



7 Deadly sins of making serious / educational games

Description

I wanted to add a short post just highlighting 7 things that I repeatedly see people doing wrong when they are making or considering making serious / educational games. This is by no means an exhaustive list though – I just like the idea of 7 deadly sins ?

1. Assume because **you** think it is fun that everyone else will.
2. Forget that it is actually a **game**.
3. Forget that it is meant to **teach** something or provide a message.
4. Test with the **wrong people**.
5. Think that it doesn't need to **look good**.
6. Think that playing games will make you a good **game designer**.
7. **Underestimate** how hard it is to make a good game.

In a little more detail.

1. **Assume because you think it is fun that everyone else will.**
 - o Fun is really subjective and just because you think it is amazing doesn't mean that the rest of us will! See sin 2...
2. **Test with the wrong people.**
 - o You are the wrong person to test it. If it is aimed at kids, get kids to test it. If it is aimed at asthma sufferers, get asthma sufferers to test it.
3. **Forget that it is actually a game.**
 - o Too often people put a few game elements onto something and call it a game. Games have gameplay, they have goals and create virtual worlds around the core experience. If you don't have those, you have at best gamification. Think of it this way. Would people play it if it was not a "serious" or educational game? No? Then why should they play it at all?
4. **Forget that it is meant to teach something or provide a message.**
 - o All of that said, it must still have the core message or lesson readily available. Don't hide the educational value so well that it can't be found! I recently played an educational game that committed this sin. The game was sort of fun, but I had no idea what it was trying to

teach me – I had to go searching for the learning angle!

5. Think that it doesn't need to look good.

- I recently went to BETT in the UK and saw a game that looked like it had been made for the old BBC Micro (don't know what that is? Ask your parents!). The reasoning was that the gameplay and educational angle was so strong that it did not need to look good. I used to agree with this, but these days it really is not all that true. We live in a superficial world where games look insane compared to when I was a kid. You are competing for the attention of people who could be playing the latest photo realistic war game, or super addictive iOS puzzle game. The content is the most important thing and you don't need to create a AAA looking experience, but you have to attract people in, otherwise how will they ever get to see how great the content is!

6. Think that playing games will make you a good game designer.

- Unless you make games, you are not a game designer! If you want to do this, make sure you have the right skills, are willing to learn them (which can take years) or know how to get hold of the right skills.

7. Underestimate how hard it is to make a good game.

- Games are hard to make. Good games are really hard to make! Think of how many thousands of games there are out there and then think of the handful that you have actually heard of? Most games, even good ones fail. This is a potentially expensive and time consuming adventure, plan for that. There are some great tools out there you don't have to build your own. Make use of what is out there. Can it be done in [MinecraftEDU](#)? Can it be made in Construct2?

And a bonus note here – **A QUIZ / TEST IS NOT A GAME, EVEN IF IT HAS CUTE GRAPHICS!!!!**

A massive thanks to [Alois Bourguenolle](#) for this awesome graphic based on the sins!

Marczewski's about making serious 7 sins GAMES

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7 deadly sins of serious game design From [Alois Bourguenolle](#)



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