

# Games, Toys, and Play

Foundations of Interactive Game Design

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# Upcoming Assignment: Gamelog

- Due Friday (1/12): Gamelog of a game of your choice
- How to do this assignment:
  - ▶ Pick a game
  - ▶ Play it for at least 45-60 minutes
  - ▶ Go to [www.gamelog.cl](http://www.gamelog.cl) (GameLog web site)
  - ▶ Create account on the site (or login)
    - ❖ Click “Want to sign up?” in upper left corner
  - ▶ Browse some existing Gamelogs
    - ❖ Click “Logs”
    - ❖ “Newest Gamelogs” and “Recently Closed” show recent site activity
  - ▶ Create new Gamelog entry
    - ❖ Click “New GameLog” in upper left corner (will appear after login)
    - ❖ Fill in forms with details about your gameplay session
    - ❖ Then, write your initial gamelog entry
      - Click “Write an entry for a GameLog you’ve created”



## GameLog Assignment (Part 2)

- Now that you have Gamelogged the first game session...
- Play the same game **again** for at least 45-60 minutes
- Then, return to the Gamelog site ([www.gamelog.cl](http://www.gamelog.cl))
  - ▶ Login
- View your currently active Gamelogs
  - ▶ Click “View Open GameLogs”
  - ▶ You will see the Gamelog you started at bottom of page
- Click “Add Log Entry” to create new Gamelog
  - ▶ Also need to update Gamelog
    - ❖ Click “Edit or Update” from Open GameLogs page
    - ❖ Modify current status (Finished playing, stopped playing, occasional play, etc.)
    - ❖ Also add your opinion about the game

# Gamelog Assignment (cont'd)

- On Friday, bring your gamelog.cl login id to class
  - ▶ You will write this next to your name on a class roster
  - ▶ Will connect you to your gamelog entries
- If you have questions about the assignment
  - ▶ Ask in class on Wednesday
  - ▶ Send TAs or Professor email
    - ❖ Email addresses on course website (ejw@cs.ucsc.edu)
    - ❖ <http://www.soe.ucsc.edu/classes/cms080k/Winter07/>
  - ▶ Found a bug, hit a technical problem?
    - ❖ Email Jose Zagal (jpszagal AT gmail DOT com)
- Collaborate!
  - ▶ We encourage you to read other entries, and comment on them
- Internalize
  - ▶ Feel free to use this site for all of your ongoing gameplay

# Games, Toys, and Play

- Goal of today's class: explore different **definitions** of games, toys, and play
- We all share strong intuitions about these concepts
  - ▶ But often have difficulty expressing these intuitions
- Purpose of developing definitions:
  - ▶ To be more precise and articulate about these concepts
  - ▶ Provide a framework for analyzing games and toys
    - ❖ That is, definitions give you interesting questions to ask
  - ▶ Points in new directions
    - ❖ By understanding what is generally considered to be a toy or a game, can push against the boundaries, and explore new game and toy concepts
  - ▶ Develop understanding of ingrained biases about games
    - ❖ Costikyan's definition of games states that games are art—are they?

# Briefly, Play

- Children often play, a free-form activity that is mostly not rule-based
  - ▶ A child playing with dolls, trains, trucks, blocks, running around with friends
  - ▶ Often some rules
    - ❖ That baby is sleeping (so don't wake it!)
    - ❖ Avoid the boiling hot lava rocks!
  - ▶ Sometimes fixed goals
    - ❖ Building a specific structure (fire station for a fire truck)
  - ▶ But, mostly marked by fluidity of rules and goals
    - ❖ Children have fickle minds and short attention spans

# Games, Play, Toys

- A rough distinction between games and toys
  - ▶ Games are rule-based, toys are not
  - ▶ But, doesn't address toy-like computer games that have rules but not strong goals
- Games and play
  - ▶ Play is free-form
  - ▶ Games are a subset of play that is rule-based
- But, games make it possible to play them
  - ▶ So play is a part of games

# Traditional Definitions

- Traditional view of definitions
  - ▶ Express a series of characteristics
  - ▶ Items matching all characteristics belong to the category
  - ▶ Miss a single characteristic: not part of category
  - ▶ Characteristics create firm boundaries
    - ❖ Provide necessary and sufficient conditions
  - ▶ All members of category meet all definitions



- Example: chair

- ▶ must have surface for sitting
- ▶ must have surface for supporting back
- ▶ must be supported off of floor

Chair or fountain?



# Prototype Theory

- Some members of a category are more central than others
- Eleanor Rosch study
  - ▶ Cognitive Representation of Semantic Categories, 1975
  - ▶ Asked 200 college students to rank, on scale of 1 to 7
    - ❖ Whether they considered items to be good representatives...
    - ❖ ... of the class of **furniture**
  - ▶ Resulting ranks:
    - ❖ 1 chair
    - ❖ 1 sofa
    - ❖ 3 couch
    - ❖ 3 table
    - ❖ ...
    - ❖ 50 stove
    - ❖ 54 refrigerator

# Are these games?

- Consider these activities:
  - ▶ Children playing with dolls
  - ▶ Jumping rope
  - ▶ Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  - ▶ Russian roulette
  - ▶ Playing Monopoly
  - ▶ Driving
- Take a moment and give each a number from 1 to 7
  - ▶ 1: is very strong example of a game
  - ▶ 7: is very weak example of a game
- *Poll class for results*



Kaba Kick: Russian roulette “for kids.” Instead of bullets, a pair of feet come out the barrel. If gun doesn’t fire, player earns points.

Source: [209.180.204.251/russian-roulette/index.html](http://209.180.204.251/russian-roulette/index.html)

# Challenges in creating definitions of games

- What are unique qualities that make a game a game?
- How to differentiate games from play, conflict, and merely rule governed activities?
- Some qualities of games
  - ▶ Has rules
  - ▶ Has a goal
  - ▶ Involves decision making
  - ▶ Safe, outside of ordinary life
  - ▶ Voluntary
  - ▶ Outcome is uncertain
- Ideally, definitions of games should address these

# Clark Abt Definition

- In *Serious Games*, Clark C. Abt defines games as follows:

Reduced to its formal essence, a game is an *activity* among two or more independent *decision-makers* seeking to achieve their *objectives* in some *limiting context*. A more conventional definition would say that a game is a context with rules among adversaries trying to win objectives.

- Key elements of definition

- ▶ **Activity**

- ❖ Game is a series of actions taking place over time

- ▶ **Decision makers**

- ❖ People playing the game are actively making decisions

- ▶ **Objectives**

- ❖ There is a goal to the game, a desired outcome

- ▶ **Limiting context**

- ❖ Rules exist that structure and limit the activity of the game

# Abt Definition Applied

Reduced to its formal essence, a game is an *activity* among two or more independent *decision-makers* seeking to achieve their *objectives* in some *limiting context*.

- How does this definition apply to the six activities from earlier this lecture?
  - ▶ Children playing with dolls
  - ▶ Jumping rope
  - ▶ Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  - ▶ Russian roulette
  - ▶ Playing Monopoly
  - ▶ Driving
- Which of these would Abt consider to be a game?

# Costikyan Definition

A game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in pursuit of a goal.

- **Key elements**

- ▶ **Art**

- ❖ Games are a form of art, hence creating culture

- ▶ **Decision making players**

- ❖ Players actively participating and making choices

- ▶ **Resource management**

- ❖ Decisions made depend on resources available, and manipulate resources

- ▶ **Game tokens**

- ❖ Representation of the state of the game, affordances for user action

- ▶ **Goal**

- ❖ Objective of the game

# Costikyan Definition Applied

A game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in pursuit of a goal.

- Apply to class list of activities
  - ▶ Children playing with dolls
  - ▶ Jumping rope
  - ▶ Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  - ▶ Russian roulette
  - ▶ Playing Monopoly
  - ▶ Driving
- Which of these would Costikyan consider to be a game?

# Jesper Juul's Classic Game Definition

- From *Half-Real*, Jesper Juul, MIT Press, 2005, p. 36
- **Rules**
  - ▶ Games are rule-based
- **Variable, quantifiable outcome**
  - ▶ Games have varying endings, with different numbers assignable to specific outcomes
- **Valorization of outcome**
  - ▶ The different potential outcomes of the game are assigned different values, some positive and some negative
- **Player effort**
  - ▶ The player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome
    - ❖ Games are challenging
-

# Juul's Classic Game Definition (2)

- **Player attached to outcome**

- ▶ The player is emotionally attached to the outcome of the game in the sense that a player will be a “winner” and happy in case of a positive outcome, but a loser and “unhappy” in case of a negative outcome.

- **Negotiable consequences**

- ▶ The same game [set of rules] can be played with or without real-world consequences.
- ▶ Examples
  - ❖ Poker: Can play this game without betting real money. Once money is bet, the game has real-world consequences.
  - ❖

# Application of Juul's Classic Game Definition

- Juul's Classic Game Definition (overview):
  - ▶ Rules
  - ▶ Variable, quantifiable outcome
  - ▶ Valorization of outcome
  - ▶ Player effort
  - ▶ Player attached to outcome
  - ▶ Negotiable consequences
- Apply to set of six activities
  - ▶ Children playing with dolls
  - ▶ Jumping rope
  - ▶ Using a slot machine in Las Vegas
  - ▶ Russian roulette
  - ▶ Playing Monopoly
  - ▶ Driving