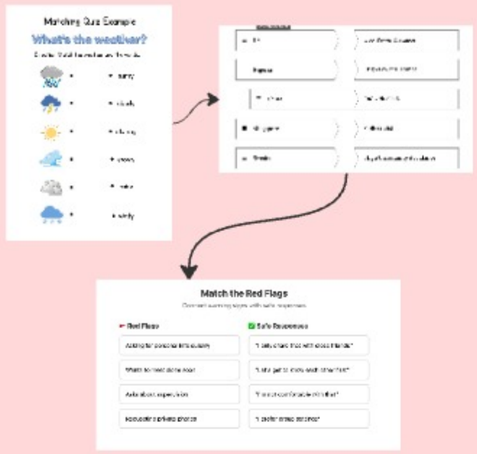
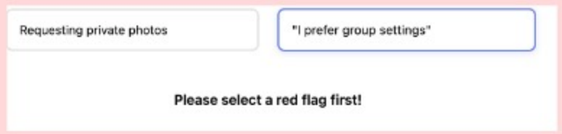
Gamification



I took inspiration from simple matching activities commonly found in children's workbooks, where users match one item to another in a clear and straightforward way.

I also noticed that Brightspace uses a similar matching format, but from experience, I found dragging and rearranging items could sometimes feel sticky or frustrating, especially when using a trackpad.

To avoid this, I chose a simpler interaction where users click an item on the left and then select the matching response on the right. This approach kept the interaction intuitive and reduced unnecessary friction, allowing users to focus on choosing the appropriate responses rather than struggling with the game itself.



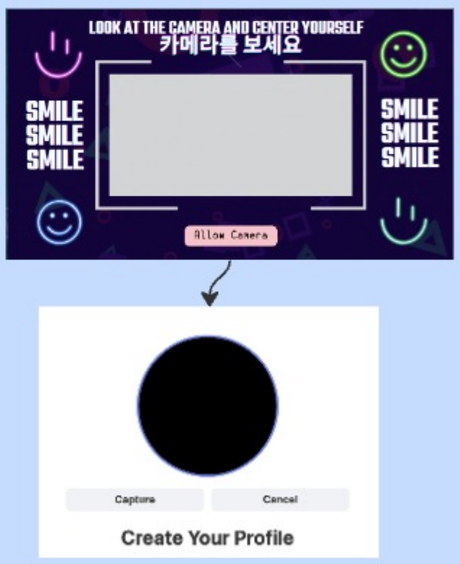
This constraint was designed to reflect how real conversations unfold. By requiring the red flag to be selected first, the interaction reinforces cause-and-effect thinking and ensures users recognise a warning sign before deciding how to respond. This makes the scenario feel more logical while encouraging deliberate rather than random choices.

Inspiration

I took inspiration from one of the seniors works titled "Let's Play Squid AI", where users were asked to take an image enter a player number, similar to how contestants are identified in Squid Game.

Even though it was a small interaction, it made the experience feel more personal and immersive, as it encouraged users to see themselves as part of the scenario rather than just an observer.

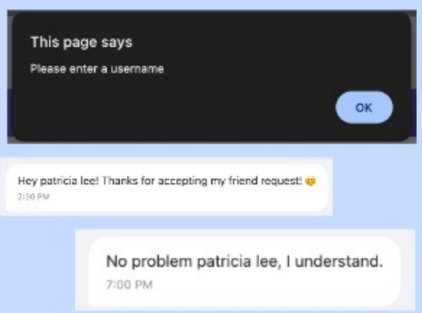
I applied this idea by framing my experience like the setup of a real social media account. By asking users to "customise" their profile at the start, i thought the interaction would feel more realistic and relatable. This helped users ease into the experience and made the later scenarios feel closer to real online situations, rather than completely fictional.



For the profile picture, I chose a circular frame so the interaction felt intuitive, as this is how profile images usually appear on social media. It also allowed users to centre themselves naturally when selecting or cropping their image.

I also noticed a design constraint in the "Let's Play Squid AI" game during the player number input. The game only allowed a specific format, limiting the input to three numbers and preventing the use of letters or symbols.

Although this was a small detail, it made the interaction feel more controlled and intentional. It helped guide the user while still keeping the experience simple and immersive. This observation influenced how I thought about user input in my own project, showing how small constraints can reduce confusion and keep users focused on the experience rather than the interface.

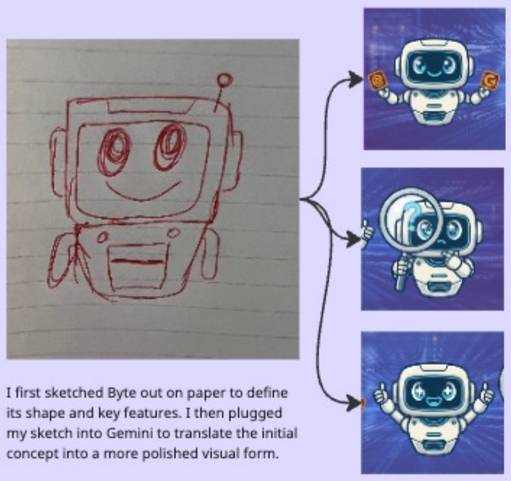


However, since usernames can include letters, numbers, and some special characters, I didn't feel the need to apply strict input constraints in my own project. I did consider limiting the input to only certain symbols, such as full stops or underscores, but ultimately decided against it, as this wasn't a priority for the overall experience.

Users were also not required to upload a profile picture. The only constraint I chose to enforce was the presence of a username, as this was essential for the experience. Alexandra uses the username directly within the chat conversations, allowing interactions to feel more personal, tailored, and realistic.

By doing this, I was able to focus on making the interaction feel simpler, rather than introducing restrictions that did not significantly contribute to the learning outcome.

The use of a mascot (Byte)



I first sketched Byte out on paper to define its shape and key features. I then plugged my sketch into Gemini to translate the initial concept into a more polished visual form.

Prompted Gemini to generate various expressions

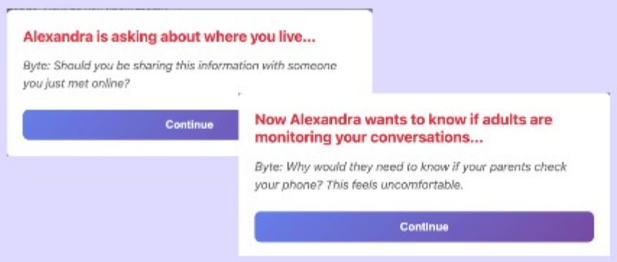
Why Byte

Byte is designed as a cute robot character. When exploring different visual directions, I realised that generating human characters with consistent features and expressions could become difficult and unpredictable, especially when repeatedly prompting AI. Choosing a robot helped avoid these inconsistencies while still allowing for a wide range of expressive emotions through the face (screen of the robot).

Beyond practical considerations, the robot form also felt conceptually appropriate. Byte is meant to exist as a figment of the social media space and something that belongs within the app itself rather than the real world. As a non-human character, Byte can guide, and more importantly interrupt/comment on interactions without feeling intrusive.

Especially when navigating environments like social media, guidance plays a crucial role in shaping how users interpret and respond to what they encounter. Similar to how people are influenced by their friends and the people around them. Byte is designed to take on the role of a trusted companion, much like said friend, who walks the user through different stages of the experience, offering timely guidance and reflection.

Byte in Action



Rather than presenting advice in a detached or instructional manner, Byte appears organically throughout the journey. For instance, during moments of heightened tension within a chat conversation, Byte intervenes through short cutscenes to pause the interaction and provide perspective, prompting users to reconsider their assumptions and be careful with their next choice.

Beyond these moments, Byte also functions as a narrative anchor between the activities, lessons, and minigames, helping to contextualise each segment and maintain continuity across the experience. I went with this approach as I felt it allows for guidance to feel more natural and embedded reinforcing learning through subtle interaction rather than direct instruction right away.

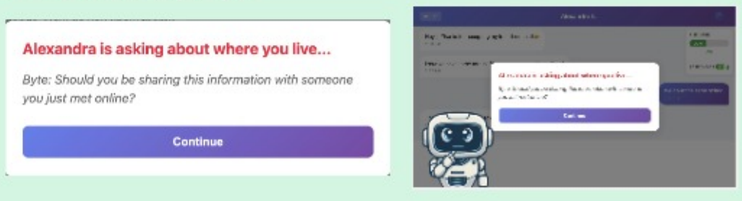
User Tester findings

To improve my project, I ran a few user testing sessions to see how people actually interacted with the design. Hearing their thoughts and watching how they interacted with it helped me understand what was working and what wasn't. The feedback I gathered was used to refine the design, reduce friction, and make the overall experience feel smoother and more engaging. User testing was especially helpful in highlighting areas where users felt confused, slowed down, or lost interest. These insights allowed me to make more thoughtful changes where needed, ensuring the final experience felt clearer, and more enjoyable.

Flipcards

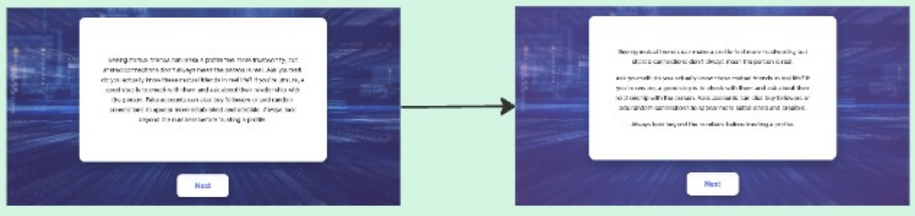
One key piece of feedback was that the "click to learn more" prompt on my flip cards was not obvious enough. Many users found it easier to simply click "next" without realising they could flip the cards to access more information. To address this, I changed the prompt colour from a light grey to a more attention-grabbing red and added a square bracket to frame the text, making it stand out more clearly as an interactive element. This helped signal to users that the cards were clickable.

Cutscene Pop-ups



Another change I made was adding an image of Byte into the cutscenes of the text activity. Byte was designed to offer perspective and guidance during these moments, but during testing, many users did not realise that Byte was the one speaking, even though the dialogue was labelled "Byte: comment." To address this, I added an overlay of Byte in a thinking pose within the cutscene pop-up. This visual cue draws more attention to the content and makes it immediately clear that the message is coming from Byte, helping users better understand the role Byte plays in the experience.

Flipcards Paragraphing



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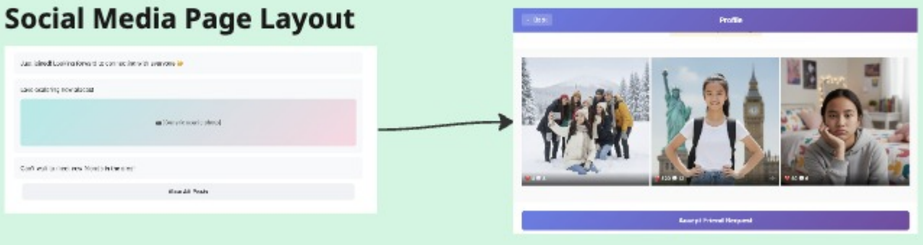
Social Media Page Layout



The original social media profile was optimised for vertical scrolling, so the posts were designed in a landscape format. However, during user testing, I received feedback that the images were difficult to see clearly at a glance. Users felt they had to spend more time examining each post to understand the content, as they needed to click to see the full post. Based on this feedback, I decided to change the images to a square format so they would be easier to view quickly. I took inspiration from Instagram, where posts are organised in a grid layout, allowing users to see all content at a glance. This change improved visibility, made the profile feel more familiar (as it was similar to an existing apps layout), and helped users engage with the content more intuitively. (e.g click to enlarge and see caption etc).