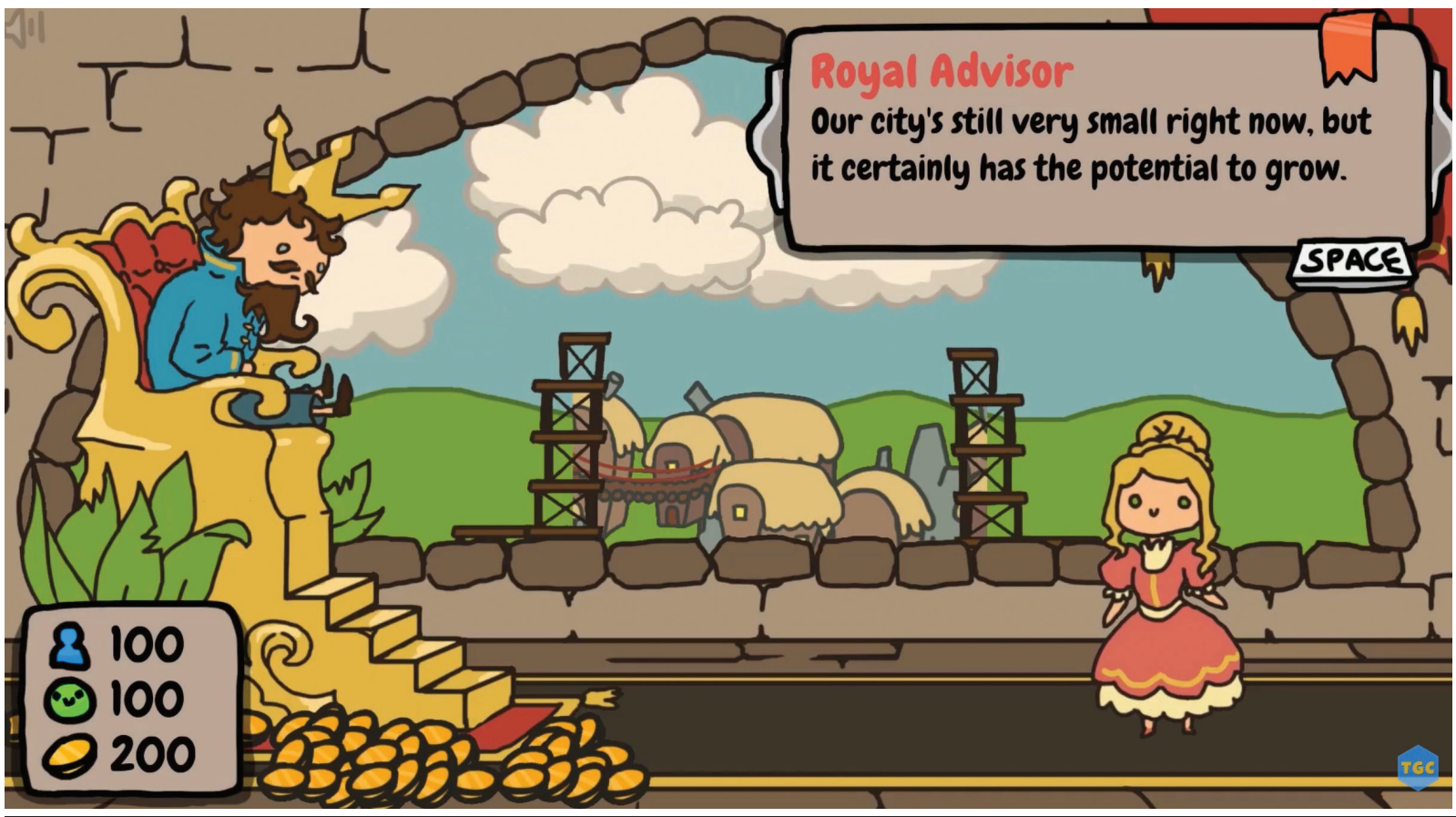
The Indie Itch: Five free simulation games to kill time with

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A free simulation game called "Sort the Court" by Graeme Borland. Youtuber Mark "Markiplier" Fischbach once played this game.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GEEK CUPBOARD ON YOUTUBE

If you find yourself feeling bored between your classes and want literally anything to do that isn't homework, you've come to the right place! Look no further than simulation games: the open-ended genre where players can manage and imagine doing either everyday or fantastical tasks. Welcome to The Indie Itch, the biweekly column where I give readers my suggestions for free games on itch.io, ranging anywhere from cozy games to roguelikes, puzzles, RPGs and anything else you can think of. This week, I've chosen five free simulation games that you can play in your browser right now that are sure to cure your boredom.

First up, we have the absolute classic "Sort the Court" by Graeme Borland. If you've been watching gaming YouTube videos as long as I have, then there's a chance you've seen this game before more than 10 years ago. In "Sort the Court," you play as a king or queen of a kingdom and you have two main controls — the "Y" key and the "N" key — to say yes or no to the people, animals, creatures and robots that come up to your throne. This charmingly illustrated game is essentially endless, but the main goal is to get your kingdom's population up, keep your citizens happy and have tons of money. This game is a lot of fun and there are so many scenarios to discover, so don't keep your kingdom waiting!

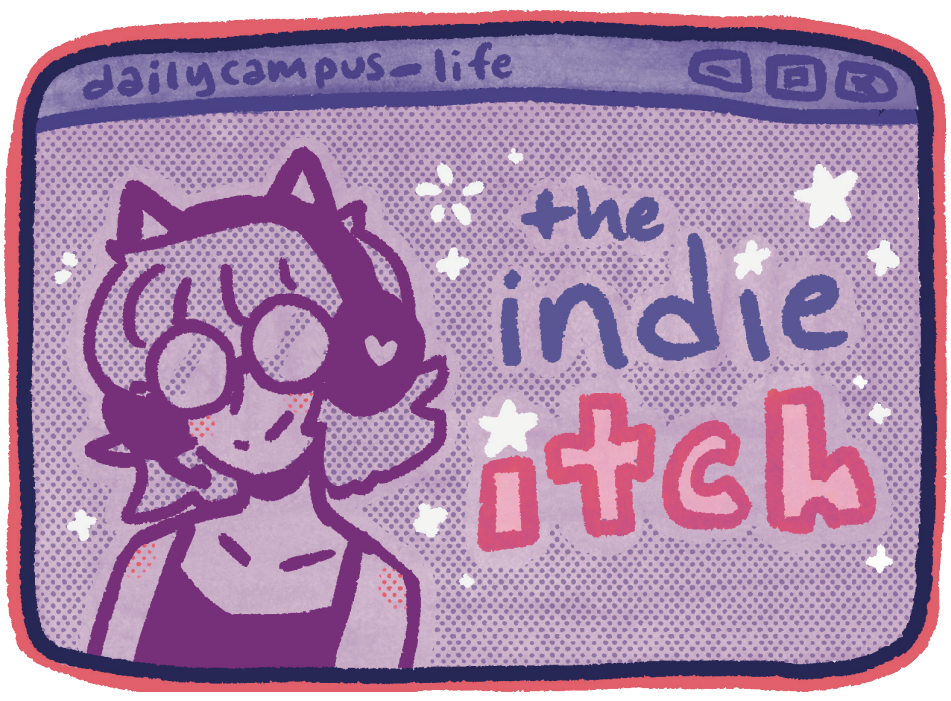
Another game that got decently popular on YouTube is "Little Chef" by Julien, Danny-vD and hello erika, which has a sequel as well. This is a cooking sandbox game that gives you a stove and interactable elements that you can make food with. You also have a blank recipe book where you have to discover each of the recipes by clicking and dragging various food (or non-food) items into the pot on the stove. The visual style of "Little Chef" is very endearing and clearly has a lot of care put into it with how clean and consistent it all is. I'm not sure how I cooked up "Baby Groot," though.

Next, I'd like to present "1,000,000 shrimp" by Jon Topielski and mafgar. This pixel art game is short, sweet and strangely addicting. As the title says, your goal is to catch 1 million shrimp. You do this by, of course, grabbing them with your bare hands out of the ocean at first. As you progress, you can upgrade your boat and methods of catching shrimp until you hit that beautiful 1 million. There's an in-game time system that tracks how long it takes you to accomplish this goal in universe, and it took me eight years and 13 days. My favorite part is the increasing number of shrimps that fly across your screen as you incrementally catch more.

Then there's "Rebound" by Jaiden Gerig, lzklein, zruby, bordenary and Brandon Garcia, which was made in two weeks for the 2021 Seattle Indies Slow Jam. By the title of the game, you might think it's about basketball, but you actually clean and bind books. As someone who has done bookbinding before, I found this game to be very relaxing because there isn't a bunch of glue all over your hands like in real bookbinding. There isn't an overarching goal or plot here; you just clean and fix up some books in your own little cozy studio. It's like PowerWash Simulator, but for book nerds.

Finally, we have "Dragon Creator" by Dragonita. There is no story or goal of any kind in this game. All you have to do is design a dragon, with the only limit being your own imagination. Considering that this game is in the early alpha stage of development, it has a shocking amount of customization to it. You have access to the full range of colors for every part of the dragon, with each main body part having a bunch of sub-parts that have different patterns for you to choose from. While there isn't anything to do outside of making your dragon — besides spinning around its 3D model — coming up with unique designs is definitely a great way to spend some time between classes.

I'd certainly avoid playing these games during class, but I can't say that I, personally, haven't done that. If you've played them all but just can't wait until the next edition of The Indie Itch for more, there are plenty of other completely free games that you can play right now at itch.io. You can find all of the games I've recommended in the collection here: https://itch.io/c/8241825/the-indie-itch.



LOGO BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



The free cooking sandbox game "Little Chef" by Julien, Danny-D, and hello erika. This is a cooking sandbox game you can play on itch.io.

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