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Food Fury: Online Casual Game Development for Nutrition Education

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Introduction
The United States is currently experiencing increased prevalence of obesity. This is a particular problem amongst
children who require dietary and activity behavioral change to mitigate this problem. The use of computer games as
channels to motivate health behavior in children is increasing. Casual games are a subset of computer games that are
simple in design, easy to access and play, popular with children, and have the potential to be effective for drill and
practice learning.

Purpose: To design, develop and evaluate the efficacy of a casual game, Food Fury, on identification of healthy and
unhealthy food choices for children 10-12 years of age.

Methods
The learning task of food identification and categorization was matched with the game design mechanic, to form chains
of like food items to clear the game board and move up in levels. Iterative design methods were used to refine game
mechanics, information available, and graphics; based in part on a formative evaluation with a focus group of 6 children.

Current Status
The game is complete, and will be tested in late April 2007, for ability to increase children’s accuracy in identifying
healthy and unhealthy foods, as well as how well children liked it, how playable it was, and their general understanding
of the game goals.

Conclusion
Casual games show promise as a method of learning about nutrition, but more research will need to be done to
understand the learning in relation to the game design, and how games can fit into a larger program of positive behavior
change.