

NEO ZHANG

Game Designer

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SHIPPED TITLES

- **Shadowstone (2026, PC Early Access)** Co-op tactical roguelite based on Sunderfolk; live-service Early Access
- **Sunderfolk (2025, PC / Xbox / PS5 / Switch)** Cross-platform, accessible couch co-op RPG where players use their phones to play cards and control their characters on a shared main screen

SKILLS

Design Disciplines: Systems Design, Combat Design, Level Design, Character Design, Quest Design, Gameplay Balance & Tuning, Accessibility & Approachable Design, Rapid Prototyping, Bug Fixing

Relevant Skills: 3D Math, Behavior Trees, Utility AI (GOAP), Environmental Query System

Engines & Languages: Unreal Engine 5 (Blueprint), Unity, C#, C++, Python

Tools & Production: Jira, Confluence, Git / GitHub, Excel / Google Sheets, Microsoft Office, Google Workspace

Languages: English & Mandarin Chinese (Fluent)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Combat & Systems Designer | Dreamhaven | **2025 – Present** | Shadowstone (2026)

- Proposed and built the combat system behind our enemy design, replacing self-contained kits with mechanics and characters designed to interact with each other and with biome mechanics, turning each encounter into unique tactical experiences.
- Balanced 20+ enemies and 5 boss encounters across 4 archetypes so that no single enemy dominated, while deliberately leaving room for interactions that make players feel clever.
- Designed encounter pacing and readability across combat, puzzle, and narrative sequences, restructuring guidance cues so players could parse objectives without UI or written tutorial prompts.
- Shipped balance and content patches on a 3-week cadence, reading live telemetry and playtest feedback to identify problems and retune them without flattening the strategies players had already built.
- Held and communicated the design vision for every character across Engineering, Art, UX, and QA through design documents, references, and flowcharts, cutting hand-off clarification requests by 80%.
- Playtested weekly with the full team, translating playtest feedback into specific, actionable card or design changes.

Level & Narrative Designer | Dreamhaven | **2023 – 2025** | Sunderfolk (2025)

- Led the design of 10 levels from paper concept and engine blockout through implementation and ship; each mission anchored on a distinct feature (puzzle, combat, exploration) that incentivizes cooperative strategy.
- Owned end-to-end design of 10 characters (1 playable hero, 4 bosses, 5 enemies) from concept to ship, translating each character's fantasy into a distinct, coherent ability kit and passive effects.
- Balanced the playable hero's kit against the full enemy roster for co-op play, tuning power level, counterplay, and AI behavior so encounters stayed fair, readable, and engaging.
- Designed for a broad, non-traditional tabletop RPG audience: designed mission flows, balanced pacing, and wrote narrative for first-time players while preserving depth for repeat play.
- Wrote and maintained high-quality design documentation for every shipped character and level (intended player experience, encounter flow, anchoring mechanic), keeping Engineering, Art, and QA aligned through iteration.
- Led 3+ internal playtests weekly, turning qualitative feedback and edge-case findings into concrete design changes.

Game Designer & Programmer → Design Producer → Design Officer | Game Design and Art Collaboration | **2019 – 2023**

TacoCat (2023) • Asterion (2022) • Gremlin Garden (2021) — Playable 2D and 3D prototypes.

- Prototyped and shipped 3 playable games across 2D and 3D, owning gameplay systems and gameplay scripting in Unity.
- Mentored 35+ junior designers each year in level design fundamentals, iteration practice, and cross-discipline collaboration through a recurring workshop program.

EDUCATION

B.S. in Computer Science & Game Design | University of California, Santa Cruz | **2019 – 2023**