

Through reading this article, a few different methods of guiding players stood out to me. The first one was to facilitate mental mapping. This is particularly important to me because my internal compass is not very well calibrated, and I can get lost easily.

Another aspect standing out to me is luring with affordance. I had to look up what that meant, and it basically means designing for a task. For example, a ladder is designed to be climbed, so if a player sees a ladder, they will instinctively think to climb it. Affordance can also be implied, like in the Batman Arkham games, with the ventilation ducts that Batman has to crawl through. You wouldn't normally do that with a vent, but they are the perfect size for Batman to get inside and navigate, so you go to crawl through them when the door closes.

My favorite way of guiding the player is through goals and narrative. Guiding a player by means of telling a story makes it seem like they are actually having an impact on the world, or sometimes better yet, progressing through it and learning the rules of the world as you go.

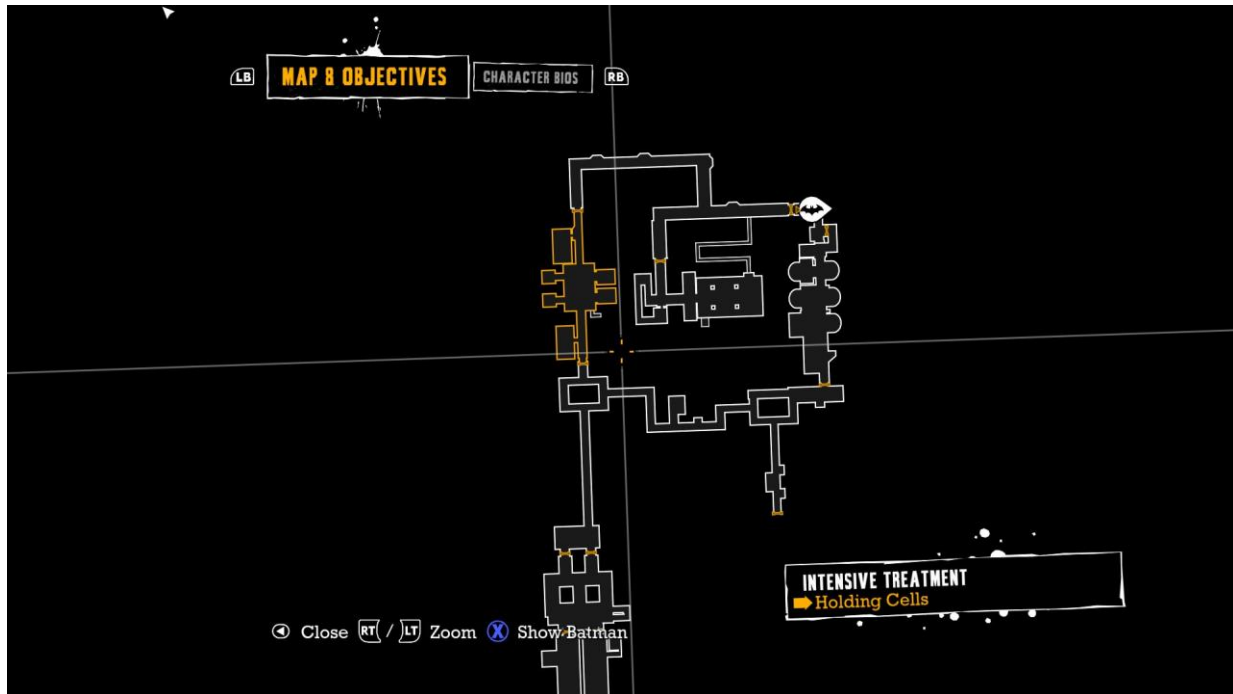
The game I chose to look more into is Batman: Arkham Asylum, because out of the Arkham series, this is the one with the best design in my opinion, and it is easy to pick see some of these elements that can fit into the three things I mentioned above and many more as well.

Mental Mapping



Arkham Asylum is good about giving the player visual cues, especially early in the game. There is a white path on the ground that leads to where you initially need to go, not needing to divert from that path until later in the game. There is also an NPC waiting at the end of the hall to give you your next steps and provide an indication that you need to go in that direction. Coming up to that corner as well, the direction you are meant to go is more lit up than the other direction you could have gone. It is important to have these directional cues at this point in the game because it is the first section where you are given full control before being guided to other points in the Asylum that require backtracking.

The maps in this game are not overly complex either. This coming from a guy with the internal compass of a walnut, only effectively being able to tell the difference between up and down means something. The level design for the interior of buildings is actually superb, as it captures the feeling of winding, twisting halls of an asylum without actually having the player lost for an extended period of time. Even when you do get a little disoriented after a combat encounter, all it takes is a quick look at the map and you know which way to go. The only section of the game where this is not quite as true, is in killer croc's lair, but that is by design.



Lure with Affordance



There are two main examples in the early game of luring with affordance. The first as I briefly mentioned before, is the presence of vents that you can open and crawl into. Many times, in this game you are not given an option to progress through a doorway, so looking for a vent becomes second nature when the way forward is not obvious.

The other is Gargoyles. These are more prominent in the stealth sections of the game, but their placement almost always guides the players to the gargoyles before they even notice the presence and positions of the enemies they are facing. The gargoyles almost never have a hand in direct progression, but when they do it is even more clear than when they are presented in a stealth encounter.

Goals and Narrative



This is one of many examples of being driven by goals and narrative to a specific location at a specific time. The dialogue creates a sense of urgency that you must respond to, and it sets the stage in the early game for how things are going to work throughout the game. The formula generally being something along the lines of discover threat, identify threat, get to threat, save some guards, guards tell you about new threat.

This kind of sense of urgency is a motivator that makes sense in the context of this game, and it is a good way to guide the player through a game like this. It makes sense in the context of the game for Batman to be tipped off by witnesses in other areas, so while it may be a little repetitive at times, hearing a guard tell you to head into the botanical gardens again is not necessarily a bad thing.