Gaming mechanics

UKRI
Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council

SECRIOUS
PROJECT

Project ID : EP/T017511/1

How to use this deck

Title

Explanation and example

Role Play

1

Where players take on and develop their role as a virtual character.

e.g. the player has to pretend that they are a doctor.

Card border colour suggests what learning level the mechanic mostly involves. See the LM Deck for key and Example Learning Verbs cards for more ideas.

Role Play

Where players take on and develop their role as a virtual character.

e.g. the player has to pretend that they are a doctor.

Behavioural Momentum

Used to give confidence and motivate players to continue the game.

e.g. the player has a 'mining' skill that improves every time they mine for something in the game.

Cooperation

Where players need to work together. Each player can have a different goal and all players don't need to benefit equally, but there is some degree of working together

e.g. players may get more points for doing something together, as opposed to by themselves.

Collaboration

In collaborative games, players share common goals and outcomes; players either win or lose together. Similar to Cooperation , but here, players benefit or don't benefit together.

e.g. where players combine their points at the end of the game and either win or lose as a whole, together.

Selecting / Collecting

The process of collecting in-game elements (such as Tokens or Information).

e.g. the player's aim is to collect a particular kind of token.

Tokens / Cards

Collectable things in a game that may or may not have effects.

e.g. the player picks up a med-pack that fills their health-meter, or the player picks up a coin that acts as points.

Information

Collectable information, as opposed to a thing (like a token).

e.g. where a player learns a code to a safe, that they can then use to unlock the safe.

Cascading Information

Information released in minimal snippets to gain the appropriate level of understanding at each point during a game.

e.g. a skill-tree where you only need to learn a few skills at a time while you progress.

Questions and Answers

Players ask and answer questions in a manner constrained by rules.

e.g. where one player needs to ask questions to try and guess the animal that they player is thinking of.

Strategy / Planning

Where players are required to use decision-making and problem-solving in order to succeed.

e.g. games like chess where the player is constantly thinking about the next moves.

Resource Management

Where the player gets some kind of object like money/items and need to make decisions using their resources.

e.g. where the player can only hold a certain number of items that can be used in a battle.

One Player Better Off

A mechanic where one player can't be better-off without another becoming worse-off.

e.g. a game where one player must lose points in order for another player to gain points.

Appointment

A mechanic in which to succeed a player must return at a predefined time to take a predetermined action.

e.g. the player must return to their 'home' at the end of the game to undertake some action.

Capture / Eliminate

Where the number of an object the player has impacts their strength in the game.

e.g. if a player moves one of their pieces to the same tile as the opponent, the player gets the opponents piece.

Tiles / Grids

A way of splitting up a game into separate areas or territories, where different actions can take place.

e.g. where a player must attempt to capture as much territory or tiles as possible, or the player placing different tiles together to form a city.

Infinite Gameplay

Games that have no explicit end.

e.g. this can be found in many sandbox games like Minecraft.

Levels

A unique space available to the player. Usually, each level is more difficult than the last.

e.g. at the end of level 1 of a game, the player moves on to level 2, which has more difficult enemies than level 1.

Action Points

Control what the user may do during their turn in the game by allocating them a budget of 'action points'.

e.g. a player can 'attack' using 2 action points or 'heal' using 1 action point.

Game Turns

Where a certain sequence of events happens, before moving on to the next turn, usually repeating.

e.g. a turn could be: a player rolls a dice, gets a 6, moves their character 6 spaces. Then the next player takes their turn.

Time Pressure

Where actions need to be undertaken in a specific length of time.

e.g. each player only has 10 seconds to make a decision.

Conditioning

Where players are conditioned to expect something, based on something else happening.

e.g. a positive conditioning could be where the player gets to level up when they reach 100 points and negative conditioning could be where the game ends when the player loses 3 lives.

Quick feedback

Shows the user what they have just done, and gives them instant gratification (the feel-good factor) of things happening after they have completed a task.

e.g. if a player answers a question correctly, they are quickly given feedback to let them know.

Learning by Teaching

When the player will work harder for their in-game character(s) than for themselves. This can happen in real-life where some people learn better by teaching others.

e.g. player may work harder to do a difficult maths problem for their avatar than in their own classroom.

Metagame

Game elements. that operate outside the rules of the game, or external factors that affect the game.

e.g. a player gains a reward in one game than can carry over into another session of a game.

Design / Editing

Where the player is tasked with creating or changing something.

e.g. a game where a player needs to create a design for a car.

Movement

Allowing players to interact with the game by moving.

E.g. moving a board game piece around a board or a character jumping onto a box.

Simulate / Response

Where the game intends to mimic or simulate another situation. Usually this is mimicking real-world activities in a (safe) artificial environment.

e.g. a game which simulates flight and the player is a pilot.

Realism

Similar to *Simulation,* but the game intends to reflect the real world as much as possible

e.g. the game reflects ancient Rome.

Tutorial

Where the player is given an introduction or practice to what they will be doing in the game.

e.g. at the start of a turn-based game, the player might get to take a 'tutorial turn' that is just for practice and wont affect their score etc.

Assessment

Where the player needs to evaluate something as part of the game.

e.g. a game where the player can only choose 1 option, but there are 4, so they need to assess the situation to choose an option.

Competition

Where the game is competitive, meaning that players are playing against other players to win.

e.g. similar to any competitive activity like football or chess.

Urgent Optimism

Similar to Time Pressure, but this focuses on getting the player to do something instantly

e.g. the player is encouraged to tackle an obstacle immediately, without waiting.

Ownership

Where the player takes responsibility for some aspect of the game.

e.g. a player may take ownership of their player character, or a city they are building.

Rewards / Penalties

Feedback a player would receive for a worthy action. Used to encourage the player to progress in the game.

e.g. if a player completes a level, they are rewarded with a coin. If the player fails a level, they are penalized with a coin being taken away.

Status

A way to provide the player with a sense of belonging or make them feel powerful.

e.g. a game with classes, where if the player is a wizard class, they share the same attributes with other wizards.

Virality

Ways to grow the player base. This usually applies to multiplayer games.

e.g. a game where you are more successful in a game, the more friends you invite to play the game.

Cut Scenes / Story

Information released in minimal snippets to gain the appropriate level of understanding at each point during a game.

e.g. a short text that gives the player background to the game's story.