Gamification

Game elements and examples of practical application

Game element	Example
Badges	Badges are usually used to recognize skills, behaviors that aren't traditionally assessed. For example, you could have a surprise early bird badge that's given out to the first person who posts to the discussion forum. Or a badge for the most helpful participant. In both cases they're kind of going above and beyond the expected norm and students aren't really assessed on posting early, or being helpful.
Roles/Role Playing	If you have a course theme or narrative, or even if you don't, you could ask the participants to take on roles different from what they're used to. For example, you could have a group of people and they each act out, or pretend to be someone they're not. One person could be a doctor, the other a nurse, and the third would be a patient. It's really about getting them thinking outside their usual perspective.
Points	This is kind of obvious, but a lot of times in gamified environments you start at zero points and build your way up. So the players are starting low and earning points, not starting at 100, and having points taken away for mistakes. It's a small, but important distinction. Also you might see a course where you can potentially earn over a 100 points. This is done so students can complete extra work to make up for the points they lost. I explain it like this "if you're paid hourly, and you miss work, you don't get paid, but if you work overtime, you can make up that money lost." It's overly simplified, but similar enough.
Story/Narrative	A course could have a narrative or a story that all participants progress through. This could be used in conjunction with other elements like badges and role playing. The course I'm studying uses a space mission theme and all the students are astronauts and earn space-themed badges as they progress through the course.
Curiosity	Some gamification tries to appeal to our natural sense of curiosity. So by allowing participants to explore, try new things, and learn for the sake of learning you are tapping into that natural curiosity we all have.

Game elements and examples of practical application (continued)

Game Element	Example
Challenge	When including elements of challenge you usually want to scaffold their learning so that the difficulty matches their skill level. As they progress, learn, and gain new skills the difficulty increases appropriately. It's commonly referred to as "flow." "Flow" concept by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Drawn by Senia Maymin.
Control	Game players usually have a great deal of control over the outcome of the game. They are able to make decisions and view the results pretty rapidly. By offering students the chance to have some control over their learning you are tapping into their internal motivation. An example might be to give them 3-4 project options and they get to choose one to complete.
Levels	Levels represent reaching a certain milestone or achievement. Many times players are able to quickly 'level up' at the beginning of the game, but as they progress it becomes harder and harder to level up. This goes along with challenge and flow. It's a good idea to have some low hanging fruit to reward participants for early achievements. This makes them feel good and want to progress.
Feedback cycles	Allow participants to quickly see the results of their decisions. They know rather quickly if they made the correct, or incorrect choice. This allows them to modify their behavior on the next go around. If you think about Angry Birds, you shoot the birds at the pigs, and right away you know if you killed any or not. If you didn't kill any you can change your angle the next time.
Freedom to fail	Many times in games failure isn't a devastating event because you know you can just try again the next time. Going back to Angry Birds, if your shot placement wasn't effective, it's ok, you can just try again. There isn't a large negative penalty for experimenting with new shot angles, if it doesn't work, oh well, try again next time.