

“Play is the highest form of research.”

Albert Einstein

Theoretical Physicist, Professor

III. GAME BENEFITS

Before we go deeper into game design, I want to remind you what games have taught us. The game is played by everyone; the game can be used as a means of exercise, reward us after we successfully complete the task, and make us think critically. Here are some things we learned from a game based on Raph Koster and my experience in the industry. Look at Figure 4 below; it pictures the universality of players worldwide, regardless of the background of the players.

1. Game is universal

Games can be played by limitless kinds of players. In an Animalia kingdom, for example, the young species also play to sharpen their skills for hunting, attacking, aiming, and more. You may realize if you have kittens or puppies, they are so actively playful at young ages. It is constructing the survivability skill for a further phase of their lives. In the board game café I am running, you can find families, including grandparents and grandkids, playing at the same table without disrupting smartphones. The games can also be played by the young or elder. Of course, some categorizations fit specific player categories. As a game designer, you must define your players and the mechanics you create.

2. Game is a practice

As we mentioned before, games can be used as an exercise for the youth generation of not only humans but animals as well to reserve the skill that might be useful in their lives. For example, animals like cheetahs, lions, and any cats play a sneaky move in their youth with their family or easy-to-catch target. Later in their adult ages, the hunting procedure experienced from playing is well-constructed, and they use it to survive in the wild.

3. Game is forgiving and rewarding

There is a story from my friend, a game designer in Indonesia. He once told me in a game jam that a game is

very rewarding and often forgiving to the player, even if the rewards are not real. For instance, if you play a game while not having the knowledge to complete the challenge, your possibility of dying in the game is high. But you need no worries because later, after you die in-game, there will probably be a pop-up window saying, “You lose. Do you want to try again?”. That phrase is so different if I compare it to what most of my friend’s parents said to their kids when we got low scores on school exams. “What have I told you. You need to study more. No TV for today”, yes that is the most common saying we get instead. Do you see the psychological differences here? Yes, you are right. Most of my friends chose the first feedback from the game compared to the feedback from our parents. Furthermore, there is no significant negative effect since the feedback on the game would not affect our real life.

4. Game push you to think

Games provide massive challenges for players. The player will try to solve the puzzle and then be provided another more challenging one. It will force the players to think and act carefully. As a result, players are prompted to establish strategies for action. In this process, the player is pushed to work their brain, which is good exercise.

5. Game is teaching language

In my personal experience, I got good grades in class in elementary school because my parents promised me that if I got top 10 in the class, they would buy me a video game. I strongly remember that playing a game in English text was also a major factor in why I had a good score in English classes in junior and senior high school. I played the game, practiced the speech, looking for the meaning in the dictionary if I needed help understanding the words. You have your own reasons why you would say that game teaches you something. So, what is it for you?



Figure 4. The biggest event of board game community in the world, Spiel, in Essen, Germany. Players from over the world come together to play board games, either kids, adults, or even grandparents.

(This photo is taken from <https://www.allrolledup.co.uk/2018/10/16/spiel-2018/>)

All of those things are just some examples of what games have taught us, especially at our younger ages. But, do you know what element in the game we have played that is inevitably the biggest factor in playing games? Fun it is.