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Assignment 2: Reflection, ideas, and planning

1. I was most inspired by one of my friends' needs (the food tracking app), but I also thought the alternatives to existing apps like GoodReads were interesting, though disheartening because so much of the success of an app similar to GoodReads is building a large and active base of users. I noticed a lot of requests for augmented reality, which would be a fun problem to solve in theory, but something I do not feel I have the expertise to solve. Most of the complaints I noticed had to do with monetization and the user interface, but many of the problems presented were less relevant to me than a meal tracking app, so I likely would not be in touch enough to provide a good user experience.

2. I have encountered apps that handle monetization gracefully. It's difficult to get users to commit to a premium app, as there is a prevalent bias toward apps being free with microtransactions or ads (but then users are often annoyed by the microtransactions and ads). One of the best models I've seen is full ads that play for roughly 30 seconds every 10-20 minutes with optional longer ads to increase rewards, and with an option to pay money directly to not see the mandatory ads anymore. Banner ads are also usually fine so long as they do not pop up in a place where the user is likely to accidentally tap. Microtransactions feel a bit more nuanced, as there are situations where you can enjoy a game without microtransactions and others where the game is basically unplayable without spending the money on microtransactions. Candy Crush is especially obnoxious, encouraging you to buy an item if you are close to beating the level and asking if you're SURE you don't want to buy it after you say no.

3. I have a Sudoku app on my phone released by genina.com that has a very straightforward and simple user interface. I've never been confused about how to do anything, and I've never felt like I should be able to do something that I can't do. The difficulties and a resume button are displayed on the left part of the screen, with your game history, a link to a competition run on weekends (which shows what time the competition is alternating with the "competition" label), a board customization option, a button that shows you how to play, and an option to buy out of ads displayed on the right. Settings, app information, and the rules of Sudoku are on the top. The default number fill mode is very easy to use, and very easy to change. Unintrusive banner ads are shown at the top of the screen while you are playing, far away from where you would ever tap. Overall, I have zero complaints about its user interface, which is something I cannot say about most apps.

4. The comment about iterating on already existing apps instead of starting from zero made me feel like I could improve meal tracking apps in the way my friend wanted them to be improved, even if it would not be robust as what a company with connections to large restaurant chains could do. It would likely not be particularly fancy after a semester's worth of work, but I think I could improve or implement some features that she felt were lacking and felt common sense to have in a meal tracking app.