

The (in)ability of modern players to play games

1. INTRODUCTION

Let's consider the freshly released (Nov. 21, 2024) *Heart of Chernobyl* as the testbed. The game is basically, it seems, quite good. (Lots of small issues that will get fixed.) Anyway, the existence of hundreds of livestreams playing the game “blind” (no metaknowledge), from start to finish, while, in sufficiently many cases, showing their faces, gives some clue as to how “modern modern” core games (2024) play games. Herbert Simon did similar experiments with chess players famously.

Comment. I like this kind of game, this basic genre this game series basically invented, since the first *Shadow of Chernobyl* (Mar. 2007) and it's second follow up, *Call of Pripjat* (Oct. 2009); I'm biased. I declare my bias here, I think the game itself looks good.

So here's some informal observations.

Speaking of retards, though, but damn, most of the people streaming it seem retarded.

Shocked—Pikachu is shocked.

I don't think most “modern modern” players, woke or not, gray hair or not, can play open world games competently well.

- They are obviously trained (by playing the vast majority of so-called “modern modern” era games (2003–2023) to need to be told what to do at every moment. I can’t watch these streams, they are infuriatingly bad at games like this.
- Half the ppl could not figure out, in hours, how to equip artifacts.
- They died to dogs, the weakest and most basic and common enemy in the entire game, hours into it, yet having several top guns and no shortage of ammo, *just because they always forget to reload*. They die to bandits, *just because they never reload*.
- Half skipped many of the fights with bandits, etc, only because they couldn’t figure out “if they have to fight” them or not. They said so... We can see they can’t make (or have trouble making) their own choices. In games with *save anywhere mechanics*, that is, without any real risk. So they missed out on a lot of early quests. Extreme risk aversion makes open world simulation games very hard to play, one can imagine.
- Both halves seem unable to play basic FPS. They are...playing an FPS on PC...with controllers. That obviously won’t work. Controllers are not precise enough to aim easily and quickly on FPS. Duh. Right? *Right?*
- They do not explore freely, absent a goal, then use the knowledge gained when a goal is later provided, to achieve it, without being told to do so, something at even mice will do [4].

Comment. Imagine “playing” chess. But one side is completely scripted. And you, the player, are told which move you must make in response. Until you win. The entire “game” is about you following the instructions. If you move a piece otherwise, “you fail the mission”—“you have left the mission area” pops on the screen. That is the only way to lose. Are you really “playing a game of chess”, like that?

All this does not bode well for game designers trying to make interesting games. If they do, then “modern modern” cohorts of players might have a lot of trouble performing well at such games, and become frustrated. *Hmm.*

Here, to test out my new formatting feature for this WIP template, is how players play games now as pseudocode, because that is the best and most precise way to describe both *what* and *how* people do things, their cognitive processes, their skills or lack of thereof [3].

PROGRAM 1.1.

```
1 Def::BasicPlan(Move(Forward)(On(Most_Obvious_Path)))
2 !BasicPlan*Check(Missed something important)
3     [Miss gear |
4       Miss quests |
5       Miss dialogue |
6       Miss blinking notifications]
7     {Get stuck.}-->[Wait until comments tell answer |
8                   Try not to explore without a map marker]
9     {}-->{!BasicPlan}
```

This is a strategy that guarantees a stream will be either overly long or overly short. If that is the intention, then as an approach it is brilliant.

Here is what several commentators said in reply to an earlier version of this report:

“The average intelligence has definitely dropped in our society. Doesn’t surprise me at all. AAA games today literally tell you what to do and how to solve things repeatedly.” [1]

“ This use of controllers on PCs is becoming more common and I find it very odd for the games where a controller isn’t the optimal input device (and there are few games where that’s the case).” [2]

REFERENCES

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