Game Pillars

For the RPG Genre

A lecture by Rylan Graham

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Introduction

What are Game Pillars?

What is a Game Pillar?

"What I mean by this term is think about the 3 – 5 main elements/emotions your game is trying to explore and make the players feel" - Max Pears

[Source Article](#)

Game Pillars

- A game pillar is a fundamental concept that your game will utilize to function

- Game pillars can vary from mechanics, aesthetics, story, and technology Source

- Game pillars should relate to one another, and should not just be stand alone concepts.

- Aim for 3-8 concepts for game pillars, however only 3 are essential.
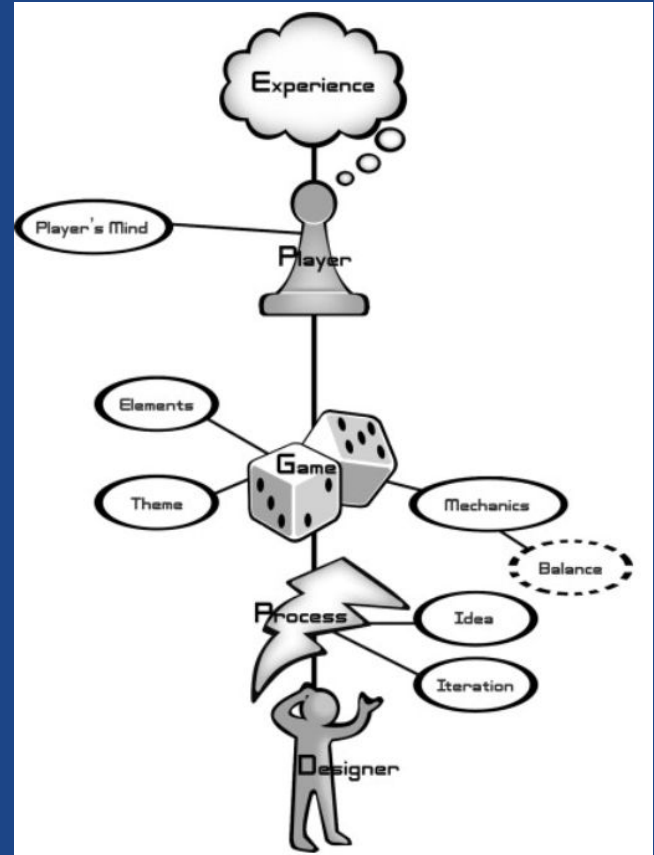
02

Game Pillar Types

What are some common types in the genre?

Possible Game Pillars

Market Systems
A system for the player to buy, sell, or trade.

Inventory or Collective Features
Items or elements for the player to collect for stats, show, or progression

Competitive Elements
Avenues for the player to compete with others, themselves or AI

Visual Elements
Perceived game elements that provide a unique experience

Exploration
Expansive options for the player to discover as the move around the game

Unique Mechanics
Gravity, Mirrors, Portals etc. Something that sets the game apart.

Most Popular Game Pillars in RPG's

23%

42%

35%
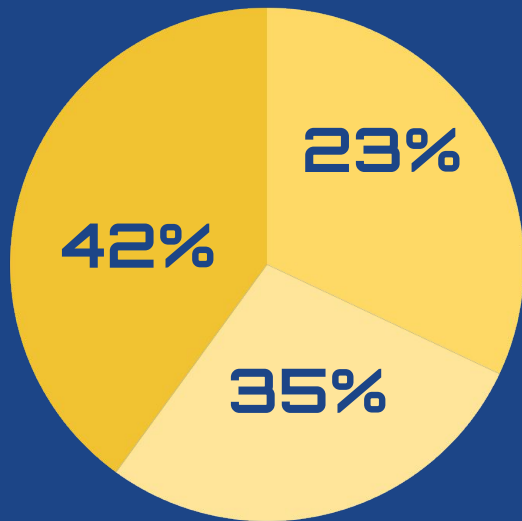
Chance of feature being main pillar in RPG Genre Title

Combat
PvP or Player vs game challenges

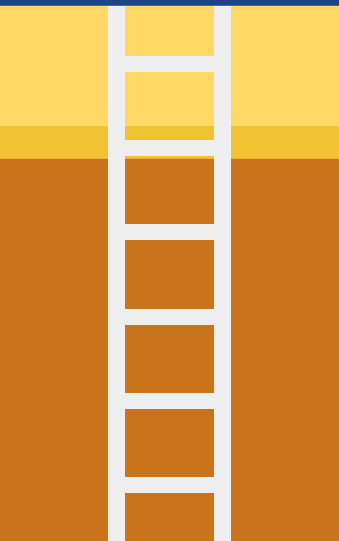## Collection
Items and Abilities being amassed during the game

Exploration
Map movement and unique features to discover

03

Industry Game Examples

A few case studies to explore

CASE STUDIES 1

Pokemon

A game franchise founded by Nintendo, Game Freak, and Creatures. Created by Satoshi Tajiri in 1996.

Began as Pokemon Red & Blue, and has since evolved to include several other titles spanning various consoles, Tv series, Movies, Trading Cards, Apps, & more.

However, what design Pillars made it such a phenomena?

Ideas for Game Pillars?

Pokemon Platinum Game Pillars

Pillar 1: Choice

Players get to Choose (1:36-5:20)
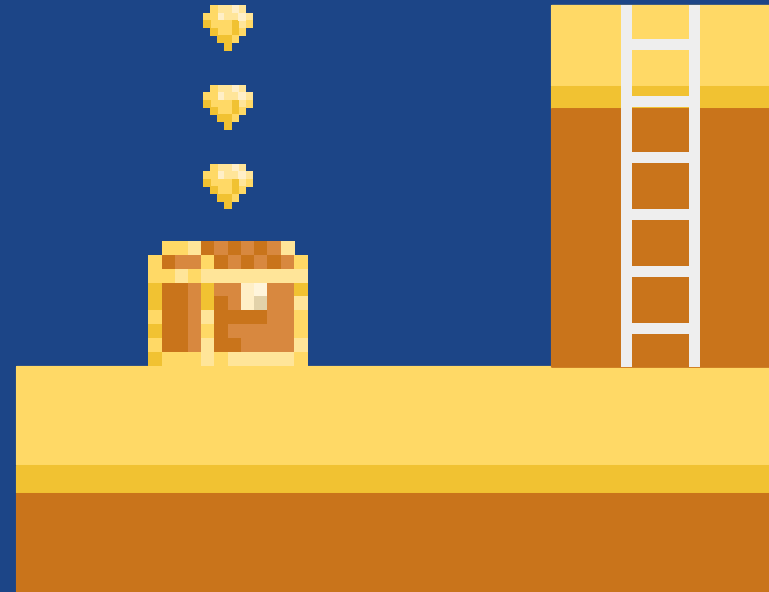
⊢ Final Fantasy ⊣

A game franchise owned by Square Enix. A collection of RPG titles. Created by Hironobu Sakaguchi in 1987.

15 titles have been released so far in the series, with over 173 million copies sold worldwide. The games are praised for their industry leading visuals, mechanics, and more.

However, what design Pillars made this title such a phenomena?

Ideas for Game Pillars?

Final Fantasy Pillars

Visuals

Game over recent years has developed better graphical elements. Looking visually stunning.

Combat

Player has abilities, weapons, and fights wide range of enemies. Combat is tough, decisive, and expressive.

Story

Spanning multiple titles, Final Fantasy Universe is large and has characters that truly relate to the audience. Players become attached and invested.

04 Good / Bad Pillars

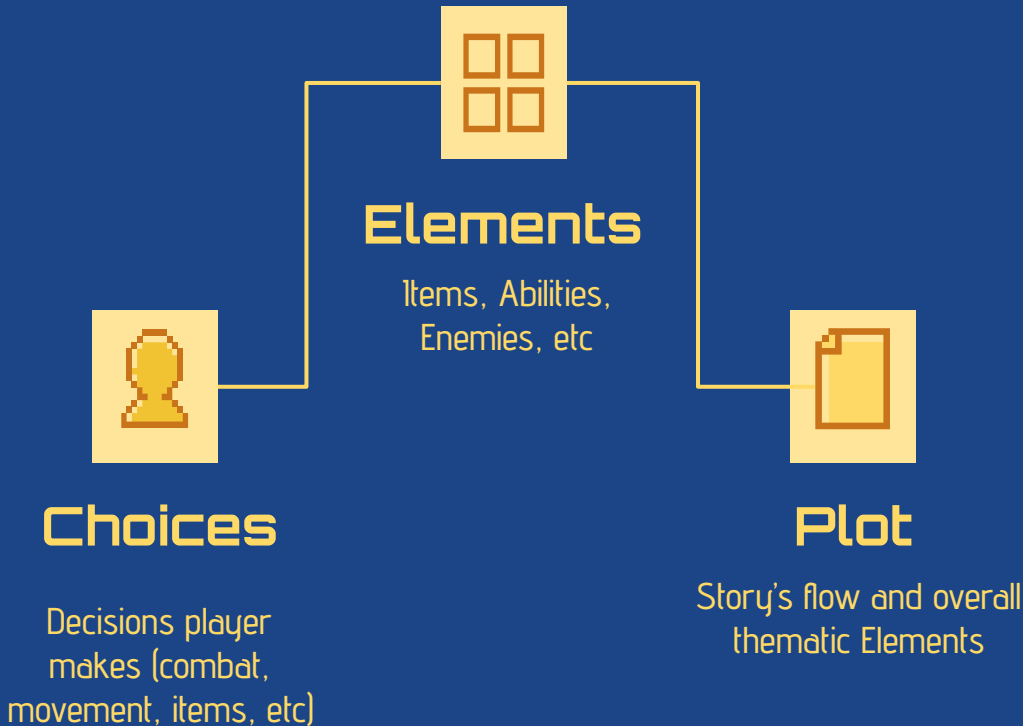# RPG Common 3 Pillar Reliance

To be a good RPG there is often a reliance on these three pillars existing (even in a small manner) together in harmony. These are all good starting points for our own RPG's, only we need to specify

Elements

Items, Abilities, Enemies, etc

Choices

Decisions player makes (combat, movement, items, etc)

Plot

Story's flow and overall thematic Elements

Bad Pillar:
BOSS

Boring
The game pillar is boring or shows little room for creativity in both production & playing

Overused
Game pillar is being emulated from other successful RPG titles, no "It" Factor

Specificity
Game pillar is not described accurately enough or is too broad.

Strength
The game pillar is not strong enough to stand on its own

Good Pillar: ROUS

Reactive

Game pillar is adaptable and can adapt to the player's progress / skill / passion

R

O

Stand Alone

Game Pillar can stand alone as a defining factor for the game. Does not rely on others

Unique

The game pillar is unique and involved elements that have not been seen or explored enough

U

S

Sync

The game pillar is in-sync with other elements, enabling good game flow

Our Games 🔓

How can we harness the capabilities of Game Pillars to our advantage?

Our Game Pillars

"When you don't have any creative direction, or even worse, if your team does not agree on a single concept or direction, it becomes a mess. Everyone just starts making stuff on their own and following their own direction." -Antoine Sarrazin

Source Article

▼

Steps to Follow for Our RPG Pillars

Agreeance & Focus
01
Team in-sync with market, consumers, and one another

User Experience
02
Define what you want your players to feel, and who your audience is

Game Pillars Fun
03
Ensure that the main flow or mechanics of the game do not stagnate

Relevance
04
Game elements should make sense together

Guided / Free Balance
05
On and Off approach to player progression in-game

Step 1:
3 Stages of Agreeance

1
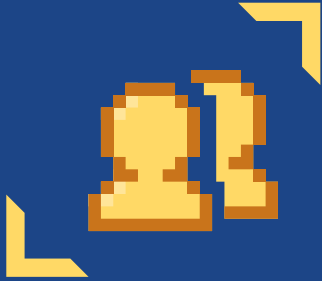
Competitive Analysis
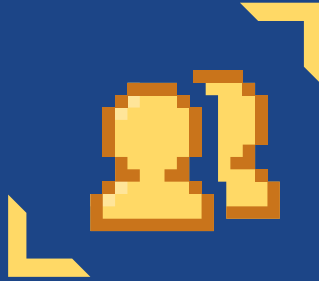
Team should analyze the genre's market and look for trends in game pillar types.

2

Available Pillars

Team should recognize their creative or production capabilities. For example: a music based game is poor if the team lacks musical capabilities.

3

Team Cohesion

All of team should agree on, or be in-line with main pillar choices. Important for all to be on the same page.

Step 2:
Audience Recognition & Catering

PERSONAL INFO

Age	18 years old
Studies	Computer Science
Job	None
Salary	$300 / month
Location	United States

Enjoyed Game Characteristics

Sport

Action

Competitive

Customization

Hobby Enjoyment

Gaming 60%

Football 40%

Ideal Game Pillars

- Football game pillar with ability to play against others. (competition)
- Customization features to change characters appearance

Why Step 2 Is the Most Important

Audience recognition allows you to match your game design to your chosen customer type. When you know your audience well you can easily trigger emotions, and overall immersion, boosting the experience and hence sales. See it as generating a link between you the producer, and the consumer, except the consumer is unaware of how you cater.
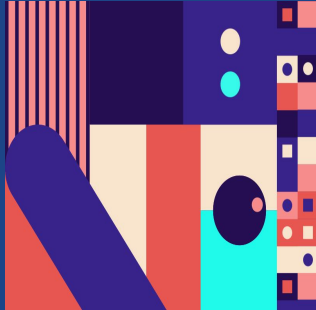
Step 3:
Ensuring Fun Game Pillars

How Do We Ensure Audience Enjoyment, and Engagement?

Enjoy this little video on what makes Video Games Fun for us as gamers. (1:14-7:00)

Principle Understandings From the Video

Fun Games Have:

Patterns

Pattern for the player to learn and improve, with gradual mechanics added

Interest

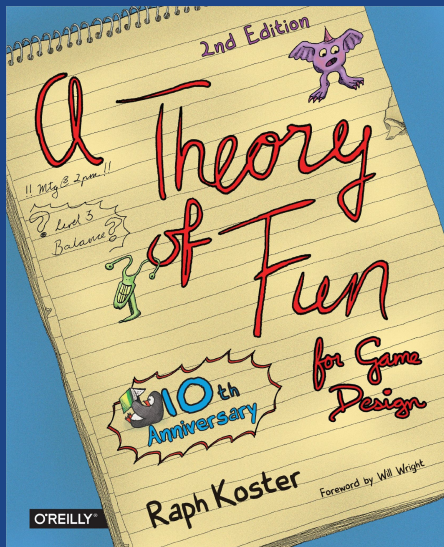Games elements are focused on players interest.

No Cheating

Games patterns can not be bypassed, player must learn and develop skills

Raf Costa's
"a Theory of Fun for Game Design"

Game elements that are crucial for game success based on evolutionary factors

Calculation of Odds and Prediction of Events

Random
Puzzle
RNG

Social Status

Competition
Combat

Spatial Reasoning

Puzzle
Exploration
Visuals
Mechanics

Memory

Puzzle

Visceral Reaction

Competition

Teamwork

Co-op
Plot
Combat

Game Loop Development

"In Halo 1, there was maybe 30 seconds of fun that happened over and over and over and over again. And so, if you can get 30 seconds of fun, you can pretty much stretch that out to be an entire game."
-    Jaime Griesemer
Source

4:20-14:00

Step 4: Game Elements & Pillar Relevancy

Game elements (Items, Abilities, etc) must fit into the games theme and work with the set genre.

For RPG's this is quite simple as items are often collected, and fights and progression are solved by different type characteristics.

Example: If a Pillar is Combat it must not stray away from Exploration Pillar, etc.

THIS IS FINE

Good Usage of Game Elements (Pillars)
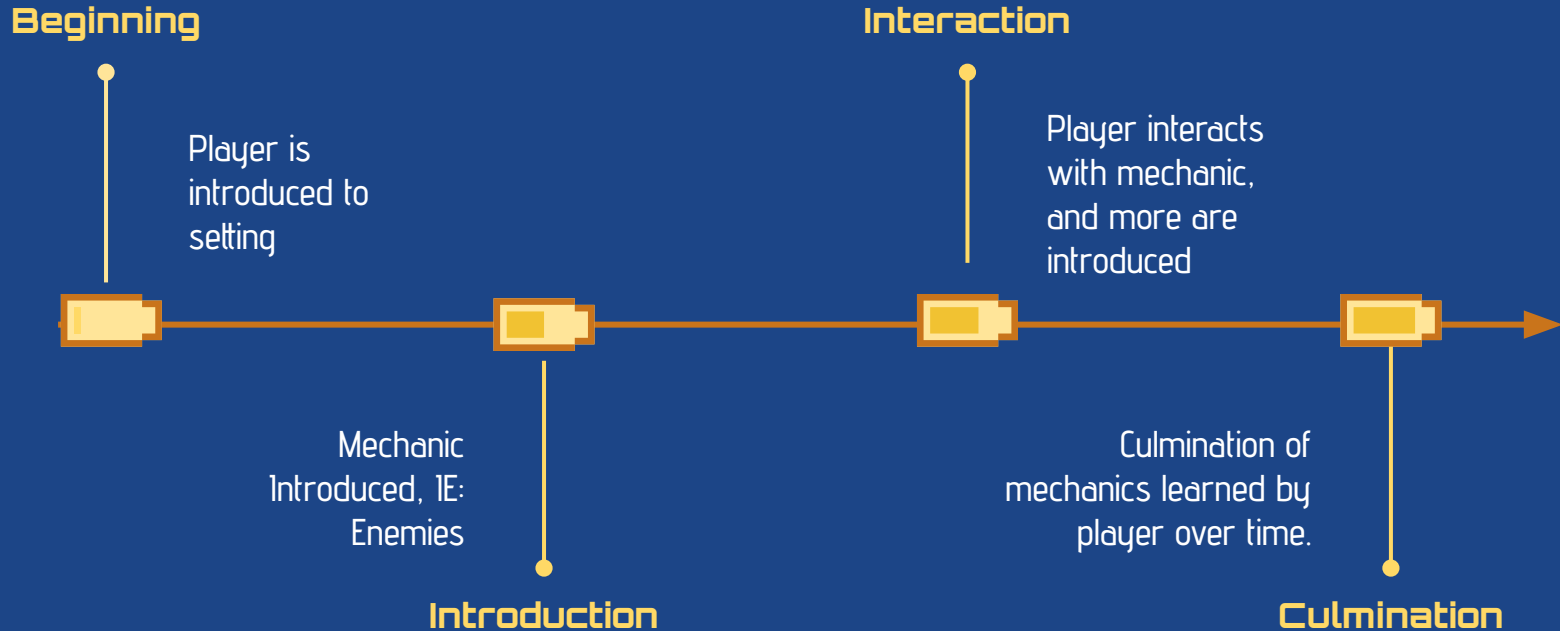## Unique, Adaptive & Strong

Breath of the Wild

11:45-End of BOTW

Step 5:
⊢ Guiding / Freeing the Player ⊣

Game mechanics and user experience should be taught or enforced gradually. Slowly ramping up the amount of info and difficulty as you go along. Here is the ideal flow for most modern games today.

Beginning

Player is introduced to setting

Interaction

Player interacts with mechanic, and more are introduced

Mechanic Introduced, 1E: Enemies

Culmination of mechanics learned by player over time.

Introduction

Culmination

How the Professionals Do It

Conclusion

A Brief Summary of Concepts Covered, and Review Jeopardy

Brief Topic Summary

What are Game Pillars?

- 3-5 game elements that define the titles gameplay

- Elements should have some relation to one another

- Pillars should be easily recognizable, as the gameplay bases off of them

Features of RPG Game Pillars?

- Most common Pillars: Combat, Collection, Exploration

- **BOSS** (Boring, Overused, No Strength or Specificity) vs **ROUS** (Reactive, Unique, Standalone, Synced)

Tips for Our Game Pillars?

-Pillars must be fun and coexist well with game elements.

-Use Raf Costa's 6 (Calculation, Status, Reaction, Memory, Space, Teamwork)

-Recognize audience & inspiration, set team goals

Steps to Make a Good Game Using Pillars

01
- Recognize RPG Pillars

02
- Check Industry / Audience / Software
- Apply Good vs Bad Filter

03
- Apply Costa's 6 Rules
- Set Team Goals
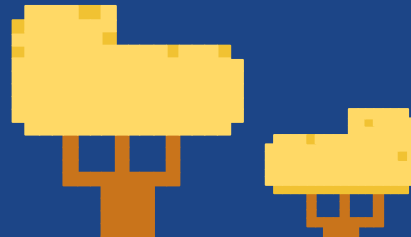- Use fundamentals of replayability and patterns

Review Jeopardy

Review Jeopardy to play with respective game design teams, if time allows

[Jeopardy](#)

THANKS!

Do you have any questions?
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Github Game Pillars Website:
https://rylanjgraham.github.io/RPG-Game-Design/

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- https://www.gamedeveloper.com/design/design-pillars-the-core-of-your-game
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pokémon
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final_Fantasy

Videos:

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