

University of California, Irvine

Digital Game Analysis: *Valorant*

Assignment 1

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Game Title: *Valorant*

Developer: Riot Games

Platform: Microsoft Windows

Year of initial release: 2020

Description

Valorant is a first-person shooter game that involves gunplay skills and use of unique agent abilities. In the competitive game mode, there are two teams of five players. The goal of the attacking team is to plant the spike (the bomb), and the goal of the defending team is to defuse the bomb before it explodes. After twelve rounds, the teams switch sides, and the first team to thirteen rounds wins. The experience is very fast-paced, where every second counts, but it is also very strategic, where smart team decisions need to be made in different situations.

Game Analysis

1. Play experience

The play experience is both strategic and intense because each team needs to create a plan and execute it in intense situations against the opposing team.

a. Core Mechanics

The core mechanics of *Valorant* are very similar to other FPS games, where there is movement, aiming, and managing resources such as health, ammo, and armor. However, *Valorant* is unique because there are eighteen different agents (as of January 2022), and each agent has a unique set of four agent abilities.



Figure 1. Agent menu showing the most recent agent, Neon.

Some of these abilities include flashes, grenades, smokes, walls, stuns, and heals. Movement is very important in this game because moving while shooting causes firing error; as a result, players need to stand still to shoot in order for the bullets to be accurate. Managing the number of credits each player has is also very important, because it determines what type of gun the player can afford each round.

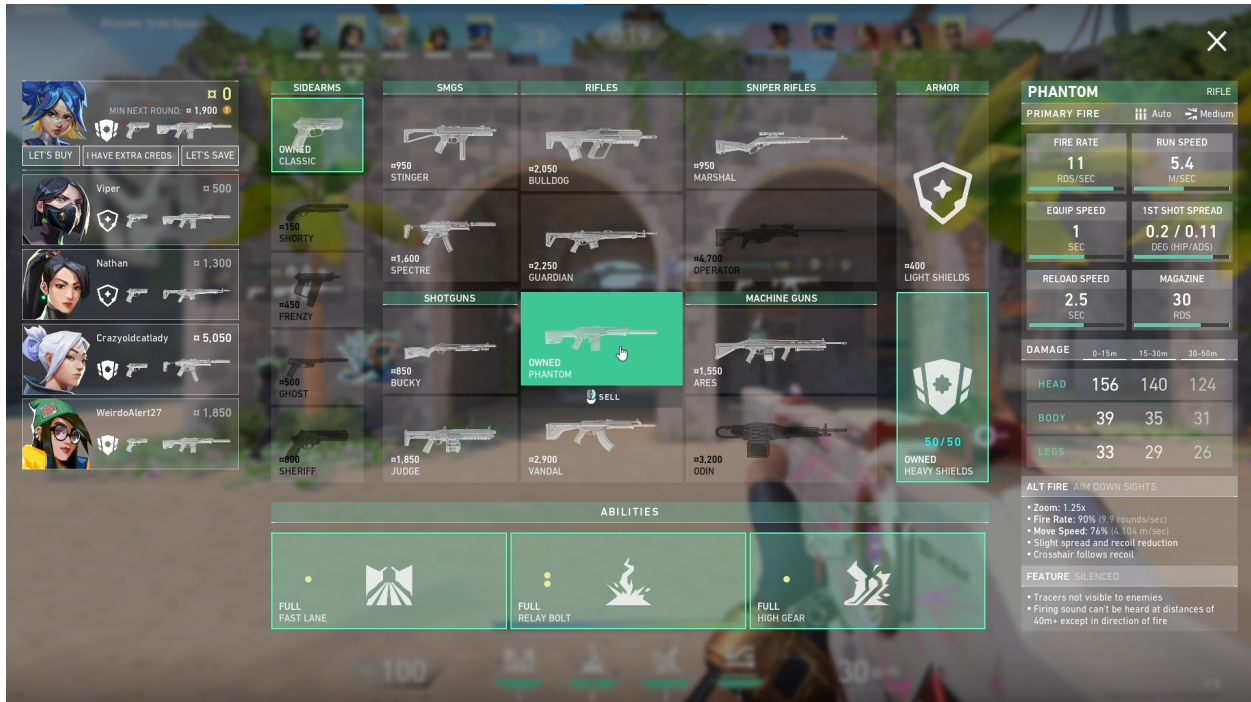


Figure 2. The buy menu at the beginning of the round.

These core mechanics contribute to the strategic and intense experience because players must be level-headed when using their abilities and fighting opponents because panicking will cause them to aim poorly and lose rounds.

b. Game Space

The game space of *Valorant* lies in seven different maps (as of January 2022). A map is randomly selected at the beginning of each game, and players must use different tactics to enter sites, plant the spike, and defend the sites. The realistic game space creates a more immersive experience, since players are able to enjoy the aesthetics of the game in addition to the actual gameplay. In addition to aesthetics, because the maps are very detailed, players can create unique lineups for abilities such as Sova's arrow that can bounce off walls and boxes to enter a site.



Figure 3. Beautiful beach scenery on the map of Breeze.

Players make use of all of the nooks and crannies (and bugs and glitches) in the maps to create their own gameplay experience, using different tactics and fighting opponents from unexpected angles, in order to gain an advantage over their enemy. These *Valorant* maps have their own personalities in the game, and some players are dedicated to spend hours figuring out the best setup for their abilities to win rounds.

c. Goals and Objectives

In *Valorant*, there are two different teams with two different goals. The attackers need to plant the spike, and the defenders need to defuse the spike. However, an alternative goal is to kill everyone on the enemy team because if the attackers kill the defenders, then they can freely plant the bomb, and if the defenders kill the attackers, then they can freely defuse the bomb (given that

there is enough time left before it explodes) or they may not even have to defuse the bomb if the attackers have not planted it yet. This formal element works to create the intense and strategic experience because if there are less than four seconds left (the time it takes to plant the bomb), the attackers should just try to kill all of the defenders left in order to win.

2. Interaction

There are many different interactions players can have in *Valorant* because it is a multiplayer game. Some examples of interactions in *Valorant* include ally to ally, ally to enemy, and player to abilities. There are exactly five players on each team, and players are not allowed to leave during the game. Leaving results in a temporary ban on the player's side, and a lost member on the team's side, which makes winning the game a lot harder.

a. Ally to ally

Players on the same team are able to communicate through voice comms and text chat. Players are able to see each other's loadouts (weapon and shield), available abilities, ability placements, location, line of sight, spike holder, and health. Healing agents like Sage are also able to see player health as a bar under the player in addition to the top of the screen because it makes it easier for them to detect the player with the lowest amount of health.



Figure 4. Minimap of Breeze that shows players on the same team, spike holder, ability placements, and vision cones.

b. Ally to enemy

Players on the defending team are unable to hear the voice comms of the attacking team and vice versa, but players can use the text chat to say “glhf” (good luck have fun) to all players or to inform the opposing team that one of their members is “afk” (away from keyboard). This way, the team is able to end the round quickly instead of waiting around. The enemy team is also unable to see the ally team’s locations, loadouts, abilities, health, etc. because it would ruin the point of the game and make it less fun.

c. Player to abilities

Unfortunately, there are players sometimes who want to throw (intentionally lose games) in order to maintain a low rank and play against lower elo players. In this case, an ally could use their abilities if they have grenades and fire, and harm their own team members. This has been a big issue in the *Valorant* community, so Riot developers have changed the amount of damage “friendly fire” can do to a teammate. Although it has improved the experience of the game, it is still impossible to stop people from throwing.

3. Meaningful play

a. Discernible

i. A player hits an enemy

Players are able to discern when they hit enemies because it makes a distinct sound, and you can see a graphic change. Some players, like myself, have all of the blood, gore, and dead bodies turned off, so these players would just see a small spike when they hit the enemy’s head. The enemy player’s movement will also slow down since player movement slows when hit. After the player dies, they can see exactly how much damage they did to enemy players, so they can also let their team know if an enemy player is low on health.

ii. A player kills an enemy

Players are able to discern when they kill enemies because they fall to the floor, and the kills show up in the top right corner for everyone. For players without dead bodies turned on, after dead players fall, they will turn into blue (ally) or red (enemy) icons with the agent’s face on it. There is also a distinct sound when a player kills an enemy.



Figure 5. Poor enemy team Sage dying as shown by her falling.

iii. A player is losing health

Players are able to discern when they are losing health because there is an audio cue for when they are hit, and the screen also lights up red in the direction from which they are being hit. Players can also tell when they are losing health by looking at the number in the bottom left corner, which indicates how much health they have. It is a meaningful choice to display health easily because it would be very difficult to play this game without knowing how much health a player has.



Figure 6. It is evident that I am taking damage from my right because there is red on the right side of the screen.

b. Integrated

- i. Using abilities the right way will help a player get kills.

Unlike other FPS games, *Valorant* is based on knowing different agent abilities and using them to gain an advantage over the enemy team. In order to emphasize this, people have found creative lineups and setups that help players get easy kills. There are even abilities that can do killing for the player, such as the grenades, shock darts, poison, fire, and turrets. Besides those, there are abilities that help players get kills such as flashes, stuns, and blinds.



Figure 7. Using stun abilities on an enemy Phoenix.

- ii. Killing players will increase the chances of winning rounds.

Killing players will increase the chances of winning rounds because the less enemies there are, the less angles players have to watch. In addition, facing a 1v1 situation is easier than facing a 1v2 situation if there are two enemy players firing at you but you can only aim in one place. Furthermore, although the objective is to plant or defuse the spike, killing all enemies on the opposing team is also an option. Therefore, players recognize that getting kills is very important in this game.



Figure 8. Winning a round by killing all of the enemy team.

iii. Working as a team will increase the chances of winning the game.

Working as a team will increase the chance of winning the game because strategizing is important. Furthermore, dead allies who relay information to their team members will help the team strategize where they should go and where they should look. Finally, working as a team to save money as a team instead of each player buying whatever they want will increase the chances of winning the game because even if they have to save on one round, they can buy the next round and win all of the consecutive rounds. As a result, teamwork is essential to this game, and having good team energy and communication will result in a higher chance of success.