

Ryan Hakius

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Game & Narrative Designer with a B.S. in Game Design from RIT and nearly 5 years of embedded AAA development experience across live-service and major studio milestone pipelines. Employed by Experis Game Solutions and contracted to Amazon Games, operating at the intersection of game systems, player experience, and technical validation. Proven background evaluating systems balance, combat pacing, player onboarding, and environmental UX, delivering actionable design feedback adopted by core development teams. Casual tabletop and narrative designer with extensive experience crafting branching quest frameworks, world lore, and player-responsive encounters.

CORE DESIGN SKILLS & TOOLKIT

- **Design Disciplines:** Systems Design, Narrative Design & Worldbuilding, Level Design, Player UX & Onboarding, Combat & Encounter Pacing, Game Balance & Economy, Playtest Facilitation
- **Engines & Scripting:** Unity, Unreal Engine, Python (Automation & Prototyping Scripting), C# (Foundational), HTML/CSS/JavaScript, Data Structures & Logic Flow
- **Production & Analysis:** Jira, Confluence, Backtrace Crash Diagnostics, In-Game Telemetry & Player Insights, Slack Workflow Automation, Perforce, Git, Proprietary AIs
- **Documentation:** Game Design Documents (GDD), Narrative Outlines, Dialogue Bibles, Character Profiles, Systems Flowcharts, Comprehensive Feature Compendiums
- **Platforms & Software:** Windows, Xbox Series X/S Devkits, PlayStation 5 Devkits, Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook), Google Workspace
- **Collaboration & Leadership:** Cross-Functional Coordination, Peer Mentoring & Training, Technical Writing, Conflict Resolution, Stakeholder Communication, Task Delegation, Agile/Scrum Teamwork, Team Morale Building

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Experis Game Solutions (Contracted to Amazon Games) | Beaverton / Portland, OR

Test Associate 3 (Systems & Acceptance Evaluation) | April 2025 – September 2026

Projects: *Tomb Raider: Atlantis* & *Tomb Raider: Catalyst* (Crystal Dynamics / Amazon Games)

- Conducted deep-dive evaluations of player-facing systems across AI behavior trees, character locomotion, combat responsiveness, and UI/UX flows across two simultaneous AAA franchise titles.
- Delivered extensive qualitative and systems design feedback during recurring Milestone Acceptance Testing (MAT) cycles; directly influenced developer feature revisions and design refinements prior to deliverable approval.
- Advocated for player experience integrity by evaluating feature deliverables against original design intent, contributing critical technical assessments to high-stakes milestone Pass/Fail decisions.
- Engineered Python automation scripts to execute automated level playthroughs for smoke passes, applying scripting logic to isolate gameplay breakdowns and level progression blockers.
- Designed an intuitive information architecture and milestone tracking workflow using Slack Canvases and automated bots, eliminating complex database queries and streamlining cross-team visibility.
- Authored technical knowledge bases and game systems documentation in Confluence, bridging information gaps to ensure consistent design and feature understanding across multi-discipline teams.
- Directed test pods of 3–7 analysts during ~10 milestone passes in the absence of lead engineers; mentored incoming staff on system mechanics and design evaluation standards.

Test Associate 1 → Test Associate 2 (Content & Systems QA) | December 2021 – April 2025

Projects: *New World* & *New World: Aeternum* (Amazon Games)

- Promoted 1.5 years ahead of schedule based on analytical rigor, deep systems literacy, and high-impact bug identification.
- Served as sole cross-functional evaluator bridging the AAAX (Art, Achievements, Audio) and UI/UX teams across major expansions (Brimstone Sands, Rise of the Angry Earth, Aeternum console launch).
- Analyzed live-service Telemetry and Player Insights alongside daily high-volume ticket queues (100s/day) to identify divergence between designer intent and emergent player behavior.
- Owned visual, audio, and functional QA sign-off for gear sets, mounts, and premium cosmetic microtransaction (MTX) assets, auditing visual hierarchy, aesthetic fidelity, and immersion standards.
- Validated mechanics, unlock criteria, and player feedback loops for 100+ in-game achievements, ensuring reward systems aligned with intended progression pacing.
- Utilized Backtrace to diagnose crash dumps and isolate engine failure states, effectively connecting user-facing bugs to root-cause system failures for the core engineering team.
- Researched, organized, and authored a multi-volume character customization taxonomy compendium adopted studio-wide as the definitive design reference for asset verification.

SELECTED DESIGN & NARRATIVE PROJECTS

Tabletop Narrative & Worldbuilding | *Sole Designer & Game Master (Ongoing)*

- Built and ran multiple long-form campaigns set in original homebrewed settings, authoring extensive world lore, regional political factions, cultural histories, and distinct NPC voice/narrative arcs.
- Designed non-linear, branching quest architectures with dynamic encounter conditions that adapt in real time to emergent player choices within rule-bound systems.

Bakery Battle | *Physical Card Game Prototype (Academic Group Project)*

- Designed a competitive 2–6 player card game centered around resource allocation, customer order completion, and strategic player sabotage.
- Refined core mechanics through dozens of iterative blind playtests, tuning card ratios, win-condition pacing, and rulebook clarity prior to professional physical printing.

Time Heist | *Board & Card Game Prototype (Academic Group Project)*

- Co-designed a cooperative heist game utilizing temporal mechanics, anchor points, and timeline cloning to solve escalating structural security puzzles.
- Balanced player action limits against asynchronous board hazards to create tactical tension and systemic narrative payoff.

Orbital Vector | *Unity Game Prototype (Academic Group Project)*

- Co-developed a 2D side-scrolling arcade game featuring dynamic planetary gravity fields.
- Designed navigational level layouts and obstacle pacing requiring players to leverage orbital physics and gravity wells to traverse levels.

Joy-Con Platformer | *Motion-Controlled Game Prototype (Academic / Group Project)*

- Engineered environmental level mechanics mapped to Nintendo Switch Joy-Con gyroscopic controls, focusing on physical affordances, accessibility, and tactile response

Eye of the Beholder | *Unity Game Prototype (Academic Group)*

- Developed an *Asteroids*-inspired top-down arcade prototype in Unity, tuning encounter pacing, enemy wave sequencing, telegraphing cues, and difficulty curves.

EDUCATION

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) | *Rochester, NY*

Bachelor of Science in Game Design | *Class of 2020*

- **Relevant Coursework:** Experience Design for Games & Media, Game Development & Algorithmic Problem Solving, Interactive Media Development, Problem Solving with Data Structures & Algorithms, Rich Media Web Apps.