Prensky's Chapter 5 - Fun, Play & Games
Matt Byrnes

The first point that grabbed me was the duality of the word fun. I agree that fun does not necessarily mean amusement. This is certainly one reason why many educators have been reluctant to embrace learning games. I have read a bit about MIT’s MediaLab but I really liked the term “Hard Fun”. I think this may be something to keep in the forefront of our minds when creating games. Many of the most popular games are very hard and require time and work to become good at them.

I do think he missed the mark when he stated that “...the computer and the television are unlikely ever to merge...”. I can see why he feels this way but I don’t think the delay in the merge is because the TV is considered a plaything. I personally think there were and still are various political and technological issues holding the convergence back. Take a look at the whole digital rights management debate raging across the media right now.

“When we enjoy learning we learn better.” Yes, I agree, but ... what is fun to each individual person? Some people find first person shooter games fun. I would not classify them as relaxing. I think maybe a clearer objective would be “to (try to) suspend disbelief.” I think the motivation can follow from there.

“Play is our brain’s favorite way of learning” I love this quote! I would have liked him to talk about this more. I think we forget sometimes our biology.

Play and Work
Good points in this part of the chapter especially the part about how the lower in an organization you look the seriousness of purpose translates into a serious demeanor, particularly when it comes to training. I am all for a workplace that supports more play. I imagine it is much easier to implement when your work is inherently creative or playful. It would be interesting to see how it could be implemented in less traditionally playful professions. Keeping it safe and friendly would also be tough.

Game Taxonomy
I like the way he classifies the “other” games that we find hard to put a label on as toys. When it comes to computer games I prefer the ones that are more like toys.

Is computer game design an art or a science? Both, of course. Ask anyone that question about their trade or profession and you will get the same answer. I can nail two bits of wood together but I am no carpenter. I don’t know the art or science of that skill and it takes both.

Lastly, I was interested on his thoughts on gender. I think the clearest thing he had to say was that an exciting game is an exciting game. If it is good everyone will play. I was expecting a bit more on the subject but he played it safe and left the issue alone.