What you need to know about gamification and why

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Through the introduction of technology changed the way education is delivered these days. Most education providers are now making use of what is called gamification to interact with the learners. The burning questions has always been on how gamification is used and whether it really improves how people learn be it at schools or workplace training. We will try to answer some of these questions in this article.

Most people misunderstand gamification, and that affects the way it's utilised to develop gamified learning. Some people see it as game-based learning that involves learners playing games, and that's completely wrong. Although gamification can involve using badges, points, and leader boards, there's more to it than that. To develop a better-gamified learning course, an Instructional Designer needs to focus more on the intrinsic motivational aspects of it. What that means is that it doesn't matter if you use badges or points as long as your focus is on intrinsic motivation.

Gamification is the use of game design and mechanics to enhance non-game contexts by increasing participation, engagement, loyalty, and competition. These methods can include points, leader boards, direct competitions, and stickers or badges, and can be found in industries as varied as personal healthcare, retail—and, of course, education.

We've seen gamification already in a variety of settings: completing a punch card to win a free sandwich, receiving a badge for being the first of friends to check in at a particular restaurant, or expanding our profiles on LinkedIn to bring the "completion bar" up to 100%. Gamification has even worked its way into the automotive industry with the innovative dashboard of the Ford Fusion hybrid. A high-resolution display features a rendering of vine-like leaves. Waste gas and your vines wither. Conserve, and they blossom. The idea is to encourage brand loyalty, so how will gamification impact the way people learn?

Games, in any form, increase motivation through engagement. Nowhere else is this more important than in the delivery of education. It's been proven that gamifying other services have resulted in retention and incentive. For example, website builder DevHub saw the remarkable increase of users who finished their sites shoot from 10 percent to 80 percent. So, in theory, it should work for learning as well.

How is gamification used in learning?

Educators have tested this theory and seen positive results. There are a variety of ways to introduce your learners to the gamification of education content delivery and we're providing you with just a few ideas.

1. Gamification in grading

One success story is Lee Sheldon, a professor at Indiana University, who gamified his course by abandoning grades and implementing an "experience points" system. Learners' letter grades are determined by the number of points they have accumulated at the end of the course, in other words, by how much they have accomplished. Because of the extracurricular interests of the current generation (games!), Professor Sheldon attributes success to the fact that "the elements of the class are couched in terms they understand." Students are progressing towards levels of mastery, as one does in games. Each assignment and each test feels rewarding, rather than disheartening. Using experience points allows educators to align levels with skills and highlight the inherent value of education.

2. Award students with badges

For each assignment completed, award students with badges. This may seem like a regression back to Kindergarten stickers of gold stars, but it's working for Khan Academy. As students watch instructional videos and complete problem sets, Khan Academy awards them with points and badges to track progress and encourage perseverance. Western Oklahoma State College is implementing this form of gamification into their technology classes, with badges like "Moodle Noob No More," or, a personal favorite "Drop It Like It's Hot" to indicate mastery of Dropbox. However, as previously noted, it's important to add value to the badges, like bonus points, skill levels, etc.

3. Integrate educational video games into your curriculum

The use of games allows learners to fail, overcome, and persevere. Students are given a sense of agency—in games, they control the choices they make, and the more agency students have, the better students do. Instantaneous feedback and small rewards (or big ones, like winning) are external motivators that work. For example, Mr. Pai, a 3rd-grade teacher on a mission to make learning fun. He disrupted the traditional classroom setting by introducing the Nintendo DS, among other technology, into his daily curriculum. Students practiced math and language through the use of computer and video games. In just eighteen weeks, his class went from a below 3rd-grade level to a mid-fourth-grade level.

Some of the games used for learning are as follows;

1. Class Dojo tracks learners' achievements and allows teachers to share student progress with parents.
2. Class Craft takes the teacher's existing curriculum and adds gamification elements such as rewards, leveling up, collection points, teams, and more.
3. Kahoot is an application that allows teachers to build quizzes that can be played with the entire classroom.
4. Quizizz is a tool for teachers to create and share quizzes to help make learning more engaging for their students.
5. Pear Deck allows teachers to create interactive presentations with built-in questions. The questions have several different interaction types, such as drawing, multiple-choice, texting, or dragging your finger to the correct answer.
6. Duolingo helps students learn new languages by using positive and negative feedback, incremental progressions, and rewards.

7. Knowre offers personalized teaching to help students learn mathematics.
8. Khan Academy helps students around the world learn mathematics from grade school to a university level.
9. Memrise is a free app that allows students with memorization of languages, science terms, coding languages, mathematics formulas, and more.

4. Stir up a little competition

Professors have found that the tournaments incentivize students to learn the material and practice. After all, everyone wants to see his or her name on the leader board, right? Celine Petsche, a teaching assistant in the School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University, uses Top Hat's tournament module to engage her students. Previously using iClicker to quiz her students on the assigned reading, Celine found that the use of the tournament function drove on some competition, boosted morale, and got her students excited about demonstrating their understanding. Celine additionally noted that the tool worked as a great equalizer among students. Introverts were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the material and participate without having to raise their hands.

Most of all, "gamifying" the review of readings simply boosted the general energy of the class. Something that can be particularly challenging during the early morning seminars!

What are the benefits of gamification

- **Makes learning fun and interactive**

Regardless of your audience or subject matter, the gamification of learning can help you to create exciting, educational, and entertaining content. It's not meant to turn work into a game, but it does play on the psychology that drives human engagement. We've all experienced the drive to compete, improve, and outperform others, and even ourselves. The rewards can be very satisfying and intensely motivating.

One of the key benefits of gamification is that it makes learning informative and exciting, mainly thanks to its interactivity. Role-play and competitive elements add an immersive angle, which, if set up well, can quite simply make learning fun.

- **Creates an addiction to learning**

If you had to define the single most important aim of learning, it must surely be to instill new knowledge in your learners. But how useful is that knowledge if it can't be retained?

Another, rather surprising, benefit of gamification in learning is the natural high it can give us, and the impact that 'high' has on the retention of knowledge. When our brain wants to reward us, it releases dopamine into our bodies, so when we win a game or achieve something important to us, we feel good.

Learning about new things is, for many, rewarding experience which causes dopamine release, and the rather fortuitous outcome of that natural drug 'fix' is that the increase in dopamine levels helps us retain

that new information.

- **Allows learners to see real-world applications**

The third benefit of gamification is all about getting your hands 'dirty'. Learning on the job can be a very effective way of cementing skills by applying them to practical scenarios.

The gamification of learning allows learners to see the real-world applications and benefits of the subject matter. They can get a first-hand look at how their choices within the game result in consequences or rewards.

- **Offers real-time feedback**

Imagine if we only took stock of how well we are doing in life once a year. Work, relationships, in fact, anything we did regularly, might suffer from a lack of self-review.

It's a little odd that many organizations only conduct performance reviews on an annual basis, instead of more regularly, or even ongoing performance reviews.

The gamification of learning allows learners to work towards real-time, measurable, meaningful targets, and get upper-level feedback as those targets are achieved. After all, you're never going to improve if you can't find out what you need to do better or find out how to upskill.

- **Gamification enhances the learning experience**

Gamification in e-learning offers the opportunity for learners to engage with content in an effective, informal learning environment. If learners get excited about learning, they are more likely to retain information.

- **More fun, efficient learning**

Gamification makes learning fun and so learners are far more likely to engage with an enjoyable learning program than a boring one.

- **More cooperation**

Learners in gamified learning programs can work towards group goals by cooperating with a team within a competitive environment. This encourages the sharing of ideas, debate, critical thinking, and strategic thought processes.

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