



Game Type and Game Genre

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Game Type

Although sometimes used interchangeably in the industry, there is a distinct difference between game type and game genre in video games. When discussing game story, we distinguish **game type** as a *description of game play*, and **game genre** as a *description of the narrative content of the game*.

The following is brief list of game types:

Action:

Games that offer *intensity of action* as the primary attraction.

Reflex response is the primary skill needed to play these games well. The most common action games are shooters (Doom) and stealth (Metal Gear). Action games also include most sports titles, although some sports titles fall into the category of simulation.

Adventure:

Games that offer *exploration and puzzle solving* as the main attraction.

These games historically offered the most engrossing story, although their popularity has declined in the last 2 decades. Reasoning, creativity, and curiosity are the most common skills required of a good adventure game player. Pioneer adventure games include Myst and Syberia.

Puzzle:

Games that offer puzzles as the primary attraction to games. These games are most commonly released on low budgets via the web.

The people who play these games tend to be the oldest population of the game playing community. One of the most successful puzzle games is the famed Tetris, Lemmings and Minesweeper. I.Q. Intelligent Cube was another interesting puzzle game of limited success.

Role Playing:

Games that offer the player an opportunity to immerse themselves in the player character's situation.

Role Playing Games (RPG) continue their rich history in storytelling by embracing innovative ways to vary and report story. Characters tend to be rich, game play is long, and character management is technical in RPGs. Famous RPGs include, Baldour's Gate, Fable, Might and Magic, Neverwinter Nights, Ultima, and World of Warcraft.

Simulation:

The primary game play element of a simulation is its ability to match real world situations.

Simulations seek to provide enjoyment through reenactment. Combat simulations and racecar simulations are relatively popular in this game type. Simulations may also include social situation simulation such as Sims and Leisure Suit Larry¹. Major games include Gran Turismo and the Tycoon games.

Strategy:

Strategy games entertain through reasoning and problem solving.

Early strategy games (e.g. Civilization) did not use much storytelling, although more recent games rely heavily on quality narrative. Games such as Command and Conquer are examples of story based strategy games.

¹ OK, so Leisure Suit Larry does not “match real world situations” but it is still a simulation. This is also true of spaceship simulations or games that simulate the experience of piloting, organizing, or being an object that may have no real world equivalent.

Game Genre

Game genre describes the way the story is told. A genre is a narrative style that effects the structure of the story, the depth of character, and other storytelling elements.

The following is a list of game genres. The genre's roughly translate to the genres of film and television. For anyone roughly familiar with pop culture they should not require an explanation:

Genre	Example
Drama	Max Payne
Crime	Grand Theft Auto
Fantasy	Kingdom Hearts, Fable
Horror	Resident Evil
Mystery	Indigo Prophecy
Science Fiction	Doom, Half Life
War and Espionage	Metal Gear Solid, Ghost Recon
Western / Eastern / Frontier	Red Dead Revolver, Ninja Gaiden

This is not a comprehensive list. There could be, for example, a game genre for romance or history, but these are not listed here.

Multiple Game Types and Game Genres Combined:

It is important to realize that few modern games fall neatly into a single category of game type and game genre. Modern games take the best of all worlds and incorporate them into a thoroughly entertaining collection of game mechanics and storytelling conventions. The Grand Theft Auto series, for example, could be described as having a crime, fantasy genre and an action, role-playing game type.

