Today I dusted off my GameCube and popped in Super Mario Sunshine. It’s one of my favorite childhood games, and one of my all-time favorites in general. I remember playing it as a kid every day after school. It seemed like it took me forever to finally beat. Now, playing it as an adult, it’s not as difficult as I remember it to be. Maybe watching let’s plays has shown me a few tricks and moves I didn’t know as a kid.

The game follows the usual Mario platforming formula, plus build on the mechanics of Super Mario 64, as this is only the 2nd 3D Mario platforming title. It’s business as usual. Bowser kidnaps Peach, and you must collect Shine Sprites to unlock levels and progress to the final boss fight. However, the game adds a new mechanic: FLUDD. FLUDD is a water powered robot backpack that Mario uses throughout the game. FLUDD not only shoots water in a stream to defeat enemies and clean up goop, but there are several other nozzles to use. The hover nozzle lets you hover for a few seconds, the rocket nozzle launches into the air at the cost of a 1/4 tank of water, and the turbo nozzle lets you run incredibly fast with equally fast water consumption.

The addition of FLUDD and its nozzles allow the player to make several choices while playing the game. For instance, you can use the rocket or turbo nozzles to quickly traverse a level or find secrets. Or you can run through the level in a more linear fashion, it depends on your skill. You also have several choices that come in the form of challenges. To unlock the final boss fight, you need to collect the 7th Shine Sprite of every level. Each level has 8 Shines plus 2 hidden Shines and a 100 coin Shine. There are a total of 120 Shines in the game. So once you collect the ~70 Shines for the final boss, you have a choice to collect the remaining 50.

To me, this choice comes down to replay value. Personally, I really enjoyed the game, so I chose to go for the extra Shines. However, these extra Shines are more difficult to collect. As a player, I need to hone my skills in order to collect these Shines. As a working college student, I don’t have time to hone these skills. Even though my love for this game is strong, I still make the shameful choice and throw in some Action Replay cheat codes to get a moon jump or invincibility.

Looking back, I think my love for this game is fueled by nostalgia. Yes, Super Mario Odyssey was an amazing game. Yes, I did collect all 900-some Moons in that game. But I still pick up and play Sunshine more often. I just love the simplicity of Sunshine. The music, enemies, story. It was just better. There are choices the player has to make. But it flows so smooth that you don’t really have to worry about what you choose (because to be honest I’m not big on choice-driven games). It’s a game where I don’t even care about the visual fidelity because the gameplay is just fun. It’s one of my favorite games and will continue to be.