

## Justin Sabo - Feb. 1st 2011 - Game Design 2011 - Game Toolbox - Assignment 2

Game	Platform	Year	Age	Details
Red Rover	Physical Activity	1988	5	1 vs. All. When the "rover" called out a color you were wearing, running across the field to the other side while avoiding the Rover tagging you was exciting because I relied not only on my speed but running away from the crowd. It was also fun to pit myself behind a fast runner that Rover was going after, so there was something between Rover and I it made running more successful. Getting tagged out was boring, especially early on since I would have to wait until the entire game was over before playing again.
Hide and Seek	Physical Activity	1988	5	Hide and seek was another early game that relied on one of the simplest mechanics ever: you ran around and hid until the seeker finds you. The less fun part was being the seeker, though it was still a thrill to catch people, sometimes relying on you detective skill, sometimes just on dumb luck. Two other great things about hide and seek were that any aged person could play, and that the game could be played virtually anywhere. It also taught me that some games, like this one, should not be altered too much and that there is an elegance in its simplicity. My friends and I tried changing the rules to expand the playing field, but when games would take 1 hour to complete, it wasn't fun. In fact, most people quit before they had been found and once the seeker quit but never told anyone.
Candyland	Boardgame	1988	5	My first board game. I played with my parents, which in any other game, they would have the advantage. But in Candyland no one had the upper hand since the game was not skill-based. The entire experience was based on chance. It was exciting to pick a new card and see where I landed.
Chutes and Ladders	Boardgame	1988	5	Since the mechanic behind Chutes and Ladders was so simple: advance forward and if you hit a ladder go up, or a chute and go down. There was something very interesting in this binary mechanic that made the game very accessible for all ages. Skill did not come into play here, but at such a young age, it didn't matter. It was a fun game to play with my grandmother or my sister. It was also easy enough that I could do all the moving for my sister and she still had fun watching the game play out.
Tag	Physical Activity	1988	5	Tag was another simple game that had a mechanic anyone could understand. I had the most fun tagging people when they were not paying attention. This gave someone a sudden surprise and compelled them to play as well. Tag could also be played anywhere, even at dinner parties. I really liked how a game would never be planned--instead someone would just tag me and say "You're it!" and the game would begin.

Super Mario Bros	Videogame	1988	5	The first video game I ever owned which came packed in with Duck Hunt given to my of Christmas of 1989. After playing level 1-1, I found secrets, got big, shrunk, died, invincible, squished goombas, grabbed coins, and even earned points on a flag pole. A simple game based on platform jumping offered so much more than any game before it and gave hope (and a future) for video games. Mario was great in that he took a simple mechanic of jumping and showed how much it could be expanded by things as state changes.
Battleship	Boardgame	1989	6	"I've sunk your battleship!" because a social catchphrase, and for good reason, as we had a game based heavily on the skill of logic. When you missed, which was often, it was always a letdown. However, without these constant let downs, when your opponent uttered "hit", it wouldn't have been nearly as exhilarating. Knowing that you tracked your opponent's ship was fun too because the only randomness came from you guessing, not a dice roll nor a spinner.
Pinball	Videogame	1989	6	A home version of classic pinball, stripped of the ability to tilt the machine. All the elements of the game were present, but somehow it felt weak. The blips and beeps weren't as loud, there weren't any physical pieces that moved, and most importantly, a high score was deleted as soon as the NES was turned off. Part of the fun of pinball was earning the high score so that everyone at the arcade could see it, but that was all lost on the home version.
War	Card game	1989	6	Perhaps the easiest card game that only relied on a player's ability to flip over the top card of his deck and shuttle when appropriate. Skill of any kind was not needed, but there was still a draw to this game because of the thrill of playing War (each player flipping the same card) and seeing what face-down cards you won from the other player, which could change the landscape of the game if you won 3 high cards. But in the end, War was completely automated and could just as easily be played by 2 computers.
Tetris	Videogame	1989	6	Tetris is my favorite puzzle game for one simple reason: it is simple and yet I never want to put it down. There are so many choices to make with each block that decisions are really interesting and one mistake could cost me the entire game. I like that Tetris adds pressure to each block, which was not immediately obvious when I first started to play it.
Tug of War	Physical Activity	1989	6	We usually played with about 10 people on each side. The fun was derived not just from winning, but from working as a team. In such a simple game, we would develop strategies such as quickly moving forward to throw the opposing team off balance then yank on the rope really hard to pull them forward. We always tried to make sure to balance the teams, since a team of stronger, larger people would always win just on sheer physical strength. The flag tied to the middle was always a good visual indicator of progress, so at any moment I knew how our team was doing.

Blackjack	Videogame	1990	7	A friend of mine had this on his old 286 computer, via 5-1/4" floppy. I learned the basic rules pretty quickly and that blackjack is, at least initially, not a complicated game. The math was simple, just hit until you have 17 or above but also keep in mind what card the dealer was showing. However, when my friend and I player with real cards against a fake dealer, we learned another important social aspect of a seemingly straightforward game: hitting/standing only at the proper time to avoid screwing over the other players. Everyone knows everyone else's hand, so if you were to do something incorrect (even if you still win) you'll have others players upset with you if they lost because you altered the order of dealt cards.
Monopoly	Videogame	1990	7	The ultimate game for the business man inside me. Playing by the rules was fine at first, but the real appeal of this game was that, even in the instructions, "House Rules" were encouraged. There was always some extra ownership in Monopoly knowing that each game played could have different rules (over the base rules) and we could control the level of fun. We could also iterate this: take the fun things from our custom rules during Game 1 and add new rules to it during Game 2, etc.
Hopscotch	Physical Activity	1990	7	A seemingly simple game but with one major flaw: the first player could, if skilled enough, win on their first turn. While this rarely happened, it was always a deep flaw that was never corrected. Now I only played this game a few times in gym class because it was a requirement, but the stigma was that it was more of a girl-game. The principle of hopping was never that fun to me anyway, so I learned that if you rely on one type of gameplay without any real mode change, your game can easily fail. There was the ability to toss a shooter, but getting it on the 8 <sup>th</sup> tile was usually too difficult. I never finished a game of hopscotch.
Legend of Zelda	Videogame	1991	8	A game that gave some clues and a vast over world that was open even from the start of the game seemed very interesting to me at the time. Link was a guy who gets power over time and I wanted to help him get there. Zelda made the player feel smart, which is one of the reasons I liked it so much. It was a great feeling to get a few clues, piece things together, and see your success in unlocked a new dungeon. It could also be very frustrating and at times too difficult but at the time, Mario was so different that playing both games around the same time made each more interesting.
Super Mario Bros 3	Videogame	1991	8	A game, presented as a play, where Mario was given an upgraded number of power ups sprawled across 9 worlds. The game's biggest strength was its variety, not only in items, but in world theming: snow, fire, water, and even big/small worlds. It served to me as the pinnacle of platforming at the time, taking everything before it and reinventing itself as the game progressed. Mario 3 taught me how vitally important that surprise and change was to good game design. Much like a good movie, it was much more fun to *not* be able to guess what was going to happen next.

5-Card Poker	Card game	1991	8	My mother taught me how to play poker. At first, I just learned the different hands, which was a lot of memorization at the time. But I immediately saw that poker, without anything else, did not provide the experience I had witnessed in movies and referenced in books. It wasn't until the playing chips were added that I saw the true value of the game. Playing just with dealt cards involves some skill, I suppose, but it is mostly left to chance. However, now I could add skill to the mix because betting introduced skills like reading a person's face and observing their betting patterns. It was tense when I was faced with the question of "Are they bluffing?"
Pinball Machine (various)	Physical Gaming Device	1991	8	Plugging back and releasing the hammer to send the metal ball into the game board was interesting mostly because each and every turn was different. Even by putting the hammer back as far as it would go, the game would play out differently each time. Pinball also was very generous with points, which always gave the impression that I was doing amazing, until I saw how many points it would take to get a free extra ball. Pinball was usually in pizza places alongside an arcade game.
Punch Out	Videogame	1991	8	Punchout was a game that distilled all other mechanics except for pattern matching. Usually this is something many games have as part of their experience, but Punch Out was great because that was all it had so I could focus just on that. It also had memorable characters and funny segments between rounds—with a game so simple, I saw that having strong personality was one of the keys to its success.
Solitaire	Card game	1991	8	Solitaire showed how a single-player game could be fun, at least during the first part of the game, and why playtesting is so important. I was generally frustrated with Solitaire because it could end in a stalemate more often than I thought. Because it was single-player, there was a different kind of pride felt by winning.
Scrabble	Boardgame	1991	8	While my vocabulary skills were not the best and I usually formed pretty simple words, Scrabble was fun because it relied heavily on both chance and skill. Not only were the pieces you picked up random, but you never knew where your opponent was going to lay down his piece. It was fun to see who got the Triple Word Score first (and usually with a word like "the")
Super Mario Bros 2	Videogame	1992	9	Although not truly a Mario game, there was something contained here which gave platforming a twist: characters with different abilities. This was significant for strategy because different characters were good at different levels. In addition, collecting coins was given a different meaning because you could play a slot machine at the end of the level. The tone of the game was that of a dream, so everything had more of a mood, which was pretty different for games on the NES, much less a Mario game. Walking through Mario's dream with completely ridiculous characters, such as the bomb-throwing Mouser, really took me to another world where rules were different. I realized that games with a unified theme could sell a believable experience even if, on paper, it really didn't make sense. Art and mood go a long way.

Paperboy	Videogame	1992	9	Paperboy was one of those games for me that I never really got too far in and spent most of my time at the beginning level. But it was entirely skilled based and even though the same things happened each time, I never really got sick of throwing newspapers because I might hit the mailbox, a person, or even have the paper go through the window. The rounds usually made me laugh for one reason or another.
Final Fantasy	Videogame	1992	9	The first RPG I ever played, Final Fantasy was not my cup of tea at the time. I was not used to the gameplay of an RPG and felt it was too slow for me. I had unlimited time to decide my action, and it played out in a very non-animated way, then I just repeated again and again. I did not have fun with this game, even though there was the promise of exploration. The story was somewhat interesting, but I learned that having fun gameplay is very necessary, otherwise the other components become less important.
Zelda II	Videogame	1992	9	Zelda II was an example of trying to be too different from something that was previously established. I was confused why this was even a Zelda game when it had little in common with Zelda I. I liked the addition of RPG elements and the gameplay was solid but the game was always very difficult because of the side-scrolling nature. I felt like the perspective shift to side-view was not good for a Zelda game—top down worked much better because the entire screen, not just the ground, could be used as a playing field
Sim Isle	Videogame	1993	10	I barely got past the title screen, but this was had no obvious “play” part of it. I read the instructions but quickly grew frustrated with what seemed to be a really complicated method to get started. When I think of games with a high barrier of entry, this tops my list. Nothing was really fun about this game, since the drag and drop SimCity gameplay was nowhere to be found. I was so confused on what to do and given so little direction, I had to move on to something else.
Sim Earth	Videogame	1993	10	Something was satisfying about putting little creatures everywhere on the screen. It was fun to watch things play out but even more importantly, this game stood out to me as something that stressed relationships between creatures. While trying to make a population, those secondary effects such as who gets eaten gave the game more character since there was no main protagonist.
Starfox	Videogame	1993	10	While the graphics were a cool tech demo at the time, Starfox was fun because of the branching levels. I can recall vividly how this created which I still don't understand: my friend could beat the easy level but not the hard level; and I could beat the hard level but not the easy level. But what was great was that we could choose how we wanted to progress and then go about the game in our own way. If, perhaps, the easy level was always the first level, I might not have had nearly as much fun. I learned the importance of choice in games.
Scattegories	Boardgame	1994	11	Here was another vocabulary-based game that put an interesting twist on gameplay: while players relied very much on their creative word skills, any letter of the alphabet (well, almost any) could be rolled. So at the beginning of the round, all players were equal.

Mario Bros.	Videogame	1994	11	I put my first quarter in only because I saw a turtle get hit and fly out of his shell, in his underwear, no less. While this game was very modular and boring if played alone, it was fun for me when I played with someone else because we could interact with each other and decide who hit the POW block. Jumping on the other player was just for fun, but it added an element which gave me more to do when we were waiting for monsters. However, Mario Bros. got difficult quickly so after \$5 I stopped playing and later bought the NES version.
Millebournes	Card game	1994	11	I would play this game with my dad. It was a pretty simple game that introduced me to the concept of power ups in card games which wasn't something I usually associated with card games. While the goal is to earn points, I would seek out the different power ups so that I would be able to avoid losing points. I saw from this game how game design elements, such as power ups, can be applied to any game, not just video games which is what I usually associated them with.
Wolfenstein 3D	Videogame	1994	11	My first FPS was Wolf3D. This was a very different game because it was extremely smooth even on my old computer and dealt with a topic that still surprises me to this day: Nazis. Of course, Wold3D would not have been the same game without the Nazi bad guys, and I suppose that is why I always found it fascinating that a game dealt with something so horrible but gave control to the player to (virtually) do something about the horrible enemy.
Sim City 2000	Videogame	1994	11	Sim City 2000 offered so many things I wanted in the original Sim City that it boggled my mind. While this game stressed management above all else, it also showed the value of forward thinking and planning on what you might put something 2 years out (when you finally had enough money). Each tool and object had a purpose and nothing felt wasted. Even surprises like Arcos were a great touch—no matter when you thought you were done, you could just keep going. This game reminded me of Tetris, but with more pieces and greatly expanded scope.
Super Mario World	Videogame	1994	11	Super Mario World borrowed a lot of ideas from Mario 3: suits, worlds, maps, and secrets. However, it took each of these much further. Gameplay was changed by having another item in a temporary storage so that when I was hit by an enemy and degraded, my new item would magically appear. This added strategy too: switching between long range fire balls or the ability to fly made for interesting gameplay. But World's greatest strength lied in it's secret exits: new areas of the map unfolded as you explored the levels. This pushed the platforming into exploration territory
Final Fantasy IV	Videogame	1995	12	FFIV was the first RPG I had ever beaten. It wasn't as long as other RPGs such as FFVI but it had a feature which I never saw before: active time battles. This was the feature I had wanted in FFI, so I had to wait a long time for it to come out. Suddenly the landscape of battles became much different and actually interesting because you had to plan and execute on the fly. I really enjoyed knowing that I could defeat enemies by thinking quicker instead of pondering for ages.

Monopoly 2	Videogame	1995	12	I created this game in response to Monopoly sometimes feeling a bit stale simply because I played it so much. I had a vision to add multiple levels to properties or have joint properties. Basically my goal was to explore each element of the original Monopoly to see how I could improve upon it. I was not the successful because most often upgrading one thing would hurt another element, but adding shortcuts around the board and a new type of card (outside of Chance and Community Chest) really made the game a bit more interesting.
Duke Nukem 3D	Videogame	1995	12	I installed all 4 floppy demo disks and launched a game that took every action cliché and rolled it up in one blood-soaked package. Duke had great weapons, fun bad guys, secrets, and even strippers. But the thing that made Duke stand out was his personality. Never before was a character so funny (albeit one-dimensional) and yet so compelling. Duke also introduced me to modem and LAN play. I was fascinated that I could play someone from my computer or a group of us had full screen death matches with LAN play. Come get some!
Sim City	Videogame	1995	12	My first city never had any residents. Nor did my second or third, but I eventually got something running. In the end, it didn't matter though because Sim City was never really about an objective, it was about using a level editor and seeing a live feed of how your drag-and drop options affected the world. It was one game I thought shouldn't have a win state, since it could go on forever. But due to dull graphics and limited options, it grew old quickly.
Doom	Videogame	1995	12	The first horror game I played was Doom. Now up until this point, I did not know what a horror game really was like, but having monsters pop out and slash me as I tried to find the right door was scary. I can remember several times, after playing, I would shut my eyes and see an Imp standing before me. I was intrigued by affect the game had on me well after I had played it. It was fun to have those power trips of using guns against hoards of monsters. Doom felt very empowering, and that is what I remember most about it.
Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening	Videogame	1995	12	This game showed me what is possible with 4 colors and a small screen. Even though the screen itself was small, Link's Awakening gave me the feeling that the adventure I was having was so big and the screen I was viewing it on was just a small window into this completely realized world. The game also had humor which wasn't typical of Nintendo games of the time. Since it came after Link to the Past, many ideas were used from that game while adding new gameplay elements and perhaps a higher level of difficulty. I was annoyed by the limited buttons on the Gameboy, since switching items became tedious.
Super Mario 64	Videogame	1996	13	I had played some 3D games before on Playstation, but not one of them managed to do 3D correctly--there were control and camera problems. Mario 64 finally changed that, while not perfect, came up with camera controls that empowered the player but also let him control the action if desired. Mario was given fluid controls in 3D that are, even to this day, the basis for many 3D games.

Quake	Videogame	1996	13	I had to find out what the big deal was. Quake was supposed to change the way I viewed FPS'. It also came out not too long after Duke3D, so I was a bit unhappy that friends flocked to this new game when I still wanted to play Duke. While Quake was smoother, it never really appealed to me because it was very brown-colored and had little personality. But it had very tight controls and interesting weapons, not to mention a great multiplayer mode.
Sonic and Knuckles	Videogame	1996	13	Perhaps the best of all Sonic games, Sonic and Knuckles gave two experiences in 1 cartridge: play as Sonic or Knuckles. I liked being able to explore the game with two characters and have a different experience each time. But the real impressive thing about this game was that it added more gameplay features to other Sonic games with the technology of the lock-on cart. I thought it was a really underused idea by the game community as no other game did lock-on, but I thought expanding gameplay on other games was quiet revolutionary.
Virtua On	Videogame	1997	14	This game is my favorite 2-player versus-style game. I got in cockpit with duel joysticks at a Penn State local arcade and spent hours there. Here was a game that had easy controls and yet managed to produce many interesting interactions with the other player by having varied levels and characters. Variety was something I always like about Virtua On, not to mention that the player I versed sat right next to me, and that created many interesting conversations—which was something modern play, for example, couldn't offer.
Mario Kart 64	Videogame	1997	14	This racing game added the infamous blue shell which I still don't like since it really penalizes the player in 1 <sup>st</sup> while giving too much power to the player in last place. Mario Kart 64 showed me the importance of properly balancing things like player controlled characters and making sure everyone has fun. But where the game was the most fun was battle mode, which pitted 4 players in an arena. My friends and I spent countless hours playing this game because the items made it so that we never played the same exact round twice.
Final Fantasy VI	Videogame	1997	14	Another top RPG, this game fused an epic story, exploration, and even made combat fun. Music and story were my favorite things about this game because they worked so well together and were each given so much care—it was very obvious how much effort was put into each section of this game. One of the best examples of this was in the Opera scene, where I hit buttons to cue singing. Plus, the villain in this game was evil from the start and didn't come in at the 11 <sup>th</sup> hour so he really felt like a force that made the final battle that much better. I was able to build up a reason to want to destroy him and that left an impression on me when I think of other memorable bad guys.

Final Fantasy VII	Videogame	1998	15	FFVII had many things going for it at the time. I was impressed and immersed by the amazing cut scenes and how they integrated with the gameplay screens seamlessly. In addition to active battles, FFVII introduced the materia system, which I really liked because it gave a level of customization and strategy to weapons. It was neat to trade ideas with friends on getting better combinations of materia for different bosses. Also, this game contained one of my most memorable moments in gaming: seeing Sephiroth walk into the flaming background. FFVII's strength was its powerful imagery
GoldenEye 007	Videogame	1998	15	GoldenEye was probably the best multiplayer game I had ever played. It had everything from weapons to levels and controlled much better than any console shoot I'd ever played. Playing round after round never felt old even in the same levels because weapons and rules could be modified quite a bit. While the game did not save stats, my friends and I decided to have a GoldenEye 500 where the first to 500 kills wins. I realized that multiplayer can add a huge value to games if it is polished. Many games seemed to tack on multiplayer but GoldenEye fully realized its power.
Sim Tower	Videogame	1998	15	I can remember many afternoons of coming home and sitting for hours playing Sim Tower, trying to get parking garages, manage waste, and make shops that didn't interrupt offices above. This was micromanagement at a very detailed level. Placing different types of shops near each other and keeping others far apart never got old. Building up and up made visual progress very satisfying.
Metal Gear Solid	Videogame	1998	15	I must have played the demo of this game 50 times and listened to the free soundtrack over and over. This game had the best voice acting I had ever heard, including movies, and put me in an action game that had the best twists and turns in recent memory. It also had innovative stealth gameplay and a cinematic presentation which pulled me further into the world. I played this game all the way through. I also remember the great use of things like a boss reading your memory card and talking about games you've played in the past—it gave the game another level where I felt connected to it. Plus, Snake felt like a real protagonist and not a cookie-cutter.
Starcraft	Videogame	1998	15	Starcraft was the first RTS game I ever played. While games like Warcraft were very popular, I never really got into them. However, Starcraft had a very sci-fi feel which was naturally more appealing to me than Warcraft. Starcraft gave me things to do at all times, and in many cases, too many things to do at once. It showed me that taking time with it and learning skills within the game would really make me an advanced player, but because I like variety, I never was good at Starcraft and only played it from time to time at a friend's house.

Starfox 64	Videogame	1998	15	Starfox 64 had some of the best catchphrases ever in a videogame. The other significant thing about this game was that it came with a Rumble Pak. I wasn't sure how much of a gimmick this was but the first time I felt force feedback, I knew this was something special. It really added an extra kick to the game because I could physically feel getting hit. The game had branching paths but also added secrets to get to some of them. I remember feeling like I was playing an arcade game, but this one had depth and kept me coming back and playing it over and over and over.
Legend of Zelda; Ocarina of Time	Videogame	1998	15	This is my favorite game of all time. It fused together story, gameplay, graphics, and music into one very polished product. I have too many memories from this game to mention but one of my favorites was hearing Sheik's song for the first time and the moment when Link stepped out of the Temple of Time as an adult. This game used cut scenes in a way I had not really seen before in a game that gave it a very cinematic feel. In some ways, this game is a curse because I compare every game to it and no game has lived up to the standard it set. My favorite part of the game was that Nintendo solved the issue of multiple 3D targets with a movable character: Z-targeting. After using it, it became so obvious but no game had ever used it before. Ocarina controlled extremely well, and that is a huge reason why it was so fun to play. Rarely did I feel like the game was difficult because of the controls.
Chrono Cross	Videogame	1999	16	Another amazing RPG, Chrono Cross was impressive to me for many reasons, most notably the soundtrack. The music was beautifully composed and added so much depth to each scene. Chrono Cross' story, however, confused me at times. There was a lot going on and some things were never made clear. I feel like Squaresoft wanted to make a more complex story than Chrono Trigger, but they didn't need to. Luckily, the gameplay was fun on its own, so when the story didn't make sense, I could overlook it.
Final Fantasy VIII	Videogame	1999	16	FFVIII was a miss for me. Coming off of FFVII, it was very depressing that the game featured a similar character and a really annoying draw system. Basically I felt most of the gameplay was me simply sitting there and draining an enemy of his items, over and over. I felt like there was too much artificial padding in this game. Also, the story was a bit too off and they threw in the "real" bad guy toward the end of the game, which felt odd. Plus some of the characters, like Seifer, were never punished for their crimes and it just left so much unanswered. I suppose my enjoyment was ruined throughout because the main character was just not likable.
Mario Kart	Videogame	1999	16	Mario Kart gave a very interesting twist on racing because it was no longer just about doing lap after lap. I welcomed this change because racing games always felt stale to me, but Mario Kart allowed racing to have interesting surprises while staying true to the basic race mechanic. Also, I liked how the abilities of the characters were very obvious and it added variety to try different characters on different courses. Controls also stuck out to me as being very tight and responsive.

Chrono Trigger	Videogame	1999	16	One of my top RPG's, Chrono Trigger managed to have great music, story, and gameplay in one package that was greater than the sum of its parts. Even with so many characters to play as, each one stood out and added something to the experience. My favorite part of Chrono Trigger were the tech combinations which could be performed by multiple characters—something not seen in an RPG at the time. I was impressed that Chrono Trigger added innovation to such a static genre.
Silent Hill	Videogame	1999	16	Silent Hill always creeped me out. It had fog, so you could never really see clearly. It had monsters attack you out of nowhere, and even resorted to horror movie clichés such as things popping out from behind the shadows. I really liked this game for the fact that I could move through the horror and in some ways it was scarier because I did not know where to go and could lead my character down the wrong path.
Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete	Videogame	1999	16	This game had the best cast of characters I have ever met in a video game. While the gameplay is simple, it got the job done. This game had an interesting story (it was a bit generic at times) but really shined because of its characters. I was actually sad when I beat the game because I knew I wouldn't be played
Twisted Metal 2	Videogame	2000	17	As far as car combat games go, Twisted Metal 2 is my favorite. It took a pretty basic concept but gave me interesting weapons and the ability to form strategy as I found to be the last man standing. The game controlled great but what really stood out to me were the levels. They always were different and structured to produce interesting interactions. I was always on my toes in this game but it managed to have areas where I could collect myself and then go back to the action.
Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask	Videogame	2000	17	I loved the dark themes and wonderful messages in this game. It was a short experience, but it was very powerful. While it departed from Ocarina's more refined look, I appreciated the art style and goofy characters. It was very powerful to play a game that had the message about the importance of helping people, even if you don't know them or may never see them again. The haunting atmosphere again reinforced the power of adding mood to a game and having it reinforce the theme.
Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past	Videogame	2000	17	Link to the Past was great for many, many reasons. I loved the gameplay and the sheer number of items I got throughout the quest. It was always fun exploring a new area and finding a secret fountain for upgrades. The game offered so many puzzles and multi-level environments that everything begged to be explored. I liked how there was a shift in Light and Dark worlds which made for very interesting puzzles.
Final Fantasy IX	Videogame	2001	18	FFIX felt like a love letter to the other FF's that came before it. I liked how they took the best parts of those games and combined them into what would end up being the last FF of that style (everything would be futuristic from now on). My main concern though was that there really was not a central character, as the main character did not have a huge problem that was really solved at the end—I guess he found love but that is a very standard story conclusion. I realized that the other characters were what made the game great, and seeing their motivations and back stories play out was the best part of the game for me.

Grand Theft Auto III	Videogame	2001	18	GTAVIII was something revolutionary at the time because it took what I thought about 3D worlds and gave me the ability to do so much more in them. It was also fun just to explore the game world without any objective or goal—just walking or driving around usually resulted in interesting interactions. The game let you go about missions at your own pace, and not only that, in many missions there was usually more than 1 way to achieve success, so creative thinking was a welcomed change. Prefaces my favorite memory is playing this game with a friend. We would switch off when someone completed a mission or died, but during missions offer each other tips or another solution.
Final Fantasy X	Videogame	2001	18	This was the first FF with voice acting, and for the most part, it was pretty good. I realized though how important good character design was for me. While I did like a few of the character designs, I disliked almost all the rest, especially Seymour. It was as if they tried to make each person different looking and put as many accessories on them as possible. It's funny that such a thing would have affected me, but I then looked at characters with a keener eye.
Panzer Dragoon Saga	Videogame	2002	19	Another one of my favorite RPGs. This game had a unique twist on role playing games because it only had a single character who rode his dragon in every battle. I liked how in this game, I never had to do level grinding and just by playing the game normally and beating bosses, I would level up enough to face new challenges. This game also had full voice acting and an amazing soundtrack, which left me with a feeling of loss for the main character at the conclusion of the game.
Oddworld: Abe's Odyssey	Videogame	2002	19	I should have known this game was going to be difficult because it advertised itself as giving you unlimited lives. I didn't realize until I played it how important that was. This is probably one of the hardest game I have ever played but Abe was fun to play as and the world was something out of a Tim Burton movie, so I was hooked. I don't remember beating the game, but I felt satisfaction just clearing some of the screens, let alone the levels. This game showed that difficulty, even if extreme, can be fun if handled correctly (unlimited lives and many re-spawn points).
Halo	Videogame	2002	19	Halo had controls that I never used before in a FPS: two joysticks. This was a tricky concept for me to master, and reminded me of when I first played Mario 64. But Halo had simple gameplay (only 2 guns at a time) and a sci-fi feel which made it easy to get into. Halo was not that easy to play in multiplayer at first, but because we could link Xboxes, I liked the experience of sitting with 3 friends on a team, and versing another team in another dorm room. We could directly communicate and form strategies. This direct communication and teamwork were my favorite parts of the Halo experience.
Super Mario World 2	Videogame	2003	20	Bouncing eggs isn't that new of a concept, but Nintendo managed to craft an experience that had amazing graphics for its time and again took the basic platforming elements of a Mario game and added a twist. Collecting enemies and spitting them out, as well as aiming eggs to hit objects felt so fluid. Again, this game stuck with me for it's consistent theming and graphical style.

Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages	Videogame	2003	20	This pocket adventure was great because it added the time mechanic found in Ocarina but in a much more concise way that allowed more direct puzzles. Though I could not help but feel it was a reskinning of the Light and Dark world from Link to the Past. But this game was fun because it took concepts from other games in a format I could take anywhere while adding just enough to make it different.
Counterstrike	Videogame	2003	20	While in college, this game became very popular and I wanted to know why. It seemed pretty standard in many ways with the guns and graphics. But I felt that the quick rounds of play gave people a nice fix whenever they wanted. It was easy to hop on and play for a bit then go to class. While this was definitely a skill-based game, I stopped playing after a bit. It was fun to play in the dorms because you be on a team with people nearby and scream at each other. In the end, the physical team of those around me was my favorite part of playing
Mario Kart: Double Dash	Videogame	2004	21	I really did not like this game. A two-person mechanic was added to the karts but this really did not enhance gameplay to a level where I felt like two people per kart was needed. It was an interesting idea, but I really didn't like how what was promised as a brand new feature really did not do anything significant to the gameplay outside of what Mario Kart 64 did years before.
Day of Defeat	Videogame	2004	21	This Half Life 1 mod was popular among some of my friends because it took that classic WWII game but added multiplayer online. While this was fun it showed me another reason I did not play online FPS': the game relied on twitch skill and a high-dpi mouse. And lots of practice. I was not willing to invest that much time into it and lost a lot. This eventually turned me off to playing these types of games online.
Super Mario Sunshine	Videogame	2004	21	What a horrible game with hidden away mini-levels. This is probably the least fun standard Mario game I have played--the game was bogged down by large, annoying sections of story and exploration which never really felt fun--the kind of fun I mean is that of exploring Peach's castle in Mario 64. The introduction of FLUD was neat, but it was hampered by so many sections of non-platforming elements that it just was not fun. I never finished it. I did, however, really like the controls and the mini-levels were difficult and reminded of simpler times, circa NES, that were closer to pure platforming. This game was an example of trying to be too many things at once and straying too far from the formula of Mario 64 that it never felt "right".
Metal Gear Solid 2	Videogame	2005	22	I was so impressed by the MGS2 trailer and the thought of playing as Snake again. Then Konami did something very risky: only let you play as Snake for a small part of the game. I did not like this because I felt cheated. Snake was a great character and someone who I enjoyed playing as but now I had this new character who was weaker and derivative. I experienced first had the risk of making something very immersive: if I don't like the character I'm playing as, the experience can be ruined.

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Videogame	2005	22	With all the freedom of the GTA games, San Andreas still gave even more freedom. It was a visceral experience to just get on a bike and ride, and ride, and then ride some more, check the map, and realize I didn't even go halfway across it yet. One moment really stood out: I took over a plane and was flying it over the desert just as America's Horse with No Name song randomly came on the in-game radio. It was a great connection because of the lyrics and I appreciated soundtracks in games much more after experiencing that. However, I did not like the addition of RPG elements such as learning to swim just to start a mission—cramming other genres into a game isn't always the best idea.
Sim City 3000	Videogame	2005	22	This game was overkill. The concepts presented in 2000 were vast, and 3000 seemed to take many of them and modify things to a point where I would just rather have the simpler 2000. Building a city was still there, but I stopped playing this game soon before starting because it really felt like they were cramming or expanding so many elements that did not need to be expanded upon. There was a lot of excess, and I learned that sometimes a simpler game is superior. Too many options seem to diminish all of them.
Katamari Damacy	Videogame	2006	23	Katamari was a great game for many reasons. But the best take-away is that simplicity is often the best solution. Katamari was easy to control and had a great soundtrack, thankfully, since some levels were 25 minutes long. All a player really needed was two joysticks and he could go on for hours rolling up things. Simply rolling things up may seem boring but with constantly changing areas and grabbing things you once couldn't, Katamari always kept me on my toes to make the largest ball I could.
Legend of Zelda: Minish Cap	Videogame	2006	23	Minish stuck out as an odd duck for a Zelda game, but that was part of its charm. The mechanic of shrinking led to an interesting change in perspective (now you were jumping on grass blades instead of stomping on a bunch of them with your boot) and puzzle possibilities. While the classic formula for Zelda wasn't altered, giving players a new perspective saved this game from being too similar to other entries. I enjoyed the minish people because they gave the game more flavor and variety.
Guilty Gear X	Videogame	2006	23	While I was never very good at fighting games, this one stuck out because of the beautiful character animations. It was very pleasing to me just to watch this game, even if I didn't actually play it very well. Even as I controlled the characters, it felt as though I was controlling them even better than I actually was because the fluid animations gave me this impression. I was always surprised by the effect animation can have on control, even if it's not actually affecting it directly, and instead it was all just in my head.

Wii Sports	Videogame	2006	23	Wii Sports came packed in with the Wii, which usually means it would be a bunch of boring demo games but instead provided something I didn't think was possible: family play. I never had a game that my entire family would play, much less wanted to play. Technology mixed with simple gameplay gave a low barrier of entry. The use of standard games like bowling was genius—I thought it was a clever way to get people who don't play games to try it. While my dad was intimidated to try a more abstract games like Mario, Wii Sports was easy because he already knew the rules of each game.
Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	Videogame	2007	24	Great graphics were what turned me on to IV at first, because they really stood out at the time. Then I heard how the game had a main objective but it's real strength was in just letting the player go and do anything. This was fun for awhile, in fact I never played the main quest because the side-quests were quicker. However, so many of them were repeated, and in similar looking dungeons, that it grew stale. I wanted better side quests in the super open world that was shown to me but as time when on, I stopped playing. Mods for the game make it fun to boot up every once in awhile, but that wasn't enough. It did show me that mods can extend a game's life, so it was a good lesson.
Final Fantasy X-2	Videogame	2007	24	I was confused by this game, because I didn't know what the target audience was. I assumed it was for people who played FFX, but it was simpler and seemed geared more toward girls. This game was a good illustration of delivering something your audience wants. I was excited when this game was first announced because it promised to continue the story but instead it was shallow and not at all what most people expected.
Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Videogame	2007	24	Ocarina set the standard and I read that the goal with Twilight was to make something that was as good if not better than Ocarina. I feel that having another target game to try to beat will ultimately be a game's undoing. Twilight was not as fun as Ocarina was for me. Oddly, it was a game that had better graphics and such, but it lacked something I call "soul". This wasn't something I could describe at the time, but it had more to do with a feeling of emptiness the game had. While it was very rich in certain areas, things like the over world hub were boring. Twilight showed me that bigger isn't always better and simply trying to out do another game based on that concept won't always lead to success. Also, some characters like the human-headed chickens, were just too weird.
Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	Videogame	2007	24	Phantom Hourglass had great control over all else. It managed to use the stylus and one button for many actions. I really liked the simplicity of this. However, this also led to many of the dungeons being very easy because of the limited control options. However, I could over look this because there were many different elements, such as sailing, so I was never bored. But the one thing that killed the experience for me was that I had to keep repeating the same areas of the Ocean King temple. This became tedious and really felt like padding to make the game longer. I wanted to just warp to new areas instead of replaying the same thing over and over.

Bioshock	Videogame	2007	24	The opening of being on a plane and crashing then finding a bathysphere and going into this underwater world full of detail was amazing. Bioshock had a great atmosphere, graphics, and sound, but the thing that stuck out for me was the way that the story was integrated into the experience. Usually in games, there isn't much of a story, or the story is crammed down my throat. But with Bioshock, I was able to control just how much of the story I wanted to listen to, and every tape that I chose to listen to gave me a few more tidbits into what happened to Rapture. Unlike many other games, I felt like I lived in the world of Bioshock while I played it.
Zack and Wiki	Videogame	2008	25	I liked the puzzles the best in this game that did not rely too much on timing but rather on logic. Partly this was due to technology: sometimes the Wiimote wouldn't correctly recognize where I was guiding the character but it also seemed out of place. There are many ways to do logic puzzles but I felt like putting quick reaction action segments hurt the experience instead of helped it—variety needs to be used carefully. There were also a few levels which had multiple ways of beating it, and this came across as lazy.
fIOw	Videogame	2008	25	I was never sure if this was a game in the traditional sense, but that's part of the reason I liked fIOw because it wasn't trying to be bigger than it was—just quiet and moody. FIOw showed me that mood can be very compelling in a simple (or complex) game because it changed my emotions as I played in a very discrete way. It was exciting to reach lower levels and add to my organism—a very good use of visual feedback for progress—it was nice to see how much I collected as I played. In most games, the character gets minor cosmetic upgrades but that was a welcomed change in fIOw.
Wii Play: Tanks	Videogame	2008	25	Tanks was a great multiplayer game that was very simple: aim and shoot or lay bombs. While I had fun on my own, the real key to having fun was playing co-op. Tanks did something very interesting: if you both die in a level, the game is over but if one of you dies, you respawn in the next level. My friend and I developed strategies for each level and eventually did beat the game, which was a great feeling after so many months of trying. I felt like Tanks could be expanded further into a much deeper game.
Okami	Videogame	2008	25	Visually very different and great to control, but what killed the experience were the mountains of text that I couldn't skip. The lore is a great addition, but sometimes I just wasn't in the mood to read all 20 slides of text—another issue was that the text simply wasn't fun to read. At least in Zelda, the camera is moving around and cutting to close ups of characters. I wanted to have a visual feast with reading the text as I did with the normal game.

Super Mario Galaxy	Videogame	2009	26	After many long years, my prayers were answered: a Mario game that made an evolutionary leap in the realm of 3D gaming. Mario wasn't just bound to a plane, he could walk and jump over different spherical bodies. Galaxy got most everything right, and came along at a time where I was doubting that 3D platforming would see any upgrades instead of just the same old thing. Galaxy did a great job of bending my mind to solve puzzles and because of shifting gravity, always gave a new perspective. The hub world, while nowhere near as fun as Mario 64's castle, was a fun stomping ground in which to experiment without the fear of failure since Mario couldn't die there. The hub gave me, a new player, a lot of comfort before venturing off into the levels. Controls took a bit of time to get used to because of how spheres affected up/down but this eventually became second nature
Catchphrase	Boardgame	2009	26	Catchphrase is best at parties because it really only requires some quick descriptions, funny motions, and then you pass it along to the other team. This simple setup made people really want to play it over and over, so rounds were quick and then everything would reset. While the low barrier of entry is the highlight of the game, the low light is
Portal	Videogame	2009	26	I stopped playing FPS' for awhile because they were growing stale to me—the only thing improving was graphics and AI (sometimes). Portal was a first-person puzzle that was brimming with personality. Again, another example of having a simple concept but loading it with interesting characters and personality to make it stand out. Portal showed me that combining genres can turn out great and that FPS' could be expanded upon in the gameplay department—a welcomed breath of fresh air.
Grand Theft Auto IV	Videogame	2009	26	IV put a strong emphasis on story and character relationships, something many other games did not bother with. But IV had good voice acting and a crazy cast of characters that all worked together to make the experience compelling. The missions were varied as with other GTA games, but my favorite memory is the Bank Heist which played out like the most exciting part of a movie all in one mission which I could control. But this came at an odd point in the game; it should have been the final mission but instead was in the middle of the game. This made the final mission weak in comparison—I learned how interest curves are very important with games that are long or short.
Half-Life 2	Videogame	2009	26	Presentation was king in Half Life 2. Voice acting was top notch. Gameplay was pretty tight as well. I just was not able to put this game down for hours because I wanted to see what puzzles and action segments came next. I would always set out to play for 30 min and end up playing for 3 hours. The weapons were also interesting but even more interesting were the vehicles I could get in and explore the world with.

World of Goo	Videogame	2009	26	World of Goo showed me the importance of taking one mechanic and fully exploring over the course of a very polished game. World of Goo would be fun without an objective; stacking and pulling goo balls is fun on its own—this game showcased the importance of building the toy first and then the rest will follow. I was interesting in what would come next in terms of new abilities. It was also fun to experiment with the goo just to see what would happen. Again, music also played a very strong part in the game and I found myself humming to the music and sometimes even forgetting what my objective was for the level.
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Videogame	2010	27	Galaxy 2 was proof that just when I thought that Nintendo couldn't possibly add more to the concept of Galaxy 1, they did—in spades. Galaxy 2 was remarkable in that it offered new experiences in just about every single level—new suits, new mechanics, new modes, etc. This game showed me the importance of variety, even if most of it didn't make sense (logically) it didn't matter. What mattered in Galaxy 2 the most was the notion of pure fun, so much so I would say the theme was fun. Regardless of what story buffs may say, fun trumps everything else in a game.
Wii Sports Resort	Videogame	2010	27	I bought Resort because I wanted to try more technically advanced, but still simple, minigames. I knew I wouldn't get a deep experience, but I was fine with that because it was the technology that made me want to play. The promise of 1:1 controls was just too great to pass up. My favorite game was the swordplay game as it was as close to a light saber duel as possible on Wii.
Henry Hatsworth	Videogame	2010	27	This game was very wacky and had a sense of humor that reminded me of Monkey Island. Gameplay consisted of an action platformer on the top screen and a puzzle world on the bottom. While this might seem like an odd combination, the game is zany enough to make it work. I learned that having a narrative that matches the type of gameplay (or types of gameplay) makes the experience very satisfying. I accepted the tale of finding the perfect gentleman's suit and a puzzle world, but if I think about it, it really seems like a Twilight Zone episode. But everything works well together, so this is another example of a game that successfully combined different genres to create a new experience.
Apples to Apples	Boardgame	2010	27	What a fun game which I think everyone in the world played before I finally did. The concept could not be simpler and at its core, Apples is a party game with quick rounds. While there is a winner, everyone has a good time and I never once cared if I won. I got more pleasure out of coming up with weird and funny choices of the word associations.