

TWO PRIMARY CATEGORIES OF GAMES AND THE ASSOCIATED GAME CHALLENGES

Games are divided into two broad categories based on the way the game is played and the types of challenges found in the game. The two categories are action and strategy. A game **challenge** is a task or contest that must be completed within the scope of game play; it is defined by the skills required by the player to complete it. Most games incorporate action and strategy challenges but give a primary focus to one specific challenge type.

Action Category

Action category is a game category designed to utilize a player's physical and mental ability to react quickly as game play changes. **Action games** are games that primarily utilize time, dexterity, and endurance challenges.

- ◆ A **time challenge** is a contest that limits the amount of time a player is given to accomplish a task.
- ◆ A **dexterity challenge** is a contest that incorporates a physical or mental challenge.
- ◆ An **endurance challenge** is a contest that tests how far a player can continue when no time limits are imposed.

Strategy Category

Strategy category is a game category designed to challenge the player's ability to solve a problem or to use previous knowledge. **Strategy games** are games that primarily use memory, logic, and resource control challenges.

- ◆ A **memory challenge** is a contest designed to test the player's ability to use facts and information provided prior to playing the game. Jeopardy!® is a good example of a memory challenge strategy game.
- ◆ A **logic challenge** is a contest that requires a player to discover and learn during game play. The knowledge gained during game play is then used to problem solve and to complete a task or contest of some sort.
- ◆ A **resource control challenge** is a contest that requires the player to manage limited resources to accomplish a task. The game checkers is a good example of a resource control challenge.

The Eight Major Game Genres

A game **genre** is a way of categorizing games based on the incorporated challenges. Although a game is usually categorized as a particular genre, most games cross genre bound-

aries and include many aspects of several genres during game play. For instance, *The Legend of Zelda™* is primarily an adventure game, but it includes puzzle solving, action, sports, and strategy. Many game genres are broken down into subgenres.

ACTION GAMES

Action games are games that absorb the player into game play by requiring quick reflexes and total concentration to win. Nearly all action games incorporate elements of the adventure game genre. Many subgenres are associated with action games, including the following:



FIGURE 1. The wide variety of video game genres attracts a wide variety of users.

- ◆ Arcade games
 - A limited time allotment prevents a skilled player from tying up the machine.
 - Dedicated machines are common.
- ◆ Scrolling games
 - The character in the game is seen from a side view.
 - The game environment scrolls across the screen.
- ◆ The first-person shooter (**FPS**) games are games often designed around various aspects of war; they are popular among players interested in historic battles.
 - The game world (camera) is seen through the eyes of the avatar, so the avatar is not present in the game environment. The **avatar** is the character in the game that represents the player.
 - Avatars cannot block a player's view.
 - Aim is more precise than in third-person shooter games.
 - Players gather weapons and shoot obstacles and enemies.
- ◆ A third-person shooter (**TPS**) is a subgenre that typically combines the action of a first-person shooter with the ability to scroll the environment.
 - The camera view is typically behind or over the shoulder of the avatar so the avatar is seen as part of the game environment.
 - Avatars can block a player's view.
 - Player interface with the environment is more precise than in an FPS game.

ADVENTURE GAMES

Adventure games are games that create an exciting and adventurous storyline and that require the player to overcome obstacles, fight enemies, and collect items to progress through the story and the game. Progression often involves moving to another level in the game where a new environment is encountered. Many adventure games include aspects from the action game genre.

PUZZLE GAMES

Puzzle games are games that require the player to find a solution to a problem while abiding by a set of game rules. Typically, puzzle games rely heavily on logic and memory challenges. Puzzle games may be fast paced (e.g., Tetris™) or slow moving (e.g., You Don't Know Jack®).

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Role-playing games (**RPG**) are story-driven games in which the player is compelled to accomplish a task before his or her enemy does. In the course of playing an RPG, the player becomes more skilled in various tasks as the game progresses. Typically, the player has more control over resources than in an adventure game.

- ◆ The player encounters an assortment of enemies that challenge him or her to duels and other deadly matches.
- ◆ New discoveries made throughout the game are used in various logic and endurance challenges.
- ◆ These challenges help propel the player toward the ultimate goal.

SIMULATION GAMES

Simulation games are games that recreate some aspect of the real world in a goal-driven and non-threatening manner. Players of simulation games become the ultimate ruler, deciding what will be built, what will be changed, and how problems will be handled. Games such as RollerCoaster Tycoon® and SimCity™ allow the player to see how circumstances in the game change based on player decisions.

SPORTS GAMES

Sports games are games that recreate a real-life sport in a digital world. Madden NFL 10™ is one of the more popular football games on the market.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Game Categories and Genres

The purpose of this activity is to categorize games and to classify the genre. Use the Internet to research each of the game titles listed below in Table 1. For each game, classify the category it falls under in the Category column. Then list its genre in the Genre column. Remember that most games will incorporate aspects of many challenges and genres but will have one main focus.

Game Title	Category	Genre
<i>Legend of Zelda™</i>		
<i>Half-Life®</i>		
<i>Dr. Mario 64®</i>		
<i>Wii Sports®</i>		
<i>Zoo Tycoon®</i>		
<i>Age of Empires II®</i>		
<i>Mario Kart: Double Dash!!®</i>		
<i>Dungeons and Dragons®</i>		

STRATEGY GAMES

Strategy games are games typically based on warfare that put the player in a position of power to make decisions to expand landholdings while maintaining prosperity for the masses.

- ◆ War games recreate military situations, allowing the player to make strategic decisions to determine an outcome. Some war games use historic events combined with fantasy to generate a storyline with monsters, aliens, and other bizarre characters.
- ◆ Real-time strategy games (**RTS**) are games that create an environment in which many actions are happening concurrently. For example, in the process of fighting an enemy, the player may decide to move some ammunition to a new location. During the time taken to make that move, the enemy is also making strategic moves to defend his or her stronghold. RTS games are not based on taking turns. All players are playing the game, making strategic decisions, and acting upon decisions in real time.

VEHICLE GAMES

Vehicle games are games that allow the player to drive some type of vehicle to race, simulate a driving experience, or accomplish a task. Various vehicles are used (e.g., cars, trucks, boats, airplanes, helicopters, and spaceships). Because these games include driving a variety of vehicles for various purposes (e.g., simulation and strategy), vehicle games are generally accepted as a separate genre.



FIGURE 2. Vehicle games are a popular genre.

Summary:



A video game genre and its corresponding category organize it in the wider spectrum of all video games. Games are divided into two broad categories based on the way the game is played and the types of challenges in the game. The two categories are action and strategy.

A game genre is a way of categorizing games based on the challenges incorporated into the game. Although a game is usually categorized as a particular genre, most games cross genre boundaries and include many aspects of several genres during game play. There are eight major types of genres.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Why is the vehicle genre generally accepted as a separate genre rather than including vehicle games as a subgenre of strategy or simulation games?
2. In the category of action games, contrast FPS and TPS games on the following criteria:
 - a. Aim
 - b. Camera
 - c. Avatars
3. Define the term “strategy games,” and give an example.
4. Define the term “adventure games,” and give an example.
5. Define the term “RPG,” and give an example.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Use the Internet and your own personal gaming experience to list games (other than those listed above in the sidebar) by genre and category. Search for games in each genre. Analyze the spectrum of gaming genres. What does it reveal? Assuming games are made to match demand and popularity, what genre is the most well liked?

Web Links:



Video Game Genres

http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/en/Video_game_genres

Computer and Video Game Genres

http://www.sciencedaily.com/articles/c/computer_and_video_game_genres.htm

Video Game Genres: An Overview

http://videogames.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Video_Game_Genres:_An_Overview