

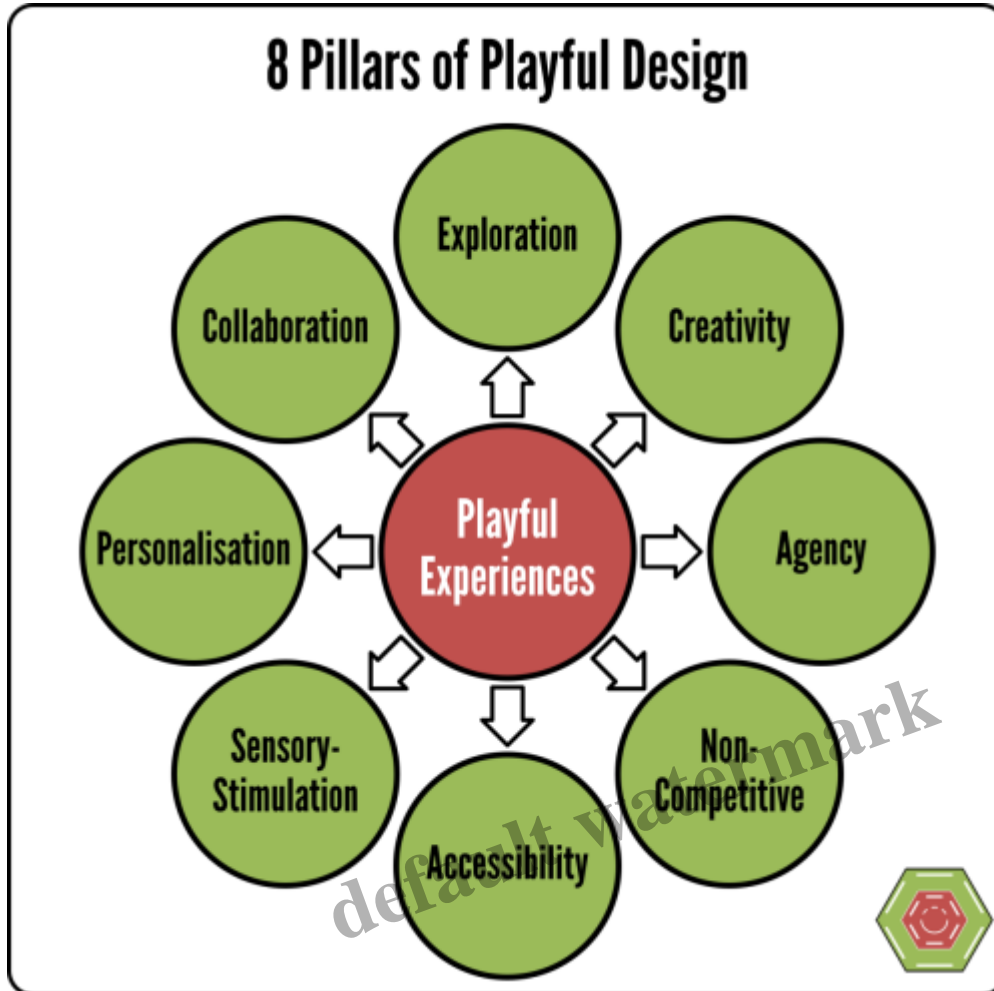
The 8 Pillars of Playful Design

Description

I've messed around with formalising a way to introduce play into experiences in the past, but this is the first time I have tried to plot out the key features of playful experiences in a way that becomes replicable in some way.

First, it is really important to understand what I mean by [Play and Playful!](#)

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8 pillars of playful design

Play

Play is free form and unlike a game does not need to have a point or a goal to it. It exists within a set of rules created by the person or people playing and is born in the imagination. Often it is a way of exploring the boundaries and extremes of something, in search of new and novel experiences. It is undertaken for its own sake often for fun and joy. To quote myself (!!)

play is a free-form activity that is undertaken because it brings fun and joy [13]

This is, as I say in the book, similar to Johan Huizinga's description in Homo Ludens, where play is an activity. [5]

Playful

Playful refers to an attitude or intent in the design, one that offers freedom and safety. It requires this lack of explicit rules, but with the addition of a safety net that encourages failure and exploration.

With that out of the way, let's take a look at the 8 Pillars of Playful Design that I consider when looking at these kinds of experiences.

The Pillars

Exploration:

Exploration is a fundamental part of playful experiences, allowing users to discover new things in their own unique way. From a design perspective, offering open-ended activities that allow users to experiment and discover new possibilities can emphasize exploration. This approach helps users to develop a sense of agency and control over the experience, increasing their enjoyment and engagement. Providing a sense of discovery, such as through hidden elements or unexpected outcomes, can also add to the excitement of the experience. [1][2][3]

Creativity:

Playful experiences should encourage users to use their imaginations and be creative. This can involve providing tools, resources, or activities that allow users to create and express themselves. Furthermore, playful experiences can foster the development of creative thinking skills, such as problem-solving and innovation. [4][5][6]

Agency:

Unlike games, playful experiences should not have strict rules or be overly structured. Instead, they should offer an open-ended and flexible experience that allows users to explore and experiment in their own way. The lack of structure fosters a sense of discovery and experimentation and allows users to approach the experience in their unique way. Providing a level of unpredictability, such as through random elements or unanticipated outcomes, can also add to the excitement of the experience. [1][5][6]

Non-competitive:

Playful experiences should not focus on competition or winning, unlike games. Instead, the focus should be on exploration and creativity, creating a more inclusive and enjoyable experience for all users, regardless of their skill level or experience. Offering opportunities for collaboration and interaction with others can also enhance the non-competitive nature of the experience. [1][5][7]

Accessibility:

Playful experiences should be accessible to a wide range of users, regardless of their age, experience, or ability level. This can involve offering different levels of difficulty or making the experience easy to understand and use. Ensuring accessibility can increase the reach and impact of the experience and promote inclusivity and diversity. Making the experience easily accessible, such as through mobile devices or online platforms, can also enhance the user experience. [3][7]

Sensory Stimulation:

Playful experiences can stimulate multiple senses, such as sight, sound, touch, and smell, to create a more immersive and engaging experience. This enhances the user's connection to the experience and increases their enjoyment and engagement. Incorporating multi-sensory elements, such as music, sound effects, and haptic feedback, can also create a more dynamic and immersive experience. [1][3]

Personalisation:

Designing the experience to allow personalisation, such as by choosing their avatar or selecting their preferences, can create a unique and individual experience for each user, increasing their sense of control and agency. Offering opportunities for customization and self-expression, such as through user-generated content, can also increase user engagement and motivation. Moreover, personalization can help create a stronger emotional connection between the user and the experience, as users are more likely to form attachments to things that are unique to them. [3][4]

Collaboration:

Collaboration can enhance any playful experience by adding a social dimension, making the experience more enjoyable and engaging. It can also increase user motivation and engagement, as users are more likely to be motivated when working towards a common goal with others. Additionally, collaboration can lead to a sense of community and shared experiences, as users work together and share their discoveries. [8][9][10]

What do you all think – have I missed anything here? How do you go about creating playful experiences?

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- 1. games
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