

Mechanic	Social, MMO, RPG?	Definition	Examples	How it can be abused or broken	Add to gameplay?	Detract from gameplay?	Impact on other players in multiplayer games
Leveling Up/Player Progression	MMO, Social, RPG	Increases players' power in the game, giving them more abilities or increasing the power of those abilities	Mario getting a 1 Up Mushroom, Pacman eating a Power Pellet, Link being able to access Gerudo Valley with hookshot[1]	Players can grind their character to a high level and make subsequent parts of the game easier	Gives player a sense of progression, lets player invest in character, adds to gameplay by offering different styles (if player can level up character in different ways)	Makes player feel not that powerful (thus not that exciting) at first, can make player too powerful (thus boring) at end	Can make other players feel useless when playing with a higher level character, makes high level character feel awesome when playing with low level character, can ruin game pacing when playing with high level character in lower level area
Turns	Social, MMO, RPG	Determines which player commits actions at that moment in game	Pokemon battles, Fire Emblem skirmishes	Players can indefinitely wait on their turn, never having to progress further	Balances the game, provides time to make better choices	Breaks instantaneous action, slows gameplay	Allows other players time to make decisions
Gifting	Social, MMO	Sending "gifts", e.g. objects and items to other players	Sending crops to neighbors in Farmville	Players can amass hordes of objects	Adds political and economical elements	Players do not have to work to earn gifts, merely given for free	Can build a trading relationship between players
Catch-Up	RPG	Make progress towards victory more difficult the closer a player gets to it	Scaling enemies in a RPG so that no matter what level the player is the dungeons are still taxing	Players can go to areas they have previously fought characters at a lower level, which are now tougher, somehow	Keeps the game from becoming easy, adds to the sense of danger as any enemy can kill you	No sense of enemy scale as all enemies scale up or down (wolves will always be tough to beat even if they were the first enemies the player fought), makes backtracking cumbersome	Can make an area seem just as difficult to a low and high level character
Energy System	Social, MMO	A resource that regulates the number of actions a player can perform	Energy system in Pioneer Trail, Farmville, Ravenwood Fair	In some games, the only means to acquire more energy is to spend real-world money on energy boosts	Monitors amount of time spent within game, prevents player from finishing entire game in one sitting	Players can only achieve so much within the limits of the energy system	A game-wide feature, all players experience it equally
Helping	Social, RPG, MMO	The game gives advice or assistance to the player	Tutorials, NPC advice, NPC companions/pets, changing difficulty on-the-fly depending on player skill	Too much advice is annoying and makes the game less fun, and too much assistance makes the game lame and not challenging	Player feels less isolated, can add new elements like companions and buffs, allows for more difficult challenges by increasing player ability	Makes gameplay less-challenging, player feels as though he is doing less	Less dependence on other players, players who are attempting PvP may become frustrated if the game is too protecting of their prey
Resource Management	Social, RPG, MMO	Players giving perceived value to items, and deciding what to use, keep or stockpile	Players have a specific amount of gear they can carry, have to place items in a certain configuration to fight in a box	Players can stockpile items that break gameplay by giving them player too many boosts	Forces the player to think more tactically and utilize items when they are needed not all the time	players may not experiment as they have to lose items to acquire new ones	gives a higher return of gifting items and of trading
Classes	RPG, MMO	A collection of skills and abilities that usually have some sort of thematic relationship with each other and determine what the player can do within the game.	Fighters are sturdy but only use mundane weapons, mages can use magic and deal heavy damage but are squishy, priests can heal their teammates	A single class that is stronger/more versatile than the other class can become overpopular and result in resentment by other players of other classes.	Provides a different experience, a playthrough with a frontline fighter may be more visceral and proactive, while a playthrough with a mage can be a more tactical affair. Can be used to create artificial challenges by limiting their class choices.	Classes that are too strict or limited can make players feel as though they were missing out on some part of the game, especially if there's no way to change classes	For games that use the Tank-DPS-Healer trinity, classes will define which players will play with which other players. Classes also serve as banners under which to rally in out-of-game communities (forums, conventions).
Resource Collection	Social, MMO, RPG	Different materials or elements that players use as economical elements	Pioneer Trail food, Zelda rupees	Players can grind and collect vast amounts of resources	Provides economic elements	Can become a metagame within itself, players trying collecting as many resources as possible	Sometimes used to trade with other players
Crafting	Social, RPG, MMO	Creating weapons, armor, and other items from materials	World of Warcraft, Runescape	Could cause balancing issues, overpowered or overvalued items.	Allows players to use items that they created themselves, sense of accomplishment	Allows for vast amounts of items to be available within the game.	Fosters trading, improvement, and social interaction between players.
Real-Time Combat	Social, MMO, RPG	Enemy confrontation in constant real-time, as opposed to turn-based combat	Pioneer Trail snake conflicts, Zelda battles	Players can continuously confront enemies in order to gain experience and level up quicker	Allows players to achieve a sense of accomplishment by defeating enemies, as well as rewarding them with resources, e.g. experience points, gold, etc.	Players are forced to think quicker as opposed to tactically, leads to players mashing one attack	When battling with other players, combat can be fast and chaotic as opposed to regulated turn-based

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Quests	Social, MMO, RPG?	Definition	Examples	How it can be abused or broken	Add to gameplay?	Detract from gameplay?	Impact on other players in multiplayer games
	Social, RPG, MMO	Explicit objectives in games that provide some kind of useful reward upon completion	Collect 10 bear asses for 200g and 300 XP	Quest farming without proper checks can lead to more gold/XP than developers intended	Provides a general sense of direction or guidance for the player. Used to push the player along the designer's intended narrative path	A single "bread crumb trail" of quests will bore the player. Completing repetitive quests is no different from simply grinding enemies	Group quests can encourage cooperation or competition against other groups. Quests determine where people frequent so large quest hubs can be come gathering places for players
Status	Social, RPG, MMO	Ability to compare relative achievement against a systematic opponent	High scores, timed challenges, percent completion, leaderboards, ladders	Emphasizing this can put off players less-concerned with things that score points, like Explorers. To counter this, "points" should be awarded for all types of gameplay	Quantifies value of various challenges, creates a standard for parallel symmetric competition	Scores and number values can detract from the game itself, and can also lower the game's immersion factor	In multiplayer games, many players participate largely to earn in-game status, achievements, and perhaps make a name for themselves in the community. Status certainly adds to player competition.
Overworld	Social, RPG, some MMOs (like KoL)	A macro representation of the game world the player can navigate to reach "smaller" but more detailed areas	When leaving a town, the player is taken to a smaller simplified representation of the world map instead of having to cross a to-scale physical distance between towns or other points of interest	Can be used to cross distances faster than a developer intended in order to exploit some other in-game mechanic that has to do with location	Removes some of the tedium from manually walking from place to place in a to-scale environment but at the same time promotes exploration and a sense of scale	Usually used because developers cannot afford to create environments for all points between points of interest, basically a cop-out solution	Not a common mechanic in multiplayer games
Inventory	Social, RPG, MMO	Spaces to store your items within a game. Can also act as a space limitation	Diablo 3's inventory and chest limitations, World of Warcraft's five bag slots, Runescape's inventory and bank space	Could become tedious and problematic to players needing inventory space	Adds a component of planning and acts as a limitation to players	Game play can be disrupted if there is a lack of inventory space	Encourages trading and gives more meaning to the items players have
Bosses	RPG, MMO	A unique/semi-unique enemy that usually marks a turningpoint/endpoint of a dungeon or a quest, sometimes with narrative significance	A player reaches the end of the game where his/her party must fight the most difficult enemy in the game, doing so will conclude the narrative and thus the game, credits roll, etc.	Players may attempt to "farm" a single boss over and over again for some lucrative drop, causing them to burn out on the game	Players gain a sense of accomplishment and closure when they defeat a boss. Also helps to make antagonists appear more significant than other minor and expendable enemies	Regular encounters with enemies may suffer from design neglect if too much emphasis is placed on interesting bosses. A boss that is placed at the wrong place and wrong time can cause a player to become overly frustrated with the game	Can serve as repeated content for groups
Morality System	RPG, MMO	Depending on choices throughout the game, the system will allow or ban the player from certain events	As players become solve more problems peacefully, more peaceful resolutions become available. Same for solutions that resort to violence or conflict.	A player can accidentally sway from good to evil relatively easily	Allows for interesting events and character interactions	Forces the player to take a moral stance on issues throughout the game	
Dungeon	RPG, MMO	A designated adventuring area usually with a unified theme, increased chances for lucrative rewards, narrative significance and maybe one or two bosses	Once the player leaves the starting area they may encounter a dungeon where some characters are introduced, and the game takes its first jump in difficulty. At the end the player fight some boss and gets a large reward	Dungeons tend to have respawning enemies, some of which can be farmed for more items than developers intended	A place to put a collection of puzzles or challenges that would seem out of place anywhere else. Provides a thematically appropriate setting for a group of enemies and bosses	Overly long dungeons without breakpoints or saving will test the patience of some players	Can serve as repeated content for groups
Secrets	RPG, MMO	Knowledge as a useful good	Hands of cards, hidden equipment/inventories, special tricks, easter eggs, hidden areas	Secrets can be exposed externally (voluntarily, of course), a player could reveal team secrets to another team, tricks could break the game if everyone cannot make use of them once discovered	Adds greatly to the exploration and immersion factors of the game, adds a non-numeric quantifier to the game (knowledge), discovering secrets adds playability and allows for % completion sort of thing	If important content is hidden, it could be missed, cool content might be missed out on, too many secrets can make applying tactics difficult	Explorers have much more to explore, Socialites can share secrets, all players can enjoy easter eggs, players can exchange tips and secrets, and everyone can make use of hidden areas for resource gathering (or hiding, in a PvP situation)

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Party System	Social, MMO	Having a group of players that progress through the game and interact together	Gang in Mafia Wars, Party in Diablo 3	Some games don't have adaptive difficulty, so the bigger the party is the easier it will be to progress	Can make combat and game progression more interesting and engaging	Can blemish the solo experience	Builds cooperation and camaraderie amongst party members
Guilds/Clans/Tribes	MMO, Social	Groups of players closely-related in some way working together to complete goals	Everquest, Kingdom of Loathing, MUDs, browser-based strategies like Travian and Tribal Wars	Clan-hopping, collectively griefing or abusing an area, heavily boosting lower-level players	Huge social factor, adds cooperation, gives strong community feel, party play (ex. raids) lead to players using different strategies, huge challenges can be included for completion by guilds	Players who prefer a solo experience are disadvantaged for their play style, clans can make challenges too easy by providing high-level resources for little-to-no cost	Guilds are a major pillar of modern MMOs. Players feel a sense of community, and seriously involved players can have the enjoyment of leading their own clan. Also, groups of players with similar interests and goals can get together.
PvP	MMO	Players or groups of players compete by fighting each other.	A player is killed by another player from an opposing faction. Each side begins to congregate on the same area to lend support until it becomes a war.	Players can coordinate to grief some other players, potentially ruining their game experience (sometimes intended).	Adds spontaneous unpredictable conflict because players cannot be memorized like preprogrammed encounters can.	Creates conflicts with PvE balance.	Can interrupt some other player goals (questing, farming, crafting). Participation is usually voluntary but not always.
Velvet Rope	Social, MMO, RPG	Players are restricted access to certain items, areas, or features based on other mechanics	Locked areas, requirements to equip certain items, level requirement to form a guild, better drops/resources in more dangerous areas	Players can get restricted items indirectly (ex. from other players), or make use of restricted features through other players' characters	Gives cause for achievement, something to look forward to, somewhat of a prestige sort of thing ("I can get into the Outlands", "I can use tools made of mithril now")	If too high a proportion of features are restricted, players will become dissatisfied with the earlier game. For instance, in many MMOs, players need to reach the level cap in order to really enjoy endgame material, like large raids, battlegrounds, and PvP brackets	Having access to a "roped-off" area or item is a measure of prestige among players. Players who see "VIP" players will want to become VIP themselves, further pulling them into the game and its experience. Players may also desire access to a roped-off area for the purpose of obtaining resources that may be valuable to other players
Puzzles	MMO, RPG	Intellectual challenges usually based on wit and knowledge rather than character ability	DDO's puzzle-filled instances, riddles, tests of lore knowledge as part of a quest	Answers can be shared or provided online with no penalty to the provider	Adds a unique element to the game: progression requires not grinding and loot, but knowledge and perhaps social interaction	Too many puzzles, puzzles too difficult to solve without external help, or puzzles relying on mechanics previously relatively insignificant can put off players, especially Killers and Achievers	Puzzle hints and solutions become a knowledge- and experience-based resource, adding to the depth of the game and satisfying Explorers and Socialites everywhere
Specialization	MMO, RPG	Player is required to make certain decisions for abilities	Crafting, talents, skill trees, raid builds, special equipment sets	Min/Maxing, heavy focus on ability/tree most "buffed" in current game version	Player cooperation, sense of achievement, necessity to implement a wide variety of skills, helps create a strong economy	Skills and abilities higher-up on the chain may be effectively restricted from lower-level players, either by danger, level requirements, or guild policy	Heavily increases the need for socialization, heavily increases economy traffic, players must make use of each other to advance as fast as everyone else, but this can upset players who prefer solo play (of course they could just stop playing MMOs...)
Supply Chain	MMO, RPG	Certain abilities require resources obtained through other abilities (earlier in the chain)	RuneScape skill system, Synnia skill system, crafting in KoL or really any MMORPG	Players can acquire higher-up items and resources from other players, either voluntarily or accidentally	Structures economy, encourages player interaction, can involve specialization, can create a sense of achievement	Too heavy a supply chain can prevent players from enjoying all of the content, could lead to game essentially requiring clan involvement	Increase in player interaction, heavy increase in economy traffic, results in competition for limited resources, increases conflict and cooperation between clans

1. 1ups and power pellets are "Power-ups".

Hookshot seems to be one of those "lock and key" level progression mechanics that Francis mentioned. There is likely another row here.

or velvet rope, see below -- odd