

Game Design: How to Create Video and Tabletop Games, Start to Finish

Lewis Pulsipher

Table of Contents

(The page numbers are not accurate because this TOC is from the original manuscript. It does show the contents of the book.)

Chapter 1 The Process of Game Design.....	Page 1
What is it like to be a designer?.....	Page 1
A. Ideas, and how little they have to do with success.....	Page 2
Ideas Alone Are Worthless!.....	Page 2
Getting Ideas.....	Page 3
"Stealing" Ideas.....	Page 4
Recording Ideas.....	Page 4
B. Origins of Games.....	Page 5
Theme or atmosphere (story, title, image, emotion).....	Page 6
Mechanics.....	Page 8
A particular game, a game system, or a genre.....	Page 8
.....	Page 8
Components (primarily tabletop games).....	Page 9
.....	Page 9
Constraints.....	Page 9
And a last admonition about origins of games.....	Page 11
C. The core of a good game design process (no, not ideas).....	Page 12
D. Developing a game concept: what should you ask yourself?.....	Page 12
E. The processes involved in game design: a systematic view of game design	Page 13
The Processes.....	Page 15
Conceive and refine ideas.....	Page 16
Play game in "mind's eye"—thought experiments.....	Page 16
Conceive game, structure, framework.....	Page 16
Create and refine prototype.....	Page 16
Write notes-rules-software.....	Page 16
Solo playtest.....	Page 17
Playtest with others.....	Page 17
Caveats.....	Page 17
Alternative ways to look at the process (MDI/MDA).....	Page 18

Stages of game design-average time spent on each.....	Page 19
F. The structural parts of a game, from a design point of view.	Page 20
Theme/History/Story/Emotion/Image.....	Page 21
Player Interaction rules (and number of players).	Page 21
Objective/victory conditions.	Page 22
"Data storage". (Information Management).	Page 22
Sequencing.	Page 22
Movement/Placement.....	Page 22
Information availability.....	Page 22
Conflict resolution/interaction of game entities.	Page 23
"Economy" (resource acquisition/conversion).	Page 23
G. Some essential questions you should ask yourself about your design....	Page 28
"Distinct" questions (yes/no, or just a few possible answers): ("digital-style" questions).	Page 30
Spectrum questions (a wide range of possibilities along a spectrum, "analog- style" questions).....	Page 32
Other questions.	Page 34
H. What's important in designing games, in "one page".	Page 35
I. What's important in designing video games specifically, in "one page".	Page 37
J. Maxims of game design.	Page 38
K. Examples of early notes for some games.....	Page 40
 Chapter 2 How someone learns to design games.	Page 44
A. The immediate objective of an aspiring game designer.	Page 44
B. Differences and similarities of video games and tabletop games.....	Page 46
C. Why aspiring designers should start with tabletop games.	Page 50
D. Why no one can make a AAA video game by himself.	Page 56
E. Derivative/subsidiary forms of video game a beginner can make.....	Page 57
F. How one person can make a complete video game from scratch, rather than modify an existing one.....	Page 58
G. Traditional games are NOT a good guide to what we can do with tabletop games	Page 59
Monopoly.	Page 60
Tic-Tac-Toe.	Page 62
Pachisi/Parcheesi.	Page 62
Chess.	Page 63
Battleship.	Page 64
Scrabble.	Page 64
Checkers (Draughts).	Page 65
Risk.	Page 65

Go.....	Page 66
H. Formal Education.	Page 67
I. Math.	Page 67
 Chapter 3 What is a game and what makes it a good game?.....	Page 71
A. What is a "game?".	Page 71
B. The characteristics of good games?.	Page 72
C. What makes a game "Epic" or even "Great"?.	Page 74
1) Scope.....	Page 75
2) Player commitment.	Page 76
3) Tension and memorability.....	Page 77
Great Games.....	Page 78
D. Why people play games.	Page 80
Something can be enjoyable or challenging to some, yet certainly not enjoyable or challenging to others.....	Page 81
Escapism?.	Page 87
E. The elements of a game.....	Page 87
F. What games actually amount to (A list).....	Page 88
Systems.....	Page 89
Psychological.....	Page 91
G. The kinds of interaction that occur in games (A list and diagram).	Page 92
H. The types of challenges in games (A list).....	Page 94
Physical challenges.....	Page 94
Mental challenges.....	Page 94
I. Checklist/reminder list for gameplay characteristics.	Page 95
 Chapter 4 You must know your audience/target market.....	Page 99
A. What are game designers trying to achieve?.	Page 99
B. Some game playing styles that designers must take into account.	Page 107
Reaction to Chaos and Randomness.	Page 111
Role of Chance.	Page 112
C. Differences between hard core and casual video gamers (A list).....	Page 113
D. Video Games and Tabletop Games are becoming more alike	Page 115
E. Who plays games, and what kinds of games do they play?.....	Page 119
F. Characteristics of "21st century" games.	Page 120
 Chapter 5 Making a playable prototype.	Page 128

Introduction.	Page 128
A. What to know about making playable prototypes.	Page 128
Don't Worry about Prettiness.	Page 128
B. The formal video game design document and how to write a good one. . .	Page 131
What is it, and what is it not?.	Page 131
Why write a game design document.	Page 132
C. The video game concept document (pitch document)	Page 134
D. Typical problems when people first try to write video game concepts and design documents.	Page 136
E. Video game documents-examples.	Page 137
Dragons' Rage High Concept.	Page 137
Conquest High Concept.	Page 138
The Fury of the Northmen High Concept.	Page 141
F. Making tabletop/paper game prototypes (physical details).	Page 143
 Chapter 6 How to work with and improve the prototype.	 Page 146
A. The purpose of playtesting.	Page 146
B. The stages of playtesting.	Page 148
Solo Testing.	Page 149
Local Testing.	Page 149
"Blind"/External Testing.	Page 150
Rules testing vs. bug testing.	Page 152
C. What to look for in the playtesters.	Page 152
D. What to look for in the play of the game.	Page 154
What you're doing.	Page 156
What the players are doing.	Page 158
How the game plays.	Page 159
How the game works.	Page 161
E. Is the Interface Good?	Page 163
F. Simplifying a Game.	Page 164
G. What to do with the results: Change, change, change-love it or fail. . .	Page 166
What to do with the feedback.	Page 167
H. When/how do you know it's worth pursuing further?.	Page 170
I. Checklist/reminder list for gameplay characteristics.	Page 171
J. When is it "done"?.	Page 173
K. Playtesting questionnaires.	Page 174
 Chapter 7 Designing levels (stages, scenarios) for video (and tabletop) games. . .	 Page 176
A. What are you doing when you make a level?.	Page 176
B. The process of creating a level.	Page 178
C. Points to consider when originating a level.	Page 180

Tactical.	Page 180
Strategic.	Page 181
D. What is the situation, what are the characters, what is the plot or context?.....	Page 182
E. What kinds of obstacles might be in a level? (a list).	Page 182
F. Kinds of quests (a list).	Page 184
G. "Bosses".....	Page 186
H. Some level design Dos and Don'ts	Page 186
I. Document editing advice (A list).	Page 188
J. Brief examples of level design documents.....	Page 190
 Chapter 8 Some specific video-game issues and genres.	Page 197
A. Life is different for a full-time video game designer compared with a freelance game designer.....	Page 197
B. What you must know about video game genres.	Page 199
C. Stories, narratives, and "sandboxes".....	Page 204
D. World-Building.	Page 205
E. The Interface.	Page 206
F. Too much like work.	Page 208
G. Products versus services, retail versus free.	Page 209
H. Is creativity important in video game design?.....	Page 212
 Chapter 9 Designing specific types of games.	Page 214
A. Multi-sided games.	Page 214
B. Social networking games.	Page 217
C. MMOs (massively multiplayer online games).	Page 218
D. Casual/"short experience"/mobile games.	Page 219
E. "Serious" games (education and training).	Page 219
F. RPG (role-playing games).	Page 221
G. CCG/TCG (collectible/tradable card games).	Page 222
 Chapter 10 Reference lists and resources.	Page 224
A. List of possibilities in each of the nine structural sub-systems of games	Page 224
B. Some books about game design.	Page 234
C. Classic games an aspiring game designer should know (brief descriptions)	Page 236
Video Games.	Page 237
Tabletop Games.	Page 240
D. Software for video game production (brief descriptions).	Page 242

E. Software for tabletop/paper game production (brief descriptions).....	Page 244
F. Sources of pieces for tabletop/paper games.....	Page 245
G. Online Resources (web sites, files, forums).....	Page 246
Glossary for Game Designers.....	Page 248