

GAME:IT

Designing Good Games



Designing Good Games

Question:

What makes a computer game a game?

A computer game is a software program in which one or more players make decisions through the control of game objects and resources in pursuit of a goal.

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A computer game:

- Is a software program
- Involves a player or players
- Is about making decisions
- Is about control
- Contains objects and resources
- Needs a goal

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What makes a **GOOD** computer game?

- ❑ Has a challenging, yet attainable goal.
- ❑ Creates interesting and difficult decisions, often under pressure.
- ❑ Balance: the game shouldn't be too hard or too easy, the player should have a chance to reach a goal but it can't be so easy it becomes boring.
- ❑ Balance between competing players: one should not be stronger or possess more power than another.

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What makes a **GOOD** computer game?

- ▣ **Rewards:** Something good should happen when a goal is achieved. Examples: more power, extra life, access to better resources
- ▣ **Flow:** keeping the challenges, pace and competition realistic to the capabilities of the player

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What makes a **GOOD** computer game?

- ▣ Immersion – feeling part of the game
 - Connected to the story behind the game & during the game
 - Does a player's actions & decisions *really matter*
 - Does a player really care about the characters or goals within the game
 - Balanced and real (real within the context of the game) surroundings and environment... *spoiler alert: this involves an understanding of math & physics that we will cover*
 - Graphics & sound also play a large role in the “feel” of a game (they don't always have to be great, think original Space Invaders – they have to be good enough)

Designing Good Games

Necessary Components

- ❑ The Story
- ❑ The Game World
- ❑ Main Characters
- ❑ Music and Sound Effects
- ❑ Special Effects

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Necessary Components

□ The Story

- A good game will have the character follow some sort of logical path; they have a story
- Even games like PacMan & Tetris started as stories to help the designers ensure the games had focus
- Some games (sports, historical, movie based) come with a story already in place where others are 100% original

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Necessary Components

□ The Game World

- Can be in 3D graphic detail, 2D abstract & cartoonish or just text and static images
- The world has to be “realistic” in context of the game. Call of Duty has the look and feel of a real battle ground, but Mario Kart is set in made up worlds and race tracks. If these games switched worlds, they wouldn't flow nearly as well

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Necessary Components

□ Main Characters

- Every game has at least 1 character; many games feature more than 1 character (or sprites as we will call them later)
- The player should identify with the characters; like the heros, hate the villians
- In a first person game, the player is the character; in third person games the character must have a strong, relatable personality (Lara Croft in Tomb Raider)

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Necessary Components

▣ Music / Sound Effects

- Background music adds a lot to the game experience
- Choose music or sounds that match the tone and flow of the game; a creepy game should have creepy music; funny games should have funny music
- Sound effects need to match the action

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Necessary Components

□ Special Effects

- Just like in a movie they can greatly enhance the players experience
- Sometimes less is more; make sure they don't slow the game down or get too repetitive
- Too much “razzle dazzle” becomes distracting and even annoying

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Game Genres

- ▣ Arcade
- ▣ Puzzles
- ▣ Role Playing
- ▣ Strategy
- ▣ Management
- ▣ Adventure
- ▣ 1st Person Shooter
- ▣ 3rd Person Shooter
- ▣ Sports Games
- ▣ Racing Games
- ▣ Simulators

Designing Good Games

Do, Critique, Learn

- ▣ Come up with a game plan and start developing
- ▣ Continually critique your work as you go
- ▣ Have others critique the game as you go
- ▣ Learn from others / work with others
 - Use resources from other game developers, learn from other's mistakes
 - 2 heads are better than 1; So 3, 4 or 5 are better yet

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Colors and Art

Colors play a huge part in the game experience

- ▣ Colors can be used to convey emotions like danger, tension, joy or amusement.
- ▣ Game designers typically storyboard their ideas first and experiment with colors on paper before actually drafting them on a computer.
- ▣ Artistic techniques like shading and edge definition are important in creating a playable game.