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# The Iterative, Incremental Design of

# ALPHABEAR 2

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GDC
GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE
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-What is Alphabear 2?

-Streamline and Enhance Core Gameplay

-Encourage Bear Collections

-Iterative and Incremental Design

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ALPHABEAR 2

# Gameplay

- Spell words with a grid of letters
- Used letters reveal new letters around them
- Unused letters eventually wither and become permanently unusable
- Game ends when there are no words left (or the timer runs out!)

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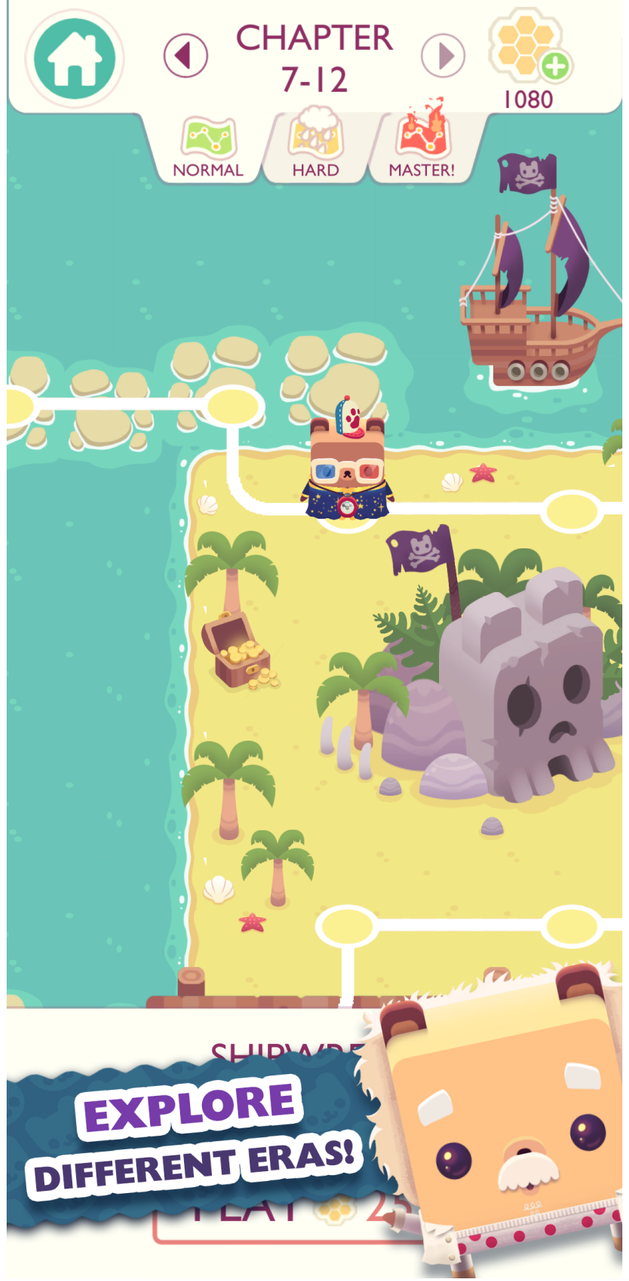
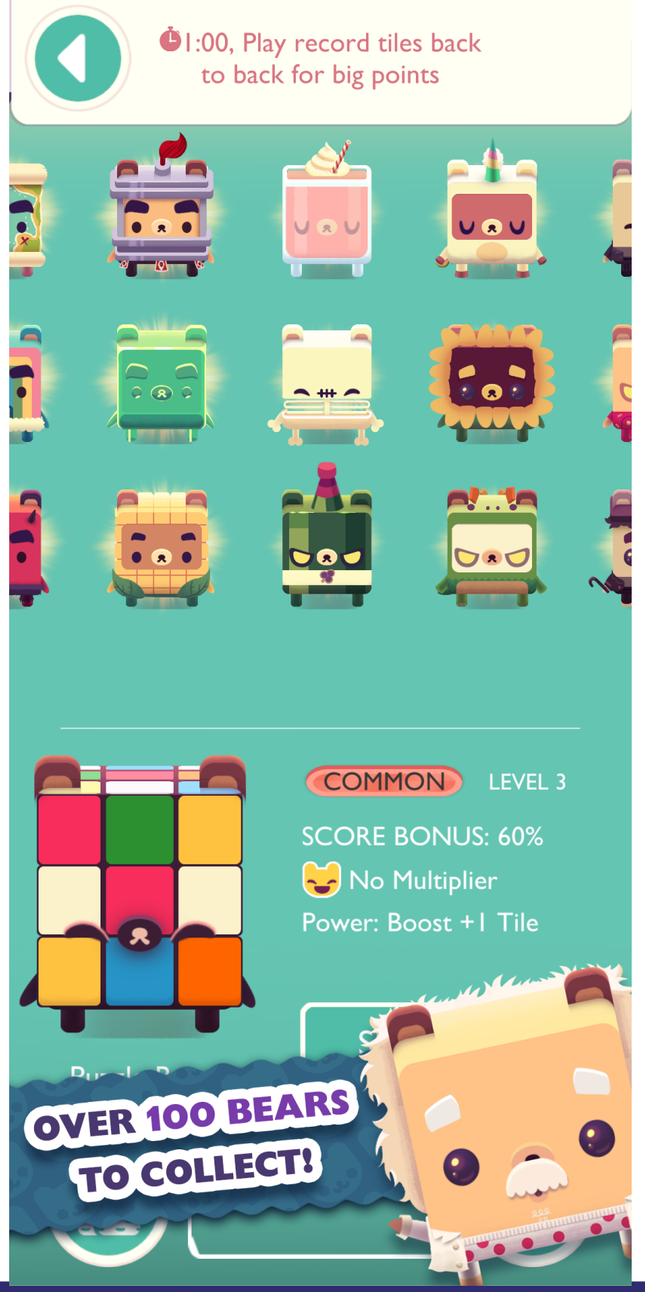
# Metagame

- Progress through a 10 chapter campaign
- Collect bears
- Find interesting synergies
- Fix the space time continuum!



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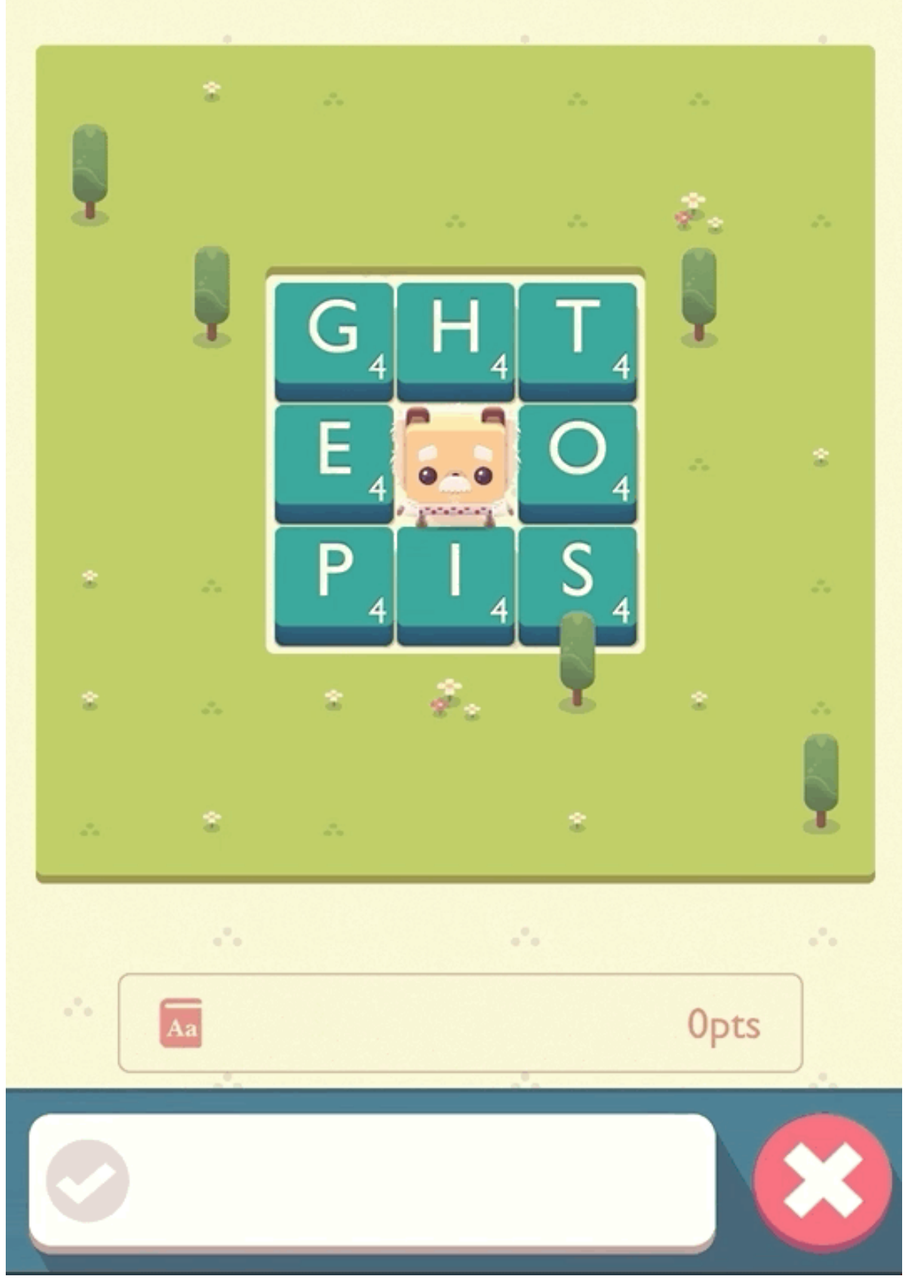
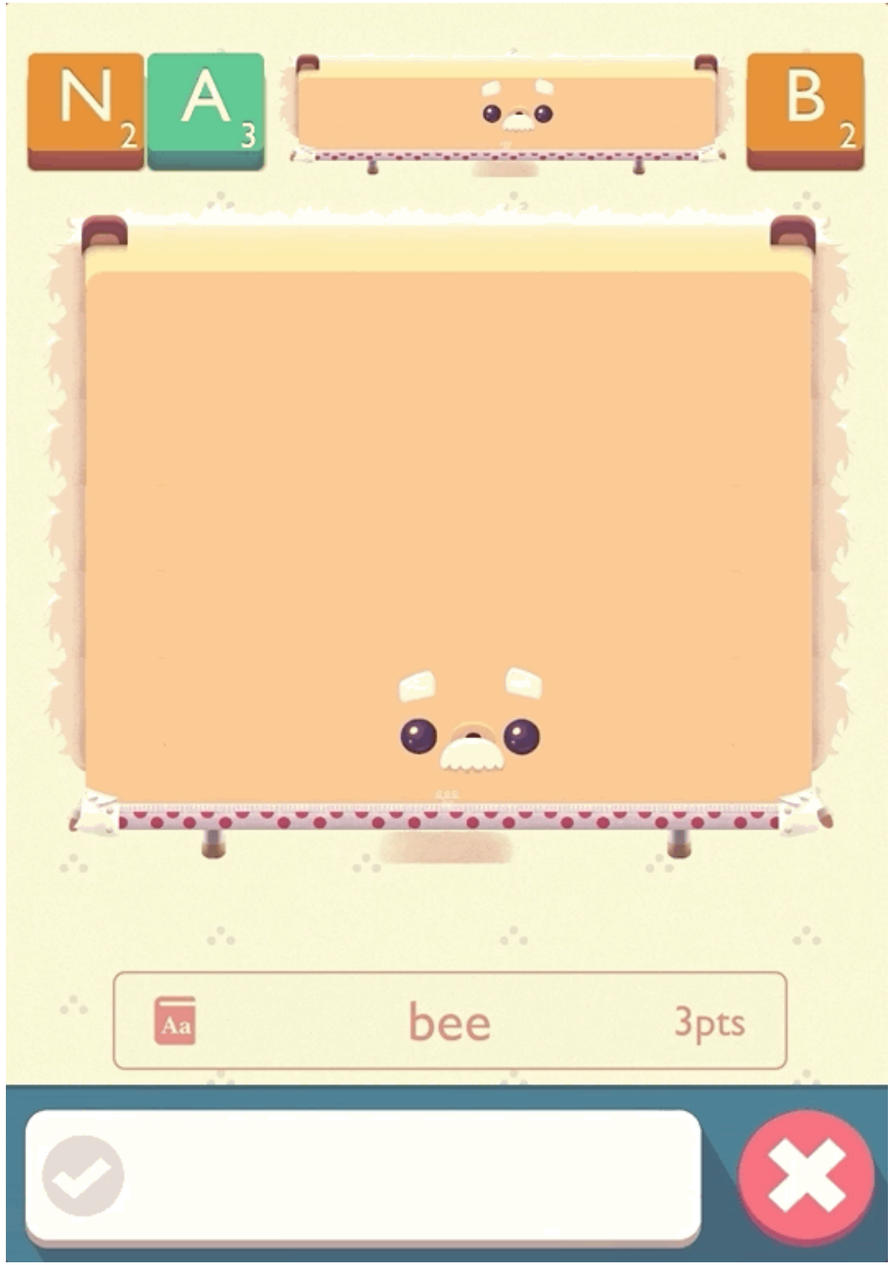
# Simplified Scoring

- Word score is just sum of letter lifetimes
- Bear scoring is just biggest bear area * 4
- Offers Interesting strategic choices



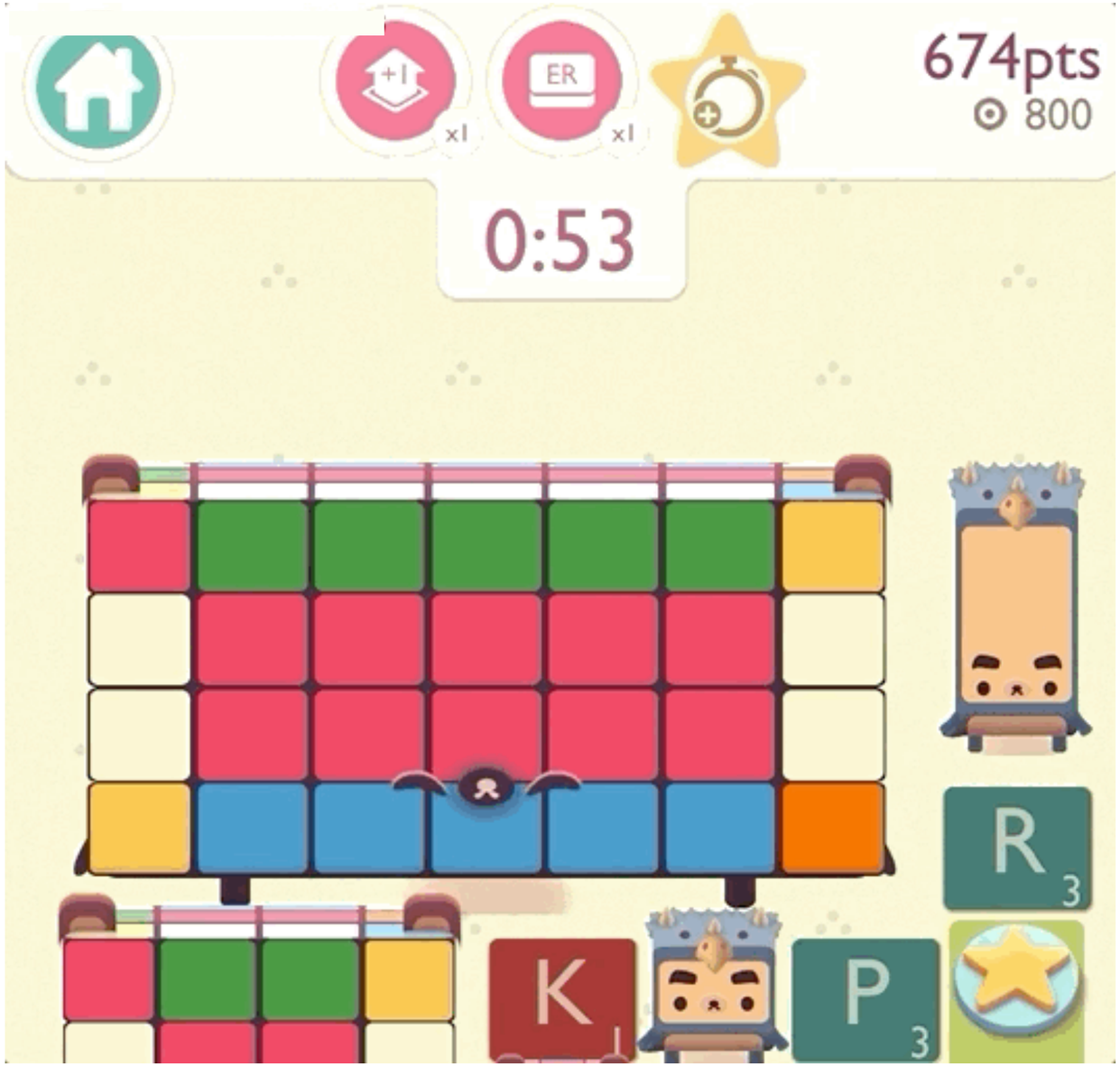
# Rewards for Big-Bearing

- "Big Bearing" - using all the letters on a board
- Something many perceive as the goal
- Rewards exceptional victories & high skill



# Early Finish

- Option to end after exceeding the target score
- Allows skilled players to progress quickly
- Offers interesting choice:
  - Save time or
  - Try for big bear reward



# Special Tile Types

- Non-letters that have interesting properties
- Balloon tiles count up
- Revealing a Key tile reveals all Lock tiles

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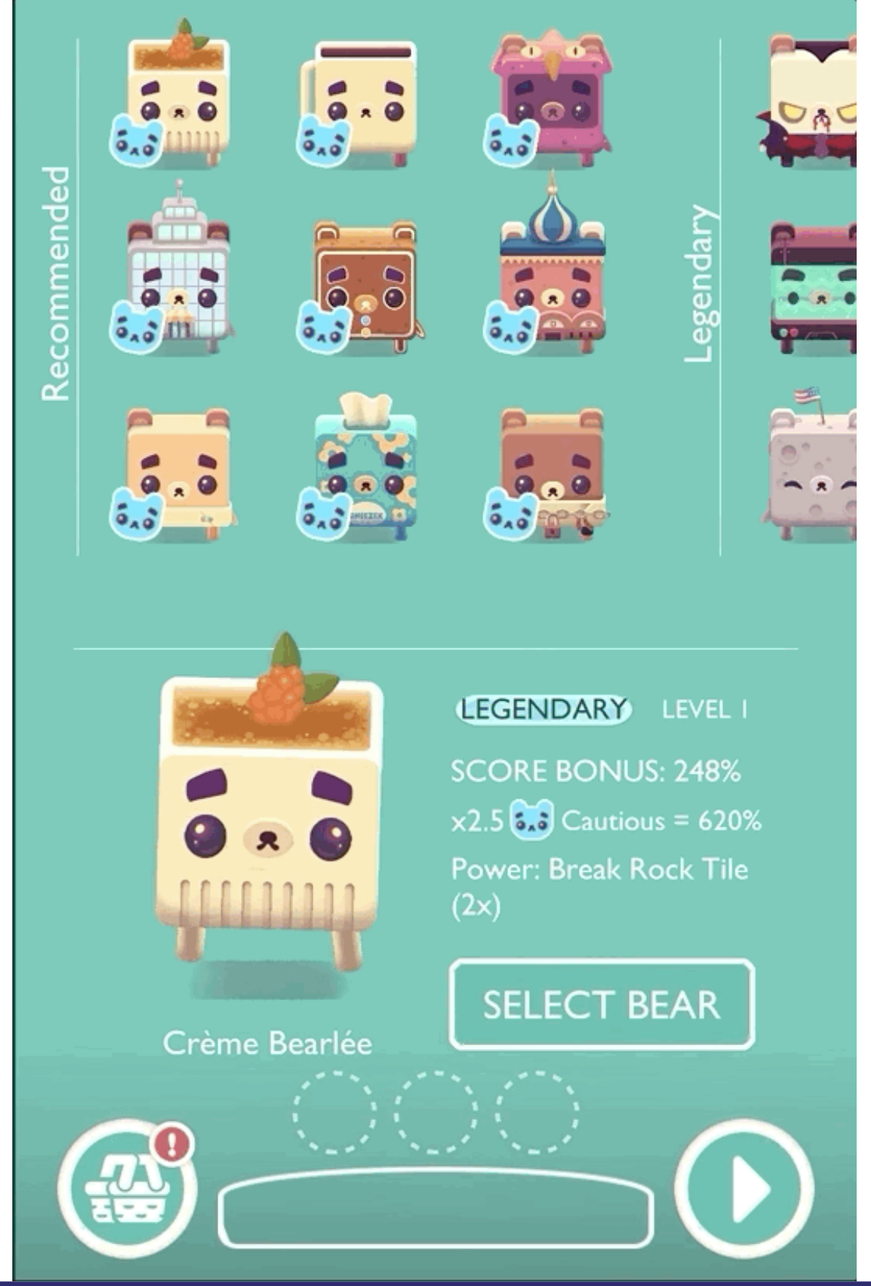
# “Recommended” Bears

- Quickly find your most powerful bears
- Shows if you’re prepared for this game
- Ensures you don’t feel stuck… unless you are!



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# Bear Collecting

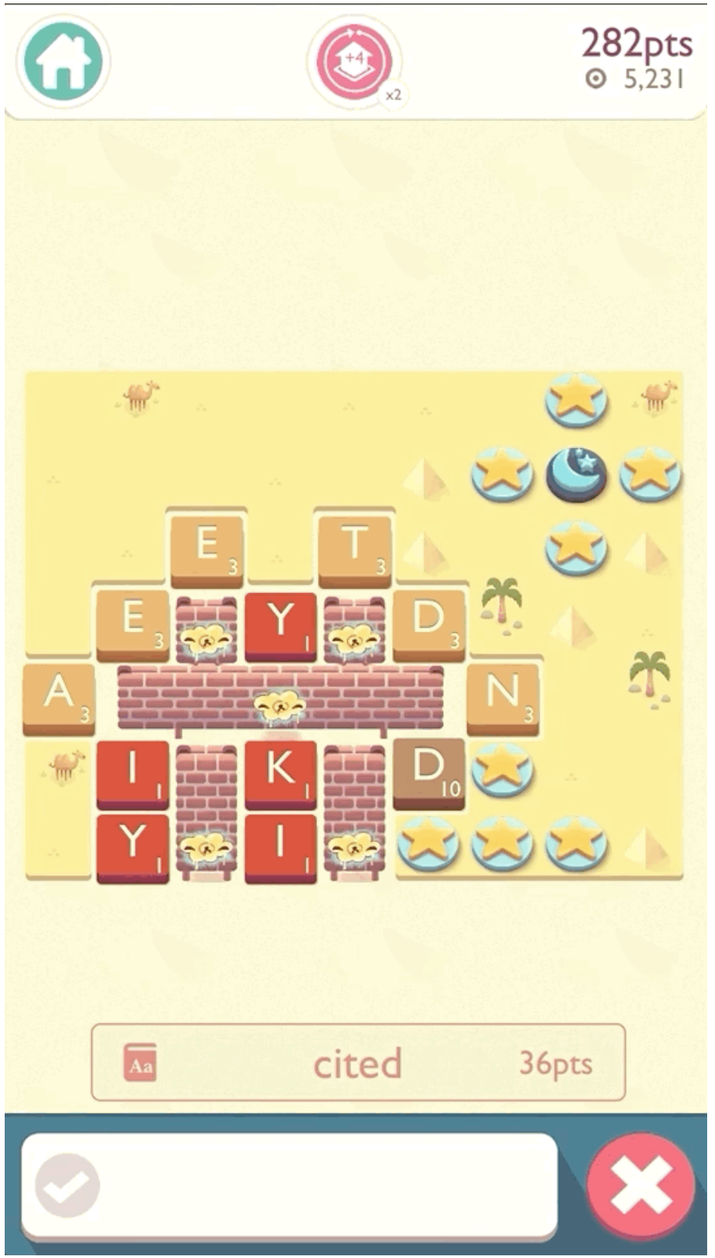
- Need players to care about a diverse bear collection
  - IAPs speed up discovery, not gate it
- Bears have one of 5 affinities
- One affinity gets double score bonus on each board
- Disabled score bonuses and banned affinities
  - Focus on power synergies, not bear levels

# More Bear Powers!

- Passive bonuses like Alphabear 1
  - e.g. “Extra R’s”, “+10 points for words starting with R”
- Striving to create interesting synergies

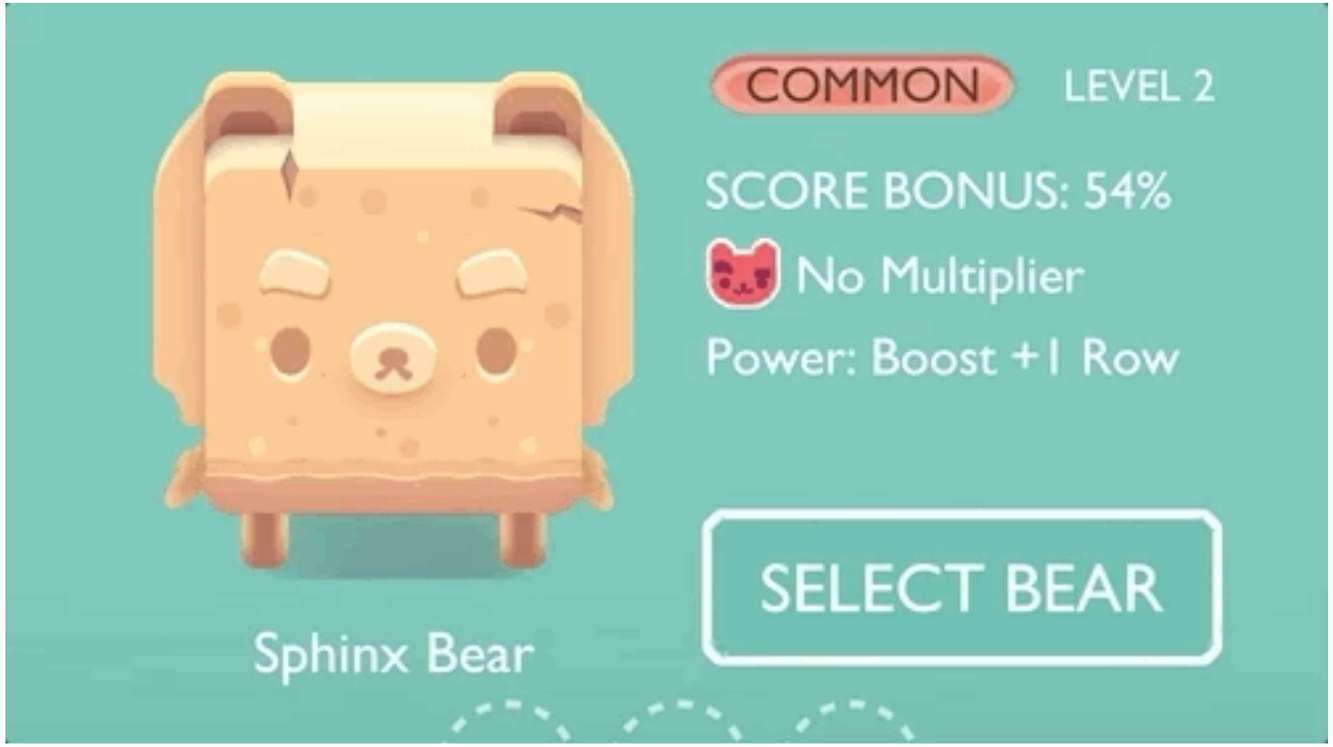
# “Active” Bear Abilities

- Triggered strategically by the player
- Directly impact the match board state
- e.g. “+1 all tiles”, “Swap tiles”, “Reveal -CPU”
- Solves “red letter anxiety”



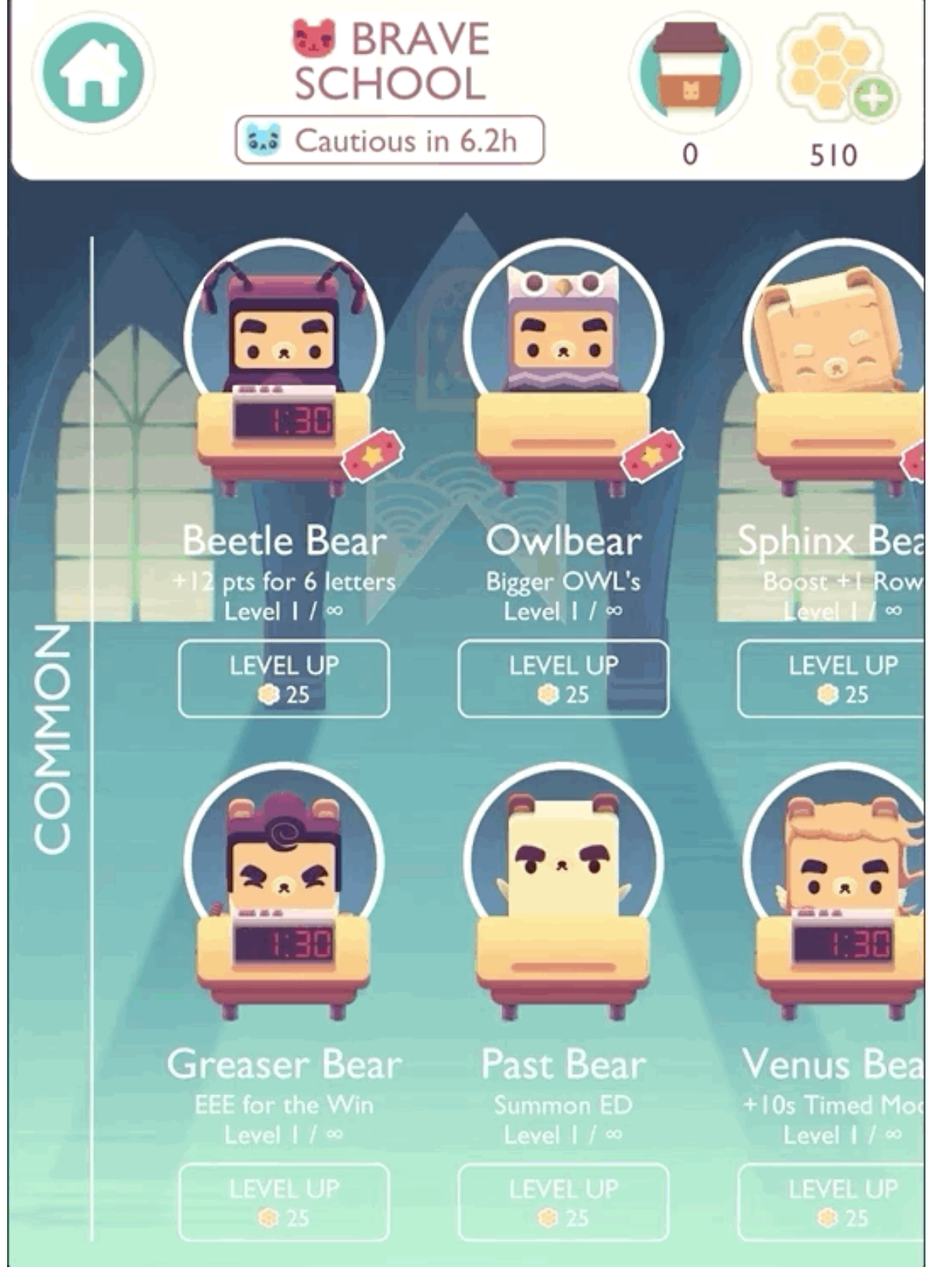
# Impact of “Active” Bear Powers

- Allows players to fix a bad board state or double-down on a good one
- Dovetails with new scoring system



# Bear Schools

- Give player control over bear leveling
- Play a game, earn a level for a specific bear
- Diplomas system makes low-rarity bears meaningful in the late game



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# Iterative and Incremental

- Started with Alphabear 1
  - Playable from day 1!
- Small, deliberate changes
- Regular builds and internal/f&f playtesters
  - e.g. Bear schools
- Meta Simulation

# Recap

- Iterative and Incremental design process helped us punch above our weight
- New special tiles and streamlined scoring enhance the core gameplay
- Bear affinities, schools, and new power combinations expand the meta and give players a reason to spend

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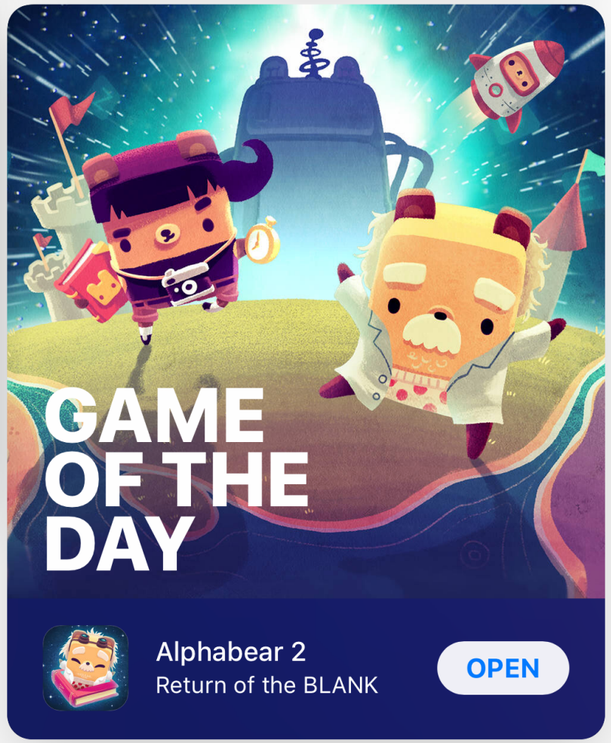
# Results!

- 7x increase in LTV
- 2019 Game Developers Choice Awards Best Mobile Game Honorable Mention




Ratings and reviews

4.7
4,379

5
4
3
2
1

Gameplay 4.3 ★ Graphics 4.4 ★ Controls 4.3 ★

Ratings & Reviews See All

4.8
out of 5

2,254 Ratings

# Thank you!

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