



## Experience Points and Gamification – Getting it Wrong

### Description

Gamification often uses points, deal with it. They can form a solid backbone to a system, after all, they are just a granular form of tracking and record keeping!

My issue today is with a misconception about using experience points in gamification. In games, we know that experience points are used in many titles. In a game, experience points (XP) are gained by doing tasks, completing missions, killing the bad guys and more. Often, the early stages of games see the user “grinding”, doing small, unskilled repetitive tasks over and over again, to gain XP.

As such, it seems obvious that we use them in gamification. The user does things that are “correct” and gains experience points. As I say, in games players are willing to spend hours doing things that are relatively boring – just for XP.

However, that isn’t quite right. They are doing these things because XP leads to new opportunities within the game. Players can upgrade their characters, purchase new items, gain new skills, unlock new levels in the game and much much more. This grinding leads to much more fulfilling experiences and opportunities within the game.

In gamification, XP often just leads to more XP or at times maybe a new in system rank. Very rarely does it offer new and more fulfilling experiences within the gamified system, very rarely does it answer the key question on the user’s mind – “So what?”

To make a long-term impact with something like experience points, you need to be able to answer that question. If you don’t give people a real reason to keep grinding – they won’t. The occasional badge won’t cut it. You need to offer new experiences, content only available to certain experience levels, virtual goods, real world goods. Something that makes the less interesting stuff more bearable in the long term.

It’s all well and good talking about flow and the like, but you can’t rely on what you feel is a perfectly balanced system working for everyone. If users want to reach for the stars – make sure there are some to reach for!

### Category

1. Gamification
2. Gaming

### **Tags**

1. Experience
2. experience points
3. points
4. rank
5. xp

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