



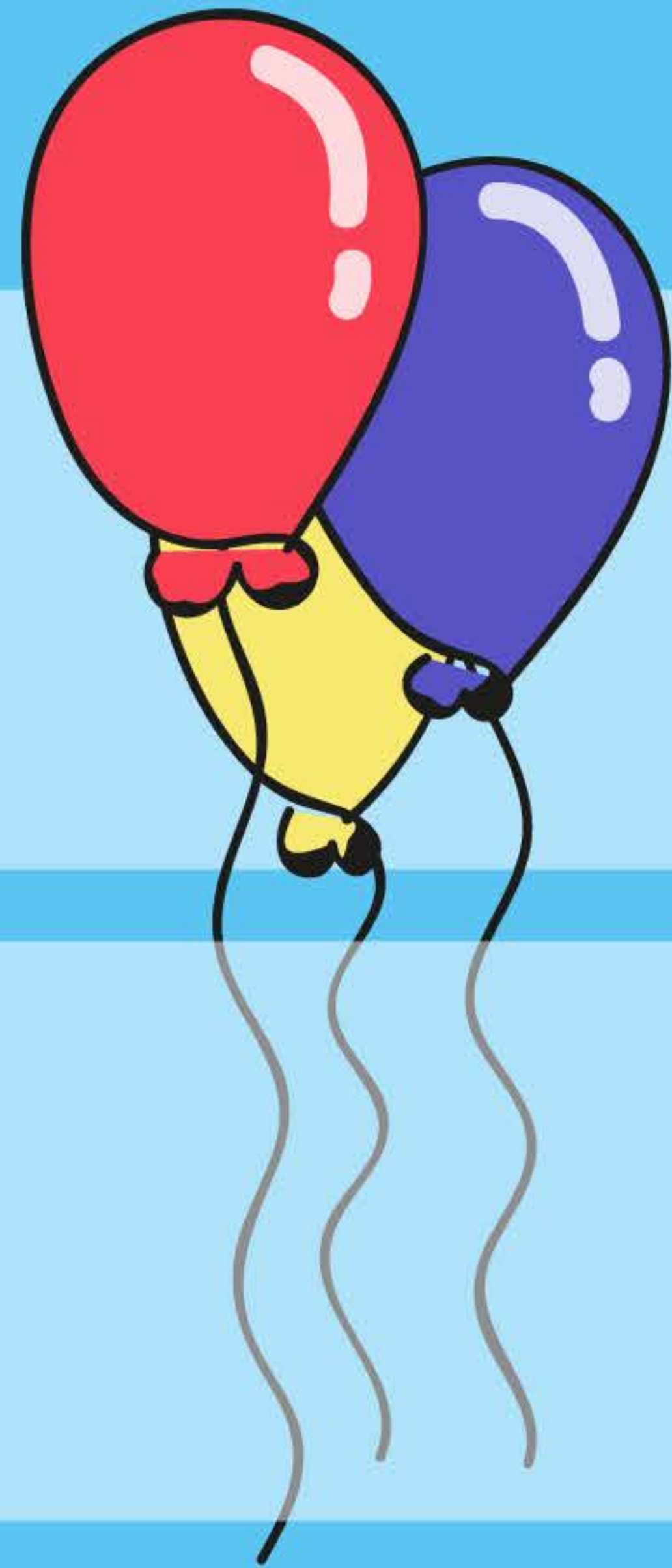
[GAMIFICATION]

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WHAT IS GAMIFICATION?

In an e-learning context, there are two nuances to gamification...



1

It's the process of adding game elements to something that isn't a game; the process by which learning that contains elements of gameplay is produced.

2

It's the process of turning something that's not a game into a game; the product is game-based learning.

An illustration on the left side of the page features several bees with yellow and black striped bodies and blue wings. One bee in the lower-middle section is exploding into a red and yellow starburst. Below this, a trail of green squares leads down to a white ship. There are also some yellow cloud-like shapes and a small yellow square at the bottom left.

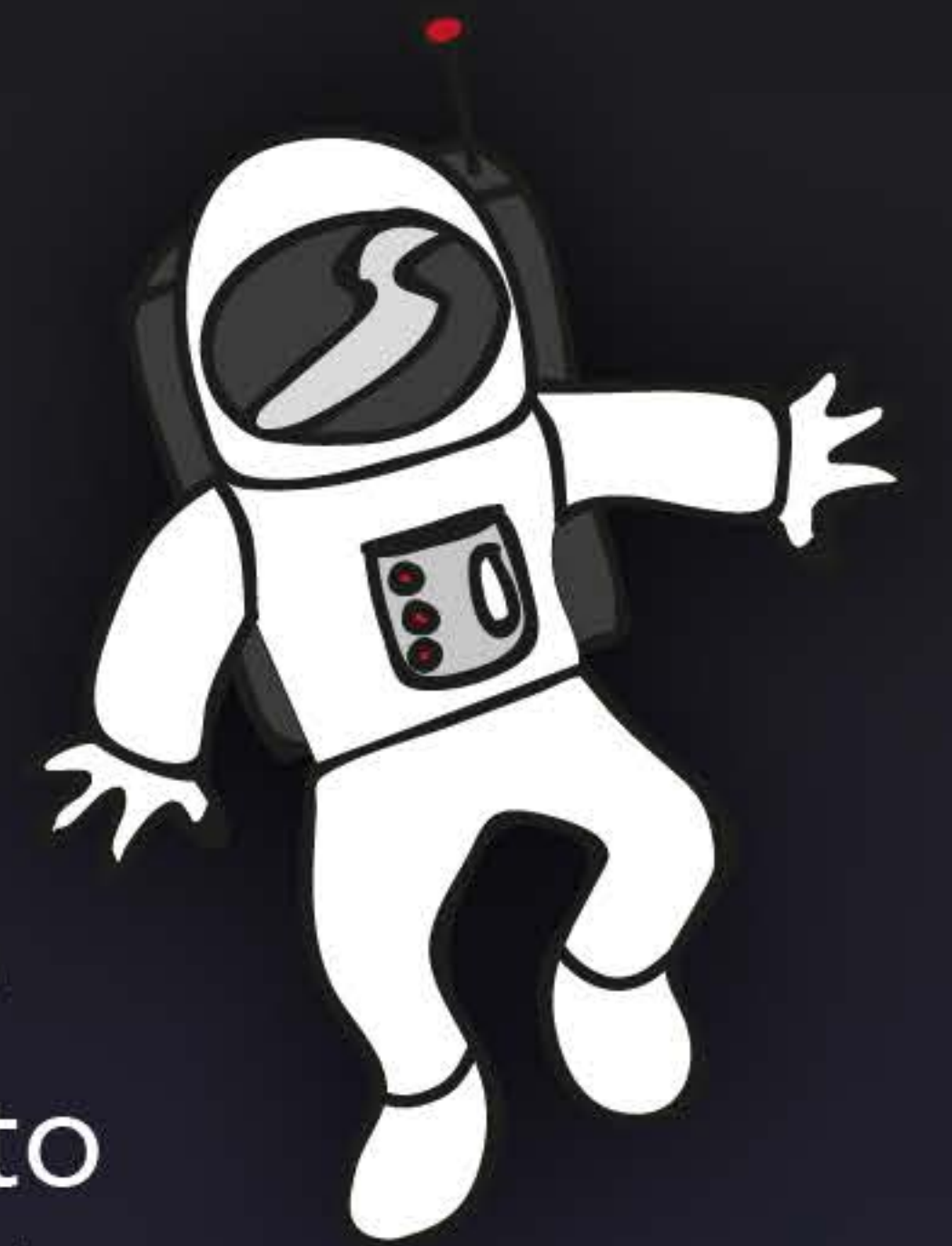
WHY THE BUZZ?

As a child, you learn through games. Basic life skills such as communicating with others, how to win and lose well (though some find this harder to learn than others!), and so on. Learning through games is embedded in us from the beginning. But in the past, this was never carried through into the workplace. "You're an adult now," we're told or assume. "Games are for children."

Things have changed. Technological advances mean you can play games online, play collaboratively, play on your phone. Gaming is a common pastime for adults now. And so the stigma of games-are-for-children has been removed. People are feeling free to teach and to learn in the same way that we have been since we were children.

Having said that, gamification isn't really anything new. The concept has just evolved slightly because technology has evolved and enabled us to do it differently. It's this new word, perhaps, which has created the buzz; and perhaps also a new way people are applying the old concept. People are talking now about 'business transformation through gamification'. Anything that's linked to performance and behaviour change like this is going to generate something of a buzz.

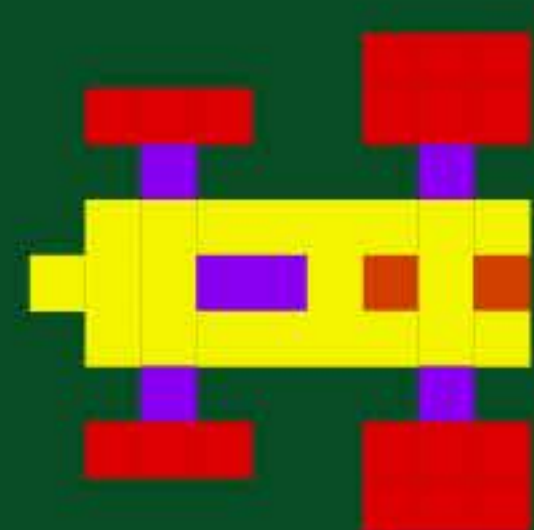
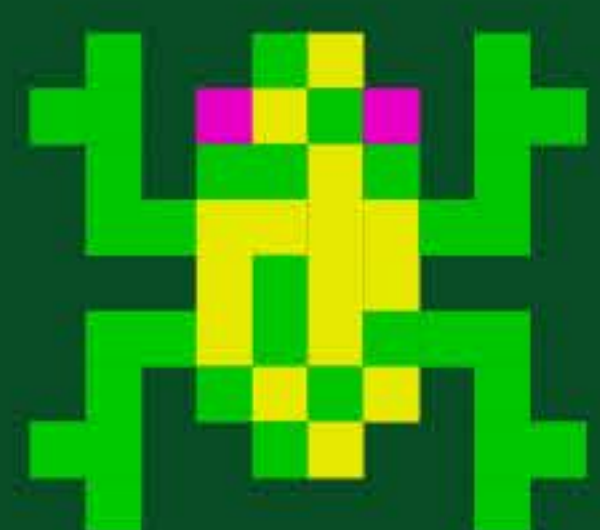
THE PURPOSE



■ **At a surface level, games are there to make the task more fun or engaging.** They can actually be completely disengaged from what you're trying to learn - they're just there to make you more likely to use this course and learn about this horrible subject. If you use gamification like this, it could still push people towards greater learning.

But we should be aiming for more than this. Just like any tool we use, gamification should stimulate people towards achieving the learning objectives; should motivate deeper learning. ■

Instead of getting to the end of the development process and thinking "Hmm, how can we make this more exciting?", we should instead be talking about gamification at the very beginning. The conversation should be "Here are our learning objectives and the things we want people to master - how can we build a game that will allow them to test whether or not they've understood this concept?" This kind of thought produces activities that simulate real-world situations and decision processes. And surely this is more valuable - having people understand their own assumptions, come up with new ideas, contextualise their learning, change their behaviour - surely this is more valuable than memorising a bunch of facts, playing a game that merely checks whether you've memorised them, passing an exam and then forgetting everything as soon as you've received your grade.



THE PURPOSE

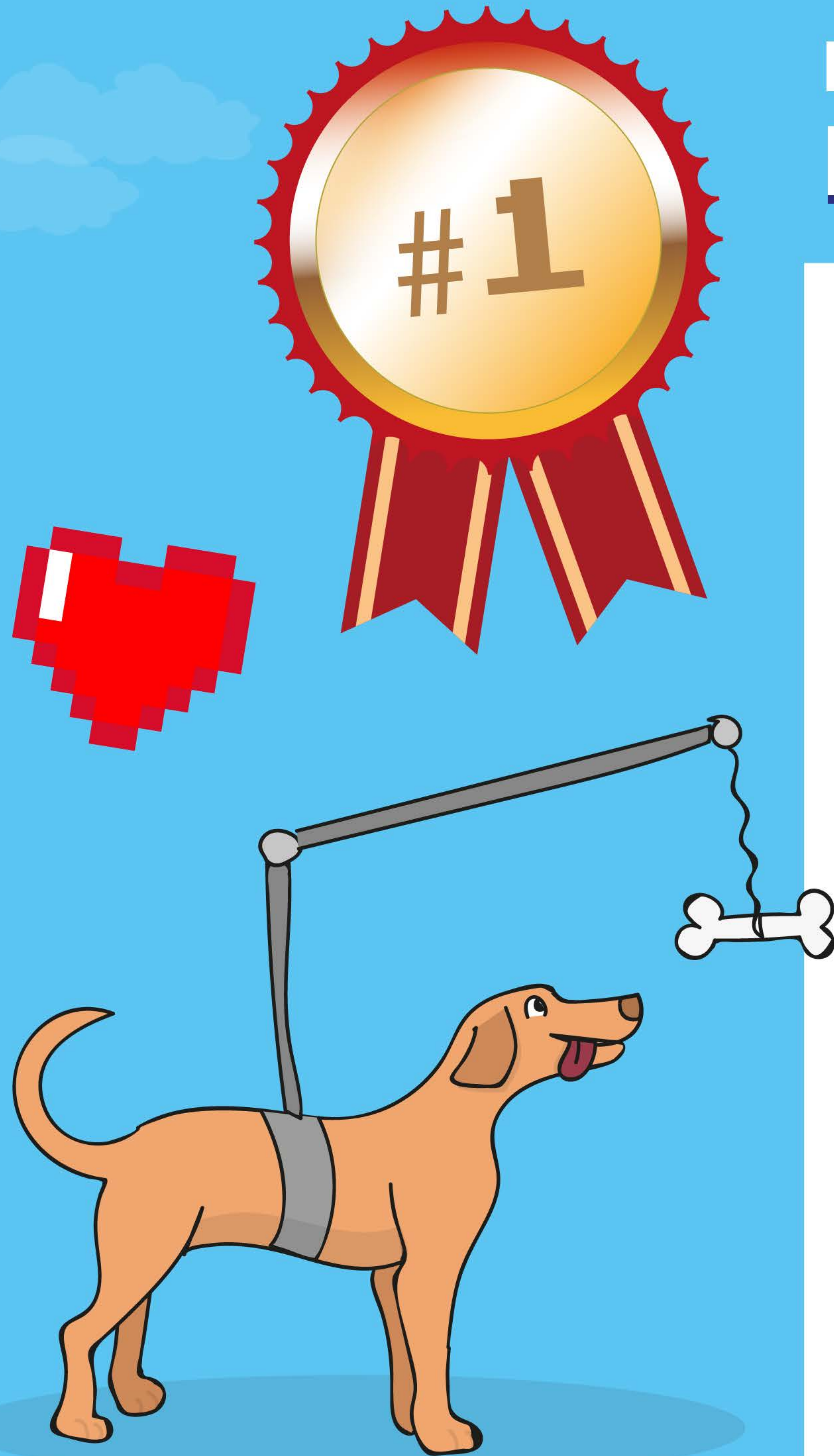
CONTINUED

This is exactly where we should be adding value by offering an online course. Imagine a course about accounting standards. Why produce a page-turning, click-to-reveal course? If people wanted to, they could just go and read the standards for themselves - that's essentially all you're giving them. But with online courses we can offer potential scenarios, highlight pitfalls, assess people at the start and show them what they don't know. We can involve people in their learning in a different way. And games are just one of the tools we can use to do that.

It's great when subject matter naturally lends itself to this approach; but the places where it doesn't might actually be the places where there's the most potential benefit.



HOW GAMES WORK IN LEARNING



It's incredibly motivating to have a target or a goal to aim for.

Games provide this - usually many targets and goals - and they keep people playing for longer. How often have you thought "I'll just do one more level" because that's all you needed to gain a particular prize or unlock something? And if someone is motivated to keep playing a learning game - well, that means they're learning more!

Competition is also incredibly motivating. Being able to see other players' progress might motivate people within the gaming community to try and surpass them. The badges in the Trivantis Community are a good example of this - seeing other users' badges makes you want them for yourself. And if someone is motivated to keep coming back to gain more, that allows for spacing and repetition in learning.

But it's more than these simple game mechanics like badges and levels that make games a great tool in learning. People can interact with one another, learn from one another. There are problems to solve and challenges to overcome - and you are far more likely to remember something when you had to put effort in to get to it. Specific feedback is key in learning, and games give you that instantly. You can try different things out - different actions, choices and approaches - without suffering the real-world consequences, and learn from each experience.

HOW TO DESIGN GOOD GAME BASED LEARNING?

Make it challenging, yet achievable

If a game is too difficult, people will give up. They need to see progress early on.

But equally, it can't be so simple that people think "this is too easy" and just move on! You need to find the balance between the two.

Think about stories

Stories are compelling. They make you want to know what happens next. They evoke emotion. And they help to contextualise learning. All of this makes stories easier to remember than a list of facts and figures.

But not all games are based on stories. They don't necessarily need them. Sims, Farmville, Scrabble - these are massively popular games, but there's no story to them. Think about your audience and your learning objectives, and decide whether stories are something you want to use.



It's all about balance

Aesthetics

It's vital to get the tone and the look right. If you make it too childish then people won't take it seriously. If you make it too austere, it might come across as boring.

And what about people who don't like playing games (it's true, they're out there)? You need to work on how you present it so that everyone will actually engage. Make the benefits of it clear to your learners - 'This will help you develop this skill.' 'This will aid your decision-making process.' Again, you have got to know your audience.

One size fits many

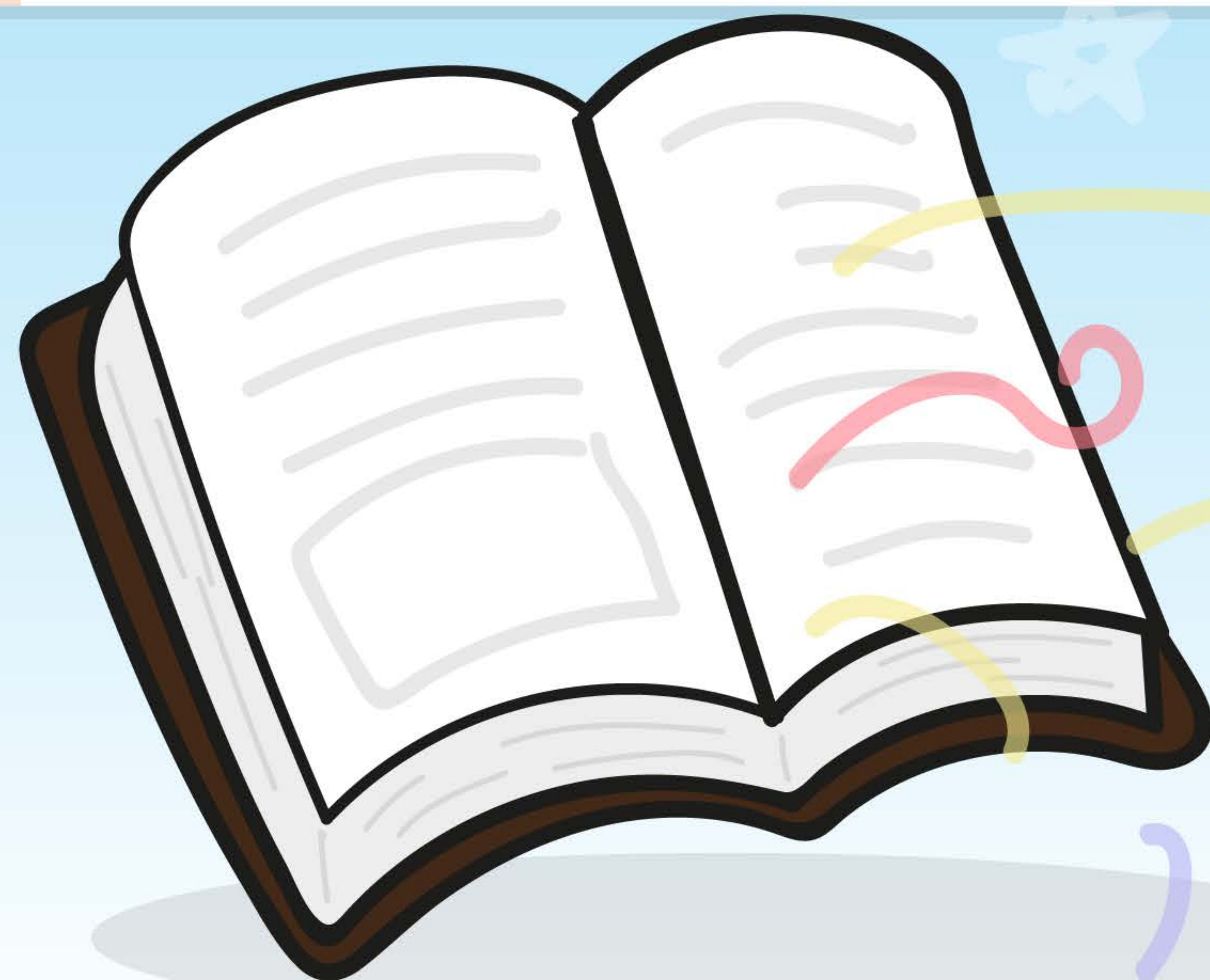
Different people will engage in different things, and you need to reach as many of them as possible. Learn about your audience, and design for them. And then play the game yourself, get focus groups to test it, pilot it among your target audience, and adjust.

Plan game content early and well

Our team have experienced game-based learning where you couldn't actually get to all the content unless you got something wrong. This is terrible instructional design! The game should not be getting in the way of the learning.

And the game itself should be good. The last thing you want is a boring interaction with overcomplicated rules.

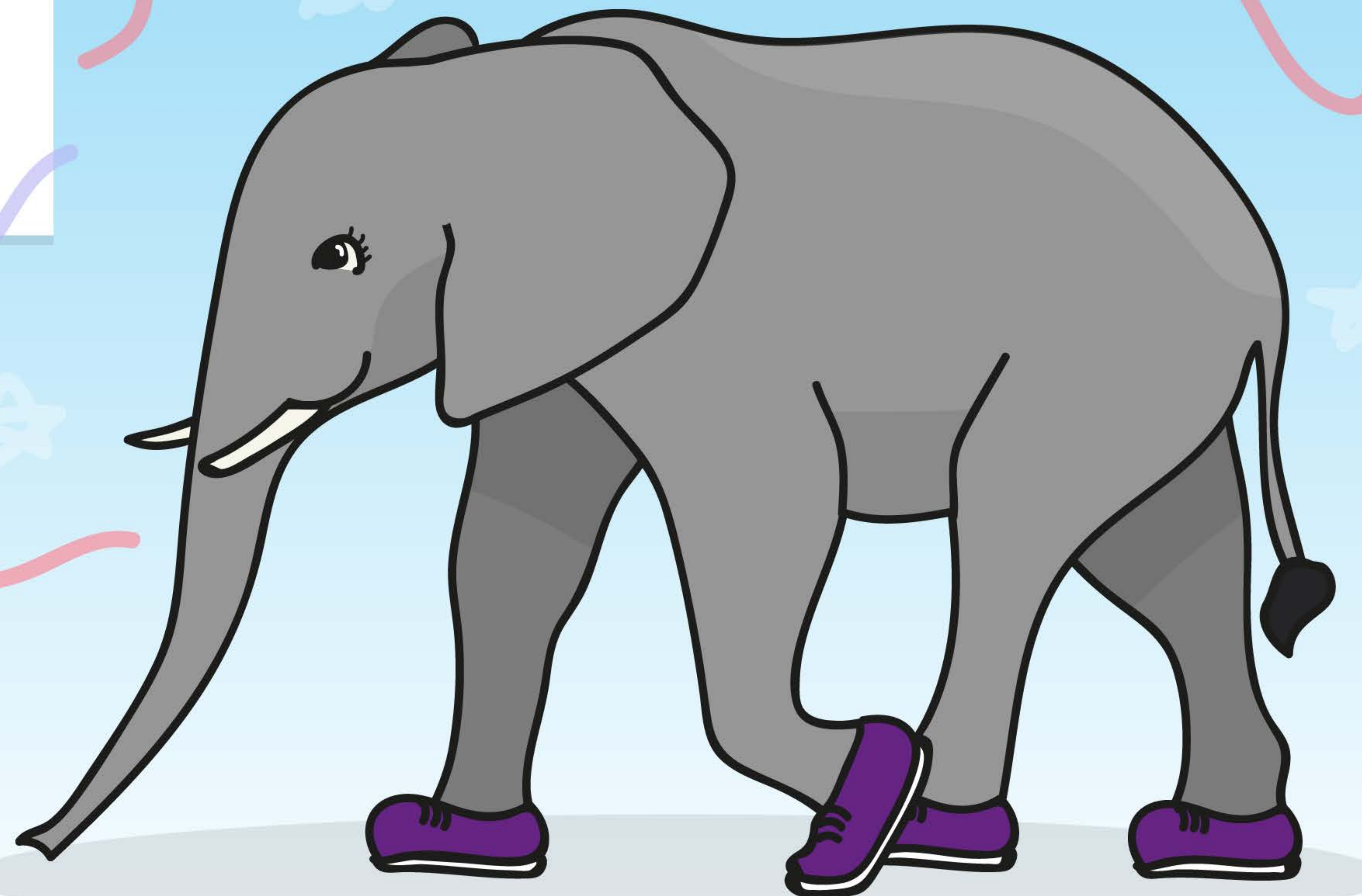
So you need to be thinking about and planning your game content from the beginning - don't just slap some games in at the end because you have a bit of time or budget left over, or because you've realised that what you've produced is actually quite dull.



The first question

The foundation of all this is a very important question; why are you building a game in the first place?

What are your learning objectives? Who are your users? What do you want them to be able to do by the time they finish? And is a game the best way to get them there?



IF YOU ONLY KNOW ONE THING ABOUT GAMIFICATION...

Well, we had three things and we couldn't choose...

1

Games are a tool. They're a part of the learning experience - not the whole army, just a garrison off to the side.

2

They're also not the cavalry coming in at the end to save the day! They should be integrated right from the start, not just thrown in later.

3

To get this right, you have to know your audience.



HAPPY GAMING!



LIKE THE WAY WE
THINK?

Observational games in event
management training

Evaluations for financial services

Simulations for health and safety

Competitions in car sales training

WE'RE **BURSTING** WITH IDEAS

We've applied gamification in all these contexts and many more,
sometimes building something new, and at other times giving
old courses a makeover.



Give us a call on **01959 543900**
to talk about how gamification could work for you.