

SMILE AND PLAY

Newsletter #3

Soft Mobility Integrated
Learning in English

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“SMILE AND PLAY” is...

Smile and Play is an excellent way of including learning of a foreign language (English) into the promotion of informal ways of education through gamification, as well as promoting cycling as a transport method.

This game consists of a platform with numerous fields that offer activities for the children playing it - from grammar exercises, to puzzles and crossword solving, to simple and semi-advanced English lesson exercises, and more!

The goal of “SMILE AND PLAY”...

It is very simple - education and entertaining at the same time. The main goal for the children/teams playing is to reach a location that is given to them at the very start of the game. To reach that location, the team/children move their pawn across the platform - and this is where the fun begins!

With the help of the [imaginary] bicycle on the platform, the children follow their path and directions with the help of rolling dice, and on their way to the location, they face challenges, small setbacks, or bonuses and fast-forwarding points. During this whole time, they also engage in fun activities like puzzles, or English lesson exercises, and more. And, whomever reaches the location first, is the winner!

“SMILE AND PLAY” is the perfect example of gamification used in informal education

We are proud to be finalizing the Smile and Play game, not just because it is amidst the last stages of its development, but because we are nearing the final product (digitized game) which has so far proven to be very useful and fun - as game testings in schools so far have shown.

Without a doubt, we can affirm that Smile and Play is an incredibly innovative way to teach children about cycling, its benefits, its importance, all possible through the English language used in this game.

With such a game that would be used as informal education, in a formal and informal setting, we hope that children will have more fun without noticing they learn all along, and they do learn a lot too!

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The crucial pillars of “SMILE AND PLAY”...

- Introducing an informal gamification approach to the formal education setting
- Educating children and pupils about the importance of cycling
- Improving the children’s English language skills and competences
- Combining teamwork, friendships, informal foreign language learning - all in one

What we strive to achieve with “SMILE AND PLAY”:

- The main goal of this project and its product (the game) is to delve deeper into the themes of cycling and sustainable means of transport; especially important in these modern times of major pollution and issues alike worldwide. And, starting this at a young age is excellent because it teaches children to participate in learning, as well as in caring for the environment.
- Creating stronger bonds between children, their parents, and teachers as well. There is nothing better and more useful than learning done in an informal way! Team work has never sounded better.
- Teachers will get a chance to work in a slightly different environment compared to a standardized regular class of teaching English as a foreign language
- Modern tools used for gamification, and tested successfully, of course, with the goal of continuous usage in the future as well



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HOW IS “SMILE AND PLAY” PLAYED?

The game shows 11 locations, and children/teams must strive to reach their picked/given location. The locations are connected mutually through paths on the platform, showing numerous fields with symbols - these symbols are the activities of different types that should be solved on the way to the location, i.e., and the finish line.

The game starts with the teacher or Game Master assigning a location to the teams. Then, the teams roll dice to start the game. The dice is rolled continuously throughout the game, in order to move the team-pawn a certain number of steps-fields.

Along the way, teams solve crossword puzzles, quizzes, or various English language exercises given by the teacher. All activities are fun and make the game all the more engaging and interesting!

And of course, the team that reaches the location and the finish line first, is the winner!



THE INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT SO FAR...

Smile and Play is a game for educational purposes, simply put, a combination of learning the English language while educating the youths on cycling.

However, the output is an educational game which can be used in 3 ways. So far,

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we have developed the first 2 methods of playing this game - the options were either projected onto a classroom board/wall, as well as having the game in a physical, printed out format.

Now we have a new addition to these playing methods - we also digitized this game! Due to circumstances that have affected everyone worldwide, we came to the idea that a digitized game would be a perfect addition to this project. Regardless of conditions for attending school classes or not, a digitalized "SMILE AND PLAY" is ready on the go. Usable with desktop link, or a Playstore app download, and this game is now available in all ways.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE DIGITALIZED "SMILE AND PLAY" TESTING

We are happy to confirm that the overall look, graphic, and layout of Smile digital is liked by all of us who have tried it out and tested it, unanimously. Of course, that is because the platform was thought out and finalized with fun and bright colors, a clear and vivid background, and multiple options once a player is logged into the platform.

The logging itself has gone through several stages of development, i.e., repairing bugs and updating after first impressions, simplifying the process of access itself with the goal of reaching a level of an easy game-entering; done via email, or linking with social apps, or simply a sign up on the very start.

One of the suggestions, another unanimous one, was perhaps a chance for a solo-game, player versus bot or the computer itself, however due to certain technical (platform program) limitations, the game is to be played with at least one other person, instead of a solo-option. But, isn't that the whole point of SMILE AND PLAY? Having educational fun with other peers :) ? That is what we all strive for with this project for informal education...educational teamwork!

Another amazing feature with this digital version is that we have a Game Master! In these uncertain times when physical playing is not possible, the Game Master on Tabletopia is the teacher or parent itself, who virtually oversees the game tempo, respecting game rules, and simply guides the children who play! Practical and useful for all involved! And, the guidance is not restricted only with the Game Master feature - we have also implemented the rulebooks of the original game into a digital tab shown at the very start of the game. This way all players can briefly read the game-rules and will have them on easy access at all times...

We hope that children from age 10 and onwards can enjoy this game version, which was adapted for this age target group, whereas the physical game version starts from ages 8 and onward, as already established from before.



UPDATES AND CHANGES TO THE PREVIOUS GAME PLATFORM AND SETTING

As you have read above in this newsletter, Smile and Play was made in 2 formats prior this new addition; and those formats are projected game on a wall/board, or a printed out physical version for direct usage in front of the teams.

The third addition which we proudly present is the digitalized Smile and Play, with the help of the game website platform Tabletopia. This is a convenient way to participate in a fun game in the comfort of your own home, or virtually with friends and classmates, teachers, parents, whomever would like to participate is free to do so!

The digitized game offers many interesting features, such as point counters, zooming in and out where needed, then there are possibilities to play the game along a video/audio call on the same website platform, and more!

This game update addition is also available on the Google Playstore, in case you want the game on the go, always with you! Now, Smile and Play's concept is available

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in all formats that could be used and needed.



OVERALL IMPRESSIONS SO FAR...

Up until now, the game testing experiences and comments have proven to be satisfactory, and of course, the development of the digital platform continues! Previously, children from Italy, Lithuania, and North Macedonia had lots of fun in the testing sessions, and comments by the teachers have helped us a lot in terms of improving and updating the game, but now we have the great challenge of participating in the Tabletopia game version. We hope and we strive to achieve the most perfect version possible, with updates, novelties, as well as moderating and reviewing constantly these finalization stages of the digital game version.

WHAT FOLLOWS NEXT?

In the final stages of the project, it is expected to finish up the ending finesses, i.e., small scope testing as well as public testing of the digitalized Smile and Play, in order to gather as much experiences and comments with feedback as possible.

Also, very soon we will prepare for printing out the physical game versions in a limited amount as well - this is all the more exciting since the main product-version will finally be accessible for a closer look, and a real-life physical-game experience.

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In this context, on the very first opportunity for public dissemination of all achievements so far, we plan to organize multiplier events for marking the successful game creation in all its forms.

Stay tuned, stay with us for more updates soon!



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ПЕСТАЛОЦИ



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