

Getting past Pay to Win

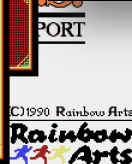
Teut Weidemann

Senior Online Game Supervisor
Ubisoft Blue Byte



Who am I:

- Working on Games since the 80' (yes I mean 1980)
- Over 100 titles on C64, Amiga, Atari ST, PC, Consoles, Online ...
- Jobs: Graphic Artist, Programmer, Designer, Development Director, CEO of own studio for 10y, CTO
- Rainbow Arts, Softgold, Lucasfilm Games, Apple, Microsoft, Wings Simulations, Psygnosis, Jowood, CDV, Ubisoft
- Also teaching "games" at Universities
- Most popular titles: Katakis, R-Type, Turrigan, MUDS, Panzer Elite, Settlers Online



Going Online f2p since 2008



TheSettlersOnline.com



Blue
Byte

A UBISOFT STUDIO



- All free to play MMO's
- Running in all internet browsers
- Technology: Adobe Flash

the Settlers® online



Browser-Spiel
des Jahres 2011

Die Siedler Online

Blue Byte / Ubisoft



Ubisoft: "The Settlers Online is set to make more money in four years than the Settlers brand did on PC over nine years ..."

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE™ EUROPE 2013

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Pay to Win

What is it?



urban

DICTIONARY

look up any word, like boot

pay-to-win

word of the day

sports

dictionary

game

thesaurus

names

m



random A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z # new favor

most popular

conversational blue
balls
what
rut ro
neopets
iron maiden
gd
what it do
pruno

alphabetical

pay the rent
pay the water bill
pay through the nose
PayTM
Paytn
Payto
pay together
pay toilet
Payton
Payton Carl
Payton Manning
Payton Marshall
paytonsaurs rex
Payton's Dad
Pay to Play

1. **pay-to-win**   97 up, 8 down  



Games that let you buy better gear or allow you to make better items then everyone else at a faster rate and then makes the game largely unbalanced even for people who have skill in the game without paying.

Dude, you've spent like 400 bucks on this game so you can beat everyone who hasn't spent any money. Pay-to-win noob!

[buy pay-to-win mugs & shirts](#)

[game](#) [f2p](#) [noob](#) [skill](#) [unbalanced](#) [pay-to-win](#)

by [Icupeverynite](#) Feb 7, 2011 [add a video](#)

2. **pay-to-win**   59 up, 18 down  

The sad truth of the free-to-play business model.

Random guy: OMG! DCU Online is is FREE TO PLAY!

Day one purchaser: God fucking damnit

Random skeptic: You mean pay-to-win, right?

[buy pay-to-win mugs & shirts](#)

[f2p](#) [league of legends](#) [heroes of newerth](#) [hellgate london](#) [maplestory](#)

by [flashn00b](#) Dec 15, 2011 [add a video](#)

Scott Miller (Apogee/3d Realms):

... you can buy coins (hence, pay-to-win) to reduce the number of mindless play-throughs that end in unavoidable failure.

The Supercell games fall into the same category.

Pay to win refers to games that are purposely designed to encourage monetary investment to propel the player to greater success.

George Broussard (Apogee/3D Realms)

When you see "pay to win" just realize it means many things:


- pay to win*
- the dev is milking you of \$ by putting up paywalls*
- the game design is incentivized to milk you of money.*

Pay to Win is imo, just a generic phrase to indicate paywalls now. It's been adopted by the masses, so that's how it is now.

Unknown:

Making the game suck unless I spend money. You at some point hit too much friction. This is how f2p has to work so I have no issue with it, but I personally don't like it.

mmorpg-.com

<p>Cod_Eye</p>  <p>★★★★★ Elite Member Joined: 9/04/09 Posts: 929</p>	<p>5/12/13 2:40:14 AM #2</p> <p><i>Originally posted by SoMuchMass</i></p> <p>So am I wrong? What is the definition of "Pay-to-Win"?</p> <p>The ability to buy items that gives an advantage with real money.</p> <p>My XIVPad: [video]http://xivpads.com?13754614[/video]</p>
<p>Kazuhiro</p> <p>★★★★☆ Hard Core Member Joined: 8/03/07 Posts: 292</p>	<p>5/12/13 2:43:01 AM #3</p> <p>Your correct, you have the only "real" definition of Pay-2-Win. Sadly a lot of quite frankly stupid/ignorant people today seem to have a messed up definition of it. Pay-2-Win is simply ANY situation where you can spend real world money to obtain an item/upgrade/etc in a game that gives an advantage, period, regardless of the item being available in the game or not. Since you are paying real money, to obtain an item, that allows you to win situations easier. Hence Pay-2-Win. Cosmetic items are the only thing a game that can sell realistically that isn't pay-2-win. (And some other rare exceptions, like server transfers/name changes/character slots/etc.)</p>

I won!



Shazim Mohammad
PC Desk Mod (2012)
www.shazim-mohammad.com

Nicholas Hoestandt (Ubisoft)

It brings a lot of confusion between different frustrations:

- *Pay-walls (« pay to unlock challenge »)*
- *Lack of generosity (« pay to get reward »)*
- *Players **frustrations** (monetization breaking game flow and fantasy)*
- *Payers **frustrations** (« pay to remove challenges/objectives »)*
- *PvP **frustrations** ("He killed me because he cheats/pays/etc...")*

And I'm surely missing a lot of others.

Justin Achilli (Ubisoft)

Synchrony of play affects this as well. *If a player doesn't compete directly in real-time with another player, he is removed from the moment-to-moment emotional impacts of the game.*

When your village gets jacked in Clash of Clans, you don't care too much. There was nothing you could do about it; it wasn't a one-to-one contest between player capacities.

When you're sniped in an FPS, you can chalk it up to hackers/ cheaters/ pay-to-winners or any other justification that preserves your self-image as a high-caliber player, even if your skills aren't where you estimate them to be.

Benjamin Cahrbits Rules (Ubisoft)

1. Don't prevent people to play when they don't pay (the Zynga design etc...)
2. Make sure that they can access all the items (excluding customization/vanity items) with IGC => can still be debated.
3. Forget any Premium Currency only God weapon
4. Make sure players get the obvious benefit of playing (save money, get access to much more fun stuff, in short definitely improves the experience)

Pay to Win

Lets check the net



Gamasutra:

Wargaming kicks 'pay-to-win' monetization to the curb **EXCLUSIVE**



One of the most successful free-to-play online game companies on the planet has announced a sweeping change in the way it monetizes all of its games.

World of Tanks developer [Wargaming.net](#) told Gamasutra in an exclusive Q&A that it would be removing all "pay-to-win" purchase options from all of its current and upcoming titles.

June 3, 2013 | By Kris Graft

 47 comments

More: [Console/PC](#), [Social/Online](#), [Design](#), [Business/Marketing](#), [Exclusive](#)



Polygon.com:

Mighty Quest for Epic Loot is reeling in game-changing microtransactions

By **Emily Gera** on Jul 30, 2013 at 5:34a @**twitgera**



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The developers behind Ubisoft's free-to-play PC release *The Mighty Quest for Epic Loot* are pulling the reigns back on a number of microtransaction upgrades previously introduced to the game, on the basis that "the game has become Pay to Win," according to a recent **blog post** from the studio.

In response, developer Ubisoft Montreal will roll back on its major premium currency changes in an upcoming maintenance patch.

"We're here today to let you know that we've heard your concerns and are acting on them immediately. We realize that letting players purchase machinery upgrades went too far in what we think feels fair to monetize. We are hereby rolling back the major premium currency mechanic changes, which will arrive in game in an upcoming maintenance."

Penny Arcade:



Blizzard confirms WoW microtransactions, community worries that pay-to-win has arrived

Blizzard has been [tip-toeing](#) around the idea of implementing microtransactions in *World of Warcraft* [for a long time](#), particularly with the Battle.net cash shop which has allowed players to buy things like character pets outside of the game and bring them into WoW since 2009.

Zisspire.com



"Pay to win" games have historically had a negative stigma amount the gaming community. Almost any game which houses a real money transaction service will be heavily criticized. However the vast majority of these games are far from a true pay to win; they will offer real money transactions which result in small bonuses such as cosmetic items or buffs which improve things like leveling speed. It would be similar to Blizzard offering new character skins or a 20% experience boost for a couple hours as opposed to the RMAH system.

Diablo 3 is a true pay to win game. This revelation has brought many gamers together since release to blast Blizzard for having the audacity to attempt to turn a profit and mock those who dare to spend their own hard earned money on one of their hobbies. Of course it is frustrating for a player who has spent thousands of hours farming and flipping on the Auction House to watch a new player make more gold by simply spending a couple hours worth of pay. But Diablo 3 should be played for fun, not as a pissing contest over your Diablogress rank.

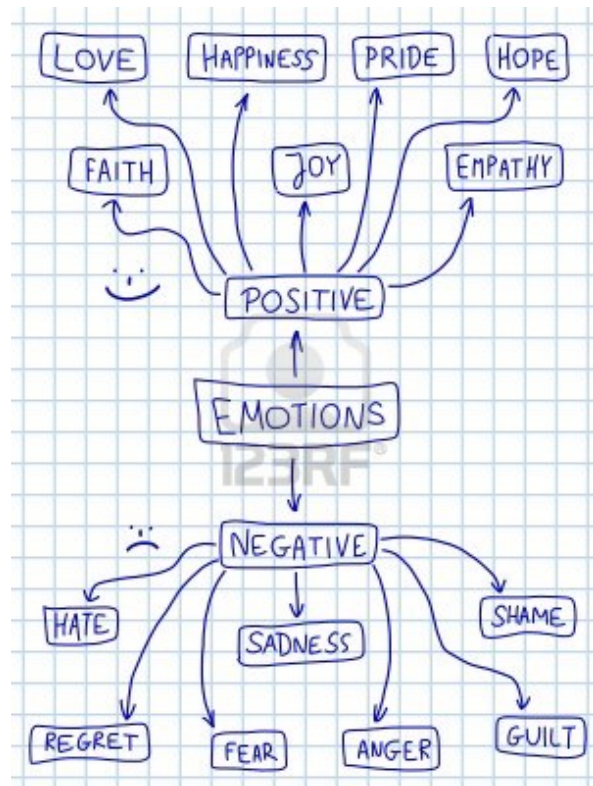
Pay to Win?

Really?



Pay to win a human emotion?

- Fear? Of what?
- Fair play?
- Jealousy?
- Where are those discussions in elder f2p countries? (Korea, China, Europe)
- Dependant on player type?



Pay to win a player emotion?

- It lessens competition between achievers
- „Pay to win“ can remove challenges
 - But games are all about challenges?
- Players start online games at different times
 - So how can you compete vs. Elder p(l)ayers?
- Is the complaint „Pay to win“ only from non payers?

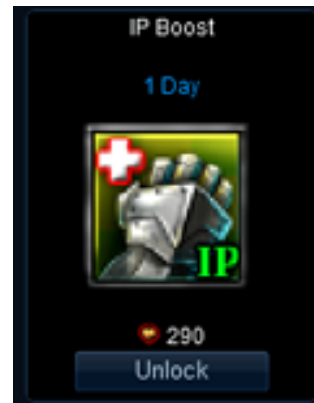
Pay to Win?

How top f2p games get away with it –
or not





- Sells early access/unlock to champions
- Sells cosmetics
- Sells "runes" (skill points)
- Selling boosts
- Generally money= grind time saver
- Free premium currency at start and over time
- i.e. mostly they sell progression!
- Matchmaker balances "p2w"*





- Sells premium accounts (grinding boost)
- Sells “gold tanks” (mid tier strength)
- Sells gold ammo & cons for money or credits (IGC)
- Sells XP conversion for progression speedup
- Sells optimal retraining of crew
- Sells slots for new tanks
- NO free premium currency*
- Matchmaker balances “p2w”





- Sells “Energy”
- Sells time (instant upgrades & recruits)
- Sells time (parallel builds/upgrades)
- Sells PvP protection (shield)
- Gives out gems for
 - achievements
 - level up
 - cleaning home zone
- Random Matchmaker = Fair?





- Sells power items
- Sells time
- Sells buff consumables & resources
- Free gems via retention, level up & quests
- Pay Items can be traded / sold





- Sells seeds
- Sells time (instant upgrades & production)
- Sells resources
- Gives out gems for
 - achievements
 - level up
 - FB connect
 - Random loot & wheel of fortune

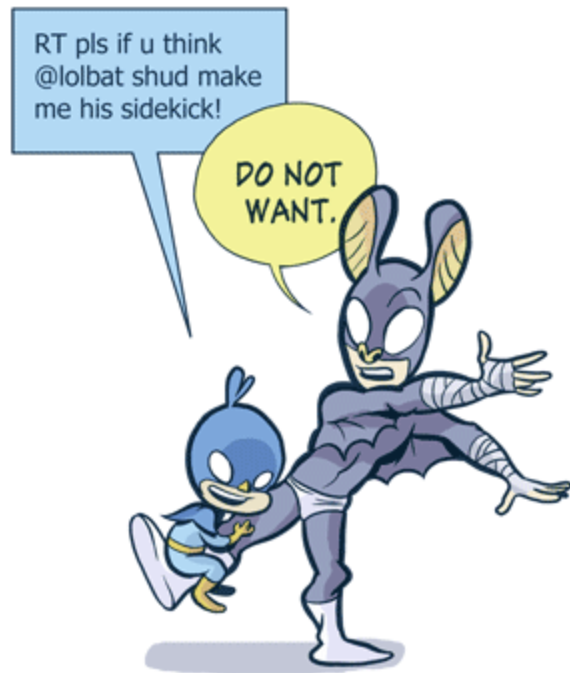




- Sells power items
- Sells gates (free with asking friends)
- Sells extra lives (or 'Energy')
- Basically sells "lessen grinding"
- No free gems!
 - But gives out trial power items

Pay to Win!

Fair Play Methods



There is no Pay to Win in successful f2p games!?

- Pay to save time
- Pay to make it slightly easier
- Pay to make it look better
- Pay to make my life easier



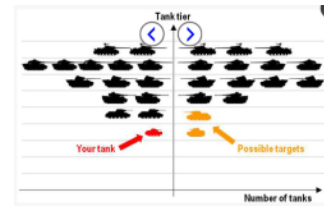
Some Fair Play methods:

1. PvP: through match making
2. PvE: you can't really "win"
 1. Reward premium currency
 2. The 50% factor
3. The inversed energy mechanic
4. Tradable pay items
5. Never change paying users game parameters

1) PvP: through match making



- Matchmaker balances player strength
- Even paying users can be balanced
- Works well with tiered based system
 - See WoT
- Or you need a player rating system (Elo)
- Don't forget social balancing
 - Grouping should be equal on both sides



2) PvE: you can't really "win"

- Reward premium currency
 - So non paying users can afford pay items by investing skill or time
- Selling up to 50% bonus/boost is ok
 - 50% XP gain
 - 50% loot gain



3) The inversed energy mechanic

- Classic “Zynga” Energy is so 2010
 - Refill E is pay to win & feels like a paywall
- Give energy into the hands of the player
- He produces it
- He consumes it
- He can “pimp” it
- Then its ok to sell it!



4) Tradable Pay Items



- Payers can get items by selling them
 - For in game resources or soft currency
- Non payers can get pay items by trade
- Payers are getting love from non payers
- You gain increased sales
- You service with a secure trade system
 - Hint: careful with trading premium currency

5) Game parameter change

- Some operators change game parameters
 - If you pay
- Makes games harder, loots worse
- Basically pushes you to 2nd purchase sooner
- **Don't do this. People aren't stupid**
- Zynga got away with this
 - As on FB games people don't "talk"



My personal recommendations



- Be “fair to play”
 - No pay walls
 - Content must be free
 - Allow premium currency grinding
- No gambling mechanics
 - We are games, not gambling
 - Prevents potential law conflicts & delayed bad feedback



Teut (Razor Alliance) at the battle of Asakai in Eve Online

Time for ANY questions!

Q & A

Twitter: @Teut
teut.blogspot.com