



## The Game Thinking Spectrum

### Description

A quick thought around my original [Game Thinking](#) content from a few years back.

I often listen to others talking about gamification, serious games and the like, as if they had no relationship to each other. Whilst it is true that they all require different approaches to develop solutions with, they should not be considered as totally exclusive of one another.

A good gamification consultant will look at the problem they are given and decide what the best solution is for their client based on their needs, not on the semantics surrounding the difference between gamification and serious games. If the solution requires a game, that is what will get made. If it will benefit from gamification, with some learning based games and maybe even a few pure entertainment games, then that is what will get made!

I was gutted recently when speaking to someone who said that they were not that interested in gamification because they didn't just want a Duolingo clone. This meant one of two things to me. The industry is still doing a bad job of evolving across the board, or they had been speaking to some poor representatives of gamification in the industry. The likelihood is a bit of A and a bit of B.

## The Game Thinking Spectrum

To help people understand a little more about what the differences are and why we should not see them as all totally separate, I have put some of the game thinking/games based solutions onto a simple spectrum. They all live in the same arena and should all be considered with equal merit for solutions and used on their own or together to create the best solutions.



Game Thinking Spectrum

## Aesthetic

At this end of the spectrum, the solutions share the look and at times the feel of games, they are more “game-like” than they are game.

## Structure

Around the mid-point, the solution will not only have the look of a game, they will also share structural comparisons. Challenges, narratives, scoring systems, RPG elements, feedback, progress etc.

## Gameplay

As we move to the gameplay end of the spectrum, the solutions are more game than game-like. They have true gameplay and all of the trappings one would expect with a true game, whether it is for more serious purposes or for pure entertainment.

## So...

All of these approaches flow between each other and can be mixed and matched in any way needed to create the best solution for a client. Never limit yourself by definitions, semantics, lack of understanding or lack of willingness to try new things!

## Category

1. Gamification
2. Education
3. Gaming

## Tags

1. game design
2. game thinking
3. games
4. lenses
5. serious games
6. simulation

7. spectrum

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