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## Game Thinking – Breaking it Down

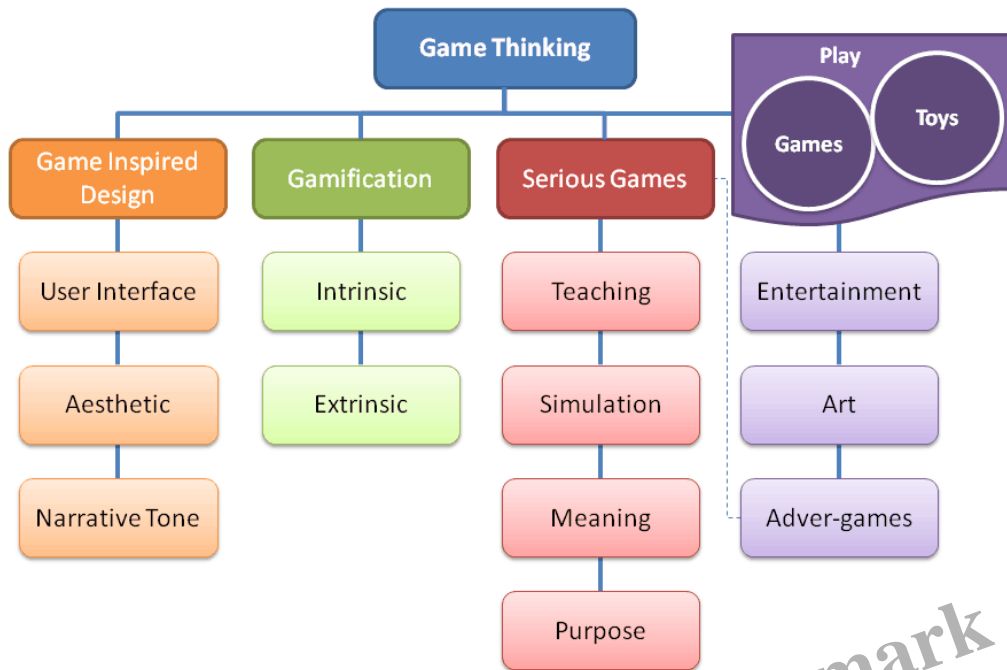
### Description

Ever since I first started considering Game Thinking, I have been trying to come up with a way to break down all of the parts that make it up. The first attempt was my article about the [differences between serious games and gamification](#). This gave me a basic outline of the 4 areas I considered to make up Game Thinking.

#### Game Thinking Breakdown

Since then, I have been thinking about this a lot. I have been trying to break it down even further. The next step was my article on the term [serious games](#). This broke serious games up into 4 basic types. Teaching Games, Simulations, Meaningful games and Purposeful games.

This led to me writing down a basic outline of what would fall under the other headings in my list. After good conversations on Google+ ([here](#) and [here](#)), I finally came up with an outline of what actually comes under Game Thinking.



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## Game Inspired Design

This used to be called gameful design, but this now has more [gamification](#) like connotations. This is where no actual elements from games are used, just ideas. So user interfaces that mimic those from games, design or artwork that is inspired by games or the way things are written. All of these have links to games, but do not contain anything that you would consider to be part of a game (mechanics, dynamics, tokens etc.)

## Gamification

Gamification is generally defined along the lines of “*The use of game thinking and elements in non game contexts*“. Here I have split gamification into two distinct types. Intrinsic and Extrinsic. This is very similar to Karl Kapps [two types of gamification](#), where he talks about structural and content gamification.

Extrinsic gamification is the sort that most people are used to, where game elements are added to a system. Things like points, badges, progress bars etc.

Intrinsic gamification is more about using motivation ([RAMP](#)) and behavioural design to engage users.

## Serious Games

Spoken about here already, this group includes full games that have been created for reasons other than pure entertainment.

- **Teaching Game:** Teaches you something using real gameplay.
- **Simulator:** A virtual version of something from the real world that allows safe practice and testing.
- **Meaningful Game:** Uses gameplay to promote a meaningful message to the player.
- **Purposeful Game:** Uses games to create direct real world outcomes.

## Games / Play / Toys

Ok, this is a bit more complicated. I originally started with just games here, but was challenged by a few people including Prof Richard Bartle. The challenge was “Where does play come into this?”.

Now, I have to admit, I was not ready for this and had to think hard, read hard and discuss hard. For those who don't know, there is a very academic conversation to be had around what a game is. There is no true single definition, but most accept that it is a type of play. Play, in this context, is confined only by implicit rules. A ball is governed by implicit rules such as gravity. You don't impose gravity on a ball, it is just there.

**Play** begins to become a **game**, when you start to add explicit rules to it. If I kick the ball through a goal, I get a point and win (Zero sum). If we work together to get the ball through a series of obstacles, we win (non zero sum). For some this will boil down to competition (with the system or other players) and cooperation. For others, there is much much more to it!

**Toys** come into this as another part of play that is important to consider. A toy seems to have two main varieties. An object or representation of an object that obeys implicit rules, but has no explicit rules on it's own. So a ball, a transformer etc. You can play with them however you want, within the toys own rules – gravity, shape, fragility etc. The other seems to be a playground. Take Gary's Mod or Minecraft (in creator mode). You are in a virtual world that has it's own implicit rules for how the world behaves and the restraints that you as the player have within the world (magic circle). With Minecraft this would be things like how far you can dig down, how far you can dig up, how certain blocks behave with other blocks. However, within those constraints you can do what you want. You can use the world itself as a toy.

There are hundreds of thousands of words dedicated to this conversation, but for me it is important not to forget the importance of play when you look at Game Thinking.

Back to **games** and I have split them up into 2 basic categories. Entertainment and Art. Entertainment is what most people would consider games. Call of duty, Civilization, World of Warcraft – that sort of thing. Art is more subjective. I would consider a game such as Proteus more art than game, some would not. That can be discussed elsewhere I am sure!

I have added a third type under games, that dotted lines back into serious games – Adver-games. These are proper games that are created to advertise something. The game is real, it plays like a game, but at some stage it is being used to try and sell you something. I have not put this directly under serious games as personally I feel that serious games should serve something resembling a

higher purpose – possibly snobbish on my part though.

## What now?

This is my take on Game Thinking. For me this represents the majority of things you should have in mind when you hear the word gamification. Limiting yourself to the standard definition is going to reduce how effective your thinking will be when it comes to designing solutions for people. I know that others have other ideas – so I throw this open for you all to interpret, add too and take from.

A huge thanks to everyone in the [Gamification Google+](#) group who helped my thinking here!

### Category

1. Gamification
2. Gaming

### Tags

1. data
2. Developers and Publishers
3. Game
4. Gamification
5. Richard Bartle
6. thinking
7. Video game
8. World of Warcraft

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