Description

[0001]   The present invention relates to a method for controlling character behavior in video games in which characters appear in a game space. The invention also relates to a video game machine operated in accordance with the above method and to a computer-readable recording medium on which a video game program implementing the above method is recorded.

[0002]   Character-raising games for raising animal characters or plant images displayed in a game space are being developed. In the character-raising games, the states of characters or images are changed over time by being fed or fertilized, or the characters or the images exhibit preset behavior in response to instructions from game players. Accordingly, the game players are able to feel as if they were actually raising plants or animals through the game screen, thereby virtually enjoying raising plants or animals.

[0003]   In conventional character-raising games, however, the states of the characters or images are merely changed over time, or only preset behavior is exhibited in response to instructions from game players. Thus, even if the game players are interested in the games initially, they soon become tired of them after repeatedly playing them for a while, whereby the game fails to exhibit entertaining characteristics.

[0004]   Accordingly, in view of the above background, it is an object of the present invention to provide a method for controlling character behavior that implements highly entertaining video games that allow game players to enjoy the games as if they were actually playing with characters displayed on a game screen, and also to a video game machine operated in accordance with the above method and to a computer-readable recording medium on which a video game program implementing the above method is recorded.

[0005]   In order to achieve the above object, according to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a video game machine that allows a character to appear in a game space displayed on a display screen of a display unit. The video game machine includes a temperament setting unit for providing a temperament of the character in accordance with an action performed on the character by a game player and the temperament of the character when the action is performed. A behavior-pattern storage unit stores a plurality of behavior patterns which are set in accordance with the temperament of the character. A behavior selection unit selects one of the behavior patterns in accordance with the temperament of the character. A behavior control unit causes the character to behave according to the behavior pattern selected by the behavior selection unit.

[0006]   With this arrangement, a character appears in a game space displayed on the display screen of the display unit. The temperament setting of the character is changed according to a "praising" or "stroking" action performed by a game player and the temperament of the character when the action is performed. The character then behaves based on the changed temperament. That is, even with the same environments and events surrounding the character, the character behaves differently according to the character's current temperament. Accordingly, the game player is able to enjoy almost the exact feeling of playing and living with the character. It is thus possible to implement a highly entertaining video game.

[0007]   According to the aforementioned video game machine, the game space may include a plurality of game scenes, and the plurality of behavior patterns may be set for a specific game scene. With this configuration, the game content becomes more complicated, thereby providing an even more entertaining video game machine.

[0008]   According to the aforementioned video game machine, the behavior-pattern storage unit may store not only the behavior patterns which are set in accordance with the temperament of the character, but also behavior patterns which are set according to a lapse of a game period. The behavior selection unit may select not only one of the behavior patterns in accordance with the temperament of the character, but also one of the behavior patterns according to the lapse of the game period.

[0009]   With this arrangement, the character behaves differently according to the lapse of the game period. For example, when the character is full, it ignores food. When the character becomes hungry, it demands for food. The character is awake during the day and sleeps at night. That is, the character autonomously behaves regardless of instructions given from the game player. This makes the video game highly entertaining.

[0010]   The aforementioned video game machine may further include a demand-action determining unit for determining at predetermined intervals whether a demand action has been performed from the character to the game player. The behavior patterns which are set according to the lapse of the game period may include the demand actions.

[0011]   This enables the game player to recognize the character's state by checking the character's behavior and to suitably perform an action on the character.

[0012]   The demand action may be performed according to the temperament of the character. Accordingly, the game content can be made dynamic and entertaining.

[0013]   The aforementioned video game machine may further include at least one operation unit for executing an instruction concerning the action. This makes it possible to change the temperament setting of the character and to provide dynamic aspects for the game content, thereby making the video game highly entertaining.

[0014]   According to the aforementioned video game machine, the temperament setting unit may