

Quest Design Sample

First, I want to provide a little background for this document. This is an excerpt from a game design test I was given by a potential employer. The test consisted of a series of game design questions and tasks. The task below was to create 15 quests within 6 hours, following the specific instructions and constraints provided. As such, this is not a complete quest design document. In fact, I think asking your game designers to write 15 quests in 6 hours (and presumably repeat that task every day thereafter) is setting an unrealistic expectation. Nevertheless, I do think I did a fairly good job given the constraints, and I have reproduced the question and answer here without any further cleanup or enhancement on my part.

=====

Question 4

Missions have the following completion criteria:

- Click/use a tool on one or more objects or non-player character
- Defeat one or more defined foes ("Defeat 20 orcs" or "Defeat the orc chieftain")
- Gain one or more items
- Give an item to an object/non player character

In addition, you have the following tools:

- Players can receive items from clicking on objects or defeating foes ("Hey, I got a gold necklace from the chest!")
- Doors can be locked/unlocked only through use of an item ("This key works.")

Create 15 different quests (one for each level) using this technology. Each quest must be distinct from one another. In other words, "kill 20 skeletons" and "kill 10 orcs" are essentially the same. However "kill 20 skeletons" and "find 20 orc totems (which are found on dead orcs)" are not. Quests may be linked together and revealed over time ("After defeating the Troll Lord, you find a map that shows the location of a buried treasure.") The following groups of enemies exist in the game world. They only exist for the specified levels, and may not be used in a mission either before or after those levels. Your 15 missions must use all the enemy groups. You may use more than one enemy group in a single mission. You will be graded on story, player zone flow, interesting use of available technology and quest variety.

- **Group: Orcs**
- Levels: 1-15
- Location: The Wild Lands
- Enemies: Orcs, Orc Shamans, Trolls, Storm Trolls, The Troll Lord
- **Group: The Undead**
- Levels: 5-10
- Location: The Death Lands
- Enemies: Zombies, Ghouls, Skeletons, Skeleton Kings, The Vampire
- **Group: The Savages**
- Levels: 10-15
- Location: EvilKingdom
- Enemies: Berserkers, Werewolves, WereTigers, Shapeshifters, The Beast Lord

- **Group: The EvilKingdom**
- Levels: 1-15
- Location: EvilKingdom & Anywhere
- Enemies: Evil Soldiers, Evil Knights, Evil Priests, Evil Wizards, The Evil King

=====

Answer

If designers have to design 15 quests in less than 6 hours, it's no wonder that so many MMORPG quests suck. Furthermore, I disagree with the premise that "kill 20 skeletons" and "find 20 orc totems (which are found on dead orcs)" are different. They're actually the same quest, except in the latter case the player probably has to grind through MORE orcs. It's actually "kill 20*(drop percentage) orcs". This is another reason why so many players become annoyed with an MMORPG. It's also hard to be creative when my boss mobs are pre-specified and cliché; e.g. "The Evil King".

With only four completion criteria, some missions have to have the same criteria. However, in the instructions to make each mission "distinct" it says killing different types of mobs doesn't make that mission distinct. By that logic, delivering different items to NPCs wouldn't be distinct, either. So I'm reading this as simply a guideline and an example to encourage diversity in the mission design, and not a hard and fast rule.

The number of enemies I've used is purely arbitrary. One would have to know the design goals for the game in terms of leveling speed and time of combat to know how long each quest should take and thus how many enemies to include per quest. Enemy numbers, mix, and strength would also ideally be dynamically adjusted based upon group size and level.

Time constraints prevent further elaboration or the writing of all the dialogue.

Quest 1 - Level 1 - The Wild Lands

Acquisition: Variable (players could acquire the quest many ways)

Completion: Defeat 10 Orcs.

Enemies: 10 Orcs.

Description: Players are tasked to kill 10 Orcs in The Wild Lands. Upon killing the last Orc, players find a message (A Note) on the orc's body, addressed to an Orc Shaman Abys. The message warns that the Orcs are being attacked by Evil Soldiers from the EvilKingdom for no apparent reason.

Quest 2 - Level 2 - The Wild Lands

Acquisition: Accept quest from A Note

Completion: Deliver A Note to Orc Shaman Abys

Enemies: 5 Evil Soldiers, 5 Orcs, 2 Orc Shamans

Bruce Sterling Woodcock
3647 W Horizons #303
Columbus, OH 43204

(408) 218-7268
sirbruce70@gmail.com
<https://sterlingcommentary.com>

Description: Players must deliver the warning to Orc Shaman Abys in The Wild Lands. Players are first attacked and must fight a total of 5 Evil Soldiers and then 5 Orcs and then 2 Orc Shamans to get to Orc Shaman Abys' location. Upon arriving at the location they see Orc Shaman Abys in combat (or post combat if engine does not allow). He defeats an Evil Knight but is himself critically wounded. Upon delivering A Note to the dying Abys he tells the players that Evil Soldiers from the Evil Kingdom are attacking The Wild Lands without provocation. He tells the players that they must pass on this warning to The Troll Lord. However, since they are not trolls, they will not get in unless they first obtain the Troll Sign (a carved stone that acts as a mark of safe passage for orcs). The Troll Sign can be obtained from Troll Ballik in the caves further in, but they will have to fight their way to an audience.

Quest 3 - Level 3 - The Wild Lands

Acquisition: Accept quest from Orc Shaman Abys

Completion: Talk to Troll Ballik

Enemies: 10 Trolls

Description: Players have to get to Troll Ballik and relay Orc Shaman Abys' message to obtain a Troll Sign. 10 Trolls stand in their way and must be defeated. Troll Ballik gives them the Troll Sign and tells them they should not have any more trouble passing into the next area.

Quest 4 - Level 4 - The Wild Lands

Acquisition: Obtain the Troll Sign from Troll Ballik

Completion: Deliver Troll Sign to The Troll Lord

Enemies: 10 Trolls, 1 Storm Troll

Description: Players arrive at The Troll Lord's stronghold. Initially, the trolls let them pass unmolested, but after the entrance they encounter a Storm Troll leading a squad of Trolls who doesn't believe the sign is legitimate and accuses the party of stealing it. Players must defeat the Trolls and Storm Trolls to get to The Troll Lord. The Troll Lord will accept the sign and hear the player's warning. He will instruct the players to deliver a message to The Vampire in The Death Lands, asking the Vampire for help in fighting off the Evil Kingdom's invasion. However, The Vampire is currently in torpor (asleep), and is guarded by mindless undead. The players will once again have to fight their way in...

Quest 5 - Level 5 - The Death Lands

Acquisition: Accept quest from The Troll Lord

Completion: Find and open secret entrance to The Vampire's castle.

Enemies: 10 Zombies.

Description: Players must first find the entrance to The Vampire's castle. The front door cannot be opened and so they must locate a secret entrance. 10 zombies are arranged around the castle to attack the players as they try to locate the entrance. If the players lack detection abilities or simply fail to locate the door, the door is automatically "discovered" after the 10th zombie is defeated. In such a case, level design constraints may dictate multiple secret doors; inside they would all lead to the same area but only one door would be discoverable in a given quest.

Quest 6 - Level 6 - The Death Lands

Acquisition: Open door to The Vampire's castle.

Completion: Obtain A Key from a Ghoul.

Enemies: 10 Ghouls

Description: Players must make their way to the center of The Vampire's castle where his crypt is. Each level constitutes a "ring" around the crypt that must be traversed before venturing further inward. In this case, there is only one door to the next quest, but it is locked. Players must acquire A Key from a Ghoul guarding this area. The key could be placed on a random ghoul or have a drop chance that's automatic after 9 ghouls are killed.

Quest 7 - Level 7 - The Death Lands

Acquisition: Obtain A Key from a Ghoul.

Completion: Click on door to The Vampire's Crypt.

Enemies: 10 Skeletons

Description: Players must use the key to open the door to the next area. In this area, 10 Skeletons guard what appears to be the entrance to The Vampire's crypt.

Quest 8 - Level 8 - The Death Lands

Acquisition: Click on door to The Vampire's crypt.

Completion: Acquire the third Necromantic Gemstone.

Enemies: 3 Ghouls, 3 Skeletons, 3 Skeleton Kings

Description: Upon arriving at the door to The Vampire's crypt, players discover 3 holes in the stone door that seals it. To continue further they must acquire 3 Necromantic Gemstones. Each item is in a separate room of the area, each one guarded by a Skeleton King and his associated minions. Players must acquire all 3 gemstones. If stealth play is allowed in this MMO, this might be a good quest to allowed hidden characters to sneak around and steal the gemstones without necessarily having to fight all three Skeleton Kings.

Quest 9 - Level 9 - The Death Lands

Acquisition: Open The Vampire crypt's door

Completion: Click on The Vampire

Enemies: 4 Skeletons, 1 Ghoul

Description: Once the third gemstone is placed in the door, it will open. Inside is The Vampire, lying asleep on a stone altar. Around him are many more of his guards who will attack as soon as the players get close. (Not too sure about the number and mix of enemies here since it depends on the level power curve. Probably no Skeleton Kings, though.)

Quest 10 - Level 10 - The Death Lands

Acquisition: Click on The Vampire

Completion: Defeat The Vampire

Enemies: The Vampire

Description: Once players click on The Vampire, he awakens from his slumber. He is not pleased and has no interest in talking. Players must kill The Vampire. In his treasure players will find Another Note. This note is from The Evil King, asking The Vampire to join him in his invasion of The Wild Lands. The note indicates a time and a place where The Evil King is gathering his forces in the EvilKingdom.

Quest 11 - Level 11 - EvilKingdom

Acquisition: Accept quest from Another Note

Completion: Obtain key from Evil Priest

Enemies: 10 Evil Knights, 1 Evil Priest

Description: Players are tasked to defeat a task force gathering outside The Evil King's castle in EvilKingdom. Players must defeat 10 Evil Knights and eventually their leader, 1 Evil Priest. The Evil Priest has a key that will allow them access to The Evil King's castle.

Quest 12 - Level 12 - EvilKingdom

Acquisition: Obtain key from Evil Priest

Completion: Open door to The Beast Lord's chamber

Enemies: 5 Berserkers, 5 Werewolves, 5 WereTigers

Bruce Sterling Woodcock
3647 W Horizons #303
Columbus, OH 43204

(408) 218-7268
sirbruce70@gmail.com
<https://sterlingcommentary.com>

Description: The interior of The Evil King's castle is patrolled by minions of The Beast Lord, The Evil King's lieutenant. The door to The Evil King's chamber is sealed. They must make their way first to The Beast Lord's chamber which has a switch that opens the door.

Quest 13 - Level 13 - EvilKingdom

Acquisition: Open door to The Beast Lord's chamber

Completion: Pull switch to open The Evil King's chamber

Enemies: 5 Shapeshifters, The Beast Lord

Description: The Beast Lord is in his chamber and guarded by 5 elite Shapeshifters. They must be defeated first and then The Beast Lord himself. Afterwards the switch may be pulled and the door to The Evil King's chamber opened.

Quest 14 - Level 14 - EvilKingdom

Acquisition: Pull switch to open The Evil King's chamber

Completion: Talk to The Evil King

Enemies: 5 Evil Knights, 1 Evil Wizard

Description: The Evil King is guarded by evil knights and a powerful evil wizard. The Evil King will calmly watch the battle unfold from his throne, which is protected by a magical barrier that the Evil Wizard has put in place. Once The Evil Wizard is defeated, the barrier will come down and The Evil King will talk to the players. He will deny planning an invasion of The Wild Lands, and claim he does not know anything about any message sent to The Vampire. He may try to blame the Evil Wizard for hatching such a plot. He instructs the players to return to The Troll King with a message of peace and an offer of cooperation between their two kingdoms.

Quest 15 - Level 15 - The Wild Lands

Acquisition: Talk to The Evil King

Completion: Defeat either The Troll Lord or The Evil King

Enemies: EITHER 5 Storm Trolls and The Troll Lord OR 5 Evil Knights and The Evil King (the Evil Knights are considerably stronger than the Storm Trolls; The Troll Lord and The Evil King are probably both equal level 15)

Description: The players must return to The Wild Lands to talk to The Troll Lord. They will not be attacked on their way in. When they finally talk to The Troll Lord, he will reveal that his quest to send them to talk to The Vampire was actually a ruse; he forged the note they found from The Evil King and sent it to The Vampire knowing that since he was still in torpor he would not read it for some time. He

Bruce Sterling Woodcock
3647 W Horizons #303
Columbus, OH 43204

(408) 218-7268
sirbruce70@gmail.com
<https://sterlingcommentary.com>

only sent the players there to eliminate one of his strongest enemies before he launches his own attack on EvilKingdom, which he had been planning to do all along.

Before the players can react, they hear fighting and commotion from the outer rooms. The Evil King and his minions come charging in from the same way the players came. The Evil King laughs, and thanks the players for leading his strike force to The Troll Lord. Just as The Troll Lord used the players to get what he wanted, so too did The Evil King use the players to further his own ends. He asks them to join him in defeating The Troll Lord; The Troll Lord asks the players to join him instead and defeat The Evil King.

The player talking to The Troll Lord must choose sides via the dialogue box with The Troll Lord. Once their choice is made (applies to entire group), the battle begins. Defeating The Evil King will be more difficult, but The Troll Lord will probably offer a correspondingly greater reward for not only defending The Wild Lands but also defeating two of his strongest enemies. If players side with The Evil King, he will be somewhat less appreciative of what the players have done, although he will reward them for leading him to The Troll Lord's lair. Players will feel like they've been used (and they have been!) no matter which side they choose in the end.