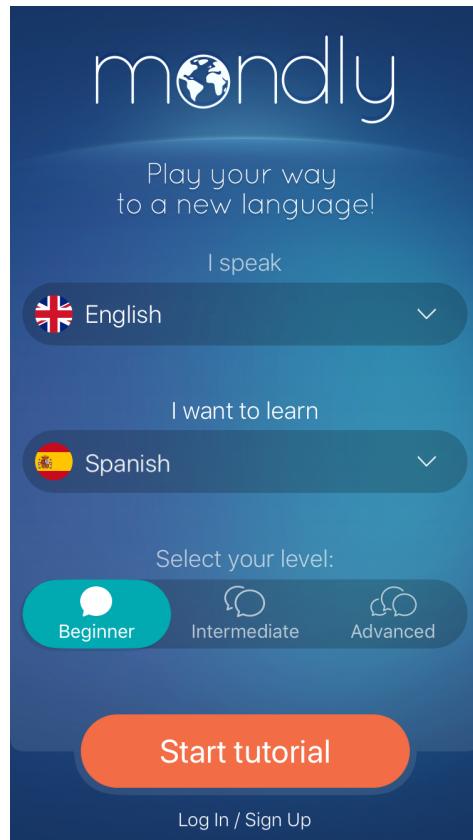


COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

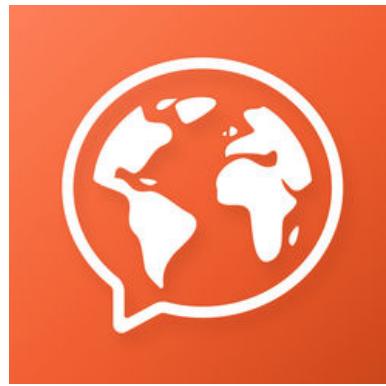




The stats and leaderboards screen shows a summary for "Level 1" with 13 points, a 1 streak, 0 minutes, 16 words, and 8 phrases. It includes a brain icon and a weekly progress graph. Below this, a calendar for January shows daily activity. Leaderboards at the bottom rank users like "Piedra" and "Regi". A teal "Continue" button is at the bottom right.

A vocabulary exercise screen for Spanish. It asks to move words to the correct answer. Options include "mañana" (sunrise image), "día" (calendar image), "afternoon" (neutral image), "tarde" (green field image), and "noche" (night sky image). The word "afternoon" is highlighted in blue.

A grammar exercise screen for Spanish. It shows a green speech bubble saying "You are correct" with a smiley face icon. Below it, a sentence "This is my father." is shown with words "Este", "es", "mi", and "padre." each in its own green box. A teal "Continue" button is at the bottom right.



FIRST IMPRESSION

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I found Mondly very attractive from the beginning. It offered nothing less than 33 languages to learn together with nice, easy colors and pleasant visuals. Perhaps not cool, but friendly and easy-going.

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At this point I could not find anything negative to say.

LAUNCH

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The promise of a simple and straightforward language app was fulfilled when I started it. However, what was not part of my original impression, was the minimalistic and stylish design of the opening windows.

The options were few and clear and it was very easy and fast to get started. I was asked to choose the language that I am using, the language that I was willing to learn, and the level where I wanted to start. When I think of it, it is actually all that is relevant in the beginning.

The tutorial was prompt but convincing with its nice visuals and partly almost scientific arguments about the best ways of learning words.

-

The first negative impression with Mondly was perhaps the very downside of this fast and easy start. Namely, even though the tutorial was fun to follow, it was still a very mixed bunch of vaguely connected themes. More than really showing how things work, its main purpose seemed to be to convince the users of the app.

In a similar way, the language program just started straight after the tutorial which I found even a bit aggressive. Perhaps it is a good idea to get the user in action as soon as possible, but I still felt a bit forced.

LEARNING WORDS

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The core of a language app is of course its way to teach the language. And in this area Mondly does a very good job. The exercises are simple, engaging and very intuitive. In the main exercises the words are repeated in different contexts accompanied by photos and audio examples. There is a huge amount of possibilities from basic lessons to conversations where one needs to pronounce the words and sentences himself. The lessons are categorized and also for every day the app provides special exercises. The user is also able to follow his/her development with all kinds of tables and statistics. It is possible to add more languages whenever one wants.

-

The limits of the free use come apparent very soon as many areas are closed for the free riders. The app reminds the users constantly of the benefits of getting the premium access. However, this is naturally not only a downside as there are not any other adds disturbing the user. Also the whole app is very professional and convincing from top to bottom. This seriousness is apt to reassure the users that the relatively low price might be worth it. Among other things the app promises a possibility to build a personal learning program.

The seriousness and professionalism are perhaps just the right match for many users. Especially for them who are serious enough about learning a language and perhaps even ready to pay for it. However, other people might find all that a bit too much.

After the uncomplicated start, entertaining but quite uninformative tutorial, and easy warming-up exercises one is taken to the main view which is everything but what was promised before. Suddenly the whole view turns somewhat complicated and even scientific with the picture of a radiating brain and the words that one needs stuck in there. Even though the lessons are still nicely ordered with clear information about the number of words and estimated times, the multiple options and statistics may be a turn-off for someone who is looking for a easy, daily dip into a bowl of foreign words. Also the points, rankings and competitions may work both ways. For me personally that was something unnecessary for a learning process, but I can definitely see how it may motivate other kind of learners.

GENERAL USABILITY

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Even if there is a lot of information and possibilities in the beginning, the app manages to be very learnable and intuitive most of the time. Signing in was a rapid and painless, 3 step process. The settings are clear and easy to use. Everything has its place and will be soon easy to find. The exercises are so intuitive that, without much of information, it is in most cases instantly clear what is expected. Most of the time I did not even have to read the one sentence instructions which is of course a good sign. The fast-paced and versatile exercises combined with motivating accomplishment charts is a very addictive and succesful way to get one learning a language.

OVERALL VERDICT

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The overall experience with Mondly was positive. It manages to convince the user of its virtues among which the effectiveness seems to be prioritized. That is not very surprising as we are talking about an app that is suppose to teach the user one or more languages. However, learning is always a long-term process, so evaluating the outcome of the made promises is out of bound of this analysis. Perhaps more important than that is the way the app manages to convince the user with its almost scientifically sounding methods. I am quite sure that it is a useful and effective way to get to know a new language and I was tempted to try it myself.

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However, Mondly may not be everybody's cup of tea. This is not necessarily a bad thing as it seems to look for users who are very serious about learning the languages and also ready to pay for it. Perhaps these two things go well together. When investing in a reasonable 12-months deal with daily alarms and development charts, one is likely much more motivated than someone who is there just to play little word games. In my opinion, these "players" will be turned away quite fast. If this does not happen because of the complexity and seriousness of the app, the freely available possibilities are in any case limited.

The turn-off of the app has very much to do with its unwillingness to fulfill certain promises made. First of all, it manages to lure the users with its easiness and uncomplexity, which is of course a good thing, as it gets people fast on board. However, many of these people may feel disappointed when things turn suddenly complicated and serious. I was personally quite perplexed when the fun and easy starting run turned into a complex whole with many features that I needed to find and learn by myself. The same goes for the free part of the app. In the beginning the user gets the feeling that there is much more to be found before making any kind of deal. As I mentioned earlier, this may not be so bad after all, as the people, who are turned away, are likely not part of the target group anyhow. But perhaps it is still not ideal to give users the feeling that they have been misled.

THINGS TO RECONSIDER

There are not many things I would change, but a couple I would at least reconsider. The first thing, which comes to my mind, is the tutorial, which is not really a tutorial. Perhaps some of its elements could be used as a brief intro, but then I would consider a real tutorial that would show how things work. If that is too heavy to begin with, I would also start with little warming-up exercises just to show how well-made and addictive they are.

The last question I have is the need for all the charts and numbers in the statistics screen as well as the whole competition part. I would do some survey asking the users whether they find all of it necessary, fun or motivating, or just the opposite. At least I personally would prefer a bit more clarity and simplicity.



A screenshot of the Quizlet website or mobile landing page. The background features a photograph of a person's hands interacting with a smartphone displaying the Quizlet app. The phone screen shows a simple interface with a blue header and a white body. Above the phone, the Quizlet logo is displayed in a large, bold, blue font. Below the logo, a subtitle reads 'Einfache Tools, mit denen du alles lernen kannst. Und zwar gratis.' A teal-colored button with the text 'Gratis registrieren' is centered in the middle of the screen. Below it, another teal button says 'Oder melde dich an'. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

A screenshot of the Quizlet mobile dashboard. At the top, a blue header bar displays 'LETZTE AKTIVITÄT' and the time '10.05'. Below this, a teal bar contains the text 'Neues Lernset erstellen'. The main area is titled 'HEUTE' and lists four recent activities: 1. '65 Karten | brooke_wingate Sex Health' (with a small profile icon); 2. '127 Karten | adriana_carpanzano Philosophy' (with a small profile icon); 3. '204 Karten | Leah_Miller14 Biology' (with a small profile icon); and 4. '123 Karten | chantal_leclerc PLUS Englisch Vokabeln' (with a small profile icon). At the bottom of the screen are five navigation icons: 'Verlauf' (activity log), 'Kurse' (courses), 'Ordner' (folders), 'Profil' (profile), and 'Einstellungen' (settings).

A screenshot of the Quizlet mobile application showing a study set for 'Englisch Vokabeln'. The top bar shows the time '9.54', signal strength, carrier 'o2-de', battery level at '33%', and a back arrow. The title 'LERNSET' is displayed. Below the title, it says '123 Karten' and shows a profile icon for 'chantal_leclerc PLUS'. The main content area shows a grid of cards. One card is visible with the German word 'gründen' and the English definition 'to found'. Below the card are four action buttons: 'NEU' (new), 'LERNEN' (learn), 'ANTWORTEN' (answers), 'ZUORDNEN' (assign), 'TESTEN' (test), 'Alle lernen' (all learn), and 'Nur 1 lernen' (only 1 learn). There is also an 'Werbung entfernen' (remove ads) link and an 'Amazon App' advertisement with an 'INSTALLIEREN' (install) button. At the bottom, there are sections for 'Karten' (cards) and 'Gesellschaft' (society), along with a speaker icon and a star icon.

A screenshot of a single Quizlet flashcard. The question side shows the German word 'gründen'. A blue callout box with the text 'Du möchtest andere Fragen sehen?' (Do you want to see other questions?) points to the right. The answer side shows the English translation 'to found' in a light blue box. Below the answer, there are four additional boxes containing the words 'to scan', 'medicine', and 'various'.

A screenshot of a single Quizlet flashcard. The question side shows the German word 'fee'. The answer side shows the English translation 'to found' in a light blue box. At the bottom right, there is a blue button with a person icon and the text 'App laden, Buch auswählen, loslegen.' (Load app, select book, start) followed by a yellow arrow icon.



FIRST IMPRESSION

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From the very beginning, everything with Quizlet was very clear and straightforward. The name, logo, descriptions, and aesthetics all speak the same language: this is a quiz app for people who love quizzes. It reminded me of those early afternoon tv-quizzes in good and in bad. I found this clear identity a strength, even if someone could call it somewhat boring. And I could not blame them either.

LAUNCH

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The opening windows were nice and helpful. With few sentences they managed to highlight all one needed to know about the app: *it is a huge collection of flashcard sets made by its users*. It appeared that in order to proceed the user was given only two strict options: make a profil or sign up if you already have one. On the other hand, the app was supposed to be free, so stakes were not too high at this point. However, later I found a faster path in one of those opening windows. One was actually allowed to search through the app and even to play the games without signing in. This option was a bit hidden but nevertheless there.

After signing in the user can roam around freely. It goes mostly by trial and error, but fortunately the app is not that complicated. For example the search "spanish vocabulary" offers an endless amount of card sets from which to choose. The most interesting bit of information is the number of cards in the set. Otherwise it is really difficult to tell the difference between the sets. It is also convincing when it says "teacher" after the provider's user name. The games themselves are simple and easy to learn. In the end, they are just different variations of how you can play around with flashcards.

-

I really did not like that I needed to create an account so early on, as it was not even that fast. At that point, I had not noticed the possibility of a free test ride. Even though there were several questions, there was none about the language I prefer to use, which was little disappointing too.

In the middle of everything is the search window which is also the only way to proceed to the various card sets. Unfortunately I did not find it practical at all. There seemed to be no categories or given options, only a box where one can write words and push 'search'. This way it takes quite a while to find what kind of card sets there are in the first place. It is all about how well the user is able to figure out the best search words to find what he/she wills. The problem is naturally the moments when one does not have any specific word in mind, but would just like to randomly roam around.

LEARNING WORDS

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Quizlet has all the upsides and downsides the normal flashcards do. Or almost. Instead of sitting down and writing your own cards, you can just go around and find sets that can just as well surprise you, amuse you, or simply drive you crazy. The quality of card sets varies so much that you can never know what you will find. You may learn words that you even did not know that exist. Or then you can just sit down and write your own cards like back in the days. That helps you to concentrate on words you yourself find important and in addition you have all those little games you can play with them.

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I would still not recommend Quizlet for someone who just wants to learn a language or specific vocabulary. At least if the person is not willing to write the card sets herself/himself or if he is not part of some community. Otherwise the endless number of themes and cards sets is just too random. A lone student ends easily up going through card sets which does not have any clear theme or order and, what is worse, it is sometimes even difficult to tell if all the words are correct.

The games are plain and simple, and they work well, if based on a proper card set. The most problematic one is that where the user needs to write down the answer, as the app does not understand synonyms or if the form is not exactly the same. Perhaps it can still be helpful when repeating the words already known.

GENERAL USABILITY

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Quizlet is not amazing in anything it does, but at the same time it manages to do everything pretty well. It is trustworthy and intuitive enough, so that one learns pretty fast how everything works. I should really keep in mind that it is totally free, so I should not be too eager to compare it to my previous test app Mondly's flashing and jumping details. There are naturally ads, but they are relatively small and inconspicuous. Sometimes that can even be a problem, as they may be confusingly hidden in the middle of the cards.

The main problem is the search feature like I already mentioned. However, as it stands in the middle of everything, it cannot be emphasized enough. Search options, categories, popular searches, or almost anything would make the search more pleasant.

If the cards are just plain word cards, the games turn quite ascetic. As one can see from the screen shots above, where the user is playing the word games, the view becomes a bit too minimalistic. Of course they are nothing but flashcards, but still..

OVERALL VERDICT

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If I have been too critical with Quizlet, which is already proven to be successful, it is because it just did not meet the criteria I had in mind. However, that does not in any case mean that it could not meet the criteria of others. Like I have said, I would not start learning a new language or vocabulary with Quizlet. That is because for this purpose only it is just too random with its thousands of card sets and their strongly varying quality. But that does not mean I did not have fun with the app.

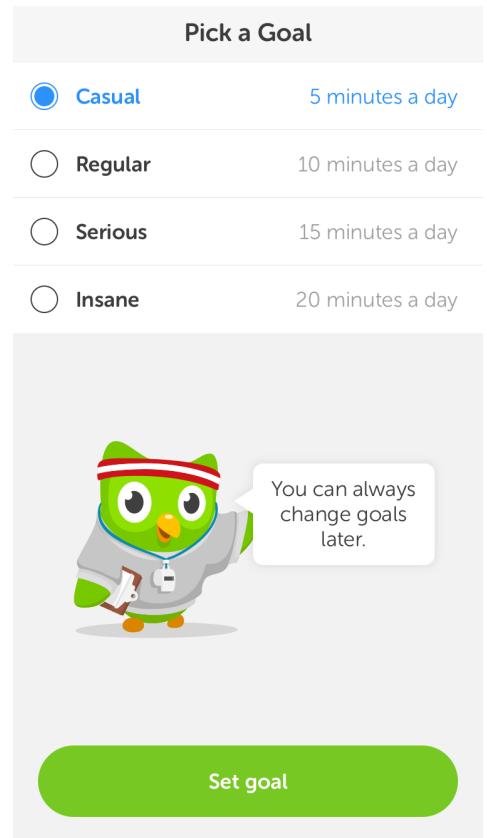
I can think several different groups of people who would really enjoy Quizlet. The first that comes to my mind is the very same people who just love different kinds of quizzes. In Quizlet there is an endless amount of themes and sets to test your knowledge. You can even make ones yourself. The other obvious group is students who can really benefit from the app. One can do courses and exercises for students to practise and for this purpose Quizlet is a really good fit.

One important factor in Quizlet is its interactivity and sense of community. I believe that is also the main reason behind its popularity. If the downside of this do-it-yourself aspect is the varying quality of the learning material, the upsides are clear too. You can have fun making sets up and sharing them and exploring the ones of others.

It can also be just really fun strolling around the vast amount of quizzes. One can never know what is there to find and with a good (or actually even better with bad) sense of humor you will never get bored. Namely, there seems to be quite a bunch of teenagers writing questionable card sets. In this sense it is also an absolute antidote for the more serious Mondly.

THINGS TO RECONSIDER

Like I have repeated, what I missed the most was the clarity and order. The search option is so crucial and at the same time so impractical. Clear themes and categories, perhaps even ratings and recommendations, would make the search so much easier. I can imagine that there are so much more to discover, but if one cannot think of it herself/himself, one will not be able to find it. The better organisation is something to really wished for.



The image shows a vocabulary quiz screen. The question is "Which of these is 'the apple'?" with a heart icon. There are four options: a woman (radio button selected), a boy in a cap (radio button), a red apple (radio button), and a man with a beard (radio button). Below the options are two buttons: "CHECK" and "LEARN".

The image shows a grammar exercise screen. It features a cartoon woman holding a silver platter. A speech bubble says "Je suis rouge!". Below it is a dashed box containing the text "Translate what she said". At the bottom are several words in boxes: "red", "man", "An", "I", "You", "girl", and "am". A "CHECK" button is at the bottom.

The image shows the Duolingo dashboard. At the top, there are icons for France (blue and red), a fire (orange), a plant (green), and a person (blue). The progress bar is at 9%. On the right, there are five circular icons with labels: "Basics 1" (1/4), "Basics 2" (0/5), "Phrases" (0/4), "Food" (0/7), and "Animals" (0/5). At the bottom are navigation icons: "Learn" (blue), "Rewards" (green), "Talk" (pink), "Profile" (purple), and "Marketplace" (yellow).



FIRST IMPRESSION

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I fell immediately in love with the friendly looking owl. From the first blick I got the feeling that Duolingo is an app with which I want to learn. There was nothing dubious about this app. It is for learning different languages accompanied by lovely, video game-like visuals and guarantee of freedom of charge.

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Someone could ask if Duolingo is already too cute and video game-like, but on the other hand the pictures are so well drawn that they can only be made by true professionals. That must be a good sign.

LAUNCH

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My high demanding first impression kept its promise when I turned Duolingo on. It was just extremely smooth and beautiful. Every picture was a real pleasure for my eyes. It reminded me of a well drawn cartoon or video game.

But it was not only the visuals. There were always the right amount of things happening with the right pace. The app starts with just few questions. One needs to choose the language to learn from a huge amount of options and the starting level. I really loved the feature that the users get tested if they do not want to start from scratch. The app itself used German in the beginning but then suddenly changed to English, which was a bit strange, but did not bother me that much.

The second step is to choose the daily amount of learning in minutes. Still the friendly owl calms the user down by saying that he/she can change the option anytime. Everything is all the time totally clear and uncomplicated.

After the first steps, the user gets right away in action. The exercises are very intuitive and fun, but still the best part is all along the way the beautifully drawn characters. At some point one is almost forced to register, but also that happens so smoothly and fast that it does not disturb at all. On the contrary, it feels like the only right thing to do. I did not want to leave these scenes ever again.

LEARNING WORDS

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Learning words with Duolingo is just fun. The exercises are intuitive and addictive, and they vary enough to keep the experience living. The variations go from combining pictures with words to writing and pronouncing answers. One is also promised a real conversation bot which will open after a certain amount of studying. The value of the beautiful graphics should not be underestimated. It is always worthwhile to complete an exercise and see the new funny characters.

There were few features that I found particularly successful. First, the exercises are clearly gathered in groups after the theme or grammatical aspect. It is very easy to follow one's development and to check what is there to come. Second, there is always an audio pronunciation following the words. Third, the app keeps track of the user's mistakes and tends to return to the weak points making sure that nothing important will be missed. All in all, I found the app very tempting and motivating.

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The first doubt about the app I had after finishing my first lesson. Suddenly there was a text saying that I was now 9% fluent in French. This was after five minutes of learning! I had learned just a couple of words like "man", "woman", "boy", "girl", "I", "the" and "a". Of course the text was there to motivate me, but unfortunately the effect was totally the opposite. If I had already learned one tenth of what this app considered as "fluent French", I would never get very far.

Naturally the question is how seriously one should take these kind of remarks that are made with good intentions, but I still could not totally leave it. This doubt that had risen goes hand in hand with the app's cute or even childish cover. Is this all even a bit too nice looking? Can I really learn something with this lovely owl? Compared to Mondly's seriousness, there was something slightly unconvincing in the air.

GENERAL USABILITY

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Everything worked smooth and intuitive. It is really easy to navigate the app and find what one is looking for. There was not perhaps one moment when I was lost or confused. One time after another, Duolingo seems to find the right balance in texts, pictures and options. It is simply a pure pleasure to use Duolingo, so in this sense they really got their UX right.

The usual problem with free apps is of course the ads and Duolingo has a fair share of them too. I have to say that they are even more violent and disruptive than usually. After every exercises comes a whole-screen ad which one needs to click away. The worst moment was when my whole phone was captured by a trailer of a game which I was able to turn off only after quite a long while. This experience was enough to convince me that the only way to proceed with the app and still keep my sanity is to pay the premium price. The prices were relatively high in comparison to other apps but somehow the beauty and great functionality managed to convince me that it would not be a total robbery.

OVERALL VERDICT

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Like I have already written several times, Duolingo is a real beauty and its temptation is very difficult to resist. It looks good and works well, so in those senses there is not much to do better. If there is a problem, it is more in the general concept itself. If there is one in the first place..

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Duolingo does not only look like a game. It is also, in some sense, a game. There is nothing new in getting points when learning a language with an app. What I find a novel instead is the gem feature. One can collect gems for example by watching ads or paying real money and with them one is able to buy accessory or more energy. Yes, exactly. Duolingo is like a game. The user has his/her heart there in the corner like in old video games and the shield around the heart disappears by every mistake. After losing it all, one needs to have a pause or buy more shield with the gems. Perhaps that is a good way to motivate people to learn faster and better, but it still gives rise to questions.

Is Duolingo too beautiful, too much fun and too much like a video game in order to be taken seriously as an educational app? Perhaps for some people, but I am sure that there is enough of them who love it just like I do. If I wanted to learn a new language, I would most likely turn to Duolingo even when its extremely annoying ads or, alternatively, relatively high price would make me consider. Perhaps it is just a brilliant idea to build a game around the learning experience. It must not be that it hinders the learning part in anyway. One must try to find out.

THINGS TO RECONSIDER

I cannot really think anything that I would do better except for the mad text that was telling me that I am not too far from being fluent in French. All the other negative points or questions that I have posed are results of conscious decisions made by the designers. They are there for a good reason even if they do not please everyone.