W1NG3D'S GUIDE TO
DETAILING YOUR MAP
## RULES WHICH MAPPERS OUGHT TO KNOW

Welcome to W1NG3D's guide to detailing your map! This guide was created with Call of Duty maps in mind, but its concepts can apply to other titles and editors as well. In order to simplify the guide and make it as effective as possible, I have compiled 4 simple concepts which help to make a map into an interesting, detailed and visually impressive game environment.

Before I begin, I'd like to give thanks to the many helpful users of www.zombiemodding.com and www.ugx-mods.com, whose knowledge and expertise have assisted me greatly over the past couple of years in developing a better understanding of Call of Duty and its often confusing mod tools!

Now, let's get started…

Rule One: Keep it *Realistic* - Clutter does not equal detail!
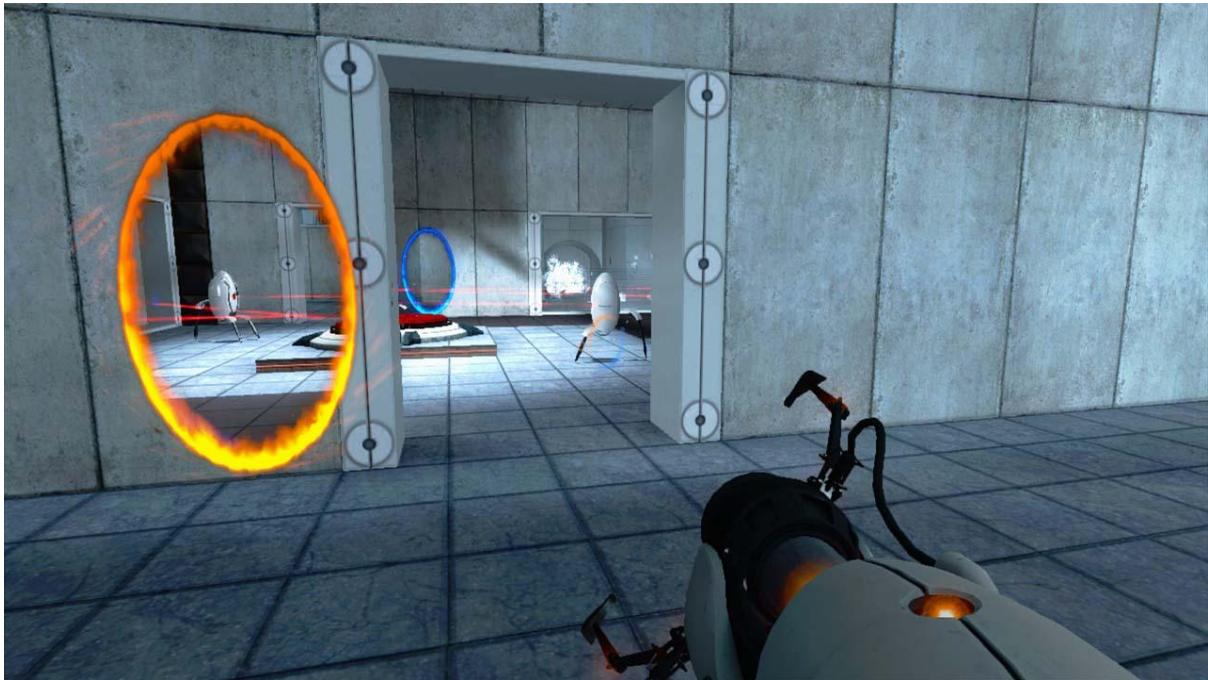
One common mistake among many aspiring mappers, is their approach to what detail actually means at a fundamental level. When people say they are trying to make their map as detailed as possible, all too often they'll simply throw in a bunch of models to make the environment appear busy and cluttered. It's important to realise that this is **not** detail; in order for a map to look its best, you need to take a step back and ask yourself a few questions:

1) Would a building/space look like this in real life?
2) Do these models, textures etc belong in this space?
3) What would I expect to see if I were wandering in this area?

Now obviously there are some cases where clutter is realistic, such as a garbage dump; however in many other environments, clutter is **unrealistic**. A detailed and realistic environment can be often crafted with a minimalistic space, using very few models at all.

Instead of cluttering a bunch of models, you should instead work on *placing them in an interesting and realistic way*. Rotating, resizing and shifting your models and textures is very useful for achieving this – it takes quite a lot of time to fine-tune all these adjustments, but it's worth it in the end.

Rule Two: Lights are your friends.

I don't think I can stress the importance of lighting enough. A well-lit map can look a million times better than even the most well-made map with a poor lighting setup. Lights should be used to highlight areas of interest and create focal points for players.

A brighter area will naturally draw more attention, so you can use this to your advantage. For example, if you make a hallway very dark/dim and only have bright lights at the opposite ends of the hallway, you won't have to spend much time detailing the walls and such in the middle of the hallway since people only pay attention to the bright areas. (This doesn't mean you can totally neglect all the unlit areas though!) Lights are also very useful because they can cast shadows onto the environment, creating variation and contrast where there wasn't any before. Breaking up the environment and creating this kind of variation is integral to creating an aesthetically pleasing & detailed map.

For an even more advanced and interesting appearance for your map, it would be well-worth investigating dynamic lights which rotate, flicker etc. Movement catches the human eye even more than bright lights, so combining these two will create a very strong focal point in your map and may also cast real-time dynamic shadows, enhancing the visual appeal further.

Rule Three: Avoid Unnecessary Repetition.

While this rule may seem very self-explanatory and somewhat obvious to many mappers, I still think it's critical to understand why certain forms of repetition should be avoided, and how this can be achieved.

I used this image from my own map "Return to Kneipe der Untoten", because I feel that the main room can be used as an example for a few ways in which repetition can be good, and also ways which I avoided the wrong sort of repetition.

Anyone who's played the map will remember that there are several dining tables in this room. They're all exactly the same model; in the setting of the map (a bar or pub), this is quite necessary and also helps to achieve a sense of *visual continuity and consistency*. However if I'd simply stamped them out in rows and not bothered to rotate them, this would make the map appear unrealistic because of repetition. In order to give each table its own individual appearance and avoid this bad repetition, I rotated the models and placed them in a naturally random manner.

This same concept can be applied to textures, terrain and geometry too; while it's ok to use some assets and styles multiple times (since that will make the map appear consistent), using these in different ways will help you to avoid a boring and repetitive appearance in your map.

Rule 4: Tell a story!

Around 99% of the time, your map's environment would realistically have been visited by people in the past. For example, if you're designing an office building, it would obviously once have been filled with workers. However, when the player enters this room, all these other people will be gone (unless you're including a bunch of NPCs which is very unlikely).

The question worth asking here is "what happened to these people"? You can provide an answer to players by telling this story in your map. If our hypothetical office building was in the middle of a zombie outbreak, it would be logical to have knocked-over furniture, trails of blood and perhaps some makeshift fortifications. These things would tell the story that the office workers either tried escaping, or built some defences (which ultimately failed anyway since they're presumed dead).

Depending on your map's theme and setting, there will be a different story to tell. It's up to you to show players what's happened in your map in the past; this rule links strongly to the questions posed in rule 1, "Keep it Realistic!".