

Educational Technology Users Group
Let's Play Twine!
November 4, 2022, Session 7
Presenter: Jamie Drozda

BONNIE JOHNSTON:

I'm happy to let you know that Jamie Drozda is back again with us and she'll be leading us through the use of the text-based game tool Twine. And we're very grateful to Jamie because, I want to give her a big thanks for volunteering to do this workshop at the last minute as we did have a cancellation, so thank you, Jamie. And so back over to you, Jamie. Let's play.

JAMIE DROZDA:

Okay, thanks Bonnie. This session is pretty light and hopefully some fun. So this is a super condensed Twine workshop as we only have 30 minutes together here. So normally I would run this as a one-to-two-hour workshop. I'll pretty quickly go over the presentation part here to keep with time. I will skip over some of these slides. And yes, this is an H5P course presentation activity here. And I was so excited when I found out I could embed H5Ps into Twine.

So when students engage in something that feels like they're playing a game but they are learning, we can refer to that learning as gamification. Gamification is not about solving difficult puzzles. Rather, it's about finding effective ways to drive students to their goals faster. Students should feel involved in the learning process and empowered by their abilities in real-world situations. And I will mention that games tend to have outstanding motivational power. People play games just for the joy of playing and for the possibility to win. I remember playing games for hours when I was a teenager and young adult, and I still do. When we think of gamification, we do not need to limit our thinking to video games and card games. We can think of more real-world examples. We can think of an activity tracker like a Fitbit, Garmin or Apple watch. These devices track our steps, stairs, and active minutes in a way that uses game design principle, which is tracking up different elements of your activity that is a gamified version of your daily activities.

When I think of gamification that I have encountered in my daily life, I think of the Starbucks loyalty program. With every purchase you make you earn stars. The stars are pretty fun. Starbucks wants to ensure that the closer you come to the goal. So maybe becoming a gold member, the faster you will spend. And there are many others too like credit card points and grocery store points.

I always like to think of students building Twines to show their learning. Now, it's important to note that creating a full blown game is difficult and time-consuming. But by using the gamification approach to design assessments, we would not expect students to complete a full-blown game. Rather, we would expect students to use game thinking and game design elements to improve engagement and motivation of the intended audience. So they would be expected to get you engaged and motivated when you are grading their homework. So let's define gamification as the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game

contexts. When gamifying an assignment, you will want students to consider the hierarchy of game elements such as dynamics, mechanics, and components. The dynamics of big-picture aspects of the gamified system that you must consider and manage, but which can never directly enter into the game. The mechanics are the basic processes that drive action forward and generate player engagement. When we think of Starbucks and credit cards, we think of the dynamic as progression, so progression towards the free coffee and that mechanic that supports the dynamic is rewards in the form of loyalty points. The dynamic is that you are going to have players progressing the system and the mechanic is rewards. The components are the specific instantiations of mechanics and dynamics. One of the most popular components used in gamification is points. In the case of Starbucks and credit cards, you earn points and those points support the mechanic rewards. Now the components supports the mechanic and the mechanics support so they damage. In this example, the component points supports the mechanic rewards, which supports the dynamic progression.

If you choose to use gamification as an assignment, you will need to give your students some tips on how to design a game because they likely never have. The tips you would give them are how to define the target audience, defining the game's objectives, and structuring the experience. These tips will apply if you are gamifying a lesson or study aid too. Twine pretty much takes care of structuring the experience for you and your students.

Defining the target audience should be pretty easy for our use cases, as it was likely you and perhaps the other students in the class. You need to make sure students understand the nature of the assignment and include clear expectations regarding the length of the game. They also need to understand if they are expected to hyperlink resources for credit or if they are expected to include proper referencing along with a references list. Students need to define what they are expecting their players to take away from the game. If students take the time to define their game's objectives, they will likely be able to identify what they want the player to do. So, be sure students know to break the game down into its main points. What does the player need to achieve to move to the next level of the game? In the case of Twine, how we players progress through an interactive story and how will they receive feedback?

Now, let's discuss quickly digital interactive storytelling and their various media forms. Because that's what Twine is, a digital interactive storytelling game. So interactive storytelling, what we are talking about is combining gamification or combining this kind of game design elements we've been talking about with narrative structure. And Twine is really a mechanism for being able to do this. It helps learners engage and can promote deeper understanding. When we tap into the combination of game design and storytelling, we're tapping both the kind of engagement aspects of game design and that deeper understanding that we know students develop when they develop a narrative of their classroom experiences. So we make sense of the world through story, right? That's sort of a universal human trait. Whether you prefer fiction or nonfiction, a certain genre over another. We all understand the story, the world through the stories we tell ourselves. We understand stakes through game mechanics and we decide how things matter based on systems of punishment and reward.

So what is Twine? Twine is an online tool that allows you to make text-based games. These games end up being a lot like choose-your-own-adventure books of yore. Twine is an open-source tool for telling interactive, nonlinear stories, which allows students to create games in the form of choose- your-own-adventure stories with hyperlink text. And it is available for Mac, Windows, and Linux operating systems. So why would you be interested in Twine? Well, it's free and very accessible. It takes about 15 to 30 minutes to get a good grasp of Twine's basic functionality. Twine files are called stories, and those stories are started in your browser. So it's important to know that if you clear your save data, you will lose your work. We recommend publishing your stories often. If you want, you can publish your stories individually, which will allow you to download the HTML file to your computer for storage. And this is also how you will share the story. And the HTML files can be re-imported into Twine. So if you do lose your work in the browser, you can bring it right back. Also, Twine is a great tool for encouraging students to think about the complete development of a digital artifact. And since it's relatively low tech in terms of complexity, students have space to focus on the course content they are supposed to be learning, rather than focusing on the code behind Twine or the code behind developing a game from scratch.

So now let's take a quick look at a couple of Twine games before we get building. So let me post a link in the chat here for you guys because you can play with this game as I'm chatting. So the first game is about Ann Boleyn. Again, feel free to click on the link and click through the game while I'm chatting. In this game, you are Anne Boleyn. You have just married King Henry and you have to not die. When thinking through this game, it really is something a student could develop. It's just basic facts about Anne Boleyn's life. But the students who built this, they had to understand all this context around history. And they had to understand who all these historical figures are. There's so much learning here, and yet it doesn't come across as an essay. I think students think more about content when they have to gamify it, rather than just write about it. Because you could put this same content in an essay. But in a game, you're actually bringing this content to life. I think this game is fun because I'm Anne Boleyn, and the stakes of Anne Boleyn's decisions are really high. She is trying not to be killed by Henry VIII. And the whole thing is her trying to have her first baby and all the consequences around everyone's opinions of her, everything she does. And it gives you a real sense of the oppression that she's under, which is kind of wild.

Yes. Let me share the Twine game with you. There you go. So I'm going to post a link. So there's the link to the Twine game with the H5P embedded in it. And the next game I want to go over quickly. Here you go, There's another link. Go ahead and click on it and play that game too. This example, I'll change screens, is made by TRU's own Mike Harcourt. Mike made this game in last year's Teaching with Technology course at TRU. This game is a little project and students have to do a job. Now, there's a little narrative here. The game says, you want to do a little job on the lathe, and you need to choose your steps. So if I choose this step, countersink, it says, nope, can't do that and we get kicked back. And if I choose another step, centre drill, it says, no, we're not quite ready for that. And you go back. If we choose the correct step, face the part. We get excellent. And then we move on in the game and we progress. So now it asks us, what speed are you going to set the lathe to? But every time you choose the wrong step, you'd get kicked

back. And I think these two games are good examples of students creating games to show learning. And faculty creating games to promote learning. I think it's important to remember in general, when we're choosing what technologies to use or to have students use, that we always make sure we're thinking about whether this is a useful skill for them in this context. We need to think about that with technology or we've just added on another platform. So in the case of trades, it's better to have students click through a game made for them rather than having them write about using the lathe. The game Mike made, might have students thinking harder about lathe when they keep getting kicked back, they might start thinking or remembering in a different way rather than just reading out of the textbook. When I think about students in other programs, I think are you teaching essay writing skills? Or are students getting marked on something you're not actually teaching? If you're not actually teaching essay writing skills, perhaps allowing students to gamify their learning could be a great option.

So with that all being said, we'll go back to Twine and we'll actually build a Twine. So I've already posted a link to the game in the chat. I'll do it again. You're welcome to open it up and follow along. If you've got two monitors, put the game on one, and then we can have Twine on another one. And there's lots of code and whatnot to copy back-and-forth into Twine from the game. So you're more than welcome to, and I really hope that you build a Twine along with me.

Let's go to the first passage. Getting started with passages and links. I'll click on here. I'm not going to scroll through, but you can see that all the instructions are here. So if you want later, you can come back to this and build your own Twine another day. You could even share it with your classroom if you're going to have students build a Twine, It's a good starter site. But first up, click on the Twinery.org link and I've got it open here in another tab. And then we're going to select Using your browser right here. And we will skip Twine's offer for help. So we'll just hit Skip. Then over here on the upper left, let's click the New button. So we're going to give our story a name. I'm going to call it Live First Twine. And then we hit the Create button. So here we have our first passage. It's untitled, and that's okay. We've got this little green rocket. And that symbol means this is where your story is going to start. So when players start playing the game, this is the start page. So we double click the passage to edit it. We can rename this right here. So we'll click the Rename button. I like to call my first passage, the start passage. I just like to call it Start. Then we can click. Okay. So now we went from an untitled to Start. I'm just copying and pasting some texts to have ready to go so that you don't have to watch my terrible typing skills. But this here down in the body of this WYSIWYG editor is what your reader will actually see. I've got another little bit of text here. And this is a pretty typical first Twine game. Probably if you Google it, you are going to come up with exactly the same thing. So you're in a hallway with two doors. You can go through the left door or you can go through the right door. And to add more passages and to link to different passages in the game, it's pretty easy. All we have to do is add double square brackets around the text. I like to select a lot of text. You could just select left door, but it makes it more obvious the colour difference if you select a lot of texts. So we have our opening brackets and our closing brackets. And then I'm going to do the right door as well. And if I make this a little bigger, you can see we have new passages here. They are titled the exact same text that we put in the double square brackets. So that's not very user-friendly for you because when you want to go back, let them go back and forth between passages. You

don't want to type out. You can go through the left door. That's a lot to remember, especially if it's a big game. So what we do is we put a bar in and then we're going to name our passage a new name. So we're just going to call this left door. And we can see here it actually changed to left door. So we'll change this one. We'll put a bar and then we will name it right door. And that's it. Now we've got our first little story map. So if I close this, I like to make things a little more organized. You can see we've got our start and we can go to the left door, or we can go to the right door. So let's double-click here. In Twine, you can use HTML code. So you can see the WYSIWYG editor here is pretty simple. But let's say I want to put a heading in. So I'm going to make a heading one. I messed that up, my terrible typing skills. I'll put the closing tag in just so I don't forget. And then I can put my cursor in the middle and I will say welcome. And then here I've got another little passage that I can copy in. I don't know if you guys can hear that, but a train was just honking as it went by. That was kind of nice to hear. So we've got Welcome to the left room. It is painted yellow and has a couch with two comfy chairs. You are welcome to stay and watch a movie, or you can go back to the entry and then I put a bar for Start. So that put our little connector here. Now we've got a two-headed arrow. Or you can click the text and magically go to the right room. So here we have an arrow now connecting the left room to the right room. So we'll close that. And then now let's do a run through. Let's play our game. So we're going to click on Build. And then we're going to click Play.

And here we have a game. This is what your reader will actually see. You are in a hallway with two doors. You can go through the left door or you can go to the right door. So let's click on the right door. We know there's nothing there because we haven't put anything there yet. But what I want to show you is that Twine puts in a Back button. So let's go back. And then we can go through the left door. And that's it. That is a pretty simple way to get a digital interactive story up and running.

At this point, does anyone have any questions? Is it okay to follow along? Let's close this. So you can add images and audio effects to Twines. It is so easy. Thanks, Ian. It's pretty easy. We just use the image or audio tag, HTML tags. I usually add all of my images that I want to link to get a hyperlink. I upload them into the media library of one of my WordPress sites. So I find that's the easiest way. I don't have my own server for storing images and audio files. It is possible to add external links. So you would just add the anchor tag, just the HTML anchor tag, and you'll hop out to another site. So let's double-click on the Start passage and we'll add an image. So I've got my image here, ready to go. I've already uploaded it to WordPress. And I think I'll get rid of this text now. I want my image to show upfront. So there we go. So let's play this and see what it looks like. Yes. Well, I think embedded videos are possible. You just have to use the HTML code to make that happen.

So here we've got a really, really big image. So we're going to add a little bit of inline CSS to this. So we're just going to shorten that down to about half its size. There we go. Width equals 50% and height equals 50%. So let's play it again now and see what it looks like. Not very good because I think I copied across the wrong quotations. Let's fix that up. And the last one. See if that did it. Not really, I'm not really a pro coder. That's for sure. I know enough to get by in life. That's about it. But here's our image. Now we can see we've got two doors side by side. It's

much smaller, we can actually see it. So that's pretty simple. To keep with time, what we'll do is I'll show you how to add a little CSS and a class. So let's close some of these Twines up here. And to add some CSS, we're going to go to Story. Then we just click on Style sheet. Again, I've got a little bit of CSS, and I am not a CSS expert by the way. If we get any more tricky than this, I usually have to reach out for help. But let's see what we can do. So the TW Story, that's our story as a whole. It's going to change every page in the story and our background colour, we're going to change it to white. And the colour is the font colour. So this is just a little hex code. You can have any hex code you want. And as you can see up here, like if you just wanted red, you could just type red. Our font family is going to be Arial impact, Helvetica, or sans-serif. The reason I add more than one is just in case one of the browsers doesn't recognize one, it'll take another. If there's none of these three, it's just going to give us a sans-serif font. And I'm going to increase the font size by 15%, so 115%. So let's close that. And we'll go back to build and play it. Now we can see we've added some really simple styling to our game. Our background is white. Our font is bigger and a little different. Yeah, W3Schools is exactly my go-to site too. Then if we go back to the Story, back to the Style sheet. Let's say I want to centre the image so we can add a class. I've got this ready to go. We'll just paste this into our style sheet. So we're just going to display the block with the margin-left auto, margin-right auto. And then we have to come in here and we have to apply the class. So we'll just type class equals centre. And there we have it. So let's play this game one more time. There we have it, our image is centred. So you can add that class to a paragraph or whatever else you have in your Twine game. It's pretty simple to do.

And once again, I just want to quickly show you the game. It's here. Goes through how to actually make all of this content. Everything we did pretty much exactly word for word. It's all here in the game. You can take some of this content and copy and paste it. We've got our Href tag which somebody asked if we could hyperlink out to. And we have the W3Schools link right here. So just to show you that that's what I use. So you could copy and paste that right into your Twine game and it would link out. Then you can go to the CSS, How to make your game look great. And all of the CSS is in here too. So it's in as an image, but I've added it up here so you could actually copy and paste it into your game. And of course there's so much more you can do. There's, I've added a few links to some fonts you could use and to the HTML colour codes. Again, how to add images, music, and sounds. We've got it all here. You can copy and paste the code. So if you're just messing around, take this, see what it does. You won't have access to change it on my WordPress site but you can definitely get your own WordPress site. Or if some maybe a friend and they can give you the URL so you can link your own images and sound. And then finally, Saving your Twine. So definitely either download the app because they do have one for Windows and Mac, download that and then the Twines will save to your hard drive. But if you're using the browser, go to the Build tab, Publish to file, and save those HTML files somewhere safe. Because it's really simple to import them back in. And I'll show you where to go for that. So if we go to Twine, Nope, I have to find it. They've recently changed everything. So here's your Published to file. Now in your different story, these are different coding. I'm just fumbling at this minute. I wish I would have had it a little better under control with this new story, but I was running on the old app and the old in the system. So let's go back. Import. If we go back to Library, import, down here, you will choose your Twine file, your HTML file, and then

you will have your story back. So from here, we went back to Library and import. Does anyone have any questions? I see we're at time. I definitely could have gone longer, but this is all the time I was given for today. Anyways, I hope. Yeah, it is a lot of fun and I really hope that everyone starts playing with this. And more importantly, get your students to play with this. It's super fun. And I know when I was in the MEP program at UBC, I handed in a couple of assignments by building Twine.

BONNIE:

Okay, Great, Thank you Jamie. And everyone's having fun and lots of exciting possibilities and loving the idea of getting it into the hands of students as well. Great. Thank you.

This transcript of "Let's Play Twine!" by BCcampus is licensed under a [CC BY 4.0 licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).