

Course: IT265-002-S2025

Assignment: Case Study 1 - Atari

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Status: Submitted | Worksheet Progress: 100.00%

Potential Grade: 10.00/10.00 (100.00%)

Received Grade: 0.00/10.00 (0.00%)

Grading Link: <https://learn.ethereallab.app/assignment/v3/IT265-002-S2025/case-study-1-atari/grading/td338>

# Instructions

## 1. Step 1:

From this spreadsheet, pick a game you plan to analyze (selection must be unique) and put your UCID to the left of it:

[Game Selection Spreadsheet](#)

If a selection turns red, it has already been chosen. Do not edit others' content/selection and be mindful if multiple people are working on the sheet simultaneously.

## 2. Step 2:

Use one of these sites to playtest and analyze your game:

- [Free 80s Arcade](#)
- [AARP Atari Games](#)
- [Keystone Kapers](#)
- [Triplets and Us](#)

If none of these work, use an alternative close to the original game.

## 3. Step 3:

Analyze and research your chosen game. Collect resources and include them in your responses for related sections.

## 4. Step 4:

Save the worksheet, export as a PDF, and upload it to the mentioned branch on GitHub. Create a pull request, merge it to main, and upload the PDF to Canvas.

## Section #1: ( 1.5 pts.) Game Overview

Task #1 ( 0.00 / 0.50 pts.) - Game Details - Note the Game's title, de

Weight: 66.67%

Weight: 33.33%

Objective: *Game Details - Note the Game's title, developer, publisher, platform, genre, and release date*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

Combat was developed and published by Atari in 1977 for the Atari Video Computer System, or the Atari 2600. It is strictly a two-player game, where both players each control a tank and try to shoot their opponent. There are several extra modes that change the rules of the game, such as allowing the players' projectiles to bounce off walls, making the tanks invisible when not shooting, or controlling a bi-plane or fighter jet instead of a tank.



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## Task #2 ( 0.00 / 0.50 pts.) - History and Industry - Note the historical

Weight: 33.33%

Objective: *History and Industry - Note the historical context of the game's release and its place in the industry*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

Combat was released just two years before third-party developers began producing games for the Atari 2600, and six years before the video game crash of 1983. The game was bundled in for a lot of Atari 2600 systems, meaning that many Atari 2600 owners were exposed to this game.



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## Task #3 ( 0.00 / 0.50 pts.) - Compare the game to similar games of

Weight: 33.33%

Objective: *Compare the game to similar games of the time*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

The game plays surprisingly differently from its sequel, Combat Two, which was never released in an official form. Its sequel featured a lives system instead of a time-based match and had a drastic improvement in graphics, which allowed the game to develop an actual setting, taking place in a forest with a river and bridges rather than a two-color maze of rectangular walls.



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## Section #2: ( 2 pts.) Gameplay Mechanics And Level Design

### Task #1 ( 0.00 / 1 pt.) - Core gameplay mechanics and how they shape the player's experience

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** Core gameplay mechanics and how they shape the player's experience

#### ≡ Text Prompt

Your Response:

The primary game mechanics are moving and shooting. The player tanks have quite limited mobility, only being able to move forward and slowly turn in place. While it may be frustrating to grasp at first, this limited movement system allows players to "trap" their opponent with their bullets, cutting their path off and making a more dogfight-style combat system, in which you are trying to get behind your opponent to shoot them more easily. Shooting is very simple mechanic at first, but upon further investigation, the game allows the players to "curve" their projectiles by turning their tank some time after shooting. Originally I thought that this was a bug for the game, but after thinking about how the game would play without it, not only does it increase the skill ceiling for carefully turning to curve your bullets into your enemy, it solves a core problem with having the limited movement system. When your opponent is at an awkward diagonal that you cannot reach by shooting in a straight line, you can still reach that diagonal by curving your projectiles. This greatly reduces the clunkiness of the game, as otherwise, you would have to slowly turn your tank, move in-line with your opponent, turn back to face them, and then finally shoot.



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### Task #2 ( 0.00 / 1 pt.) - Level design and how it affects gameplay

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** Level design and how it affects gameplay

## ≡ Text Prompt

Your Response:

The various different levels the players have access to allow them to select the levels that they particularly enjoy. If the players like having several walls to use as cover, they can choose to play on a more dense field. If they find that walls get in the way too much, they can select a more open field. The walls in each level play well off the curving bullets mechanic and the bouncing bullets mode. Players may need to curve their bullets around cover to hit their opponent, as a straight shot may not always be possible. The walls also add to the unpredictable chaos the bouncing bullets mode offers. Additionally, the different modes, including bouncing bullets and invisible tanks, spices up the rather empty base game and introduces more crazy, unpredictable mechanics that forces the players to think about how they can use the walls to bounce their bullets more effectively or try to read the movements of their invisible opponent.



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## Section #3: ( 1.5 pts.) Graphic And Audio Design

### Task #1 ( 0.00 / 0.75 pts.) - Game's visual appearance, artistic choice

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Game's visual appearance, artistic choices, and how they contribute to the experience*

## ≡ Text Prompt

Your Response:

While the specific colors depend on what game mode you select, player one's vehicle, projectile, and score are all in one color, while player two's is in another color. This ensures that there is no confusion as to who is who and which person has what score. While the sprites of the tanks are simple, the artists prioritized making the barrel of the tank clearly indicated so that the player knows where they are facing both for moving and for shooting projectiles. As each round is on a roughly 2-minute timer, players know when the round is about to end when their scores begin blinking, signaling that the round is about to end. Without this indication, players may have been left confused as to why they can no longer operate their tank.



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### Task #2 ( 0.00 / 0.75 pts.) - Sound design, including music and sound

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Sound design, including music and sound effects, and their impact on the game*

### ≡ Text Prompt

Your Response:

Both players have different moving, shooting, and getting hit sounds. This adds to the divide between the players that their two separate colors had, giving more indication as to who did what. Additionally, I feel that it makes the sound in the game a lot more varied. Had both players shared the same sound effects, I feel that the sound in the game would get stale a lot faster. There is a constant noise during the game that only stops when a player gets hit, and resumes when the players are put back in control of their tanks after the point is scored. In its current form, I feel that this noise is more of a detriment to the game. Its only use is to signal that the game has resumed, but other than that, it is much louder than the player's sound effects, drowning them out. However, if this noise was quieter and was changed to an actual music soundtrack, I believe it would have been a drastic improvement to the game.



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## Section #4: ( 1.5 pts.) Narrative And Storytelling

### Task #1 ( 0.00 / 0.75 pts.) - Narrative structure, main plot points, an

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Narrative structure, main plot points, and setting*

### ≡ Text Prompt

Your Response:

As this is not a story-driven game, there is not really a narrative or even a setting to comment on. From the choices of vehicles, the game has clearly chased a more militaristic, at-war theme. The biplane and fighter jet levels clearly take place in the sky, even including clouds that the players can drive into to mask their movements. Drawing from the game sequel, Combat 2, the tanks modes may take place in a forest environment.



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## Task #2 ( 0.00 / 0.75 pts.) - Character development and how it integrates

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Character development and how it integrates with gameplay*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

The only "characters" in combat are the various military vehicles the players control, thus this aspect of the game is lackluster in comparison to other Atari games. The vehicle being a tank makes sense in the context of the limited movement system. Tanks are slow, both to move and to turn, which gives reason as to why the players control the tanks in the way that they do. Jets and aerial vehicles cannot exactly stop midair, which is why the players cannot stop when controlling their jets, but merely slow down/speed up. Additionally, these vehicles being associated as military weapons give reason as to why two of them would be in combat. It's as if the two players are on opposite sides of a war when trying to take each other out. In summary, the choice of vehicles aligns extremely well with the rules of the game.



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## Section #5: ( 1.5 pts.) Impact And Reception

### Task #1 ( 0.00 / 0.75 pts.) - Critical and player reception, including r

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Critical and player reception, including reviews and feedback*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

Being an early Atari game at a time where technology was very rapidly advancing, Combat quickly became outdated in just a few years, unable to keep up with newer games at the time in terms of both graphics and content. People commented on its lackluster graphics, clunky controls that took a while to get used to, and monotonous gameplay loop. However, even in comparison to other early Atari games, reviewers were still unhappy with Combat. Video magazine rated Combat and its various modes significantly lower than other Atari 2600 launch titles. However, after some time, retrospective reviews began to speak highly of Combat. As it became more and more accepted as a retro game, people were able to look past its poor graphics and sound design and instead focus on its stellar gameplay (relative to other games at the time) instead.





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## Task #2 ( 0.00 / 0.75 pts.) - Game's impact on the gaming industry

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Game's impact on the gaming industry and its cultural significance*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

As indicated by the retrospective reviews, people look back on this game quite fondly. Being a pack-in title, the game is much more popular than many other Atari games as essentially every Atari 2600 owner also owned Combat. Its popularity has made it a staple Atari game that many people think of when asked to name an Atari game. The game even had a spiritual successor in the form of the Tanks! minigame found in Nintendo's Wii Play. This game led to my discovery of Combat and was the reason I selected it for my case study.



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## Section #6: ( 2 pts.) Reflection

### Task #1 ( 0.00 / 1 pt.) - Was the game "fun"? What made it fun or not?

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Was the game "fun"? What made it fun or not?*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

Since this game only functions well with a second person, I asked my brother to play a few rounds with me, and we had quite a good laugh discovering the strange techniques and "jank" the game had to offer. I believe that, in most cases, a game being multiplayer inherently makes it much more fun than if it were just a singleplayer game, as the shared experience makes it all the more novel. I don't imagine this game to be very fun when playing solo, though, as the second tank is essentially defenseless. The sheer amount of levels and modes the game has gives a lot more content that surprised me for a simple Atari game, making the

modes the game has gives a lot more content that surprised me for a simple Atari game, making the gameplay experience last a lot longer than if it only had the first stage and mode.



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## Task #2 ( 0.00 / 1 pt.) - Reflection on the learning experience and ea

**Weight:** 50%

**Objective:** *Reflection on the learning experience and ease of research*

### ≡, Text Prompt

Your Response:

Even with games as basic as early Atari 2600 games are, there are still valuable game design lessons to learn. The age of these games made it quite difficult to dig up any primary resources at the time, which made researching them a bit more difficult. I relied much more on playtesting the game to form my own analysis, rather than rely another person's analysis of the game. This made me think much more critically as to why the game was the way it was, backtracking what decisions had to be made during the design process.



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