

There are many examples that get rolled out again and again when it comes to gamification. Several of them come from an experiment that Volkswagen did a few years ago called The Fun Theory. Two very popular ones were the Speed Camera Lottery and the Piano Staircase.

The idea behind the staircase was to see if people would use the stairs rather than the escalator next to it. And, unsurprisingly, the number of people using the staircase did increase. Sadly, the experiment didn't last very long, so it was not possible to understand if this was just due to novelty. Also, there are no statistics on how many people's behaviour was changed to the point they continued to take the stairs after the piano was removed.

Those shortcomings aside, it is a cool little experiment and does show how changing the environment in an intelligent way can have dramatic effects on people's behaviour.

However, it is not gamification. What are the rules? What are the individual's objectives and goals? Where are the progress and feedback loops? It contains nothing that we would consider to be a game element. It is just a novel change to the environment. And that is ok because it is cool and people obviously enjoyed it, but we just need to stop trying to claim it as an example of gamification!

How Could You Gamify It?

Simple, add some defined challenges and goals.

Think about Guitar Hero. This is a game because it introduces challenges. Lights flash on the screen and you have to match them on the fretboard. Your speed and accuracy are measured and feedback is given straight away on the screen. The music just supports the [game mechanics](#). It's essentially Simon Says with rock music!

If the Staircase Piano had something similar, a set of keys light up to guide you towards playing a tune and at the top of the stairs there is an accuracy score on a monitor - bang, it is gamified (well actually sort of a serious game with purpose...)

As gamification moves forwards, we need to stop seeing interesting ideas and saying they are gamified, without justifying **how and why we** feel they are examples of gamification - other than "oh, they are fun and cool"!

Also published on [Medium](#).

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