



A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

USEFUL TO THOSE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED WITH VIDEO GAMES

Analog stick

This is a miniature joystick that comes up from the controller, and is usually in a position where pushing it with your thumb (often there are two, one for each thumb) is the most natural way to use it. Typically, in a first-person view, one analog stick will control the direction your character walks, while the other will control what direction you are looking (or where you are pointing your gun).

Action/adventure

Mario! Typically 1 player, if 2 player then they alternate so not as engaging/multiplayer as other games.

Backward Compatibility

Console-makers have realized that their older games are still very popular; however, you may not have room to leave both your Game Cube and your Wii hooked up to your TV all the time. A popular feature in some of today's systems, including hand-held systems, is "backward compatibility," or the ability of new hardware to play old software. The PlayStation 2 will play all the games made for the original PlayStation, and some PlayStation 3 versions will play PS1 and PS2 games - but not all, so it's vital to check in advance if this feature is important to you. The Wii will play all GameCube games and the Nintendo DS Lite (but not the DSi) will play Game Boy Advance Games. The Xbox 360 will play some but not all original Xbox games.



Boss

Older platformer-type games such as *Mario* or *MegaMan* typically had levels or worlds that culminated in a "boss fight," or an encounter with a large, challenging enemy. The music would usually change at this point in the level, signifying the importance of the fight. A common trait of boss fights is that the screen stops scrolling and you become trapped in a defined area with the boss (usually the size of one screen, or slightly larger). Often, beating a boss rewards you with a related power (ie beat Bubble Man in *Mega Man*, get Bubble Lead weapon).



Button-masher

A style of play - or an insult - typically used when playing real-life opponents in fighting games. Fighting games have powerful moves that are triggered by pressing a precise combination of buttons, sometimes in strings of four or more. Rather than memorizing and perfecting these moves (which differ for each character), some players simply hit buttons at a high speed. Players who have taken the time to learn the characters' moves may be insulted if they lose to someone they perceive as a 'button-masher.'

Casual game / casual gamer

With the explosion in popularity of portable electronics such as the iPod, the BlackBerry, and even just the proliferation of computers, we have seen a rise in what are called "casual" games. These games are often puzzle-based and involve fairly simple, repetitive motions such as matching all the marbles of one colour, finding words in a jumble of letters, or shooting coloured balls to make matching sequences. They fit the demand for time-wasting games while students take a break from work or are commuting on a bus. Many websites have sprung up with flash-based games to cater to the needs of these consumers. The games are usually free to play (though some are distributed under the shareware model, and there are successful subscription sites), but make their money through advertising. Facebook, a social networking site, has integrated games into its site with its "App" program. Any developer can create a game that will run on Facebook, and users can play it free of charge. There is a huge market for casual gaming and since games are usually simple (and thus cheap to make), they reach a wider audience than a more involved, expensive game would. Developers of casual games are eager to expand into all areas of the market, such as young kids (WebKinz), women of all ages, and older adults. Examples: *Snood*, *Diner Dash*, *TextTwist*, *Collapse!*

Cheat Code

The "Konami Code" is famous among gamers for working with a range of games developed by Konami in the 1980s and 1990s. The code, which you may recognize in popular culture if you keep an eye out, is up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A. It produced different reactions in different games, from a full set of power-ups in *Gradius* to 30 lives in *Contra*. While not advertised by the games or included in instructional materials, word of the Konami Code spread among gamers in order to help them beat these challenging video games. Other cheat codes exist for other games, giving powers such as invincibility, unlimited time, and other fun advantages. In the years before it was possible to save your progress, games often issued passwords once you had achieved certain milestones. If these were shared, it was also



possible to pop in a game and start with different weapons or accomplishments.



Clan

A group of players who regularly play together in a multiplayer game. They can range from groups of a few friends to 1000-person organizations, and have a broad range of structures, goals and members. The lifespan of a clan can vary considerably, lasting from a few weeks or months to several years. Numerous clans exist for nearly every online game available today, notably in first-person shooters, massively multiplayer games, role-playing games, and strategy games. Each have their own goals and game play preferences, though these too are transitory, depending entirely on the active members.

Console

As opposed to a PC game, played on a computer and displayed on a monitor, when people say “console” they are generally referring to a piece of dedicated hardware designed primarily for video game playing which plugs into the TV. With the current generation of systems, the line between a console and a computer is blurring even further, with all three major systems having internet capabilities (you can download an Opera browser made specifically for the Wii) - both for online gaming and general browsing - as well as other features such as photo galleries, news and weather updates, etc. The three major console systems in the market today are the Wii (Nintendo), the PlayStation 3 (Sony), and the Xbox360 (Microsoft). Like computers, consoles also typically have multimedia functionality. The original PlayStation has been called one of the best audio CD players ever made. The current PlayStation will play audio CDs, DVDs, and Blu-Ray discs, which is Sony’s proprietary high-definition format. The Xbox will also play movies and has teamed up with NetFlix and other services to legally download movies and television shows, which cost extra in addition to the monthly cost of subscribing to Xbox Live, which is their online service. In order to take advantage of these features, users must also have a high speed internet connection.

Controller

This is how you input directions to the game, or “control” your character or agent on-screen. In the early days, a controller consisted of one joy-stick and possibly one or two buttons; some controllers now have more than a dozen buttons. Pressed in different combinations, they can signal different actions to the game.

Controllers between systems are vastly different and are not compatible with each other. Some are “wired,” meaning they must be plugged in to the system and draw their power from it. The advantage of wired controllers is not having to charge or buy batteries; the disadvantage is being tethered a certain distance from the screen (especially bad in more active games such as *Guitar Hero*). Wireless controllers either have a built-in battery that is charged by plugging it in to the system or another power source, or run on normal batteries (double-As, usually) that can be purchased almost anywhere (rechargeable batteries also work and are a good investment).

Controllers for the current generation of systems are quite expensive; approximately \$50 each. If you need to purchase three additional controllers for your system - most only come with one these days - you could be adding \$150-\$225 to the cost of your system depending on which one you choose.

Cut scene

A cinematic sequence within the game, where the player no longer has control of the character. These are normally reserved for dramatic points in the game, such as the beginning and the end, as well as major developments in the story. Cut scenes normally feature better graphics than the game play, because they do not receive input from the player and do not have to be generated in real time. They are created in advance and just played when a triggering event happens. *Metal Gear Solid 4*, a recent and very popular game for the PS3, received criticism because it contains approximately seven hours of cut scenes, and struck a deal with reviewers that they could only review the game in advance if they did not mention this, fearing it would dissuade players.



D-pad or direction pad

Like the analog stick, the D-pad is a common way of inputting direction to the game. It usually consists of four buttons: on up, one down, one left, and one right. Many current controllers have both a D-pad and an analog stick because some games - and some players - work better with one than the other.

DLC

Now that all the consoles can connect to the internet, downloadable media, including add-ons to games, is becoming very popular. DLC tends to consist of new tracks for music games, additional maps or levels, or even just different clothing and accessories for your characters. These purchases are completed over the internet via the console, using a credit card. They tend to cost between \$1-\$20.

Easter egg

A hidden feature, message, or joke embedded in the game, that is not normally accessible. Sometimes unlocked by pressing a sequence of buttons while being in the right place, they can reward players with running jokes. One infamous easter egg was the “hot coffee” minigame in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, which, when hacked in order to access, began an intercourse-based minigame.

Expansion pack

An addition to a game you've already purchased. "Expansion pack" normally refers to the physical media form (for example, a new CD for a PC game). When purchasing games, check the box carefully to see whether it is a full game or merely an expansion pack, because if you don't already own the main game, an expansion pack will be useless to you. Expansions tend to contain additional maps or upgrades.

Fighter/fighting game

A type of game where two or more characters attack each other on screen. The designated area is usually quite small, only several screens wide or high at most. Players have some kind of damage gauge or life bar, which declines as they are attacked. Moves are performed by pressing buttons in a particular sequence. These games usually have options, including the ability to set the level of blood and gore, the strength of a character's attacks (to even out the game if one player is much better than the other, if desired), and whether or not items randomly appear during the fight. Examples: *Street Fighter*, *Super Smash Bros.*, *Mortal Kombat*.

First-party developer

An in-house game development group that creates software exclusively for the parent company's system, for example, Nintendo develops games for its consoles such as the Wii and the DS, which are not available on any other platform.

First-person shooter (FPS)

Can be multiplayer online – very popular and sophisticated now. Play against other real-life players rather than AI. More fun. Some people make clans. Have practices together – it's like a video game team. Examples: *Counter Strike*, *Half-Life*, *Team Fortress*, *Quake*.

Griefing

This is a player activity found in MMOGs in which a player does not play to achieve the goals set by the game, but instead harasses other players. This harassment may be in the form of stalking, insults, or the exploitation of unintentional game mechanics. Most MMOG staff define griefing as 1. the abuse of a game mechanic not intended by the developer; 2. the inability of a victim to get retribution without using game mechanics; and 3. the purpose of a griefing act must be to negatively impact the gameplay of another player.

Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO/MMORPG)

World of Warcraft is the most prominent example, with over 11 million subscribers. Subscribers pay about \$15 a month to play on the company's servers, with millions of other people. They form guilds and complete quests. MMOs typically have chat support, including voice chat, text communication, and quick canned messages. They're very social – people meet and can become friends, playing together as a group at designated times. Examples: *Diablo*, *World of Warcraft*, *Guild Wars*.

n00b

Has the same meaning as "newbie." It implies an obvious newness to the game that is illustrated by a player's lack of knowledge and skill.

Nintendo DS, DS Lite, DSi

Nintendo's hand-held, portable console. The DS has two screens: one that you touch with a stylus, and a regular one. Units can communicate with each other when they are in close proximity, allowing a group of people with DSes to chat and play games together. There have been three versions of it since its original release, and the DSi now incorporates a camera and internet capabilities, among other improvements.

Peripheral

An additional component for the system or game, that is either required to play certain games (drums, guitar) or enhances the experience of playing a game (wheel for the Wii remote). Includes devices such as USB keyboards and memory cards.

Platform

A term used to refer to which piece of equipment a game is available on. The Wii is a platform, as is a PC or a Mac.

Platformer

Usually an action/adventure, side-scrolling type of game where much of the gameplay depends on successfully running and jumping between horizontal surfaces (ascending platforms, moving platforms, small landing areas). Players often have to avoid gaps, spikes, and moving objects such as fireballs, while collecting other items like rings or coins.

Puzzle game

Puzzle games tend to be single-player. They often don't require much of a time commitment, and have progressively more difficult levels. These are popular types of games to create for emerging platforms, such as mobile phones and social networking sites. Examples: *Bejeweled*, *Mah Jong*, *World of Goo*.

Real-time strategy (RTS)

One of the most popular PC games of all time is *StarCraft*, which came out in 1998 and is still played widely today, even professionally. The long-anticipated sequel, *StarCraft 2*, is in development. In these games players usually assemble both a base and an army, which require resources. You play with/against other players or a computer, and the goal is usually to eliminate the other player's base and army. RTS is the opposite of turn-based game, where each player can perform a limited number of actions before his or her turn ends. With RTS, there are no pauses and all players are performing actions concurrently. Examples: *Age of Empires*, *StarCraft*.

Role-playing game (RPG)

You create a character and can often control how they look, what they're wearing, their attributes – a common way of doing this is having a set number of points, which the player distributes among various traits such as strength, intelligence, agility, etc. Game play is often very loose, with quests and objectives that can be completed on the player's own timeline. Characters in RPGs tend to have hit points (a health meter) that increase when you gain levels. Levels are dependent on experience points, which are typically gained from winning fights. RPGs are known to have a large cast of characters and lots of dialogue, which means reading and/or listening frequently. Examples: *Final Fantasy* series, *Chrono Trigger*, *Mass Effect*.

Rhythm/music/physical game

This genre has experienced a huge jump in popularity the last few years, which some believe has crested. They tend to be an excellent choice for a tournament game because they're performance based, and people like playing and watching. Nintendo has created a peripheral called a balance board, which comes with *WiiFit*, but can be used with other games like snowboarding. As motion-sensing capabilities grow, expect more physical games. Examples: *Parapa the Rapper*, *Guitar Hero*, *Rock Band*, *Dance Dance Revolution*.

Sports game

Very popular for people who are into pro sports. The licensed games mirror the current league composition, which players like if they have a favourite team or favourite players. In *NHL 2K9*, you can choose Carey Price, Alex Ovechkin, Sidney Crosby, and any other NHL player, thanks to an agreement between the NHL and developer 2k Sports. Some games thrive on this realism, while others are more fun like *Mario Kart* or *Mario Strikers Charged*. Sports games aren't just for the major leagues: there are snowboarding and skateboarding games. *Mirror's Edge*, a parkour-based game, was named one of the top games of 2008.

Simulation game

These mirror real life in some way, often involve money or other limited resources, and responsibility. Typically, instruments or sections of the screen will give feedback to the player - a happiness meter, an altimeter, a population count, etc. Examples: Flight simulators, People simulators (*The Sims*), universe simulators (*Spore*), *Roller Coaster Tycoon*, *Nintendogs*.

Shareware

It is copyrighted commercial software that is distributed through download from an Internet site or off a disc without payment. It is usually for a trial basis, often limited by functionality, availability or convenience, and for the purpose of giving a buyer the opportunity to use the program and decide if the purchase of a full version would be useful.

Shovelware

A derogatory term, it refers to software noted for the quantity of what is included instead of the quality or usefulness. The term is also refers to software that is moved from one computer platform to another with little to no thought on adapting it for use on the destination platform.

Third-party developer

A game-developing company that can have an agreement with a console company, but is not part of that company. They are free to develop games for any system, and sometimes develop games for all systems, including consoles and PC. Activision Blizzard, using subsidiary developers, has released *Guitar Hero III* on six different platforms: the three current-gen consoles, the PS2, PC and Mac. An example of a third-party developer with exclusive relationships is Square Enix, which used to have an exclusive relationship with Nintendo (the first games in the *Final Fantasy* series came out for the NES and the SNES), but began releasing games exclusively on Sony systems beginning with *Final Fantasy VII*.

