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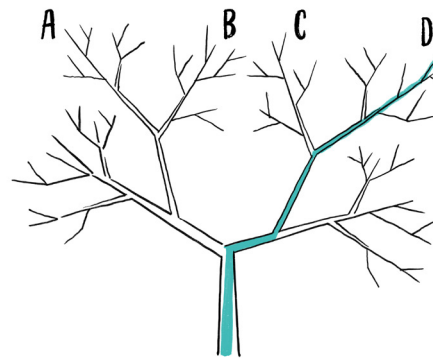


WILL WRIGHT | CHAPTER 02

Generating Game Concepts

TERMS

emergence (n.) A design phenomenon in which features of play manifest independently when the player interacts with the game mechanics and sets the system in motion. In its adjective form, emergent can describe narratives, strategy, and even gameplay.



Designers find new game concepts by being inspired by all objects and settings, no matter how mundane they first appear. The natural and social worlds are a richer source of concepts than other games: Look for points of conflict or dynamic interaction everywhere you go. But the most important thing about inspiration is knowing what to do when you find it. Here are a few tips:

1. Find new subjects through wide-ranging research. Don't limit yourself to subjects that have already been explored in games. Seek out areas that are new to you and try to learn more about them, no matter how technical they might seem at first.

2. Once you have a general subject for a game, analyze it from every possible perspective. If you're interested in air travel, for example, you might wonder how a pilot lives and works. But what about the flight attendant or the air traffic controller? What about the plane itself, or the birds avoiding it during takeoff and landing? What about the clouds the plane cuts through during flight, or the weather gods who determine when a plane is grounded and when it can fly? Each of these perspectives can produce any number of game designs. All should be considered in equal detail.

3. When you face difficult design decisions, trust your gut. Sometimes you'll have to make choices without clear data. Will had no idea *SimCity* would have the wide appeal it gained, but he knew it was interesting to him, and that was enough. Be confident in your instincts about what is fun.

"You can take almost anything, and looking at it the right way, make it a fascinating interactive experience."

LEARN MORE

Watch a documentary about an obscure subject and jot down a few game concepts that come to mind as you do. While watching, pay attention to whether the subject becomes more or less interesting the more you learn about it. Try *Helvetica* (2007) by Gary Hustwit, which is about the world of typography, or *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2012) by David Gelb, which is about an 85-year-old sushi master in Tokyo.

ASSIGNMENTS

Generate a new game concept in your Concept Book and describe it to a friend. Have that friend describe the idea back to you. Note which parts of the design your friend emphasized that you didn't expect. Note which parts of the design they left out or forgot.

Go to Wikipedia. Click the "random article" button on the sidebar until something grabs your attention. Read the article, focusing on the actors and agents within it. Then, generate a game concept about the subject of the article from five different perspectives. Record the concept in your Concept Book.