Theory of Fun for Game Design by Raph Koster – Review:

With the use of psychology, Raph Koster tries to explain what makes games fun and how the brain processes them. Although the book is about what makes games fun, it is not particularly engaging to read. Half of the book are illustrations that don't really add much (though I appreciate the effort). Here are some notes I took before I got bored of taking them:

Chapter 1

-   Kids are instinctively attracted to games
-   - Kids learn at a ferocious rate
-   Why did authors kids master tic-tac-toe so suddenly?
-   Kids weren't able to say that tic-tac-toe is a limited game
-   They saw the pattern but didn't understand
-   You don't need to fully understand something to be able to do it
-   Repeated failure is a predictable cycle, which is boring
-   Games don't last forever
-   Games that are too easy are boring, but games that are too hard are also boring
-   Author decided to tackle questions of „what game are", „what is fun" and „why games matter".
-   Games are not taken seriously at all
-   Games are now a major cultural force
-   Working and playing aren't all the different

Chapter 2

-   Game theory isn't about game design, but about optimal choices of competitors (it is frequently proven wrong)
-   Definitions of the word „game" are all over the place
-   None of the definitions mention fun
-   Game designers offer often contradictory set of definitions
-   Human brain is a consumer of patterns
-   Gamers are full of patterns
-   Human brain even pattern-seek the process of pattern-seeking
-   Brain is made to fill in blanks
-   Brain is also very good at assumptions
-   It is also very good at cutting out the irrelevant
-   It also notices a lot more than we think it does
-   When we grasp a pattern, we get bored with it and iconify it
-   We usually run on automatic chuncked patterns
-   We react slower when chunk behaves unexpectedly and we have to think conciously
-   People like order with a bit of texture and variation
-   Noise is everything we don't understand patterns of
-   **Grok** – to understand something so thoroughly that you have become one with it
-   Muscles don't really have a memory
-   After grokking enough, you are able to create a library of chuncked knowledge to apply

- It is fun to exercisce your brain

Chapter 3
- Finally! Games!
- Previously mentioned definitions define games as if they existed within a world of their own
- The issue is that these definitions describe games as something that isn't real
- Games might seem abstracted from reality because they use iconic depictions of reality
- Games are closer to how our brain visualizes stuff, compared to how reality is like
- Games are puzzles to solve, just like everything else is
- Games are concentrated iconic and abstracted chunks that are ready to be absorbed
- Distinctions between toays and games, or play and sport, start to be a bit picky and irrelevant
- Books don't have the ability to accelerate the grokking process like games do
- Games that fail to exercise the brain become boring