



Achievements

Best Practice: How to Implement Achievements

Achievements and collectibles are used to represent many different actions, challenges, and other abstract things, so the implementation will vary according to each particular use. They speak to the process of gamification, where we as designers weave game-like features into practical applications so as to encourage user engagement. However, they are employed primarily to encourage users to perform tasks repeatedly, whether this involves engaging with others in an online community, leaving reviews on an e-commerce website, completing online gaming challenges, or any other act that helps enhance your website, product, or service as a direct result.

Therefore, the underlying psychology of using visible and collectible achievements remains the same across all these instances, and, for this reason, there are a number of general characteristics that apply to all particular uses, which are as follows:

- 1** | **Establish the different challenges and tasks you wish the user to carry out.** Identify the order in which users are meant to progress through these different tasks or challenges.
- 2** | Once you have determined the different stages involved in the experience of your online service, **you must assign logical and meaningful collectibles or statuses to each achievement.** There is very little incentive for users if the collectibles and statuses seem to be randomly linked to the achievements; so, you must make the act of acquiring achievements meaningful in some way.

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- 3 | Make sure that the nature of the achievements is appropriate for how you are going to use them. For example, it would not make much sense to use statuses such as 'Prince', 'King', and 'Queen' for a website review system that rewards users for the number of reviews they leave for furniture. Likewise, it would not be fitting to offer collectible achievements, such as progressively more deadly weapons, if users are involved in an online community for My Little Pony. Therefore, **it is important that the achievements and collectibles are not only meaningful in the established hierarchy (e.g., bronze, silver, and gold) but also in terms of the way they are being used on your website or product.**
- 4 | The achievements and collectibles should reward users for their continued activity, right from their first use. For this reason, you must **design the achievements in a way that makes the collectibles, statuses, or any other benefit of repeat use ordered so they are linearly more rewarding.** You will soon lose a user's interest if he or she achieves the highest possible status within a few reviews, posts, challenges, etc. Therefore, it is important to use a 'drip-drip' approach, only giving users the rewards as and when they have hit certain targets and *gradually* giving them achievements, rather than inundating them with virtual rewards for the smallest of things. You can use statuses that have progressively more prestige attached (e.g., 'Soldier', 'General', 'Commander') or collectibles that have a clear increasing value (e.g., precious metals, perhaps from tin up to platinum).
- 5 | Establish and make apparent how exactly users achieve a certain status or acquire a status or collectible. **If the users are unaware of how to attain the different statuses or collectibles gradually, the whole process may seem arbitrary and carry less interest for them.** Therefore, from the outset, you must make it clear to the users which challenges or tasks they must satisfy in order to progress through the achievement hierarchy.

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- 6** | **Display the user's achievements so they are immediately apparent upon attaining each collectible or improvement in status;** if these things are hidden from the user or tucked away in a separately accessed region of the user interface, then their value is greatly decreased. In addition, when there is some benefit from seeing the status and achievements of others, ensure they are clearly visible in the user's profile or at a point when they become useful to others, such as the person's reviewer status.
- 7** | If the user is able to attain many different achievements, **you may want to show a scaled-down list on the user's public profile and provide a separate dashboard showing all of the different awards, collectibles, and achievements the user has gained over time.**
- 8** | **Test how the users behave with the achievements and collectibles on offer;** if they do not seem to be encouraged by the ones currently on offer, you will need to determine whether they are visible enough or you might need to include some new achievements to entice them.

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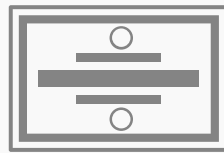
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