

# Elapse

## Preface

Every field has a different understanding of time. Time necessitates a descriptivist<sup>1</sup> definition that evolves with new experiences and knowledge. To talk about time is to call upon millennia of changing ideologies that have fluctuated with concepts of labor, religion, money, technology, race, gender, colonization, and more.

As video games have emerged as a medium, they have created a contained concept of time that reflects, contradicts, or blends with real time. Just as the railroad led to the “annihilation of space and time” (Schivelbusch 1), teleportation, time skipping, mounts, checkpoints, and other game features warps players’ understanding of spacetime while they’re gaming.

Games such as *Braid*, *Life is Strange*, *Twelve Minutes*, *Before Your Eyes*, *Slay the Princess*, and others with explicit time-centered mechanics explore the medium’s ability to manipulate time, but its full capabilities have been largely untapped by game developers. Many games orient their use of time as a tool or vehicle for violence (*Quantum Break*, *Deathloop*, *Returnal*), revealing the essence of many games: “men shooting men in the face” (Anthropy 3).

The most common way games stray from this convention while exploring time is through the use of time loops, which Mobius Digital’s Creative Director Alex Beachum claims arose from “a void that needed filling in the industry” (Batchelor). I’m attempting to call attention to a similar vacancy, a need for time-based games that disrupt the combat-heavy success stories of AAA publishers and instead focus on interpersonal relationships.

*Elapse* thus arose to fill this gap and build upon its predecessors, hoping to one day become a guiding force that encourages other games to intentionally engage with the time perspective that digital games are uniquely situated to realize.

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<sup>1</sup> Descriptivism refers to a non-judgemental linguistic doctrine that focuses on the use cases of language. It is often used in comparison to prescriptivism, which believes that there are “right” and “wrong” uses of language dictated by written rules.