

The original idea

My initial idea was to create an interactive game that followed a user as they set up a social media account and started talking to someone they didn't really know. The experience was meant to feel familiar, like how people normally use social media, so nothing seemed risky at first.

I wanted the scenario to reflect common online risks that happen in everyday digital spaces, especially on social media. Generative AI plays a big role in this, as it makes it extremely easy to create convincing fake profiles. In the game, Alex's profile was made up using AI-generated images and details to show how someone can pose as a real person without proper identification and still appear believable.

As the interaction continued, the user began chatting with Alex, who shared mutual friends with them. This was intentional, as people tend to trust others more when they appear socially connected. Through different choices in the conversation, the user had to decide what to share and how to respond, which showed how small, normal decisions can slowly lead to issues like manipulation.

Rather than explaining everything upfront, the experience let users learn as they went. Short interactive questions were included to help users think back on earlier situations, and simple visual cues like green ticks were used to acknowledge safer choices. This kept the experience engaging without making it feel like a lesson, while still reinforcing awareness around online safety.

Elements

Minigame (texting)

The first part of my experience opens with a texting activity using a fake profile, Alexandra. I wanted to immediately draw users in with a fun, interactive scenario where they could select different reply options and see Alexandra respond accordingly. Even when users chose the “correct” option by pushing her away, I designed Alexandra to remain persistent and continue suggesting things like meeting up. This was intentional, as it reflects how, in real-life situations, perpetrators often continue to push boundaries rather than backing off immediately.

This allowed users to have the autonomy to make their own decisions while experiencing the consequences of those choices in a simulated environment.

Quiz/Testing retention

I tested retention through short “quizzes”, but made a conscious decision not to use multiple-choice questions, as that felt like it defeated the purpose of the experience. Instead, I wanted these moments to feel less like an assessment and more like a quick self-check, encouraging users to actively think about what they had just learned rather than simply selecting an obvious answer. This helped reinforce understanding while keeping the experience engaging and low pressure.



Mini Lesson

I wanted to introduce bite-sized content without making the experience feel like a formal lesson where information was being directly taught or explained. To achieve this, I decided to use flip cards, similar to how flashcards are used when studying, with a short title on the front and more detailed information on the back.



Design Rationale

Tiny5 1 style | Stefan Schmidt

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought

When considering typography for my design, I initially wanted to use a pixel-style font to match the overall aesthetic. However, I quickly realised that using a pixel font for longer paragraphs made the text difficult to read.

I explored several pixel fonts on Google Fonts and found that some were overly blocky, which made even short words hard to read. As a result, I chose Jersey 10, as it was more legible while still fitting the pixel-inspired style. I also decided to limit the use of the pixel font to headers and key UI elements, such as the front of the flip cards, Byte's name tag, and the skip button. For larger bodies of text, I avoided using the pixel font altogether to prioritise readability and ensure a more comfortable reading experience.

Jersey 10

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted

Profile Picture

Skip →

RISK LEVEL

LOW

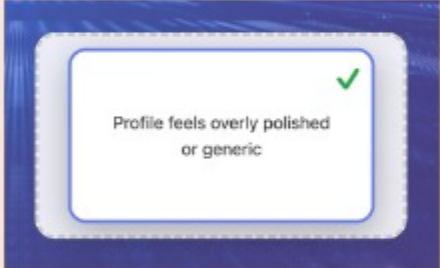
Low

SAFE CHOICES 0

I decided to include a risk meter at the top left of the screen so users could track their progress and see, in real time, how their choices were affecting the outcome. I didn't want users to have to wait until the end of the game or experience to understand whether they were making the right decisions. By providing instant feedback, the risk meter helps users reflect on their choices as they play, reinforces learning moments, and keeps them more engaged throughout the experience.



I chose to make the final section of the experience non-skippable, as it provides closure and reinforces the learning outcomes from the choices users made earlier. This ensured that users reflected on their actions rather than moving on too quickly.



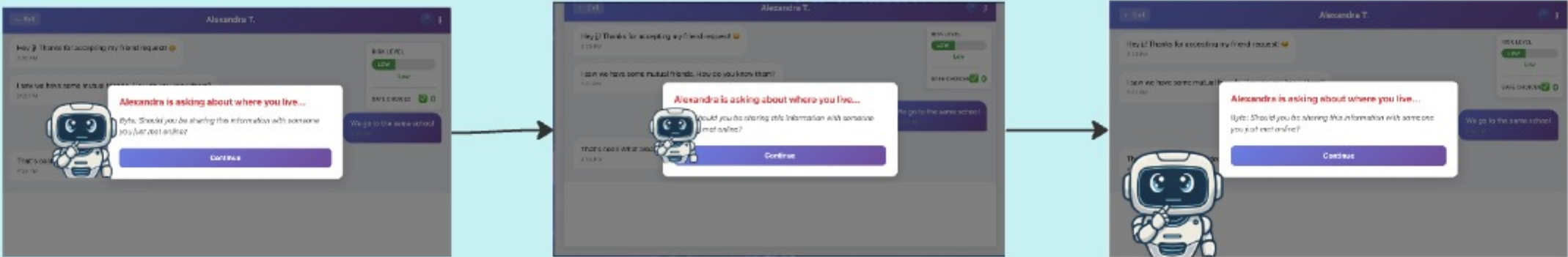
Rather than only giving users a score at the end of the activity, I decided to build instant gratification directly into the experience whenever users made the correct choices. This allowed users to keep track of their progress in real time and better understand how their decisions were affecting the outcome. By providing immediate reinforcement, the activity felt more engaging and rewarding, which helped incentivise users to stay attentive and make more thoughtful choices throughout the experience.



When considering feedback within the activity, I wanted to make interactions as obvious and clear as possible. For example, instead of only showing a tick when a user selected an option, I designed the box to slightly shrink in size and slightly grey out once it was selected.

This provided a stronger visual cue that the action had been registered. Personally, I find interactions clearer when there is more immediate feedback, similar to how buttons often change appearance when hovered over. This approach helped make selections feel more responsive and reduced uncertainty for users.

Challenges I Faced



As mentioned in my user testing feedback, it was not obvious enough that Byte was speaking during the cutscenes in the text activity. To address this, I initially wanted to overlay Byte on the screen to make it clearer that the dialogue was coming from him. However, because my project was designed in a separate file (not yet uploaded onto the iframe), loading it into the iframe caused layout issues, and the overlay ended up covering parts of the pop-up. Additionally, since the bottom of the Byte icon was flat, it did not align well across pop-ups with different widths, which made the layout look awkward.

Instead of keeping Byte as a small floating icon, I decided to make him larger and flush to the bottom of the screen. This turned out to be a win-win situation. Not only did it solve the alignment and layout issues, but it also made it far more obvious that Byte was speaking, as the character presence was much stronger overall. What initially felt like a technical setback ended up being a blessing in disguise that improved both clarity and the overall design of the screen.

Red Flags

Safe Responses

Asking for personal info quickly

"I only share that with close friends"

Wants to meet alone soon

"Let's get to know each other first"

Asks about supervision

"I'm not comfortable with that"

Requesting private photos

"I prefer group settings"



Another challenge I faced was finding alternatives to traditional multiple-choice questions for the gamification aspect of the experience. While reviewing past projects, I noticed that many relied heavily on MCQs to test user knowledge, but this felt too much like a test to me. I wanted the experience to feel less formal and evaluative, and more interactive and engaging. To achieve this, I integrated three different interaction types: a matching game, a drag-and-drop activity, and a short, quick check where users selected and submitted their answers. These interactions helped test users' understanding in a more playful and natural way, while still reinforcing key learning points.