

Alto's Adventure

Reviewed on Android

Ian Hajnosz



Format and Prioritization

Good Practice

- Aspects of the game that should be kept (Good Job!)

Small Intrusion

- Infrequent or inconsequential issues that may only pose minor annoyances to some players

Medium Intrusion

- Issues of the game that may be common or difficult for players to engage with, but surmountable nonetheless

Priority Intrusion

- Aspects of the game that significantly hinder play-experience and/or occur frequently

Questions?

- Parts of the game that may be intentional design choices, oddities, or otherwise are of note

Signaling

Shield system rewards players for daring tricks and fast runs

Players are temporarily protected from run-ending obstacles, rewarding them for their play: When the player receives a speed boost, typically following a successful trick or an icy patch, a small shield appears in front of the player for a short time, destroying obstacles (rocks and campfires) in the way that the player would otherwise have to avoid. In effect, players are given additional license to alter their gameplay to increase their speed at every opportunity and perform tricks while also reducing the likelihood of crashing.

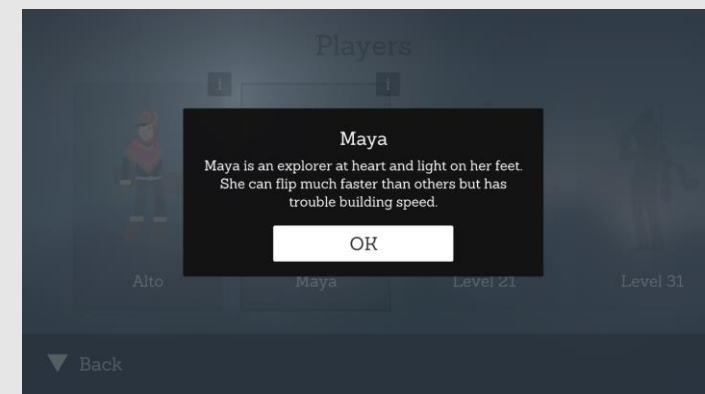
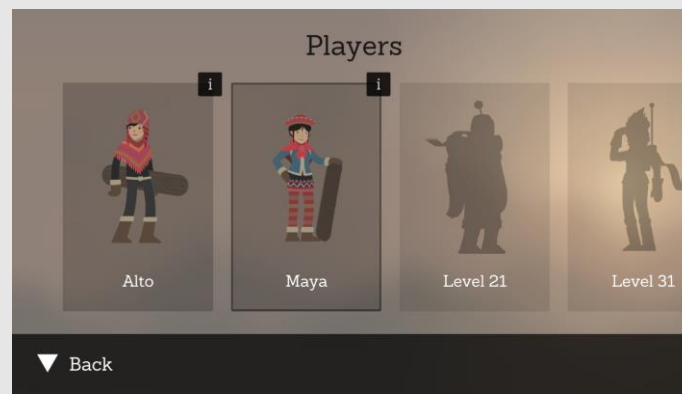
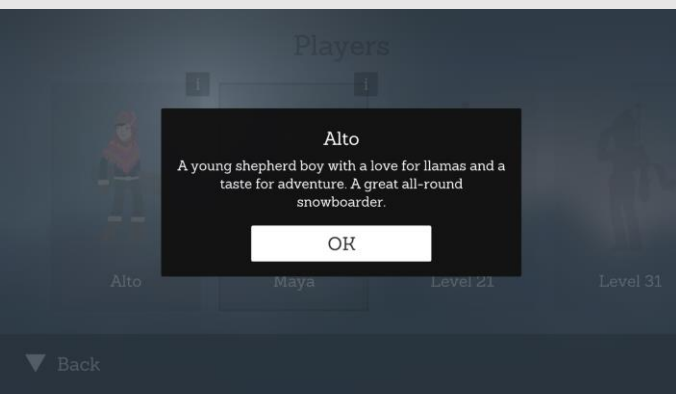


Signaling 1/3

New characters have different stats

Players can play levels with characters that suit their own play style: Not only do unlockable characters incentivize leveling up for players and gives them the ability to better customize their own game experience (from an albeit minor aesthetic perspective of different characters), but **switching between characters increases game re-playability**; the different character stats can drastically alter gameplay. **Players should be less likely to pre-emptively stop playing for lack of variation and meaningful (and attainable) goals.**

Some characters may be more suited to fulfill certain goals than others. For example, Maya has faster spinning capabilities so she may be preferred when a player has a goal to “perform a triple backflip,” something that may be very difficult to do with the default, all-around character, Alto.



Signaling 2/3

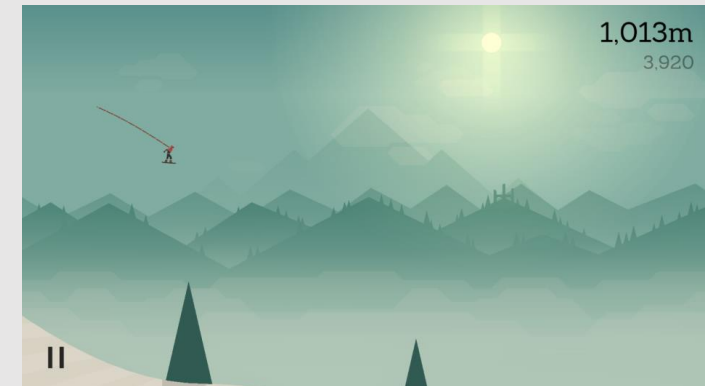
Extending scarf indicates combo progress

Players are given a visual reminder of their combo progress: Upon completing a single, or set of tricks, the player character's (PC) scarf will become increasingly longer. The scarf shortens as time goes on until another combo is performed. Players should generally know when they completed a combo and how large of a combo it was.

Scarf gameplay mechanic not apparent until mid/late game

Players may not understand the gameplay utility of the scarf: Upon the purchase of the Wingsuit in the mid/late game, the scarf becomes a tool to extend the player's jumps to string longer combos. Through normal play however, achieving the 7,500 coin price may take players many hours to attain. Though players may watch 30 second advertisements for 500 coins to save up, the time investment for this feature, one buried within the store (which some players may not see much), is not generally attainable through casual play. The wingsuit addition is the most significant, and arguably the only, development of the core gameplay mechanics. Is this the developer's intent?

On the one hand, this lofty coin price and more complex mechanic gives advanced players a new challenge for the late-game. On the other hand however, many casual players may never reach this new game mechanic, particularly players who may have stopped preemptively playing early on because they would have preferred more complex gameplay elements from the start—this is a good opportunity to examine when, and how many, players stop playing (i.e. how many players drop off before reaching this mechanic).



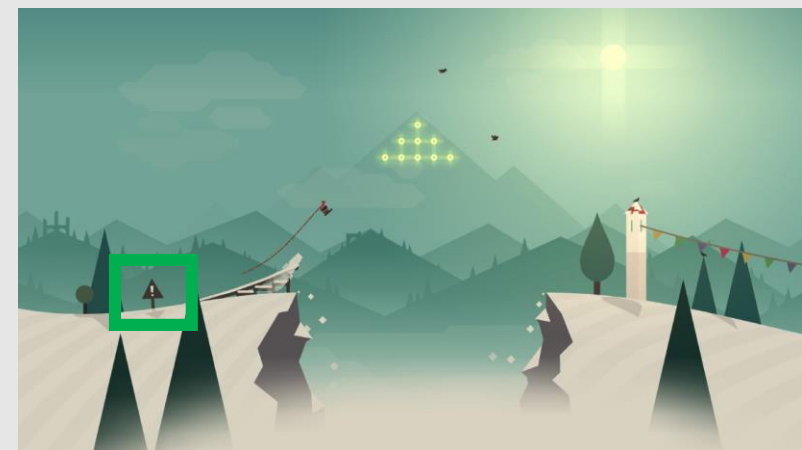
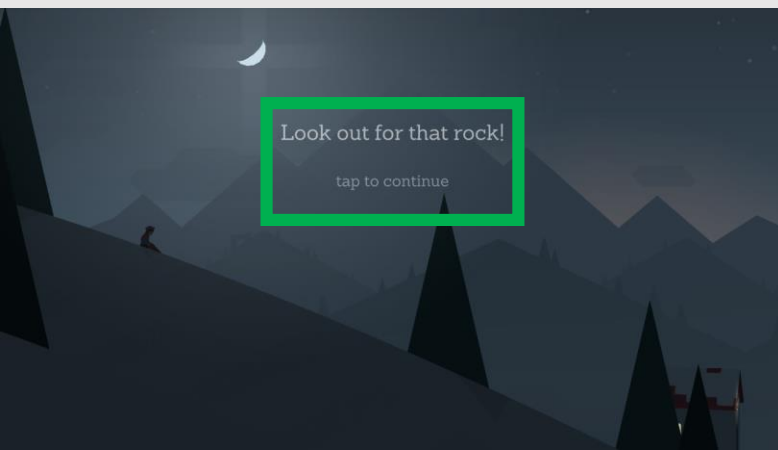
Signaling 3/3

Diagnostic messages from run-ending crashes

Players should understand what ended their run: If players make a mistake early in their run, the game will display a small message telling the player what ended their run. This may help players, especially novice ones, understand what parts of the game they are misunderstanding and/or what they should look for on their next run.

Consistent signage and obstacles

Players should recognize the different kinds of obstacles and course features: Rocks, grindable rails, and chasm warning signs have consistent designs, making them easily distinguishable from each other. Less distinguishable obstacles and features may confuse players



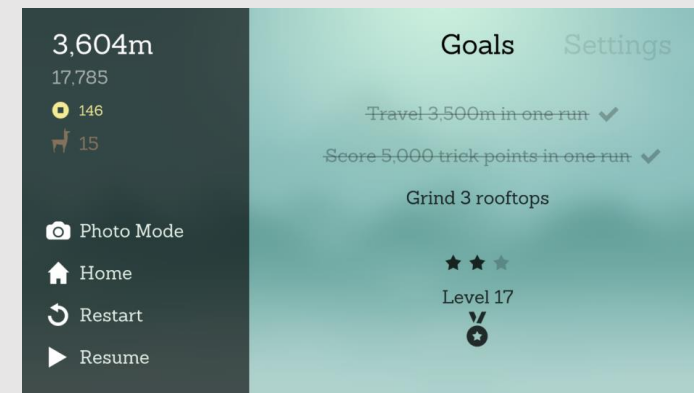
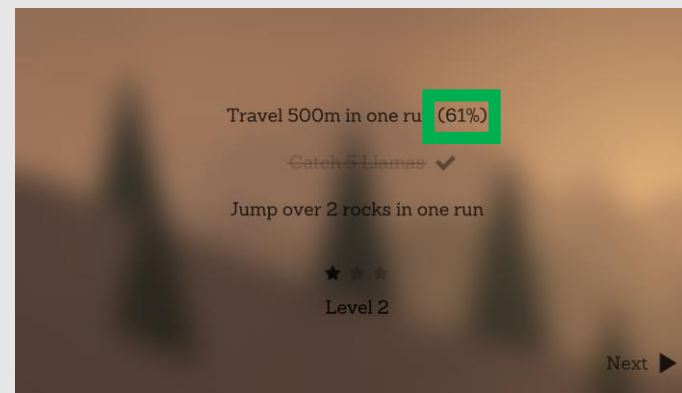
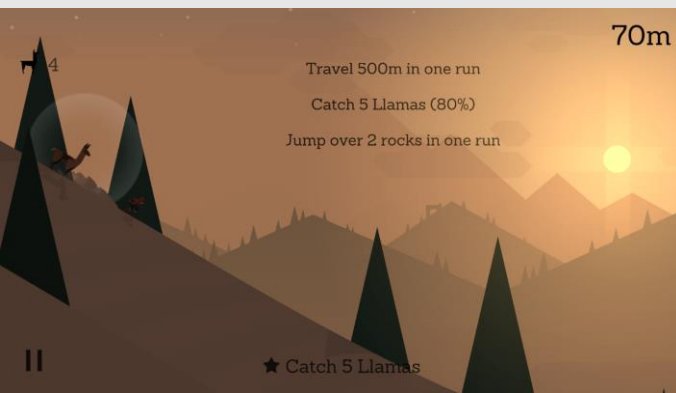
Player Progress 1/2

Level goals are easily accessible

Players should know what goals they must achieve to progress to the next level: Leveling up requires fulfilling the pre-determined goals for that level. The goals are displayed at the beginning of each run (quite seamlessly it should be said), in the middle of the pause screen, and at the end of each run. Additionally, the goals themselves include player progress in those said goals—players should therefore be aware of what they need to do to progress towards the next level.

Other points to consider:

- After several runs without success in achieving a goal, the game will give the player the option to use coins to skip a given goal. Players should be less likely to get stuck on a particularly difficult or esoteric goal, helping them continue to progress through the game.
- Upon leveling up, the new goal screen will also display how many more levels until the next character unlock, reminding players of their next reward.



Player Progress 2/2

Players can revive their PC to continue their run

Players should be able to tailor their run progress to their own wants/needs: Upon a run-ending crash, the player is given the option of either watching an advertisement video or spending coins to continue their run. This feature should help players continue their runs to achieve personal or game related goals.

Additionally, this feature may also serve to alleviate frustrations from an ended run by giving players an immediate restart and include an exchange of relatively unintrusive ad-related content for in-game reward.



Monetization

Features requiring payment are clearly gated

Players will likely understand which features require additional payment: The “Workshop” tab in Alto shows items labeled with the appropriate method of purchase (that with dollars or with in-game collected coins). This means that players are less likely to accidentally spend dollars on in-game items.

Other Points to Consider:

- Clear descriptions of the Workshop items should let players know what they are receiving for their coins
- Players’ accumulated coin total displayed at the bottom right of the screen should inform players of their current in-game purchasing power
- “Gift Shop” tab exclusively has real-world merchandise, making it unlikely that players would misconstrue their purchases

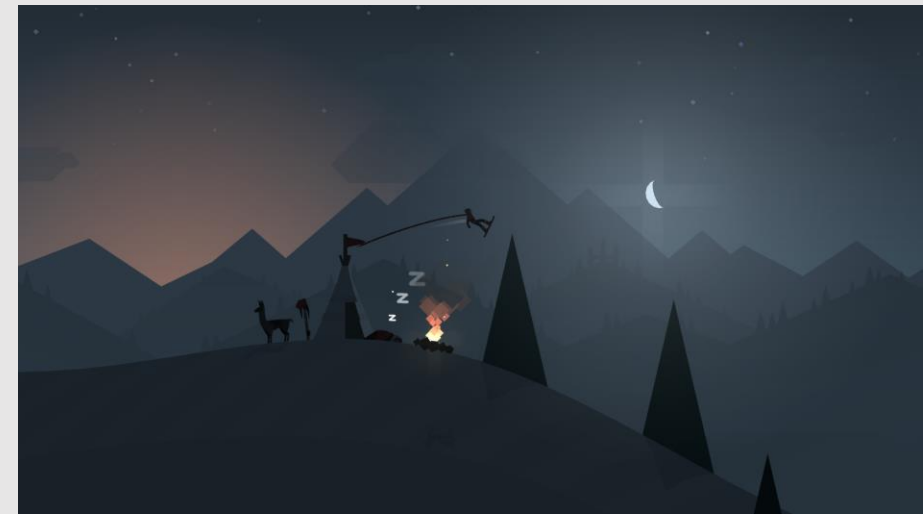
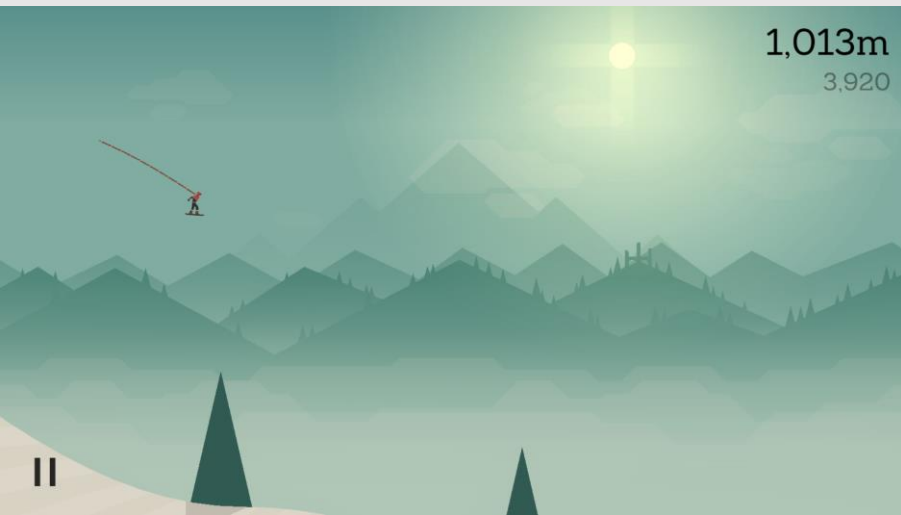


Aesthetic 1/2

Low Viewability and Contrast 1/2

Players may lose track of their character: Even on high brightness, the PC and obstacles in the foreground can be difficult to distinguish from the purely aesthetic background, particularly during the “night” part of the in-game day/night cycle. Though this low contrast effect is utilized productively for the sake of added challenge in certain sections, like forests, the progression of the day/night cycle makes night sections noticeably more difficult to view the PC. Because the cycle is continuous, even whilst waiting in the menus and pause screens, novice players especially may wait for daytime to start their runs in more advantageous lighting.

The PC and obstacles become difficult to distinguish as obstacles or environment, potentially making the night cycle more difficult than the day cycle, especially if phone brightness is medium to low. Novice players, who are less likely to have runs longer than a single time cycle, may become disproportionately discouraged—expert players are more likely to encounter both day and night cycles in their longer runs thus they should be less affected.

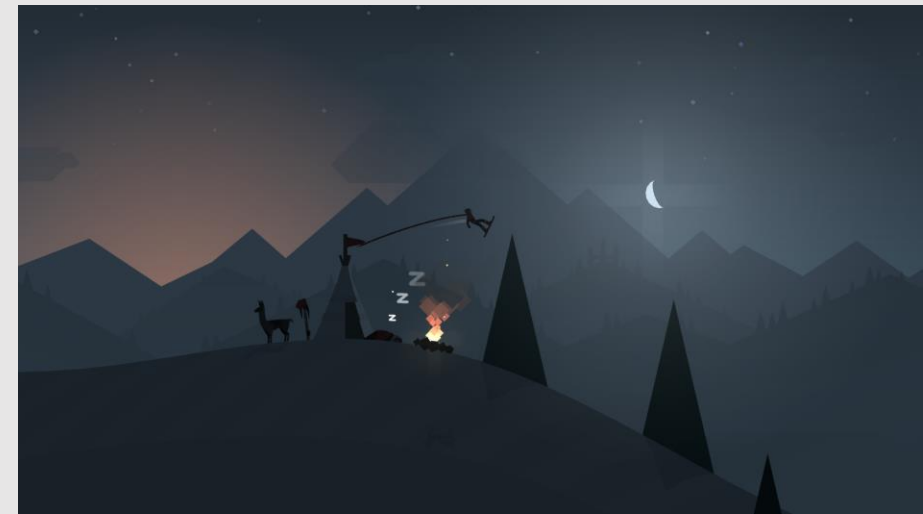
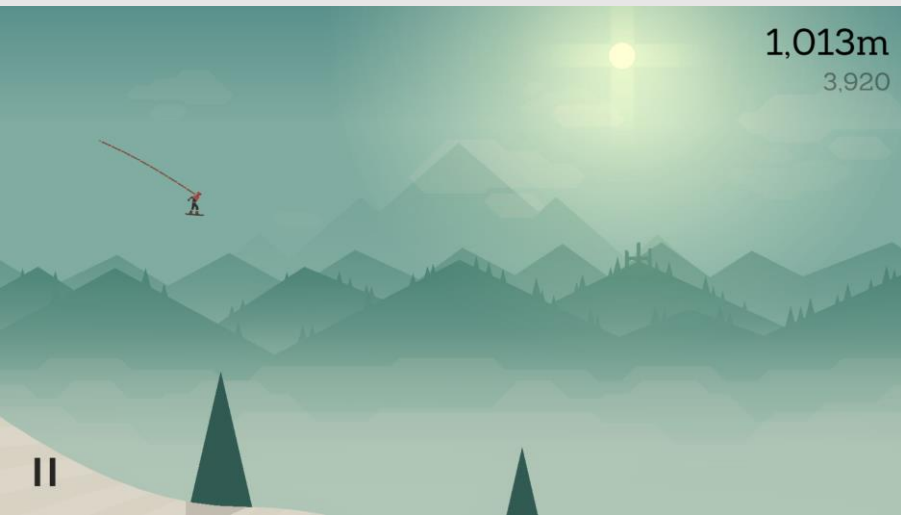


Aesthetic 1/2

Low Viewability and Contrast 2/2

Possible Solutions:

- Give the PC something of strong contrast to the background; either give the PC something bright, like a small hue of light, torch, or give a small glow for the snowboard, or instead make the PC even darker on the night cycles to accentuate contrast and make the PC more visible.
- Add a settings feature that allows the player to set the sun or moon at a single place in the sky for their run. In addition to giving players the opportunity to play with the aesthetic of the game (possibly a boon to the camera features), it also gives players the option to flexibly customize play to their preferred part of the cycle.
- This issue may be an intentional design choice or a usability issue: playtests and telemetry data should help inform whether an unacceptable number of players crash in the night part of the cycle



Aesthetic 2/2

Game Revels in It's Aesthetic

Players should be more likely to engage with the game: The game is undeniably a beautiful one and invites the player to appreciate it. The photo mode is a great way to help players to take quality screenshots and share the game as they want to.

Additionally, “Zen Mode” allows players to use the game for relaxation purposes, including just the sound effects, day/night cycle, and circulating weather patterns. This mode also gives players the option to do their own runs with unlimited restarts but without the UI so that they can take photos without the scoreboard or distance metrics impeding their photo. In essence, players can still use Alto's Adventure without playing it.

