

ABSTRACT

Title: Losing is Fun: The Lure of Extreme Difficulty in Gaming

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This research paper examines challenging games by focusing on the subgenre of computer role-playing games known as roguelikes. It asks why players choose to play challenging games when their skill is significantly less than that required by the game. Examining them through the lens of player reports, it finds issue with the dominant model of flow theory and attempts to explain why it fails to be fully useful as an analytical tool. Using "games as learning" and "positive stress" as tools, it analyses roguelikes and determines three factors which cause players to continue playing - challenge, replayability, and narrative. The paper concludes with suggestions for future research.