# Game Genres and Categories

**Unit:** Game Design

**Problem Area:** Theory of Game Design

**Lesson:** Game Genres and Categories

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

**1** **Describe the two primary categories of games and the associated game challenges.**

**2** **Describe the eight major game genres.**

■ **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Michael, David, and Sande Chen. *Serious Games: Games That Educate, Train, and Inform*. Thomson Course Technology, 2006.

Moore, Michael, and Jennifer Sward. *Introduction to the Game Industry*, Pearson / Prentice-Hall, 2007.

## ■ Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials
- ✓ White board or flip chart

## ■ Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ► action category
- ► action games
- ► adventure games
- ► avatar
- ► challenge
- ► dexterity challenge
- ► endurance challenge
- ► FPS
- ► genre
- ► logic challenge
- ► memory challenge
- ► puzzle games
- ► resource control challenge
- ► RPG
- ► RTS
- ► simulation games
- ► sports games
- ► strategy category
- ► strategy games
- ► time challenge
- ► TPS
- ► vehicle games

## ■ Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

*You will need four brown paper bags. Choose four different movie genres (e.g., action, romance, comedy, and science fiction). Write the name of each genre on a different brown paper bag. Place the bags around the classroom on various tables. Cut several slips of paper—approximately three per student. Write the*

*names of movies students would recognize on each of the slips, and place them in a hat. Then have each student randomly select three slips of paper.*

*Next, have students read the titles and place the slips of paper into the paper bag that best describes the movie. Once students have completed the activity, review the titles placed in each bag and introduce the concept of genres. Hold a class discussion about movie genres, leading the discussion toward game categories and genres.*

# CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

**Objective 1:** Describe the two primary categories of games and the associated game challenges.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the two primary categories of games and the associated game challenges?

I. Game categories—Games are divided into two broad categories based on the way the game is played and the types of challenges found in the game. A game **challenge** is a task or contest that must be completed within the scope of game play and 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. The two broad categories of game categories are action and strategy.

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

      1. A **time challenge** is a contest that limits the amount of time a player is given to accomplish a task.

      2. A **dexterity challenge** is a contest that incorporates a physical or mental challenge.

      3. An **endurance challenge** is a contest that tests how far a player can continue when no time limits are imposed.

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

      1. 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.

2. 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.

3. A *resource control challenge* is a contest that requires the player to manage a limited amount of resources to accomplish a task. The game checkers is a good example of a resource control challenge.

**Teaching Strategy:** *Use VM–A. Have students work in small groups to list as many memory, logic, and resource control challenge contests as possible. You may want to reward the group with the highest number as an incentive.*

**Objective 2:** Describe the eight major game genres.

**Anticipated Problem:** What are the eight major game genres?

II. Game genre—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. 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 sub-genres.

A. **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. There are many sub-genres associated with action games, including the following:

1. Arcade games
   a. A limited time allotment prevents a skilled player from tying up the machine.
   b. Dedicated machines are common.
2. Scrolling games
   a. The character in the game is seen from a side view.
   b. The game environment scrolls across the screen.
3. The first-person shooter (**FPS**) games are game often designed around various aspects of war; they are popular among players interested in historic battles.
   a. 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.
   b. Avatars cannot block a player's view.
   c. Aim is more precise than in third-person shooter games.
   d. Players gather weapons and shoot obstacles and enemies.

4. A third-person shooter (**TPS**) is a sub-genre that typically combines the action of a first-person shooter with the ability to scroll the environment.
   a. The camera view is typically behind or over the shoulder of the avatar so the avatar is seen as part of the game environment.
   b. Avatars can block a player's view.
   c. Player interface with the environment is more process than in an FPS game.

B. **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.

C. **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*®).

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

E. **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.

F. **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.

G. **Strategy games** are games typically based on warfare that put the player in a position of power to make decisions to expand land-holdings, while maintaining prosperity for the masses.
   1. 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.
   2. 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.

H. **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.

**Teaching Strategy:** *Use VM–B to review the eight major game genres. Assign LS–A to have students perform an Internet game search.*

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. Questions at the ends of chapters in the textbook may also be used.

■ **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.

■ **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

### Part One: Matching

1. g
2. a
3. f
4. b
5. e
6. d
7. c
8. h

### Part Two: Short Answer

1. The vehicle genre is generally accepted as a separate genre rather than including vehicle games as a sub-genre of strategy or simulation games; these games include driving a variety of vehicles for various purposes (e.g., simulation and strategy).

2. The action games with first-person shooter (FPS) and third-person shooter (TPS) are contrasted on the following criteria:

    a. Aim—Aim is more precise in an FPS game than in a TPS game.

    b. Camera—FPS games are seen through the avatar, so the avatar is not part of the game environment. TPS game views are typically behind or over the shoulder of the avatar.

    c. Avatars—In FPS games, the avatar cannot block a player's view. In TPS games, avatars can block a player's view, so the avatar is part of the game environment.

## Part Three: True/False

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. F
7. T

Name _____

# Game Genres and Categories

▶ **Part One: Matching**

*Instructions:* **Match the term with the correct definition.**

a. action games
b. adventure games
c. puzzle games
d. RPG

e. simulation games
f. strategy games
g. sports games
h. vehicle games

_____1.   Games that recreate a real-life sport in a digital world

_____2.   Games that absorb the player into game play by requiring quick reflexes and total concentration in order to win

_____3.   Games that are typically based on warfare and put the player in a position of power to make decisions to expand land-holdings while maintaining prosperity for the masses

_____4.   Games that create an exciting and adventurous storyline and require the player to overcome obstacles, fight enemies, and collect items to progress through the story and the game

_____5.   Games that recreate some aspect of the real world in a goal-driven and non-threatening manner

_____6.   Story-driven games in which the player is compelled to accomplish a task before his or her enemy does

_____7.   Games that require the player to find a solution to a problem while abiding by a set of game rules

_____8.   Games that allow the player to drive some type of vehicle to race, simulate a driving experience, or accomplish a task

*Instructions:* **Answer the following.**

1. Why is the vehicle genre generally accepted as a separate genre rather than including vehicle games as a sub-genre 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

▶ **Part Three: True/False**

*Instructions:* **Write *T* for true or *F* for false.**

_____1. A memory challenge requires a player to discover and learn during game play.

_____2. An endurance challenge requires the player to manage limited resources to accomplish a task.

_____3. Games in the strategy category are designed to challenge the player's ability to problem solve or to use previous knowledge.

_____4. A game that incorporates a time challenge limits the amount of time the player has to accomplish a task.

_____5. Aim in a first-person shooter (FPS) game is usually better than in a third-person shooter (TPS) game.

_____6. Real-time strategy (RTS) games are based on players taking turns.

_____7. An avatar is a character in the game that represents the player.

# GAME CATEGORIES AND PRIMARY CHALLENGES

| Action | Strategy |
|---|---|
| **Time challenges**—These challenges limit the amount of time a player has to accomplish a task. | **Memory challenges**—These challenges utilize facts and information provided to the player prior to playing the game. |
| **Dexterity challenges**—These challenges incorporate a physical or mental challenge. | **Logic challenges**—Knowledge gained during game play is used to solve problems and to complete a task. |
| **Endurance challenges**—These challenges test how far a player can continue when no time limits are imposed. | **Resource control challenges**—In these challenges, players must accomplish a task with limited resources. |

Many games incorporate both action and strategy challenges.

# EIGHT MAJOR GAME GENRES

**Action**

**Adventure**

**Puzzle**

**Simulation**

**Sports**

**Vehicle**

**Role-play**

**Strategy**

Name _____

# Internet Game Search

## Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to categorize games and to classify the genre.

## Objectives

1. Categorize games.

2. Classify a game genre for selected game titles.

## Materials

♦ lab sheet
♦ writing utensil

## Procedure

1. Use the Internet to research each of the game titles below.

2. For each game:

   a. Classify the category it falls under in the *Category* column.
   b. List the genre in the *Genre* column.

3. Remember that most games will incorporate aspects of many challenges and genres but will have one main focus.

4. Review your category and genre choices with the class.

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

# Internet Game Search

1. As with most games, those on the lab sheet fall into several genres and cross category boundaries.

2. The answers below reflect the one main focus and most prominent aspect of the games.

| Game Title | Category | Genre |
|---|---|---|
| *Legend of Zelda™* | Action | Adventure |
| *Half-Life®* | Action | Action / first-person shooter |
| *Dr. Mario 64®* | Strategy | Puzzle |
| *Wii Sports®* | Action | Sports |
| *Zoo Tycoon®* | Strategy | Simulation |
| *Age of Empires II®* | Strategy | Strategy / real-time strategy |
| *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!®* | Action | Vehicle |
| *Dungeons and Dragons®* | Strategy | Role-playing game |