slots.

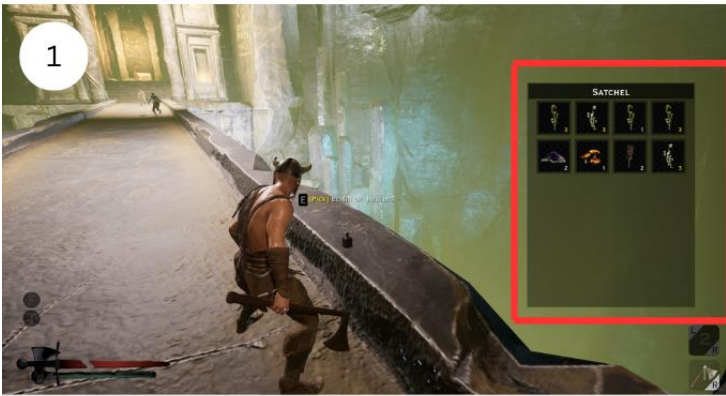
I play tested it myself and had 5 other users play test it.

Here are the results.

Equipment Slots - as additional inventory UI



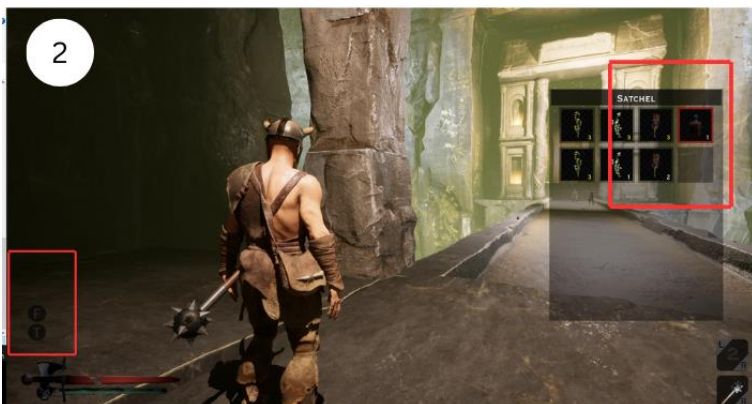
Weapons are placed directly in the **Equipped Weapon** slots and NOT stored in the **Satchel** Inventory



Potions are placed directly in the **Equipped Potion** slots and NOT stored in the **Satchel** Inventory



Potions can also be unequipped and stored in the **Satchel** Inventory whenever the user wants.



Overall, player feedback was positive — with 100% of participants (5/5) stating that the ‘**equipment slots**’ addressed the primary pain point and added value to their Possessed: EOTA gameplay experience.



Gameplay snapshot from my upcoming PC game Possessed: Enigma Of The Ancients.
(Beta release on March 1st 2025)

Takeaways

The design thinking behind video games is no different from that of any other product design project. Developing my own game, having people play-test it, and combining my UX and game design expertise was an exciting and motivating challenge. I look forward to releasing my game to the world as I continue to learn and grow as a designer.

Please feel free to browse through my [digital portfolio](#) for more case studies and get sneak peeks into my development process for Possessed.