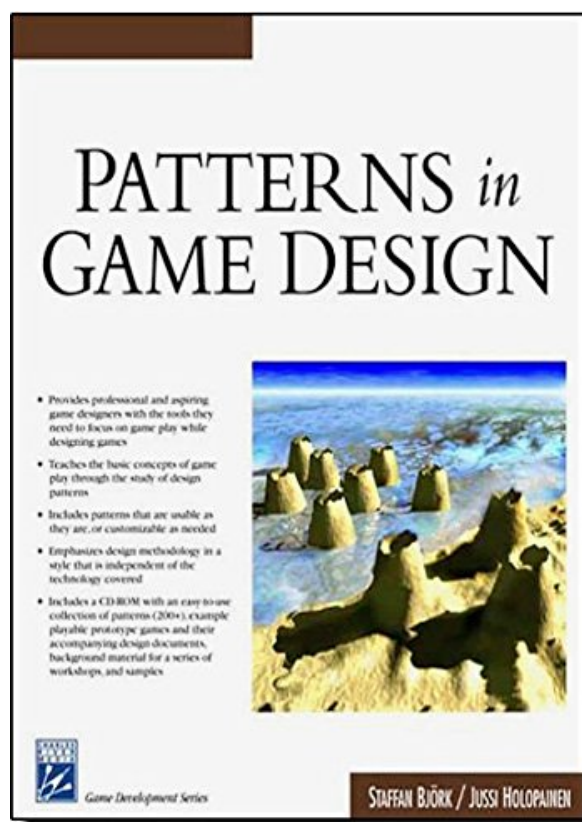


PATTERNS IN GAME DESIGN (GAME DEVELOPMENT SERIES) (CHARLES RIVER MEDIA GAME DEVELOPMENT) BY STAFFAN BJORK, JUSSI HOLOPAINEN



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PATTERNS *in* GAME DESIGN

- Provides professional and aspiring game designers with the tools they need to focus on game play while designing games
- Teaches the basic concepts of game play through the study of design patterns
- Includes patterns that are usable as they are, or customizable as needed
- Emphasizes design methodology in a style that is independent of the technology covered
- Includes a CD-ROM with an easy-to-use collection of patterns (200+), example playable prototype games and their accompanying design documents, background material for a series of workshops, and samples



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About the Author

Staffan Bjork has a Ph.D. in Informatics from Goteborg University, Sweden. He has been the studio manager of the Play studio at the Interactive Institute in Sweden between 2001 and 2003 and currently works part time as senior researcher at Play and part time at Chalmers University of Technology. He has authored many articles about game development. Jussi Holopainen is a Research Scientist at Nokia Research Center, Tampere, Finland. He is one of the founding members and the current (2003) treasurer of Digital Games Research Association (<http://www.digra.org>). He is also a member of the steering board of Neogames, a Finnish game development and promotion organization.

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Patterns in Game Design provides professional and aspiring game designers with a collection of practical design choices that are possible in all types of games. These choices, called patterns, are used to illustrate the varying types of gameplay found in games. For the purposes of this book, gameplay is defined as the structures of player interaction with the game system and interaction with other players. This includes the possibilities, results, and reasons for players to play. By putting these elements of gameplay into practical patterns, designers have access to a common set of concepts that can be used by all developers, allowing game projects to be approached with more standard tools. These patterns help designers put their concepts and ideas into words, which makes communication between members much easier. The patterns also help with making design choices, understanding how other games work, and inspiring game ideas. The book itself is divided into two main parts. The first part covers the theoretical aspects of describing games and defining the template used to develop the game design patterns. The second part includes the actual patterns divided into chapters based on the aspect of gameplay they cover. The patterns can be used in any order and referenced as you would a dictionary. By studying these various game design patterns, designers learn about the choices they'll have to make when using a pattern in their own designs, and they'll gain an understanding of what gameplay is, so that they can design better games.

- Sales Rank: #2389909 in Books
- Published on: 2004-12-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.00" h x 7.40" w x 9.28" l, 2.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 423 pages

About the Author

Staffan Bjork has a Ph.D. in Informatics from Goteborg University, Sweden. He has been the studio manager of the Play studio at the Interactive Institute in Sweden between 2001 and 2003 and currently works part time as senior researcher at Play and part time at Chalmers University of Technology. He has authored many articles about game development. Jussi Holopainen is a Research Scientist at Nokia Research Center, Tampere, Finland. He is one of the founding members and the current (2003) treasurer of Digital Games Research Association (<http://www.digra.org>). He is also a member of the steering board of Neogames, a Finnish game development and promotion organization.

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19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Don't be misled by the name

By Ravinunt A. Sudangnoi

Don't be misled by the name of this book, it is not "Design Patterns in Games" it is "Patterns in Game

Design." Many of the people below have misread the title and have bought it before doing their research.

This is a book on game design, on a method of formal analysis that needs more attention in the game design world. Some people are afraid that if we list all game elements to pick and choose from, we'd end up with stale mass produced games. This is NOT true, please don't be misled by this thought. Not only does that thought not prevent stale badly made mass produced games to begin with, but like many other structured artistic works (TV, Literature, and the like) games can benefit from a defined lexicon of elements (Patterns in this book). Recognizing the things that games share in common with each other can help you to find what it is that makes a game unique.

Like literature, everything under the sun has pretty much been done already in games. While there are some elements that have yet to be discovered in games, no matter what communication between Designer and Player still requires familiar elements to encourage play and game mastery. Because of this, there will likely be no completely contrary game. A game that is completely different from all other games (I mean shares NO elements in common with any other game), is likely to be a bad one. Just like a movie that shared no elements in common with all other movies would likely be unsuccessful.

Simply because these elements exist and are strictly defined does not require you to follow them strictly, the point is to use the pattern as a starting point to adapt, combine and create using the components given to you, much like programming you can use these abstract tools to create things of great complexity. The elements in the book are described thoroughly and give links to other elements that are related as well as problems and rewards that may arise with using the element. This is essential to understanding that design choices in gaming usually have inherent positives and drawbacks.

In conclusion, this book provides an excellent resource to the abstract art that is Game Design [...]. As someone who has used this method to analyze a particularly difficult to categorize game, I found the experience very rewarding, because I better understood the effect that each pattern gave to the game as a whole. There is one negative however, this book is a little old and new elements need to be added, but it can't go anywhere if the only reviews on it represent a mistake in purchase.

PS. My Game Design teacher at Digipen recommended that a good exercise for Game Designers would be to pick element patterns at random and try to make a good game out of that (remember you can adapt the patterns, they are only a start).

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

An Important Reference

By Quiet Observer

This book collects and classifies (arguably) all the commonly-found design elements of games, providing a very useful reference for game designers. For designers interested in in-depth analysis of games and gameplay mechanics, this book provides a reference by which game design elements can be systematically identified.

I have found this useful not only for analysis, but more importantly in serving as a framework for gameplay derivation especially when translating gameplay dynamics from traditional games, play, and popular interactions into the modern mediums of computers, the internet, and online social networks.

This approach was used, for example, in the MILLEE project by CMU professor Matthew Kam, where native traditional games were analyzed using the patterns in this book to help derive language-learning games that were more accessible and attractive to children from impoverished areas of the developing world.

Depending on how you use it, this book can be truly invaluable.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Great reference, not at all about programming

By Mark Ivey

This is a great reference book as long as you know what you are getting. As others have noted, this book has nothing to do with programming and is as dry as an encyclopedia. I'm still glad I have it, as I can't think of another book like it.

This book is about game design, which is a separate field from programming. It is about mechanics, dilemmas, feedback loops, rewards, goals, metagames, etc. It covers how time limits change gameplay, the consequences of imperfect information, what things can lead to player alliances, and so on. It won't help you write code, but it should help you understand how the different elements of a game work together to make it fun.

This is a reference book and is written in an academic style so it is dry. I can't imagine reading it straight through. Most of the patterns are heavily cross-referenced to other patterns. In fact, many of the patterns are defined in terms of other patterns so it takes a lot of flipping back and forth to understand the meaning. Fortunately, it comes with a CDROM including all the patterns in the book, plus some extras that aren't printed in the book, in nicely hyperlinked HTML. I've spent hours clicking through the patterns, like wandering around wikipedia.

As far as I know, there isn't another book like this on the market. Books like *Challenges for Game Designers* and *Game Design Workshop* cover similar concepts, but neither of those attempt to be a complete reference like this does.

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