Unlike many, since I was young, planning, designing and developing was in my blood. Growing up playing videogames, you would always find me playing games that were not traditional for young kids. I remember that the first game that I enjoyed playing was Zoo Tycoon 2. Where the player had to design and operate a zoo for the public. I would spend hours planning where to place animal habitats, listening to clients’ feedback and adjusting the services offered, and always adding new and existing features at the zoo. I remember that I would immerse myself in the world of a designer and I always thought, “What would my customers like to see when they walked into this zoo?”. I would do this by putting myself in their shoes and think about what kind of amenities I would like to see.

I got to learn many design strategies even by playing this simple game. You could create a beautiful zoo, sure, but you had to take into account what the clients wanted. The game let you know of what where the guests’ frustrations, what they wanted to see in the zoo, how satisfied where the clients with prices, features, and animals they saw. Based on that feedback, I would then look at my budget and my unlocked features and added something new or upgraded existing features. Once the update was complete, I went into research mode and analyzed what clients thought of these new features and if further improvements needed to be made. Now guests where not the only thing you had to worry about. You also had to care about your budget, the animal’s wellbeing, and employee satisfaction. So, you had to juggle many things to make a functioning zoo. I would spend hours following this format! But it was so much fun because I really enjoyed this kind of environment where I constantly had to design, plan, execute, and research my changes to the game.

Thus, while it is unusual for people to get into design from playing video games, I think having this experience has made me the designer I am today. I always cared for the small details, listened to the customer’s concerns, and was able to work through solutions with my available resources – things that I encountered as a kind playing Zoo Tycoon. I still play games like that till this day, but this interest has developed to a passion as an adult. I have found that as I progress through my journey as a UX designer, there are many things that UX designers do that I did as a young kid. Wireframes, layouts, prototypes, working with multibranched customers/team members, user research, and customer engagement are things that Zoo Tycoon taught me. Even thought I have further developed those skills now, I am thankful for experience which allowed me to find this passion early on in my life.