

Good Snack**SHILPA THOMAS**

Thursday

**Performing activities that provide progress towards another better the flow in games**

Flow is an essential factor to take into consideration to create player engagement. When creating video games, the designers must consider the following components of flow - a challenging activity requiring skill, a merging of action and awareness, clear goals, direct, immediate feedback, concentration on the task, a sense of control, a loss of self-consciousness, and an altered sense of time. In certain games, the completion of one activity leads to some progress in another. This increases the player's interest in the game and contributes to better player immersion. This is especially true for RPGs as it keeps the flow of the game smooth, as finishing one activity primes the player for the next one.

An example of a game with a good flow is the country life simulation RPG Stardew Valley. In the game, almost every activity helps another out. I.e., performing one activity will provide progress towards another and can even unlock new goals for the player. To be more specific, mining in the mines can lead the player to discover new artifacts that can get the player certain items that help in farming when donated to the museum. It can also unlock another mission. Similarly, increasing the friendship with the other characters in the game will unlock new crafting recipes, which increases farm production. Every activity in the game is intertwined, and the player is rewarded for completing one activity by increasing progress in another.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rf05yKfVpLQ>



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Bad Snack**SHILPA THOMAS**

Thursday

**Adding a new game mechanic without giving the player time to test it out throws the player off their game**

Allowing the player to play around with the controls and try out new mechanics before a major boss fight is essential in keeping the player's morale high. Often, this is done through tutorials. Even in games without tutorials, the player can generally play around with the mechanics before jumping into major fights. However, certain games fail to ease the player into these new mechanics and introduce them right before a boss fight. This throws the player off their game, and the unfamiliarity can frustrate them.

An example where this can be seen is in the 2D puzzle platformer, BirdGut. The game revolves around a disabled bee that gets eaten by a bird, which eats insects to brainwash them into maintaining the machinery within the bird that keeps it alive. The gameplay is relatively simple, and the bee can mainly just walk around and jump. The puzzle design of the game keeps the game challenging without complicating the gameplay beyond moving and jumping. However, towards the end of the game, a new mechanic for shooting is introduced, and the player does not get enough time to get familiarized with it before encountering the enemies. These encounters require that the player fires at the enemies with precision, which the player does not have enough time to learn. This frustrates the player and leaves a bad aftertaste of the game, which up to this point, is a fascinating blend of simple controls.

[BirdGut Playthrough - No Commentary](#) ↗



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Reply to snack**VIENNA CORDIER (They/Them)**

Yesterday

**The Presence of Affordances and Signifiers Aid in Hinting/Reminding the Player of Possible Actions and Interactions.**

Games that allow the player to buy, craft, and switch between weapons usually have a lot of said items to choose from. This can possibly contribute to them forgetting weapon and button functions, leading them to not fully utilize all of the awesome mechanics that the developers created for them. Additionally, this can overwhelm and frustrate the player when they can't figure something out immediately to progress onward. To combat this, games that provide affordances and constant pop-up signifiers remind the player of mechanic functionalities and greatly decrease frustration.

First, to define the relevant terms: affordances dictate what actions are possible in relation to the object and user. Signifiers convey where and how the action should take place; they indicate any apprehensible behavior/action to the user.

Rise of the Tomb Raider is a superlative example of these features used properly. Rise of the Tomb Raider provides visual prompts when an item can be interacted with or when an action can be performed, along with the controls necessary to do it. This simplifies and significantly decreases the functions the player has to memorize. This gives the player one less thing to think about when engaging in a tough fight or trying to solve difficult puzzles like in the GIF shown below. Quick reminders help the player in the moment and set them up for future gameplay.

The Design of Everyday Things tells us that “the most effective way of helping people remember is to make it unnecessary” (pg. 100). Rise of the Tomb Raider nails this and illustrates the importance of clearly defined signifiers and affordances in good design, especially in games.





SHILPA THOMAS

8:36am



Hi Vienna,

You make a really good point. Having an indicator to identify interactable objects is very important in games. It reminds me of the card-based RPG *The Seven Deadly Sins: Grand Cross*. When the player walks by an interactable object in the environment like a barrel, a magnifying glass pops up to indicate that it can be broken. Similarly, an interactable hangar is indicated by a popup of a hangar or a piece of clothing that tells the player that he can change his clothes there. The same happens when the player walks around an NPC, several popups float above the NPC's head, indicating the different ways the player can interact with it.



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