

When you're not good at your new hobby

FATIMA JAHAN ENA

Over the years, I've gained a bit of a reputation for being flaky. Not with friendships or other relationships, just with my interests.

I start every year with starry eyes and new hopes. "This year, I can feel it," I think as I mentally puff my chest and straighten my posture. "This year, I'll definitely learn [insert new hyper fixation here]."

These fixations usually lead nowhere. My learning curve, or lack thereof, is almost formulaic at this point. I hyper-fixate on something around my bedtime, spend a few hours in subreddits to find resources, enthusiastically tell my friends about my new interest, take the leap to start learning, hit a minor hitch and then... give up. It's almost as if I go in expecting to be a maestro from the first try.

The truth is, I do. Maybe it's some ego-related issue, but generally I float through life thinking I'm probably good at most things. So, it kills me when my delusions are hindered.

This mindset has seeped out of my interests into my professional and academic lives as well. The feeling of not being good at something immediately holds me back from consistency or new experiences.

If you relate to this feeling, don't worry. You're not



alone. Let me help.

The first step is to tell yourself that it's okay to be terrible at something. It might sound obvious, but it can often feel like the vulnerability that comes with being a beginner is too intimidating.

Expecting to be perfect in the initial stages of acquiring a new skill restricts your learning curve. To quote the ever-wise Jake the Dog from Adventure Time, "Sucking at something is the first step to becoming sorta good at something."

It is also important to realise that ours is a culture that

is obsessed with the "grindset" of monetising our interests. Consequently, the pressure to produce monetisable content can pollute casual hobbies.

This can be counterproductive as hobbies are defined as activities made for enjoyment or relaxation. The case is different for skills that are required in your academic life or career. But for new, casual interests, it can be helpful to remind yourself that the watchful eye of capitalism is not peering over your shoulder as you try scrapbooking or writing.

Lastly, baby steps can take you a long way. It's beneficial to set out on new terrain with manageable goals and expectations. We get hits of dopamine when we achieve a goal, no matter how minor they may be. This can be utilised by creating mini goals along the way to help you sustain your enthusiasm. This practice also doubles as self-appreciation, which will take you a long way as well.

Trying new things will always be daunting. The fear of not excelling may always be constant. However, there are always ways to work around the negativity and broaden your skill sets.

Fatima Jahan Ena likes complaining about capitalism and her forehead. Find her at mail2ena@gmail.com

The art of storytelling in video games

TANZIM NOOR TANMOY

We read stories to entertain ourselves, travel to strange or magical places, be scared, find out whodunnit, laugh, cry, think, feel, and be so engrossed that for a while we forget where we are.

We consume stories in many ways like by reading books or watching movies. But there's another form of storytelling that's amassing adoration – video games.

The usual structure of storytelling in popular media has always been something like this – we witness an incident taking place, sometimes through the eyes of a character, and sometimes from the words of a narrator. It's a tried and tested method, and an engaging one too, allowing us to care about the characters and the story.

However, we can only do this as observers. It's restricted to always being a passive experience.

Video games have the unique ability to give people the

first-hand experience of what's happening to a character. Players aren't restricted to only being bystanders. They become the hero, villain, or just a father running from a nine-feet-tall vampire lady to save his daughter.

Moreover, games like *God of War* (2018) let you experience one of the most beautiful, personal, and larger than life stories of all time about a God and his son. The game is wittily embedded with Norse mythology with alterations to give the game a chance to tell its version of the myths.

Some video games, like *The Last of Us Part II*, make you play as multiple characters, forcing you to empathise with the points of view of different characters with different or even opposing ideals and goals. This makes the story non-binary, and feel realistically complex, something other mediums rarely possess.

Another great example would be *Detroit: Become Human*, an interactive choose-your-own-adventure game. The story puts the player in front of a familiar dichotomy – should sentient robots have the same rights as humans? Players have to make decisions both as characters who

would agree and those who wouldn't when playing the game.

Video games have long been regarded as hollow pieces of media to be consumed for mindless recreation, whereas books and films are appreciated as mediums of impactful stories. *Castlevania* is a perfect example of how false that sentiment can be.

The show, adapted from a popular game series titled the same, has the premise of vampires, vampire hunters, mages, magical beasts and so on. But even in between all the action-packed fights, we get to see politics, parental issues, religious discourse, real and flawed characters, as well as good vampires and terrible human beings.

These aspects about such adaptations speak for how video game stories can be as powerful and impactful, if not more, than our contemporary storytelling methods. Thus, it's time we start appreciating video games, not just as another means of entertainment, but also as sources of articulated storytelling.

Send Tanmoy tips on how to become better at Valorant at tanzimnt@gmail.com

