Role Playing Games

Introduction

Role-playing games are one of the most popular computer games currently in production. Role-playing games have a long history which extend back to non-computer desktop games. While most role-playing games have distinctive features, they mostly follow the initial game paradigms. In order to understand role-playing games is helpful to understand the history of role-playing game.

In brief, RPG games are focused on character development and the concept of leveling. Characters are created and managed by the player in the character abilities and skills are part of the game mechanic. As the character games experience their abilities and skills increase.

History

Role-playing games started as desktop games prior to the development of computer games. The classic desktop game Dungeons & Dragons was one of the earliest which used rules, dice, and character sheets. The typical Dungeons & Dragons desktop game starts with several players in a dungeon Master. Each player will initially select a character. For their character, each player will choose a mixture of abilities in the initial Dungeons & Dragons game these abilities consisted of strength, Constitution, dexterity, intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. Each character has a combination of these abilities and relative values for each ability. The dungeon Master control is to direct the players through the game, create and maneuver nonplayer characters (typically monsters), and generally guide the game.

As the player’s character progresses to the game they can develop skills and experience and can acquire additional resources. This allows the player to progress and increase their characters level. During the course of the game characters will likely confront opponents such as monsters. During such confrontations Adelson Sue the player’s strength and ability is measured against that of the monster. The element of randomization is included by rolling a die in using the outcome of the die to influence the battle.

Interestingly enough, early RPG games included a group of players that played and supported each other during adventures and campaigns. As a teaching to the PC many of the early games, which lacks network support, defaulted back to single player. Well early RPG games structured in terms of adventures in class there is also some latitude from the dungeon Master to change things and make the game more interesting. During the time that RPG games shifted to PC and consoles there was a break between Western RPG games and Japanese RPG games. The main difference is that Japanese RPG games tended to be more linear in fashion and included more story character development than Western versions of RPG games. Other differences with Japanese RPG games included turn-based combat and combat calculation abilities and skills.

While many RPG games used the same world as Dungeons & Dragons, a meaty evil world of trolls, elves, dragons, RPG games are not limited to such mythology. Early computer-based RPG games extended the traditional mythology world. Games such as the Ultima series on the PC included many of the classic Dungeons & Dragons features of RPG games such as character development. Games such as Ultima IV which came out in 1985 moved from classic RPG’s to world building. In Ultima for an entire and complicated world was created within which the RPG took place. The game character had an open world environment within which to complete quests and other tasks.

One of the most widely praised of the early computer RPG games was Baldur’s gate II. This game was a fairly faithful reproduction of the board based Dungeons & Dragons game. There were several characters that played as a group and that supported each other on quests and adventures. Characters had initial abilities and could develop skills and increase their abilities through leveling. Games of this type allowed characters to acquire resources and work quest based in the sense that characters went on adventures as directed by various game characters. The success Baldur’s gate made possible the development of RPG games such as Morrow Wind and Skyrim.

While the middle Earth mythology was used for a number of RPG games is not the only world within which RPG games could be set. A very popular early RPG game used the Star Wars universe and was called Knights of the Old Republic. As
with other RPG games this game included skills and abilities and leveling. Game characters could progress through the game by completing quests and achieving goals.

Modern RPG games include many of these classic features but have extended the genre to include open world environments. Examples includes Skyrim, the Witcher, and the fallout series. Many players of modern Western RPG games expect such open world environments, but there are successful RPG games that are more linear and structure. These include games such as dead souls.

As RPG games developed there was a split between Western RPG games and Japanese RPG games. The latter took inspiration from a different source than Western dungeons and dragons types of games. Japanese RPG’s based more on Japanese visual novels and manga than Western traditions of trolls and dragons. Japanese RPG games also emphasize story over character and few have the open world structure of Western RPG’s. While Western RPG is allowed the player to create and define their own character many Japanese RPG’s had the player use predefined characters.

Other differences between Western and Japanese RPG’s include the battle systems. Western RPG’s tend to use real-time combat while Japanese RPG’s tend to use turn-based combat. Another difference is that Western RPG’s tend to be darker in tone while Japanese RPG’s are designed to appeal to wider audiences. Early Japanese RPG games were played on consoles and even handheld devices. Games such as Chrono trigger were early precursors of Japanese RPG games. Later games such as the Final Fantasy series cemented Japanese RPG games as a well-defined and robust type of game.

Features

Some of the main features of RPG games include:

- Character development including character definition and character selection
- Character abilities and skills where abilities are part of the characters nature skills are developed during gameplay
- Characters can level up by completing quests and other in game activities
- Resource management is a central part to the gameplay
- Game story is integrated into the open world (Western RPGs) or a central part to the game (JRPGs)

Examples – Fallout 4

Character Definition: You can define your character a number of different ways in this game. Initially, the game character can be physically defined by the player. The player has a chance to graphically set the sex and physical attributes of the game character. Once the physical attributes of chosen the character’s abilities can be sent. In fallout this is defined by the letters SPECIAL. This stands for strength, perception, endurance, charisma, intelligence, agility, and luck.

For example, the strength attribute is related to in game mechanics. The ability to carry more weight is increased the higher the strength value is set this also affects the accuracy of certain weapons. Larger weapons that require more strength will have less accuracy the player’s strength ability does not match the weapon. While each of these abilities are fixed and new abilities cannot be added, leveling up involves adding points to each ability. However, points are not used to increase the ability but to add perks to the ability. As your character levels up through gameplay, points can be added to each ability four experience points and is given by performing various tasks in the game. For example, discovering new locations, killing enemies, solving puzzles, and getting rewards for completing quests. By strategically using leveling players can create and modify their game characters so they have specific abilities and perks. Fallout for gives the player the ability to quickly level up in the early parts of the game, but requires the player to work harder to level up in later parts of the game.

Game story: Fallout 4 is an open world RPG game. The game story involves a series of main quests that follow the outline of the main story. These quests are structured so that the player must complete them in order and so the game designer controls the presentation of the story. Fallout also includes a large number of side quests. These can be
typically done in any order and can also be done simultaneously with the main quest. In order to complete the game and complete the story the main quests must be done. However, the side quests can either be done or ignored.

By having the main quests done in sequence the game designers can control the order and the pace of the story presentation. Side quests must be constructed so they are independent of each other and are not order dependent. Along with the main quests story the game designers have added a number of random episodes. These include small side quests that the player can discover as they wander through the open world. This method of storytelling is typically found in Western RPG’s. Open world RPG’s such as fallout and the Witcher commonly use this mixture of main side quests.

Combat: The combat in fallout is real-time and not turn-based. The player has the option of playing in a first-person or third person mode and the combat is a mixture of melee versus ranged weapons. Combat often involves multiple ways to win a battle. Players with higher strength or combat abilities can use a direct approach and overpower their opponents. Players that are not as strong but have a higher stealth capability can use sneak and ranged weapons. Fallout has nicely mashed the various combat options with the character’s attributes and abilities. Since fallout is set in a post-apocalyptic world various kinds of current and modern weapons are available. This includes, handguns, shotguns but also includes energy weapons and other weapons. Opponents in fallout include various human factions, mutants which have been scarred by radiation, and ghouls which are zombielike characters.

The artificial intelligence powering opponents is fairly good. While opponents typically react in the same way they sometimes can act independently.

The world: The world in fallout for is very well defined. A great deal of effort went into creating an open world with the tremendous amount of detail. Players are directed through parts of the world, especially in cities, by having mounds of rubble force players to take specified paths. The sense of scale is communicated by having the player listen to distant battles and seeing far-off explosions. Supposedly, the AI in this game is running various elements independently of the player’s location. Nonplayer characters are behaving on their own and, when they come in contact with each other, behave according to their nature. For example, one of the strategies in fallout is to lower one enemy into the Mets of other enemies. At this point, they typically engage in combat with each other and the player can step out of the action.

In order for fallout to maintain the mixture of main inside quests the world of fallout must be large enough for exploration and complicated enough to maintain the user’s interest.

Crafting: one of the outstanding features of fallout 4 is the use of crafting. Many RPG games allow the player to modify their equipment and to add features. Many traditional RPG games allow players to combine elements found within the game to craft or modify existing weapons. In fallout this extends to not only crafting weapons but also crafting abilities. While fallout has a workbench for modifying existing weapons and also has a workbench for modifying armor and, at some point, regular clothes. Fallout extends this crafting feature to a chemistry station workbench where the player can craft drugs and other items that extend the ability of the player. For example, by temporarily increasing inability in a particular situation. Another crafting feature is the ability to craft food and other items using ingredients found in the world. For example, the character can take radiation damage by staying too long in an area with high radiation. They can fix this damage by either taking a drug or by eating specifically crafted food.

Fallout has extended this crafting concept to what it calls settlements. A settlement is a section on the map that contains friendly NPC’s. By scavenging resources in the world and using a settlement workbench the player can craft various environmental elements such as beds, food, electrical sources, and other items that can be used by the settlement. Clearly, the purpose of such an elaborate crafting system is to not only appeal to certain kinds of game players but also created game with high replay ability.

Other features: One of the features in earlier fallout games that did not make it to fallout 4, is the idea of karma. This was the idea that player characters are treated by other in PCs in the game and have adventures or difficulties based on the amount of good or evil they did. Fallout allows the player various dialogue options in various choices. The player can either side with or doublecross groups of people in the game. The results of such actions are typically measured in XP
and resources. However, in earlier fallout game in games such as Star Wars, the game character is treated differently based on which moral choices they make. In Star Wars the player to go to the dark side or the good side. In earlier versions of fallout the amount of karma the player had was never really disclosed by the game. Players just had to evaluate how their character was being treated and what sorts of problems or adventures the character was having. This concept of karma force is another method to ensure the player fully embraces the character.