

Gordon's Bag of Holding

Half-Life 2: Episode 2



SinglePlayer Level Design Document

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DOCUMENT REVISIONS TABLE

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QUICK SUMMARY

“Gordon’s Bag of Holding” is a single-player, timed countdown *Half-Life 2: Episode 2* level. Gordon uses his newfound ability to collect and store ammunition to fend off the hordes of zombies and zombine infesting Black Mesa East. After the Combine attack on the facility in *Half-Life 2*, zombies and headcrabs from the nearby town of Ravenholm found a way in and infected the Combine forces. Returning to the facility to retrieve the personal trans-dimensional pocket device (the Bag of Holding), Gordon must mow through crushing waves of zombie attackers to find an escape.

GAMEPLAY

Gordon arrives in the level weaponless (except for the Gravity Gun) due to a glitch in the teleportation technology. Dr. Eastman contacts Gordon through a console screen to tell him that the teleportation device is fried. Magnusson is working on it but it doesn’t look hopeful. Alyx meets Gordon topside in a helicopter. Gordon must retrieve the Bag of Holding and find another way out of the facility. Gordon picks up the device from the clutter of the wrecked labs. Zombies burst into the room and Gordon must fend them off. Gordon then heads down the corridor searching for an exit.

Using his stored ammunition to dispatch attacking zombies, Gordon comes upon a former living area the Combine converted into a storage space. Gordon finds a stash of propane tanks and uses them to judiciously dispatch the zombine in the area before boarding an elevator to the roof and ending the level.

Objective Summary

- *Objective 1:* Retrieve the Bag of Holding from the wrecked lab.
- *Objective 2:* Find a different way out of the facility.
- *Objective 3:* Survive!
 - Player dies if health reaches 0

OVERVIEW

Campaign

- Name: The Nth Dimension
- Level Position in Campaign:
 - Before the Level: After the attack on the White Forest rebel base, Dr. Magnusson gave Gordon information about a powerful weapon left behind during the attack on Black Mesa East. The personal trans-dimensional pocket device allows the user to store certain objects in a small pocket dimension enabling greater carrying capacity. Dr. Magnusson teleports Gordon back to Black Mesa East to retrieve the device.
 - After the Level: Alyx meets Gordon topside in a jerrybuilt helicopter they then use to fly to their next destination. Along the way, they fend off attack from ground-based and aerial Combine forces.

Mission Location

- Theme: Commandeered research lab/living space
- Mood: Stranded and alone
- Setting: Black Mesa East, rebel research labs and living space destroyed and occupied by Combine
- Time: Mid-Day
- Season: Autumn
- Weather: Bright and sunny (evident by the glow above when the player enters the elevator)

Mission Difficulty

- Start: 1 of 5
- Middle: 2 of 5
- End: 3 of 5

Mission Metrics

- Play Time: 2-3 minutes
- Physical Length: 1024 units
- Physical Area: 1024 units x 2048 units
- Max New Characters: 1
- Max Visual Themes: 2
 - Area 1: The lab is a small research lab with a teleportation device. The lab was wrecked during the Combine attack on the facility
 - Transition: Basic corridor with pipes and other mechanical detail
 - Area 2: The living quarters is a small (though larger than the lab) open area converted into a makeshift place for the rebels to sleep. The Combine used part of it to store explosive materials during their takeover. There is an elevator leading to the roof across one side.

LEVEL DETAILS

LEVEL ATMOSPHERE/MOOD

The entire level takes place inside the former rebel base/research facility, Black Mesa East. The rebels constructed the facility inside of an abandoned hydroelectric facility along the canals outside of City 17. Even before the Combine invaded the facility, the site was somewhat in disarray. The rebels co-opted the facility for a purpose different from what it was intended and had to set up their own makeshift living conditions wherever they could.

After the Combine attack and subsequent infestation by Ravenholm zombies, the site fell into complete disrepair. Chunks of missing concrete and debris all throughout the base show the physical effects of the Combine assault. Scattered throughout are the dead bodies of rebels the Combine left to rot. Broken, flickering lights leave the entire underground area feeling extremely dark and claustrophobic. Puddles and dripping pipes add to the feeling that the facility is in great need of service. Gordon can hear the sounds of battle in the distance as the remaining Combine try to fend off the zombie hordes.

The lab is an utter mess with equipment torn off walls, racks on their side with their contents spilling out, and workbenches scattered all around. Before they were infected, the Combine converted the small living quarters into a storage space for their explosive equipment as a base for further expansion into the facility. A combine elevator in one corner shows their preferred entrance point during the attack and allows a stream of natural light to enter the underground space.

STORY

Introduction (Not Shown in Actual Level)

- At the end of *Half-Life 2: Episode 2*, Gordon successfully defends the White Forest rebel base from a heavy Combine attack. The team succeeds in launching a rocket to close the large dimensional portal over the former Citadel. Gordon and Alyx are preparing to use a helicopter to travel to the *Aurora Borealis*, an Aperture Science research vessel carrying a mysterious and dangerous cargo that mysteriously vanished and the rebels have recently discovered again, when a Combine Advisor attacks them and kills Alyx's father, Eli.
- Faced with a new turn of events, Dr. Magnusson tells Gordon of another device left behind at Black Mesa East that could potentially aid him in his quest. While Alyx takes some time to recover, Dr. Magnusson prepares to teleport Gordon to Black Mesa East to recover the device. The trip is only supposed to take a few minutes.

In-Game

- Gordon arrives safely in a secondary lab/storage room at Black Mesa East but something's not right. Gordon quickly realizes that the only thing that made it through with him is his Gravity Gun. An indicator light and its accompanying "beep" alert Gordon to an incoming message from offsite. The display is all static and white noise but the audio gets through well-enough for Gordon to understand. Dr. Eastman informs Gordon that there's been a malfunction in the teleportation equipment. There's no way to fix it. He tells Gordon to get the device and get out of the facility. Once topside they'll figure something out.
- Gordon picks up the Bag of Holding. The device gives Gordon access to a pocket dimension where he can store objects such as saw blades and propane tanks for later usage. Gordon grabs a few saw blades from the equipment in the lab and a propane tank. Gordon exits the lab and enters a small corridor. He takes out a lone wander zombie that appears from around a corner with one of the saw blades before recovering it. Turning a final corner, the hall widens and Gordon sees an open door at the end. Two zombies and a zombine fan out, meaning Gordon must use several saw blades to strike them or use the propane tank he's storing. After taking out the zombies, Gordon enters the room.
- The room is a former living quarters for the rebels. A large group of zombies and zombines spots Gordon as he enters and begins to close in for the attack. Gordon dashes to the side, using his propane tanks to take out a large bunch of zombies. Suddenly, a door bursts down from one side and a small contingent of Combine charge-in attacking both the remaining zombies and Gordon. Gordon gathers more explosives and ammo from the room, using it to take out both the zombies and the Combine, in fiery, explosive and dismembering glory. Once clear, Gordon takes the elevator to the roof.

Extro (Not Shown in Actual Level)

- Gordon rides into the blinding light of the roof and comes up surrounded by a massive battle between Combine and zombies. Taking cover, Gordon opportunistically joins the fight, picking off enemies when he can. As the Combine take notice, they peel off a small force to attack Gordon directly. Out of nowhere, rockets strike the Combine coming after Gordon from above, obliterating them. A helicopter passes overhead and lays down more fire, clearing the enemies away to make a landing space. Alyx pops her head out and beckons Gordon to the copter. Together they take off, leaving the Combine and zombies far behind.

“60 seconds of gameplay”

- Gordon enters the living quarters and sees the mass of zombies in the space.
- Zombine rush at Gordon while regular zombies begin to shamle over to Gordon
- Gordon uses his saw blades to take out the two attacking Zombine, who are too close for explosives.
- While Gordon takes out the Zombine, the zombies close in from the front and rear, forcing Gordon to move to one side to get a better shot.
- Gordon takes cover behind an overturned couch and unleashes an explosive propane tank at the zombies, taking out one group.
- Suddenly, the Combine breach a side door across from Gordon and Gordon is in their sights.
- Gordon moves to new cover and uses his stored ammunition to take out the Combine who are also fighting the zombies

MAJOR AREAS/VISUAL THEMES

Area 1: Secondary Research Lab/Storage

Text Description:

This room is a jumbled mess. It was a jumbled mess even before the Combine attack and the zombie infestation. The secondary lab has working equipment in it but served more as a highly disorganized storage room for whatever equipment Eli and the rest of the rebels at the facility didn't need at the moment. Overturned racks spill their contents onto the floor and workbenches covered with various pieces of equipment clutter the floor. Large machinery lining the walls remains in place but pipes, tubes, hoses, and split wires have fallen off the walls and over everything else. Some of the lights have fallen off the ceiling leaving parts of the room cloaked in darkness. The teleportation device sits in one corner and a damaged, but operational console across from it.

Visual References

- Terrain/Vegetation
 - None
- Models/Architecture



Figure 1: Teleportation Equipment



Figure 2: Wrecked Lab Equipment



Figure 3: Messy Nature of the Storage Room



Figure 4: Console Screen (but has static in-game)

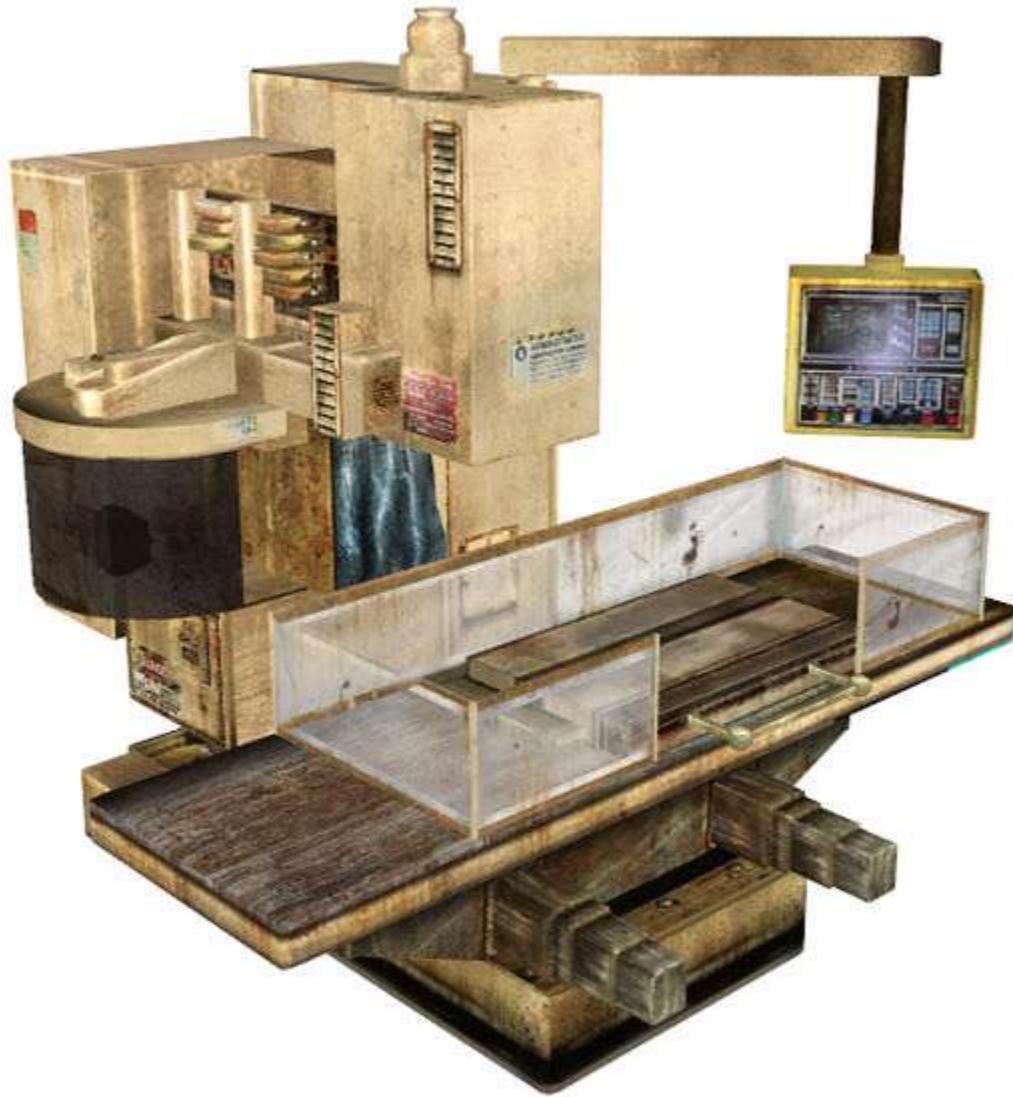


Figure 5: Lab Equipment



Figure 6: More Lab Equipment



Figure 7: Computer Console Equipment



Figure 8: Holding Unit for the Bag of Holding

- Textures/Lighting



Figure 9: Concrete Walls of the Room



Figure 10: Gloomy, moody lighting (without the green tinge in-game)

- Characters/Vehicles
 - None

Transition Area: Corridor

Text Description:

Pipes hang down off the walls spilling water onto the floor. Wires hang from the ceiling. Damaged lights hang from the ceiling leaving the corridor swathed in a sickly, flickering yellow. Pieces of debris from the damaged ceiling form piles on the floor. Steam vents from damaged pipes making it hard to see clearly.

Visual References

- Terrain/Vegetation
 - None
- Models/Architecture



Figure 11: Arched concrete walls and ceilings in the corridor and boxes



Figure 12: Concrete debris in the corridor

- Textures/Lighting



Figure 13: Darkness in the corridor



Figure 14: Water stains on the concrete



Figure 15: Dark, arched corridor with a lot of water damage

- Characters/Vehicles



Figure 16: Zombie!



Figure 17: Zombine!

Area 2: Living Quarters

Text Description:

This is a medium-sized, semi-open space with the clutter of improvised living. Hydroelectric equipment still lines the walls revealing the former industrial use of the space. The remnants of the rebel living arrangements remain. Carpets line parts of the floor to create a more home-like environment. Tables where the rebels might once have eaten dinner still sit in a corner. Crates and broken boxes hint at the personal items the rebels once kept in here. Thanks to the Combine assault, makeshift furniture lies in disarray, tables turned on their side for cover, overturned couches, mattress propped in a corner. The Combine have instead turned the place into an equipment store with boxes and racks of explosives and other equipment. They've even installed an elevator to the roof of the building and begun to set-up computer equipment. The zombie attack left their plans unfinished and tipped over boxes spill Combine technology over the floor.

Visual References

- Terrain/Vegetation
 - None
- Models/Architecture



Figure 18: Converted Living Quarters



Figure 19: More converted living quarters



Figure 20: Beds in the living quarters



Figure 21: Combine computer equipment



Figure 22: Combine equipment in an adapted space



Figure 23: Example of a Combine lift, but more slapped together in-game

- Textures/Lighting



Figure 24: Wall texture in the living quarters



Figure 25: Lighting in the living quarters, some areas in darkness

- Characters/Vehicles



Figure 26: More zombies!



Figure 27: Zombine



Figure 28: Combine Squad



Figure 29: Combine Soldier equipped with SMG

LEVEL OBJECTIVES

- Primary: Recover the Bag of Holding, Escape!
- Secondary: N/A
- Bonus: N/A
- Hidden: N/A

CHALLENGE HIGHLIGHTS

Combat

- Single zombie encounter in the corridor
- Three zombie encounter at the end of the corridor (forces quick use of multiple items from the inventory)
- Zombie and zombine combined assault in the living quarters
- Combine soldiers breach a door and join the battle, turning it into a three-sided fight

Stealth

- N/A

Puzzles

- N/A

Conversation

- Dr. Eastman informs Gordon he needs to fight his way outside to meet Alyx

Boss Battles

- N/A

WOW MOMENTS

- Moment 1 (Area 1: Secondary Lab):
 - Picking up environmental items to add to Gordon's inventory and figuring out how to take those items back out of the inventory
- Moment 2 (Area 2: Living Quarters):
 - Using stored inventory items to take out the zombies and the attacking Combine soldiers

Actors

Player

- Model(s):
 - Gordon Freeman
- Inventory:
 - Gravity Gun
- Start Location:
 - Wrecked lab – teleportation platform
- Motives/Objectives:
 - Retrieve the Bag of Holding
 - Lead the rebels in defeating the Combine

Key Actors

Headcrab Zombie

- Model(s):
 - npc_zombie
- Inventory: n/a
- Motives/Objectives:
 - Kill anything that is not a zombie
- Starting Location:
 - Corridor
 - Living Quarters

Zombine

- Model(s):
 - npc_zombine
- Inventory:
 - 1 Grenade
- Motives/Objectives:
 - Kill anything that is not a zombie
- Starting Location:
 - Corridor
 - Living Quarters

Combine Soldier

- Model(s):
 - npc_combine_s (regular variant)
- Inventory:
 - SMG
 - 1 Grenade
- Motives/Objectives:
 - Survive the zombie infestation
 - Stop Gordon from escaping (kill him)
- Starting Location:
 - Living Quarters

Supporting Actors

Dr. Eastman

- Model(s): n/a (audio/text only)
- Inventory: n/a
- Motives/Objectives: Assist Dr. Magnusson in developing weapons to stop the Combine permanently
- Uses Within Level: Fill Gordon in on the situation with the teleportation device

User Interface

Pre-Game Information

- Read-Me:
 - Explains the need for the extra configuration (.cfg) files
 - Tells the player where to install the .cfg files
 - Gives default key bindings for new abilities and tells player how to change the binding manually in the config files
 - Tells the player of the need to complete the level or run the “unbind” in the console to remove extra key bindings
- Briefing: N/A

In-Game Information

- Introduction
 - Dialogue
 - The teleportation device malfunctioned, Gordon needs to find an alternative exit
- Conclusion
 - “You made it out” on-screen message before fade-to-black
- Objectives
 - Retrieve the personal trans-dimensional pocket device (the Bag of Holding)
 - Find a way out of the Black Mesa East facility

Post Game Information

- Debriefing: N/A
- Stats: N/A

HUD Elements

- Normal Elements Used
 - Health
 - Suit
 - Ammo
 - Weapon Select
- Special Elements Required
 - Inventory Category
 - Inventory Count

GAMEPLAY DETAILS

Level Progression Chart

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Time (min) | 0 | | | | 1 | | | |
| Terrain/Objective | Secondary Lab/Storage Room | | | | Corridor | | Living Quarters | |
| Opponents | None | | | | Zombies, Zombine | | Zombine | |
| Challenges | | | | | 3 zombie spread | | Zombine pincer | |
| Wow Moments | Get the Bag of holding | | | | | | | |
| New Skills/Weapons | Bag of Holding/Inventory | | | | Use inventory to attack rapidly | | | |
| Time (min) | 2 | | | | 3 | | | |
| Terrain/Objective | Living Quarters | | | | | | | |
| Opponents | Zombies, Zombine | | Zombies, Zombine, Combine Soliders | | | | | |
| Challenges | 3 sided-battle, environmental ammo against guns | | | | | | | |
| Wow Moments | Combine breach | | | | Get on Elevator | | | |
| New Skills/Weapons | | | | | | | | |
| Legend | | | | | | | | |
| 1 square = 15 seconds | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary Lab/Storage Room | | | | | | | | |
| Corridor | | | | | | | | |
| Living Quarters | | | | | | | | |
| Challenge Highlight | | | | | | | | |
| Wow Moment | | | | | | | | |
| New Weapon/Skill | | | | | | | | |

Figure 30: Level Progression Chart

Gameplay Mechanics

Prerequisite Skills:


- Basic W, A, S, D movement
- Circle-strafting
- Aiming and shooting
- Picking up and flinging objects with the Gravity Gun
- Using environmental objects as weapons against enemies

Skills Learned

- Taking and storing environmental weapons in the Bag of Holding
- Taking items out of the Bag of Holding
- Switching the active item in the Bag of Holding
- Catching items in the Gravity Gun stream when taking them out of the Bag of Holding
- Managing inventory for combat situations

Overhead Level Map

Key

- Scale
 - 1 Grid Square = 128 units
- Wow Moments: 
- Challenge Highlights
 - Objectives 
 - Skill Tests 
- Player
 - Start Point 
 - Optimal Route 
 - Alternate routes 
 - Area End 



Detailed Map Descriptions

Area 1 – Secondary Lab/Storage Map

Key



- Key Actors

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---|---------|---|---------|---|
| ○ Spawn Points: | Zombie |  | Zombine |  | Combine |  |
| ○ Routes/Behaviors | Zombie |  | Zombine |  | Combine |  |



- Supporting Actors

- Spawn Points: None
- Routes/Behaviors: None

- Pickups (weapons/ammo/etc.)

- Saw Blades 
- Propane Tanks 

- Key Gameplay Objects

- Cover 
- Combine Boxes 

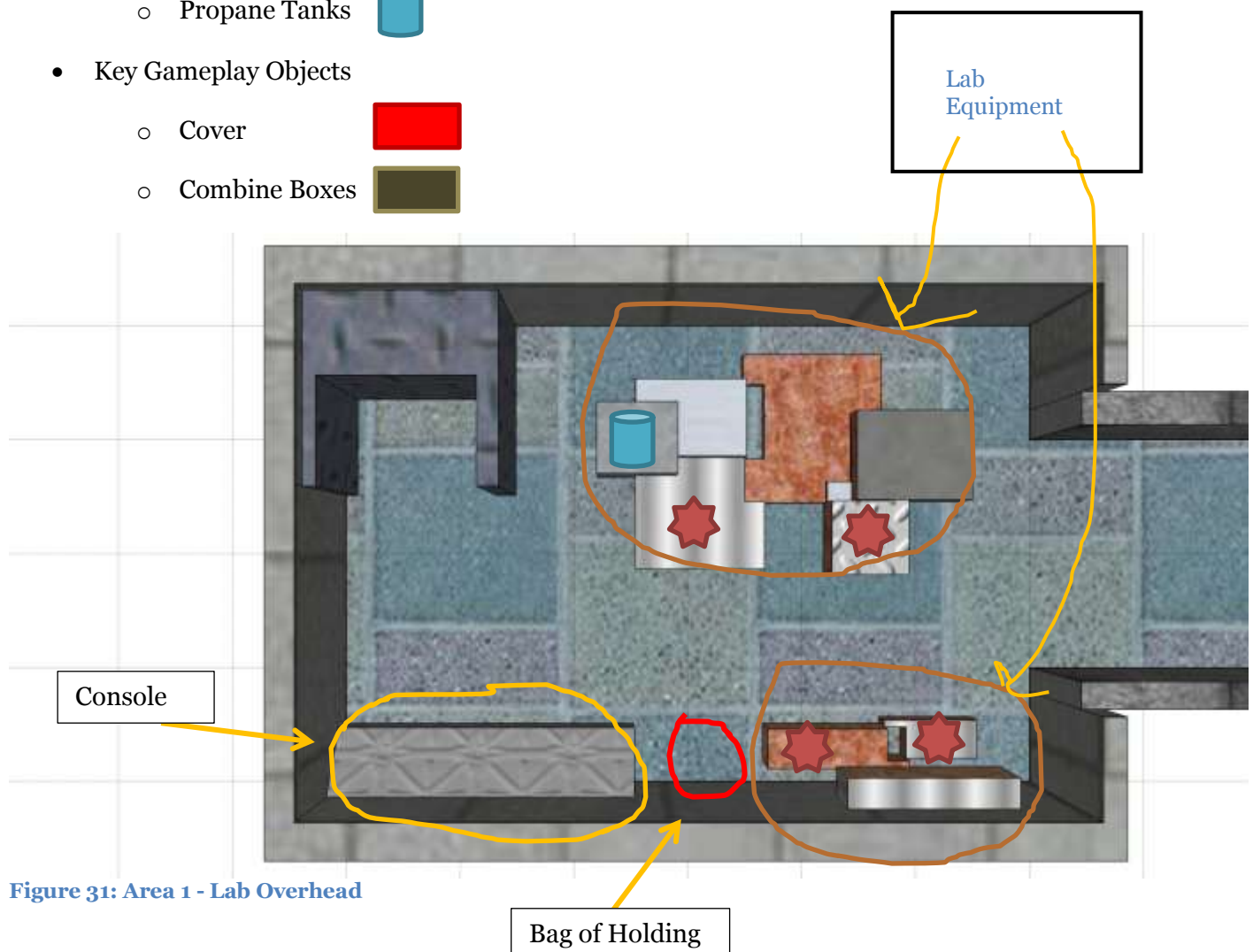


Figure 31: Area 1 - Lab Overhead

Gameplay

1. Gordon spawns at the teleportation device with only his Gravity Gun
2. The console beeps and flashes, causing Gordon to investigate
3. Dr. Eastman explains that the teleportation device malfunctioned and Gordon needs to find his own way out of the facility
4. Gordon picks up the Bag of Holding
5. Gordon adds the saw blades and propane tank to his inventory (he can practice taking things out and putting them back in in this safe area)
6. Gordon advances to the corridor

Dialog

- Dr. Eastman: “Gordon, Gordon! Thank god you made it! Something happened to the teleportation device. Dr. Magnusson says it can’t be fixed. You’re going to have to pick up the personal trans-dimensional pocket device and find your own way out. We’ll figure out a way to get you back here, you just find a way out. Be careful!”

Visual References



Figure 32: Teleportation Equipment



Figure 33: Messy Nature of the Storage Room



Figure 34: Computer Console Equipment



Figure 35: Holding Unit for the Bag of Holding

Transition Area – Corridor

Map

- Key Actors

- **Spawn Points:** Zombie  Zombine  Combine 
- **Routes/Behaviors** Zombie  Zombine  Combine 



- Supporting Actors

- **Spawn Points: None**
- **Routes/Behaviors: None**

- Pickups (weapons/ammo/etc.)

- Saw Blades
- Propane Tanks

- Key Gameplay Objects

- Cover 
- Combine Boxes 

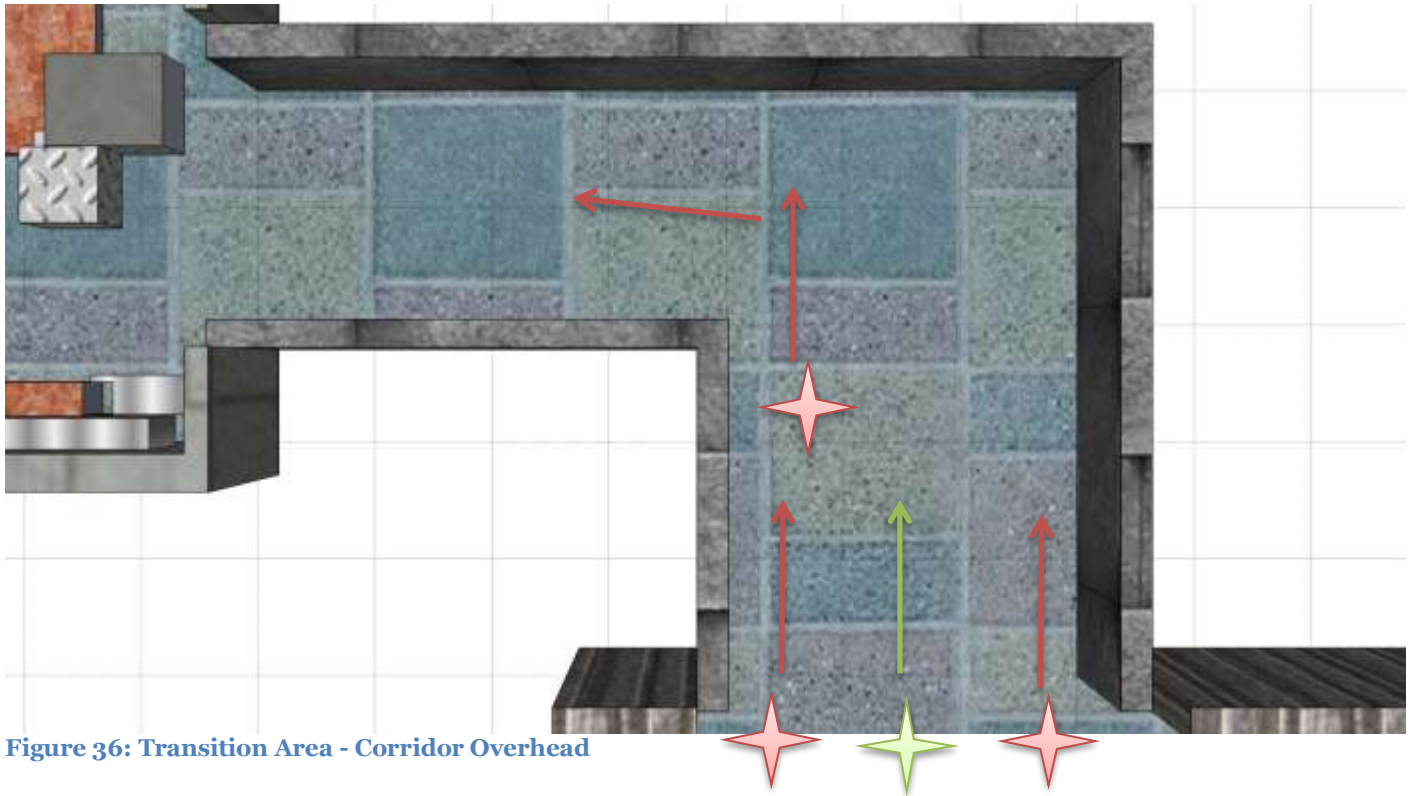


Figure 36: Transition Area - Corridor Overhead

Gameplay

1. Gordon has four saw blades and one propane tank in inventory
2. A single zombie rounds the corner, forcing Gordon to pull out a saw blade to attack kill it
3. Gordon turns the corner and sees three zombies heading straight for him.
4. Gordon quickly uses three saw blades to take each one out individually OR the propane tank to get them all in one hit
5. Gordon continues into the Living Quarters

Dialog

- None

Visual References

Figure 37: Arched concrete walls and ceilings in the corridor and boxes



Figure 38: Concrete debris in the corridor









Figure 39: Dark, arched corridor with a lot of water damage

Area 2 – Living Quarters

Map

Key



- Key Actors

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---|---------|---|---------|---|
| ○ Spawn Points: | Zombie |  | Zombine |  | Combine |  |
| ○ Routes/Behaviors | Zombie |  | Zombine |  | Combine |  |



- Supporting Actors

- Spawn Points: None
- Routes/Behaviors: None

- Pickups (weapons/ammo/etc.)

- Saw Blades 
- Propane Tanks 

- Key Gameplay Objects

- Cover 
- Combine Boxes 

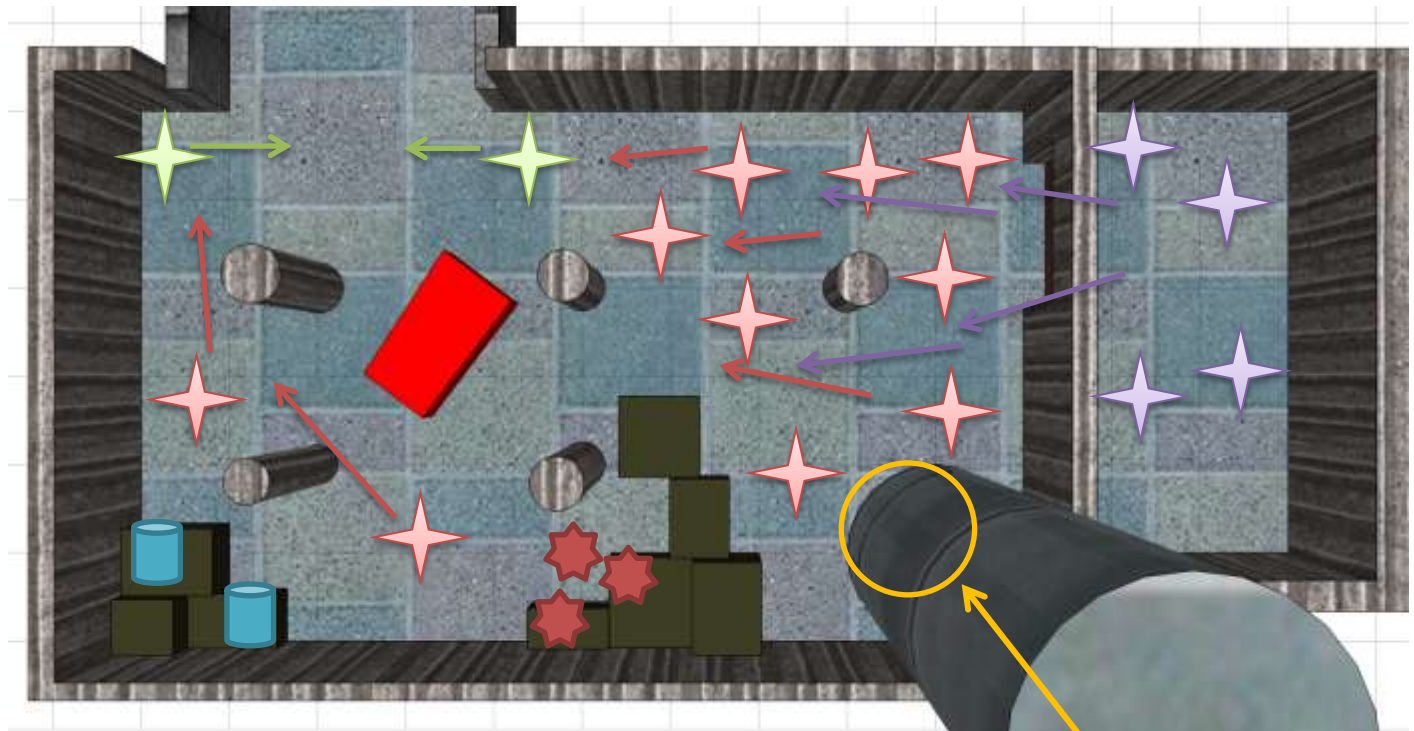


Figure 40: Area 2 - Living Quarters

Elevator
Entrance

Gameplay

1. Gordon still has the four saw blades but may not have the propane tank
2. Two zombine quickly attack in a pincer formation around Gordon, Gordon must take them out with saw blades
3. Propane tanks draw Gordon to the southern corner
4. Gordon uses a tank or saw blades to take out a large group of zombies
5. Four Combine breach the door and begin attacking the zombies and Gordon
6. Gordon takes them out from behind cover
7. Once clear, Gordon takes the elevator to the surface

Dialog

- None

Visual References

Figure 41: Beds in the living quarters

Objective:

Use the switch on the control panel to watch the security tape.



Figure 42: Combine equipment in an adapted space



Figure 43: Example of a Combine lift, but more slapped together in-game



Figure 44: Combine Squad

APPENDIX

WHY IS THIS FUN?

This sequence allows the player to feel even more powerful using the Gravity Gun. During the original *Half-Life 2* and its episodes, the player could only carry one environmental weapon at a time. This sequence grants the player the ability to carry around multiple objects that they can use whenever they feel. The player still has to manage their use of the objects to make sure they do not lose any ammo. This creates a compelling challenge due to the ability to pick up weapons to re-use.

WHAT MAKES THIS SEQUENCE INTERESTING/MEMORABLE?

This presents a hefty departure from the normal gameplay of *Half-Life 2* when players must to scavenge for environmental weapons. This sequence provides the fun gameplay that players associate with using the environmental weapons while also making players feel more powerful by giving them the ability to collect “weapons” for later use. This keeps the player in an action-oriented format and adds in the fun of managing your inventory in the heat of combat.

HOW WILL YOU COMMUNICATE TO THE PLAYER WHAT THEY NEED TO DO?

The fact that the player has no weapon other than the Gravity Gun immediately communicates that the player needs to rely on environmental weapons to survive. Because the level is adding in new functionality and needs to explain new controls to the player, it is a necessary evil to include text to explain the new key bindings. In terms of communicating where to go, lighting and event triggered doors guide the player through the level and to the exit.

HOW CAN THE PLAYER BREAK IT?

The player could semi-break the level by using their propane tanks early, but even this doesn't break it completely. The player always has access to the saw blades because they stick in the environment. Sending them across the room simply means that the player needs to retrieve them to kill the enemies, though this may make it harder to advance. Killing the Combine soldiers opens the elevator so essentially there should not be a way to break the level. It may be less enjoyable if the player kills all the zombies in the living quarters before the Combine breach since part of the fun is seeing the three-way battle, but this doesn't stop the player from completing the level.