A gaming device allows a player to play a game. A controller is in communication with the gaming device. The controller is configured to receive a wager and allow a player to play several games. The controller records at least one variable about the games played. The controller determines a play level for the player from several pay levels based upon the recorded variable or variables. Several pay-tables are provided. Each of the pay-tables is associated with a play level. The controller can change the pay-table used by the gaming device to the pay-table associated with the player's play level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAME OUTCOME</th>
<th>PAYOUT</th>
<th>LEVEL 4 PROBABILITY</th>
<th>LEVEL 3 PROBABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL OTHERS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/ANY/ANY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANY/ANY/CHERRY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/CHERRY/ANY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANY/CHERRY/CHERRY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/ANY/CHERRY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/CHERRY/CHERRY</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/ORANGE/ORANGE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORANGE/ORANGE/BAR</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORANGE/ORANGE/ORANGE</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/PLUM/PLUM</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUM/PLUM/BAR</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUM/PLUM/PLUM</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/BELL/BELL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELL/BELL/BAR</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELL/BELL/BELL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/BAR/BAR</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.0088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/7/7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.0022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAYOUT PERCENTAGE PER CREDIT</th>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95.00%</td>
<td>92.000%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIG. 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAME OUTCOME</th>
<th>PAYOUT</th>
<th>LEVEL 2 PROBABILITY</th>
<th>LEVEL 1 PROBABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL OTHERS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/ANY/ANY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANY/ANY/CHERRY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/CHERRY/ANY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANY/CHERRY/CHERRY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/ANY/CHERRY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/CHERRY/CHERRY</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/orange/orange</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orange/orange/bar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orange/orange/orange</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar/plum/plum</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plum/plum/bar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plum/plum/plum</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar/bell/bell</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bell/bell/bar</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bell/bell/bell</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar/bar/bar</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.0078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/7/7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.0012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PAYOUT PERCENTAGE PER CREDIT**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89.00%</td>
<td>86.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 4**
PLACE WAGER ON GAMING DEVICE

PLAY GAME ON GAMING APPARATUS

RECORD PLAYER AND WAGER VARIABLES

DETERMINE PLAY LEVEL

NEW PLAY LEVEL?

CHANGE PLAY LEVEL AND PAYTABLE

NOTIFY PLAYER OF GAME OUTCOME FROM GAME

FIG. 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAME OUTCOME</th>
<th>PAYTABLE D</th>
<th>PAYTABLE C</th>
<th>PAYTABLE B</th>
<th>PAYTABLE A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL OTHERS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/ANY/ANY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANY/ANY/CHERRY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/CHERRY/ANY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANY/CHERRY/CHERRY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/ANY/CHERRY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERRY/CHERRY/CHERRY</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/ORANGE/ORANGE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORANGE/ORANGE/BAR</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORANGE/ORANGE/ORANGE</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/PLUM/PLUM</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUM/PLUM/BAR</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUM/PLUM/PLUM</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/BELL/BELL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELL/BELL/BAR</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELL/BELL/BELL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR/BAR/BAR</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/7/7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 7**
FIG. 8
GAMING DEVICE AND METHOD OF USE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to gaming devices and, more particularly, to a gaming device that awards prizes based upon a player's level of play. The player's level of play can be based upon various factors such as wager amounts and the amount of time spent playing gaming devices.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Gaming devices are well known in the art and a large variety of gaming devices have been developed. In general, gaming devices allow users or players to play a game. In many casino-type gaming devices, the outcome of the game depends, at least in part, on a randomly generated event. For example, a gaming device may use a random number generator to generate a random or pseudo-random number (hereinafter, both types are referred to as a "random number").

[0003] The random number can be used to determine a game outcome. For example, the random number may then be compared to a predefined table to determine a corresponding outcome of the event. If the random number falls within a certain range of numbers on the table, the player may win the corresponding predefined prize. The table may also contain display information that allows the gaming device to generate a display that corresponds to the outcome of the game. The gaming device may present the outcome of the game on a large variety of display devices, such as mechanical spinning reels or video screens.

[0004] Some gaming devices award bonus prizes in addition to prizes that are awarded in a primary game. Of course, the prize in the primary game may simply be the opportunity to play the bonus game. A bonus prize is generally defined as a prize in addition to the prize obtained from the primary game and that is awarded to the player when a predefined event occurs. An example of a bonus game can be found in U.S. Pat. No. 5,848,932 to Adams. Adams discloses a primary game having three spinning game reels and a bonus game having a bonus display with one spinning wheel. The spinning wheel is divided into multiple sections, and each section has a symbol representing a prize. When predeter-mined indicia are displayed on the spinning game reels of the primary game, the wheel of the bonus display spins and stops. The bonus prize is displayed as the symbol on the wheel being pointed to by a pointer. The bonus prize is awarded in addition to any prizes awarded in the primary game. Another bonus game is disclosed in Baerlocher et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,336,863). Baerlocher et al. disclose a slot machine with a bonus award display. The bonus award display has a bonus wheel and a mechanical, movable pointer.

[0005] Gaming devices in casinos are more successful when they are able to captivate and hold a game player’s interest for a long period of time. When a game player plays a gaming device for a longer period of time, more revenue is generated for the casino. A game player may lose interest with a game that has a static display that changes very little over time or that the player deems to be unattractive.

[0006] Retaining the interest of casino patrons is especially important for players who frequently play gaming devices and those who wager larger amounts. This group of casino patrons can account for a significant percentage of the revenue generated by a casino.

[0007] Gaming devices today typically use a single static pay-table. That is, the payback for each gaming device is fixed and does not change. For example, a slot machine that accepts wagers in 25-cent increments will have the same payback percentage of 88 percent for a 25-cent wager as for a $1.00 wager.

[0008] What is needed is a gaming device that can change the prizes and payback percentage awarded by the gaming device based upon one or more variables related to game play by a game player.

SUMMARY OF ONE EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

Advantages of One or More Embodiments of the Present Invention

[0009] The various embodiments of the present invention may, but do not necessarily, achieve one or more of the following advantages:

[0010] the ability to provide game players with a more exciting and desirable gaming experience;

[0011] the ability to attract more patrons to play a game;

[0012] provide longer play times and a greater payout possibility for a player;

[0013] provide greater revenues for gaming operators;

[0014] provide a gaming device that can award higher payback percentages;

[0015] provide a gaming device that can award larger prizes;

[0016] provide a gaming device that can collect and record data about one or more variables associated with the player’s game play;

[0017] provide a gaming device that can award prizes based upon the length of time that a player is playing the gaming device;

[0018] provide a gaming device that can award prizes based upon one or more game play variables;

[0019] provide a gaming device that can award prizes based upon the amount wagered; and

[0020] provide a gaming device that can change pay-tables based upon one or more game play variables.

[0021] These and other advantages may be realized by reference to the remaining portions of the specification, claims, and abstract.

Brief Description of One Embodiment of the Present Invention

[0022] In certain embodiments, the present invention relates to a gaming apparatus that includes a gaming device for allowing a player to play a game. A controller is in communication with the gaming device. The controller is configured to receive a wager and play several games. The controller records at least one variable about the wager and the games played. The controller selects a play level for the player from several play levels based upon the recorded variable or variables. Several pay-tables are provided. Each of the pay-tables is associated with a play level. The controller can change the pay-table used by the gaming device to the pay-table associated with the player’s play level.

[0023] In other embodiments, the present invention relates to a gaming method. The method includes receiving a wager
and playing a plurality of games. At least one variable is recorded about the wager and the games played. A play level for the player is determined from a plurality of pay levels based upon the recorded variable or variables. A plurality of pay-tables are provided. Each pay-table is associated with a play level. A pay-table is selected that is associated with the player’s play level. The pay-table used by the gaming device is changed to the pay-table associated with the player’s play level.

The above description sets forth, rather broadly, a summary of one embodiment of the present invention so that the detailed description that follows may be better understood, and contributions of the present invention to the art may be better appreciated. Some of the embodiments of the present invention may not include all of the features or characteristics listed in the above summary. There are, of course, additional features of the invention that will be described below and will form the subject matter of claims. In this respect, before explaining at least one embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of the construction or to the arrangement of the components set forth in the following description or as illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0025] FIG. 1 is substantially a front view of a gaming device of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. 2 is substantially a schematic diagram of a portion of the gaming device of FIG. 1.

[0027] FIG. 3 is substantially a pay-table for use with the gaming device of FIG. 1.

[0028] FIG. 4 is substantially a pay-table for use with the gaming device of FIG. 1.

[0029] FIG. 5 is substantially a flowchart of a gaming method of the present invention.

[0030] FIG. 6 is substantially a front view of the gaming device of FIG. 1 showing another possible game display.

[0031] FIG. 7 is substantially a pay-table for use with the gaming device of FIG. 6.

[0032] FIG. 8 is substantially a front view of the gaming device of FIG. 1 showing another possible game display.

DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

[0033] In the following detailed description of the embodiments, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part of this application. The drawings show, by way of illustration, specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0034] Game Apparatus

[0035] Referring to FIG. 1, one embodiment disclosed herein comprises a gaming apparatus or device, generally indicated by reference number 10. Gaming device 10 comprises a primary game apparatus 20 and a display 50. Game apparatus 20 may be any of a large number of devices that are adapted to allow players to play a game. For example, game apparatus 20 may utilize reel displays, such as spinning reels 22-24 or a video display (not shown), to display outcomes of the game. Means may also be provided for accepting wagers, such as a coin slot 21 or voucher and card reader 25, and for awarding prizes, such as a coin dispenser 27. Voucher and card reader 25 can read and print paper vouchers and can read and modify player tracking cards with monetary amounts and other information. A handle 26 and button 28 are provided for activating game apparatus 20 to begin a game. In at least one embodiment, game apparatus 20 may be an S Plus model gaming device manufactured by International Game Technology in Reno, Nev.

[0036] Game apparatus 20 may be controlled by an electronic controller 82 (see FIG. 2) that utilizes a random number generator 83 (FIG. 2). The random number generator produces a random or pseudo-random number for each game. The outcome of the game may be determined by comparing the random number to a table of outcomes or pay-table stored in a memory and accessed by controller 82. A number of different pay-tables may be used, and different pay-tables may be used for different games. The pay-tables can be designed so that different prizes have different probabilities of being awarded. Such design techniques are well known in gaming. Examples of such designs are shown in U.S. Pat. No. 4,448,419, issued to Telhuas, and U.S. Pat. No. 4,456,465, issued to Durham. Controller 82 causes reels 22-24 or the video display to show the outcome of the game that corresponds to the outcome of the random number generator. It is recognized that game apparatus 20 may operate in many other ways and still achieve the objects of the present invention.

[0037] Play Level Display

[0038] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, gaming device 10 may have a housing 32 with a front panel 33. Housing 32 can be made from many different materials such as metal or plastic and can include decorative coverings or attachments and lights (not shown). A display such as a credit meter 110 can be used to display prizes or credit balances won on gaming device 10.

[0039] A display 50 such as a video display can be mounted in front panel 33. Display 50 can be any suitable display including video displays, plasma displays, LCD displays, LED meters and the like. Display 50 may be a single display or can be more than one display.

[0040] Display 50 can show play level information for a game player. Various play levels 52 may be assigned to a player. For example, as shown in FIG. 1, the play levels may include plays levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each of the play levels may be assigned to a pay-table 54 with a different average payback percentage. Play level 1 may have an average payback percentage of 95%. Play level 2 may have an average payback percentage of 92%. Play level 3 may have an average payback percentage of 89%. Play level 4 may have an average payback percentage of 86%.

[0041] Several gaming devices 10 may be in communication with a computer network server 60 (FIG. 2) and with other gaming devices 10 through a cable 62 such as an Ethernet cable. Server 60 can be a conventional network server that contains software that can operate on a processor. Server 60 can collect and transmit game information and instructions between server 60 and gaming device 10.

[0042] As seen in FIG. 1, a display or meter 56 can show the game player’s current level of play. Meter 56 is shown
displaying a play level of 3. Meter 56 can inform a game player of their current level of play. Once the player is aware of their current play level, they can refer to display 50 to determine what the current average payback percentage is for their play level.

[0043] A player’s level of play may be determined in many different ways using different game play or wager measures or variables. These variables may be recorded during game play by controller 82. The variable information may be stored by controller 82 or may be communicated to server 60. The variables recorded by controller 82 may be in addition to any information recorded by a player tracking system.

[0044] For example, a player’s level of play could be based on the average wager per game, average wager during a predetermined period of time such as an hour, day, month or year. The player’s level of play can also be based on total cumulative amount wagered, average number of games played during a predetermined time period, total cumulative number of games played, number of visits to the game operator (casino) during a predetermined period of time, and total cumulative number of visits to the game operator.

[0045] A player’s level of play may be determined using one measure or a combination of play variables. For example, a play level index may be calculated using a plurality of measures in a predetermined relationship (formula).

[0046] In the embodiment of FIG. 1, gaming device 10 uses different pay-tables for different play levels 52. In this embodiment, if a player achieves a predetermined play level, a pay-table 54 associated with that level is used to determine the outcome of the player’s games. This pay-table may have a higher payback percentage for some play levels and lower payback percentages for other play levels.

[0047] When a game player initially begins play on gaming device 10, they may be assigned to the lowest average payback play level, or play level 1, until enough data or variables on the player’s gaming can be collected to determine a play level. The number of game rounds necessary to determine a play level for a player may be predetermined or may be random.

[0048] Alternatively, gaming device 10 may initially assign the highest average payback play level, or play level 4, to a player in order to attract game players to start playing gaming device 10.

[0049] Gaming device 10 may also be linked to a player tracking system. Player tracking systems are often used by gaming proprietors to track a player’s wagering habits and to award “comps” such as room upgrades, free meals, show tickets, etc. The information recorded might include the kind of games the player has played, how often the player visits the establishment, the amount won or lost by the player, the amount of time spent playing games of chance, etc.

[0050] Turning now to FIG. 2, gaming device 10 comprises a controller 82 that is adapted to control the operation of the game apparatus 20. Controller 82 may be one or more micro-computers or processor boards. A random number generator 83 may be in communication with controller 82. Random number generator 83 is capable of randomly generating a random number and providing the random number to controller 82.

[0051] It is recognized that controller 82 and random number generator 83 may be a single processor or processor board. Controller 82 may be in communication with a computer network server 60 through an electrical cable 62 such as an Ethernet cable.

[0052] Server 60 and controller 82 can collect wagers, determine any prizes awarded by gaming device 10, determine a play level and display the play level on display 50 and update credit meter 110.

[0053] In an embodiment, server 60 may implement a casino loyalty rewards program by monitoring the player’s play on gaming device 10. In another embodiment, server 60 may store games and download the games onto gaming device 10. Server 60 may assign a play level and pay-table that are also downloaded from server 60.

[0054] One or more sensors 84-86 may be provided for determining the position of reels 22-24. Sensors 84-86 may sense the positions of reels 22-24.

[0055] Controller 82 can also detect when coins or currency have been inserted into coin slot 21 or a voucher or card is inserted into voucher and card reader 25. Controller 82 can also detect when an error has occurred, and when a sensor detects tampering.

[0056] Controller 82 can determine a play level for a player and display the play level on display 50. Controller 82 can record game play and wager variables during a game and use the information to compute a play level. For example the game play and wager variables may include:

- Average wager per game;
- Average wager during a predetermined period of time such as an hour, day, month or year;
- Total cumulative wagered;
- Average number of games played during a predetermined time period;
- Total cumulative number of games played;
- Number of visits to the game operator or casino during a predetermined period of time; and
- Total cumulative number of visits to the game operator.

[0057] Controller 82 can use a formula or other methods to calculate a game player’s play level. For example, the formula may use the variable of average wager per game. One such formula is given by the equation:

$$\text{Play Level} = \left( \frac{\text{Average wager per game for current player}}{\text{Average wager per game for all players}} \right) \times 100$$

rounded to the nearest integer play level.

[0058] If the average wager per game for the current player is 4 credits and the average wager per game for the all players is 2 credits, the resulting play level is 2. Other formulas may also be used to calculate the play level.

[0060] The use of play levels allows the gaming device operator to increase the payout or average payback percentage to those game players that wager larger amounts, play longer, and return more frequently to a gaming establishment or casino. The use of play levels allows the casino to reward game players that generate more revenue for the casino.

[0067] Turning now to FIGS. 3 and 4, several possible paytables for use with gaming device 10 are shown. In an embodiment, the outcome of each game is randomly selected. Random number generator 83 generates a random number and supplies the random number to controller 82. Controller 82 compares the random number to one of the pay-tables shown in FIGS. 3 and 4.

[0068] FIG. 3 can include a game outcome column 322, a payout column 324, a play level 4 probability column 326.
and a play level 3 probability column 328. The average payback per credit wagered is indicated in row 330. Random numbers (not shown) can be assigned to each row of FIG. 3 for both play levels 3 and 4.

For example, assume that the random number generator produced a random number indicating that cherry/cherry/any was the game outcome. If controller 82 has determined that the current play level is play level 3, the probability of hitting the cherry/cherry/any combination is 0.013 or 10.3%. If controller 82 has determined that the current play level is play level 4, the probability of hitting the cherry/cherry/any combination is 0.106 or 10.6%. Random numbers can be assigned to each game outcome to achieve the desired payback percentage as is known in the art.

FIG. 4 can include a game outcome column 322, a payout column 324, a play level 2 probability column 340 and a play level 1 probability column 342. The average payback per credit wagered is indicated in row 330. Random numbers (not shown) can be assigned to each row of FIG. 4 for both play levels 1 and 2.

Once controller 82 (FIG. 2) determines the game outcome, controller 82 credits or debits the players account or credit balance according to the game outcome and updates credit meter 110 with the current credit balance.

The pay-tables shown in FIGS. 3 and 4 award prizes based on a player’s play level. Gaming device 10 can assign play levels based upon game play and wager variables. For example, the probability of a player receiving a winning outcome increases with increasing average wager amounts. Gaming device 10 can assign play level 4 to players with large average wagers. Play level 1 may be assigned to game players with small average wagers. In this manner gaming device 10 can reward players that generate more revenue for the gaming establishment.

When a player has completed gaming on gaming device 10, controller 82 and server 60 may store the player play level for future use. The player’s play level may also be stored on a player tracking card or a player tracking system.

In another embodiment, the player’s play level may qualify them for additional prizes. For example, if a game player is selected for play level 4, they may also receive a physical prize such as tickets to a show, hotel room accommodations or restaurant meals.

Game Play Method

Referring now to FIG. 5, a flowchart of a method of gameplay 200 using gaming device 10 is shown. At step 202, a player may initiate game play method 200 by placing a wager on gaming device 10 (FIG. 1). The wager may be in the form of cash or credit from actual domestic or foreign currency, vouchers, coupons, tickets, electronic cards, and other sources or forms of wagers known in the art. Once the player initiates game play method 200, the player may play a game on the game apparatus 20 at step 204.

At step 210, the controller may record game play and wager variables. The variables may include average wager per game, average wager during a predetermined period of time such as an hour, day, month or year, total cumulative amount wagered, average number of games played during a predetermined time period, total cumulative number of games played, number of visits to the game operator (casino) during a predetermined period of time, and total cumulative number of visits to the game operator.

Next, method 200 proceeds to step 212 where controller 82 determines the player’s play level.

At decision 214, the controller checks to see if the play level resulting from step 212 is a new play level. If the play level is not a new play level, method 200 returns to step 208 where the game player is notified of the game outcome and any credits are added to the player’s credit meter. If the play level is a new play level, method 200 proceeds to step 216 where the play level is changed to the new play level. Also at step 216, the pay-table used by the gaming device is changed to the pay-table associated with the new play level.

Method 200 then proceeds to step 208 where the game player is notified of the game outcome and any credits are added to the player’s credit meter. After step 208, method 200 then returns to step 202 where the player may play gaming device 10 again.

The steps shown in the flowchart do not necessarily imply that the steps have to take place in a particular order. The order of steps may be varied; some steps may be eliminated; and some steps may be replaced with other steps. Such variations still fall within the scope of the invention.

First Alternative Embodiment

Referring to FIG. 6, an alternative embodiment of a gaming device 400 is shown. Gaming device 400 may be similar to gaming device 10, except that display 50 can show different pay-tables associated with each play level. If a player is assigned a play level by gaming device 10, a pay-table associated with that play level is used to determine the outcome of the player’s games. The pay-tables may have the same pay back percentage but different prizes or prize amounts are awarded. For example, smaller prizes are awarded more often.

Display 50 can show play level information for a game player. Various play levels 52 may be assigned to a player. For example, as shown in FIG. 6, the play levels may include plays levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each of the play levels may be assigned to a pay-table. The pay-tables may include pay-tables A, B, C and D. Play level 1 is assigned to pay-table A. Play level 2 is assigned to pay-table B. Play level 3 is assigned to pay-table C. Play level 4 is assigned to pay-table D. Each pay-table may award different prizes for various game outcomes.

Turning now to FIG. 7, several possible pay-tables for use with gaming device 400 are shown. In an embodiment, the outcome of each game is randomly selected. Random number generator 83 (FIG. 2) generates a random number and supplies the random number to controller 82 (FIG. 2). Controller 82 (FIG. 2) compares the random number to one of the pay-tables shown in FIG. 7.

FIG. 7 can include a game outcome column 550, pay-table D 520 and pay-table C 522, pay-table B 524 and pay-table A 526. Random numbers (not shown) can be assigned to each row of FIG. 7 for pay-tables A-D.

For example, assume that the random number generator produced a random number indicating that cherry/cherry/any was the game outcome. If the game player’s level is play level 4, gaming device 400 will use pay-table D and the game outcome is indicated as winning 5 credits. If the game player play level is play level 1, gaming device 400 will use pay-table A and the game outcome is indicated as winning 8 credits. Random numbers (not shown) can be assigned to each game outcome to achieve the desired payback percentage as is known in the art.
[0087] Once controller 82 (FIG. 2) determines the game outcome, controller 82 credits or debits the player’s account or credit balance according to the game outcome and updates credit meter 110 (FIG. 6) with the current credit balance.

[0088] Gaming device 400 may be played using the same method 200 previously described in FIG. 5.

Second Alternative Embodiment

[0089] Referring to FIG. 8, an alternative embodiment of a gaming device 800 is shown. Gaming device 800 may be similar to gaming device 10, except that display 50 can show several progressive jackpots associated with each play level. If a player is assigned a play level by gaming device 800, the player is eligible to win the progressive jackpot associated with that play level. A player with a particular play level may be able to play for a progressive jackpot associated with that level of play.

[0090] Display 50 can show play level progressive jackpot information for a game player. Various play levels may be associated with various progressive jackpots. For example, as shown in FIG. 8, the play levels may include play levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each of the play levels may be assigned to a progressive jackpot. Play level 1 is assigned to progressive jackpot 810 having a current value 812 of $122,310. Play level 2 is assigned to progressive jackpot 814 having a current value 816 of $10,700. Play level 3 is assigned to progressive jackpot 818 having a current value 820 of $5,970. Play level 4 is assigned to progressive jackpot 822 having a current value 824 of $621. Alternatively, the progressive jackpots could have the same award amount that are awarded more frequently for different play levels.

[0091] If controller 82 (FIG. 2) determines that a game player is selected for play level 3, the game player is eligible to win progressive jackpot 818, if the progressive jackpot is awarded during the time that the game player is playing gaming device 800.

[0092] Several gaming devices 800 would be connected in a network that may be in communication with a server 60 (FIG. 2). A portion of each wager on the gaming devices is allocated to progressive jackpots 810, 814, 818 and 822 as is known in the art.

[0093] Gaming device 800 can show a player several different progressive jackpots that they may qualify to win. Gaming device 800 can encourage longer play times and larger wagers. For example, a player who is currently assigned to play level 3 may see that the progressive jackpot 814 associated with play level 2 is much larger. The player may increase their wager or play gaming device 800 for a longer period of time in order to try to increase their play level to play level 2.

Other Embodiments

[0094] In another embodiment, a formula may be used to determine a winning event rather than a fixed pay-table. The formula can use a play level variable or index to determine when a winning event occurs. Alternatively, a fixed pay-table may be generated by the controller using a formula that incorporates a play level variable or index. The fixed pay-table may be stored in memory and used for the particular player during a period of time. Alternatively, a fixed pay-table may be used in which the size of the prize awarded for a winning event is determined at least in part using a play level variable or index.

[0095] Although the description above contains many specifications, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the embodiments of this invention. Thus, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents rather than by the examples given.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming apparatus comprising:
   (A) a gaming device for allowing a player to play a game;
   (B) a controller in communication with the gaming device, the controller being configured to:
     (a) receive a wager;
     (b) play a plurality of games;
     (c) record at least one variable about the wager and the games;
     (d) select a play level for the player from a plurality of play levels based upon the at least one variable;
     (e) provide a plurality of pay-tables, each pay-table being associated with one of the play levels; and
     (f) change the pay-table used by the gaming device to the pay-table associated with the play level selected for the player.

2. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the average wager per game.

3. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the average wager per game during a pre-determined period of time.

4. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the total cumulative amount wagered.

5. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the average number of games played during a pre-determined period of time.

6. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the total cumulative number of games played.

7. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the number of visits to a gaming establishment during a pre-determined period of time.

8. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the variable is the total cumulative number of visits to a gaming establishment.

9. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein a jackpot is associated with each of the play levels.

10. The gaming apparatus of claim 1, wherein the pay-tables are determined by a formula based upon the player’s play level.

11. A method of gaming comprising:
    (A) receiving a wager on a gaming device;
    (B) playing a plurality of games on the gaming device;
    (C) recording at least one variable about the wager and the games;
    (D) selecting a play level for the player from a plurality of play levels based upon the at least one variable;
    (E) determining a game outcome using a formula, the formula at least partially using the play level for the player to determine the game outcome; and
    (F) awarding a prize based upon the game outcome.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein a fixed pay-table is generated using the formula.
13. The method of claim 11, wherein the amount of the prize is determined at least partially by the play level associated with the player.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the variable is selected from the group consisting of
(a) average wager per game;
(b) average wager per game during a pre-determined period of time;
(c) total cumulative amount wagered;
(d) average number of games played during a pre-determined period of time;
(e) total cumulative number of games played;
(f) number of visits to a gaming establishment during a pre-determined period of time;
(g) total cumulative number of visits to a gaming establishment.

15. A method of gaming comprising:
(A) receiving a wager on a gaming device;
(B) playing a plurality of games on the gaming device;
(C) recording at least one variable about the wager and the games;
(D) selecting a play level for the player from a plurality of play levels based upon the at least one variable;
(E) providing a plurality of progressive jackpots, each of the jackpots being associated with one of the play levels; and
(F) awarding the progressive jackpot associated with the play level of the player, if a Jackpot qualifying event has occurred.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the variable is selected from the group consisting of
(a) average wager per game;
(b) average wager per game during a pre-determined period of time;
(c) total cumulative amount wagered;
(d) average number of games played during a pre-determined period of time;
(e) total cumulative number of games played;
(f) number of visits to a gaming establishment during a pre-determined period of time;
(g) total cumulative number of visits to a gaming establishment.

* * * * *