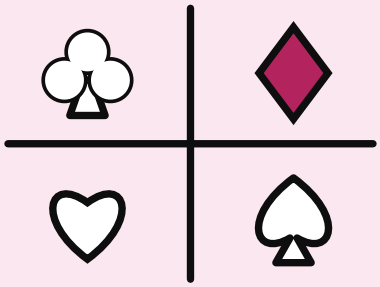
Model

Bartle's player types

Classifies people who play in multiplayer worlds by what they enjoy most: achieving goals, exploring the world, relating to others or imposing on them.



In Spanish
Tipos de jugador de Bartle

Origin
Bartle (1996)

What problem it addresses

A reminder that not everyone plays for the same reason. Design uses it to check what a game or app offers each motivation, though it grew out of observation and is not a validated test.

Components

Two axes
Are they interested in the world or in other people? Do they want to act on them or interact with them?

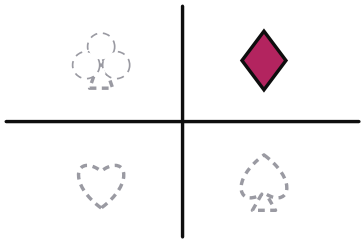
Four types
Achievers (act on the world), explorers (interact with it), socializers (interact with others) and killers (act on others).

Balance
In the essay, how the world is designed changes how many of each type there are, and some types affect the others.

An example

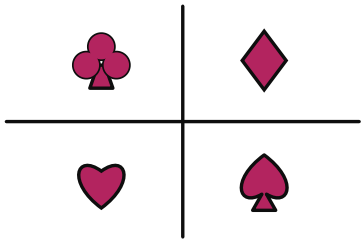
The same game world, with two different designs.

Only levels and treasure



Everything revolves around leveling up and collecting rewards. **It serves only one motivation.**

With more to do



There are also areas to discover, places to talk and challenges against others. **Every motivation finds something.**

Use it as a design checklist, not to pigeonhole people: the same person can have several motivations.

How it works

1

What people enjoy in play varies: goals, exploration, people or rivalry.

2

Two questions sort it out: the world or others? acting or interacting?

3

A design that offers something to each reaches more people.

Applications in design

✓ Use it like this

Review your game or app with the four types: what does it offer people who want to achieve, explore, socialize or compete?

✗ Avoid

Assigning each person a single type with a test: the same person has several motivations.

Don't fall for it

Look at how they affect each other: a leaderboard that rewards dominating can put off someone who just wanted to explore.

3 motivations

Achievement | Social | Immersion

What the research says

Analyzing the answers of 3,000 online role-playing players to 40 questions revealed three main motivations: achievement, social and immersion (Yee, 2006).

●●○ **Debated evidence.** They were barely related to one another ($r < 0.10$): being high on one doesn't lower the others, contrary to what Bartle assumed.

Connections

Related to

- Gamification
- MDA: mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics
- Octalysis
- Self-determination theory

Authors and works

1996	**Richard Bartle**	Proposed the four types after months of debate among expert players of MUD2, a multiplayer text game. He himself warned it was not a rigorous study.
2006	**Nick Yee**	Tested its assumptions with surveys and found motivations that combine, not separate types.

Sources

Original sources

- Bartle, R. (1996). Hearts, clubs, diamonds, spades: Players who suit MUDs. Journal of MUD Research, 1(1). View source (https://mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm)
- Yee, N. (2006). Motivations for play in online games. CyberPsychology & Behavior, 9(6), 772–775.

Last reviewed: October 27, 2026

Atlas público de diseño, de Adriana Ojeda. Texto e ilustraciones bajo licencia CC BY 4.0.