
Wolf spends this chapter discussing the idea of time in video games and compares it other mediums as well as analyzing the effects that time has had on the development and play style of games.

Key Points:

- Films have physical aspects as non-diegetic aspects showing that time is passing (such as the random flickers on screen or the black dot in the corner), while games utilize ambient acts to present this feeling.

- Video games are designed to have cyclical actions in time, as they are designed to be played more than once.
  - A careful balance has to be reached between randomness and predictability, otherwise the game becomes too difficult as there is no way to get better at it if it is truly random, or the game becomes boring as everything you do is predictable.

- Interludes, title scenes, cutscenes etc. are all used for pacing purposes, but the pacing can be due to mechanical limitations (IE: load time), narrative advancement, or giving the player a break.
  - However, too many of these pauses leads the player into starting to think that he/she has no real involvement in the outcome of the game, especially since the player has no real control over how long the 'game' is going to last.

- The relationship between game time and real time is a key aspect of video games, and is the combination of both pacing dictated by the player and pacing dictated by the computer.
  - Differences in how much each is controlled serves as an important dictator as to what genre a game can be in. Arcade games are purely player dictated and are very fast paced, while home games are slower paced and often include pause and save functions.

- In some games, time can be a resource that is continually eaten up by the game itself, while in others, you have as much as you need to accomplish a given task. By emphasizing one over the other, the game can suggest either quick reaction vs. thorough thought.
  - With better technology, more and more diegetic symbols of time passing are implemented into games (clocks in games, day/night cycles), and can affect gameplay.

Analysis:

Wolf brings up several interesting points about the temporal aspects of games. The one that struck me as the most interesting is the analysis of the relationship between real time and game time, and how important this is to all aspects of the game. While we have discussed how cutscenes are used for pacing purposes, it seems to me that the relationship of real and game time encompasses that discussion. After all, cutscenes are small (or large) moments where game and real time are synchronized to fully immerse the player.

What I believe is significant to our class is the idea that in RPGs, there is often ample opportunity to go and do 'nothing.' In this sense, the game time and real time are entirely desynchronized. In Final Fantasy VII, there are many times where game time will refuse to advance until you have talked to certain characters. Does this break the sense of immersion, or are we already committed to the idea of the stop and go of actual game time advancement?