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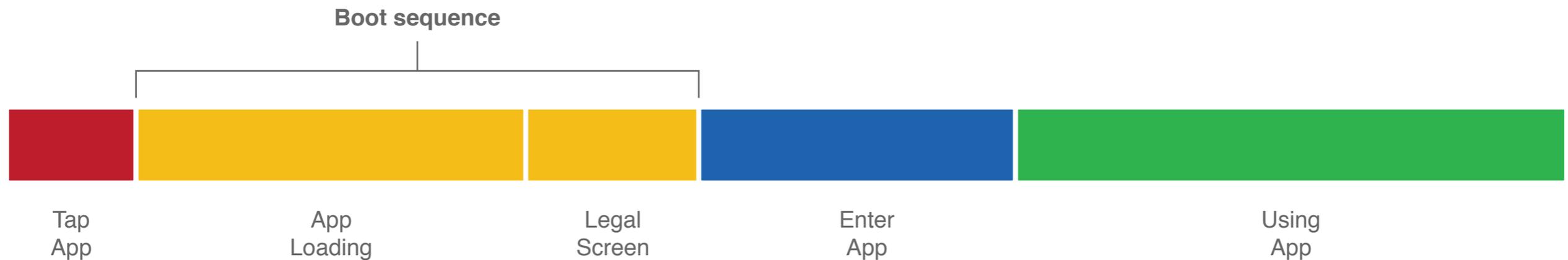
How to design a

First Time User Experience

(AKA - a FTUE)

Time to the experience

So a new player has downloaded your product. Congratulations! Now they want to use it. As quickly as possible...

Boot sequence

| Tap App | App Loading | Legal Screen | Enter App | Using App |

In order to keep users engaged, keep the boot-up sequences as short as possible. Users don't care about the company logos or legal jargon, they just want to use the product - get them to the good stuff... fast!

Depending on your product, you might direct users to a front end, or explain the how the product benefits the user. Make sure you design your starting point accordingly.

Thinking about the user

When introducing something new, ask yourself these three basic questions from a users perspective -

1

What is this?

No need to be overly clever here. Simply be direct and tell the user what this new thing is using clear and direct language.

2

What's in it for me?

Give the player a reason to care about this new thing. What does the player gain from this? Where possible, show as well as tell.

3

What do I do next?

Give clear goals and instructions so users clearly understand what they need to do as a next step and have a clear goal.

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How people learn

Here are a few tools you can use when teaching people learn how to use a product, game or app:

How people learn

Understanding and relevance

Increasing difficulty

Positive reinforcement

Emotional involvement

Practice of new skills

Application

Provide clear goals within the context of what the user is doing

Varied challenges that grow from simple to more complex

Reward repeatedly to fuel motivation

Create memorable moments that resonate

Provide opportunities to test newly learned skills

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Making learning fun

Teaching users follows the same structure as progressive difficulty, but in this case we're dealing with psychology.

| Tease	Acquire	Practice	Master	Combine
Capture attention	**Introduce concept**	**Establish concept**	**Prove skills**	**Challenge mastery**
• Motivation	• Teaching	• Context	• Adapt difficulty	• Association of other skills
• Curiosity	• Conditioning	• Reason	• Progression	• Challenge
• Context	• Purpose	• Own pace	• Rewarding	• Wider context
• Meaning	• Association	• Skill development	• Mastery	• Meaning

Progressive Difficulty

Regularly introducing new things for users aim for, learn and master to keeps them engaged and motivated.

Introduce new skills and abilities one at a time. Allow users to mess about with newly discovered skills and master them before introducing the next.

Asking users to combine new skill with a previously learned skills a give them a sense of mastery.
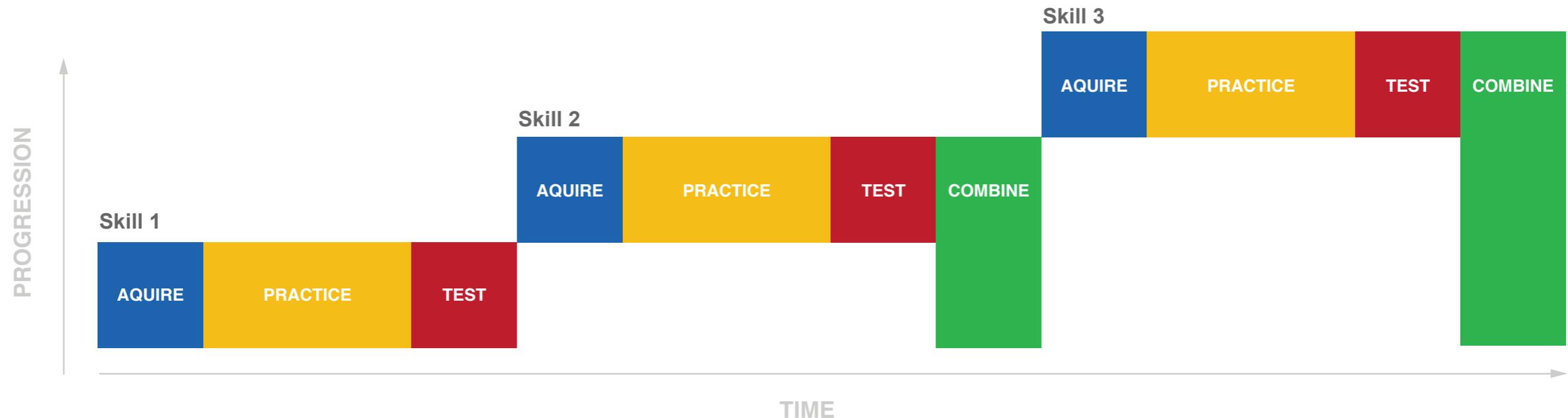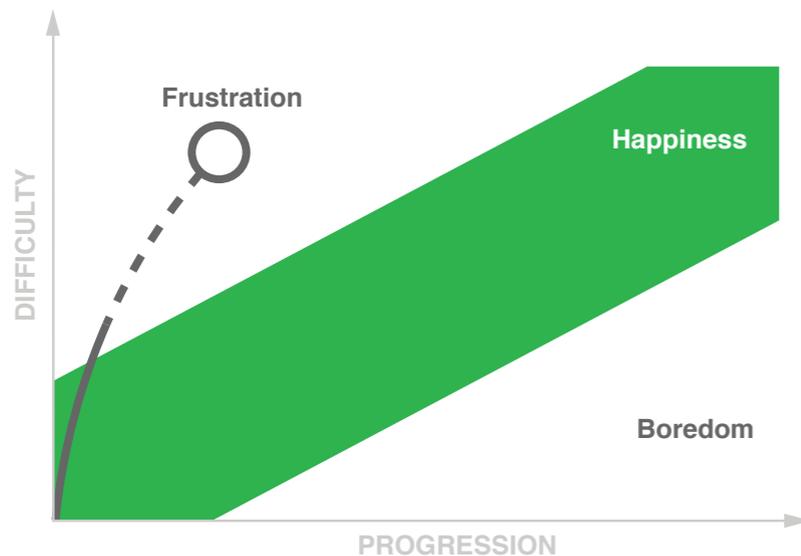
Difficulty management (games)

In a game, it is essential to increase diffculty to keep players engaged.

We can use the simple "happiness" curve to increase difficulty as players progress through a game.
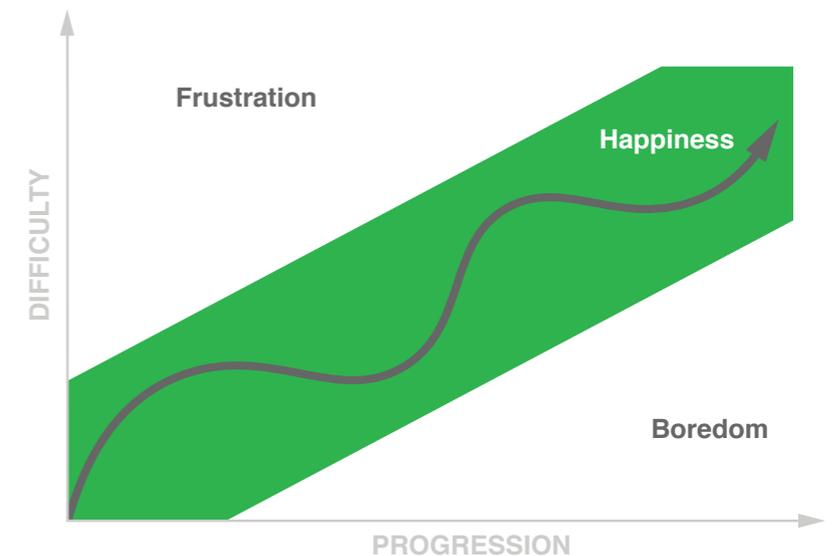
All players are different however, so we need to use techniques that cater for everyone...
This is where difficulty management comes in:

Player gets frustrated... gives up
😖
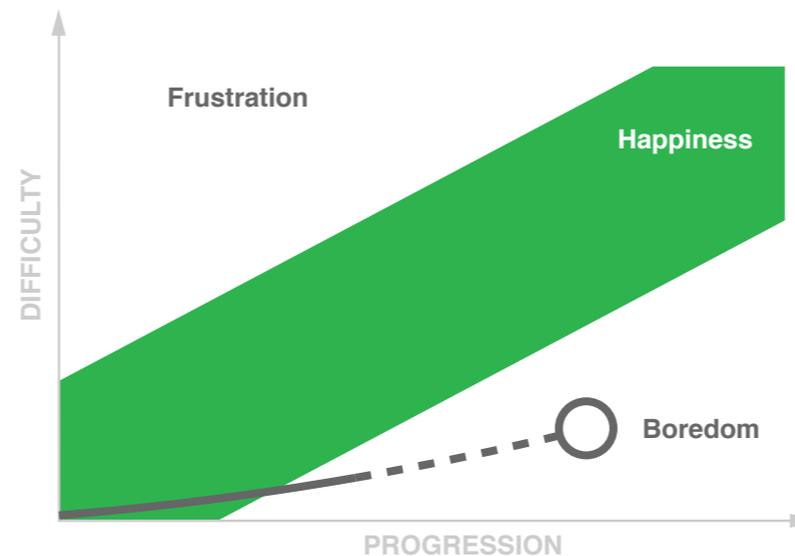
Player gets bored... gives up
😴

The sweet spot...
☺️

Learning inputs

It doesn't matter what it is you're learning - a new language or how to ride a bike, you've got to start somewhere.

Users need to understand how to interact with the product quickly so they can focus on enjoying the experience rather than learning inputs.

UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE

Everyone starts here, filled with naive enthusiasm. I wonder what this experience will be like? How hard can it be?

UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE

Users understand HOW to use the product. They can do things so well that they don't have to think about how the interactions work and can focus on the experience. Performing actions becomes automatic.

CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE

Sudden realisation of the actual experience. Users quickly figure out what involved. **This is where most people give up.** It's our job to make sure they don't.
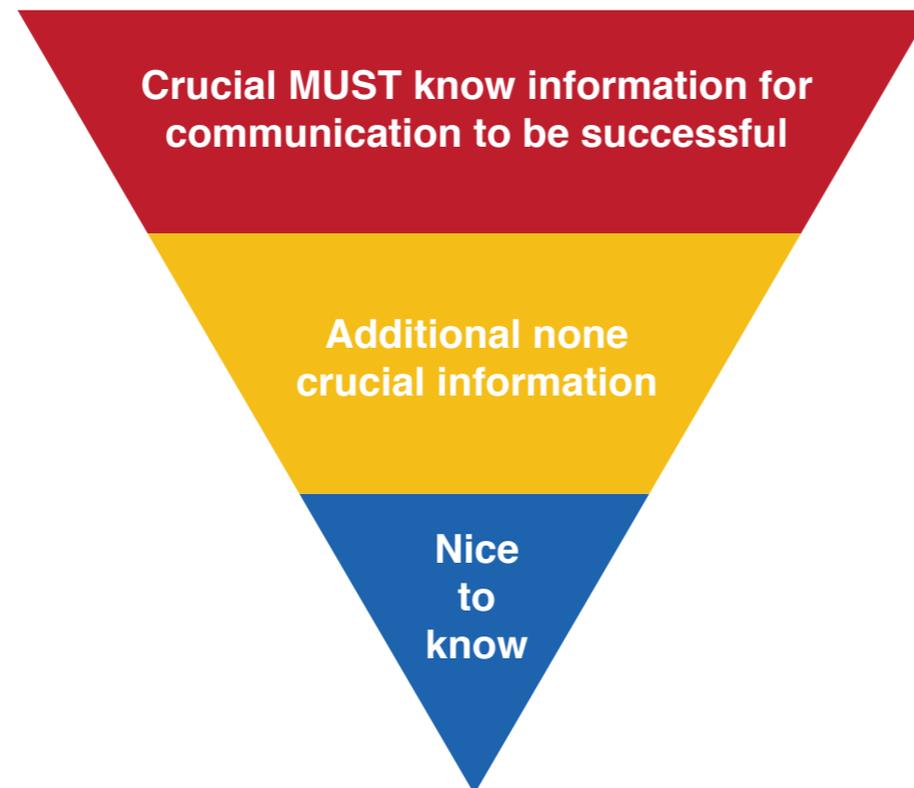
CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE

The basics are understood. Users are having fun with their new skills, but are still learning the basics and need challenges of increasing difficulty to keep them engaged.

Order of information

Always lead with the most important information first. Keep this short and snappy.

Next comes supporting important to back up the leading points. Keep adding and organizing communication in order of relevance until the least important information is last, as users could stop paying attention at any time.

Crucial MUST know information for communication to be successful

Additional none crucial information

Nice to know

- Who

- What

- Why

- When

- Where

- How

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Telling a story

Any sequence of steps can have a narrative structure applied. You can apply this to theory when creating when experience map. Think about where you can put peaks, troughs and climatic moments.

Think about the Cinderella story. This is a plot line Disney have made a fortune using:

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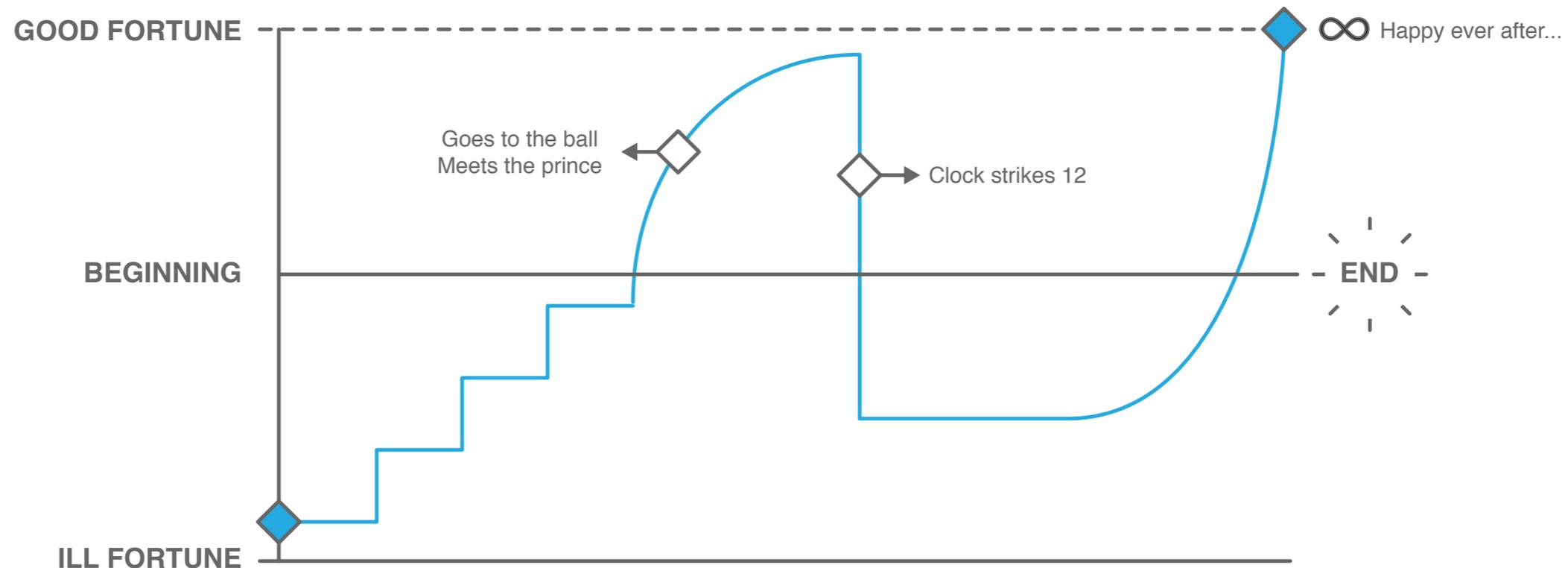
How to Simplify

Simplicity is about bringing order to complexity, and complexity doesn't have to be complicated!

Find what's essential

Stripping a design down to it's most essential parts can be tough, but when you do, you're left with the bare essentials. Trimming the fat and perfecting the core is almost always better than adding more.

Simplify for better execution

Simple ideas are easier to communicate, which means they are easier to understand and easier to execute. Remember, what we take away is as important as what remains.

Strengthen the design with clarity

Design works best when people understand how to use or do something. Everyone should be able to understand the design, if they are nine or ninety nine. That responsibility is on the us, the designers.

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Keep asking questions

Always remember, you know things users don't. Users aren't dumb, they just know less about the design than you. If they don't know, they don't care. It's down to the designer to make them care.

- What is user motivation to be doing this?

- How does this make users feel?

- What will the user expect to happen next?

- Does this feel rewarding enough?

- Could this job be done with less input?

- How much am I asking players to think?

- Will users need to remember this?

- Is this as clear and direct as it can be?

- Is this on brand?

- Do clickable things look different to non-clickable things?

- Does this look trust worthy?

- Is it clear what to do without reading the text?

- does the design lead the users eye to the right places?

- Is the goal communicated clearly?

- Does this motivate users to complete their goal?

- Is information clear, direct and easy to understand?

- Is the most important piece of information most prominant?

- Does this look visually appealing?

- How could this be improved?

... Plus many others. **QUESTION EVERYTHING!**

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