

Tag in Bananaland Design Document

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Note: Wireframes and Concept Art in this document do not necessarily represent final art.

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Overview

“Tag in Bananaland!” is a casual and fast-paced tag video game, designed for 2 to 4 players. The game will take the feeling of playing tag on a playground and bring it to our screens by using playful user interaction, dynamic environmental obstacles, a hand-drawn art style, and silly sound effects to create an atmosphere of childlike whimsy.

“Tag in Bananaland!” is based on traditional tag (where the tagger tries to tag other players, other players avoid being tagged, and whoever the tagger tags becomes the next tagger), but it will also expand on this framework to create a more engaging multiplayer experience. For instance, in addition to tagging, “Tag in Bananaland!” will also add the ability for players to throw each other around. While throwing other players is impossible in real life, “Tag in Bananaland!” can feature cartoonish behaviors because it is a video game. Behaviors like throwing would also take advantage of the game’s multiplayer capabilities and add strategic elements— for example, someone could throw another player in the tagger’s direction to influence who will become the tagger next. The new tagger may then try to get their revenge by pursuing whoever just threw them, and playful grudges like these will complement the game’s strategic elements to turn “Tag in Bananaland” into an engaging social experience.

In addition to further player interaction, “Tag in Bananaland!” is also unique because of the environments it takes place in. Normal tag is usually played in a park, but “Tag in Bananaland!” would have multiple levels set in varying locations such as a banana market, a candy utopia, and a ski resort. Each location would have unique objects (such as fences to jump over or giant gumballs to throw around), as well as terrain with different effects (such as slippery ice or puddles of candy goo). These dynamic levels would reward players for “just playing around” as they experiment and interact with various objects in space, and this sense of open-ended exploratory play will be a great match for the theme of neighborhood tag in a park.

Throughout “Tag in Bananaland!”, a clock will constantly be counting down on the bottom of the screen. Once the clock runs out of time, the game will transition to an end screen, where the players’ avatars will be standing on an Olympic-style award podium. Each player will have a personal score based on how little time they spent as the tagger, and these scores will be displayed here. Whoever has the highest score is the winner of the game.

Game Summary

Platform

“Tag in Bananaland!” is designed for local multiplayer on a PC, and is played using the keyboard and/or Xbox and PlayStation controllers. The game supports 2-4 players.

Design Pillars

“Tag in Bananaland!” satisfies the following game design parameters:

1. Social Play: Players may interact with each other directly through in-game behaviors like tagging and throwing.
2. Strategic Play: Players may develop and implement strategies to tag or escape other players while avoiding environmental obstacles.
3. Open-Ended Play: Players will be rewarded for “just playing around” as they explore and experiment with their environmental surroundings.

The basic gameplay loop is:

1. User runs away from the tagger
2. User gets tagged and becomes the tagger
3. User chases after other players
4. User tags another player who becomes the new tagger

In “Tag in Bananaland!”, the players can:

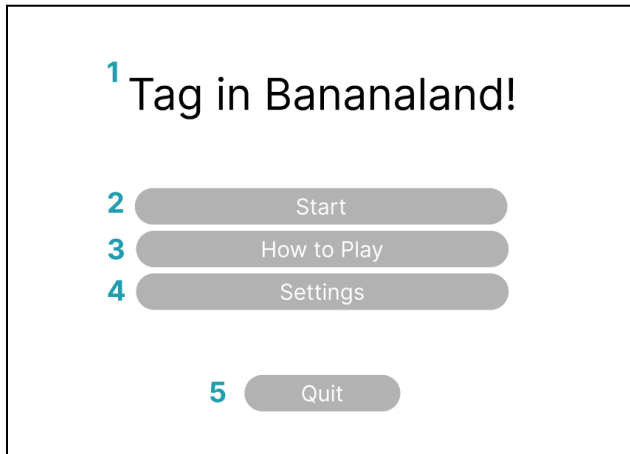
- Select how many people are playing the game
- Select personal player avatars
- Select what level to play on
- Run around
- Always see each player’s location
- Always easily identify the tagger
- Look for the best route to take to escape the tagger while avoiding obtrusive obstacles
- Get tagged and become the new tagger
- Tag others to make someone else become the new tagger (only the tagger can do this)
- Fall over, being temporarily stunned after getting thrown or tagged.
- Throw other players
- Throw interactable objects (like balls)
- Jump over obstacles
- Interact differently with different types of terrain.
- See the camera smoothly move to follow players’ positions
- Constantly see the clock, which shows how much longer the game will last
- Constantly see everyone’s score
- See the end screen that shows who won and everyone’s final score.

Gameplay

[Clickable Prototype](#)

Title Screen

Title screen where player can begin the game or edit settings.



1. Game Title
2. Start Button: Click to start game
3. How To Play: Click to view gameplay instructions and controls
4. Settings: Click to edit settings
5. Quit: Click to quit the game

How to Play

The "How to Play" button opens this screen, showing basic rules and controls to play the game.

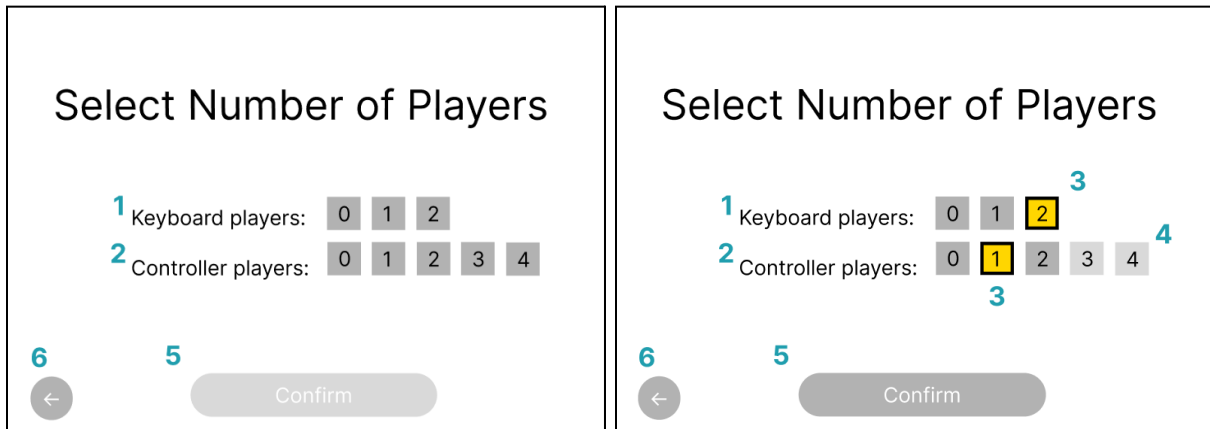


1. Rules: This explains the basic rules of tag, and what each player's objective is. For the final version of the game, the rules could be reworded.

2. Controls: This diagram shows the controls. Keyboard players each use different controls because they share the keyboard (move using arrow keys or WASD, jump using enter or space bar, and tag/throw using right or left shift), but controller players all use the same controls (move using the left joy-con, jump using A, and tag/throw using the right trigger).
3. Back Button: This button takes players back to the previous screen.

Player Select

The “Start” button on the Title Screen takes users here, to select the player count. The game is designed for 2-4 players– up to 2 on the keyboard, and up to 4 on Xbox/PlayStation controllers.



1. Keyboard Players: Users select how many people are playing on the keyboard.
2. Controller Players: Users select how many people are playing on controllers.
3. Selected Number: Numbers will be highlighted to show they are selected.
4. Grayed Out Numbers: The game allows a maximum of 4 players, so some numbers are grayed out to prevent selecting more than 4 players. In the upper right image, with 2 players on the keyboard, only 2 controller players can join to avoid exceeding 4 players.
5. Confirm Button: This button becomes clickable after the number of players is selected. Clicking it leads to the Character Select Screen.
6. Back Button: This button takes players to the previous screen.

Character Select

After confirming, users choose what character to play as–Frog, Dog, Chicken, or Fish. Each player must choose a unique character. Here is an example of the screen for a 3-player game:



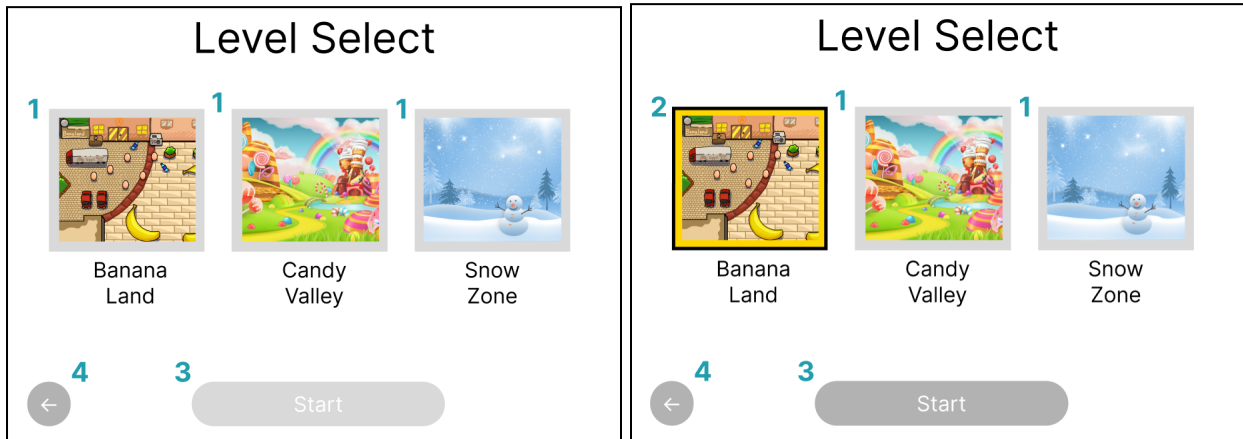
1. Player Number: Each player is assigned a number to distinguish themselves from other players.
2. Character Image: Each player can see what character they currently have selected. For instance, in both images above, Player 3 has selected the Fish.
3. Arrows: Players can click on the arrows or use the “move” controls to tab between character options in a cycle. For example, between the two images above, Player 1 switched from selecting the Frog to the Dog.
4. Confirm: This button confirms the selected characters and takes players to the Level Select Screen. If multiple players have selected the same character (like two players selecting Dog), this button will be grayed out and will not be clickable.
5. Back Button: This button takes players back to the previous screen.

Below is an example of the Character Select Screen in a 4-player game and a 2-player game. The UI would expand or contract to accommodate character selection for the number of players in that particular game:



Level Select

After confirming their characters, users are brought to the level select screen. Here the player may select what level to play. Each level will include different maps with unique visuals, different combinations of obstacles, new interactable objects, and easter eggs to explore.



1. Levels: Each level is represented with an image and a name.
2. Selected Level: Once selected, a level will be highlighted. The “Banana Land” level is selected in the image to the upper right.
3. Start: This button starts grayed out. Once a level is selected, this button will become clickable and will start the game.
4. Back button: This button takes players back to the previous screen.

Opening Fanfare

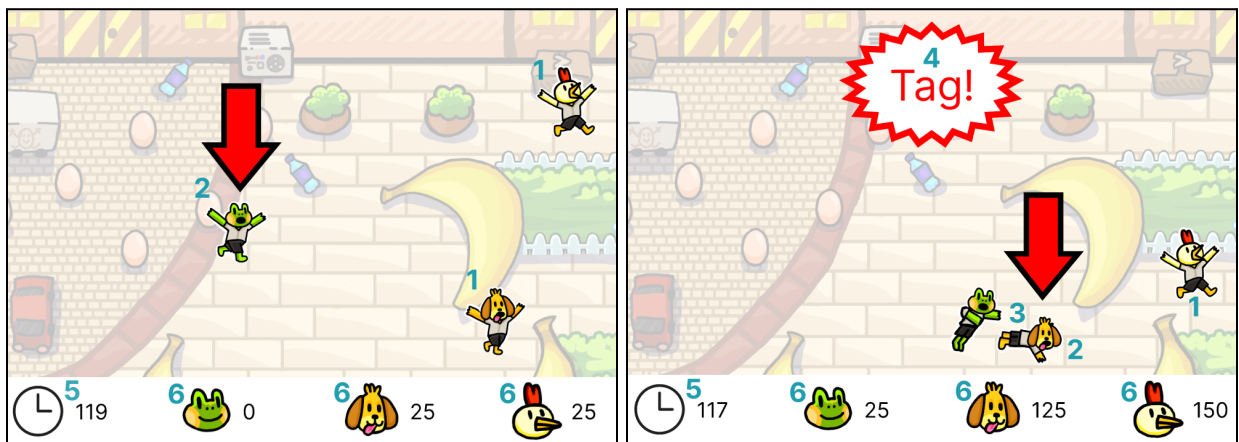
Immediately after clicking start, the level opens, the players appear onscreen (represented by the characters they selected earlier), and we hear the opening musical fanfare (similar to [this recording](#)). The players are all free to move around, but none of them are the tagger yet.



1. Players: when the game starts, the players are evenly distributed throughout the screen. They can move around, but none of them are the tagger and nobody can tag anyone else.
 - a. Note: the tagger will not be determined until after the fanfare ends; this is so during the fanfare everyone can get a head start before the tagger starts pursuing.
2. Level: the level is the background / setting where the players are standing. The level shown here is a placeholder.
3. Clock: the clock shows how many seconds are left in the game. Once the fanfare is over, the clock will start counting down.
4. Player Scores: each player has a personal score. Scores will remain at 0 until the fanfare is over.

Tagging

As soon as the fanfare finishes, the game chooses a random player to be the tagger, the clock starts counting down, the players' scores start increasing, and a bell sound plays (similar to [this recording](#)). The tagger must now try to tag other players, other players must avoid being tagged, and whoever the tagger tags will become the next tagger

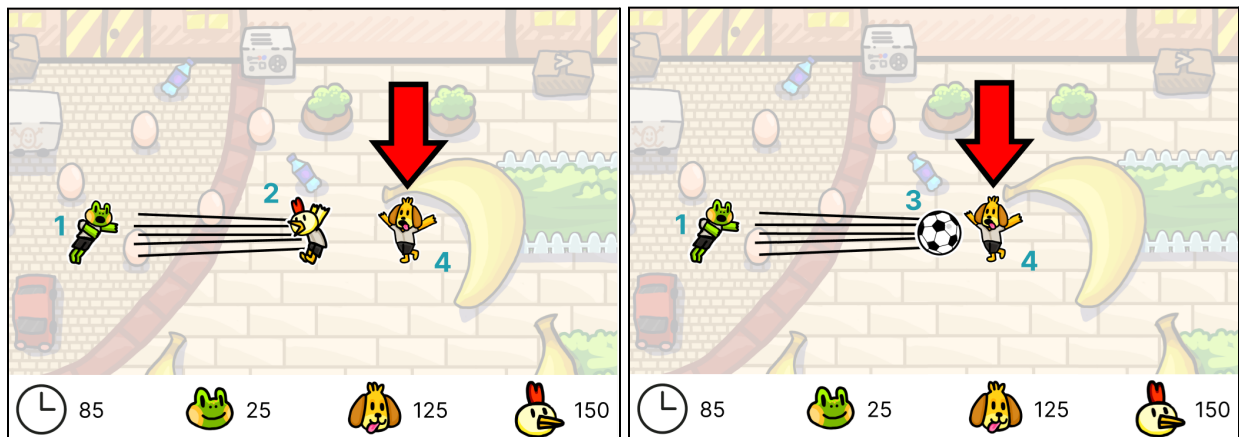


1. Players: The avatars of players who are running away from the tagger
2. Tagger: The tagger chases other players to try to tag them. The tagger is identified by the giant red arrow that always points at their head.
3. Tagging: To tag, the tagger must stand by a player, face them, and press the “tag/throw” button (right trigger, right shift, or left shift). The tagged player becomes the new tagger, and they get the red arrow. The new tagger also falls over and gets briefly stunned, which allows the previous tagger to run away. In the upper right image, the Frog tags the Dog, which gives the Dog the red arrow and stuns it temporarily.
4. Tag Alert: Whenever a player is tagged, a bell sound plays and a large temporary alert appears at the top of the screen to emphasize that someone was just tagged.
5. Clock: After the fanfare, the countdown starts and shows how many seconds are left until the game ends. The clock starts at 120 seconds (The game lasts 2 minutes).

6. Player Scores: After the fanfare, players' scores start to increase. Players earn points based on how little time they spend as the tagger, and players gain points faster if their avatar is located closer to the tagger's location.
 - a. Note: This encourages more exciting gameplay, where players want to be near the tagger to accrue points faster, but want to be far from the tagger to avoid being tagged.

Throwing

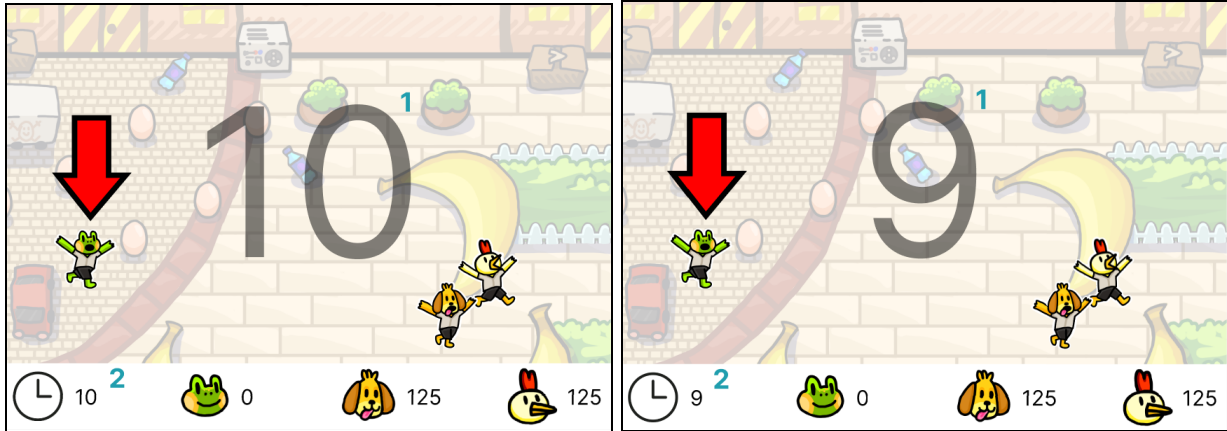
In addition to *tagging* each other, players can also throw each other around the screen.



1. Thrower- The player who performs the “throw” action. Players can throw other players and objects. Everyone except the tagger can throw players, but everyone including the tagger can throw objects. To throw something, stand by it, face it, and press the “tag/throw” button (right trigger, right shift, or left shift).
2. Thrown Player- The player who has been thrown. Thrown players are launched in the direction the thrower is facing. Once thrown, a player will lose control of their character. After coming to a complete stop, a thrown player will remain stunned for a moment before regaining control (similar to getting stunned after being tagged).
3. Thrown Object- Like players, movable objects like balls can also be thrown. Thrown objects are launched in the direction the thrower is facing, and will bounce off of other players and any walls they collide with until they slow down.
4. Tagger- Throwing players adds strategy to the game, as someone could throw another player in the tagger's direction to influence who will become the tagger next. Throwing objects is also strategic, as thrown objects may obstruct the tagger and slow their pursuit.

Time is Running Out!

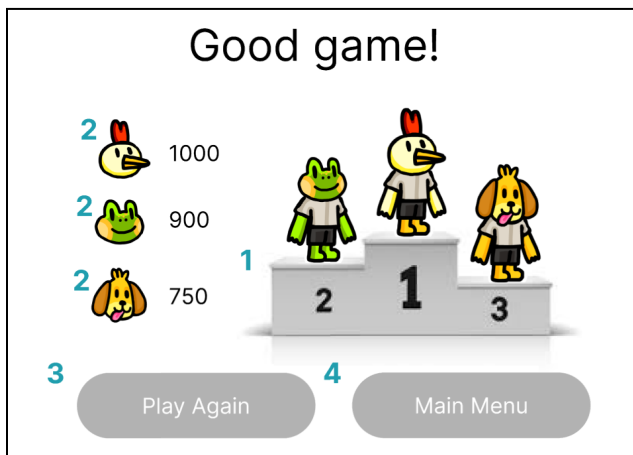
Throughout the game, a clock is counting down in the bottom left corner of the screen. The clock starts at 2 minutes, and the game ends when the clock runs out. Once the clock has only 10 seconds remaining, the players will be warned that the game is almost over.



1. Big Numbers- a large transparent countdown will appear in the middle of the screen for the last 10 seconds of the game.
2. Countdown Clock- The clock is almost out of time.

End Scoring

After the time runs out, players are brought to an end screen where scoring information is displayed. Each player's score is based on how little time they spent as the tagger, and players also earned higher scores for spending more time located closer to the tagger's location.



1. Podium- The players' avatars stand on an award podium.
 - a. Each player's position is based on their score. The player with the highest score would stand on the highest point, the player with the 2nd highest score would stand in the second highest point, etc.
 - b. The podium's size would vary based on player count, similar to the variation used to accommodate different player counts on the Character Select Screen.
2. Scores- Each player's score would be displayed next to their avatar's head.
3. Play Again- Clicking this button would start another match with the same number of players, same characters, and same level.

4. Main Menu- Clicking this button would take players back to the Title Screen, where they can quit the game or can edit settings before starting another match.

Levels

“Tag in Bananaland!” would feature multiple levels. Levels are the maps where tag is played. Unlike most games, these levels will not need to be played in sequential order. All the levels will already be unlocked the first time the game is opened, and while some levels may have more complex layouts than others, no level would necessarily be much more difficult than any other. Levels would be viewed from a top-down perspective.

Level Design Pillars

Each “Tag in Bananaland!” level must:

1. Provide opportunities for players to devise strategic routes, which they may use to escape or pursue other players while avoiding obstacles.
2. Encourage open-ended gameplay in which players interact with and experiment with their environmental surroundings. The levels should be dynamic enough that they reward players for “just playing around,” much like the exploratory play seen in childhood backyards.
3. Be distinct from all other levels in terms of layout, complexity, and/or aesthetics.

Features of Level Maps

Each level map would be made up of 6 kinds of interactable features: 1) walls, 2) jumpable obstacles, 3) destroyable obstacles, 4) passable obstacles, 5) movable objects, and 6) terrain. These features must be thoughtfully placed throughout each level, to ensure that each level allows players to play strategically, while also encouraging experimentation and exploration.

- 1) Walls are stationary objects like trees or boulders that the player cannot run through. To get past one of these obstacles, the player must walk around it.
- 2) Jumpable obstacles are stationary objects like fences that players cannot run through, but they *can* jump over. To jump, a player must press “A” (on controllers) or “W” or “Up” (on keyboards). Players will have to time their jumps correctly, in order to successfully get past an obstacle. If they jump and land *on* an obstacle (instead of landing on either side of it) they will ‘trip over the obstacle,’ and will be temporarily stunned (similar to how players are stunned after being tagged or thrown). Jumping over these obstacles is a great way to access a shortcut and escape the tagger, but doing so is also risky because if you fail and get stunned you will be vulnerable to getting tagged.
- 3) Destroyable obstacles are stationary objects like sandcastles or snowmen that players cannot run through, but they *can* destroy. Players can destroy these obstacles by approaching them, facing them, and pressing the “tag/throw” button (either right trigger, right shift, or left shift). This will cause the obstacle to play an animation in which it falls apart. After an obstacle is destroyed, players can run through it. While destroyable obstacles can get in the player’s way, they are easier to get past than jumpable obstacles because players do not risk being stunned by them.

- 4) Passable obstacles are stationary objects like bushes or tall flowers that the player *can* run through. Whenever a player runs through one of these obstacles, the obstacle would be animated (for example, the bush's leaves would exaggeratedly rustle). These obstacles add more life and visual interest to the game world, but do not contribute much to strategic gameplay.
- 5) Movable objects are objects like balls that can be thrown by the player. Players can throw objects by walking up to them, facing them, and pressing the "tag/throw" button. The object will then accelerate in the direction the thrower was facing, before bouncing around the room and eventually slowing to a complete stop. If a player runs into a movable object, they will slowly push the object in the direction they are running.
- 6) Terrain exists flat on the ground, and affects the player when they run over it. Players will react to different terrain in different ways; for example, walking on grass makes players move slower, and walking in puddles makes the player's movement slippery. Interactions with certain types of terrain may also cause animations or particle effects; for example, walking in puddles would cause the water to ripple and a splashing particle effect would occur around the player's feet. As players run away from the tagger, they will have to strategically figure out how to make their escape while avoiding terrain that could slow them down.

The following reference video shows a great example of a player interacting with obstacles and terrain in a way that would be very similar to "Tag in Bananaland!". The sandcastle represents a destroyable obstacle, the bush represents a passable obstacle, and the shallow and deep water represent terrain: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE-8PWDTErg>

Level Environments

Every level would have a different layout and a different skin to represent a different environment. Environments could include places like a banana market, a candy utopia, a ski resort, or a minigolf course. Having many environments would contribute to the game's emphasis on open-ended gameplay as players are interacting with different objects and exploring different locations in each level. Environments will also make each level feel more novel, and they will add to the game's replayability as each time players play the game they could try out a different level with a different atmosphere.

Camera

Any level that is strategically and aesthetically deep enough to fulfill the stated requirements may be too topographically large to fit onscreen all at once. To resolve this issue, the game will include a camera that will fluidly follow the average position of all the players. If the players are spread out, the camera will zoom out. If players are near each other, the camera will zoom in on them. The camera will also have a maximum and minimum zoom value, to ensure the players never appear too large or small. Once the camera is zoomed out to its maximum value, the camera's bounding box will function as an impenetrable wall to prevent players from running offscreen and to ensure everyone is always within the camera's view. The camera will always be centered on the players' current average position, and will follow them throughout the level.

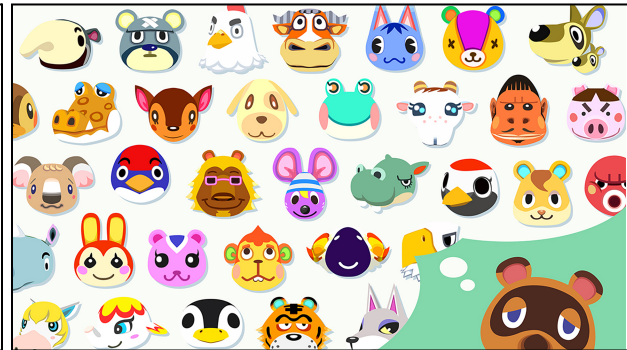
Visual References

“Tag in Bananaland!” would have a hand-drawn visual art style, reminiscent of doodles or illustrations in children’s books. The game would use bright and highly saturated colors, and would have juicy visual responses to player actions. Character designs would be inspired by “Animal Crossing” villagers, but would be 2D and more artificial a la the characters in “Paper Mario”. Backgrounds could be more detailed than the characters, as seen in media like “Paper Mario” and “The Amazing World of Gumball”. Levels would be viewed from a top-down camera angle. Below are some reference images for visual inspiration:

Paper Mario: Color Splash



Animal Crossing: New Horizons



The Amazing World of Gumball



Animations

- Character animations (we would need this for all 4 avatar characters)
 - Idle
 - Running
 - Tagging/Throwing
 - Jumping
 - Falling (being stunned)
 - Being thrown
- Particle effects
 - Dust cloud particle for player running
 - Impact particle effect for player being tagged, and for landing after being thrown
 - Velocity particle effect for player being thrown
 - Splash particle effect for player running through water
 - Leaf particle effect for player running on grass
- Environmental Animations
 - Animation for interacting with passable obstacles
 - Animation for terrain reacting to player footsteps
 - Animation for destroyable objects falling apart

Music and Sound

Suggested music and sound:

- Menu music track (plays in background when menus are open)
- Gameplay music track (plays in background after fanfare)
- Ending music track (plays on End Scoring Screen)
- Bugle / trumpet fanfare tune for the start of the game (similar to [this](#))
- Impactful bell sound to signify whenever someone gets tagged (similar to [this](#))
- Jump sound
- Throw sound
- Feedback sounds- confirmation when something is selected, etc

Accessibility

“Tag in Bananaland!” could include a variety of accessibility features:

- Customizable keybindings
- Adjustable input sensitivity
- Multiple options for input devices (keyboard and controllers)
- Controls and game instructions accessible throughout the game to remind forgetful players how to play.
- Adjustable text size settings to accommodate visually impaired players.
- Visual information conveyed using symbols—not just color—to accommodate color-blind players.
- Haptic feedback
 - Haptic feedback triggers during important events (such as when someone is tagged) to further communicate important information to visually-impaired and hearing-impaired players.
 - Haptic feedback would be toggleable, as some players may find the vibrations annoying, uncomfortable, or painful.
- The game’s timer could be adjustable; the default would be 2 minutes.