

UNDEERTALE

PEOPLE'S DELECTION: THE ENFORCER

The Enforcer in Undertale

In *Undertale* there are numerous moments in which the player is **forced by the game to act in a certain way** or **differently** from how he has done up to that moment of gameplay. The analysis will focus on the **combat system** (which is varied during the run) and on the gameplay moments that aim to **take away agency from the player**, and then **give it back to him later**. They serve to *break the rhythm of pace* and enable the player to face new situations in continuous gameplay.



Toriel : Force the player to stay in the house

At the beginning of the game, **Frisk** meets **Toriel**, a goat-like monster who saves the main character from Flowey's attack. Toriel shows Frisk how to solve the game's first puzzles and takes him to her house to tell him about the beginnings of the game's lore. She tries to convince Frisk to stay there to protect her from the dangers of the Ruins. The player is **free to explore the house**, but if he tries to leave without first talking to Toriel several times and answering her questions, **she will take the protagonist by the hand and take him back inside**. The dynamic **removes agency from the player**, **forcing** him to carry out mandatory tasks before being able to continue. Even before the fight, Toriel continually tries to convince Frisk to go back and stay in the house, **not removing the player's agency but continually interrupting his exploration before leaving**.



Characters removed (Genocide Run)

During the **Genocide Route**, the player has the objective of *killing every character he manages to fight and carry out specific tasks to unlock a boss fight and an alternative ending (Sans)*. The player's actions have direct consequences on the gameplay and lore of the run, **preventing him from meeting some characters and interacting with them** (the **limitation** that the game imposed in this case is the **limitation of narrative and game paths by removing branches of development** of the game history)



Combat System Variations - Soul Modes

The **Combat System** in Undertale allows the player to **fight or interact with enemies to spare them later**. Once the player's turn has taken place, he will have to defend himself from enemy attacks which can be of **numerous types** and can **completely overturn the methodology most present in the gameplay**, namely that of moving the Red Heart (*Soul of the main character*) in order to **avoid enemy shots**.

Blue Soul - Jump Mode

The **Soul in Jump Mode** is affected by **gravity**, like a *side-scrolling/platformer perspective*. In this status the player **loses complete control of the position of the heart** while **defending against an attack, being able to only use the horizontal direction**. However, he **unlocks a new command** that allows him to jump and avoid moving obstacles. In this way the game **removes the player's agency by eliminating a dimension of movement**, but allows him to **experiment with a new type of combat, breaking the monotony of enemy turns**. This mode occurs in fights with **Sans** and **Papyrus**, who apply it differently given that Sans seems to have *more control of the punishment for the player (the game also varies the intensity of the impact with which the mechanic affects the gameplay, giving the player time to master the skills necessary to overcome it)*.



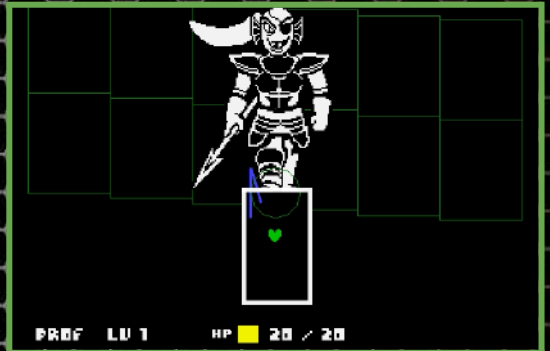
Yellow Soul - Shooter Mode

The Soul in **Shooter Mode** is flipped upside down like a monster's SOUL, so its heart's point is directed toward the foe. The player can **shoot projectiles to hit the enemy**, in this way his **Fight action is replaced**. In this mode the player experiences a **completely new way of fighting**, the feature is presented in a **few moments of gameplay** (is only used against **Mettaton** and **Mettaton EX** as well as the **Lost Soul** variation of **Alphys**) and is used to increase the pace of fights.



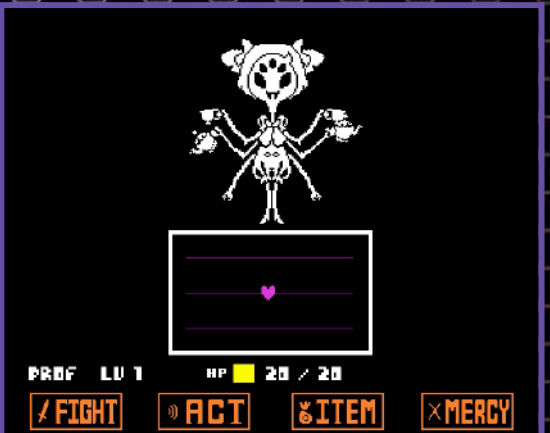
Green Soul - Shield Mode

The Soul in **Shield Mode** cannot move, but wields a **shield-like spear** from Undyne that protects the protagonist in whichever direction is pressed. With this mechanic the fight becomes a **rhythm game**, with the player having to **rotate the shield in time to protect himself from the Boss' attacks**. The mechanics are imposed by the game both to **break the pace of the fights** and to **make the fight with Undyne**, one of the main secondary characters of the game, **unique**.



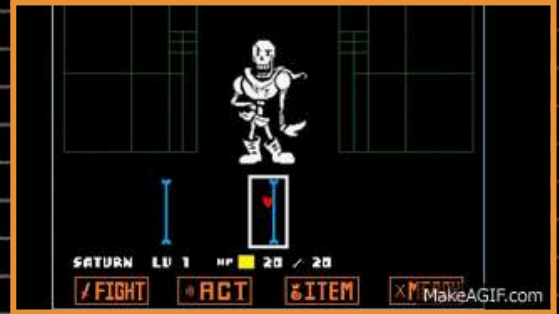
Purple Soul - Trap Mode

The Soul in **Trap Mode** can **only move left and right on a line and switch between lines using up and down**. This limitation is imposed by the game **only in the battle with Muffet**, the queen of spiders, and aims to make the player **experience a fighting mode based on reflexes and speed of decision-making** (when the heart is chased by the giant spider the player must constantly **dodge obstacles and escape upwards in the meantime**). This **greatly increases the pace** of the game and **interrupts the monotony of the fights** faced before reaching that moment of gameplay.



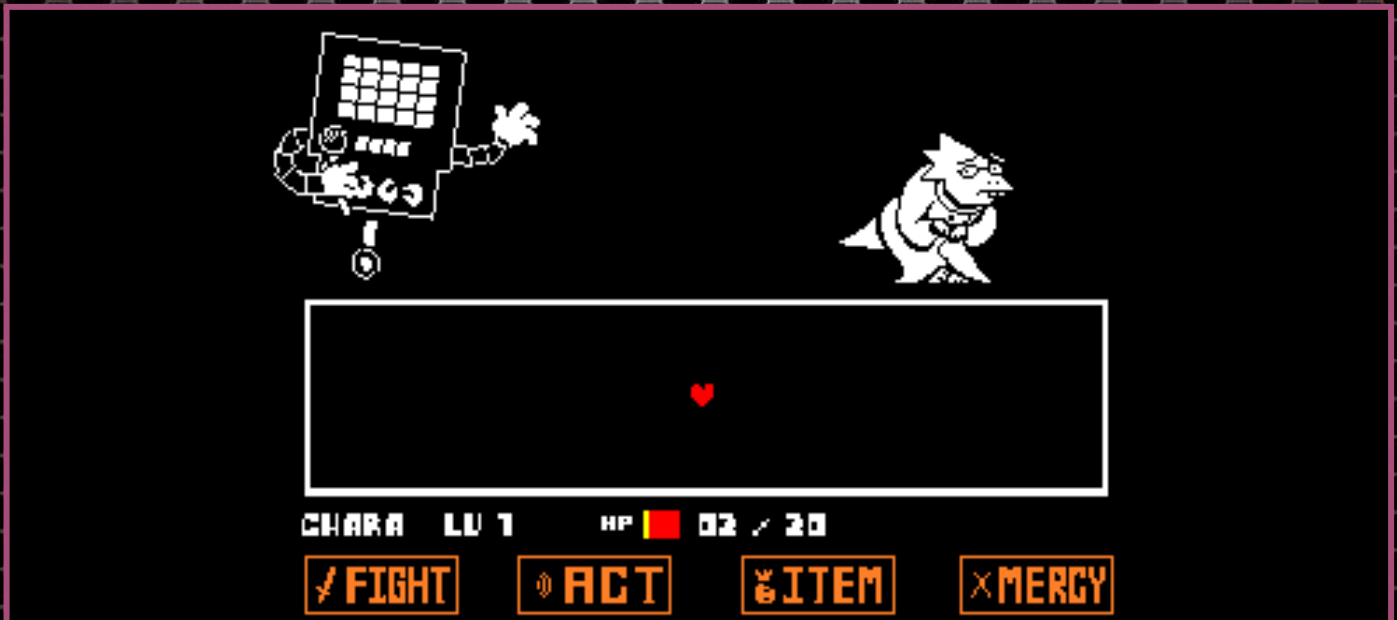
Combat System Variations - Blue & Orange Beams

During the attacks of some enemies, the player will have to **alternate movement and standing still to avoid being damaged by blue beams** (they deal damage if the player passes through them while moving) **and orange ones** (they deal damage if the player stands still when they pass him). This mechanic leads to **alternating phases of dodging enemy shots**, forcing the player to **continuously change pace**.



Combat System Variations - Mettaton's Quiz

In the first battle against **Mettaton**, the player is **forced to answer questions for a TV quiz**. Each incorrect answer halves the player's current health, **a dynamic that is imposed in the last questions** (impossible to answer correctly, creating submission in the player). In this battle the **player cannot die** (the division is always approximated upwards, so the player at most remains with 1HP).



Combat System Variations - Sans

The battle against **Sans** in **Genocide Run** is a **continuous gameplay variation**. Initially the Boss aims to **switch between Normal and Blue Soul**, until he manages to **command the character's heart by moving it in every direction** (to avoid attacks the player must react reflexively to the obstacles that are thrown at him). Attacks against him do **not inflict damage**, the player's turn can **only be used to heal himself via objects or to interact with Sans**. At the end of the fight, Sans **takes complete control of the fight**, deciding to wait forever during his turn and prevent any action from the player. After several minutes of waiting, the Boss will fall asleep and the player will be able to forcibly move the movement box to reach the attack action and thus finish off the boss. **The entire fight is dictated by the game, reducing the player's agency to a minimum**. This generates **submission, excitement** and makes the battle against a main character unique.



Undyne & Alphys Date

Undyne and **Alphys** decide to go on a **date** and *Alphys* asks *Frisk* to accompany her to rehearse what to say on the outing. In this phase the game presents the player with a **dialogue** in which **he will decide the answers and the progress of the appointment, varying the outcome of the latter**. Also in this case the game places the player in the position of influencing the lore of the game through his choices, **eliminating narrative branches based on his answers**.



Respawn System - Restart from the checkpoint

Every time the player dies during a battle, the game allows him to respawn only at the last checkpoint reached, forcing him both to **retrace the path taken** to carry out the fight and to **face the enemy again** from the beginning. The only possibility that the game gives the player is to be able to **skip all the dialogues** and immediately start the battle (*valid only for Bosses*). This mechanic increases the player's **fear of suffering defeat** and creates **excitement** in battles as well as the **submission** of *having to start everything over from the last save*.



Aesthetics delivered by the Nudge

Excitement

At different moments of the fights **the pace of the attacks is increased and the type varies**, requiring the player to **find alternative and quick solutions to avoid the attacks**.

Sensation

Different **visual** and **sound effects** are inserted into each bossfight, **immersing** the player more in the battle (*color of the souls, personalized music for each fight*).

Fear

Each player's decision can **determine a change in the lore and type of run he is facing**. Furthermore, after a defeat the player must **start the fight all over again** and start from the **last checkpoint**.

Logic

The logic is introduced when **the player must decide when to attack and when to interact with the enemy to weaken or slow him down**, or when to use objects to heal himself (*different for each combat*).

Discovery

The different types of combat systems lead the player to **look for new strategies that adapt to the fight**.

Other Nudges correlated

Attentional Shift - Tomato Work Method

The **continuous changes of pace** in the game's fights act as **regulators of the player's attention** in the game. The **dialogues** that can be undertaken even in the middle of the fight reactivate the player's **Reflexive Attention**, while the different **combat system modes**, the **mood changes** given by the choices made by the player and the **different activities** inserted aim to recharge the **Executive Attention**.

God Complex

The game (during the **Genocide Run**) completely removes some characters from the game, leaving game areas empty from random encounters (at a lore level, the characters are afraid of Frisk after he has exterminated every enemy that comes across him). The fear implanted in the other game characters makes the player **feel like a god (with negative intentions), feared by everyone**.



Conclusions

The **Enforcer Nudge** wants to **force the player to behave in a certain way or to change the rules of his run**. Undertale does this by often **varying the combat system**, providing **features** to the player with whom he will **only interact a few times**, and **posing different development paths** that vary based on Flick's actions. This generates **Submission** in the player (*he is deprived of agency*) but also **Excitement** in trying new gameplay dynamics, furthermore **the pace of the game is continuously broken** to avoid the **monotony** given by *random encounters and puzzles*. The game wants to **remove** from the player's mind the **idea of being in total control**, Flick's possibilities are often **reduced and decided by the game**. *This leads to the player being controlled by the game and not vice versa.*

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