

# Preface

There are many purposes for this book (and to editorialize early, maybe too many). We would like to provide a rational set of approaches that the reader might employ to design their own learning games while ensuring that all the successes and mistakes we made with ours are clear so that you can learn from them. In the first part, we begin by examining what games are generally, what learning games are specifically, and why we think we know this to be the case. This discussion is followed by a brief examination of some of the challenges and complexities inherent in learning from or with games, particularly, from the perspective of designing ethically, including whether or not we should use or create one at all. From there, Part II provides three main (or core) approaches we have used and observed for building learning games: making them for an audience, allowing learners to design their own, and designing a game in a balanced manner between designer and learner. Three coherent approaches are provided for learning game design that has evidence from research along with examples from our own work. Part II also discusses some of the tools we have used for the design of learning games, none of which include actual game engines. The third part provides examples of these approaches in practice from our own past work as well as an introduction to the redevelopment of a narrative used to frame one set of learning game spaces. Part III is broken into (a) virtual worlds and (b) transmedia gaming approaches used to develop these. The fourth part ties in (or connects) the underlying theories used to support learning game design as well as methods for validly studying and reporting results related to these rather complex learning developments.

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Learning Games

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