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Beginning RPG Maker MV

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Beginning RPG Maker MV

Darrin Perez
San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico

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*This book is dedicated to the eternal pursuit of one's dreams
in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity. Never stop fighting!*

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About the Author

Darrin Perez (1988-) was born in Alexandria, Virginia and currently resides in Puerto Rico. His debut fantasy novel, *Whispers of Dawn*, was written as a self-imposed challenge in the spirit of NaNoWriMo (National November Writing Month). He has also written many articles on video games at *Hubpages* and published an ebook concerning RPG Maker VX Ace (a video game development engine) as well. His newest nonfiction book, *Beginning RPG Maker MV*, is the second edition of the *Beginning RPG Maker* Apress book series and the fourth book that the author has published with the company.

About the Technical Reviewer



Robert Reed first started using RPG Maker in his teenage years with RPG Maker 2000. With that experience, he pursued and obtained a Bachelor Degree in Game Design from Collins College in 2011. Through that time, he has followed each incremental release of the RPG Maker series and learned several programming and scripting languages, including C++, C#, Javascript, Java, ActionScript 3.0, and LUA. He resides in Phoenix, Arizona.

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Robert Reed served as this book's technical reviewer, and I would like to thank him for helping me make this book the best it can be. His diligent and measured approach to chapter reviews was key to making sure that the book's code was functioning as it should. However, I can't continue without acknowledging Michael Lin's technical review work in the first edition of this book. Had he not done the initial tech review, you might not be reading this second edition right now. Sometimes it's the smaller things that have the biggest impact; a butterfly effect, if you will.

I would like to thank the RPG Maker community as a whole for all that they have done to make exploring and using each new version of RPG Maker as easy as humanly possible. They have provided countless resources (in the form of tutorials and other essential assets such as sprites and music). Working with a game-development engine can be a daunting task, but they are always willing to lend a helping hand to anyone who needs it. There are far too many people to name, but I hold the community fondly in my heart (even if it has been forever since I've visited).

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Finally, I thank you, my dear reader. At the end of the day, all writers make sacrifices to get a solid book out to you and everyone else who desires to read about a certain subject. It is when I see the number of people who read my work that I can boldly say that the sacrifices were worth it. May you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Introduction

It has been a long journey to reach this point. The story of what would eventually become this book started humbly, as a much smaller (self-published) offering titled *The RPG Maker VX Ace Help Guide for Beginners: Tips and Tricks You Can Use For Your Very Own RPG* (quite the mouthful, right?) that was released exclusively in e-book format for the Amazon Kindle. I was contacted by Ben Renow-Clarke in early June of 2014 about writing a RPG Maker book for Apress. He even specifically noted that we could expand on my e-book; a sentiment I promptly agreed on. Work on *Beginning RPG Maker VX Ace* started a few months later and was completed some time after. Of course, the industry doesn't stop moving, and it thus became necessary to update *Beginning RPG Maker* for MV, the newest version of Degica's video game creation software. Updating the book was a process that took the better part of three months and I'm rather proud of the final result. In reading this text, I am confident that you will understand why. This book is the manifestation of my desire to teach other people the things I have learned during my time using RPG Maker in general and MV specifically.

If you're reading this book, you are probably interested in learning about RPG Maker MV. If you've just started using RPG Maker MV, the amount of features it offers for your roleplaying game development may be confusing. That's what I'm here for. During the course of this book, I will give a basic overview of the engine, give tips and tricks that will help you start getting a foothold on understanding RPG Maker MV, and even give you some of the code I've personally used in my time using RPG Maker Ace and MV. So, take a deep breath, and let's go!

What is RPG Maker MV (RMMV)?

RMMV is the latest version of the roleplaying game development engine published by Degica and developed by Kadokawa Games. It was designed with ease of use in mind and allows a complete beginner to create a complete RPG without needing a single day of programming experience. It was released internationally October 23, 2015 and in Japan December 17, 2015 (marking an uncommon occurrence; a Japanese-created product that is released later in its country of origin than in other countries). As with earlier iterations of RPG Maker, games have already been developed with it. Here's a list of features that RMMV brings to the table:

- A powerful eventing system. Events are essentially precoded instances that allow you to do many of the most common RPG things, such as create a treasure chest, a shop, or an inn, force player movement, and create nonplayer characters (NPCs for short) that change what they say based on the player's actions.
- A fully developed turn-based battle system. Besides the classic forward-facing view of earlier RPG Makers, MV also provides support for side-view battles, if those are more your style. For the sake of differentiating this edition of *Beginning RPG Maker* a little more from the first edition, I'll be using the side-view battle system. If you want some other battle system altogether, then you can script one (or commission someone else to do the same). However, that is an advanced topic and I will not be touching upon it in the context of this book.

- A character generator. This generator allows you to create your very own characters by using and mixing predetermined art assets. It can create both the character sprite and the portrait.
- Modifiable skills and item damage formulas. If you want to change the default formula for the Attack command, you can. Likewise, you can change different skills and items so they damage or heal based on both the user's and the enemy stats.
- The ability to create and use multiple tile sets, and edit the passability and terrain tags of those tile sets. Terrain tags can be used with switches and variables to create damage floors, among other things.
- The ability to create enemy encounters and define the regions they spawn in, all with the help of the self-titled Region Tool.
- The ability to use events and JavaScript to give additional effects to items and skills above and beyond the already extensive functionality that RPG Maker MV provides out of the box.

What Is a Roleplaying Game (RPG)?

Chances are that, if you've picked up this book, you probably already know what an RPG is. Most likely you've played some of them by now. Sticklers would say that every game is technically a roleplaying game, given that you control a character or group of characters in your attempt to win the game. On that note, here's a list of criteria I consider essential for a game to be considered an RPG:

- A system that rewards character progression. The most common of these is the experience system. By gaining a certain amount of experience (commonly abbreviated to XP or EXP), the player's character gains a level. The higher the character's level, the stronger they are. Leveling up normally grants new abilities and perks for the character as well.
- A predetermined storyline. While most other genres of video games have a story, nowhere is it as important as in an RPG. It is, usually, the main reason people play RPGs.
- A player character (PC). This is the human player's persona within the in-game universe. The player experiences the game's story through the eyes of his character.
- Nonplayer characters (NPCs). Real life would be boring if you were the only one in it, right? In the same way, a video game would be fairly dull if you were in a completely blank slate devoid of all interaction. NPCs help give the RPG world life as well as serve the many roles required in virtual society. By definition, every character that the player cannot control is an NPC.

There are surely other criteria by which an RPG can be defined, but the ones just listed are, in my appraisal, the most important.

About this Book's Source Code

Given the sheer size of RPG Maker MV's audio and image project folders (they take up about 400 MB of space), I decided to remove them from each of the source code chapter folders. Otherwise, the source code download would be over 6 GB in size! The audio and img folders were respectively placed in a single Assets folder, bringing the size of the entire source code download to a much more manageable size (less than 500 MB). To run a chapter's MV project file correctly, you'll need to copy the audio and img folders within Assets to that chapter's folder. You can find a bit more information in the source code's readme if need be (including a pair of screenshots that will help you visualize what I mean).

■ **Caution** While my way of packing the source code saves you the trouble of *downloading* ~6 GB of content, do keep in mind that the book's source code folders will take up about that much disk space, should you have all 15 project chapter files on your drive at the same time with the associated assets folders pasted within.

PART 1



Creating a Solid Foundation

Everything worth doing starts with a single step. It is the same with creating your very own video game, whether with a development engine such as RPG Maker MV (RMMV) or utilizing your own programming skills. This part of the book will cover the following topics:

- Installing and starting up RMMV, as well as a short overview of story and game play in the role-playing genre of video games.
- The use of switches and variables to create quests and area exits, among other things.
- Adding maps to your project to encompass various typical RPG locales, such as towns and dungeons, manually and with RMMV's own Load function.
- A detailed overview of the RMMV database and how it pertains to player characters, enemies, collectible items such as weapons and potions, and other RPG essentials.
- Populating our first dungeon, complete with enemies, treasure chests, and a boss encounter.

I hope you're as excited as I am! Without further ado, let's begin!

CHAPTER 1



Starting Out with RPG Maker MV

This chapter will cover the following subjects:

- Installing RPG Maker MV (RMMV)
- A short overview of story and game play in roleplaying games (RPGs)
- Starting up RPG Maker and taking your first steps toward creating your very own game

■ **Note** This book will exclusively cover RPG Maker MV. If you have an earlier version of the engine (such as XP, VX, or VX Ace), you will have to upgrade to MV to follow along.

Before you can use RMMV, you must have it installed. First, I'll walk you through the process of getting and installing your own copy of RMMV.

Where Can I Get RMMV?

RMMV (and a slew of related products) can be purchased from the official site at www.rpgmakerweb.com. The exact link is <http://www.rpgmakerweb.com/products/programs/rpg-maker-mv>. Alternately, RMMV is also available from Steam.

■ **Note** If you're a Mac user, you'll need to grab the Steam version, as the standalone installer is Windows-only.

When it's not on sale, RMMV costs \$79.99, but you can try it free for 20 days by grabbing the trial version if you're a Windows user. Unfortunately, Mac users have no trial version at this time; a situation we can only hope changes eventually.

You will be asked for your name and e-mail address when you download the RMMV trial.

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this chapter (doi:[10.1007/978-1-4842-1967-6_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4842-1967-6_1)) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

So, I Downloaded a Copy of RMMV. What Next?

If you have a standalone version of RMMV, what follows next is finding the downloaded archive and running the Setup.exe located within it. Afterward, installing it is as easy as following the steps in the installer.

Once the installation is complete, loading it up for the first time will bring up a screen such as illustrated in Figure 1-1.

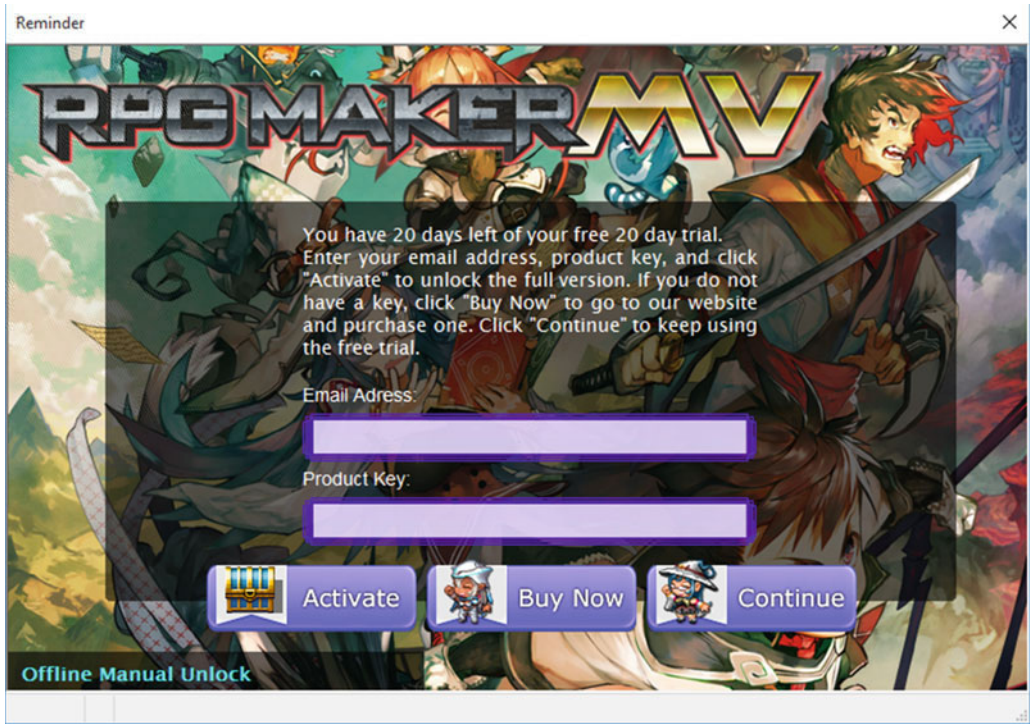


Figure 1-1. The starting screen for trial versions of RMMV

The screenshot is pretty self-explanatory. If you have purchased RMMV, you need only type in your product key as well as the email you provided at that time to activate the software by clicking on the Activate button. Otherwise, you can click on Buy Now to buy a copy of RMMV. If you would rather keep using the trial, you can just click Continue.

■ **Note** If you're using the Steam version, that platform will automatically install RMMV for you once you purchase it and choose to download it. As it is a full version by default, you shouldn't have to worry about the activation screen just described.

So, I'm Done

Welcome to the world of video game development! I hope you enjoy your stay! Now that you have a functioning copy of RMMV, we can continue. Before we start using the application, it would be good to talk about RPG design in general. Let us begin with the most important aspect, the story.

■ **Note** The current version of RPG Maker MV at the time of this writing is version 1.1. If you have a newer version of the software, it may include extra features not discussed here.

Story

Perhaps the most important thing about an RPG is its story. Even in the days of old, when the first *Dragon Quest* (known as *Dragon Warrior* in the United States until the eighth entry in the series was released) and *Final Fantasy* games were in their prime and storage was an issue with the earliest consoles, RPG developers sought to invest their players into the simple plot that they managed to fit within the cartridge. Perhaps the most important thing I can point out is that not every story needs to be complex. Complexity helps, sure, *if you can make it work*. Sometimes, it's the little things that have the greatest impact. The basic facets of *any* basic RPG story are virtually identical to those used in your standard fantasy or sci-fi book with a heroic protagonist:

- *You have a protagonist:* In an RPG, this is the main character controlled by the player. The protagonist is a distinct entity, with goals, dreams, and desires.
- *You have a conflict:* The most typical fantasy conflict for both books and video games is a great evil that rises, and only the hero/chosen one/protagonist (whether alone or with help) can defeat them. With that said, don't limit yourself. If you come up with a great plot that involves a conflict between the protagonist and himself, for example, feel free to take that ball and run with it.
- *You have obstacles:* Think back to the last RPG you played or fantasy book you read. The protagonist did not start the adventure and defeat the main villain within ten minutes/pages (if they did, it was probably a fake-out and not an actual victory). The protagonist probably started from a position of relative weakness and set out into the world to defeat the antagonist, being deterred every so often by hostile forces (some aligned with evil, and some not) and hindrances such as a broken bridge or a collapsed mine shaft.
- *You have a climax and a resolution:* The protagonist, after countless tribulations, finally reaches the castle of the "Dark Lord." With a carefully calculated strike of his weapon of choice, he defeats his timeless foe. Or does he? Depending on the type of story you want to tell, perhaps your antagonist escapes to live another day. Perhaps he was merely subordinate to an even greater evil.

A great story can save an otherwise mediocre RPG, but a mediocre story can ruin even great RPGs. You must define what type of story your RPG will have. Following are some questions that should get you thinking along the right track:

- *Will it be a fantasy RPG?* If so, will magic be prominent? Will alternate forms of abilities, such as technology or something else altogether, take center stage?
- *Or will you have a sci-fi RPG?* That's neat, too. Will technology be prominent, or will the setting be a devastated future where everyone is basically surviving with sticks and stones?