

Game Design Activity #4

Soundscapes

Exercises around soundscapes can be divided into two: an experiential **Soundwalk** and a practice-based **Audio Drama**.

Youth work outcomes

Outcome 7 Young people develop their perspectives through new experiences and learning. (Outcomes 3,4 and 6 of the [National Outcomes and Skills Framework](#) are also relevant to this activity.)

Youth work skills

teamwork, decision making, communication

Set-up

Soundwalk: If taking young people outdoors, make sure you have risk assessed the activity and have appropriate permissions and safeguarding in place.

Audio drama: Download and become familiar with the software in advance of the session. Seek out expertise within the group.

Length of session

60 minutes, flexible

About Soundwalking

Soundwalking involves walking with the focus on listening to sounds in the environment. This can be done in small or large groups and is recommended to be done in silence (with curated places and times for discussion and contemplation).

Go for a Soundwalk

Young people should be guided (safely!) through a physical location and asked to make mental notes on the sounds that they hear that build upon the soundscape of the environment. For example, a city centre may include noises of footsteps, rustling bags, conversation, music, traffic, wildlife, the weather, and so on.

The purpose of soundwalking is to connect listeners to their environment by identifying depth and nuances to the soundscape which can then be implemented into digital media to create a more immersive aural experience.

About Audio Drama

An audio drama (also known as radio drama, radio plays, or radio theatre) is a performative piece that uses music, dialogue, and sound effects to convey a story. It has no visual component and relies only on the use of audio to portray a sense of place and story. In a game context, an audio drama can be a helpful way to communicate themes and feelings of a virtual space where visuals and interactivity are not required.

An audio drama is typically no longer than 60 seconds and focuses on a particular section or part of an experience: this might be traversing through a particular environment, a conversation between two characters, or an action sequence. The point of the audio drama is to help the listener imagine what the visual and interactive components of a game might be as driven by the audio experience.

Sound libraries

There are a variety of accessible sound libraries with collections of sounds that can be used in royalty-free contexts, such as:

- **Soundly:** a cloud-based library with in-built editing tools to compose soundscapes (free and paid services available);
- **BBC Sound Effects:** an online library and mixing tool for creating soundscapes and sound effects;
- **Freesound:** a website with a database of downloadable creative-commons audio tracks.

Audio editing

Another free-to-download software that can be used is Audacity, an open-source recording, mixing, and editing tool for audio. Alternatively, the use of recording devices (such as mobile phones and dictaphones) can be used alongside live performances of sounds from young people.

Create an Audio Drama

In groups (of between 2-4 people), encourage young people to compose an audio drama based on a particular section of their game. They can be encouraged to research examples to provide them with inspiration or to help communicate ideas to each other (such as scenes within games and films that are similar to their concept). Some example scenarios for the audio drama might include:

- A character receiving instruction for a task or quest;
- Travelling from a city to a village through a countryside/coastal area;
- A high-intensity chase sequence;
- A moment of tranquility or contemplation within the game's story.