Gameplay

- **Gameplay**: Gameplay can be defined as choices, challenges, or consequences that players face while navigating a virtual environment. These are often the challenges in a game that were linked together with story structure and character development—almost as if they represent plot points in a story. For each challenge (or plot point), consider the many strategies that can be used by a player (or character in a story) to overcome it. Remember that the gameplay is what truly makes a game compelling.
- **Rules**: All games contain rules. The rules of a game define the actions or moves that the players may make in the game (and also those that they cannot make). The rules of the game should be communicated to the players. Although this can be accomplished through in-game tutorials and hints, an instruction manual often accompanies the game.
- **Victory Conditions**: A game's victory conditions correspond to how players should win the game. There can be only (1) one winner or can be several or many. Here, you should determine the point in the game where it can be said that this victory condition has been met. For example, In the mobile game Mobile Legends (ML), you can win by completely destroying the enemy's base.
- **Loss Conditions**: A game's loss conditions specify how players lose the game. Two types of loss conditions are implicit and explicit.
  - *Implicit loss condition* is common in games that require competition between the player and other players or non-player characters (NPCs). Ex. Racing game
  - *Explicit loss condition* is when the player loses because his character dies or runs out of vital resources. This is common in construction and management games.
- **Interactivity Modes**: There are several types of interactivity that affect the gameplay. In each of these modes, the interactive element originates with the player—which illustrates how important the player's decisions are in the game-playing process.
  - **Player-to-Game**: Player-to-game interactivity is a very common form of interactivity, especially when it involves single-player mode. In single-player mode, the player is interacting only with the game itself and the platform. Even though the non-player characters (NPCs) might exhibit many human characteristics (and the player might sometimes think they are human), they are still generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) system.
  - **Player-to-Player**: In multiplayer mode, players are not only interacting with the game but with each other. Player-to-player interactivity is the connection between players: how they communicate with each other and ways in which they play the game together (which could include cooperative and/or competitive behavior).
  - **Player-to-Developer**: It is also possible for players to interact with those who have actually developed the game. Player-to-developer interactivity is most commonly illustrated in chat rooms and discussion forums available on the game's website. Many developers take great care to read comments and concerns from the players, and they will often participate in the conversations directly.
- **Game Theory**: Game theory focuses on the types of conflicts that exist in games and how players might respond to these conflicts. Game theory applies to games that contain two or more opponents.
  - **Zero-Sum**: Involve situations where players have completely opposing interests. In chess, for example, each player's goal is to win the game. Since there can be only one winner, it is impossible for both players to ultimately get what they want.
  - **Non-Zero Sum**: Involve situations in which players do not have completely opposing interests. These types of games are common in MMO games where players form teams or guilds to compete against NPCs. In this case, the players are cooperating with each other (while competing against common enemies).
  - **Prisoner's Dilemma**: This illustrates what happens when all players try to compete with each other in an NZS situation. An example of this can be a battle royale game where all the players on the battlefield must eliminate all other players to survive.
- **Challenges**: Gameplay involves a series of challenges that are linked together. The types of challenges that occur in a game are often related to the game's genre. In fact, players who focus on playing particular genres have come to expect certain challenges to occur in these games.
  - **Explicit**: An explicit challenge is intentional, immediate—and often intense.
  - **Implicit**: An implicit challenge is not specifically added to the game but is an emergent feature of the game itself.
  - **Perfect Information**: When perfect information is provided, the complete state of play is known to the players at all times. Perfect information yields logical challenges, where players assimilate the information and use it to decide on the best course of action.

- **Imperfect Information**: With imperfect information, players are provided with only a fraction of the information needed to make the best decision. In contrast to the logical challenges in games with perfect information, the challenges in these games also require inference (or the ability to make a guess about the nature of the missing information).
- **Intrinsic Knowledge**: This is gained from within the game world. For example, a player could discover the purpose of a magical machine after getting some information from an alchemist NPC in the game.
- **Extrinsic Knowledge**: This is gained outside the game world and applied to the game. Example: In a Pokémon battle, a water type Pokémon is very strong against a fire type Pokémon.
- **Spatial Awareness**: In spatial challenges, players usually have to navigate through environments. These challenges are very common in puzzle games. An example of this is the Monument Valley game.
- **Resource Management**: Many games allow players to manage settings and actions associated with their resources or characters. This resource management is referred to as micromanagement in games that involve a high level of detail, it is one way to allow the player to have many options in the game. An example of this is the Clash of Clans game.
- **Reaction Time**: Action games challenge a player's reaction time. This is especially significant when the speed at which a player responds to a challenge is directly related to the speed at which the player's character reacts in the game. This could mean life or death for the character if slow reaction time results in a missed opportunity to defeat the enemy or take the treasure before it vanishes.

Challenges & Game Goals

All the challenges discussed can be applied to specific goals within the game itself:

1. **Advancement**: Reaching a higher level in the game. Each successive level might increase in difficulty—as in many arcade and puzzle games. "Leveling up" could also allow your character to be more powerful, as in many RPGs.
2. **Race**: Accomplishing something before another player does; this is a reaction-time challenge associated with some action and multiplayer puzzle games.
3. **Analysis**: Applying mental processes to solving riddles and cryptic codes. This is a mental challenge that involves almost every other type of challenge—and it's used most widely in puzzle and adventure games.
4. **Exploration**: Moving into new areas and seeing new things; satisfies the curiosity of the player, and it's popular in adventure games and RPGs.
5. **Conflict**: Disagreements or combat between characters; used in almost all game genres to provide dramatic tension.
6. **Capture**: Taking or destroying something belonging to an opponent without being captured or killed in return; remains one of the most overarching game goals across all genres (including action and RTS games).
7. **Chase**: Catching or eluding an opponent—often by utilizing either quick reflexes or stealth strategies; popular in action and stealth games.
8. **Organization**: Arranging items in a game in a particular order—often by utilizing spatial and pattern-matching strategies; common in most puzzle games (e.g., Bejeweled, Tetris) and in strategy games with a great deal of resource management tasks.
9. **Escape**: Rescuing items or players and taking them to safety—often involving analytical reasoning and resource management.
10. **Taboo**: Getting the competition to "break the rules"—often involving physical or emotional stamina (e.g., Twister, Don't Break the Ice).
11. **Construction**: Building and maintaining objects—common in process simulations; involve resource management and trade.
12. **Solution**: Solving a problem or puzzle before or more accurately than the competition does—involving analytical reasoning and knowledge application. This goal is common in adventure games, which incorporate a lot of detective work.
13. **Outwit**: Applying intrinsic or extrinsic knowledge to defeat the competition.

- **Balance**: A game is balanced if players perceive that it is consistent, fair, and fun! The ease of winning the game also increases as the players' skills increase. However, a better player should be more successful in general at the game than a less-skilled player—unless the game is based purely on *luck* instead of *skill*.

  To set up a balanced system for players, the gameplay needs to provide:

  a. **Consistent challenges**: Players should experience gradually more difficult challenges.
  b. **Perceivably fair playing experiences**: Players shouldn't be doomed from the start through their "mistakes."

c. **Lack of stagnation**: Players should never get stuck with no way to go on.
d. **Lack of trivial decisions**: Players should be required to make only important decisions in the game, even in games that incorporate micromanagement.
e. **Difficulty levels**: Players should have a choice of difficulty, or the level should adjust to the player's ability throughout the game.

References:

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