

It Starts With a Summon

Minigame Class Design Document

Design Philosophy

Every minigame in this document follows (now four) core principles:

1. **Skill should feel like progression mastery.** Players should feel like they are learning something (magic, botany, astronomy) rather than just pattern matching.
2. **Performance affects flavor.** Romance routes are not locked behind skill gates. Good performance unlocks bonus dialogue, unique scenes, and richer interactions, but every player can complete every route.
3. **Juice:** Every action should have satisfying feedback I'm aiming for if scope allows. Visual sparkle, audio stings, and playful animations transform functional mechanics into memorable moments.
4. **Mechanical diversity.** Each minigame tests a different skill type: memory, deduction, timing, and intuition. No two games should feel the same reskins of each other.

The game features four classes across five academy days. Three classes build character stats that unlock dialogue options and align with specific romance routes. The fourth class (Potions) produces gifts that affect love interest affection.

Class	Stat	Best Route	Core Fantasy	Skill Type
Astronomy	Myth	Keith (Human)	Discovering wonder	Pattern Memory
Herbology	Science	Riven (Rival)	Proving knowledge	Deduction
Spells	Arcane	Aldric (Villain)	Mastering power	Timing
Potions	(Affection)	All Routes	Thoughtful gifting	Intuition

Astronomy: Star Charting

Stat: Myth | **Route:** Keith (Human) | **Complexity:** Low | **Skill Type:** Pattern Memory

Core Fantasy

You are learning the myths written in the stars. Each constellation tells a story, and by tracing them correctly, you unlock the wonder of this world's night sky!

How It Works

- The professor displays a constellation for 2 to 3 seconds
- The constellation fades, leaving only scattered stars on the screen
- The player clicks stars in the correct order to recreate the pattern
- Lines connect between selected stars, revealing the constellation

Difficulty Across Five Days

Day	Stars	Display Time	Decoy Stars	Constellation
1	4	3.0 seconds	0	The Lantern
2	5	3.0 seconds	1	The Wand
3	6	2.5 seconds	2	The Serpent
4	7	2.5 seconds	3	The Crown
5	8	2.0 seconds	4	The Dragon

Scoring

1. **Perfect (all stars, correct order):** +3 Myth
2. **Good (1 to 2 errors):** +2 Myth
3. **Passable (3+ errors but completed):** +1 Myth
4. **Failed (incomplete):** +0 Myth

Juice

1. Each correct star click produces a soft chime that rises in pitch
2. Lines between stars shimmer with a gentle glow as they connect
3. Completed constellations pulse once and emit a starburst particle effect
4. Wrong star clicks cause a soft "fizzle" sound but do not break the attempt
5. The professor names the constellation after completion

Narrative Payoff

Keith is from Earth, looking at completely unfamiliar stars. High Myth stats unlock a special scene where you stargaze together and Keith describes Earth's constellations while you share the stories behind yours. This is one of the most intimate bonding moments in his route.

Asset Requirements

Asset Type	Minimum	Stretch
Backgrounds	1 (night sky)	1
UI Elements	1 (star sprite)	3 (star, decoy, line)

VFX	0	2 (starburst, shimmer)
SFX	0	3 (chime, fizzle, complete)

Herbology: Plant Diagnosis

Stat: Science | **Route:** Riven (Rival) | **Complexity:** Medium | **Skill Type:** Deduction

Core Fantasy

You are a botanical detective. An unknown plant sits before you, and you must figure out what it is by examining its properties and cross-referencing clues. This is not about memorization; it is about careful observation and logical thinking.

How It Works

1. An unknown plant specimen appears on screen
2. The player has limited "test slots" to examine the plant (3 to 4 depending on day)
3. Available tests: Check Leaf (shape/texture), Smell Flower (scent type), Poke Stem (reaction), Check Roots (structure)
4. Each test reveals one clue about the plant's identity
5. A reference chart showing all species and their traits is always visible
6. Based on clues gathered, the player selects the correct species from multiple choice

Example Round

Unknown plant appears. Player has 3 tests.

1. Test 1 (Check Leaf): "Serrated edges, waxy surface"
2. Test 2 (Smell Flower): "Sharp, minty aroma"
3. Test 3 (Poke Stem): "No reaction"

Player checks the reference chart: only Frostmint has serrated waxy leaves AND a minty smell. Answer: Frostmint. Correct!

Difficulty Across Five Days

Day	Species Pool	Tests Allowed	Specimens	Trait Overlap
1	4	4	3	None
2	5	4	4	Low
3	6	3	4	Medium
4	7	3	5	Medium
5	8	2	5	High

Trait Overlap means how many species share similar traits. Higher overlap requires more strategic test choices.

Scoring

1. **Perfect (100% correct):** +3 Science
2. **Good (80% or higher):** +2 Science
3. **Passable (60% to 79%):** +1 Science
4. **Failed (below 60%):** +0 Science

Juice

1. Each test has a unique animation: magnifying glass for leaves, sniffing particles for smell
2. Plants react to tests: a Snapping Violet bites, a Puffshroom releases spores
3. Correct identifications make the plant "bloom" with a satisfied wiggle
4. The reference chart has a hand-drawn field guide aesthetic
5. Perfect rounds earn a "gold star" stamp from the professor

Narrative Payoff

Riven has always resented the MC for coasting on their parents' reputation. High Science stats unlock a moment where you correctly diagnose a tricky specimen that Riven misidentifies, earning genuine (if grudging) respect.

Asset Requirements

Asset Type	Minimum	Stretch
Backgrounds	1 (greenhouse)	1
Plant Sprites	4 (recolor variants)	8 (unique species)
UI Elements	5 (4 test buttons + chart)	6 (+ result card)
VFX	0	4 (test animations)
SFX	0	5 (tests + correct/wrong)

Spells: Power Channeling

Stat: Arcane | **Route:** Aldric (Villain) | **Complexity:** Medium | **Skill Type:** Timing/Precision

Core Fantasy

Casting magic requires focus and control. Power flows through you, and you must release it at exactly the right moment. Too early and the spell fizzles. Too late and it backfires. Perfect timing produces powerful, impressive results.

How It Works

1. The professor announces a spell to cast
2. A power meter appears with energy fluctuating in a wave pattern
3. A "sweet spot" zone is highlighted on the meter (the Stretch release point)
4. The player clicks/taps to release the spell when the wave hits the sweet spot
5. Spell quality depends on timing accuracy

Cast Quality Outcomes

1. **Perfect (dead center):** Spell casts with maximum effect, impressive VFX
2. **Good (within sweet spot):** Spell works normally
3. **Weak (slightly outside):** Spell fizzles with reduced effect
4. **Backfire (way off):** Comedic failure, spell affects caster

Difficulty Across Five Days

Day	Wave Speed	Sweet Spot Size	Casts Required	Spell
1	Slow	Large (30%)	3	Lumen
2	Slow	Medium (25%)	4	Ignis
3	Medium	Medium (25%)	4	Frigus
4	Medium	Small (20%)	5	Scutum
5	Fast	Small (15%)	5	Fulgur

Scoring

Score is based on the average quality across all casts in the session.

1. **Perfect (mostly Perfect/Good casts):** +3 Arcane
2. **Good (mixed results):** +2 Arcane
3. **Passable (mostly Weak):** +1 Arcane
4. **Failed (mostly Backfires):** +0 Arcane

Juice

1. The power meter pulses with magical energy, glowing brighter near the sweet spot
2. Perfect casts produce dramatic spell effects with screen shake and particle bursts
3. Backfires have comedic animations (hair stands on end, robes smolder briefly)
4. Consecutive Perfect casts build a "combo glow" around the character
5. The professor's reactions escalate based on performance

Narrative Payoff

Aldric was expelled for misusing powerful magic. He respects raw magical talent over book knowledge. High Arcane stats unlock a confrontation scene where you match his spell with a perfectly-timed counter, earning his genuine surprise.

Asset Requirements

Asset Type	Minimum	Stretch
Backgrounds	1 (practice room)	1
UI Elements	2 (meter, sweet spot)	3 (+ energy wave)
Spell VFX	1 (generic cast)	5 (unique per spell)
Backfire VFX	1 (generic fizzle)	3 (comedic variants)
SFX	2 (cast, fail)	6 (per spell + outcomes)

Potions: Intuitive Brewing

Function: Gift Crafting (Affection System) | **Complexity:** Low | **Skill Type:** Intuition

Core Fantasy

You are crafting thoughtful gifts for people you care about. The magic is not in memorizing recipes but in understanding what each person would appreciate. A good gift shows you were paying attention.

Key Design

This design uses visual vibes so players can intuit good combinations without explicit recipes, plus contextual hints from the game world.

Ingredient Mood System

Every ingredient has a visual style that hints at what kind of gift it produces:

- Warm and Cozy** (soft colors, rounded shapes, gentle glow): chamomile, honeycomb, wool essence
- Impressive and Rare** (metallic sheen, crystalline, elegant): moonpetal, silverdust, phoenix feather
- Dark and Dangerous** (spiky, purple or black, slightly ominous): nightshade, cursed bone, shadow ink

Love Interest Preferences

Character	Loves	Dislikes
Keith	Warm and Cozy gifts (reminds him of home)	Impressive and Rare gifts (reminds him he doesn't belong)

Riven	Impressive and Rare gifts (values excellence)	Warm and Cozy gifts (seen as lazy)
Aldric	Dark and Dangerous gifts (respects audacity)	Both other types (finds them boring)

Contextual Hints

The game provides hints through natural dialogue and environmental storytelling:

1. A classmate mentions "Keith looked homesick at breakfast. He was staring at his tea like it reminded him of something."
2. Riven is overheard criticizing another student's "pedestrian" gift choice.
3. A rumor circulates that Aldric once kept a vial of something forbidden as a "souvenir" from his academy days.

How It Works

1. Player enters the potions classroom and sees available ingredients on a shelf
2. Player selects 2 to 3 ingredients by clicking or dragging them to the cauldron
3. The cauldron bubbles and changes color based on ingredient vibes
4. A gift is produced with a name and brief description
5. During free time, player can choose to give the gift to a love interest

Affection Results

Gift Match	Affection Change
Perfect match (they love it)	+2 Affection
Neutral (polite acceptance)	+0 Affection
Bad match (they dislike it)	-1 Affection
Actively offensive (worst possible)	-2 Affection (but funny dialogue)

Juice

1. The cauldron bubbles with colors matching the dominant ingredient vibe
2. Cozy ingredients make the cauldron emit warm steam and gentle bubbles
3. Impressive ingredients create sparkles and a crystalline chime
4. Dangerous ingredients cause ominous smoke and a low rumble
5. Mixed vibes create chaotic effects (bubbles in multiple colors, sparks flying)
6. Gift reactions are fully voiced with distinct animations for each love interest

Asset Requirements

Asset Type	Minimum	Stretch
------------	---------	---------

Backgrounds	1 (potions classroom)	1
Ingredient Sprites	6 (2 per vibe)	9 (3 per vibe)
UI Elements	2 (cauldron, shelf)	3 (+ gift result card)
VFX	1 (generic bubbles)	4 (per vibe + chaotic)
SFX	1 (brewing)	4 (per vibe)

Stat Thresholds and Rewards

Performance affects flavor, not access. Every player can complete every route regardless of minigame skill. Stats unlock bonus content that enriches the experience for skilled or dedicated players.

Maximum Possible Stats

With 5 days of classes and a maximum of +3 per class, the highest possible stat is 15. However, players must choose which class to attend each day, so realistically they might attend the same class 3 to 4 times maximum.

7. **Realistic maximum per stat:** 9 to 12 points
8. **Typical player range:** 4 to 8 points

Stat Thresholds

Stat Level	Unlocks
0 to 3	Base dialogue only. Route is fully completable.
4 to 6	One bonus dialogue option per route. Character acknowledges your competence.
7 to 9	Special scene unlocked (such as stargazing with Keith, study session with Riven, spell duel with Aldric).
10+	Ending variation. The route's conclusion has additional dialogue or a unique CG reflecting your mastery.

Total Asset Summary

Combined requirements across all four minigames:

Asset Type	Minimum Total	Stretch Total
Backgrounds	4	4
Item/Object Sprites	10	17

UI Elements	10	15
VFX	3	18
SFX	3	18
Total:	30	72

Implementation Priority

For game jam scope, I'd recommend building in this order:

1. **Astronomy** (simplest: click sequence comparison, array of correct answers, least asset heavy)
2. **Potions** (can be menu-based at minimum, ingredient lookup table for gifts)
3. **Spells** (timing meter is straightforward: sine wave + click detection)
4. **Herbology** (most asset heavy, probably most complex: trait database, test system, reference chart UI)

Minimum Viable Version

If time runs short, each minigame can be simplified more:

1. **Astronomy:** Remove decoy stars, keep core pattern matching
2. **Herbology:** Reduce to 4 species total, give unlimited tests
3. **Spells:** Larger sweet spot, slower wave, more forgiving timing
4. **Potions:** Pure menu selection instead of cauldron interaction

Juice Priority

If we only have time for limited polish, I'd prioritize these high-impact additions:

1. Sound effects for correct and incorrect actions (biggest impact for smallest effort)
2. Particle effects on success (starbursts, sparkles, etc.)
3. Character reactions to gift giving (like maybe expressions and short voice lines)
4. Screen shake or flash on perfect scores