

On the Way to Fun

**An Emotion-Based Approach to
Successful Game Design**

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Preface

I spent the last few weeks commuting to and from work on the bus while carefully studying *The Art of Computer Game Design* by Chris Crawford [Crawford 84]. Needless to say, I enjoyed that pioneering book tremendously, not only for the actual contents, which are still mostly valid and able to make us really *think* about game design, but also for Crawford's concision and synthesis skills. In just about 80 pages, he could clearly explain his ideas. Crawford's book was the first one dedicated to videogame design. Countless more followed and today game design books are getting extremely comprehensive, insightful, and...massive.

This is obviously very exciting for all of us who have an interest in games, whether as a profession or as a hobby. But for those who, like me, keep trying to squeeze reading and studying into our busy daily work schedules, reading a 1000+ page tome on a crowded bus or subway train isn't an easy task at all! This was one of my concerns when I started writing this little book. I wanted to be as concise and focused as possible and deliver my message in a small, agile book that could easily be carried around and read anywhere whenever there are five minutes free.

With respect to the actual contents, my objective was to provide some food for thought by clarifying which emotions and instincts are particularly relevant within the gaming medium and how they can interact with each other to enhance the gaming experience. This can hopefully help us with the oldest design problem of all—how to make a “fun” game—by giving us a fresh perspective on how to properly design and develop gameplay ideas in a way that makes these interactions straightforward and natural.

In doing this, I wanted to recall some old and fond memories in those who, like me, are old enough to have witnessed the beginning of our industry. I also hoped to excite some curiosity among the new generations by analyzing several case studies coming from the so-called “retro gaming” scene, in particular by focusing on those games that were published between the late seventies and mid-eighties.

Overall, this book was written for aspiring and beginning game designers who want to know a little more about human nature, emotions, and instincts and their important place in designing games. I am also confident that, by formalizing concepts in a simple and straightforward way that were usually left to academic studies, the book may even be of some help to more experienced professionals by making them aware of something they may well have already used, but only at a subconscious level thanks to their own personal intuition and skills.

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