

52 Gamification Mechanics and Elements

Description

Below is a list of various elements and mechanics that support different User Types and contexts and can enhance your gamification designs. These are by no means all there are, but these are the ones that I chose to include with my [Gamification Inspiration Cards](#).

When people invest time, effort, emotions or money, they will value the outcomes all the more.

General



14 Signposting icon

On-boarding / Tutorials

No one uses manuals anymore! Help people get used to your system with a nice tutorial or a gentle introduction on how everything works.

Signposting

Sometimes, even the best people need to be pointed in the right direction. Signpost next actions to help smooth the early stages of a journey. Use “just in time” cues to help users who are stuck.

15 Loss Aversion icon

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Loss Aversion

No one likes to lose things. Fear of losing status, friends, points, achievements, possessions, progress etc can be a powerful reason for people to do things.

16 Progress icon

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Progress / Feedback

Progress and feedback come in many forms and have many mechanics available. All User Types need some sort of measure of progress or feedback, but some types work better than others.

17 Theme icon

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Theme

Give your gamification a theme, often linked with narrative. Can be anything from company values to werewolves. Add a little fantasy, just make sure users can make sense of it.

18 Narrative icon

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Narrative / Story

Tell your story and let people tell theirs. Use gamification to strengthen understanding of your story by involving people. Think like a writer!

55 Curiosity icon

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Curiosity / Mystery Box

Curiosity is a strong force. Not everything has to be fully explained, a little mystery may encourage people in new directions.

56 Time Pressure icon

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Time Pressure

Reducing the amount of time people have to do things can focus them on the problem. It can also lead to different decisions.



Scarcity

Making something rare can make it all the more desirable.



Strategy

Make people think about what they are doing, why they are doing it and how it might affect the outcomes of the game.

13 On boarding icon

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Flow

Getting the perceived levels of challenge and skill just right can lead to a state of Flow. Balance is the key.

Consequences

If the user gets things wrong, what are the consequences? Do they lose a life, points or items they have earned?

Investment

When people invest time, effort, emotions or money, they will value the outcomes all the more.

Schedules

10 Random Rewards icon

Random Rewards

Surprise and delight people with unexpected rewards. Keep them on their toes and maybe even make them smile.

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11 Fixed Reward Schedule icon

Fixed Reward Schedule

Reward people based on defined actions and events. First activity, level up, progression. Useful during on-boarding and to celebrate milestone events.

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12 Time Dependent icon

Time Dependent Rewards

Events that happen at specific times (birthdays etc.) or are only available for set period of time (e.g. come back each day for a reward). Users have to be there to benefit.

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9 Socialisers icon

Socialiser

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49 Guilds icon

Guilds / Teams

Let people build close-knit guilds or teams. Small groups can be much more effective than large sprawling ones. Create platforms for collaboration but also pave the way for team based competitions.

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50 Social Network icon

Social Network

Allow people to connect and be social with an easy to use and accessible social network. It is can be more fun to play with other people than to play on your own.

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51 Social Status icon

Social Status

Status can lead to greater visibility for people, creating opportunities to create new relationships. It can also feel good. You can make use of feedback mechanics such as leaderboards and certificates.

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Social Discovery

Social Discovery

A way to find people and be found is essential to building new relationships. Matching people based on interests and status can all help get people started.

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Social Pressure

Social Pressure

People often don't like feeling they are the odd one out. In a social environment, this can be used to encourage people to be like their friends. Can demotivate if expectations are unrealistic.

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Competition

Competition

Competition gives people a chance to prove themselves against others. It can be a way to win rewards, but can also be a place where new friendships and relationships are born.

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Free Spirits

Free Spirit

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Exploration

Exploration

Give your Free Spirits room to move and explore. If you are creating virtual worlds, consider that they will want to find the boundaries and give them something to find.

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Branching Choices

Branching Choices

Let the user choose their path and destiny. From multiple learning paths to responsive narratives. Remember, choice has to be or at least feel meaningful to be most effective and appreciated.

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Easter Eggs

Easter Eggs

Easter eggs are a fun way to reward and surprise people for just having a look around. For some, the harder they are to find, the more exciting it is!

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Unlockable / Rare Content

Unlockable / Rare Content

Add to the feeling of self expression and value, by offering unlockable or rare content for free spirits to make use of. Link to Easter eggs and exploration as well as achievement.

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Creativity Tools

Creativity Tools

Allow people to create their own content and express themselves. This may be for personal gain, for pleasure or to help other people (teaching materials, levels, gear, FAQ etc).

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Customisation

Customisation

Give people the tools to customise their experience. From avatars to the environment, let them express themselves and choose how they will present themselves to others.

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Achievers

Achiever

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Challenges

Challenges

Challenges help keep people interested, testing their knowledge and allowing them to apply it. Overcoming challenges will make people feel they have earned their achievement.

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Certificates

Certificates

Different from general rewards and trophies, certificates are a physical symbol of mastery and achievement. They carry meaning, status and are useful.

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Learning / New Skills

Learning / New Skills

What better way to achieve mastery than to learn something new? Give your users the opportunity to learn and expand.

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Quests

Quests

Quests give users a fixed goal to achieve. Often made up from a series of linked challenges, multiplying the feeling of achievement.

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Levels / Progression

Levels / Progression

Levels and goals help to map a users progression through a system. It can be as important to see where you can go next as it is to see where you have been.

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Boss Battles

Boss Battles

Boss battles are a chance to consolidate everything you have learned and mastered in one epic challenge. Usually signals the end of the journey – and the beginning of a new one.

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Philanthropists

Philanthropists

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Meaning / Purpose **Meaning / Purpose**

Some just need to understand the meaning or the purpose of what they are doing (epic or otherwise). For others they need to feel they are part of something greater than themselves.

Care-taking **Care-taking**

Looking after other people can be very fulfilling. Create roles for administrators, moderators, curators etc. Allow users to take a parental role.

Access **Access**

Access to more features and abilities in a system can give people more ways to help others and to contribute. It also helps make them feel valued. More meaningful if earned.

Collect & Trade **Collect & Trade**

Many people love to collect things. Give them a way to collect and trade items in your system. Helps build relationships and feelings of purpose and value.

Gifting / Sharing **Gifting / Sharing**

Allow gifting or sharing of items to other people to help them achieve their goals. Whilst a form of altruism, the potential for reciprocity can be a strong motivator.

Sharing Knowledge **Sharing Knowledge**

For some, helping other people by sharing knowledge with them is its own reward. Build the in the ability for people to answer questions and teach others.

Disruptors

Disruptor

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Innovation Platform
Innovation Platform

Disruptors think outside the box and boundaries of your system. Give them a way to channel that and you can generate great innovations.

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Voting / Voice
Voting / Voice

Give people a voice and let them know that it is being heard. Change is much easier if everyone is on the same page.

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Development Tools
Development Tools

Think modifications rather than hacking and breaking. Let them develop new add-ons to improve and build on the system.

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Anonymity
Anonymity

If you want to encourage total freedom and lack of inhibitions, allow your users to remain anonymous. Be very, very careful as anonymity can bring out the worst in people!

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Light Touch
Light Touch

Whilst you must have rules, if you are encouraging disruption, apply them with a light touch. See how things play out before jumping in. Keep a watchful eye and listen to the feedback of users.

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Anarchy

Anarchy

Sometimes you just have to burn it all to the ground and start again. Sit back, throw the rule book out of the window and see what happens! Consider running short “no rules” events.

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Player

Player

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Points / Experience Points / **Points / Experience Points (XP)**

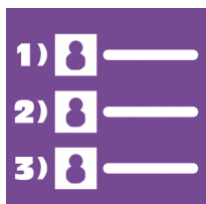
Points and XP are feedback mechanics. Can track progress, as well as be used as a way to unlock new things. Award based on achievement or desired behaviour.

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Physical Rewards / Prizes / **Physical Rewards / Prizes**

Physical rewards and prizes can promote lots of activity and when used well, can create engagement. Be careful of promoting quantity over quality.

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Leaderboards / Ladders

Leaderboards come in different flavours, most commonly relative or absolute. Commonly used to show people how they compare to others and so others can see them. Not for everyone.

Badges / Achievements / **Badges / Achievements**

Badges and achievements are a form of feedback. Award them to people for accomplishments. Use them wisely and in a meaningful way to make them more appreciated.

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Virtual Economy **Virtual Economy**

Create a virtual economy and allow people to spend their virtual currency on real or virtual goods. Look into the legalities of this type of system and consider the long term financial costs!

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Lottery / Game of Chance **Lottery / Game of Chance**

Lotteries and games of chance are a way to win rewards with very little effort from the user. You have to be in it, to win it though!

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The Periodic Table of Gamification Elements



Most of the icons are available at game-icons.net. For more information, check the [icons accreditation info here](#).

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