The Learning Loop

update mental model → Mental model → Decision → Action → Rules run → Feedback → (update mental model)

Practiced repeatedly

Players master systems by looping over them multiple times
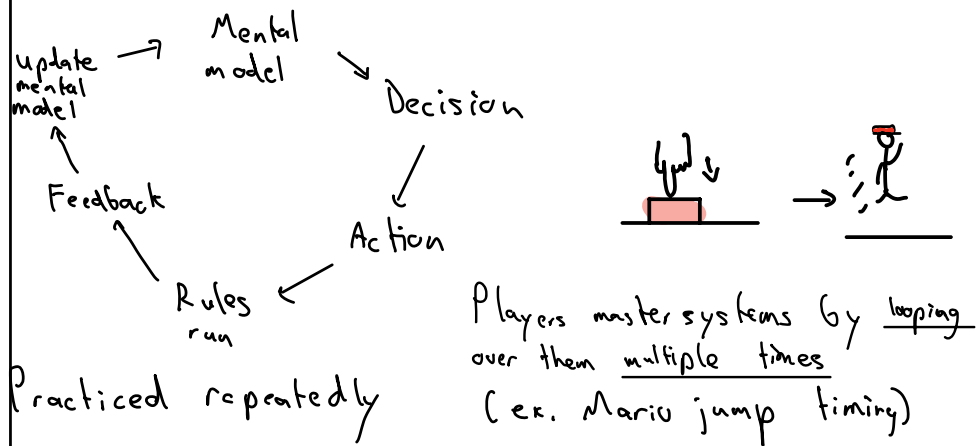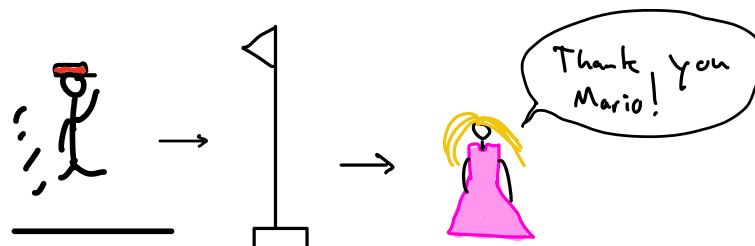
(ex. Mario jump timing)

Story Arcs: One-Time Events

Mental model → Action → BIG feedback → One-time update
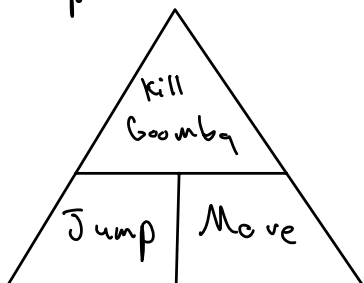

Thank you Mario!

- Deliver pre-authored meaning
- Story moments, emotional beats
- Generally only happen once
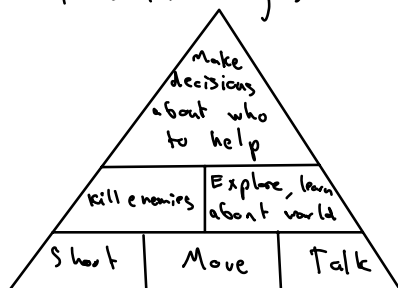
- Player doesn't need to practice like loops

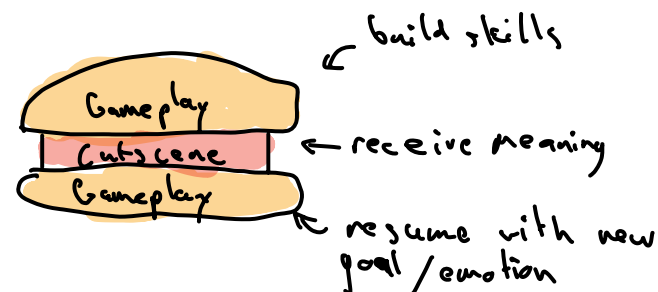# Loops & Arcs

Stacking Skills

Super Mario Bros.

- Kill Goomba
- Jump | Move

Fallout: New Vegas

- Make decisions about who to help
- Kill enemies | Explore, learn about world
- Shoot | Move | Talk

Low-level mechanics work together to create high-level architecture and goals

Game Architecture: Mixing Loops and Arcs

Gameplay ← build skills
Cutscene ← receive meaning
Gameplay ← resume with new goal / emotion

RELIGION is a game too!

Bible = arc   Rituals = loop