

Add an original discussion about about your feelings on choice systems and narratives in video games. In your own words, describe "player agency" and what that means for the likes of The Stanley Parable Demo. Are the choice systems in games arbitrary, or do they reflect real-life decisions or freedoms? Also, what did you think of the demo?

I stumbled upon the Stanley Parable years ago and have since used to to introduce countless skeptical friends to gaming. If I can convince them to sit down at the keyboard, they're hooked for at least an hour. I think "player agency" is just a matter of perspective. Just as no two people interpret traditional works of art or movies in the exact same fashion, no two players end up with the same experience after having played a game.

Games have rules or limitations, but both are meant to be bent, broken, or ignored. Players are free to play the game however they choose. Just as a painter can't force her audience to feel a certain way about her work, game designs can't force players to have a particular experience with their game.

A great example of this is a WoW character named 'Doubleagent'. This player has deliberately chosen to play one of the most popular games ever in a completely unique way. Instead of choosing one of two factions, like the millions and millions of other players have done before him, this player opted do neither and instead chose to painstakingly pick virtual flowers until he reached the maximum level cap, a method of leveling that surely took many orders of magnitude longer than the traditional routes. Was this an intended option from the developers? Probably not, but Doubleagent certainly has embraced his player agency.