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Game setting vs World building

Although related, the setting of the game and the process of world building are different concepts.

World building refers to a general practice of inventing a fictional universe where a game or story takes place.

Creating the setting of the game is the process of thinking through all of the scenic elements of a game that gives the character a sense of the world the game exists in.

Your game's fictional world might be much larger in scope than what the player sees.

The setting elements reveals the world to player.

The game setting must include enough details for the user to understand the basic premise and logic of a world.

Game setting and level design

The game setting generally refers to the objects, backgrounds and other visuals in the game that set the scene.

Level design is the design of the way a user moves through a level which involves the user interaction, the setting, the physics of the world, the obstacles and the rewards.

Game setting is used to enhance level design but it is only one component of good level design.

Types of game worlds

Before designing the setting for a game, the designer must choose the type of world the game takes place in.

Can you think of a game that takes place in each of these worlds?

Setting types

- Fantasy
- Perspective world (something about the characters perspective is changed)
- “Our world”
- Sci-fi
- Historical/period
- Mythological
- Fictional world (from an existing fiction like Star Trek)



Image source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AZC-StarTrek.jpg>

Physical dimensions

After choosing a type of world, the designer can begin to set specific physical

dimensions for the game setting.

2d vs 3d - In this course we are doing 2d games, but this is a important to take into consideration with the game design. Some games work better in 2d than 3d and vice versa.

Boundaries - In some games the boundaries are very clearly defined, such as **Tetris**, where we can easily see the playing space. Other games do not show their boundaries and have to be explored to reveal the boundaries of the setting.

Scale - In realistic games, like **The Sims**, the characters are scaled according to normal real world dimensions with buildings and other objects in the game.

In games set in a fantasy world, the scale of characters might be changed to reflect aspects of the game dynamics, such as a in **Katamari Damacy** where the unusual physics of the game allow the player to grow much larger than would be physically possibly in real life.



Image

source: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/dad-sims-4-game-online-house-969327/>



Image source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/1649>

Game setting elements

This week we're focusing on scenic elements, so we'll ignore things like interactive objects and non-player characters.

- Terrain
- Rules (natural rules like gravity)
- Flora / fauna
- Cultural artifacts

Screen space

Because the screen is a 2d plane, there are different ways of dividing up the dimensions to imply dimensionality.

- Background and foreground
- Vertical space
- Horizontal space

Physical time

Another aspect of the game setting is physical time.

- Does time behave like it does in the real world?
- Does it only move forward at a constant rate?
- Can the user control time?

Finding inspiration

There are many places to look for inspiration for creating a balanced game world, in other video games, movies, art, every day scenes and other aesthetic practices. Personally, I find things like aquariums and gardens inspiring for their use of space, cultural objects and balance of color and shape.

- [Creative Aquariums](#)
- [Garden Landscape](#)
- [How to Design a Garden](#)
- [Principles of Landscape Design](#)
- [Terrariums](#)
- [Aquascaping](#)