

Gamification



Figure 1: bluewolf.com

There's an intriguing new theory of learning out there called GAMIFICATION. While this may sound like educational gaming, actually it is not. Gamification suggests that our students (at least the digital natives among them) are used to the kind of incentive structures that are built into digital games. If that's the case, why can't we incorporate similar incentive structures into how we teach? That's the question that gamification scholars are exploring--and you don't even need technology to do it. The theory is really about motivation and engagement.

In understanding gamification, it helps to think about your own experience with games. Have you rescued the princess? Do you have a farm in Farmville? Have you ever ventured into World of Warcraft? If you do, think about how these games motivate engagement.

Some examples of how to incorporate gamification into instruction:

- Turn assignments into self-paced challenges or quests. You can give students several quests and allow them the option of choosing which to pursue.
- Give out points or "badges" for student achievements. These need not be extra credit, but you can turn it into a competition, visibly recognizing those that are leading in points, or in certain categories or themes.
- Design your assignments or instruction so that there are levels of achievement. Require students to pass one level before moving on to the next
- Related to the item above, you can have each "level" end with a "monster" challenge, i.e. a harder assignment or activity that may take several attempts to complete successfully
- Think about structuring group assignments similarly to large multi-player games. Groups, for example, can be chosen based on abilities (or points).

There's a great overview (Seven Things You Need to Know about Gamification) from EDUCAUSE, accessible here <http://www.educause.edu/Resources/7ThingsYouShouldKnowAboutGamif/233416>

If you want to know even more, THE GAMIFICATION OF LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION: Game-based Methods and Strategies for Training and Education by Karl Lapp (Pfeiffer, 2012) is recent book that provides some great ideas.

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