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Jesper Juul

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## The Art of Failure

An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games

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**Jesper Juul : The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games (Playful Thinking)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games (Playful Thinking):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An interesting exploration of the link between fun and frustrationBy Thomas TvilerenThis is the best attempt I have read to explore what makes computer games so enjoyable, and how

this is intimately connected to their being maddeningly frustrating. Even though this book is admirably short, it can come across as long-winded at times. And the use of figures seemed clumsy (but that might have been because of the Kindle formatting). I wish the author had aimed more for an essay and less for scientific jargon that obscures more than it clarifies. I still recommend it to anyone interested in this subject, as there is little writing in this field. Another, longer but better written book, is Tom Bissell's *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*.<sup>2</sup> of 2 people found the following review helpful. Insightful and direct  
By Jonathan  
The irony with games is the fact that playing games, at least good ones, come with a stream of failure. If you've noticed that before and wondered why, this essay is remarkable in its directness and insight. If you're also interested in game studies, this essay is a wonderful illustration of at least one of the potential venues of game studies that is possible.<sup>0</sup> of 27 people found the following review helpful. Two Stars  
By Angelaugh for a class

An exploration of why we play video games despite the fact that we are almost certain to feel unhappy when we fail at them. We may think of video games as being "fun," but in *The Art of Failure*, Jesper Juul claims that this is almost entirely mistaken. When we play video games, our facial expressions are rarely those of happiness or bliss. Instead, we frown, grimace, and shout in frustration as we lose, or die, or fail to advance to the next level. Humans may have a fundamental desire to succeed and feel competent, but game players choose to engage in an activity in which they are nearly certain to fail and feel incompetent. So why do we play video games even though they make us unhappy? Juul examines this paradox. In video games, as in tragic works of art, literature, theater, and cinema, it seems that we want to experience unpleasantness even if we also dislike it. Reader or audience reaction to tragedy is often explained as catharsis, as a purging of negative emotions. But, Juul points out, this doesn't seem to be the case for video game players. Games do not purge us of unpleasant emotions; they produce them in the first place. What, then, does failure in video game playing do? Juul argues that failure in a game is unique in that when you fail in a game, you (not a character) are in some way inadequate. Yet games also motivate us to play more, in order to escape that inadequacy, and the feeling of escaping failure (often by improving skills) is a central enjoyment of games. Games, writes Juul, are the art of failure: the singular art form that sets us up for failure and allows us to experience it and experiment with it. *The Art of Failure* is essential reading for anyone interested in video games, whether as entertainment, art, or education.

I can think of no other medium that so constantly forces its participant to contemplate their own demise. The act of playing games is one dotted with near-endless failure. Yet we plow on. Jesper Juul's new book is exactly the sharp examination of failure I need to keep myself from stabbing my eyes out when I get frustrated. (Jamin Warren, Founder, Kill Screen)  
In *The Art of Failure*, Jesper Juul explores an interesting idea and asks provocative questions. This book will be of interest to developers, players, scholars, journalists, and readers with related interests, such as chess players or athletes. (Henry Lowood, Curator for History of Science Technology Collections, Stanford University)  
Frankly, I hadn't expected to enjoy a book about failure nearly as much as I did. Jesper Juul brings many different fields of study to the table and provides an engaging learning experience. (Brenda Brathwaite Romero, game designer, COO and Co-Founder of Loot Drop)  
Juul's essay is lean, pleasingly bold, and follows through on an intriguing premise. (Slate)  
So it's a fascinating time to examine the concept of failure in video games, and luckily the gaming academic Jesper Juul did just that in *The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games*, which was released in February by MIT Press as part of its Playful Thinking series.... Maybe the interesting question here isn't what failure in games does -- as Juul acknowledges, it does different things for different people -- but rather what creative new approaches developers can take to one of the oldest, most universal parts of the human experience. (Jesse Singal Boston Globe)  
About the Author  
Jesper Juul is Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design, and Visiting Associate Professor in Comparative Media Studies/Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the author of *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* and *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*, both published by the MIT Press.