EXPLORING THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES BEHIND
GOOD GAME DESIGN

A GAME DESIGN Vocabulary

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A Game Design Vocabulary: Exploring the Foundational Principles Behind Good Game Design

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A Game Design Vocabulary: Exploring the Foundational Principles Behind Good Game Design

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Master the Principles and Vocabulary of Game Design Why aren't videogames getting better? Why does it feel like we're playing the same games, over and over again? Why aren't games helping us transform our lives, like great music, books, and movies do?

The problem is language. We still don't know how to talk about game design. We can't share our visions. We forget what works (and doesn't). We don't learn from history. It's too hard to improve.

The breakthrough starts here. A Game Design Vocabulary gives us the complete game design framework we desperately need--whether we create games, study them, review them, or build businesses on them.

Craft amazing experiences. Anna Anthropy and Naomi Clark share foundational principles, examples, and exercises that help you create great player experiences...complement intuition with design discipline...and craft games that succeed brilliantly on every level.

Liberate yourself from stale cliches and genres Tell great stories: go way beyond cutscenes and text dumps Control the crucial relationships between game "verbs" and "objects" Wield the full power of development, conflict, climax, and resolution Shape scenes, pacing, and player choices Deepen context via art, animation, music, and sound Help players discover, understand, engage, and "talk back" to you Effectively use resistance and difficulty: the "push and pull" of games Design holistically: integrate visuals, audio, and controls Communicate a design vision everyone can understand

A Game Design Vocabulary: Exploring the Foundational Principles Behind Good Game Design Details

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From Reader Review A Game Design Vocabulary: Exploring the Foundational Principles Behind Good Game Design for online ebook

Daniel says

This was an interesting dive into game design. It's definitely a textbook, but still was fun to read and had of course a lot of great information. It was more about video games than games in general, but the approach is sound for a lot of things and definitely had takeaways (and verbiage) that I'll keep using.

Devin Helmgren says

This is required reading for future designers. Eloquently blends ideas and concepts that make up the field.

Guilherme says

A good primer for anyone that wants to do game design beyond "an exact clone of World of Warcraft but I get to name the elves this time". Anthropy's laser-focus on a game as an exploration of a single mechanic may be a bit narrow, but it's a great stepping stone for a variety of game designs that doesn't get much love from the big companies.

Naomi Clark's second half focuses on storytelling and theme. It's a less revolutionary section, as pretty much every book on game design is a thinly rebranded essay on writing stories for books and movies, but it still details a lot of what makes storytelling for games unique.

But, most importantly, the book doesn't mention the hero's fucking journey anywhere, and so gets 5 out of 5.

Luke says

This was a very well written and thoughtful book. In it Anna talks about what makes good video-games good, how to make video-games good, and how to create a good balance of story and gameplay.
The biggest challenge for game designers to do is tread the boredom(too easy)/frustration(too hard) line. If your game is easily mastered most people will get bored quickly and stop playing. If your game is too hard players will stop playing right from the start because it is too frustrating (although exceptions like Flappy Bird still exist). The key to good game design is to make the tool and abilities (or "verbs" as Anna calls them) develop to overcome different challenges. An example is the game Portal, the verb that makes you pick up an item is also the verb that makes you push buttons, pull levers, ect. Additionally the difficulty of timing for this verb increases as you progress through the game. Portal 1 and 2 are my favorite games and reading this book made me realize why on a technical level.
Unlike many games today, Portal only teaches you things you would have no idea how to do unless it told you (like using wasd to move). Additionally the "tutorials" don't exist. The game shows you new controls on

the side of your screen so as not to interrupt gameplay. The levels you work in are designed in a way that you "accidentally" figure stuff out. Since Portal is a puzzle game giving away controls would ruin the whole game, but in forcing the playing to figure out interactions it makes the player feel more invested in the game. Additionally, when you figure out something, like how to use portals to fly around the place, it gives a genuine feeling of accomplishment contrary to other games that just tell you everything and then say "Great job!" at the end.

I highly recommend this for anyone who enjoys making or even playing games of all sorts. Many of the principles in this book can translate to card and board games too.

Kitty says

Like most white guys on the Internet, I run a mildly competent gaming podcast focused on older titles and their design. For quite some time, I'd been frustrated in my own personal contribution to the conversations due to a lack of experience in discussing unorthodox titles and an unawareness to commonly accepted terminology. Recommendations came with wide-eyed looks of horror as my brain was unable to produce apt descriptions for what bizarre titles did well and ultimately, why I enjoyed them. From a self-awareness standpoint in conversation, being unable to adequately communicate emotion is a terrifying thing.

I picked this text off a Twitter recommendation as a tutorial for engaging in game design conversations and holy smokes. If you're interested in fascinating game discussion topics, complete with fun Knytt exercises, please give this text a try! Thank you, authors, for now I can adequately communicate my own personal defense whenever an entire housewarming party turns on me for mentioning I didn't enjoy Bioshock Infinite.

Robbie Hunt says

It's good for what it is.

As someone who's been in game design as a hobby for many many years - I can say there's not a whole lot new here. However, in the past, typically what would happen would be: Game Designer reads about game design topic -> Game Designer talks with other Game Designers about what this topic means for 'Games as Art' - but this book already frames these topics with that perspective.

So in that sense it is refreshing, but you'll find yourself flashing back to conversations you've likely already had, if you're predisposed to think of game design in this way.

However, I might recommend this book to new designers or designers who never before put much stock into the 'Games as Art' notion because I feel it's quite persuasive.

A note: Mostly when I find blocks of texts related to 'Games as Art' they get preachy, weird, or radical (in a bad way). But there is no danger of that here. This is a fair and honest attempt and mostly a success - you just won't get anything out of it if you've already been seeking this kinda stuff out for years, but do read it so you can then recommend it to the next generation!

Paul Davies says

An excellent look at what it means to treat game development as an art form instead of a job. Also, a fair attempt at standardising terminology.

Zack Hiwiller says

Anthropy's half is pretty good, although it could use some editing to be less about her friends and more about more widely understood examples. Clark's part is essentially every book about game design: a great set of boxes to categorize things that have already been made but almost nothing prescriptive. Anthropy's part expanded could have made for a great ebook, but at this price you should expect more.

JM says

The second part of this book (written by Naomi) is fine enough, but typical of other books or pieces or writing about games and game design. It's helpful stuff, especially if you haven't read very much about games and their design, but not overly stand-out. For me the first section by Anthropy is the real reason for reading this book, and what got me to purchase it to begin with. That woman really knows her games. And she really knows how to design them. And in books (and blogposts, and interviews etc.) shows she really knows how to talk about them too.

A wonderful introduction to ways of thinking about games and their design, and a great resource and source of food-for-thought and inspiration for working and aspiring game designers.

Zeyuan Hu says

Want to say something, but essentially this books says nothing

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