Cutscene Pause Feature

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Key:

🟩 Key takeaways
🟨 Supporting knowledge
🟥 Nice to know

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🟩Summary

This document describes XXX's need for a **pause state for cutscenes and cinematics**, and includes research into the implementation of similar features in other games while pitching ideas for the UX and UI of this feature in XXX.

🟩Intent

While players can already pause gameplay at any time by opening the menu or inventory, we should consider extending this option to cutscenes *and* cinematics. This feature would be beneficial to many of our players for a higher quality experience, and vital to some for accessibility reasons. For more information, check out the "Why is this important?" section below.

Feature Design

MVP

A minimum viable product for XXX's pause feature would be a very simple overlay with a "PAUSED" message, and a clear prompt to resume play. This would provide the fundamental requirements of this feature, but it would be excellent if we were able to include some or all of the "Ideal" options detailed below.
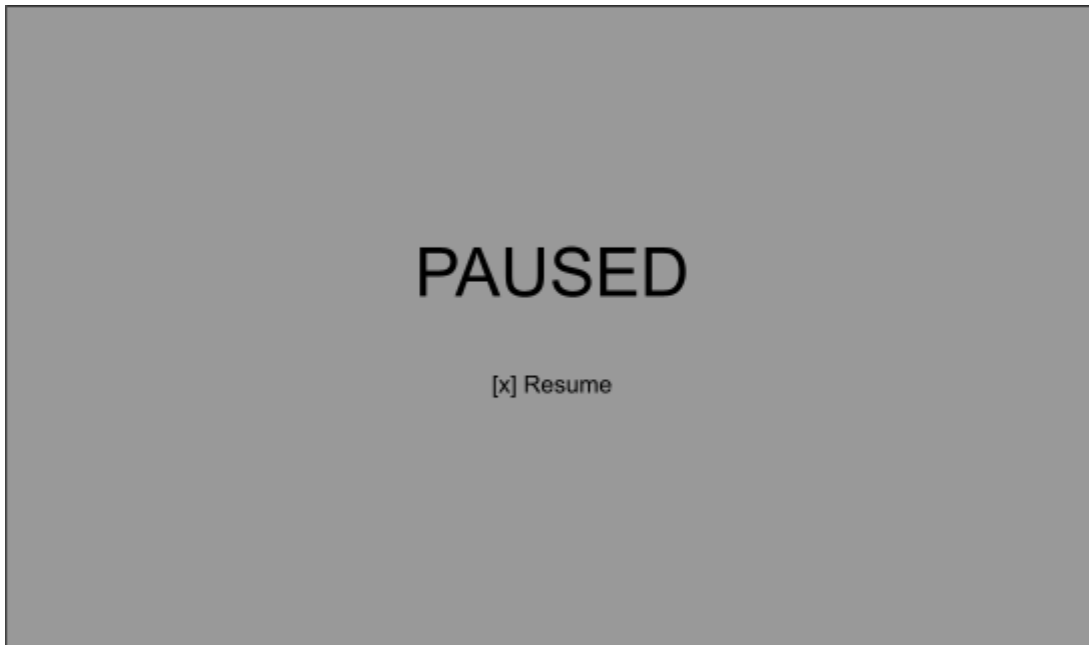
Ideal

If we're able to go beyond MVP, we could offer a few more options on our pause screen:

- **Top Priority:** "**Skip**" (This feature is expected, as it is already partially implemented)

  Some of our cutscenes and cinematics are long, and it would be a valuable quality of life feature to allow players to skip them upon **replaying** (not on first playthrough). If XXX ever acquires any kind of speedrunning community, this would also be an appreciated addition.

  However, **not all pausable cutscenes should be skippable**: some, such as short real-time cutscenes that involve important code calls (e.g. spawning an asset mid-scene), will not be skippable. Any design that includes a "skip" option will need to allow for instances where skipping should either be removed or greyed out.

- **Priority 2:** "**Options**"

  This could either allow players to open the existing options menu, or an options menu tailored to cutscenes specifically that gives quick access to relevant settings, such as brightness, audio, subtitles, etc.

- **Priority 3:** "**Quit to desktop**" / "**Quit to menu**"

  Sometimes players will want to abruptly quit their game and power down their machine, because they know they won't be able to return to the game in the near future. As long as we can make it so *saves will pick up at the start of cutscenes* and **not** at the end of them, this would be a valuable thing to offer.

🟨References

Many games fail to include the option to pause cutscenes, but there are several references we can look at to inform our own design thinking.
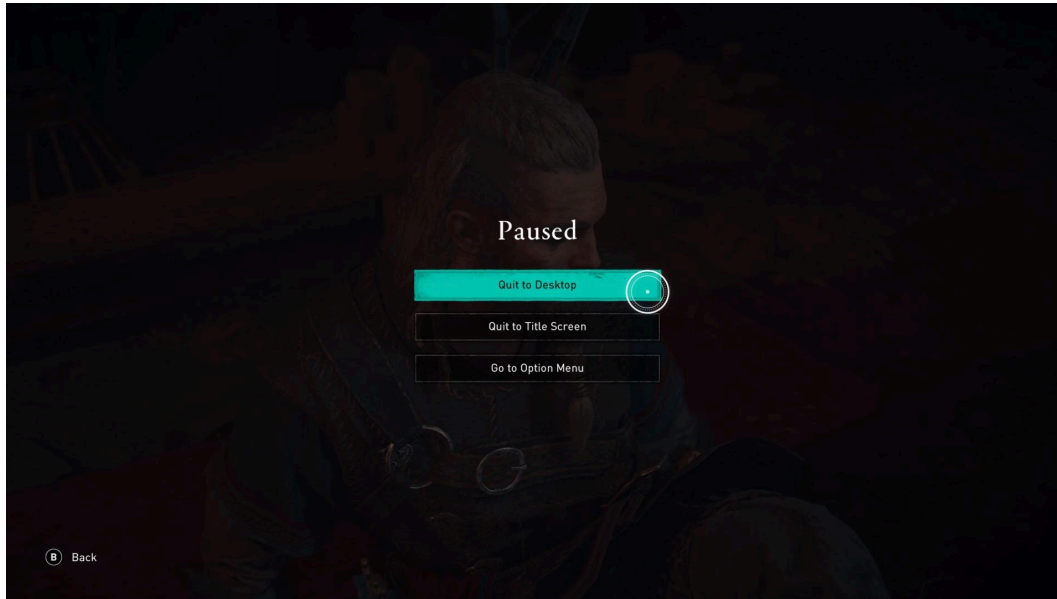
Death Stranding (2019)
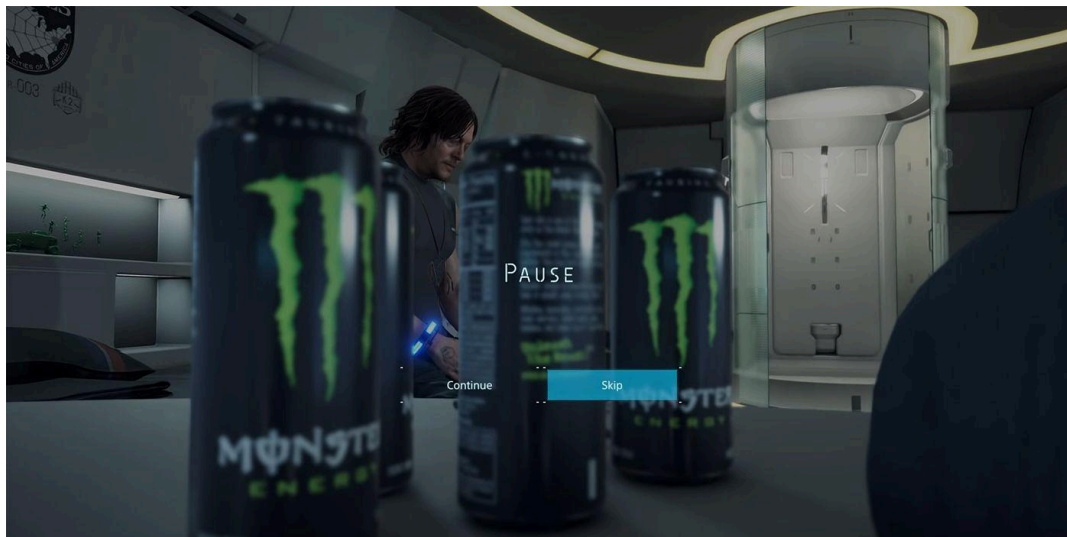
Death Stranding's pause menu is extremely basic, but it serves its purpose. It allows players to pause and resume cutscenes, while also offering a "skip" option.

Also notable is the way the menu overlays the cutscene, and doesn't obfuscate it beyond darkening it slightly. This is valuable as it allows players to pick up exactly where they left off visually, with no jarring transition.

Assassin's Creed Valhalla (2020)

Assassin's Creed Valhalla offers a few more options with its pause screen. It enables players to quit to their desktop or the title screen, to open the "options" menu, or resume play. It also features the same overlay quality as Death Stranding, however, it also significantly darkens the scene behind it, making the transition less seamless.

When allowing players to quit during cutscenes, we would have to consider our save system and what this would mean for a player's save state. Would their save pick up before the cutscene, or after? If after, it would mean players could end up missing cutscenes they wanted to see, or allow players to deliberately skip cutscenes *we* want them to see.

A Plague Tale: Requiem (2022)
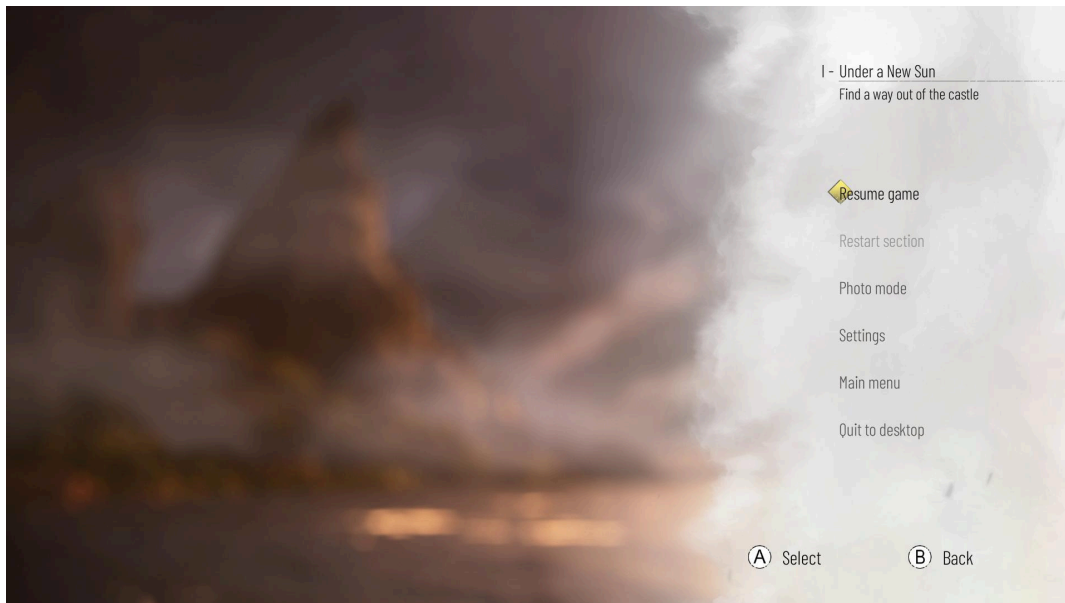
Here we see even more options on offer. Not only is the player shown the name of the section they're playing through and their current objective, they are also able to open "photo mode", a special feature of *A Plague Tale: Requiem*. Note that because this menu is mid-cutscene, the player's option to "Restart Section" is greyed out.

Detroit: Become Human (2018)
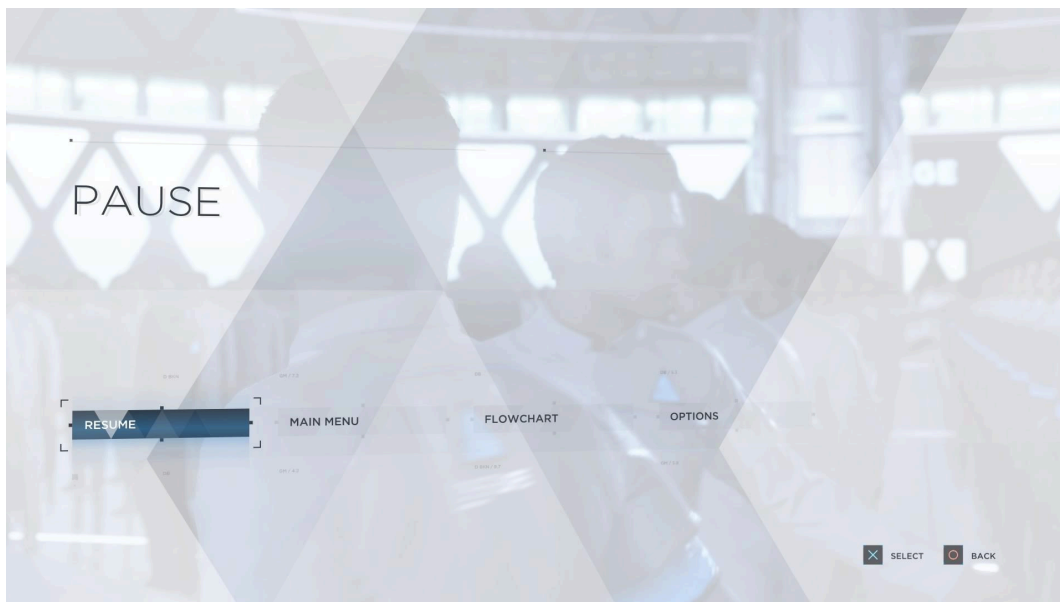
Detroit offers a similar selection as *Assassin's Creed*, while also allowing players to open the game's "flowchart", a feature of the story's non-linearity.

Why is this important?

Accessibility

The ability to pause games is an essential accessibility feature, and cutscenes are no exception. A myriad of different people **need** to pause games at some point, for reasons including but not limited to:

- **Disability or illness**

  Both physical and mental disabilities may require a player to be able to pause their game at any point, either to take a break or to deal with symptoms of their disability. This also extends to anyone with a temporary illness that might be hindering their ability to play a game for long stretches of time, such as headaches or hand/wrist injuries.

- **Parent or carer responsibilities**

  It's hard to focus on a game when a child or dependent requires your care and attention. Allowing our players to pause cutscenes will enable parents and carers to enjoy the game with the knowledge that they won't miss anything if they need to quickly react to the needs of their family.

Quality of Life

On top of being essential for some players, the ability to pause cutscenes is also *nice to have*.

We all want or need to pause games at one time or another: answering the door or the phone, grabbing a snack or drink, needing to run to the bathroom, needing to stretch, and so on.

Enabling our players to pause cutscenes will increase the quality of their experience overall, regardless of whether they have a specific or persistent need to use the feature.