Game Design Recommended Reading
This bibliography is a modified list originally created by Professor Tony Rowe. All annotations are written by him.

**Character design for mobile devices** (NFGMan, 2006)
Not just for mobile devices, this is good analysis of sprite art as seen in classic games of the 8-bit and 16-bit eras and beyond. Not really a how-to guide, but it will help you understand the thinking behind many pixel art styles and see how many character sprites (Super Mario, Sonic, Bonk, etc.) developed across numerous game titles.

**Creating the art of the game** (Matt Omernick, 2004)
Full disclosure: this book was written by a friend and co-worker of mine. Omernick set out to create an introductory tome on 3-D modeling and texturing for the novice. His instructions are well-illustrated and he also covers what life is like as a game artist in the industry. However, the book was written more than 10 years ago and some techniques may not be as applicable with the latest generation of game systems.

**Understanding comics** (Scott McCloud, 1994)
This is an essential tool for artists and game designers alike. McCloud’s study of sequential art has applications beyond the pages of comic books and graphic novels. Learn how to use iconographic imagery (great for sprite-based games), give a sense of transition of time, convey emotions, and tell a clear story through a flat, 2-dimensional image (like a comic page or a video screen). The sequels, *Making Comics* and *Reinventing Comics* are interesting but less applicable to game development.

**The art of computer game design** (Chris Crawford, 1984)
Written by the creator of early, influential games like Eastern front: 1941 and Balance of Power, this is the first book ever published that deals with the theory of video game design. Some sections are outdated (such as the Taxonomy of Computer Games), but many of the core concepts Crawford wrote in 1984 are still valid today. Crawford hosted the first gathering of game developers that would become GDC conference in his house back in 1988.

**The art of game design: a book of lenses** (Jesse Schell, 2008)

**The art of interactive design: a euphonious and illuminating guide to building successful software** (Chris Crawford, 2003)

**Challenges for game designers** (Brenda Brathwaite (now Romero) and Ian Schreiber, 2009)
A great collection of “analog” game design exercises great for stimulating inspiration and guiding one through the steps of game production. **Romero** is an industry veteran who got her start on the Wizardry game series in 1981. She is known for her “Mechanic is the Message” series of experimental board games, of which Train is probably best known.

The design of everyday things (revised print, electronic) (Donald Norman, 2013 revised edition)
**Emotional design: why we love (or hate) everyday things** (Donald Norman, 2004)
Yes, these books are about industrial design and have nothing to do with video games. However, Norman’s design method is about improving the experience of the user of an object: making its function clear, intuitive, and effective. These are vital methodologies for any designer, especially one creating game controls and user interfaces. The Design of Everyday Things is the only book my game mentor insisted that I read and I recommend reading at least the first three chapters. You will start thinking about problems you didn’t know you had to solve. Emotional Design is a great follow-up on the first book.

**Game design workshop : a playcentric approach to creating innovative games** (Tracy Fullerton, 2018 4th edition)
One of the better game design textbooks available, even though it is riddled with minor factual errors (they don’t detract much from the book’s usefulness but do annoy a game historian such as myself). Includes some good exercises for thinking about design but my favorite is the collection of “Designer Perspective” articles written by industry professionals (even my old boss, Glen Entis. Look for a photo of the sandbox and plastic army men I used for level design on early Medal of Honor games).

**Game feel** (Steve Swink, 2009)
A great book for determining what makes a video game “feel” good. Good information on player’s perception and reaction times, timing and acceleration, and is heavily illustrated to make the information clear. Worth the price for the Super Mario Bros. analysis, alone.

**Level up! The guide to great video game design** (Scott Rogers, 2014)
Rogers gave one of my favorite GDC talks, ever (Everything I learned about Level Design I learned from Disneyland). I’ve adapted part of his talk into a lesson I give about taking game inspiration from theme parks. The book is easy to digest, thoughtful, and filled with his quirky illustrations.

**On the way to fun** (Roberto Dillon, 2010)
A slim volume that analyzes the emotional responses derived from a game’s aesthetics, dynamics, and mechanics. Most of the text is occupied by analyses of various retro and indie games. Useful if you want your game to have a similar emotional impact of, say Braid, Flower, or Robotron: 2084. I never used the book much but your mileage may vary.

**Rules of play: game design fundamentals** (Katie Tekinbas and Eric Zimmerman, 2004)
A scholarly attempt at a means to discuss the theory of game design. It starts with a look at different developer definitions of words like “system,” “game,” and “interactivity.” From there it looks at the rules of games, the play of games, and the culture of games. Includes some good guest contributions by pro designers (Richard Garfield’s game about fighting siblings in the back seat of a car is a highlight). The book gives a lot of voice to Bernie DeKoven and the “New Games” movement (often presented with dissenting opinions thereof, fortunately). I do give the authors credit for often citing Pilgrim in the Microworld by David Sudnow: a true story of one man’s obsession with Atari Breakout (I thought I was the only one who ever read that book!).

**A theory of fun for game design** (Raph Koster, 2013 2nd edition)
While I don’t always agree with Koster’s professional design decisions, this is one of my favorite books on game design theory. Subjects range from how the human brain works, ethics in entertainment, analysis of human activities: all things that a good designer needs to know. Plus, lots of cartoons.

**Game AI Pro 1 2 3 4** (edited by Steve Rabin)
An extensive collection of articles written by industry AI engineers (and some of my co-workers). My go-to series of books to turn to when I am designing AI systems, whether it be for an FPS, a racing game, or artificial life. This series is not for the novice and is now out of print, unfortunately.

**Artificial intelligence for games** (Ian Millington and John Funge, 2009 2nd edition)

**Game programming algorithms and techniques** (Sanjay Madhav, 2014)
A new book that assumes the reader studied two semesters of object-oriented programming (C#, C++, Java, Python) and want to apply their knowledge toward making games. Covers topics like 3-D graphics, those darn quaternions, camera controls, physics, basic AI, networking, user interfaces, and more. Written in pseudocode, the lessons are adaptable to your favorite OOP language. I find this book clearer and easier to work with, though less thorough, than the old C++-focused standby, Core Techniques and Algorithms in Game Programming by Daniel Sanchez-Crespo Dalmau.
**Game programming patterns** (Robert Nystrom, 2014)
A clear and easy guide to basic programming patterns for the intermediate programmer. Not just for games, these are good guidelines for any engineer to know. Best of all, you can read it on the web for FREE.

**Digital performance: a history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation** (Steve Dixon, 2007)

**Feminist frequency: tropes vs. women in videogames** (Anita Sarkeesian, video series)
Feminist blogger Sarkeesian’s thoroughly researched series about sexist tropes found in video games, such as the pervasive “damsel in distress” scenario. Many of these tropes are literary shortcuts: overused plot devices that don’t make for fresh, interesting narrative. Other tropes are downright misogynistic. I find her series to be fair and even-handed, though I do hope she continues her “Positive Female Characters in Video Games” series with more good examples (such as my characters: Manon Batiste and Lt. Tanyay Pavelovna...hint, hint).

**How to do things with videogames** (Ian Bogost, 2011)
Are video games good for anything besides entertainment? If you are asking the same question, this book is for you. Want to make a game that introduces empathy, improves the user’s skills, makes music, improve mass-transit, or even makes something fun seem boring? I always enjoy Bogost’s writing and this book looks at many games that try to do something unusual and postulates on how to take those ideas further.

**Persuasive games** (Ian Bogost, 2007)

**Realtime Art Manifesto** (Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn, 2006)


**The society of the spectacle** (Guy Debord, 1967)

**The virtual window: from alberti to microsoft** (Anne Friedburg, 2009)

**Tactical media** (Rita Raley, 2009)

**Reality is broken** (Jane McGonigal)

**Game over: how Nintendo zapped an American industry, captured your dollars, and enslaved your children** (David Sheff, 1993)
One of the first video game history books I read and it is still the go-to text for a thorough history of the Nintendo corporation. However, I couldn’t help but get a negative vibe about games from author (just look at that title!). This edition, written in 1993, is now quite outdated. The newer edition, Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World, bring the timeline up to about 1995 but that is still out of date.

**High score! The illustrated history of electronic games** *(expanded edition)* (Rusel DeMaria and Johnny Wilson, 2002)
A visual treat presenting the people, hardware, and games behind the industry. It makes a good companion piece to the unillustrated Ultimate History of Video Games, below. Written by two game journalists who have covered the industry since its infancy, High Score! includes a wealth of photographs, information, and interviews from countless professionals.

**Ultimate History of Video Games** (Steven Kent, 2001)
Kent is one of the better video game historians and this title is a 2nd edition of the book I read: his self-published The First Quarter. It is probably the best overall history of the North American video game industry (until 2001, anyway) in print. However, the edition I read had numerous, minor, factual errors and from the reviews only, it looks like the new edition still has them. Still, Kent has many quotes directly from major movers in the industry from the some 500 interviews he conducted. I recommend you use this book but double-check your facts before writing your term paper.

**Masters of Doom: how two guys created an empire and transformed pop culture** (David Kushner, 2004)

**Racing the beam: the Atari video computer system** (Nick Montfort and Ian Bogost, 2009)
A modern look back at the days where game creators were engineers, artists, animators, musicians, and game designers all rolled into one. Montfort and Bogost thoroughly examine the mind-boggling hoops they had to jump through in order to program the Atari 2600. He shows how they made the machine do things it was never created to do. Also includes tales of how several touchstone games were created: Combat, Adventure, Pitfall!, and more. A must-have for those interested in the technical nitty gritty of classic console games.

**Vintage games** (Bill Loguidice and Matt Barton, 2012)
Each chapter takes a game genre, such as stealth or 2-D platformer games, and looks at the most important game of the genre. It explores what made each game so vital to the genre, the key mechanics and concepts of the game, which games influenced it, and which games were influenced by it and made other changes to the genre. Instead of a linear look at the industry’s history, it takes each touchstone game and looks backward and forward from that point.