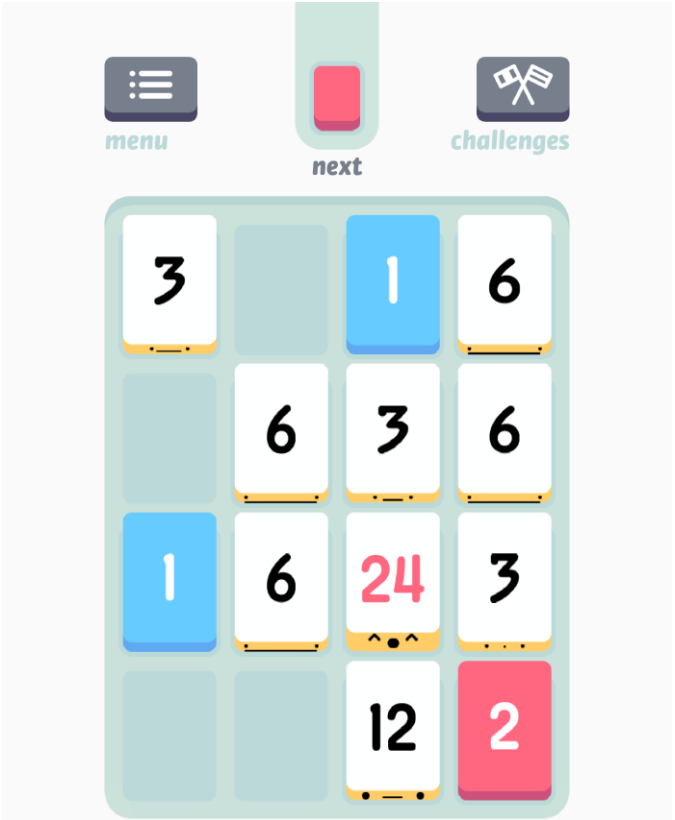
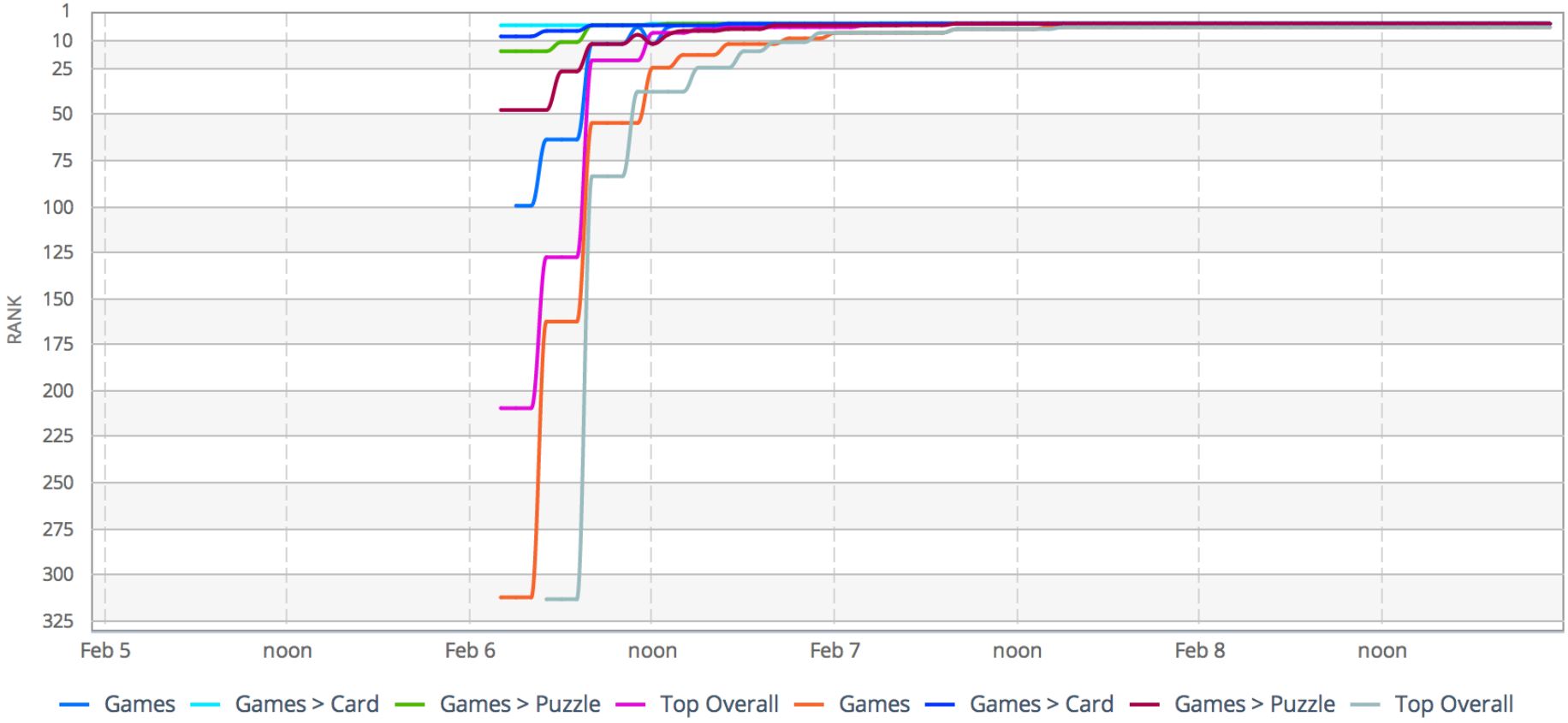
Tutorializing Innovative Mechanics

Asher Vollmer
Game Designer, Sirvo LLC

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE 2014
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
MARCH 17–21, 2014
EXPO DATES: MARCH 19–21

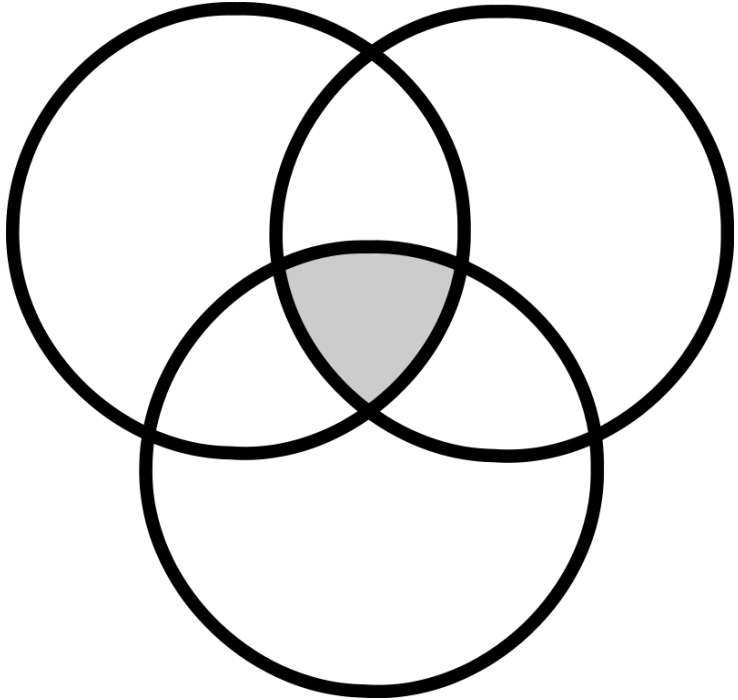


IT'S OVER WHEN THE BOARD FILLS UP


RANK
1
10
25
50
75
100
125
150
175
200
225
250
275
300
325
Feb 5
noon
Feb 6
noon
Feb 7
noon
Feb 8
noon
Games
Games > Card
Games > Puzzle
Top Overall
Games
Games > Card
Games > Puzzle
Top Overall

“SUCCESSFUL”

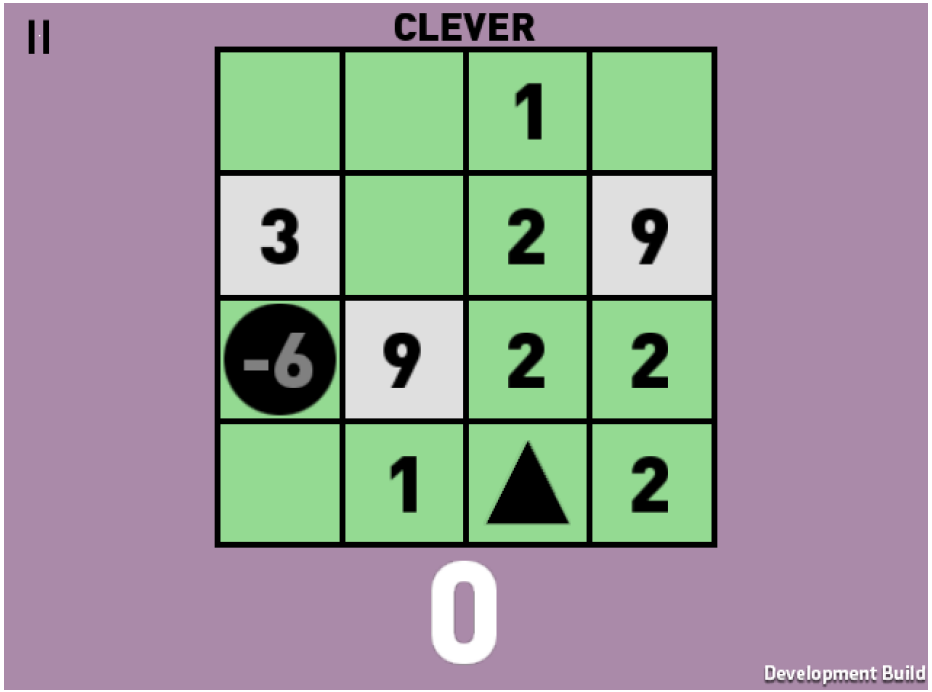
HOW I DESIGN

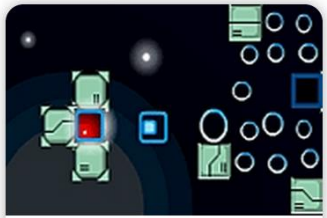


PICK A GOAL

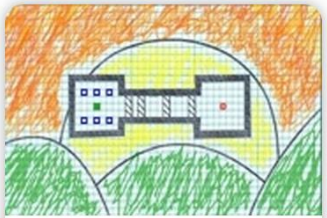
PICK A GOAL

ARROW-KEY GAME





ORBOX 65%



GREEN SQUARE 62%

FLUFFY STEEL 93%

ACHIEVEMENT 83%

BABY BIKER 88%

STRANGE 88%

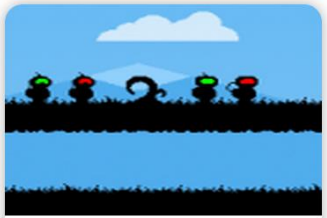
SPLITMAN 75%

THE 82%

ALL THAT 87%

WILLIAM AND 87%

WILLIAM AND 80%

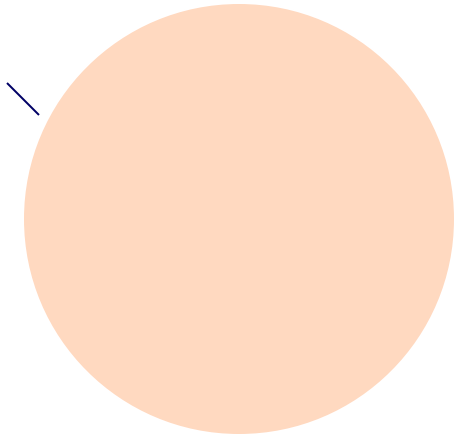


GREENS 77%

PICK MULTIPLE GOALS

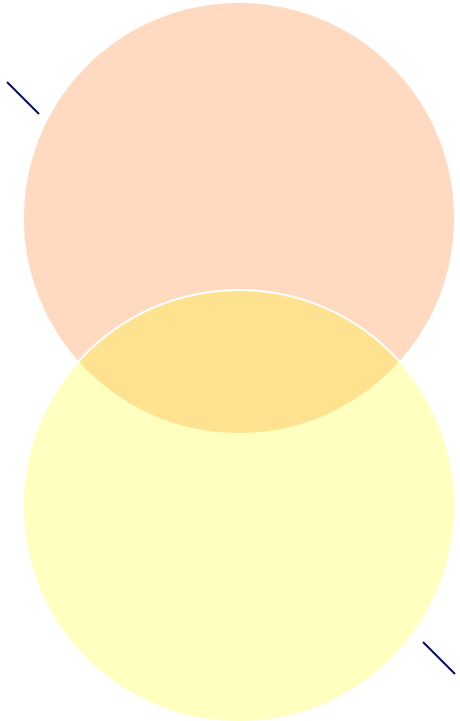
PICK MULTIPLE GOALS

ARROW KEYS



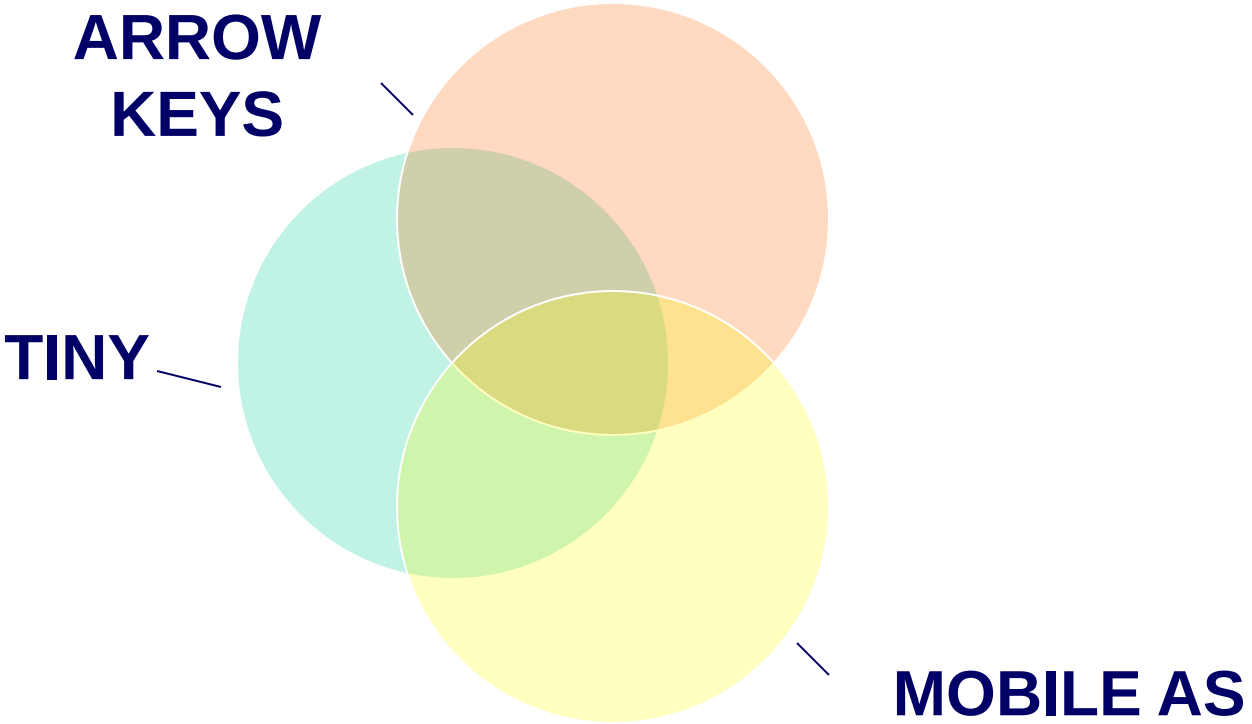
PICK MULTIPLE GOALS

ARROW KEYS

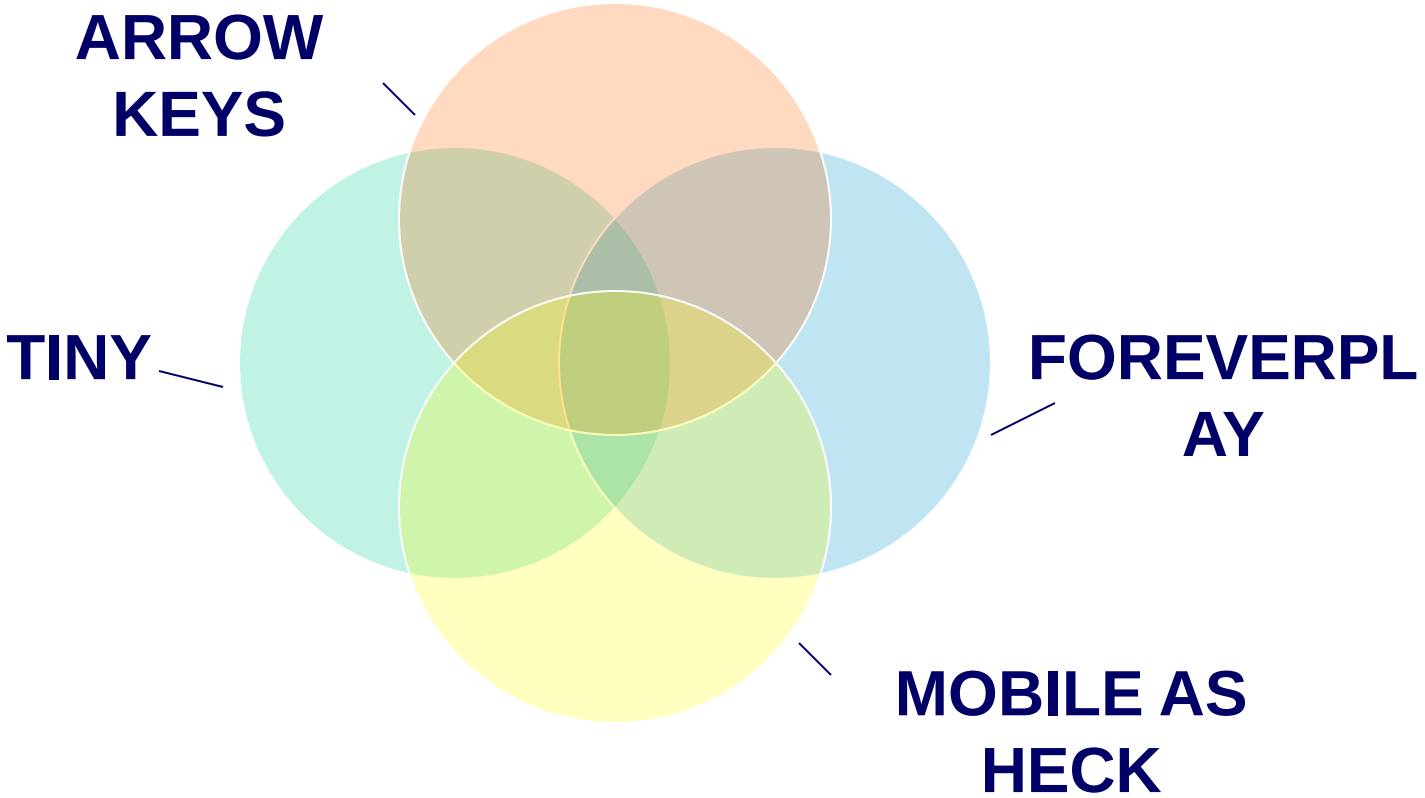


MOBILE AS HECK

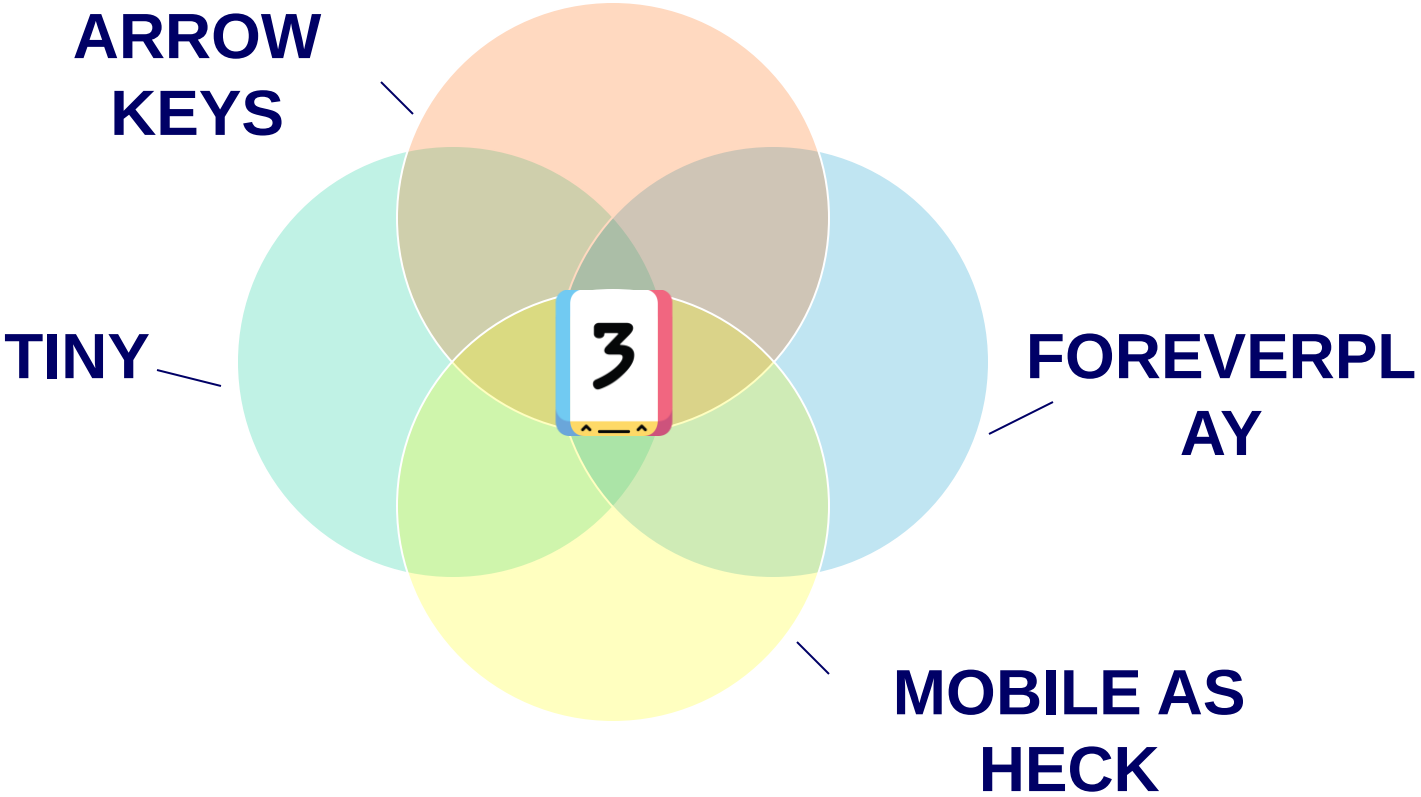
PICK MULTIPLE GOALS



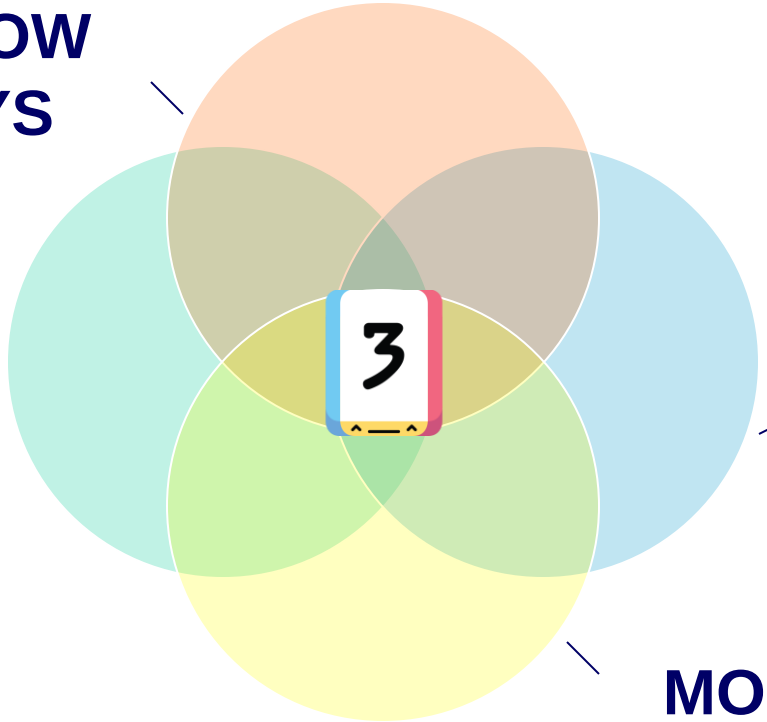
PICK MULTIPLE GOALS



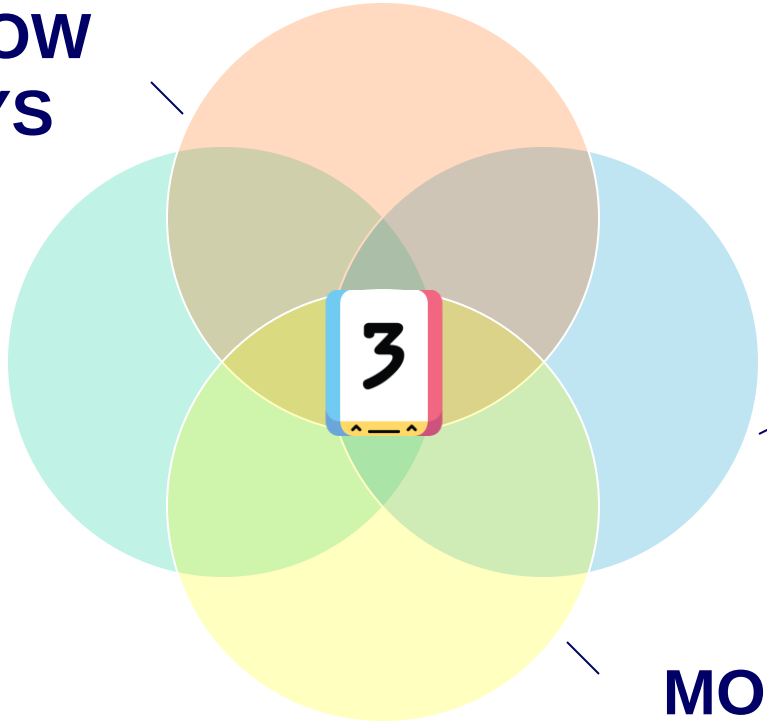
PICK MULTIPLE GOALS



PICK MULTIPLE GOALS



PICK MULTIPLE GOALS



SPEAKING OF CONFLICTING GOALS

THE TUTORIAL PART

(finally)

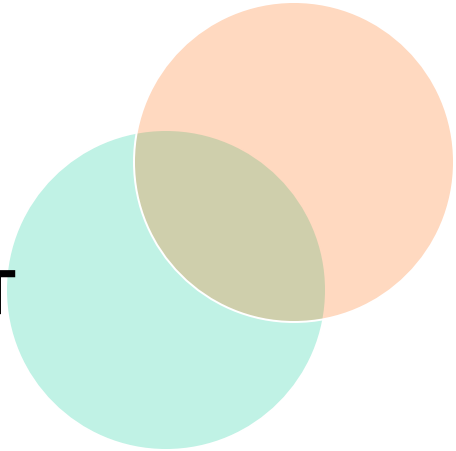
What should tutorials accomplish?

What should tutorials accomplish?

TEACH

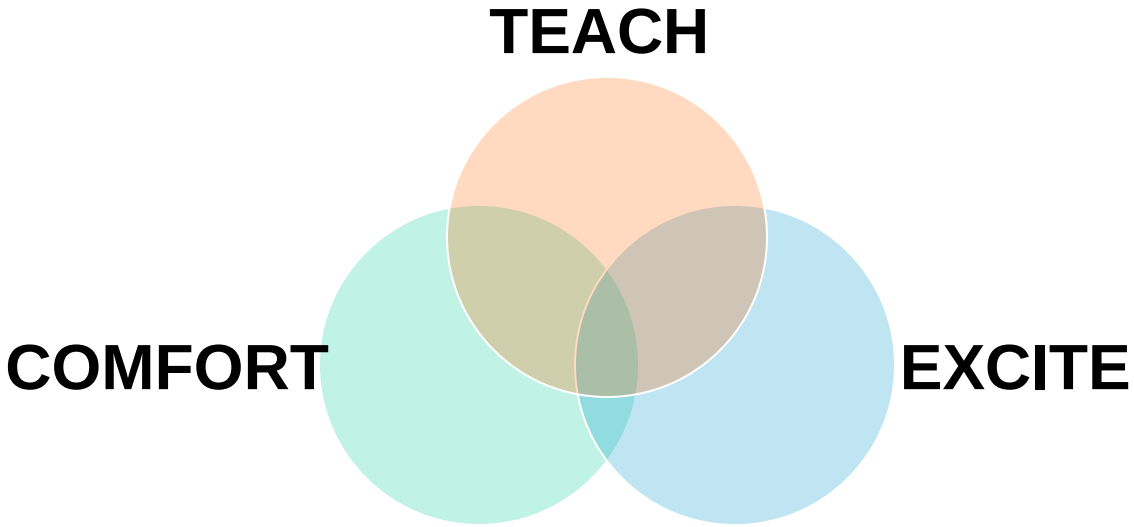
What should tutorials accomplish?

TEACH

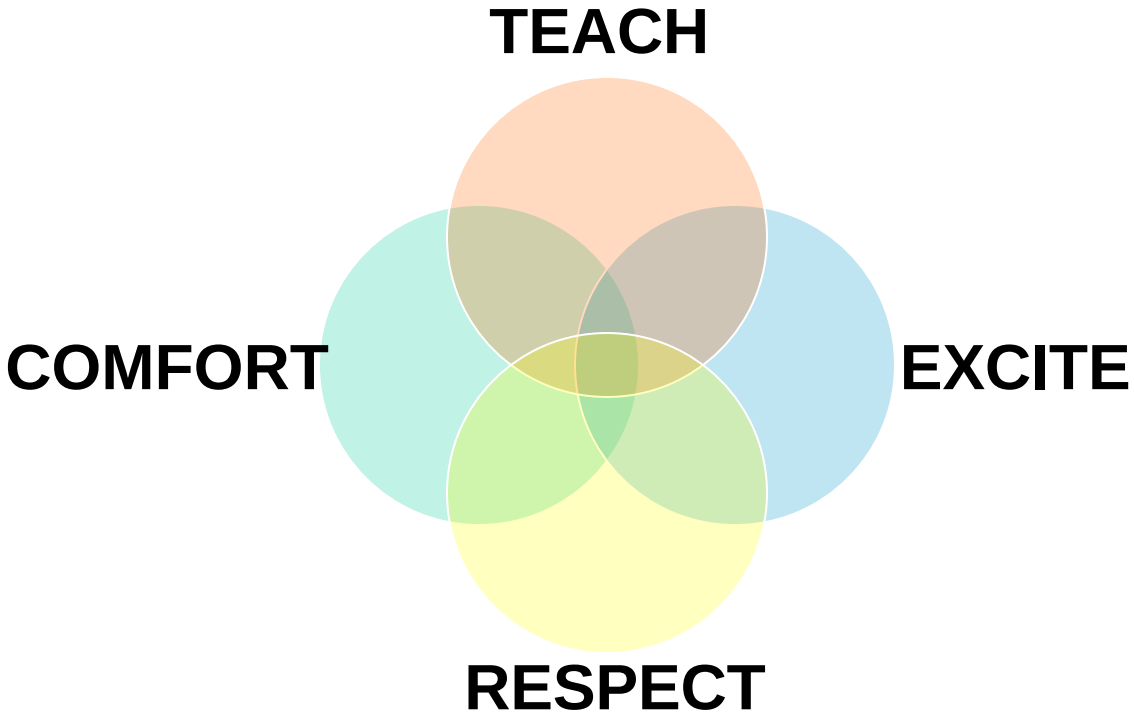


COMFORT

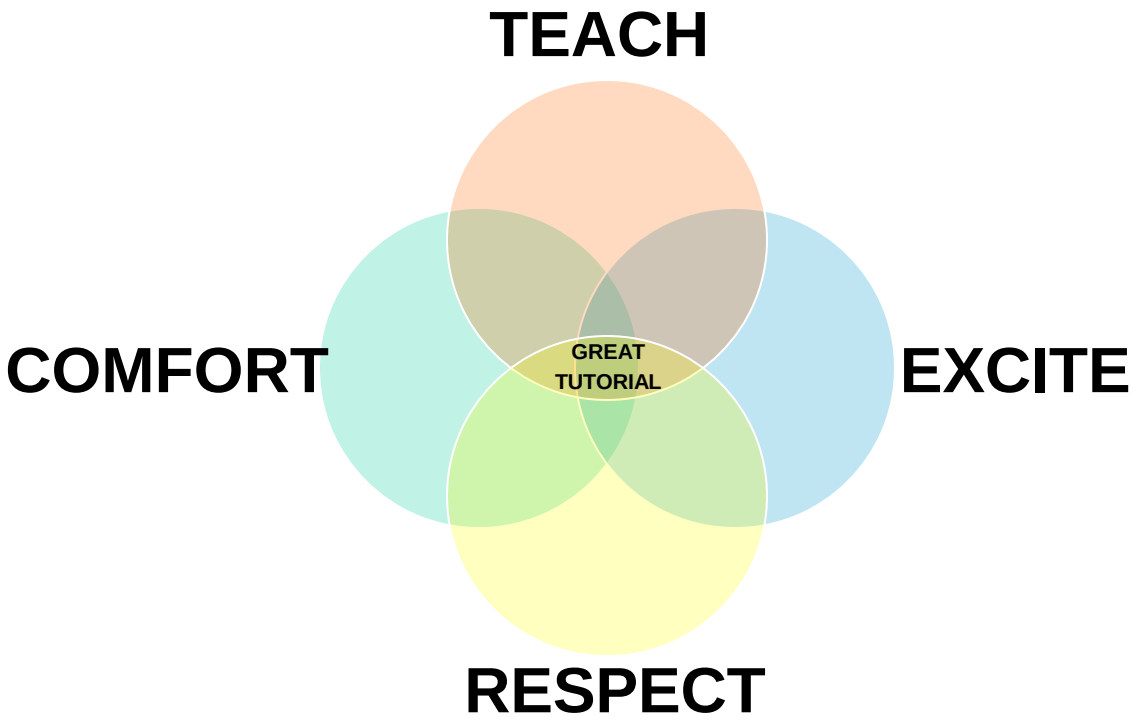
What should tutorials accomplish?



What should tutorials accomplish?



What should tutorials accomplish?



THERE IS NO RECIPE FOR A PERFECT TUTORIAL

THERE IS NO RECIPE FOR A PERFECT TUTORIAL

but…

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

- Tell the player what to do

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

- Tell the player what to do
- Stay out of the player's way

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

- Tell the player what to do
- Stay out of the player's way
- Give the player a safe space

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

- Tell the player what to do
- Stay out of the player's way
- Give the player a safe space
- Make the goals into puzzles (!)

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

- Tell the player what to do
- Stay out of the player's way
- Give the player a safe space
- Make the goals into puzzles (!)
- Use scaffolding

HOW DOES EACH INGREDIENT RELATE TO THE DESIGN GOALS?

TELL THE PLAYER TO

TEACH COMFORT

TELL THE PLAYER TO

TEACH COMFORT

GE UT E PLAYER'S WAY

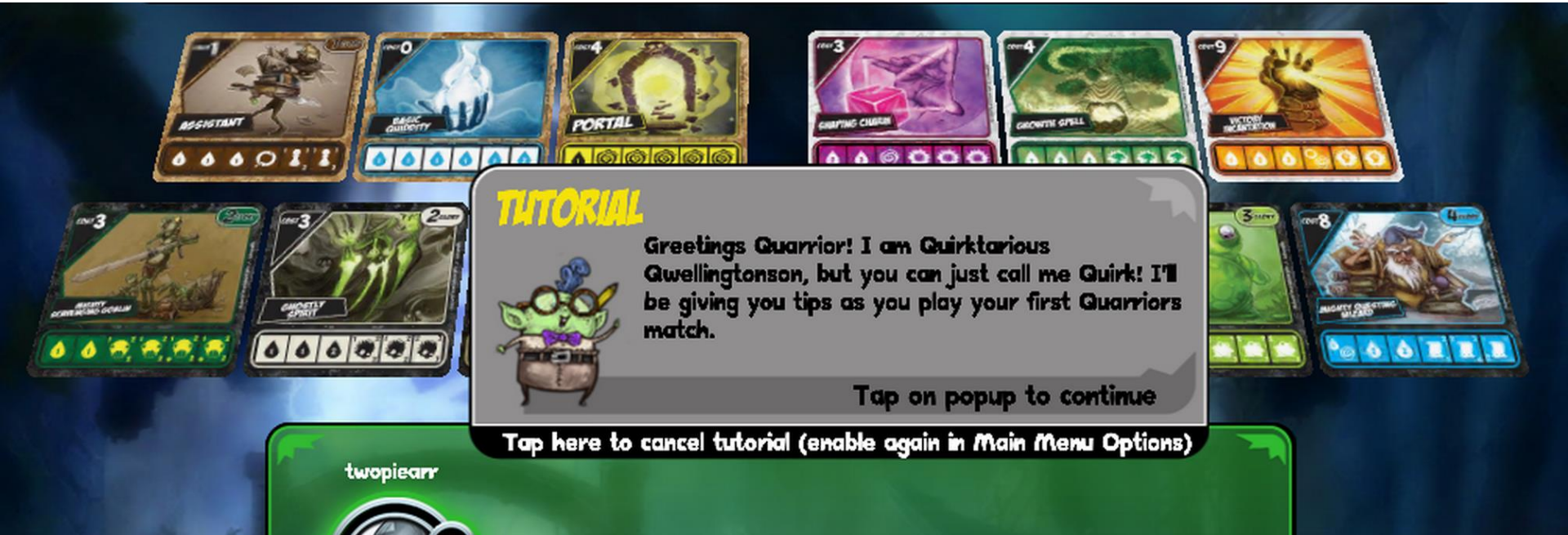
RESPECT EXCITE

GE UT E PLAYER'S WAY

RESPECT EXCITE

GE UT E PLAYER'S WAY

RESPECT EXCITE



GE UT E PLAYER'S WAY

RESPECT EXCITE

This game series adapts to the choices you make.

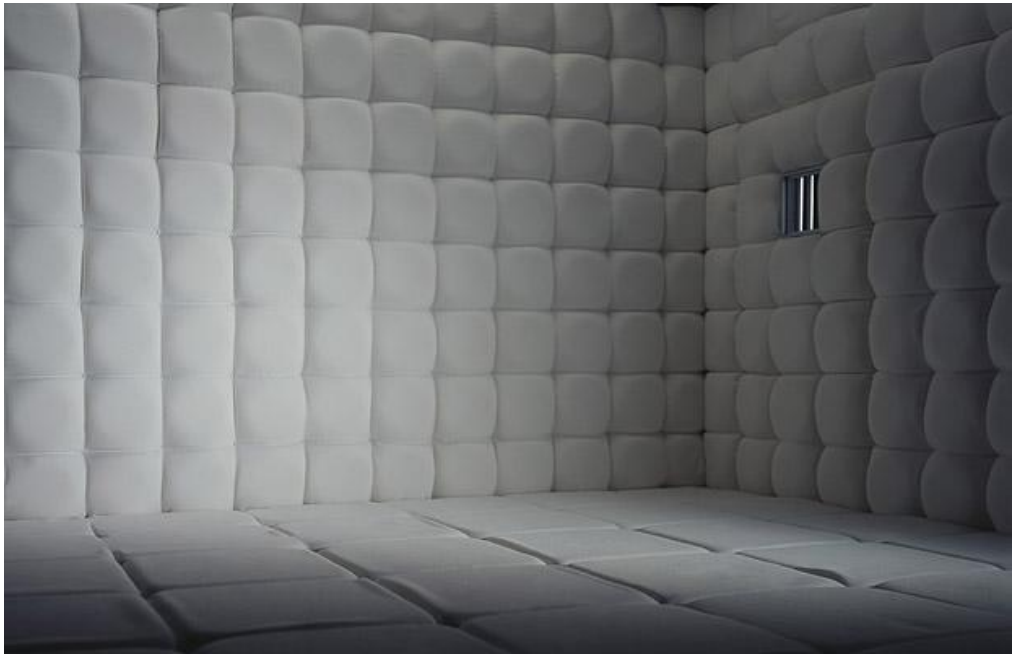
The story is tailored by how you play.

GIVE THE PLAYER A SAFE SP E

TEACH COMFORT RESPECT

GIVE THE PLAYER A SAFE SP E

TEACH COMFORT RESPECT



GIVE THE PLAYER A SAFE SP E

TEACH **COMFORT** **RESPECT**

MAKE THE GOALS INTO PUZZLES

(!) TEACH COMFORT RESPECT EXCITE

MAKE THE GOALS INTO PUZZLES

(!) TEACH COMFORT RESPECT EXCITE

MAKE THE GOALS INTO PUZZLES

(!) TEACH COMFORT RESPECT EXCITE

MAKE THE GOALS INTO PUZZLES (!)

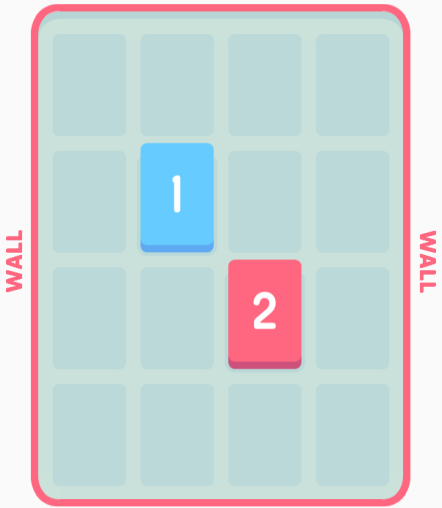
TEACH COMFORT RESPECT EXCITE

MAKE THE GOALS INTO PUZZLES (!)

TEACH COMFORT RESPECT EXCITE

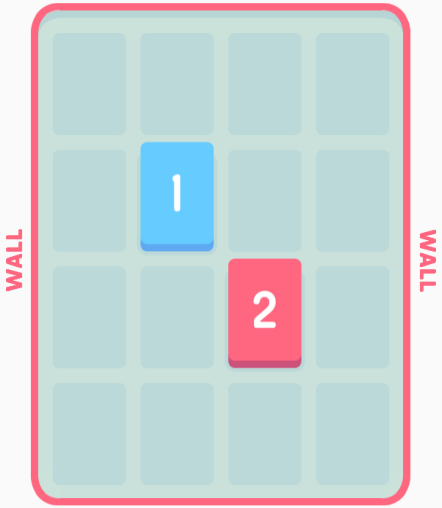
TELL ME WHAT TO DO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GAME

Rearrange numbers by pushing 'em into walls.



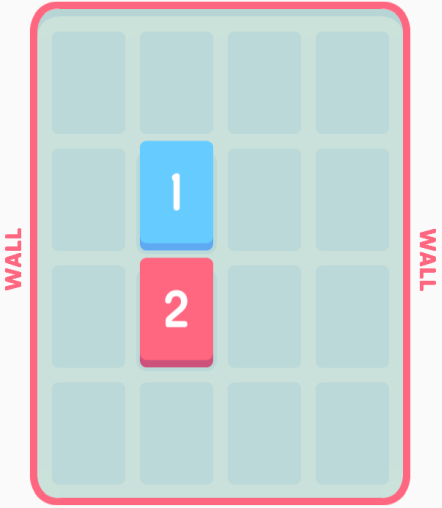
SWIPE ANYWHERE; MOVE EVERYBODY

Rearrange numbers by pushing 'em into walls.

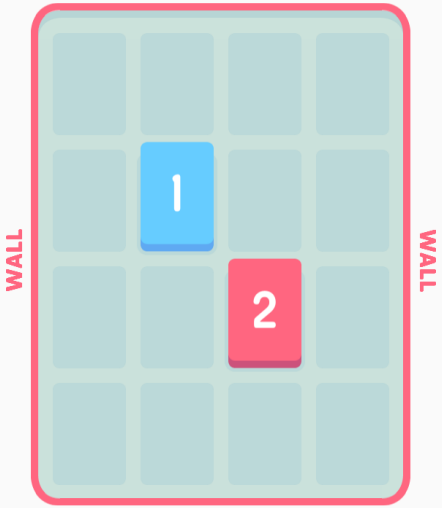


SWIPE ANYWHERE; MOVE EVERYBODY

Use the walls to add 1 & 2 together.

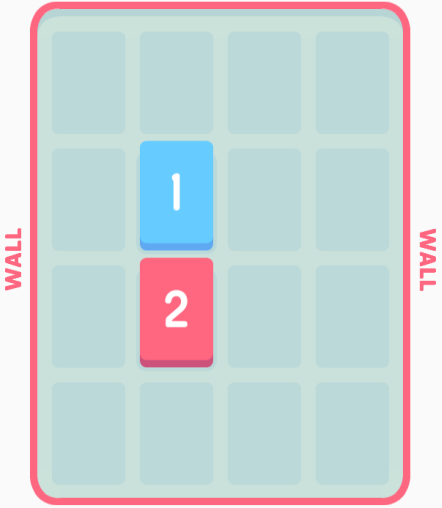


Rearrange numbers by pushing 'em into walls.

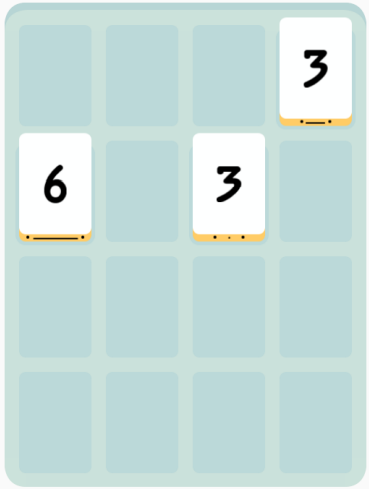


SWIPE ANYWHERE; MOVE EVERYBODY

Use the walls to add 1 & 2 together.

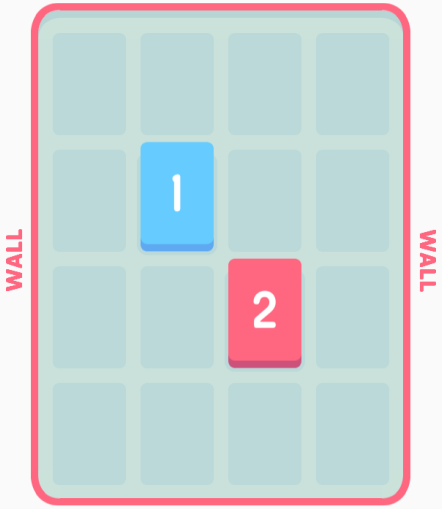


Numbers 3 and higher will only add together if they are twins.



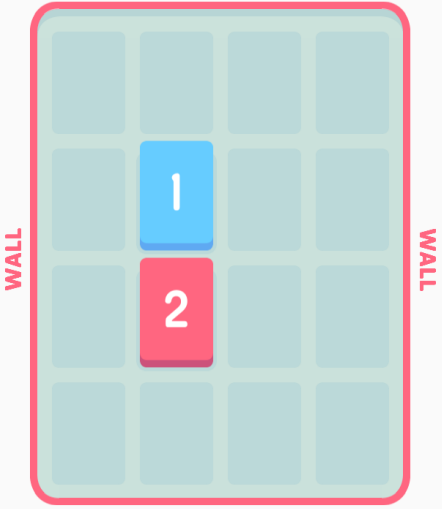
CREATE A 12 TO CONTINUE

Rearrange numbers by pushing 'em into walls.

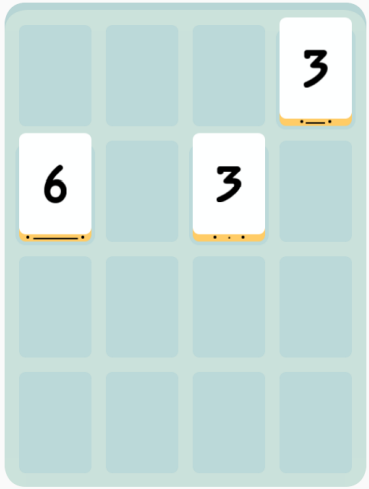


SWIPE ANYWHERE; MOVE EVERYBODY

Use the walls to add 1 & 2 together.



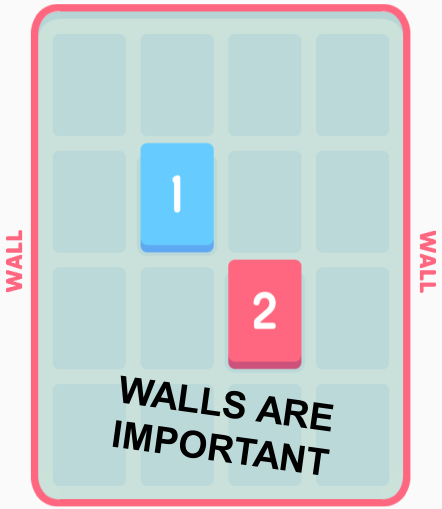
Numbers 3 and higher will only add together if they are twins.



CREATE A 12 TO CONTINUE

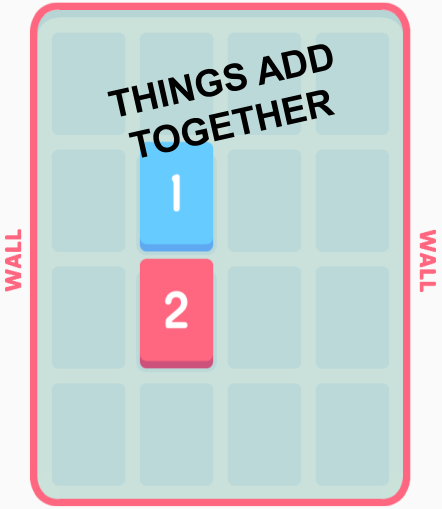
Make a 24!

Rearrange numbers by pushing 'em into walls.

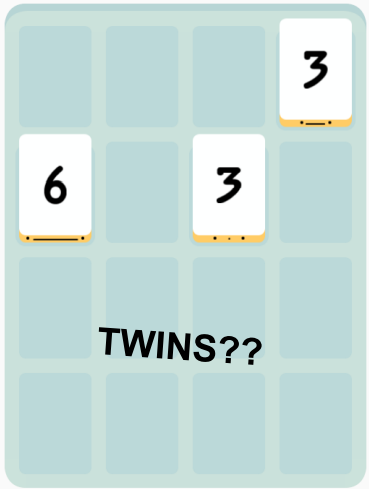


SWIPE ANYWHERE; MOVE EVERYBODY

Use the walls to add 1 & 2 together.

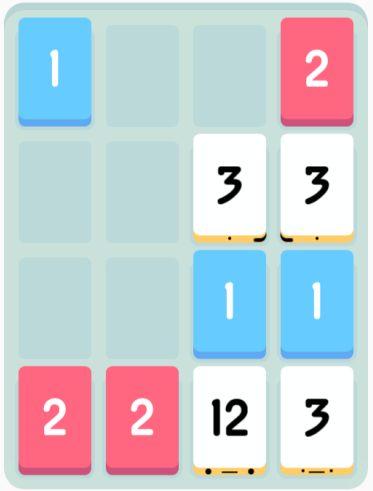


Numbers 3 and higher will only add together if they are twins.



CREATE A 12 TO CONTINUE

Make a 24!



THERE'S SO MUCH STUFF IN THE WAY

HELP THE PLAYER BUILD A MENTAL MODEL

USE SCAFFOLDING

TEACH COMFORT RESPECT

Scaffolding = Context Sensitive Hin

USE SCAFFOLDING

TEACH **COMFORT** **RESPECT**

Based on:

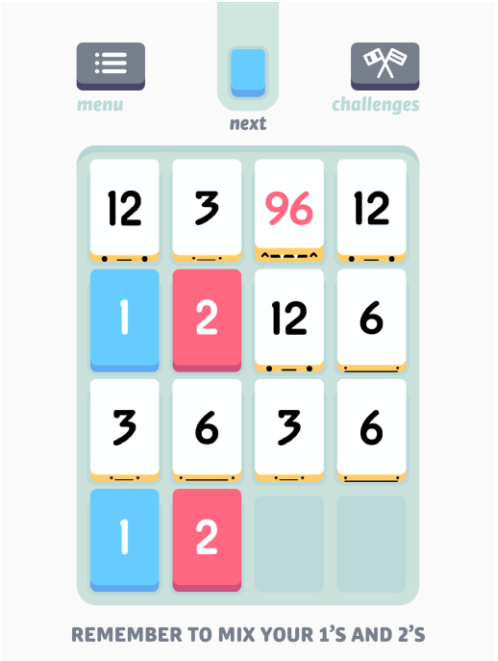
- Time spent inactive
- Lack of player progress
- Proximity to beginning of game
- Whatever you can detect programatically

USE SCAFFOLDING

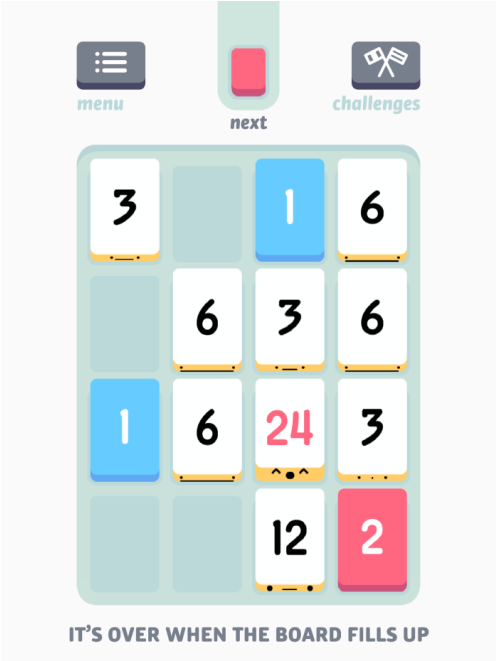
TEACH **COMFORT** **RESPECT**

USE SCAFFOLDING

TEACH COMFORT RESPECT



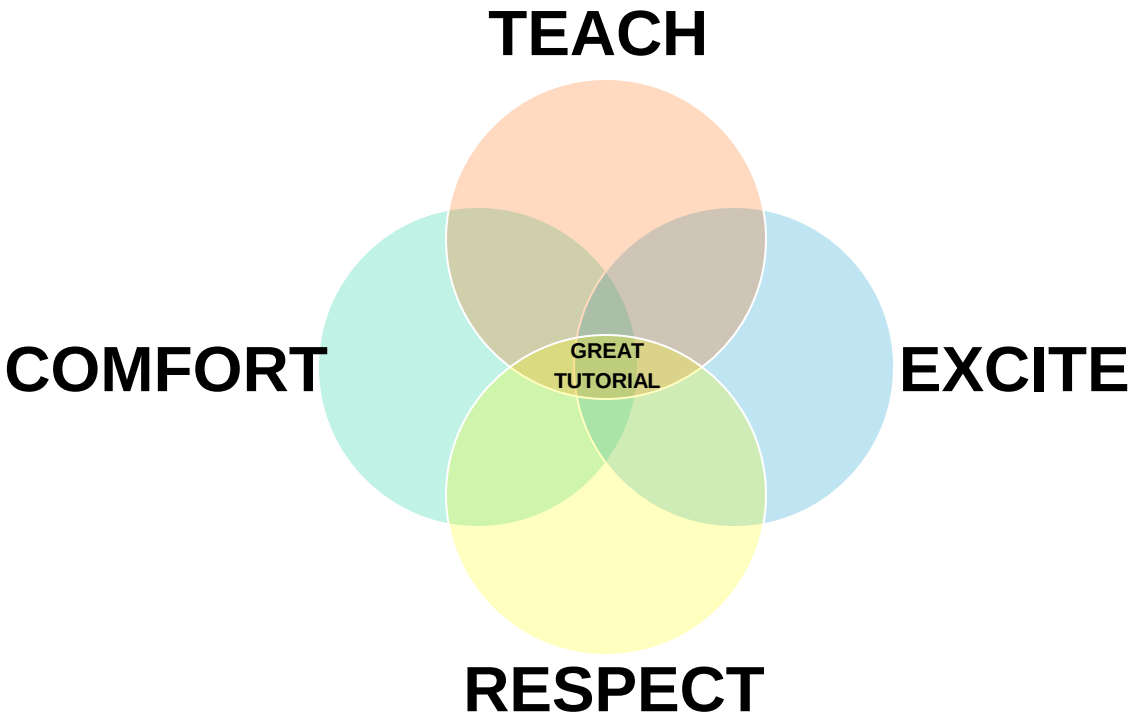
REMEMBER TO MIX YOUR 1'S AND 2'S



IT'S OVER WHEN THE BOARD FILLS UP

HERE'S A LIST OF INGREDIENTS

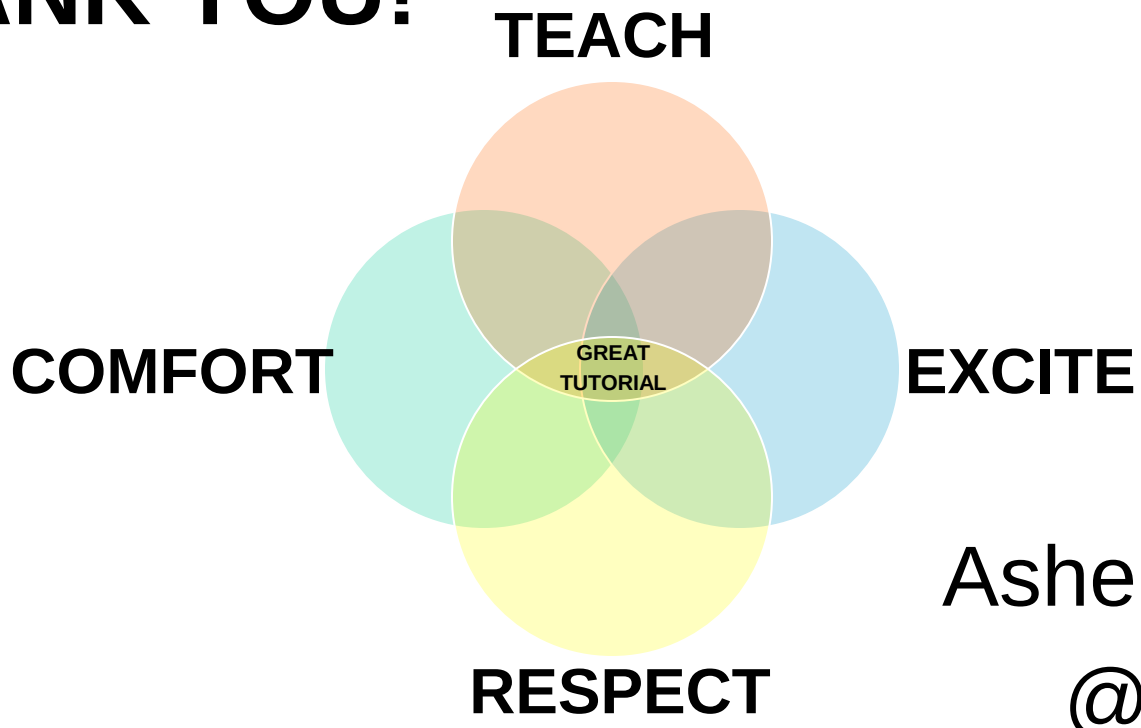
- Tell the player what to do
- Stay out of the player's way
- Give the player a safe space
- Make the goals into puzzles (!)
- Use scaffolding


TEACH
COMFORT
GREAT
TUTORIAL
EXCITE
RESPECT

PLAYTEST

TEACH **COMFORT** **RESPECT** **EXCITE**

THANK YOU!



Asher Vollmer
@AsherVo