



CIS 5640: Introduction to Game Design

Assignment 4: Player Choice

For this assignment, you will be thinking about player choice and player agency.

1. Choose a game that you've played before of any medium, at least moderate complexity (has at least a few different player actions). Clearly list:
 - a. The fundamental player actions. What are the basic verbs of the game that the player is performing **most often**, moment to moment in the game?
 - b. For each of those actions, describe what choice the player is making and what they are deciding between. Yes or no? Choosing between a set of options?
 - i. What is the meaning of the choice? Risk vs Safety?

For video games, unless the game is all about looking and walking, please exclude camera maneuvering and basic motion from the game. Focus on what makes the game unique. You should cover the basic verbs, but don't need to be exhaustive. For example:

Minecraft:

- Explore
 - The player is choosing where on the map to navigate to in search of more resources (things to mine, sites to build). They are choosing between different areas and biomes, and also choosing when to seek shelter vs press on and venture further from base.
- Harvest
 - The player is choosing how to spend time (and tool durability) collecting resources, which resources to collect and how many. They are also indirectly choosing what items to craft by gathering the resources needed to craft those items.
- Craft
 - The player is choosing which item to craft, how to spend their collected resources by crafting items that will further advance their ability to explore, build, craft and harvest. At a higher level, they are customizing their gameplay experience and choosing their playstyle by investing in tools that will enable them to better fight, build, decorate, survive or craft more.
- Build
 - The player is choosing where to place a block based on aesthetic or functional priorities (or both). They are choosing a block type and a

location for it, but at the higher level, they are choosing what structures to use and what they will look like. Like with crafting, this helps determine their gameplay and playstyle.

2. Create a super simple twine game!

We're breaking our no technology rule, but it's EXTREMELY easy, I promise. You can teach yourself the basics in 2 minutes.

Let's practice designing experiences around player choice! We're going to make the original type of narrative game, a tiny choose your own adventure game / text adventure game. Play at least 15 minutes of some [games made with twine](#) on itch.io as inspiration. This can be 15 minutes of one game, or 15 minutes total of you experimenting with different games.

I particularly recommend this one. Play with sound. (<5 minutes to play):

<https://litrouke.itch.io/please-answer-carefully>

Don't worry too much about your game being good. And don't worry about styling it (unless you really want to). This is mostly an exercise in thinking about what choices are most impactful to offer players. And the tradeoff between offering more flexibility and the exponentially increasing development time.

1. Choose a narrative premise for your game. Can be anything: you're a pirate lost at sea, you're a penn student locked in a bathroom, anything. But you should know:
 - a. Who is the player?
 - b. What situation are they in?
 2. Ask yourself, what are some compelling choices someone in that situation might have to make?
 3. Go to [TWINE](#). You can download an app, or (recommended) just use it directly from the browser.
 - a. WARNING: if you use the browser version, the only way to save is to export your game as a file. Be careful not to lose your progress by closing the browser.
 4. Make a tiny twine game of at least 10 nodes.
 5. When you're done, export your game out as an html file and post to discord along with the rest of this assignment.
3. Now it's time to finalize your mini one-page game design document! The structure remains the same as before, but you should provide updated (based on your changes in the second lab session), more detailed explanations.

This is a **collaborative** team write-up! However, each individual should include the final version in their own submission. Finally, one person from each group should post the final result in the lab-submission channel within the class Discord channel.

Game Title: [Your Game's Title]

Story Theme & Rule Constraint:

- **Theme:** [The theme your group selected]
- **Rule Constraint:** [The constraint your group applied.]

Story Background: Provide an engaging description of the game's setting and narrative. Be sure to include details about the world, the roles of the players, and the motivation behind playing this card game.

New Game Rules: Outline how the core mechanics of Crazy Eights have been adapted to align with the theme and rule constraint. Specify key gameplay rules and interactions that define your modified version.

How the Theme Enhances the Rules: Explain how the chosen theme strengthens the new mechanics and enhances player immersion and engagement.

Final Playtest Reflection: Summarize the main insights from all playtests. Highlight what aspects of the game functioned well, what challenges arose, and any surprising emergent gameplay moments.

4. Provide feedback for 2 other group's versions of Crazy Eight on Discord forum, and 1 other twine game. :) Be friendly and constructive! (Do this by next Thursday midnight)
5. OPTIONAL: If you'd like, as a bonus exercise, describe:
 - a. A time you felt low player agency: how did the game make you feel like you did not have any power to shape your own experience. How?
 - b. A time you felt high player agency.