

# The Six Games Deep Dive

## Introduction

Most confusion in modern creative, professional, and online life does not come from lack of skill or effort. It comes from **playing the wrong game**—or worse, playing multiple games at once without realizing it.

"The Six Games" framework describes six fundamentally different modes of value creation, reputation formation, and coordination. Each game has its own incentives, failure modes, and developmental role. Platforms, communities, and individuals routinely collapse these games together, producing frustration, burnout, and distorted outcomes.

This essay provides a deep dive into each game, how to recognize them in the wild, how they fail, and how people progress through them over time.

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## The Six Games (Overview)

At a high level:

- **G1 — Canon:** Truth, correctness, and alignment with an external reality
- **G2 — Craft:** Skill acquisition through practice and feedback
- **G3 — Performance:** Execution under constraint and pressure
- **G4 — Status:** Relative positioning within a social field
- **G5 — Leverage:** Scaling impact through systems, media, or capital
- **G6 — Coordination:** Designing games others can play

Each game answers a different question:

- G1: *Is this true?*
  - G2: *Can I do it well?*
  - G3: *Can I do it when it counts?*
  - G4: *Where do I stand relative to others?*
  - G5: *How far can this travel?*
  - G6: *What game are we playing now?*
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## G1 — Canon (Truth)

**What it is:** Alignment with reality. Canon is about being right, not being seen.

**How to recognize it:**

- Arguments reference external constraints
- Claims can be falsified
- Status is irrelevant

**Common failure modes:**

- Becoming dogmatic
- Confusing consensus with truth
- Freezing development by defending correctness

**Why starting here is a trap:** Early creators often assume truth is sufficient. It is not. Canon without craft, performance, or leverage remains inert.

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## G2 — Craft (Skill)

**What it is:** Developing capability through repetition, feedback, and correction.

**How to recognize it:**

- Focus on process over outcomes
- Willingness to look bad temporarily
- Local feedback loops

#### Common failure modes:

- Endless preparation
- Avoidance of exposure
- Mistaking practice for progress

**Role in development:** G2 is where competence is built. Without it, later games collapse into playacting.

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## G3 — Performance (Execution)

**What it is:** Delivering results under real constraints—time, stakes, and opposition.

#### How to recognize it:

- Deadlines matter
- Outcomes are visible
- Failure has consequences

#### Common failure modes:

- Burnout
- Over-identification with winning
- Narrow optimization

**High G3 and Ego Death:** Sustained performance eventually exposes the limits of identity. When winning becomes unstable, ego collapses—forcing either reinvention or retreat. This is where flexibility and return to G1 become necessary.

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## G4 — Status (Positioning)

**What it is:** Relative ranking within a social environment.

#### How to recognize it:

- Comparisons dominate
- Attention becomes currency
- Narratives outweigh outcomes

#### Common failure modes:

- Status anxiety
- Zero-sum thinking
- Confusing visibility with value

**Platform capture risk:** G4 is highly capturable. Platforms amplify it because comparison drives engagement.

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## G5 — Leverage (Scale)

**What it is:** Amplifying impact beyond individual effort via systems, media, or capital.

#### How to recognize it:

- One-to-many dynamics
- Automation or delegation
- Asymmetric returns

#### Common failure modes:

- Detachment from reality
- Metric chasing
- Fragility under change

**Why platforms favor it:** Leverage produces growth curves platforms can monetize.

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## G6 — Coordination (Game Design)

**What it is:** Creating environments where others can play, compete, and create value.

**How to recognize it:**

- Rule-setting power
- Incentive design
- Stewardship over control

**Common failure modes:**

- Over-engineering
  - Centralization
  - Becoming the bottleneck
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## How the Games Interact

The games feed each other:

- G1 grounds G2
- G2 enables G3
- G3 produces signals for G4
- G4 unlocks G5
- G5 enables G6
- G6 reshapes G1

Problems arise when signals from one game are mistaken for success in another.

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## Why Platforms Capture Some Games More Easily

Platforms excel at capturing:

- G4 (status)
- G5 (leverage)

They struggle with:

- G1 (truth)
- G2 (craft)
- G3 (performance)

Because these require proximity to reality and long feedback loops.

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## Case Studies: Creators Playing Each Game Well

(Using examples from *The Game Audit*)

- G1: Researchers and domain experts prioritizing correctness
- G2: Craftspeople documenting learning in public
- G3: Operators shipping under constraint
- G4: Narrative builders shaping perception

- G5: Media-native creators scaling ideas
- G6: Community architects designing arenas

Each succeeds by staying inside their game's rules.

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## Developmental Progression Through the Games

A typical arc:

**G2 → G3 → G4 → G5 → G6**

Skill precedes performance. Performance creates status. Status enables leverage. Leverage enables coordination.

Skipping steps produces instability.

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## Why G1 Flexibility Matters After G3

High G3 eventually breaks rigid identity structures. At this point, returning to G1—truth-seeking without status attachment—allows recalibration.

This is where many people stall or burn out.

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## How to Tell If You're Playing the Right Game

Ask:

- What is being rewarded here?
- What failure looks like?
- What exits exist?

Misalignment feels like friction without learning.

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## Conclusion

The Six Games framework is not about hierarchy. It is about **fit**.

Progress comes from knowing which game you're in, why you're there, and when it's time to move on.