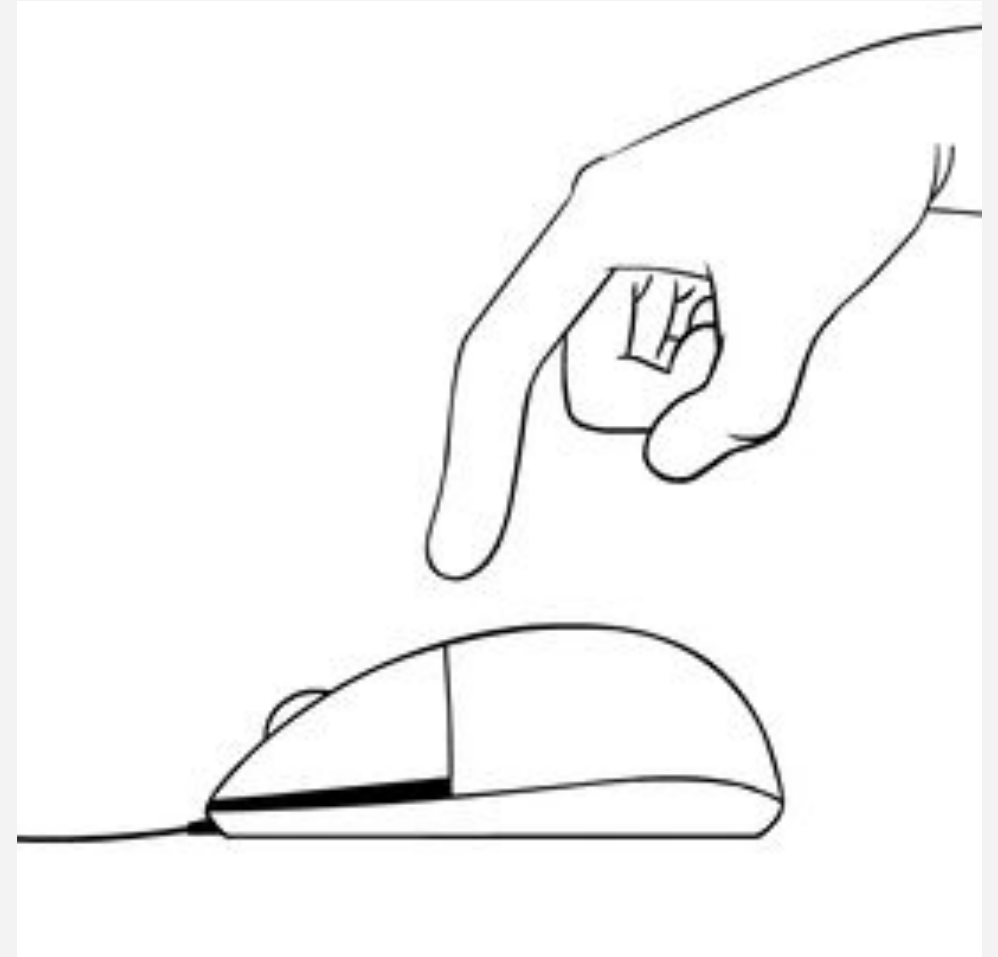


# **IDLE GAMES**

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# Classification and Definition

- Also known as "incremental game" or "clicker game".
- a genre of game defined by the primary feature of its strategy: leaving the game running by itself for long periods of time.



# Levels of Interactivity

- clicker
  - require higher interaction than minimalist and zero-player
- minimalist
  - reduce the number of actions
- zero-player
  - require no player involvement or limited input in the initial step of the game with no influence in gameplay

# Central Poetics of Incremental games

- play less and plan more
- a form of “self-obviating” play
- reconsider “play” and “fun”

# Origin of Idle Games

- A key precursor to idle games is game bots or AI agents.
- Bots, or AI agents, are automated computer players that act as if controlled by a human player.
- Games are usually designed for player interaction, but can also incorporate an AI player. This mechanism gives idle games a ground earth to be born.
- In 2002, Progress Quest, became one of the first zero-player games.

# The first idle game (2002 by Fredricksen)



# Characterization

- incentivize long-term motivation and promote desired behaviors.
- deceptively simple at first, but reveal impressive depths, including growth curves, bottlenecks, plateaus, and economic models.
- Idle games feature components of
  - strategy, decision making, long- and short-term planning, a strong sense of progression



# Core Mechanics

What do you get when you take an  
RPG and remove the grinding and the  
quests?

# **Waiting & Self-Play**

# Progress Quest (2002)

## Tabletop RPG Simulator

A “fire and forget RPG”[1].

Generate a character.

Watch a campaign unfold in real-time.

Story and events are narrated to the user.

**Progress Quest - Bruxbroom**

**Character Sheet**

Trait	Value
Name	Bruxbroom
Race	Half Orc
Class	Mu-Fu Monk
Level	1

Stat	Value
STR	11
CON	13
DEX	15
INT	10
WIS	14
CHA	10
HP Max	3
MP Max	7

Experience

**Spell Book**

Spell	Level
Rabbit Punch	I

**Equipment**

Weapon	Sharp Rock
Shield	
Helm	
Hauberk	-3 Burlap
Brassairts	
Vambraces	
Gauntlets	
Gambeson	
Cuisses	
Greaves	
Sollerets	

**Inventory**

Item	Qty
Gold	0
stun worm trode	2
ostrich beak	1
spider web	1
quasit tail	1
dwarf drawers	1
wasp stinger	2
orc snout	1
nebbish belly	1
shrieker stalk	1
dervish robe	1
bugboar tusk	1
nixie webbing	1
billy goat beard	1
midge corpse	1
sylph thigh	1
pirate booty	1
ghoul muscle	1

Encumbrance

**Plot Development**

☒ Prologue  
☐ Act I

**Quests**

☒ Deliver this nosegay  
☐ Deliver this casket

Executing a greater Ant...

Modern idle games can self-play, but revolve around one quantity or resource type that the player must accumulate in order to get more resources.

# **Clicking & Resource Management**



# Cookie Clicker (2013)

First true “incremental” game.

Click to generate cookies.

Use accumulated cookies to buy faster ways of producing cookies.

Self-plays when the player is AFK.

“I think what draws people in is simply the idea of accumulating large amounts of things over time — cookies, gold coins, experience... As the players gain more stuff, they feel less and less like quitting because they'd have wasted all the time they've invested into it.

As with MMOs though, there almost always comes a moment of ‘sudden clarity’ where the player realizes how pointless it all is, and decide to leave the game”[2]

*-Orteil*



If idle games are “pointless” and play themselves, can they really be considered games?

Pirate Puppet's bakery

2.591 million  
cookies

per second: 3,868

Options

Stats

News: chocolate mines found to cause earthquakes  
People come from very far away to get a taste of your cookies.

Info

Legacy

Buy

Don

1

10

100



Cursor

51



Grandma

36



Farm

23



Mine

17



Factory

1



Bank

0

???

???



Achievement unlocked  
Cookie monster



Achievement unlocked  
Builder



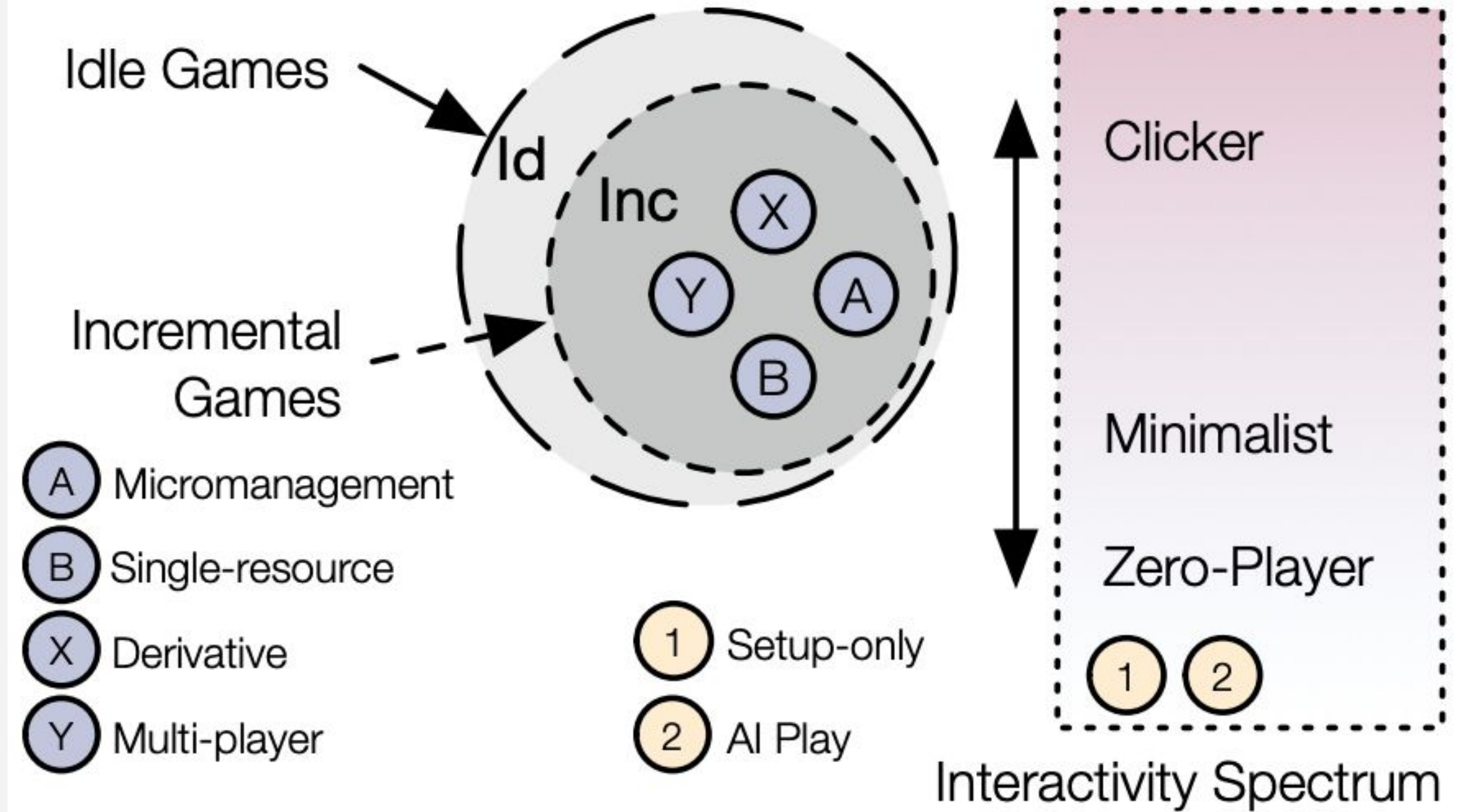
Achievement unlocked  
Fledgling bakery



Achievement unlocked  
Production chain



Achievement unlocked  
Mouse wheel



Source: Playing to Wait: A Taxonomy of Idle Games





# Mine Defense (2014)

Incorporates idle elements such as unsupervised progression.

Micromanagement.

Tower defense clicker.

Adds new mechanics such as tower defense elements such as: enemies, structures, and crafting.

Hybrid.

# Kittens (2014) By Bloodrizer

Over 400,000 play sessions on Kongregate (2017) and Bloodrizer mobile apps (2017).

Kittens Game by bloodrizer

IRC is back (:3) 94% \$ 0/100 ±

Save | Options | Reset | Wipe | Ver 1.4.0.4

Show All Lock/Unlock

±/± Bonfire | Small Village | Science | Time | Achievements

catnip: 9.76K /29.93K (+37.29/sec) [+50%]

wood: 47.56 /1197.22 (+0.41/sec)

catpower: 51.24 /478.89 (+0.34/sec)

science: 163.48 /1496.53 (+0.30/sec)

kittens: 8 /8

All | Enabled | Togglable | Food Production | Population | Science | Storage

Gather catnip

Catnip field (52) sell

Hut (4) sell

Barn (4) sell

Refine catnip

Pasture (9) sell

Library (5) sell

Year 6 - Spring, day 53

Log | Chat

You are a kitten in a catnip forest.

Clear log pause

YEAR 6 - SPRING

o Unable to load save data. Close the page and contact the dev.

YEAR 3 - WINTER

o Unable to load save data. Close the page and contact the dev.

# 28 hours of playing Kittens

<https://bloodrizer.ru/games/kittens/#>

Kittens Game by bloodrizer

KG Discord Patreon

Save | Options | Reset | Wipe | Get the app | Ver 1.4.6.2.d

⚙ ? Bonfire | Small Village (4) | Science | Achievements

catnip 5000 /5000 (+28/sec) [+50%]  
wood 31.44 /200  
science 27.50 /1000  
kittens 4 /4

All · Enabled · Toggleable · Food Production · Population · Science

Gather catnip

Refine catnip

Catnip field (48) sell

Hut (2) sell

Library (3) sell

Spring  
Log | Chat

You are a kitten in a catnip forest.  
Clear log [+] Log Filters pawse

- > A rare astronomical event occurred in the sky
- > A kitten has joined your village
- > A kitten has joined your village
- > 1 kitten starved to death.
- > 1 kitten starved to death.
- > A kitten has joined your village
- > A kitten has joined your village
- > A rare astronomical event occurred in the sky
- > A rare astronomical event occurred

# Summary

Idle games genre is vastly diverse

- Completely self-playing experiences
- Extreme micromanagement
- Potential for deep play

Large community of players:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/incremental\\_games/](https://www.reddit.com/r/incremental_games/)

Large collection of free browser-based games:

<https://www.kongregate.com/incremental-games>



# References

- [1] Progress Quest Manual - <http://progressquest.com/info.php>
- [2] The cult of the cookie clicker: When is a game not a game? - <https://www.polygon.com/2013/9/30/4786780/the-cult-of-the-cookie-clicker-when-is-a-game-not-a-game>
- [3] Playing to Wait: A Taxonomy of Idle Games - <https://pixl.nmsu.edu/files/2018/02/2018-chi-idle.pdf>
- [4] Idle Games, Everything You Need to Know! - <https://mobilefreetoplay.com/idle-games-everything-you-need-to-know/>
- [5] The Pleasure of Playing Less - <https://ndownloader.figshare.com/files/12212813>