

3.3 Points, Badges & Leaderboards

Perhaps three of the most well-known game elements are Points, Badges , Leader boards.

Points

Points are basic elements found in many games and gamified applications or software. They are usually offered as a reward for successful achievements, and they help the player keep track of their progress throughout the game or gamified experience. They are often called experience points. Another variation of points can come in the form of coins. One of the most important reasons for the creation of points is to provide continuous and immediate feedback to players by measuring their in-game behaviour and reinforcing good behaviour by rewarding them with points . Points acknowledge efforts and achievements early and often. In the beginning points are usually supposed to be earned easier and faster for the player to be able to progress through the first levels and hook them into the game. After the first levels, the acquisition of points and the levelling up becomes harder and harder. The stakes in higher levels might also be higher as not only will the point acquisition be tougher, but they might come across damage points that will knock them down. When used properly in a class, this might also give enough time for the slower players in the classroom to catch up with the ones that have progressed further in the game.

Badges

Badges can be visual representations of achievements such as a scoring streak ; collecting non-essential items throughout the game or acquiring valuable information. Badges symbolise players' achievement and merits and as such they provide certain prestige and social status. As social dynamics are involved with acquiring badges, they can exert social influence on players' and co-players' behaviour enough to lead them to choose specific challenges or routes in order to acquire them. This is especially true for when badges are rare or harder to find or they offer privileges such as handing homework late or giving powers such as eliminating the multiple-choice answers to a question by 50%.

Leader boards

Display players' ranking according to the most earned points or awards. The leader board can offer an overall ranking or can show relative success for a specific mission.

Therefore, they are indicators of a player's progress in relation to other players' performance and progress. Leader boards can be a tricky element to use as in some cases they can act as motivators when players just need a few points to progress to the next level or surpass a competitor and in other cases they can act as demotivators for those who find themselves at the bottom of the leader board. It is mainly seen that leader boards positively impact participation and learning through productive competition when competitors on a leader board are approximately at the same level.

To counteract potential negative and demotivating effects of the leader board what some LMS (learning management systems) that have leader board software for gamified experiences do is, only



show the learner/player a couple of players ahead of them and a couple behind them in order not to avoid creating a toxic and unproductive educational experience.

Another way to counteract any demotivating effects is to introduce HOUSES. Perhaps four of the most famous houses are those of Hogwarts : School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Those are of course, Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw. House totals could be the sum of all the individual players' experience points. A house system can create a positive teamwork culture, a sense of belonging and an attitude “ we are all in this together” . As you introduce the house system it is important to make clear that they each have accountability for their own performance and effort but also for constructively supporting their peers should they need help.

