

The following handout provides a summary of the main points from the chapter, "What Are Videogames Anyway?," in *The Art of Videogames* by Grant Tavinor. The handout includes a brief overview of the chapter, the formal structure of Tavinor's argument, and a detailed, section-by-section summary in bullet point format. The summary employs philosophical jargon and technical terminology appropriate for an upper-level college philosophy course and emphasizes key ideas through bolding and italicizing.

---

## Chapter 2 Summary: What Are Videogames Anyway?

In this chapter, Tavinor explores the complexities involved in defining videogames. He draws parallels with the philosophical debate on defining art, highlighting the challenges and the value of such an endeavor. Tavinor critically examines prevalent theories in game studies, such as narratology, ludology, and interactive fiction theory, and finds them inadequate as definitions of videogames. He proposes a **disjunctive definition** of videogames, acknowledging that there might be multiple ways to be a videogame. Tavinor emphasizes the role of the visual digital medium, the intent for entertainment, and the modes of engagement through gameplay or interactive fiction in constituting a videogame.

---

## Formal Argument Structure

1. **Premise 1:** The definition of videogames should serve to clarify the subject matter and guide further study in the field.
2. **Premise 2:** Existing theories in game studies, when formulated as definitions, fail to encompass all and only videogames.
3. **Premise 3:** Videogames exhibit characteristics of both games and interactive fictions, suggesting a disjunctive nature.
4. **Premise 4:** The visual digital medium and the intent for entertainment are essential features of videogames.
5. **Conclusion:** Videogames can be defined as artifacts in a visual digital medium, intended for entertainment, and employing either rule-based gameplay or interactive fiction.

---

## On Definition

- The field of game studies lacks a clear definition of videogames.
- Tavinor advocates for the importance of defining videogames to provide clarity and direction to the field.
- The chapter draws a comparison between defining videogames and defining art, highlighting the challenges and potential benefits.
- Tavinor distinguishes between **nominal definitions** (concerned with everyday usage) and **real/empirical definitions** (concerned with the true nature of things).
- The chapter discusses the influence of cultural categories on the creation of new artifacts within those categories.
- Tavinor acknowledges the likely **nominal nature** of the videogame category but emphasizes the utility of a definition in understanding the origin, similarities, and functions of videogames.

## Theories of Gaming

- **Narratology:**
    - Posits that games are a new form of narrative.
    - This theory is criticized as not all videogames have narratives, and narratives exist in other media as well.
  - **Ludology:**
    - Emphasizes the game-like nature of videogames.
    - This theory is criticized as some videogames, like simulations, do not fit the traditional game model.
  - **Interactive Fiction Theory:**
    - Suggests that games are interactive fictions.
    - This theory is criticized as not all videogames involve fiction, and interactive fictions exist outside of videogames.
- 

## A Definition of Videogames

- Tavinor proposes a **disjunctive definition** to account for the multiple ways a videogame can be.
  - The definition includes two necessary conditions:
    - **Visual digital medium:** Videogames fundamentally rely on visual representation in a digital environment.
    - **Intended as an object of entertainment:** The primary purpose of videogames is to entertain.
  - The definition also includes a disjunctive clause for two sufficient conditions:
    - **Rule and objective gameplay:** Many videogames engage players through rules and objectives.
    - **Interactive fiction:** Some videogames immerse players in interactive fictional worlds.
  - Tavinor argues that this definition captures the essence of videogames while acknowledging their diversity and connections to other media forms.
- 

## Tavinor's Definition of Videogames

- *"X is a videogame if it is an artifact in a visual digital medium, is intended as an object of entertainment, and is intended to provide such entertainment through the employment of one or both of the following modes of engagement: rule and objective gameplay or interactive fiction."*