



# Game Design Brainstorm

## Match-Three Game Ideas

Date	Author	Change Log
1/11/2019	Brian Mahoney	Initial brainstorm of ideas

### Objective

This is an evaluation of the potential ways in which Match-Three games can be made for the Skillz platform. The goal is to analyze each option based on our tenets of effective skill game design in order to assist developers in choosing a Match-Three design that will be successful on Skillz.

### Overview of the Genre

Match-Three gameplay typically takes place in a large grid filled with a random arrangement of colored game pieces. The player works to create groups of three matching items, usually by swapping, but sometimes by rotating or sliding, depending on the game. When a match is made, the objects explode, removing them from the grid. As items are removed, new ones drop in from the top, refilling the grid. The player earns points for each explosion, with the score value scaling up based on the size of the group. Additional gameplay depth is often added through the inclusion of power-ups, obstacles, and level-based objectives.

### Option A: Gold Board

Confidence

**HIGH**

- An asynchronous, objective-based match-three game.
- Boards of various shapes are generated on a large grid using 5-7 different varieties of objects.
- The player manipulates the board by swapping two adjacent objects.
- A game can be made up of just a single level or as many as three (determined by playtesting, targeting a match length of around two minutes).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a match is made on the grid, all of those squares change color to gold.</li> <li>• The goal is to turn the whole board gold, which advances the user to the next level (or provides a time bonus if it was the last level).</li> </ul>
<b>Pros:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple, fun objective</li> <li>• This format worked on Skillz in the past</li> <li>• Fun mix of speed and puzzle-solving</li> <li>• Many players will already be familiar with this gameplay from other match-three games</li> </ul>	
<b>Cons:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearing squares that are in tight corners can occasionally be difficult or frustrating. Some kind of power-up should be included for hitting those hard-to-reach places.</li> <li>• Players who prefer to focus on speed over strategy will not enjoy this format</li> </ul>	

## Option B: Match & Merge

<div>Confidence</div> <div><b>MEDIUM</b></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An asynchronous, speed-based match-three game</li> <li>• Boards of various shapes are generated on a large grid, using just five or so colors of objects -- for example, five different colors of fruit.</li> <li>• Matches are made by swapping two adjacent objects.</li> <li>• Matching the basic objects provides a small amount of points and produces a bonus object.</li> <li>• There are three tiers of bonus objects which are worth increasing amounts of points when they are in turn matched -- for example, silver coins, gold coins, and jeweled doubloons.</li> <li>• Matching three basic objects produces a silver coin, matching four produces a gold coin, and matching five produces a doubloon.</li> <li>• Matching three silver coins produces a gold coin, matching four produces a doubloon, and matching five produces three doubloons.</li> <li>• Matching three gold coins produces a doubloon, matching four produces three doubloons, and matching five produces an explosion of nine doubloons.</li> <li>• Matching three doubloons consumes them for double points. Matching four consumes them (double points) and produces a small explosion. Matching five produces a burst of electricity that consumes all doubloons on the board for TRIPLE points.</li> <li>• Both types of coins and the doubloons will also “fall out” of the board if they reach the bottom row, causing them to be cashed in for points.</li> </ul>
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items that are consumed in explosions are also converted into points.</li> <li>• The basic goal is to produce and match as much currency as possible to achieve the highest possible score in the time allotted.</li> </ul>
<b>Pros:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast-paced gameplay with lots of strategy</li> <li>• Gameplay escalates drastically as the player creates more and more coins.</li> <li>• High skill cap -- easy to learn but challenging to master</li> <li>• Players will see clear improvement in their scoring as they get better</li> <li>• Merge games are a popular genre that is more contemporary than match-three</li> </ul>	
<b>Cons:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This format is untested on Skillz and uncommon in the app store as well - experimental</li> <li>• The merge mechanics might be unfamiliar to core match-three players, although the basic gameplay is the same</li> <li>• Skilled players will score much higher than newbies</li> </ul>	

## Option C: Sliding Collector Match-3

<div>Confidence</div> <div><b>MEDIUM</b></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An asynchronous, speed-based match-three</li> <li>• A square 8x8 or 9x9 board is generated, containing 6-8 colors of objects.</li> <li>• The player manipulates the board by sliding an entire row or column to a new position. Objects that are slid off-screen wrap around the edges of the board to appear on the other side.</li> <li>• Each game would be made up of a single level with a timer.</li> <li>• The goal of each game is to match certain colors a particular number of times. The required amount of each color is shown at the top of the screen, and the goal counter decrements with each match of the required color.</li> <li>• Matches are only permitted in a straight line (unlike Diamond Strike, for example). This is not exceedingly difficult because there are fewer colors on the board than in games that allow nonlinear matches.</li> <li>• Matching four of a kind clears the entire row or column in that same direction.</li> <li>• Matching five of a kind creates an “artifact” -- an indestructible power-up that can be used again and again until the level is won by matching it with it’s same color.</li> <li>• The game ends when the player has gathered the required amount of each color, at which point a time bonus is awarded.</li> </ul>
--	---

### Pros:

- Sliding rows and columns creates a more strategic match-three in which the players has more power to manipulate the board.
- Focusing on particular colors requires a strategic approach.
- Indestructible power-ups are fun and awesome.

### Cons:

- Sliding controls can be finicky if not implemented well
- Players who make matches without focusing on the required colors will do poorly.
- This concept has not been proven out in the existing market yet.

## Option D: Loot Drop Match-Three

Confidence

**HIGH**

- An asynchronous, objective-based match-three game
- Boards of various shapes are generated on a large grid, using six to eight colors of objects
- Matches are made by swapping two adjacent objects.
- The goal of the game is to collect N loot items, which is tracked by a counter at the top of the screen.
- A progress meter on one side of the board fills with each game object destroyed. Every X objects spawns a loot item that drops in from the top of the screen. (It enters the board wherever the space opens up when that “Xth” object was destroyed, so the player has some control of it.)
- Loot items are collected by dropping them to the bottom of the screen, at which point they fall out of the board and the treasure goal decrements accordingly.
- Loot can also be matched (three or more in a row, like any other item) to earn double credit for collecting them.
- Matching four items creates a “bomb” power-up of that color that destroys a 3x3 area when matched.
- Matching five items creates a cross power-up of that color that destroys an entire row and column when matched.
- After the player collects the required number of loot items, the game ends and a time bonus is awarded.

### Pros:

- A speed-based game that also requires strategy to drop treasures into the right places
- This type of “drop the treasure to the bottom” gameplay has been used in many popular match-three games.
- Power-ups and cascades allow multiple treasures to be generated at once

### Cons:

- The “treasure generation” mechanic will be unfamiliar to players and requires some onboarding
- Players who just make matches without focusing on the objective will do poorly

## Option E: Match-Three Treasure Adventure

Confidence

**HIGH**

- An asynchronous, objective-based match-three game
- Three or four large game boards are generated, connected by a narrow path of game objects. Each game board has loot obstacles to be collected. The game begins by zooming into the first game board on the path.
- There are three types of loot objects and “dirt”, which is an additional obstacle:
  - Dirt: Matching near dirt removes it from the board, clearing space for more matching.
  - Golden Statues: Matching near a gold statue collects it from the board.
  - Ancient Pots: Matching near an ancient pot breaks it open, revealing a Golden Statue.
  - Jeweled Chest: Matching near a Jeweled Chest unlocks it, causing it to open. Matching near an Open Chest empties it, adding three Golden Statues to the board where it was.
- Matches are made by swapping two adjacent objects.
- Matching four or more items at once creates a power-up (TBD).
- The goal of each game board is to collect all of the treasures on the board (including any Golden Statues that pop out of chests).
- Once a game board is completed, the camera pans over to the next one. When the final room is reached, the player is notified via flying text.
- Finishing the final room ends the game, awarding a time bonus.

### Pros:

- Traveling across multiple game boards provides a fun narrative opportunity and a sense of exploration.
- This is a more puzzle-like, thoughtful form of match-three, with a lot of strategy.
- This type of “clear all the obstacles” gameplay has been used in many successful match-three games.

### Cons:

- Collecting treasures has some complexity and will require onboarding.
- Players who just make matches without focusing on the objective will do poorly.