SAVEgame

by Michael Christie

1. INTRODUCTION

What is it - SAVEgame is a role-playing game set in the world of computer and videogames. This historical period began in the 1950 s, with the creation of a game that became known as Pong. The creation of videogames has become a multi-million dollar industry, with technological advancements improving the videogame experience from a pair of white blobs trying to hit a smaller white blob past each other, to nearly photo-realistic three-dimensional representations of people with imaginary backgrounds armed with fantastic weapons trying to kill each other s nearly photo-realistic representation.

Players take on the roles of videogame characters in a mostly consensual videogame world. SAVEgame is all about what videogame characters do when not being possessed by demons, and forced by their to take on all manner of ridiculous

quests, or to be the last, best hope for their race planet whatever. However, often that is exactly what videogame characters do with their free time anyway...

A note on terminology, spelling, and other stuff: SAVEgame gleefully uses computing measurements and terminology in ways that were not the original intended definition. If I get time, there may be a game glossary at the end of this file. I am from Australia g day and thus follow the British standards of spelling eg armour has a u in it, and the letter s is favoured over the letter z in words such as hypnotise and realise. Finally, the computer hardware software system I am writing the initial draft this on is somewhat limited.
The game mechanics for this system call for use of exponents eg 2 to the power of x, where x is the exponent , in which x is usually written in a superscript font. In this document I use the ^ symbol, thus 2 to the power of 7 is 2^7. Now that s more than enough introductory stuff, it s time to start competing.

Game Chef Selections - I have chosen the following options:

Theme - SAVEgame is inspired by the currently unfolding historical age of videogames, which have evolved in complexity as the technology behind them evolves.

Ingredients - SAVEgame shall incorporate the following ingredients:

Invincible
Companion
Accuser

Limitations - SAVEgame shall use a dice resolution mechanic where three pieces of information can be determined from a single roll.

Gameplay Requirements - To get the most out of SAVEgame, players should have the following:

1. An interest in computer and or videogames

2. At least one eight-sided dice hereafter called a d8
3. Knowledge of the 2 table. Here's a start - 2 2 equals 4
4. A sense of humour see requirement 3, above

2. CHARACTER CREATION

Characters in the SAVEgame world are made up of bits, which are the building blocks of data. In quaint accordance with the videogame systems they exist within, characters are defined by an exponential ranking system over three primary attributes. To begin the process of character creation, discuss the preferred power level of the game with the other players. The power levels are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Bit Definition

Power Level	Rank	Bit Definition	Example Character
1	2	2^1	Pong
2	4		Pac-Man
3	8		Sonic the Hedgehog

4	16	Super Mario
5	32	Lara Croft
6	64	Samus Aran
7	128	Gordon Freeman
8	256 2^8	

Bit Definition indicates the number of points you can spend on creating your initial character. Also, as you might have guessed, this is based loosely on CPU processor power.

The primary attributes used to create characters are Identity, Interface, and Interaction:

Identity ID - This attribute is a measure of how well defined a character is. This covers both appearance and emotional complexity. For example, Pong is a white rectangle. Pong has an Identity rank of 1. Gordon Freeman is a bespectacled, bearded, gun-toting scientist and hero of the revolution in a futuristic world. He has an Identity rank of 7.
Game application - Identity is used for Reality Checks see Combat, below. It is

also used for governing relationships with other entiies in the gameworld. Finally, it is used to guide players in defining their character s background. A 1-bit character can get away with a two-word background Pong is Pong, after all , but a 256-bit character would have a back-story, and numerous personal details irrelevant to their current situation, but which give depth to their personality. You can get up to 7 bonus points for a single sentence summary of your character, and up to another 7 bonus points for a background story of 256 words. The size of the bonus is determined by comparing your ID score with the maximum ID score 8 .

Interface IF - This attribute defines how the character generally perceives the SAVEgame world. Interface rank 1 again, Pong is a good example is a top-down view of the world. Rank 7 the aforementioned Mr Freeman has a 3D perspective, with stereo surround sound and lots of options.

Game application - Interface is used for noticing things and reacting to them. It is the primary attribute for combat

actions see Combat . A character can choose to function at a lower Interface rank than they are capable of, or this can be forced upon them by the results of a Reality Check see Gameplay . Table 2 lists the obvious interface modes. If you think of others, use them, but be careful to rank them appropriately in the list as the order of interface modes has an effect upon combat.

Table 2: Interface Modes

Mode	Example
Top-down	Galaxian
Side-on	Donkey Kong
Isometric	Populous
Third Person	Neverwinter Nights
First Person	Half-Life

Interaction IA - This attribute defines the influence a character can have over objects and entities in the game world. Unlike the other primary attributes, all characters get a free category of action, thus Pong, with Interaction rank 1 can move in the game world, and Pong can also deflect objects.

Gordon Freeman Rank 7 can interact with the game world in up to 8 ways.

Game application - This is a very important attribute. Under normal circumstances, if you do not have the right form of interaction, your available actions are restricted. It is recommended that players follow the guidelines in Table 3 as to which Interaction they can perform. However, it is possible to have a playable character without some of the basic interactions. For example, a character inspired by real-time strategy games might ignore the Collect and Store interactions and take Create and Command instead .

Table 3: Common Interactions

Rank	Category	Example
1	Move	Physically move around the gameworld.
2	Collect	Collect objects eg Power-Ups .
3	Use	Activate levers, switches, buttons, etc.

4	Communicate	Communicate with entities.
5	Destroy	Remove objects from the game world.
6	Store	Hold number of objects equal to your IA score.
7	Create	Create useable objects see Object Creation .
8	Command	Issue commands to other entities.

Suggested minimum rank for the type of action.

Players must build their character from the Bit Definition agreed on as the power level of the game. Thus in a 1-bit game if you re keen to go totally old-school , the total point cost of your initial character cannot exceed 2 points. This may seem rather ridiculous, but further on in this section there are Bugs that can offset the cost of your attributes, and Features that are beneficial under appropriate circumstances. However, to be honest I must admit that a 1-bit game is probably going to be short and silly

GM: OK, you re in a big empty space which is all black as far as you can see. Suddenly there is a loud fanfare, followed by a whoosh as a bunch of alien spaceships fly in at exactly your altitude, and they start swaying back and forth. What do you do
Pong: I jump up and down a lot in a threatening manner
Donkey Kong : I beat my chest and throw barrels at them Can we roll dice yet
GM: No, this is stupid. Why don t we look at higher level characters instead

The Game Watch version.

As a more sensible example, a group of gamers decides to play a 32-bit game. Monty wants to have a character who, in normal form, is primarily good at combat, can pick up weapons and use them, and looks pretty cool doing just that. He buys Identity Rank 2 cost 4 , Interface Rank 4 cost 16 , and Interaction 3 8 points . Monty decides his character will look like a cool spaceship Identity 2 . With Interface rank 4, Monty s spaceship can function in top-down mode eg Galaxians , side-scrolling mode eg

Defender , isometric mode Zaxxon , and first-person mode Descent . With Interaction 3, Monty decides that the spaceship can Move, Collect, Use and Destroy objects. Monty has now spent 28 points, so he will take a closer look at the Entomology...er, I mean Bugs section, a little later in the character creation process. For now, however, here s a new level of complexity.

Subsystems: Videogame characters generally have some attributes specific to the type of game they feature in. In SAVEgame, these are called subsystems. Characters in role-playing videogames tend to have attributes measuring their combat prowess, magical aptitude, etc.

Essentially, these attributes can be defined by the player. Keeping things simple, the maximum number of subsystem attributes a starting character can have is equal to the character s power level, and ranks in Subsystems are bought from the character s Bit Definition value eg, save some points or take some Bugs . So, continuing with the previous example, Monty s spaceship character

currently has 8 points to spend on up to 5 subsystems. He decides he can make do with 4 subsystems, choosing Speed, Manoeuvrability, Accuracy, and Shields. Because he is getting tired, he simply spends 2 points on each. After referring back to Table 1 he determines that each subsystem is at Rank 1. These ranks will come in handy when Monty s character attempts to do something, but that s another section Gameplay . Any unspent subsystem points go into the character s Power-Up Pool. Meanwhile, Monty s spaceship, which he has decided to call Thrustoid is already at the maximum Bit Definition allowed for the game s agreed power level, and now we come to the third part of character creation.

Features: These are neat stunts or tricks the character can perform. They are different to Subsystems in that they are not limited to increasing attributes via specialization. They are also often related to ways in which the characters are used when they are possessed by the Demons From Beyond. In many cases, features have certain prerequisites that must be met before a character can use

them. Finally, in the character creation process they are bought by spending a the required amount of character points. In desperate circumstances, they can be bought with Innovation Points, to provide temporary bonuses lasting until the end of a combat cut-scene .

Note: Features have a bit cost that does not follow the exponential scale.

Buffer - Your character can repeat their previous action.
Prerequisite: Can be used if no Feature was used in the previous action, and the previous action was not an absolute success see Gameplay, below .
Cost: 1

Camper - Your character is good at hiding, and attacking while stationary.
Game effect: 1 to attack rolls while stationary, 1 to hiding, 1 to noticing stuff.
Prerequisite: IF 3
Restriction Current Interface Mode must not be top-down or side-on, as it is not possible to Camp in such game worlds.
Cost: 2

Companion Your character has a companion entity who is either useful in limited circumstances, or of limited use in all situations.
Game effect Create a character from one quarter of your character s Bit Definition. The companion s derived values are calculated from that amount. You may choose Interactions that your character does not possess. If the companion dies, you lose 2 points from your ID score until the companion re-spawns.
Prerequisite: ID 4

Hotshot - Your character can target vital areas of an opponent in combat.
Game effect: 2 to damage on a successful hit.
Prerequisite: IA 2
Restriction: Must know Destroy interaction.
Cost: 3

Interface Hotkey - Your character is able to switch between available Interface modes quicker.

Game effect: The initial penalty for reality adjustment see Reality Checks in combat is reduced by 1.
Prerequisite: ID 2
Cost: 2

Invincible Gank Master Your character is temporarily unable to be killed or injured.
Game effect: Your Playability score immediately returns to its original value eg damage is healed. This lasts until everyone else in the current combat or scene is dead other players included. You are still susceptible to Reality Checks other players can gang up on you. For every success you get with attacks against the other players, your Innovation score increases by 1. For every player you kill, your primary attributes are each increased by 1. If you do not kill at least one other player, your Identity score is reduced by 2. If you fail any action while Invincible, there must be a Reality Check at the start of the next round,
Prerequisite: Character must be possessed by the Demons From Beyond.
Cost: 8

Platformer - Your character is good at Jumping and or Climbing.
Game effect: 1 to rolls involving Jumping and Climbing.
Prerequisite: ID 2
Restriction: Your character s description should imply that you can climb or jump.
Cost: 1

Theme Music - Your character has an inspiring but repetitive theme tune.
Game effect 1 to any one action in the same round as the tune plays.
Prerequisite: ID 4 or less
Restriction: You have to hum the tune or there is no effect. Other players may get annoyed with your humming. Use at your own risk.
Cost: 1

Bugs - In SAVEgame, Bugs are seemingly random events that affect the characters. They represent the influence of the Demons From Beyond over the characters. They can occur when a player fails an action both dice rolled higher than target . At the time, the GM

can choose to spend Intervention Points for any of the effects below. Players may also select Bugs during character creation, in which case the character has the bug as a tendency anyway, and the Intervention Costs for pre-existing Bugs are halved.

Dodgy Collision Detection - Your character sometimes inexplicably doesn t succeed in an action.
Game effect: For the remainder of the combat scene, your character rolls 3 dice for any attempted action, and takes the results of the two highest dice. Unfortunately, this never happens in the player s favour.
Intervention Cost: 2

Floating Point Failure Your character has problems counting.
Game effect: Any bonus amounts are reduced by one. Thus your character does one less point of damage, and gets one less power-up point from successful actions. This lasts until the end of the scene.
Intervention Cost: 2

Lousy Animation - For the remainder of the combat scene, your character is badly animated.
Game effect -2 to ID.
Intervention Cost: 1

Gank Magnet Other players like killing you.
Game effect: If you are ganked, the ganker gains double the usual benefits - their attributes increase by 2.
Intervention Cost: 8

Feel free to use these as a guideline for creating your own Bugs if necessary eg I m running out of time

Derived Values

Playability - This is a measure of how long a character can survive in the gameworld. It is derived by adding the character s three primary attributes together. The result is the character s Playability score, and indicates how much damage measured in Bit Points the character can withstand before respawning.
Thrustoid has Playability 9.

Innovations - These represent alterations to the game world that characters can make in difficult situations. At the end of the character generation process, the character s Innovation Total is calculated by subtracting the character s Playability score from their Bit Definition total, and dividing the result by 8, with the remainder going into the character s Innovation Pool. Back to Thrustoid, who is set to blast off with 2 Innovation Points and a Pool of 7. Innovations will be covered in Gameplay, below.

GAMEPLAY

The success of actions in SAVEgame is governed by rolling 2d8. The result on each die is compared against a total derived from the character s applicable attribute plus subsystems, modfified by applicable features, bugs and gameworld effects. This system produces three possible outcomes. If both dice are equal to or below the sum of the

character s applicable attributes, subsystems, and modifiers, the result is an absolute success. The character s Innovation Pool is increased by one. If only one die is equal to or below the target, the result is a contestable success - the GM may choose to spend one or more bits from the Intervention Pool to cause a spontaneous Reality Check see below . However, the players may contest against the GM in this situation by matching his bid with Innovation Points. When the GM ceases the contest, all bids are subtracted frim their respective bidders.
If both dice rolls are above the target, the GM adds one to the Intervention Pool.

Table 4: Actions and Consequences

Dice Target	Combat Result	Non-combat Result
2	Damage 2 target low roll	Absolute: 1 Innovation
1	Damage 1	Contestable:

	target low roll	GM Option
0	Miss 1 to GM Intervention	Fail: 1 to GM Intervention

Non-Combat Example: Lora Craft is holidaying in the quaint medieval town of Everwinter when a plague of zombies breaks out. With limited ammo and a shortage of guns for sale in town, she realises that zombies can t climb actually none of the townsfolk can climb . So she tries to climb, and rolls 2d8. The applicable attribute for this is Interaction, as she is interacting with the gameworld by moving. Lora has Rank 5 Interaction and she uses one of her Features Platformer to assist in the action, for a total of 6. The results on the dice are 2 and 8 - a contestable success. The GM lets her get away with it...this time. Lora gets to add the Difference between her lowest success roll and the target to her Power-Up Pool.

Combat Example: Thrustoid is attempting to shoot a bizarre alien space probe that

has been buzzing around and zapping other characters. He rolls 2d8 and unfortunately gets a low roll of 6, and a high roll of 8. However, with Interface at Rank 4, and his Accuracy subsystem at Rank 3 for a total of 7, this is a contestable success. This is combat, so the GM rolls 2d8 for the probe Interface 2, Shields 1 , and rolls 1 and 6, for a contestable success. However, ties in combat are decided in favour of the player, with no bidding allowed, except in Boss Battles see below . Thrustoid has no bonus to damage perhaps he should have bought a Firepower subsystem or something similar , so he is limited to the basic 1 bit plus the difference between the low roll 6 and the target 7 . In this case, the damage total is two bit points, which are subtracted from the probe s Bit Point total.

The Reality Check: The Reality Check is perhaps the most important part of SAVEgame. Reality Checks occur at the start of any combat. They can also

occur if two or more players disagree over the current reality at any time, whether in combat or not. The nature of reality in the SAVEgame world is effectively defined as an interface mode (see the Interface attribute, above), but two or more players can combine their Interface attributes to help achieve a desired mode. When the desired mode is chosen, each party involved roll 2d8 and compare the results on the dice to their Identity score. This is treated as a standard action roll, but the consequences are much greater. Compare the number of successes of each party, and in case of a tie, all interested parties may spend Innovation points to outbid the others. All Innovation points used to bid in this way are lost (even unsuccessful bids). The winner of the Reality Check gets to choose the current interface mode. It is important to note that the GM can combine the ID scores of all attacking entities, up to a maximum of 7.

The winner of the reality check instantly switches to the desired Interface

mode. Other characters present may now spend an Innovation Point to switch to the active mode immediately, but the Innovation Point is added to the GM s Intervention Pool. If they choose not to spend an Innovation Point they are at a penalty of 1 to action totals for each step away from the chosen mode. This penalty decreases by 1 each round until it gets back to zero. As can be seen in Table 2, in normal circumstances the maximum initial penalty would be 4 going from first-person perspective to top-down, or vice versa.

Interface Modes: A Matter of Perspective.

Each Interface has advantages and disadvantages in combat situations. These modifiers listed in Table 5 are in addition to the penalty applied for characters being out of sync with the result of a Reality check.

Table 5: Combat Effects of Interface Modes

Mode	Benefit	Drawback
Top-down	Extreme visibility even around corners	-2 to ID
Side-on	2 to attack	-2 to defence
Isometric	1 to attack	-1 to defence
Third-Person	1 to move, 1 ID	-2 to notice things immediately in front behind
First-Person	None	None

For example, Lora Craft again is in a group with Galaxian, and Lara wins the Reality Check when a battle ensues. Lora chooses the third-person Interface and Galaxian can either spend an Innovation point or start combat with a hefty -3 penalty, which tapers down to zero by the fourth round of combat. On the positive side for Galaxian, he

gets a better look at himself now that he s no longer in top-down mode, and has more freedom of movement.

Initiative: In SAVEgame, combat occurs when the player characters trigger something. Thus the other side always starts first. Turn order is determined by ascending order of Identity cannon fodder attack first .

Defence: All characters in SAVEgame get at least one defence each combat round. The defence roll is based on the character s IF score, modified by any one relevant subsystem eg armour, shield, dodge, force field . A subsystem can only be used once each round. If you are attacked prior to the beginning of your attacks, an absolute success on your defence roll grants a bonus Innovation Point.

Multiple Actions in Combat: Characters can have multiple attack and defence actions in combat. The maximum number of actions is determined by the character s IF score, but each additional action costs 1 Innovation Point. At the start of

the round, you must declare the number of additional actions you are taking at the start of the round, and spend the appropriate number of Innovation Points at that time. Once you start attacking, you can only receive one bonus Innovation point in a combat round multiple absolute successes do not provide multiple Innovation Points.

Results of Combat

Power-Ups: When a player character kills another entity in SAVEgame, the victim s life energy is converted to Power-Ups. The number of Power-Up points is equal to the entity s Power Level if you bag yourself a Sonic the Hedgehog, that s 3 Power-Up Points, which go into the Power-UP Pool of the character that delivered the killing blow. Eight Power-Up points can be converted to either gain one Innovation point or gain one lost point of Playability. Alternatively, Power-Up points can be spent on increasing Subsystems, but the cost to increase a subsystem to the next level is derived from Table 1.

Respawning and Possession: When a player character loses all their Playability points, they respawn. They should recalculate their derived values. They should also make a Reality Check to against the GM to determine if they are now possessed by the Demons From Beyond. The winner of this check decides whether the player will be possessed. If the character is possessed he must pick a target from amongst the other players to gank. The ganking does not have to take place immediately. However, each time there is a Reality Check won by a player character, they may accuse one of the other player characters of being a ganker, and must also guess the intended victim. Succeeding in both parts of the accusation means the Demon From Beyond is exorcised, and that any ganking will only be out of animosity between video game characters until the next respawn occurs. A partially correct accusation must be confirmed by the GM but not which part of the accusation is correct . The possessed character is free to act normal, helping the group fight their enemies but potentially accumulating

Power-Up points towards buying the Invincible Gank Master feature
A completely incorrect accuser may be secretly assigned the Gank Magnet bug by the GM and the possessed character may change targets.

Game-Mastering in SAVEgame

SAVEgame is designed to be played in a similar fashion to the majority of role-playing games, but with simpler rules inspired by the simpler setting.
Traditional role-playing games RPGs have a Game Master GM who runs the game for the other players, describing the environments they are in, and acting the part of all the non-player characters NPCs and adversaries the players meet.
The GM should also have a plan ofevents that will occur in the game.

However, in SAVEgame, the setting is rather malleable. To stick properly to the theme, a session of SAVEgame should include references to both high and low points in the history of videogames, from the time of Pong through to speculation about the next generation of videogames.

Thus the characters could fight off waves of alien spacecraft as they travel through a fantasy wilderness on their way to a martial-arts tournament to stop UltraPong from ruling the universe. On the way there they would experience cutscenes which explain what they re supposed to be doing or which offer side-quests to achieve secondary goals.

On the other hand, you could pick a genre of of videogame, and play SAVE game exclusively in that way. The Bit Definition Scale lends itself to an approximation of many different game styles , as follows in Table 6:

Table 6: SAVEgame reality Basics

Bit Definition	Game Style
2	Simple monochrome action games, minimal sound
4	Simple platform games, simple sounds
8	Multi-colour, minimal environment action games, or low-level interface RPGs, tunes ,rudimentary speech-synthesis

16 Detailed action games, rudimentary 3D environments, RPGs with plot development, stereo sound, classy theme music.

32 Action games with plots, full 3D environments, RPGs with real-time combat, cutscenes with dialogue, CD audio tracks

64 Full 3D action RPGs with plot developments in cutscenes with dialogue and full-stereo CD audio soundtrack

128 As above...but with near-realistic graphics

256 Next generation - potentially photo-realistic graphics, better interfaces

Of course, there are videogames that have traits assigned to higher Bit Definition than listed here.

Description of the Gameworld The GM should be influenced by the Bit Definition level of the game in describing the world. Thus at lower bit definitions, leaves would twitch in the breeze, or there may not even be a breeze

at all. There is fun to be had in describing things that do not happen realistically. Take examples from your favourite videogames, or the ones that really suck.

Encounter Levels and Boss Battles - Normal encounters for the players should be with enemies at least 2 power levels lower. Boss Battles should be with an enemy at least 1 level higher

The Intervention Pool - The Intervention Pool is used by the GM to make existence harder for the PCs. The initial size of the pool is calculated by counting the number of characters in the game, and adding the game s power level. Thus, in a game with 5 16-bit characters, the GM s Intervention Pool starts at 9. These Intervention Points can be used by the GM to bid against players who do not achieve absolute success on an action roll, or can also be used to give characters bugs when they fail an action.

Hints and Cut-scenes Hints are like signals from the GM relating to the overall plot. At the start of a combat,

generally after the Reality Check, the GM should give a hint to the players about what is to happen next, or how to win the combat. This can be as simple as momentary description of zooming in on a lever in the room, or pointing out that one of the orcs has a big sword. Depending on the type of game, you may wish to come up with puzzles for the players to solve. Cut-scenes are special moments in the game when the players have achieved something, such as killing a Boss, completing a quest or solving a puzzle. During a cut-scene, players can spend Power-Up points on increasing subsystems.

Object Creation The character generation system can be used to create inanimate objects as well as characters. Inanimate objects generally have an ID score of zero, and lack the Move category of Interaction. However, inanimate objects can ignore the recommended ranks required for the more complex interactions. Bonus points can be given for a summary of the object, but that cannot exceed the overall rank of the object. A 4-bit gun could be called a

Disrupto-Blaster, for example, and then there are 6 points to spend on it. However, as it is a gun, it requires the Destroy interaction to function, so the gun should have at least 1 level of Interaction.

Closing Notes: This experience has been valuable in setting a goal, and watching life interfere with it. But I am happy with what I have achieved in the time I was able to manage, and I hope you enjoy it. There will almost certainly be a v1.1. Thank you to the Iron Game Chef competition

GAME OVER

SAVEgame	Character Name: Power Level: Bit Definition: Summary:	
ID: Identity	Subsystems Name Rank _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Playability _____	Innovations _____

IF: Interface	____ _____ ____ _____ ____ _____ ____ _____ ____	Damage Received	Power-Up Pool
IA: Interaction			
Features Name Cost Effect		Bugs Name Cost Effect	

Character Background: