

Callum Scott

Elena Bertozzi

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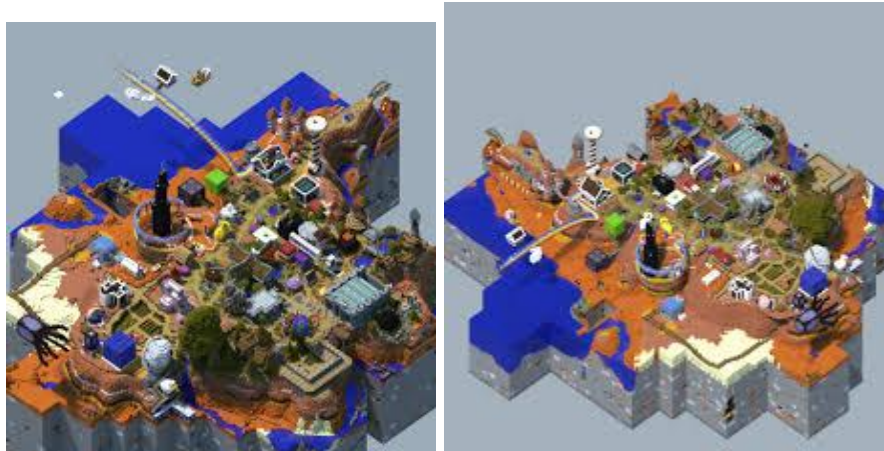
### The creative possibilities of simplicity

The game Minecraft, developed by Mojang and 4J Studios, is an open-world survival sandbox game. The player is dropped into a world that is filled with hills, plains, oceans, deserts, jungles and so many other biomes and sights. At night the player tries to survive as monsters roam around in the dark looking to attack the player once insight. By day, the player can explore the wonderful world generated before them to find and collect resources. They can then use those resources to craft and upgrade tools and items or build whatever their mind can think of, whether it be a small hut or a large fortress. Minecraft is heavily designed around the idea of pixels, where everything in the game is square. By using pixels and blocks you create a very basic and simple canvas for the player to interact with and create on. The player is not intimidated or confused by building or the mechanics to build, instead, the player begins to imagine what they could build and begins to work towards it.



*Minecraft Pocket Edition (mobile version) point-of-view*

Minecraft has done a great job at making sure newer players are not overwhelmed, while also allowing for more experienced players to create more complex and interesting builds. By creating a game with one simple shape like a square to base your environment around, you give the player an easily understood and navigable canvas on which they can spend their energy towards imagining and creating instead of trying to figure out how to create. For the same reasons, experienced players have an endlessly growing and developing canvas (see image below for reference). It has been designed to give the player endless possibilities so long as their imagination can keep up.



*Rendering of the Hermitcraft (a dedicated private server) season 4 shopping district*

The first seconds the player loads into the world, they are surrounded by square blocks. As they begin to interact with the world they will pick up square blocks. The environment shapes of Minecraft create also aid in setting the calming feel of the game. Rebecca McCrone, a Word Processing Specialist at Ideas To Go, lists ways to boost creativity with the top 2 spots both have to do with being comfortable and relaxed. When Mojang designed Minecraft they purposefully made decisions consciously around the main purpose of their game. Even the smaller components of the game like the fonts and even the sun are designed consistently with the blocky

palette. Aswell in compliment with the environmental shapes in Minecraft, there is also a distinct audio component while you play. When you are walking around on the surface of the world you are accompanied by this calming melodic music. The music is not something you notice, it is a soft background loop to help hold attention and improve brain activity. By designing the elements of the game all towards a common goal you not only achieve that goal, but you create a game with which players can truly fall in love with.

Though the developers can not make it too easy on the player, so they added mechanics in the game to add difficulty. The first and biggest one is the monsters coming out at night as mentioned before. At night the world becomes filled with zombies, skeletons, giant spiders, and creepers (a self-destructing monster) set out to destroy you.



They create a time constraint on when you are able to do certain tasks unless you have crafted proper equipment in order to do so. This is a very good mechanic to add, it does not slow the player's creativity down but rather draws creative attention to a problem the player has. Players may build weapons, bases, traps, or any other creative way they want to deal with the onslaught of monsters. Another constraint they added was with materials and how to retrieve them. Take diamonds, for example, the most valuable item in Minecraft. To retrieve diamonds you need to use an iron pickaxe, and to get the iron to build it you need to use a stone pickaxe. In order to get the stone for your pickaxe, you need to use a wooden pickaxe, which you can get the wood you need from punching a tree.



With these two major constraints in the way, you keep the sense of the game, to survive in a creative and enjoyable manner, the same while altering the player's perception of the game. Players are now faced with 2 constant obstacles that players have to overcome in their own way. Minecraft has been able to construct a game environment that allows players creative freedom on a vast scale across multiple different types of problems.