



Final Fight and Relative Progress Bars

Description

Progress bars

During lockdown and thanks to our newish dog, I've been playing a lot of Xbox in the early mornings. I try to play games when I can, but until recently have not really had time to invest much of my life into them. But, I've always maintained that to understand what makes games work, you need to play them!

Anyway, I decided to have my annual play through of Final Fight, one of the greatest games of all time (I'm my opinion anyway!). As I was playing, I was analysing what was making it enjoyable (the curse of a gamification designer) and realised one small but key element. The health bars of the bad guys. Rather than just the main boss fights having a health bars every baddie has one, no matter how weak.

So what? Well, I realised that unconsciously I was prioritising how do deal with based on how much health they had, taking out weaker foes first, so I could concentrate more strategic attacked on those with more health.

Now, what is a health bar to you and me? A progress bar that goes in reverse! Rather than the bar filling up as you move towards your goal, it goes down, your goal is to hit 0 health on your enemy.

Not only did this help me prioritise my work flow in each screen, it also added to my understanding of my progress in the game. Each challenge, no matter how small, had its own progress bar! Not only that, I immediately knew how hard each challenge was going to be by the size of the progress bar. In fact, this was the bit that really stood out.

When we use progress bars in gamification, they are usually all the same size, going from left to right for a predetermined distance, no matter what is being measured. That's fine if all challenges are equal, if all of them require you to complete 10 identical tasks. However, what if each task is different, some harder or longer than others.

So it got me thinking about how we use progress bars. Should we be making them all a relative size to the challenge, so that at a glance a player can see what to expect the effort to be in each challenge? Should Relative Progress Bars become a thing?

Food for thought and I'd love to hear your views!

Category

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