

## Week 1: Game Complexity Chart

The labeling of the chart is what throws me off in terms of finding this chart completely accurate. From our readings (specifically "Children's Motivations...") and experience, we know that the "social" aspect of gaming quite often takes place outside of the game, so someone looking at just the chart (and not reading the context) could be misled by what this is supposed to convey. Also, there's a level of social interaction in the games that are non-social. In a RPG or action game, you have to interact with characters within the game itself. It's hard to tell what they're measuring here. As for the Complex/Simple axis - I don't know in what world Guitar Hero is simple! I think they probably mean single-goal (simple) vs. mission-driven (complex). Overall, I understand what they're trying to convey, but that's as a gamer. I think if this chart was given to a group of non-gamers, they'd all come away with different takeaways. For example, it's easy to say that since MMORPGs are complex and social, those are the ones we should use in a classroom. But couldn't you use RockBand to teach teamwork? What if you're trying to get students with fine motor skill difficulties to practice in a fun way? That shoots Guitar Hero from simple to complex, just by changing the context of the teacher looking at this chart. Which, I think, is the issue. Even though I understand their overall goal, the chart is too oversimplified.

## Week 3: Flow

Csikszentmihalyi talks about two things that helped with my understanding of flow. The first is the idea of immersion, or being completely absorbed in the task at hand. The second is the idea of an equilibrium we hit (he calls it an average) where we measure the challenge of a moment to the skills we possess to meet it at that moment. I think these concepts, taken together to create the concept of flow, manifest themselves in games in the game narrative, and the tasks or goals of the game. For example, if you take a game like Candy Crush or any of the Hidden Pictures games, nearly all of them have some sort of story that you follow. Some have cut-scenes when you reach certain levels or goals in the game; some have a story check in when you first start. But that helps with the immersion aspect of flow, in that you're following along on this path as you do the tasks. As for the tasks themselves, we still think of gaming in terms of levels - start off easy, maybe a tutorial, and getting progressively harder. This means that the game tasks (the challenge) are built to the skills the player should have at any given moment. As to whether or not a game or course-game can be "good" without flow, I think that depends on how we define good. Effective, sure. But I think the person's level of enjoyment and immersion is going to depend. For example, the spot-the-hidden-objects games could just list all of the different levels and not give you the story in between. But the narrative is what makes you want to keep playing. Finding out that next piece of the story is what makes you consider spending \$5.99 on extra energy at two in the morning.... Similarly, in thinking about designing my English 250 course as a game, I could have the students do game-like tasks every day in class. However, without tying those skills to an assignment (the challenge in this situation), their feelings of immersion might not be as strong, and it might be reflected in their learning.