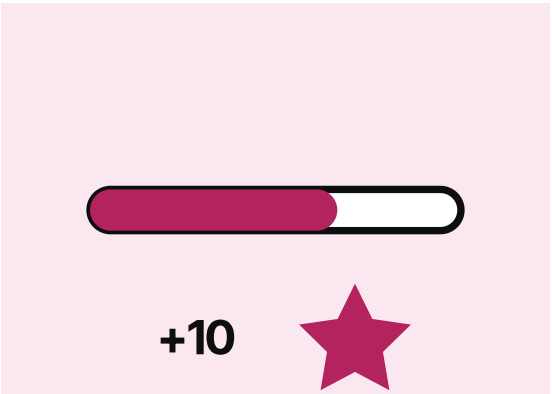
Concept

Gamification

Using game design elements (points, levels, challenges, leaderboards) in something that isn't a game, so it gets used more or more eagerly.



In Spanish
Gamificación

Origin
Deterding, Dixon, Khaled and Nacke (2011)

What problem it addresses

Explains why so many language, fitness or work apps have points and streaks, and why they don't always work.

An example

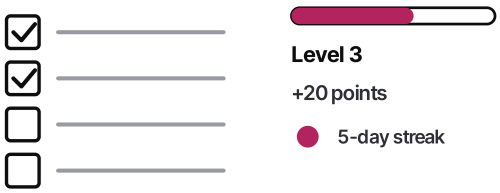
The same task list for a course, presented in two ways.

Not gamified



Tasks and dates. **Just the task.**

Gamified



The same tasks, with points, a level and a streak. **How it is presented changes.**

Game elements are added, but the task doesn't become a game. That is why the effect depends on the task and on who does it.

Why it happens

1 

Points and levels make progress visible;

2 

challenges and leaderboards add a goal and a comparison,

3 

and that can encourage people to keep going if the goal matters to the person and isn't just novelty.

Applications in design

✓ Use it like this

Make progress visible in something people already want to achieve.

✗ Avoid

Adding points and badges to a task that gives nothing to the person doing it.

👁 Don't fall for it

Measure beyond the first few weeks: part of the effect may be just novelty.

2 of 15



Positive effects on everything — Only partly

What the research says

Among the studies with statistical tests, only those found positive effects on everything they measured; the other 13, only partly (Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014).

●●○ **Debated evidence.** A review of 24 studies. The effects depended on the context and the people, and part of them could be due to novelty.

Connections

Used in

- Interaction design
- Behavioral design

Related to

- Zeigarnik effect
- Flow
- Goal-gradient effect
- MDA: mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics
- Hook model
- Octalysis
- Deceptive patterns (dark patterns)
- Self-determination theory
- Bartle's player types

Authors and works

2011	**Sebastian Deterding, Dan Dixon, Rilla Khaled and Lennart Nacke**	Defined it as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts.
2014	**Juho Hamari, Jonna Koivisto and Harri Sarsa**	Reviewed 24 studies: gamification had positive effects, but they depended heavily on the context and on who used it.

Sources

Original sources

- Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011). From game design elements to gamefulness: Defining “gamification”. In Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference (pp. 9–15). ACM. View source (https://doi.org/10.1145/2181037.2181040)

Academic reviews

- Hamari, J., Koivisto, J., & Sarsa, H. (2014). Does gamification work? A literature review of empirical studies on gamification. In Proceedings of the 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences. IEEE. View source (https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377)

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026

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