

VGS GAMEDEV WORKSHOPS

WEEK 1: Conceptions of Games and Game Design

Quick Same Page Check:

“You have a thing, a part of the world, and you have a simulation of that. There’s a gap in between made up by all the differences. **The immersive fallacy is this idea that computer simulation allows us to close this gap and makes these things identical. But this gap is an essential part of how this representation works,** this gap is where the magic happens.

Model airplanes would not be better if they were the same size as airplanes. By the same token, if you think about it, **the incredible sense of freedom created by GTA is created by carefully limiting the actions of the player.**

Even if you could by some magic create this impossible perfect simulation world, where would you be? You’d need to stick a game in there. You’d need to make chess out of the simulation rocks in your world. It’s like going back to square one. I don’t wanna play chess again. I wanna play a game that has the dense simulation and chess combined. This requires a light touch and an understanding of how representation works. This requires respect for the gap. **The gap is part of your toolset.”**

- Frank Lantz, “The Immersive Fallacy” (2005) (Lightly edited)

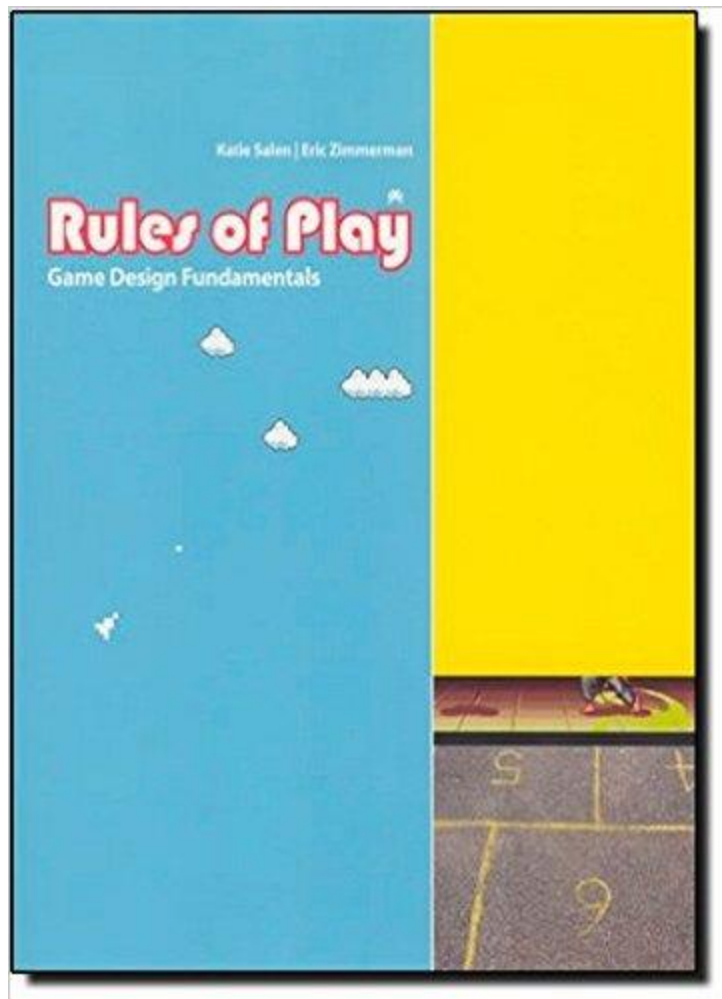
"A game is a series of interesting decisions"
- Sid Meier (Civilization)

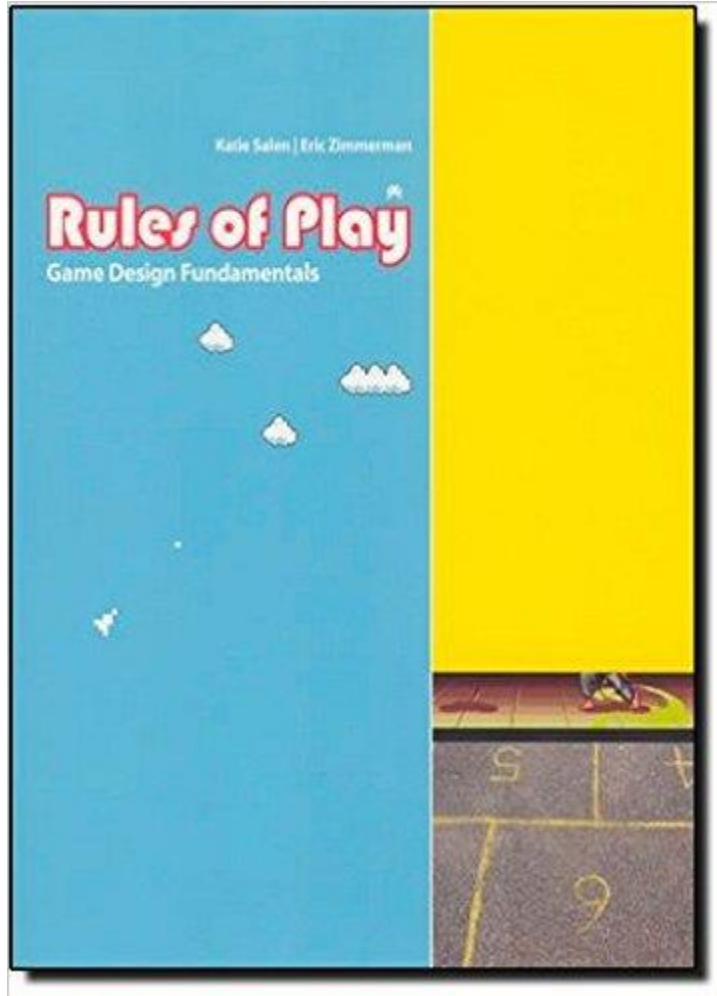
A game is a series of interesting decisions ...?

Kate Salen | Eric Zimmerman

Rules of Play

Game Design Fundamentals





3 facets of games:

RULES

PLAY

CULTURE

RULES:

How does the game function as a formal system?

Eg Chess has more possibilities than checkers.

PLAY:

How do we subjectively experience playing the game?

Eg Playing Twister involves a lot of sexual tension *that's never mentioned in the rules.*

CULTURE:

How does the game interact with the broader context in which it exists?

Eg American Football involves a ton of ritual and drama that's *never mentioned in the rules* and *not an inherent result of humans passing an egg-shaped ball and tackling each other etc.*

EXERCISE:

Think of a game that engages each of these facets.

Bonus for integrating the ideas still to come.

(We'll discuss next week).

OTHER CONCEPTIONS OF GAMES

Johann Huizinga (Homo Ludens, 1939):

- Play is separate from “ordinary” life
- Play is order, and proceeds from defined rules
- Play is connected with no material interest.
- Etc

Eg Law, War, Philosophy, Art

Ian Bogost (Cow Clicker, Georgia Tech) (Play Everything, 2016)

“Play is this process of operating the world, of manipulating things. It's related to experimentation, and it's related to pleasure, but not defined by it.”

Play is not the opposite of work

Eg Mowing the lawn, cleaning, laundry

Frank Lantz (Drop7, NYU) (Hearts and Minds, 2014)

“Games are the aesthetic form of instrumental reason... not reason in the service of aesthetics, not reason alongside aesthetics, but the aesthetic form of choices and actions and outcomes”

Eg Angry Birds, Twine games (hypertext trees),
Speedrunning

Frank Lantz (Drop7, NYU) (Hearts and Minds, 2014)

The game of Half-Life is a game which on its surface is about scientists discovering hidden truths about physics and using that knowledge to warp space and time.

When players speedrun Half-Life they are *actual* scientists discovering *actual* hidden truths about the actual world of Half-Life and using that knowledge to *actually* warp space and time.

Various Common Ideas

Games are about...

...introducing order to a system

...research and experimentation

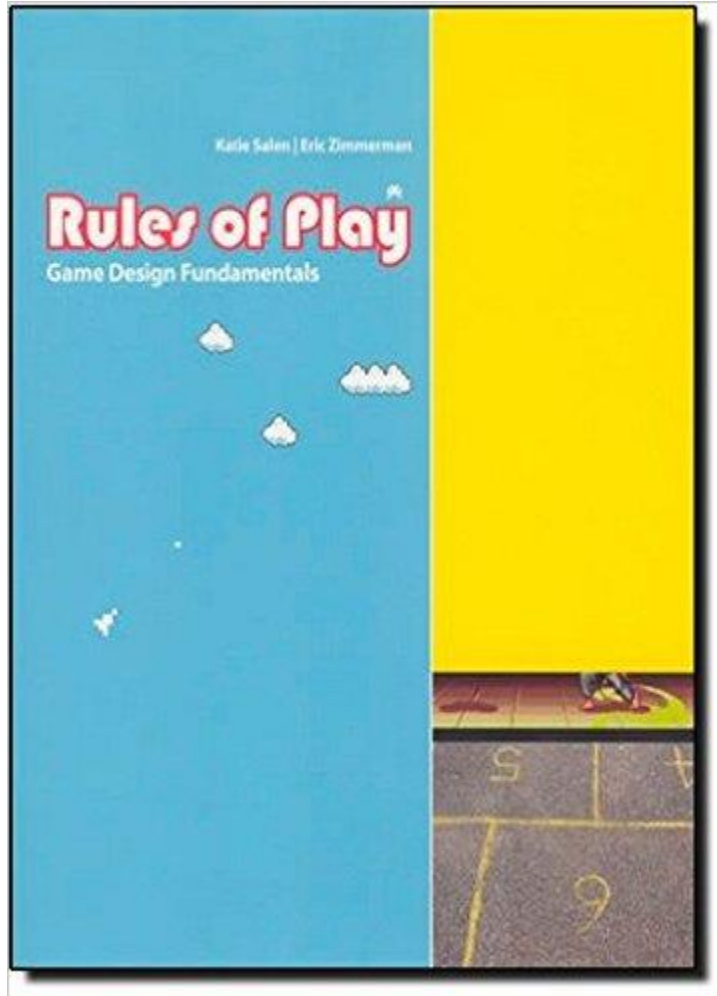
...learning and improving

...pattern matching

...stimulating reward centers in the brain

...occupying/engaging yourself when you're bored

...repetition and ritual



3 facets of games:

RULES

PLAY

CULTURE