

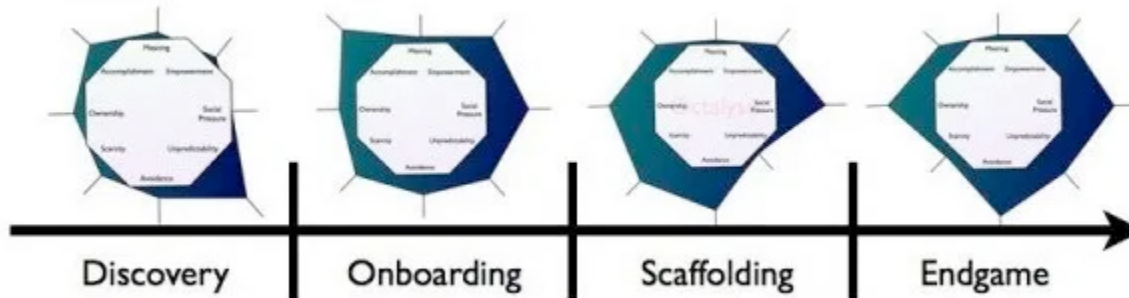
Player types and Experience Phases

Experience Phases:

Actionable Gamification describes 4 phases a player goes through over the lifespan of a game (or product):

1. Discovery
2. Onboarding
3. Scaffolding
4. End Game

The drives that motivate a player will shift through each phase and these changes can (should!) be mapped:



#1: DISCOVERY - why would people even want to start the journey?

In the Discovery phase, the goal is to create motivation towards trying out your product through clever marketing and messaging. Generally, there are combinations of Curiosity and Unpredictability (Core Drive #7), Epic Meaning & Calling (Core Drive #1), and perhaps Social Influence & Relatedness (Core Drive #5) if you want things to become more viral.

#2: ONBOARDING - how do you teach users the rules and tools to play the game?

Onboarding is about teaching users the rules and tools to play the game. Onboarding starts as soon as the user signs up, and ends when the users have mastered the fundamental skills needed to play the game and achieve the early stage win-states. Onboarding, like the Discovery Phase, generally retains a weak form of Unpredictability & Curiosity (Core Drive #7), and it is the Gamification designer's job to install other Core drives into the user experience.

When a user first joins, they generally just feel curious about the product. Depending on how well the Gamification designed the Discovery Phase, users could come because they just read about it somewhere (Core Drive 7), their friends told them to do so (Core Drive 5), its for a good cause (Core drive 1), their boss made them use the product (core drive 8) or because of high exclusivity (Core Drive 6).

No matter why the user decided to join the service, the most important Core Drive in the Onboarding Phase is mainly making players feel a sense of Development & Accomplishment (Core Drive #2). You want to make users FEEL smart and competent with lots of instruction, interaction, Empowerment and feedback reinforcements (Core Drive #3).

Game techniques suitable for onboarding:

- Step by Step Tutorials (Game Technique #9)
- Glowing Choice (Game Technique #28)
- Narrative (Game Technique #X)

Also Introduce Early Win-States

Small achievements need to be rewarded frequently at the beginning. This builds the player's confidence. At this point, each experience of success is called an *early win-state*. It is important to introduce as many of these opportunities as possible. And they should be done within a reasonably close span of time to keep up the level of excitement. Conquering minor challenges can be very satisfying at first. But eventually this gets boring. Harder challenges need to be introduced *gradually* as the game progresses past the Onboarding phase.

Once the player has mastered the basics, the stakes are then raised by a moderate increment. The point is to make it within their reach to overcome this challenge. This allows them to feel an even greater sense of victory. This can be referred to as the *first major win-state*, also known as the *first boss-fight* (Game Technique #14). Before the first Boss-Fight, everything the user does should be like honey and marshmallows, easy and sweet. But the first boss fight (and this could abstractly be a slightly higher challenge or problem to solve) needs to make them feel a little nervous because they don't know if they can overcome it, which will sweeten the joy of victory.

A big mistake many apps make is to bombard their users with messages to invite their friends to join too. However, why would users want to invite their friends before they even know if they like the experience? A more optimal strategy is to introduce friend invite requests (or other desired target behavior) right after the first Boss Fight.

#3: SCAFFOLDING - the regular journey of repeated actions towards a goal?

The third phase of on-going and regular activity of the game is where players use all the rules and options they learned during onboarding to try to achieve as many Win-States as possible. Amy Jo Kim refers to this phase as "habit-building." In the player's journey, this phase is supposedly where the most "fun" should happen, and usually has equal standing within all 8 Core Drives, depending on what your product actually does and for whom it is designed for. The Scaffolding phase is where users come back on a regular or daily basis to commit mostly repetitive Desired Actions. So what is the motivation for a user to come back and do the exact same things over and over again for hours everyday? That is the question the Scaffolding Phase seeks to answer.

#4: END GAME - how do you retain your veterans?

The Endgame is when players believe have done everything there is to do at least once and are starting to feel like there are no longer unexplored Win-States. Not spending enough time thinking about this last phase when designing products is I believe, a gigantic mistake. If game designers do not create a good endgame, people will get bored and quit the game, when in fact these veterans are generally the product's biggest evangelists, best community managers, and best sources for monetization.

Often times this is more easily achieved by implementing techniques that appeal to White Hat and Intrinsic Core Drives. For instance, if the veterans have higher status among their peers of a closely knit group, they will have a sense of pride and stay in this game for longer, as opposed to become a newbie again in another product with no social influence (Core Drive 4: Social Influence & Relatedness).

[Learn more about the experience phases](#)

Bartle's Player Types

It's a good idea to understand how your players like to approach playing games. There is a simple measure designed by Richard Bartle, the Bartle Test of Psychology, which breaks up the way people play games into four simple categories:

- **Killers**, interested in acting and players
- **Achievers**, interested in acting and world
- **Socialisers**, interested in interacting and players
- **Explorers**, interested in interacting and world

These categories *aren't* rigid. Most people display some traits in more than one category. However, most people have a dominant trait which determines their overall preference. If you know where the majority of your players fall using this tool, you can use it to inform the majority of features you will use, and then just add a small number of features that appeal to each of the other categories.



The Killer

Killers are similar to Achievers in the way that they get a thrill from gaining points and winning status too. What sets them apart from Achievers is that the Killers want to see other people *lose*. They're highly competitive, and winning is what motivates them. They want to be the best at the game—and it should come as little surprise that the only way for *that* to be true is if they beat *everyone else*. You may expect this personality type to be common, but Bartle's research suggests that only a small number of players are Killers – less than 1%.

The Achiever

Achievers are all about points and status. They want to be able to show their friends how they are progressing. They like to collect badges and put them on display. This is the type of person who responds particularly well to incentive schemes such as Air Miles, where every additional mile collected is an achievement in its own right. Bartle estimates that roughly 10% of people are players of the Achiever type. Chances are you will know several people of this sort; someone who boasts he used a quicker route to get to a destination than his friend did is an Achiever type.

The Socializer

The vast majority of players are Socializers. That's almost 80% of people who play games. Socializers experience fun in their games through their interaction with other players. Socializers are happy to collaborate in order to achieve bigger and better things than they could on their own. Games, such as Farmville (Facebook's largest game), appeal to the Socializer. For instance, Socializers are happy to water someone else's farm in exchange for new crops for their own farm. For example, office workers who leave at the end of the day and remind each other to water each others' crops may be friends... or they may just be acquaintances. Whatever the deal is, the point with Socializers is that joining forces makes sense to them. Note—this is the last place you'll find fierce competition, but it doesn't mean Socializers are passive milksops who lack ambition.

The Explorer

Explorers want to see new things and discover new secrets. They're not as bothered about points or prizes. For them, *discovery* is the prize. Explorers are fine with repetitive tasks as long as they eventually "unlock" a new area of the game, or they deliver some kind of "Easter Egg" (an Easter Egg is a small bonus within a game – sometimes it's as simple as a little joke, whereas in other cases it might be a full extra video sequence regarding what has been accomplished). Explorers really enjoy the surprise that's possible in a game, and around 10% of players fit into this category. These are the players who will feel at walls in a game in order to access a secret passage; their satisfaction on doing so is what makes them tick, not bragging to their friends about their discovery. Build this sort of feature into your gamification design—and you'll be speaking their language.

[Check out the Game Techniques List >>](#)