

# Games

## Section 8



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## Games

Games can improve learning: they provide a framework for introducing new knowledge, a space for exploration, opportunities to experience new things and apply what you know, and a way to assess through simulation. Learning designers hear a lot about the benefits of gamification, the use of game thinking and game design elements in non-game contexts. If made well, they can be used to engage, teach, entertain, and measure 'players' contributions and participation. However, they will only recognise and reward the behaviours of a small percentage of your target audience.

Gamification is when mechanics are applied to a learning activity. For example a forum might use a points system and rank learners for contributing to a discussion. Games are specific interactions that account for game mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics to allow learners to experience or try new concepts or ideas. These can be online, like a game that lets learners explore another world, or offline, like a group treasure hunt where people work together to solve clues.



In this section, we will look at how to build successful, engaging games that encourage learning and help you understand your learners. This doesn't mean you will design new computer games from scratch (although we list some tools you can use to do so). Games can only enhance a great, well thought out experience, they cannot create one on their own. If your community is disengaged or your learning opportunity not coherent, games won't cover that up.

## Khan Academy: Gamified Learning

### Description:

#### What was the challenge? / What happened?

Founded in 2006, Khan Academy is a non-profit, web-based education platform that provides free access to a library of approximately 5,500 instructional videos, problem sets, and skill assessments. This multimedia content is available in all key subjects, including math, science, history, and SAT prep. To join Khan, users must have four things: internet access, a phone or computer, a topic of interest, and a desire to learn.

### Solution:

#### How did we approach it? / What did we do?

When Nadia, Sal Khan's niece, came to Sal for homework help, he offered to tutor her remotely by making short, instructional videos about basic math concepts. Word spread and due to the growing demand, he began to upload the lessons to YouTube for his family to access independently. Soon other students across the U.S. began to access his YouTube channel. In September of 2009, he began make the videos full-time from home. By 2011, his YouTube channel boasted 57,275 subscribers. In 2014, 1.75 million.

### Conclusion:

#### How did it work? / What are lessons learned? How does it relate to broader context?

Khan Academy uses game mechanics such as "skill-growth trees" to unlock new classes and learn new skills. As learners progress through the question sets, their access increases. Points are assigned and new learners 'skill up' quickly, which hooks them and creates the desire to spend more time on the website and more time learning. Points allow learners to 'unlock' special rewards, like unique titles and avatars.

