

# Multiplayer Map Theory in Gears of War

## The “Front”

- “The most important gameplay factors in Gears are the narrow field of view and restricted rotation rates. With this in mind, it becomes very important that both teams have a “front” or common direction an enemy is likely to come from.”
  - Because of this “Front”, good Gears of War maps likely translate to good Halo CTF maps
- “The shapes and positioning of your cover can play a big part in defining a front. Set up obvious defense areas and give them a facing that makes their intended use clear to anyone who sees it. Use walls or impassable areas to funnel players through the regions you've defined as combat areas.”

## The “Visible Flank”

- “The Holy Grail moments we look for in Gears playtest sessions come when a flank intentionally happens, it’s fairly earned, and it’s effective and rewarding to execute.”
- “When players die, they need to feel like it was through a decision of their own making, and not the designer’s cheap trick or oversight. Players are just fine with dying if they're learning from their experience, or as a result of smart play by opponents, and not just feeling like a victim.”
- **“If you take nothing else from this document, take this. A player who is paying attention should always have a chance to see an enemy attempting to flank them, and have a chance to react.”**
  - Instead of using standard walls for most of your level’s structure, consider using low impassable areas, crevices, or at least put many gaps in your walls to allow an observant player a chance to see what’s going on in the next area.
- “Flanking someone should involve more than a split second roadie run or evade to the side, it should be a deliberate action and ideally require a bit of risk or exposure to pull off (picture a high ground flanking area, but with little cover or no good escape route).”

## “Fuzzy Cover”

- “Players need to feel safe in cover. They need to be able to recognize useful cover at a glance before moving to it, and cover needs to behave predictably because players don’t want to experiment in the middle of a firefight. When cover doesn’t fill these needs, we call it “Fuzzy Cover”.”
  - Examples of fuzzy cover are foliage, chain link fences, railing where bullets could pass through the holes, short cover with sloped sides that result in parts of the player being

exposed, pillars you can take cover on that are too narrow to actually protect you from fire, small alcoves the player can't actually fit into, etc.

- “Mansion contains some fuzzy cover on the interior areas, where columns and railings often result in players believing they're safe, when they're really not.”

## Level Flow and “Lures”

- “Two to four super weapons placed strategically in a map will definitely affect how the map plays, and this can be used to aid long term replayability of a map. A lure could also be a key cover structure, or a powerful flank position, or a scripted object like a button that triggers an event.”
- “Also, a good combat arena can often work from several angles. A map such as Gridlock will often see a firefight rotate in orientation, occupying the same space, but with action happening on a different axis.”
- “Having high ground on someone will often negate low cover and also increases visibility. Higher ground gives you a combat advantage and you need to build in a tradeoff unless you plan on them being all powerful from their position.”
- ““Shallow” used lures and flow to great effect. The sniper rifles on the side bridges and explosive weapons in the central areas keep players moving around the various paths and make that movement meaningful.”

## Cover Construction and Placement

- “In general, **low cover is better than tall cover**. Picture a wall in the middle of your combat area; you have only the corners to interact with. You can move between the extents of the surface and even manually crouch at the edges, but generally your interactions are limited to the ends of the wall. With walls you're also greatly limiting player visibility and separating the player from all the action going on over the wall.”
  - “If you lower the wall you've drastically increased the options for the player. They are now aware of things going on over the wall and can be on the lookout for flanks and enemy movement. They can pop up and shoot from anywhere along the wall, giving them far more choices in firing positions. They can stay crouched and feel sneaky as they maneuver for a better shot. And of course they can mantle over the wall. As soon as they start moving along a high wall they are detached and simply traversing the map, but with a low wall they're still fully involved in the match.”

## Scale

- “There are two aspects of scale here: literal size of map, and gameplay space.”

- “Gears is simply not designed for sniping at enemies on the other side of a desert – it’s fun in some games, but it’s not likely to be fun in Gears regardless of your preferences.”
- “Your players need to be playing in the same map and not branched off doing their own thing.”
  - “Pick a single primary combat region, and if there’s an outlying area of your map that isn’t relevant to what’s going on in that central area, consider deleting it... you’re probably only fragmenting your combat instead of trying to get everyone involved in one common experience.”

## Approach

- “...the initial approach to a map from the spawn area has three effects on the map as a whole.”
- “Of primary importance is having a line of visibility to areas enemies are likely to enter the map from. Even though this view is far enough away that combat is probably ineffective, it’s incredibly useful to be able to tell “Hey, 3 guys went high, 1 guy’s going for the Boomshot! It’s like seeing the “play” unfold that the enemy team is calling and allows you to adjust your tactics for the round.”
- “Players will generally take this opportunity to take a few shots at the opposing team if they can see them, and even though it’s not going to kill anyone from so far out, it greatly enhances the feeling of drama as the round opens and everyone is roadie running forward under distant fire.”
- “It also serves as a nice breather between rounds. If you were the last one to die in the previous round, you’ll probably appreciate the 3-5 seconds to collect your thoughts and think about what to try next while you’re running into the next fight.”

## Gimmicks and Hooks

- “The layout and gameplay need to stand on their own merit, but the hook gives the map something to cling on to.”
- “This could be a central visual landmark such as a series of arches stretching across the map, or perhaps it’s really windy and some debris rolls by periodically amongst the audio cues for wind gusts, or maybe it is a gameplay gimmick such as a ticking bomb in the center of the map.”
- “Whatever you’ve done to tie your map into the player’s consciousness, bring that into the name of the map as well.”

## Visual Clutter

- “Use clearly different textures to contrast floor surfaces and walls, so a player can see a “floor plan” as they look around. Ideally cover should be textured to contrast as well.”
- “Use lighting to guide players through your map. When you have an area with a specific exit like a door or arch, move to the far side of the room, squint at the screen and ask yourself if you can tell where the exit is. If the screen is a grey sea of muddy noise, use a contrasting light source in

the exit to catch the player's eye. Contrary to that, if something catches your eye that isn't an exit or important feature, tone it back so as not to misdirect the player.”

- “Again, avoid placing any ancillary meshwork that might be confused as "fuzzy cover".”