Your Own Virtual World
Play God - Be God (Even If It's Only Electronically)

Part of the appeal of video games is the visual eye-candy that splashes across
the television screen. But even the addictive imagery is only half of the
equation. The remaining half is the magic bestowed upon our eyes when this
imagery comes to life. Animation that's controlled by a gamer is all it takes to
escape into a different time and place - a time and place brought to you by
virtual reality.

As you can imagine, virtual reality is a hypothetical three-dimensional visual
world created by a computer. Players can enter and move about in this world and
interact with objects as if inside it.1 Some of the games that are already on
the market give a pretty good idea of what virtual reality is and can do. Video
games like Zelda, Halo, or Harry Potter allow players to enter into an
environment and interact with objects, but they don't allow the player to create
an environment and that's what virtual worlds are all about.

Without a single ounce of programming experience, anyone can create a virtual
world and have loads of fun doing so. All one needs is an idea.

To begin, you'll want to construct a plan that maps your idea of the perfect
world, the craziest world, or the oddest world that you can imagine. Some
virtual world software will give you a template of sorts (a "starter" world)
that lets you make additions and ultimately build a world that you've always
dreamed of. A good example of template use is inside Maxis' SimCity or SimTown
games. Both games provide pre-designed environments that provide plenty of space
and opportunity to shape them into one that you prefer.

Of course, you could always start from scratch. The only problem with starting
with scratch is that it takes more time and knowledge to add some of the
features that virtual worlds provide. Either way (from scratch or from a
template), most users build a world by adding objects and scenarios - even
deleting some until they've reached the perfect balance.

A good place to find examples of what you could build in virtual world gaming is
online. Every virtual world program available offers sample environments that
players can download and install into their own system. Some manufacturers of
these games even hold contests and award winners with free upgrades. Other
suitable places to find ideas are from fiction books: -historical, -fantasy,
-futuristic, you name it. Science fiction movies are a good resource for ideas
as well.

Just understand that virtual gaming takes time. Rome wasn't built in a day and

neither will your virtual world. There's no rush and this is a relaxing hobby. Take your time and have fun. Don't fret over not knowing how to build an object or lay down a map - you can learn how to do these kinds of things in due time. Your goal is to create a world of enjoyment and it won't help if you find yourself frustrated all the time.

When ready, you can add characters with their own unique histories, habits, strengths and weaknesses. You can even give them goals or small tasks to perform throughout the game. Giving your characters goals and tasks will help you give the game a plot.

To get started, look for RAD (Rapid Application Development) Tools. RAD tools will help you bang a virtual reality game together in no time and with little difficulty.

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