SHAWN ZHANG

Combat Designer / Technical Designer
z.yuxiao@icloud.com | (203) 715-9645 | Salt Lake City, UT | Portfolio: (Link)

EDUCATION

University of Utah | B.S. in Games (Entertainment Arts & Engineering) 2021 – 2025
- Dean's List 2024–2025, Utah Global Scholarship ($20,000).
- Won IGDA SLC Game of the Year (2025).

EXPERIENCE

Valiant Entertainment | Developer / Studio Owner 2026 – Present
Salt Lake City, UT
- Independent studio focused on the Roblox Creator Economy, reaching 2,000+ players.

WalterNet Games | Game Engineer Intern Sep – Dec 2024
Remote
- Collaborated with a team of 8 to ship Bricks Over Blocks to Steam for early access within 4 months.
- Built and designed multiple block effects and special effects; co-designed and implemented the core score system.
- Managed integration pipeline for 3D assets, animations, and VFX to meet performance targets for release.

NetEase Games | User Researcher Summer 2023
Shanghai, China
- Conducted playtesting and user interviews with English-speaking players, providing data-driven feedback to design teams on combat feel and UX flow.

PROJECTS

Greatsword Combat System Demo | Solo Dev — Combat Design + Programming Mar 2026
UE5 C++ / GAS / Behavior Tree / AnimBP | Built from scratch in 7 days | AI-assisted dev (Claude Code) | Dark Souls greatsword-inspired
- Combat Architecture: Designed and implemented a complete combat system in GAS with 6 attack types (Light / Heavy / Shield Bash / Charge Attack / Jump Attack / Roll Attack), each with independent GameplayEffect damage values and stamina costs.
- Hit Feedback: Implemented HitStop (CustomTimeDilation) with enemy time dilation at 0.01 and player at 0.05, reinforcing greatsword combat weight and impact.
- Enemy AI: Built Behavior Tree architecture (BTService detection + BTTask attack) with a reaction system (Stagger / Knockback) driven by GameplayTags, writing results to Blackboard for AI decision-making.
- Attribute System: GAS AttributeSet managing Health/Stamina with replication support, attribute clamping, delayed stamina regen, and continuous sprint drain.

Beamdown | Capstone Project — Combat Design / UI Programming 2024 – 2025
Shipped on Steam | University of Utah EAE Capstone | 30-person team
- Boss Combat Design: Designed a 3-phase boss fight structure with health-threshold-based phase transitions; designed AttackChooser selection rules with per-phase attack pools, strong-attack cooldown prevention, and dual trigger paths (melee range + impatience timer).
- Attack Design: Designed 4 boss attack patterns (Crush Attack / Shockwave Slam / Rock Slam / Spinning Blast), each following Tell→Attack→Recover rhythm, covering melee tracking, ring AOE, area denial, and bullet-hell spatial threat dimensions; defined visual/audio feedback specs.

Bricks Over Blocks | Engineer / Designer (Intern) 2024
Released on Steam | WalterNet Games | IGDA SLC Game of the Year (2025)
- Shipped a commercial indie title from zero to Steam release in 4 months with a team of 8.
- Designed and implemented a scoring system and real-time UI architecture, handling complex state updates across gameplay systems.
- Managed integration pipeline for 3D assets, animations, and VFX to meet performance targets for release.

Dungeons & Drinks | System Designer / Programmer 2024 – 2025
University of Utah EAE Mobile Game Design Course | F2P Mobile Game
- Authored a complete GDD covering core gameplay loop, economy system, and progression curve.
- Designed FTUE onboarding flow, player guidance, and recurring monetization event documentation.
- Led cross-discipline coordination across programming, art, and audio teams through the full development cycle.

Hampter Ball | Programmer / Designer 2024
Shipped on Itch.io | 3-day Game Jam | 7-person team
- Designed and implemented a combat behavior and progression system in Unity.
- Implemented and designed an enemy AI system based on a real-time route-finding algorithm.

SKILLS

Combat Design: Combat system architecture / Hit-feel tuning (HitStop) / Enemy reaction systems / Numerical balancing / Boss behavior design
Engine & Tools: UE5 C++ / Gameplay Ability System (GAS) / Behavior Tree / Animation Blueprint / Enhanced Input / Blueprint / Unity C#
Design: Combat system documentation / Competitive game analysis / Numerical framework design / GAS architecture planning
Pipeline: Git / Perforce / Rider / Visual Studio / AI-Assisted Dev (Claude Code)
Languages: English (native level), Mandarin Chinese (native)

ADDITIONAL: GAME EXPERIENCE

Dark Souls 1, 2, 3 & Elden Ring — Completed
Cyberpunk 2077 — Completed
Assassin's Creed Odyssey & Origins — Completed
Super Smash Bros. — 100+ hours
Splatoon 3 — 50+ hours
The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild — Completed
Monster Hunter World — 50+ hours
Battlefield 2042 — 50+ hours
Battlefield 1 — 100+ hours
Battlefield V — 100+ hours
Deadlock — 20+ hours
League of Legends — 2000+ hours
Overwatch — 100+ hours
Marvel Rivals — 20 hours
Apex Legends — 150+ hours
PUBG — 200+ hours
Civilization VI — 150+ hours
Slay the Spire — 50+ hours
Balatro — 50+ hours
The Binding of Isaac — 50+ hours