

ZONED OUT

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

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Zoned out!

Engine: Phaser 5 + Matter.js

Platform: Browser ([LINK](#))

Tagline: “Don’t get caught.”

Concept

Zone-Out is a browser-based survival game where the player controls a cursor on a graph paper background. Geometric shapes are thrown at them from all screen edges. Survive as long as possible.

The game is built around a single core tension: the longer you survive, the more chaotic and fast the world becomes punctuated every 30 seconds by a dramatic colour scheme shift that repaints the entire game world.

Design Pillars

Readable Chaos Three shape types, three rules. The player should never die and feel cheated death is always legible.

Risk vs. Reward The triangle is the game’s skill expression layer. Ignoring it is safe. Mastering it is powerful.

Escalating Pressure No plateaus. Difficulty scales continuously speed, rotation and spawn rate all increase every 30 seconds.

Colour as Rhythm The colour shift is not decoration. It is a psychological beat, a reward for survival and a signal that things are about to get harder.

Notebook Aesthetic Everything looks like it was drawn during a boring class. The aesthetic reinforces the theme: you are zoning out, and you are about to get caught.

Core Loop

Dodge shapes → survive → 30 second threshold →

colour shift + difficulty increase → dodge faster shapes → repeat until death

The loop has no win state. It ends only when the player dies.

Player

- Controlled entirely by mouse movement.
 - One hit death, no health, no shields, no second chances.
 - Bounded to the screen cannot leave the play area.
 - The cursor is the only fully saturated element in the game at all times always the most visually prominent object on screen by design.
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Shape Design

Three shapes. Each has a distinct mechanical identity and a distinct visual identity. The player learns them through play, not through a tutorial.

Square The Threat

The baseline danger. Instant death on contact. No special mechanic. Exists to fill space, create pressure, and punish passive play. Spawns most frequently (60%).

Circle The Shield

Safe to touch. If the player positions themselves inside a circle, incoming shapes are physically blocked by the circle's body. The shield is not passive; circles are physics objects that get pushed around by squares. The player must actively maintain position inside one to use it. Spawns at medium frequency (25%).

Design intent: Introduces spatial awareness and positioning as a skill layer without adding any input complexity.

Triangle The Risk/Reward Tool

The game's highest skill expression moment. One edge is visually distinct (higher saturation, thicker outline). Hitting this edge destroys the triangle and clears every shape on screen.

Hitting any other part of the triangle kills the player instantly.

The triangle rotates continuously the distinct edge is not fixed in screen space. The player must read the spin and intercept the correct edge at the right moment. Spawns least frequently (15%).

Design intent: Creates an optional high-risk, high-reward action. A passive player can ignore triangles entirely and rely on dodging. A skilled player who masters triangle reads can clear the screen on demand, buying breathing room as difficulty escalates.

Stamina Economy (Implicit)

Zone-Out has no explicit stamina or resource system. However, the player's effective "resource" is screen space. As difficulty increases:

- More shapes spawn simultaneously
- Shapes move faster
- Free space on screen decreases

The triangle clear is the only way to instantly reset screen state. Its value compounds as difficulty increases a clear at 30 seconds is useful; a clear at 3 minutes is critical.

Difficulty Scaling

Difficulty scales at every 30-second threshold. No hard tiers values increase continuously.

Value	Scaling
Min/max speed	+20% per threshold
Min/max rotation speed	+20% per threshold
Spawn rate	+20% faster per threshold (floor: 300ms)
Simultaneous spawns	+1 per threshold (cap: 10)

Starting values: Speed 116–436 px/s, rotation 0.55–3.3 rad/s, spawn interval 1354ms, 2 simultaneous spawns.

The speed range scales uniformly (both min and max increase) the variance is preserved but the floor rises continuously. Early game produces unpredictable mix of slow and fast shapes. Late game produces consistently fast shapes with little variance.

Colour Scheme System

Purpose

The colour shift serves three design functions simultaneously:

1. Reward spectacle for surviving another 30 seconds
2. Signal the world changing is a clear marker that difficulty has increased
3. Chaos each new palette is dramatically different, keeping the player visually stimulated

Generation Rules

Every scheme is procedurally generated from a single random cursor hue using colour theory:

Role	Derivation
Cursor	Random hue, anchor for everything else
Background	Complementary hue ($\pm 180^\circ$), alternates light/dark each shift
Square	Triadic offset ($\pm 120^\circ$)
Triangle body	Analogous to square ($\pm 20^\circ$)
Triangle edge	Same hue as triangle body, higher saturation
Circle	Analogous to background ($\pm 30^\circ$)
Timer overlay	Cursor hue, slightly desaturated

Rules enforced: Minimum 60° hue separation between consecutive schemes. Background strictly alternates light/dark. Cursor is always the most saturated element on screen. Semantic colour logic: Shape colours carry implicit meaning derived from their hue relationships. Square (triadic) tends toward contrasting, alarming colours. Circle (analogous to background) tends toward calming, recessive colours. Triangle edge (high saturation) always reads as the most visually active element on the shape.

Shift Sequence

1. Physics and spawning pause
- 2.
3. Radial wave expands from cursor position new background colour reveals progressively, shapes repaint as wave passes over them
4. Survival time overlay appears (2 seconds)
5. Physics and spawning resume with updated difficulty values

The wave has no colour of its own the expanding background IS the wave front visually.

Death Sequence

Death is not an instant cut to a game over screen. It is a moment.

1. Freeze physics stops, all shapes retain position
2. Shapes lose fill only outlines remain, world becomes skeletal
3. Death circle a sketchy circle draws itself around the cursor's death position
4. Speech bubble "Is my class boring you?!" slides aggressively from the top of the screen. Screen shakes on impact.
5. Hold 1 second
6. Game over screen

Design intent: The death sequence recontextualises the failure within the game's narrative. The player wasn't killed by shapes they got caught zoning out. The teacher's speech bubble is the punchline. It transforms frustration into humour, encouraging retry.

Scoring

No points. No score. Survival time only.

Time is displayed live during play and shown on the death screen alongside the session best. This intentional time is universally legible, emotionally resonant, and requires no explanation. "I survived 2 minutes" is immediately meaningful. A numeric score is not.

Aesthetic System

Graph paper background: Fine grid lines, slightly warm off-white. Establishes the notebook context immediately.

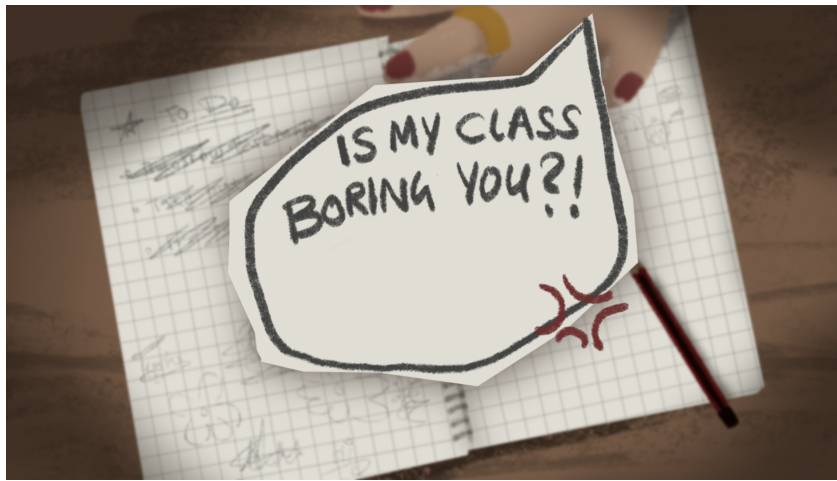
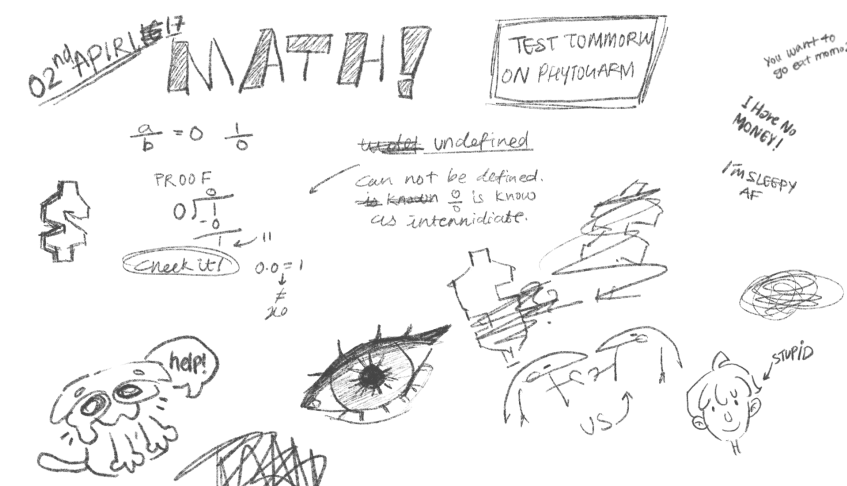
Sketchy outlines: All shapes have procedurally generated wobbly outlines lines broken into segments with small perpendicular jitter, updated at ~7fps to simulate a slow hand-drawn wobble.

Pastel noise texture: Scattered dots over shape fills simulate chalk or pastel on paper. Dots shift slightly lighter or darker based on background brightness to maintain readability across all colour schemes.

Doodle layer: Full-canvas transparent PNG assets sit between the background and shapes, swapping on every colour threshold. Assets are hand-drawn student doodles inverted automatically for dark backgrounds. No repeats within a single run.

Death screen asset: “Is my class boring you?!” hand-drawn speech bubble. The game over screen is a photograph of a real notebook with the game over information overlaid. Survival time displayed in a dark red (#6c2f2e).





What the Game Is About

Zone-Out is about the experience of zoning out in class that moment when the world narrows to the page in front of you and everything else disappears. The graph paper, the doodles, the shapes that feel like they're being thrown at you it's the anxiety of not paying attention made playable.

The teacher catching you at the end is inevitable. The question is only how long you can last before she does.