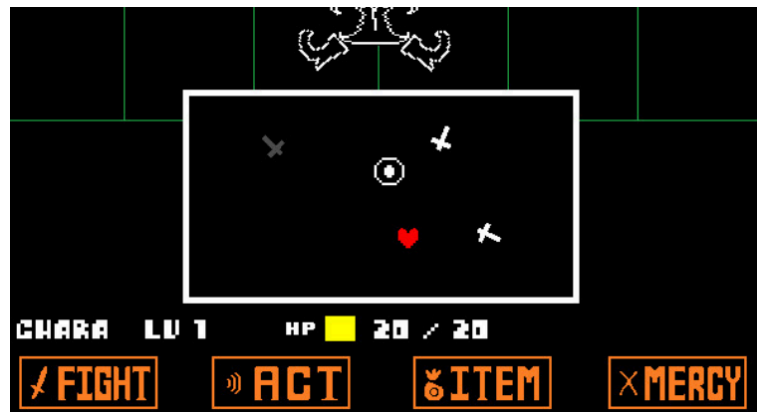
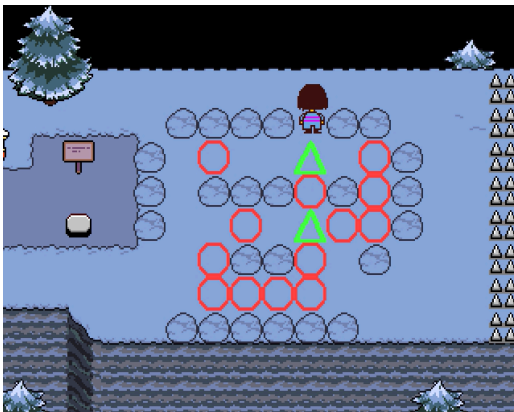


## Journal 4: Undertale and Actions

Looking at Undertale through the lense of action was interesting to me, and it afforded me a few surprises. In playing Undertale, the two basic actions that your character may perform are move/walk, and interact. When playing the PC version, the player uses the arrow keys to move around and the “z” key to interact with different things. Simple right? At least, it appears that way.

However, after reading the section of the textbook called “Actions,” I realize that there is more to this game than these two basic actions. Yes, they are the driving force of what you do in the game. But, there is more to these actions than their face value. For example, one concept mentioned in the text is that of verbs (or actions) that can act on many subjects (or objects); in other words, actions that have multiple uses. This takes place quite a bit in Undertale.

Let’s start with movement. Moving when in the regular game space is a basic action, but it becomes what is called a **strategic** action when you use it for other things, such as to solve a puzzle or step on a switch, as seen in the image below (left). Movement can also be used strategically in battle mode, as you move around in order to avoid enemy attacks and thereby avoid losing health. These are just a few of the ways in which the basic action of movement can be used to achieve different things, but they illustrate the concept fairly well.



Now, let’s consider interaction. When it comes to interaction, this basic action is used more than any other throughout the game. You can use it to read signs, to talk to NPCs, and to generally interact with any given object that you come across (all seen below); at the very least, most objects will have some sort of humorous text pop up when you interact with them that tells you a little about them. But what else can you do? You can also use interaction to select options in battle, as also seen below.



These actions are still basic actions, though. So, at what point do they become strategic? Generally, they become most strategic when used in battle. SPOILER ALERT -- Undertale is an RPG, but it is different from most RPGs that have come before it in that the player's moral alignment affects the outcome of the game. For instance, if you play the game as one who has played other, more mainstream RPGs, you might be inclined to kill all enemies. However, this will cause the characters to react differently to you as you play the game, even by fearing you. If you play as a pacifist - which goes against the norm for RPGs - the characters will be more friendly to you as you play, and will become companions to you. Finally, if, like most players that have no introduction to Undertale before playing it, you begin as a normal RPG player by eliminating all enemies, but realize the impact this has and change to a pacifist, your game will result in what some call the "neutral" outcome.

This style of strategic gameplay is one of the things listed in the text that contributes to **emergent** gameplay: the inclusion of goals that may be achieved more than one way. You can beat the game regardless of the way that you play it - in what some call the "genocide run," the "pacifist run," or the "neutral run." But each will have different outcomes and will affect the difficulty of the game as well. So, how do interactions play into this? When choosing to interact - particularly in battle - you decide whether to attack enemies or to spare them. This goes against the normal RPG playing style chiefly because sparing enemies gives you no experience points, which are often the most important thing for being successful when playing an RPG. However, because of the emergent gameplay that is created in Undertale, players soon realize that this makes a difference, and that it is *not* a normal RPG - it is its very own.

So, in each of these ways, Undertale makes use of action - both basic and strategic. There are multiple ways to use actions, which makes for more interesting and emergent gameplay, and ultimately for a better gaming experience. And finally, though the basic actions of Undertale are important to gameplay, it is the strategic actions that make the biggest difference in the outcome of your game; just as the text says, "The actions a player can take are so crucial to defining a game's mechanics that changing a single action can give you a completely different game" (Schell 173). It is in these ways that Undertale makes itself the unique game and experience that it is, and that makes it so charming to so many gamers across the globe.