

Lesson plan #3

PLATFORMS AND CONTROLS

A game platform is an electronic system which can be used to play video games. To interact with the game, controls are needed. Early games generally used a keyboard or a joystick - now it is possible to control a game using touch, sound, or even by waving your hands in the air. As computing power increases, games platforms do more impressive things. However, with games, ingenuity can sometimes count more than computing power. This is indicative of the creativity at the heart of video games and interactive entertainment, and what helps to make them appealing to consumers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ▲ Identify the different games platforms available.
- ▲ Be familiar with the different types of game control.

KEY VOCABULARY

platforms | games console | stylus | touchscreen | joystick

SUGGESTIONS FOR STARTER/STIMULUS

- ▲ Ask the class to name all the types of game platform they can think of.
– or –
- ▲ Get hold of more than one type of game platform, and make a comparison.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CONTROLS AND CONSOLES

The worksheet has a list of control types and a list of games platforms. Ask the students to connect the control types with the games platforms which use them.

PROS AND CONS

Ask students to list what they think are the advantages and disadvantages of different types of game platform. Then, as a class, discuss why some games are better suited to some platforms than others. For example: games which rely on impressive graphics and take a long time to play are usually developed for home video consoles, such as Xbox and PlayStation. Games which only take a few minutes to play are often better suited for smartphones and PCs.

Different consumers also prefer different platforms, and a lot of gamers have a brand loyalty. Nevertheless, some consumers do use more than one platform, depending on the genre of game they are playing. For example, family games and some of the earlier fitness games have traditionally been played on the Nintendo Wii. Action and adventure games, by contrast, have traditionally been played on the Xbox or PlayStation.

BUTTONS AND ACTIONS

Ask students to look at some game manuals and fill in the table in the worksheet, listing the control buttons and what they do (actions) for each game.

Note: you can find game manuals on console manufacturers' websites. For example:

- ▲ <http://www.nintendo.com/consumer/manuals/index.jsp>
- ▲ <http://support.xbox.com/en-gb/pages/xbox-360/get-started/manuals-specs.aspx>
- ▲ <http://uk.playstation.com/support/>

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EXTENSIONS

Ask students to list and describe the different parts of the electromagnetic spectrum that are used to control a Nintendo Wii.

PLENARY SUGGESTIONS

Discuss limitations of games controls.

Discuss how some games need or benefit from a particular type of control (e.g. SingStar needs a microphone, Guitar Hero needs a guitar, and racing game experience is enhanced with a wheel) whereas, for others, it makes much less difference (e.g. games that you can control with a keyboard, mouse, or on your phone).

WORKSHEET ANSWERS

CONTROLS AND CONSOLES

This is not a definitive list. For example, some PCs may have touchscreens, and there can be extra accessories for consoles.

Smartphone - touchscreen, motion sensor, microphone, camera, possibly keyboard

Nintendo DS - touchscreen (stylus), microphone, action buttons, direction buttons, camera (DSi)

PlayStation 3 - joystick, action buttons, direction buttons (on game controller), microphone, camera, motion sensor

PC - keyboard, mouse, joystick

Wii - action buttons, direction buttons, motion sensor

Xbox 360 - joystick, action buttons, direction pad (on game controller), motion sensor, camera, microphone (Kinect controller)

PSP - action buttons, direction buttons, joystick

Nintendo 3DS - action buttons, direction buttons, motion sensor, microphone, camera

PROS AND CONS: POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Pros	Cons
Personal computer (PC)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Don't have to buy dedicated equipment ▲ Lots of games available online, many free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Some games difficult to get running (PCs are not standardised) ▲ Some games may need a high specification computer ▲ Not very portable (although 'cloud gaming' may change this - see, for example: http://www.onlive.com/service/cloudgaming)
Home video game console (e.g. PlayStation, Xbox, Wii)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Optimised to play games ▲ Several people can play at once ▲ Can play online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Need to buy dedicated equipment ▲ Not portable
Portable game console (e.g. Nintendo DS, PSP)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Portable ▲ Multiplayer options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Small screen limits graphics ▲ Unsociable (only one person can use console at a time)
Smartphone	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Don't have to buy dedicated equipment ▲ Lots of cheap or free games available to download ▲ Location gaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Small screen ▲ No game controller buttons (usually) ▲ Fiddly keyboard ▲ Online gaming depends on wireless phone signal - unreliable and/or expensive

Student worksheet #3

PLATFORMS AND CONTROLS

Use this worksheet to investigate the pros and cons of different types of controllers and consoles.

CONTROLS AND CONSOLES

Connect the control types with the platform types (each platform has at least two control types):

Control type	Platform type
touchscreen	smartphone (e.g. iPhone, BlackBerry)
keyboard	Nintendo DS
mouse	PlayStation 3
microphone	PC
action buttons	Wii
motion sensor	Xbox 360
camera	PSP
direction buttons/pad	Nintendo 3DS
joystick	tablet computer (e.g. iPad)

PROS AND CONS

Different types of platform have different advantages and disadvantages. For the following types platforms write down what you think are the pros and cons.

- ▲ Personal computer (PC)
- ▲ Home video games consoles (Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Nintendo Wii)
- ▲ Portable games consoles (Nintendo DS, PSP)
- ▲ Smartphones (iPhone, Android phone)

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BUTTONS AND ACTIONS

Look at some manuals for games on the same platform.

Create a table using the headings below and, for each game, complete the table with the button names and what they do (actions) for each game.

An example has been completed for you.

Platform			
Nintendo DS			
Game		Game	Game
Dragon Quest VI		Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	The Sims 2
Button	Action	Action	Action
X	display main menu/ confirm	N/A	N/A
Y	Display information /Enlarge Map / Close all windows	display the menu	N/A