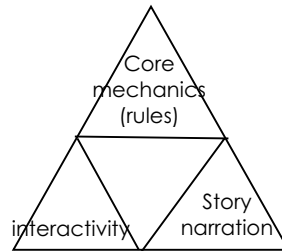


# User Interfaces in Games (Game UI)

**Interaction + visual elements + sound = user experience**

User interface must accept player commands (such as point and click to go somewhere or pick up item or make character jump) and inform player status (such as level for health, score, game level etc.)



## Production Process

Rough draft using placeholders –testing - progressive iterations – testing – Final UI  
Focus groups look at how new users play  
Function first then aesthetics!

## Good verses Bad UI

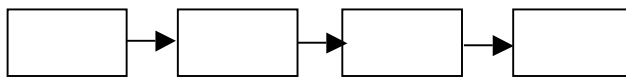
Good UI is never noticed – Bad UI is noticed and hated!  
Good UI = you ARE avatar on screen – Bad UI = you ARE CONTROLLING avatar on screen

## Parts of UI

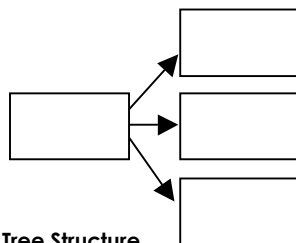
**Shell:** menus including title, setup of sound and video options, character creation, configuration of controls, help screen, access saved games, create new game, exit game

Menu making for Shell

Linear or tree structure (not too many clicks; let the player get to the action right away!)



**Linear**



**Tree Structure**

**In-game Interface:** what the user sees while playing game

## Elements within In-game UI

**Status** – set goals, increase thrill, and provide rewards

**Score** – usually numerical

**Ammo count** – can be numerical or iconographic or bar

**Power level** – displayed as changing color progress bar

**Level indicator**

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Some UIs are transparent = no game elements on screen!

### Element Types:

**Icons:** universal and context driven, use tool tips as needed to describe, clear imagery

**Text:** not globally recognized, need to be at least 12 pixels tall! Minimize for universal playability of game

## Evolution of Interfaces

### Arcade Game (historical)

Non-playing mode: cycles through TITLE, INSTRUCTIONS, HIGH SCORES, and later DEMO to entice you to play. Press button to play.

Play Mode: SCORE, LEVEL #, LIVES LEFT

[www.mame.net](http://www.mame.net)

### Text adventures (historical)

Verb/noun input (take rock), abbreviations or longhand for directions (north or n, south or s), keyboard and enter key only...

[www.mudcenter.com](http://www.mudcenter.com)

### Graphic Adventures (historical)

Point and click became popular, interface could have inventory, score, level etc on it. Different modes for talking and adventuring and using items...

### Modern games

More recently games are using completely transparent interface (no interface) or have the whole screen taken up by the window to the world (MYST, BLACK and WHITE)

Interfaces are more **context driven** and so there is less choosing the right 'inventory item' or correct option but more of having hold of right object and using a button to use it.

**Examples are:** previous games would make you choose a mode to go into such as talk, fight, etc. and then clicking on person you want to interact with... Nowadays, if you have nothing in your and and you click on person you want to interact with you will talk to them ... if you have a weapon in your hand and want to click on them they you fight them! Less clicks = game with better flow.

## RPGs

Character generation mode  
In game adventure mode  
Inventory mode  
(3 different types of screens to deal with)

## Types of Controls (input devices)

Joystick evolution  
Keyboard

## Ergonomics!

Watch for ergonomic design so that you can play a game and get lost within in with out getting sour or cramped!

## UI Layouts (examples of where controls go)

