Dinkum
Skill Mastery System

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Contents

High Level Summary

System Essence Statement

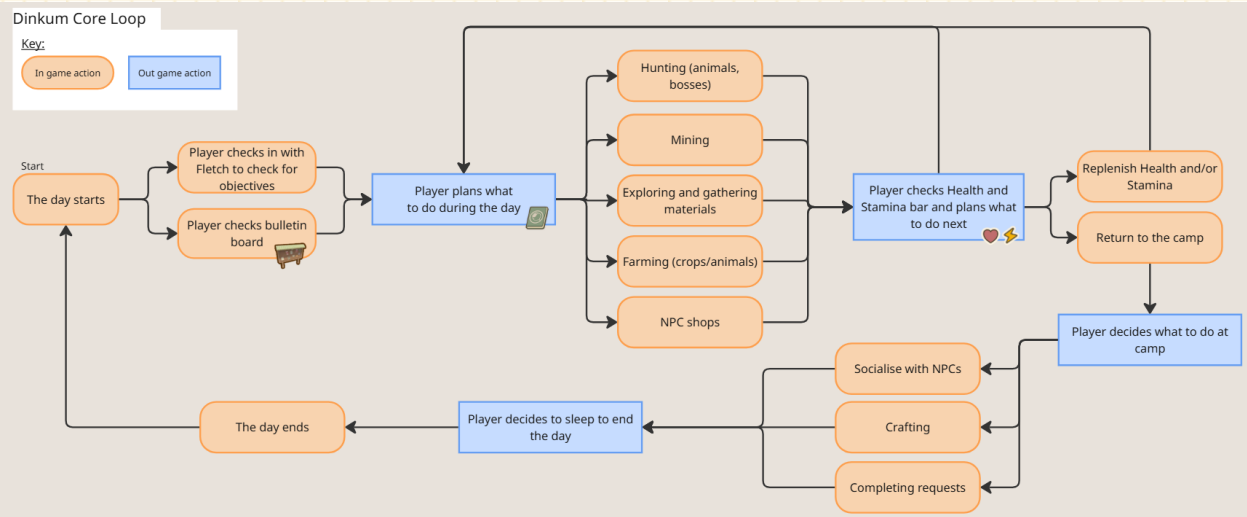
The Skill Mastery system deepens player progression beyond licenses, offering long-term goals and specialization. By unlocking specific skill-based bouses, players can shape their own strengths and tailor their playstyle to suit their needs as they develop the town.

Chosen Game Analysis

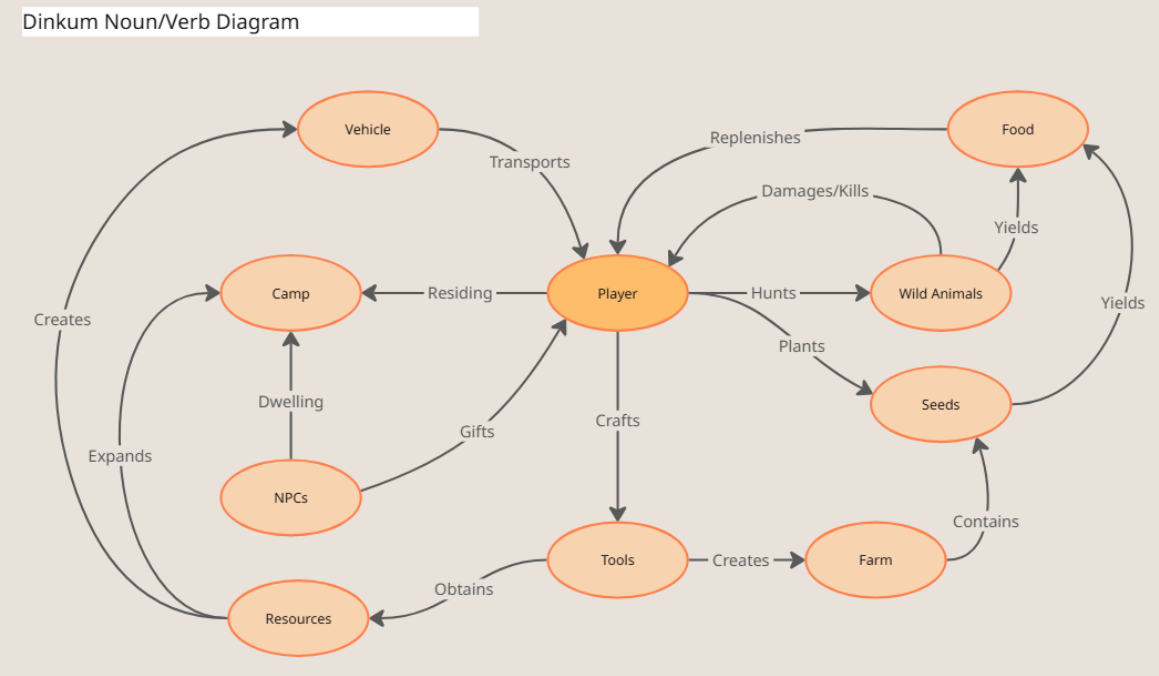
Dinkum is a life-sim, exploration crafting game. In Dinkum, players arrive on an island with limited resources and need to explore, mine, hunt and log for more materials to build and grow their base into a town with NPCs that they meet along the way. The core pillars in Dinkum are player freedom, character interaction, and creativity. The game's systems are formed with these core pillars in mind which result in a player experience centred around autonomy and expression.

Dinkum in-game screenshots

Dinkum's core loop focuses on daily routine and interacting with all the different activities and systems during the day to eventually develop a town and build an island life that suits the player.



Flow chart for Dinkum's core loop



Noun/Verb Diagram to illustrate interacting objects in the game

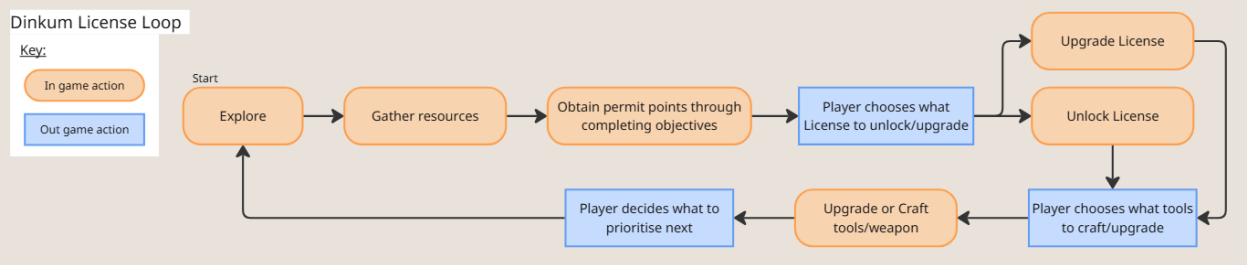
The player acts at the centre of Dinkum, being the main initiator for all activities; driving vehicles, interacting with NPCs, and hunting animals.

System Analysis of Chosen Game

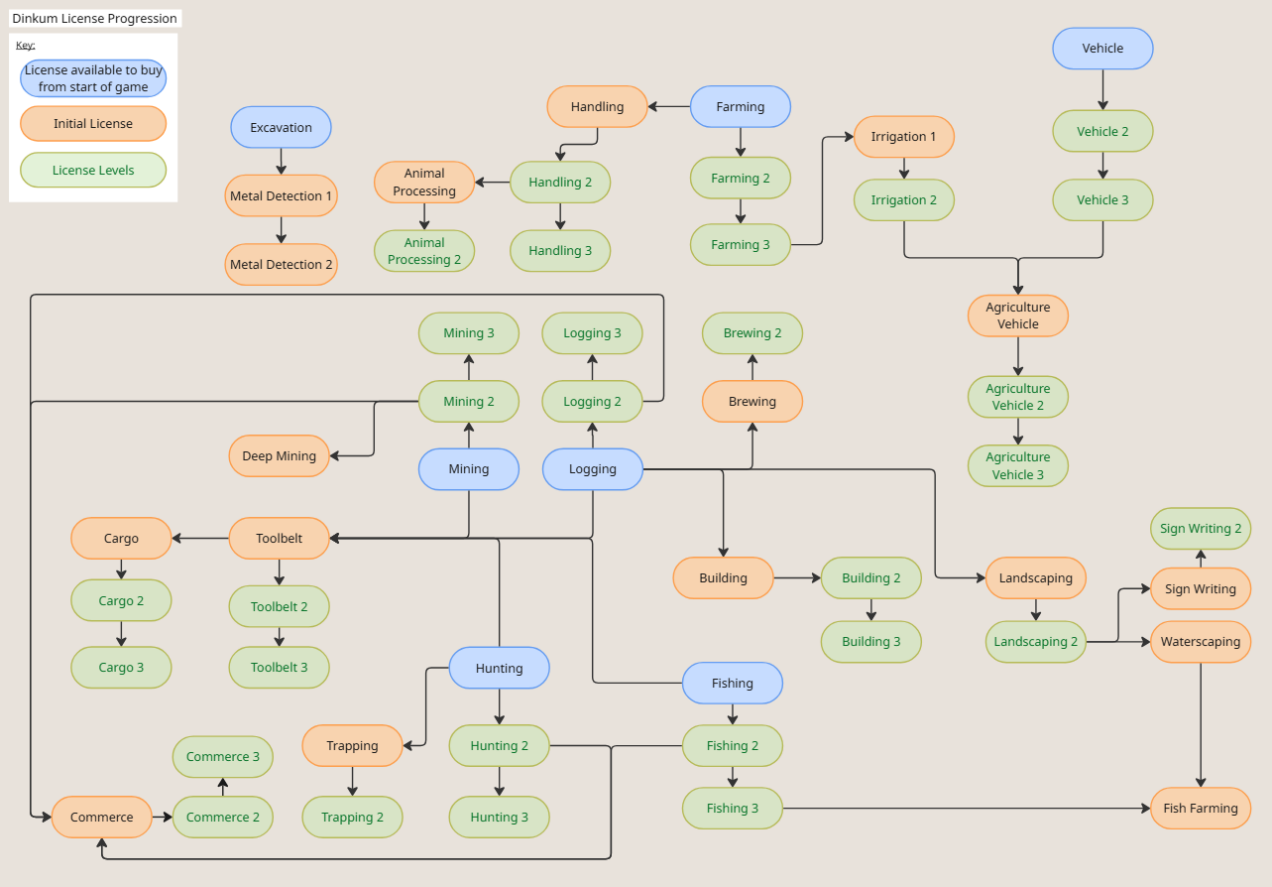
License System:

The License System acts as Dinkum's main form of progression. To unlock new activities or recipes, players need to purchase Licenses by using Permit Points; this is what drives the core loop as players progress through the game. For example, in order to get access to fishing, players need to purchase a Fishing License.

Each license acts as a progression gate and learning tool; by requiring the players to earn and invest Permit Points, the system encourages exploration and repeated use of mechanics. As the player acquires more Licenses, the amount of available activities increases, which creates a sense of growth.



Flow chart for Dinkum's License System



License Progression Diagram

Economy Systems:

The economy system is introduced organically as the player sells their gathered resources, such as mined ores or fish to the main shop on the island. The main economy system in Dinkum is the 'Dinks' which are the form of currency players and NPCs will use to sell and buy items. 'Permit Points' is a separate currency that players earn by completing specific requests from NPCs or in their journal.

Statistics for relevant economy and efficiency systems:

- 50 points base stamina
- 50 points base health (25 hearts displayed in the UI)
- Economy score % based on how much the player spends or sells in the town with the NPCs
- Banking system once the economy score reaches 35%

Skill System:

Dinkum has 6 'skills' (referred to as Core Skills in this document) which can be found in the 'Player Details' section of their journal (see UI design section for a visualisation). These 6 skills are: bug catching, farming, fishing, foraging, hunting, and mining. As the player reaches a higher level for these skills, less

stamina will be used. This is significant to consider for the Skill Mastery system as both of these systems affect the stamina.

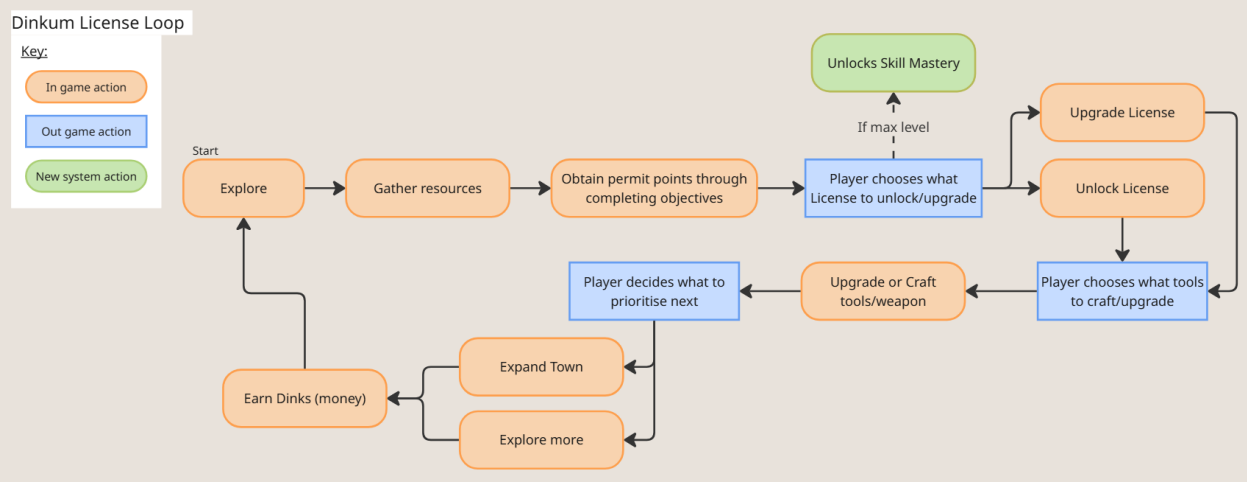
Problem Statement

Once players unlock most or all of the available Licenses, the primary sense of progression ends. Progression plateaus as there are no further upgrades, or new mechanics to push those same skills further. This means that the game shifts into a routine of repetition rather than progression, which weakens the player's engagement loop. The Skill Mastery System introduces a second layer of progression beyond licenses to address this problem.

How the System Addresses Problem

The Skill Mastery system is an additional progression system that expands upon the existing License system. This system introduces Skill Mastery buffs and benefits that allow players to have long-term goals and a higher degree of customisation for their gameplay.

In addition to this, the Skill Mastery system can potentially be expanded further than this and integrated with the town building systems, for example, it could lead to unlocking new building or decoration types for specific specialties.



Flow chart to for Dinkum's progression loop- and where the Skill Mastery System falls into it

Core System Concepts

Overview

The Skill Mastery System serves as a progression layer built on top of the existing License System. Players unlock Skill Mastery upon reaching maximum level of a License, and (if applicable) level 30 of the skill. Upon unlocking Mastery, players can then earn Mastery Experience Points (Mastery EXP) to fill a progress bar, which then unlocks a Skill Mastery Title. When the Skill Mastery Title is equipped on the player's profile, it grants the player the relevant unique buff for that skill. The Skill Mastery Titles able to be equipped by the player are limited to 2, which means there are only 2 active buffs/bonuses at any time.

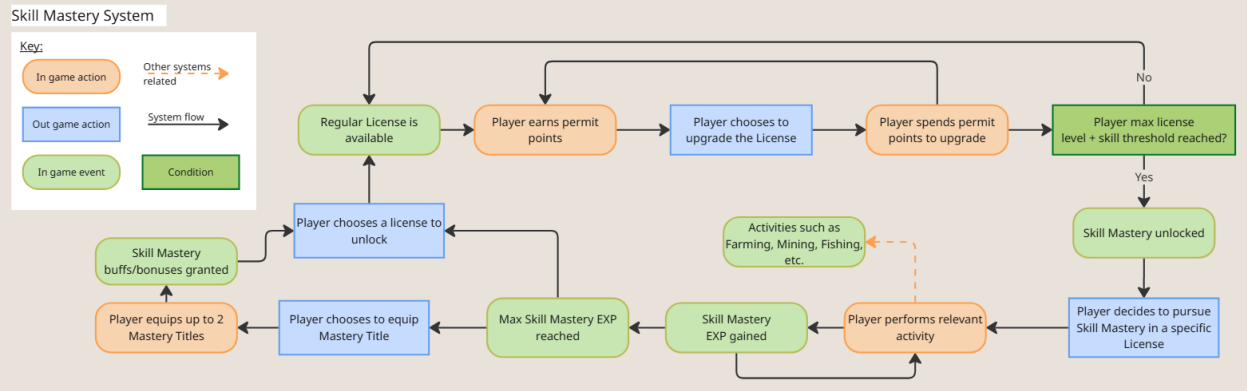
Integration with other systems

The Skill Mastery System is designed to complement and expand upon the existing systems at Dinkum's core; the related systems are named:

- License System: the foundation of this progression system
- Economy System: buffs and bonuses obtained from Skill Mastery directly affect the economy
- Stamina and Food Systems: Efficiency and stamina buffs obtained through Skill Mastery will directly interact with these subsystems and influence players' planning around them
- Crafting Systems: the Skill Mastery system will affect crafting as there are some buffs that grant the player lower costs to craft related items

The Skill Mastery system is extensible as it can be expanded further. There is the potential extension on this system for buildings or decorations that can be unlocked depending on the skill mastery of the player. For example, skills related to fishing or boating can unlock a specific boat dock building structure or decorations to add to a boat dock. The Skill Mastery system itself is an extension of the existing progression system in Dinkum, expanding the progression loop.

System Flow Diagram



Skill Mastery System Flow Diagram

System Rules

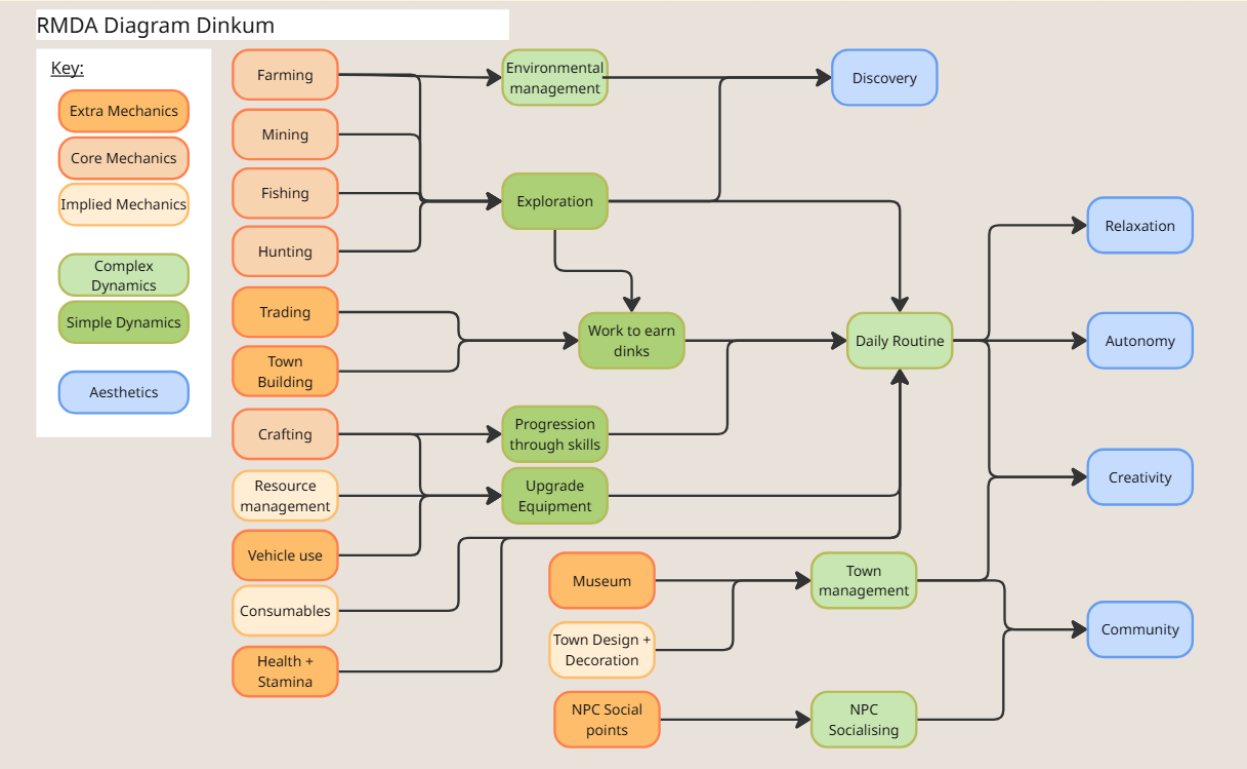
- To unlock: Max. Level license, and level 30 in the skill if one of the core skills
- After unlocking, Mastery Experience Points can be earned to fill up a progress bar
- Once that progress bar is filled, player earns Skill Mastery Title
- When the Skill Mastery Title is equipped on the player's profile, it grants the player the relevant unique buff for that skill.
- Specific Skill Mastery Bonuses can be found under the Design Outputs section in this document

Expected Player Experience

The Skill Mastery System enhances Dinkum's player experience by introducing ongoing goals that maintain engagement throughout the mid and late stages of gameplay. The Skill Mastery System contributes to gameplay by extending Dinkum's core activity loops with additional layers of progression. It

transforms existing mechanics into long-term motivational structures that sustain player engagement beyond the License system.

This RMDA diagram illustrates how each mechanic in Dinkum results in the player experience.



RMDA Diagram

Considering the aesthetics outlined in this RMDA diagram, the Skill Mastery system has been designed to foster these experiences for the player. As players transition from early to mid and late game, the Skill Mastery System provides new layers of motivation. In the early stages, players focus on earning Licenses and building their town. In the later stages, Skill Mastery introduces renewed goals that add depth to familiar routines.

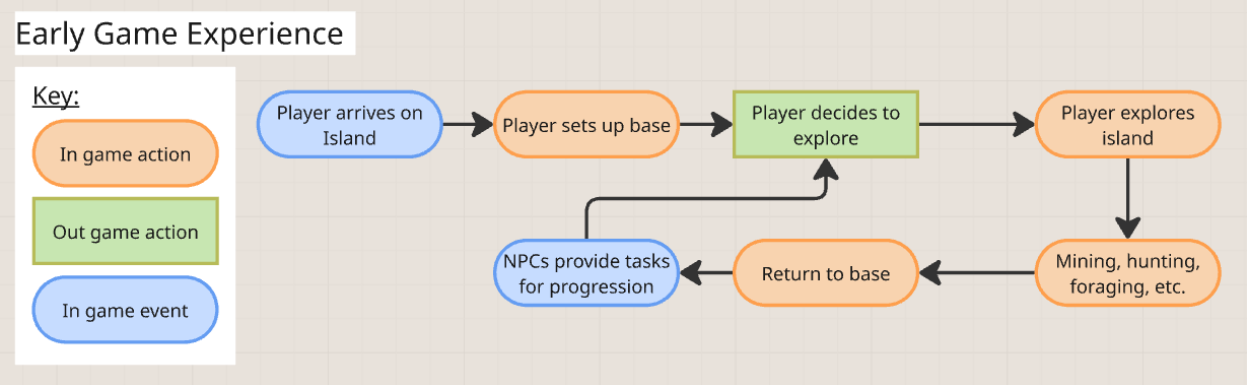
Players should experience the following through the addition of this novel system:

- Sustained progression: A sense of continued purpose after completing Licenses, preventing the late game plateau
- Specialisation and Creativity: The freedom to define their play style through chosen Mastery Titles
- Rewarded for consistency and engagement: The satisfaction of seeing long-term effort reflected in quality-of-life benefits that they can choose for themselves

The following hypothetical scenarios have been considered in relation to the impact of the Skill Mastery System on the player experience:

Early Game Experience

At the early game stage of the game, players are still familiarising themselves with the core systems in Dinkum; exploration, logging, mining, NPC relationship, crafting, and selling and buying items. The player will be motivated by curiosity and learning with the new systems they are introduced to. The player won't be interacting with the Skill Mastery System at this stage.

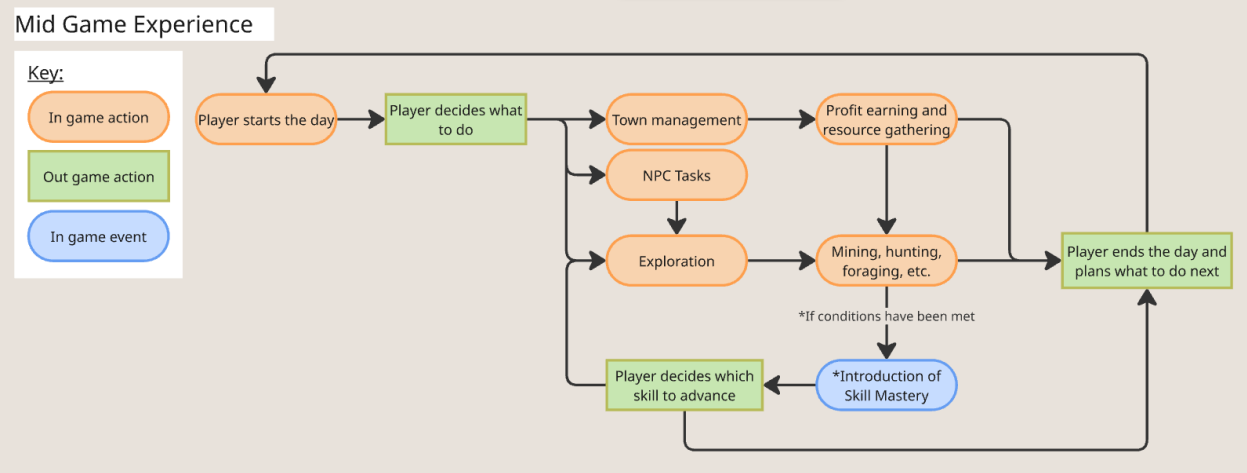


Early Game Experience Flow Diagram

Mid Game Experience

During the mid-game experience, this is where most players would experience reaching maximum levels for a lot of licenses, though not all. They would be interacting with more layered systems and finding their own playstyle and focus within the game. At this stage of the game the payer would also have some town development with different businesses and NPCs around, although maybe not all.

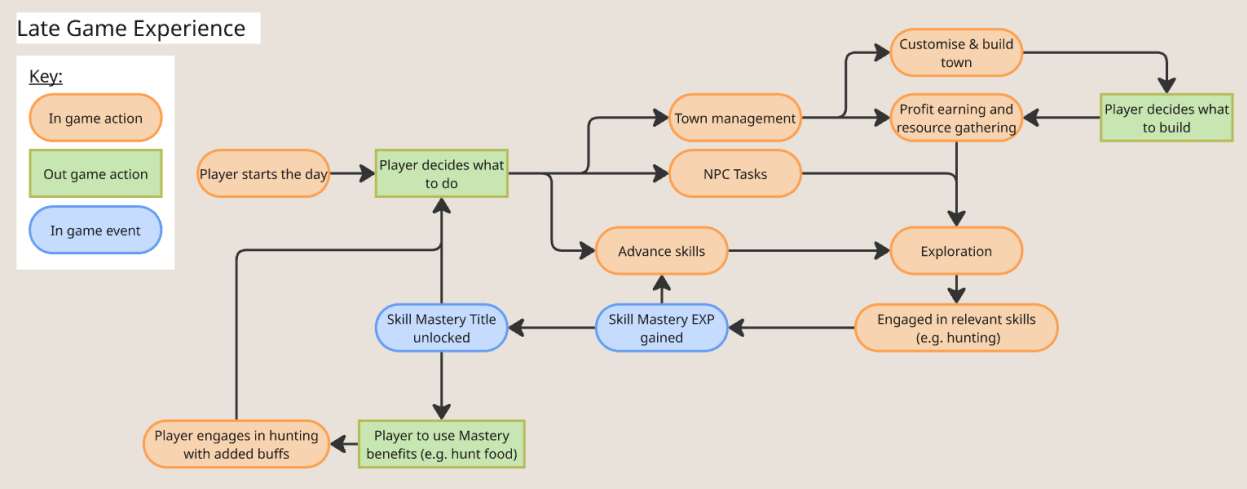
The Skill Mastery System would most likely be active here, the player will choose what they want to specialise in and begin earning Mastery EXP through repeated actions of the relevant activity. Since the player won't have reached the maximum level for all licenses or unlocked all the different aspects of gameplay full at this point, the system aims to give the player a maintained sense of creativity and freedom as they progress through the game as they have ongoing goals to work towards.



Mid Game Experience Flow Diagram

Late Game Experience

By the late-game player will have most of the town upgrades and license skills. This is where the Skill Mastery System becomes key, as instead of progression plateauing during this stage, it adds another layer of progression for the player to continue to aim for.



Late Game Experience Flow Diagram

Overall, the expected player experience focuses on motivation for development and achievements. Players should feel that the Skill Mastery System rewards their time and effort spent invested in doing different skills while furthering Dinkum's core themes of creativity and relaxed progression, which align with the aesthetics outlined in the RMDA diagram.

Game Research

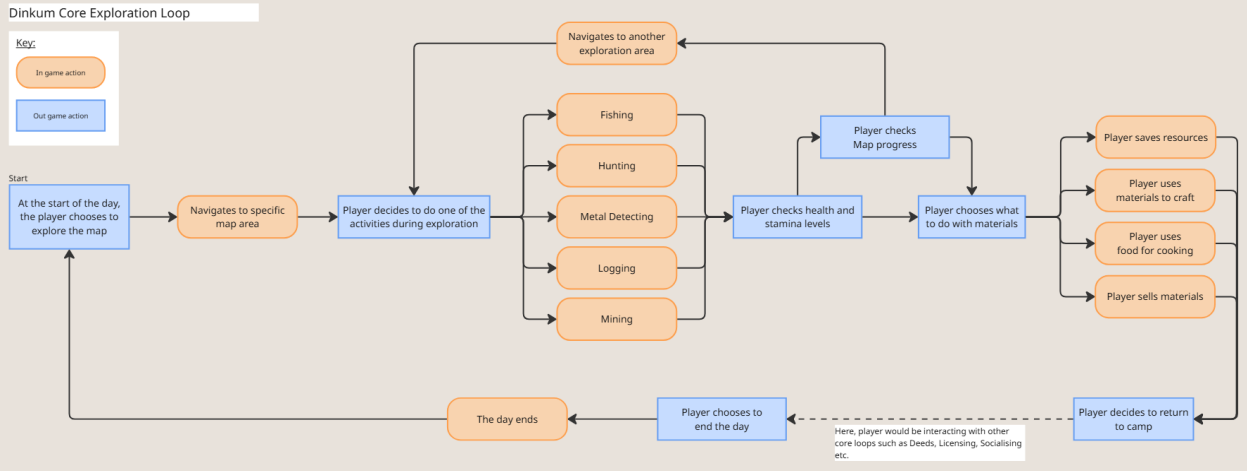
Chosen Game Research and Analysis

Dinkum is a life simulation games and was released as an Early Access game in July 2022, with Version 1.0 released in April 2025 for Windows and Nintendo Switch. The game is available in single player and co-op multiplayer. The core gameplay loop revolves around the farming, crafting, exploration, and community building. Players perform activities and plan their day to collect new items, earn Dinks, and expand the town. This loop engages the player with gradual progress and an emphasis on player autonomy.

Key Systems and Loops other than the License and progression systems include:

Exploration loop

Exploration forms one of Dinkum's core loops as it allows the player avenues to interact with the game's other core systems. The players explore the island and its various biomes to gather materials and discover new wildlife.



Crafting and Building

Crafting and building allows players to invest their gathered resources into tools, furniture, and town structures. Crafting supports the progression in Dinkum by enabling the player to gradually improve their tools and equipment whilst also maintaining town development as the player begins to become more efficient at gathering resources. This aspect of the game links with exploration and progression as the player grows more efficient in resource gathering.

Time of Day and Seasons

There are 4 seasons in a year in Dinkum, each season consisting of 28 days. Day starts at 7am and last until midnight at 12, where the time is considered ‘late’ during this ‘late’ time of night, the player’s stamina is reduced from the base of 50 to 5, significantly reducing the actions they can take. This means that stamina and daily routine are an important aspect to the core of the game.

NPC relationships

NPCs play an essential role in the narrative and gameplay progression. Through completing NPC requests, players can build a relationship with them and eventually invite the NPC to stay on the island with them once they reach the necessary threshold in their relationship points. Licenses, quests, crafting, and exploration all link to this aspect of Dinkum.

Design Considerations with Chosen Game

The Skill Mastery System has been designed to compliment Dinkum’s existing progression and economic systems while ensuring that new bonuses remain balanced and meaningful. The goal is to introduce a sense of growth in the late game, whilst maintaining Dinkum’s core gameplay pillars: resource management, economic stability, and stamina-based decision-making. Implementing this system would require some play-testing in order to fine-tune the buffs and bonuses, which will most likely see some adjustments due to differing player behaviour; however the following design considerations were made when designing the system in order to reduce the negative impacts of this as much as possible.

Progression and Pacing Balance

To preserve the balance of existing systems, each Skill Mastery Title buff is carefully balanced to feel rewarding without disrupting gameplay flow. Mastery bonuses are designed to provide steady growth that enhances the player's experience without making challenges in the game feel too easy.

- Timing-based buffs (such as those for Trapping or Animal Handling) provide players with improved control during specific actions. These time-based effects are capped at a maximum duration of 8 seconds to prevent gameplay from becoming too easy.
- Flat percentage-based bonuses are limited to a maximum of 25%, maintaining economic and gameplay balance.
- All buffs are designed to integrate seamlessly with the game's core mechanics and provide steady, long-term progression.

System	Effect of Skill Mastery System	Design consideration
Progression	Adds new 'Mastery' buffs beyond licenses	Prevent rapid progression by making EXP gain gradual and slow
Economy	Increased sale prices or efficiency in production for mastered skills	Cap economic bonuses (for example; in the commerce license)
Mechanical	Durability mechanic would be affected by new Mastery buffs	Limit stamina or durability buffs to certain skills/limit of number of buffs able to be active at any one time
Crafting	Improves crafting yield/Items have less cost to craft	Cap yield boost or create a yield boost with a certain % chance, instead of 100% yield boost each time

Economy Balance

The Commerce License required adjustment to accommodate the Skill Mastery layer. Its standard licenses bonuses at level 1/2/3 were reduced from 5/10/15% to 2/5/10%, reserving the 15% increase for the Commerce Skill Mastery bonus. This ensures that meaningful economic rewards are still attainable but gated behind higher progression milestones, preventing early-game imbalance.

To maintain overall economic stability, benefits that affect income generation such as crop yields, sale prices, or resource-gathering efficiency, are capped at 15% maximum. This approach safeguards against inflation of player profits and aims to maintain long-term balance across the game's economy, whilst still providing reasonable bonuses that reward the player.

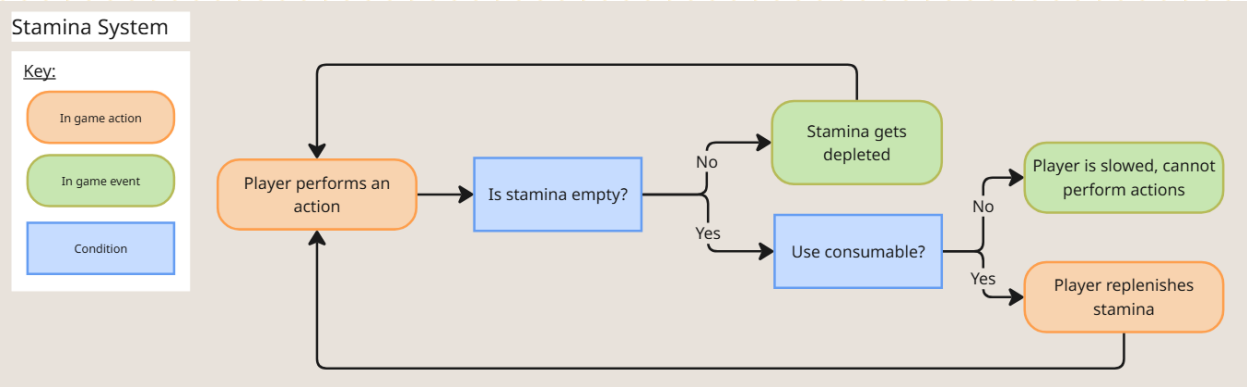
Below, values shown in the tables may differ from the latest game updates. Tables do not display all available items in game, what is shown is a limited number to illustrate economic impact.

Table for selling value of items with and without skill mastery

Item	Regular selling price	Brewer bonus selling price
Bottle Brush Brew	10,78	11,858
Wattle Brew	6,380	7,018
Item	**Regular selling price**	**Commerce bonus selling price**
Wattle Tea	1,595	1,834
Button Board	2,355	2,708
Bread	3,240	3,726
Monarch Butterfly	3,860	4,439
Cloth	5,150	5,922
Iron Piackaxe	9,062	10,421
Prime Roast	10,395	11,954

Stamina and Efficiency Balance

The player will only 'pass out' and lose tool durability and Dinks when the player's health reaches 0, the amount of stamina consumed has no impact on this. However, low or zero stamina will mean the player walks incredibly slow and cannot perform any actions. This means that managing the player vitals is important; this can be through food regeneration items, buffing items, and other consumables.



This means that stamina and food consumption are central to Dinkum's core decision-making loop. Because the management of stamina directly affects how players plan their daily activities, stamina-

related buffs must be applied conservatively. To maintain this design intent, stamina bonuses were originally designed to be restricted to 5–10% and applied only to specific skills, but the final design choice was to instead make stamina buffs add to the base value of stamina that the player has, and this additional value being capped at 15 points (due to how Core Skills reduce stamina cost at higher levels). This prevents players from becoming overly efficient and ensures that food and stamina management remain essential parts of gameplay, without being too limited during late-game.

Mechanic affected	Elements	Effect of Skill Mastery System
Stamina	Quantity, state, action	Increases the amount of stamina a player has, meaning players can do more things during the day if their skills are higher level
Movement	Quantity, spatial	Faster actions expand the exploration range
Fishing, Mining, Hunting, Farming	Action	Improves the efficiency of these actions

Similar Games Analysis

Dinkum is similar to both Animal Crossing and Stardew Valley, as they all fall under the life simulation game category and each title focuses on player-driven progression and creativity. This section analyses each game and evaluates the effectiveness of relevant systems, so these findings can be applied to the Skill Mastery system.

Animal Crossing: New Horizons

Animal Crossing: New Horizons was released in 2020 by Nintendo. The game focuses on gradual progression and gameplay based in real-time in relation to the player. Players unlock new tools, recipes and features through milestones and Nook Miles. The game's goals are largely open-ended to let the player decide what they want to do and the economy systems act as motivation for progression, this emphasises the aspect of player freedom and creativity and ensures the player experience remains tied to this core theme. NPC interactions are an important feature of Animal Crossing as Villagers will respond dynamically to the player behaviour, further emphasising a personalised experience through the game.

Stardew Valley

Stardew Valley is a farming simulation game developed by ConcernedApe in 2016. It combines open-ended exploration with economic and skill progression that focuses on player growth through farming skills and optimisation of those skills.

Progression in Stardew Valley is built around its 5 core mechanics; farming, mining, fishing, foraging, and combat. Each skill levels up through repeatedly performing the activity, with the maximum level being level 10. The economy in Stardew Valley is heavily based on the efficiency and planning of the player as the game expects the player to be able to manage their profits and farm structure. Relationships with villagers, and the potential to marry NPCs creates unique opportunities for players to personalise in-game events with these characters.

Similar Systems Analysis

In The Sims 4, players can develop a wide range of skills such as cooking, video gaming, and painting by repeatedly performing actions related to those skills, and unlock Mastery Perks for each of them. Each skill progresses from Level 1 to 10, with higher levels unlocking new interactions, recipes, or gameplay benefits. Upon reaching the required level, players gain access to unique Mastery Perks that act as special traits or abilities, granting significant advantages such as increased profit margins or faster skill performance.

(Image) The Sims 4 – Skill Mastery Perks

The system in The Sims 4 demonstrates the effectiveness of rewarding players for long-term engagement within a skill. By providing noticeable improvements upon reaching mastery, the game sustains player interest and offers a sense of achievement.

Another game that has a similar system is Stardew Valley. In this game, players improve various skills such as Farming, Mining, and Fishing through repeated use. At specific milestones, Level 5 and Level 10, players are presented with profession choices that permanently grant them bonuses and alter gameplay choices. For instance, reaching Level 5 in Farming allows players to choose between become a Tiller which grants a 10% increase to crop value, or a Rancher, which increases animal product value by 20%.

The profession system in Stardew Valley effectively introduces player choice and long-term strategy into skill progression. By offering branching paths, players are encouraged to specialise and define their character identity in the game.

(Image) Stardew Valley – Farming Level 5 Profession choices

Overall, both games implement 'Mastery' of skills in different ways. The sandbox nature of The Sims 4 allows these perks to be quite significant without the risk of ruining the in-game economy; for example,

Mastery Perks with monetary benefits can range anywhere between 100%-200% increase in profit. On the other hand, in Stardew Valley the benefits gained from Professions typically ranging between 10% and 25%, which maintains the balance of the in-game economy while still feeling rewarding. This structure ensures that progression continues to feel meaningful well into the late game and provides clear incentives for continued skill investment.

For Dinkum, these examples highlight the value of giving players the choice to specialise their skills and customise their gameplay, and the importance of balancing these additional bonuses for the games' economy systems. The Skill Mastery system should encourage long-term play by offering balanced rewards that enhance quality-of-life within the game, whilst also providing meaningful rewards and benefits to the player for their skill.

Academic Research

Self Determination Theory (SDT) can be used to explain player engagement and motivation for progression in games (Deci & Ryan, 2012). SDT proposed that individuals are naturally inclined towards growth and self-improvement, but the intrinsic tendency depends on the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) outlines the idea that fulfilling these needs are essential for intrinsic motivation, and if any of these are not fulfilled the motivation will decrease. This can be used in the context of games to understand player engagement and motivation.

Organismic Integration Theory (COT) can be used to explain why players respond differently to the same systems or mechanics, as some may be more self-driven while other players may need more explicit rewards or structures. There is a continuum of motivation that varies to different degrees:

- Amotivation
- Extrinsic Motivation:
    - External Regulation: External rewards/punishments drive behaviour
    - Introjected Regulation: Internal pressure, such as guilt or ego, guide motivation
    - Identified Regulation: Individual recognises and accepts the value of the behaviour as important
    - Integrated Regulation: Behaviours are fully assimilated with one's self and values, though still extrinsic
- Intrinsic Motivation: Internal rewards such as personal satisfaction or enjoyment

The Skill Mastery System extends Dinkum's sense of *intrinsic motivation* by satisfying the player's need for autonomy and competence, by allowing players to choose which skills to specialise in and rewarding the player visibly through mastery over time. This system sustains engagement through feelings of self-directed growth and motivation.

Industry Research

Lazzaro's framework identifies four emotional drivers that make games enjoyable:

- Hard fun – challenge, problem-solving, mastery
- Easy fun – curiosity, exploration and playfulness
- Serious fun – purposeful and meaningful goals
- People fun – social interaction, cooperation

Dinkum aligns most with easy fun and serious fun; Dinkum's appeal is rooted in its aspects of exploration and discovery. It has a sandbox-like structure that encourages players to build their own way and experiment with what they are given. The game also encourages long-term goals with farming and town development and activities that emphasise the sense of routine and personal achievement.

The Skill Mastery System reinforces serious fun by providing long-term goals that deepen the player's sense of progression and purpose. It also incorporates elements of both hard and easy fun; as players will grow their skills through gradual mastery but also encourage players to explore different play styles and experiment with all the varying activities.

Summary of How Research Guides Design

The design of the Skill Mastery System in Dinkum uses this research to understand player engagement and motivation, and progression design. From SDT's framework, the system emphasises autonomy by allowing players to freely choose which skills to master and how they wish to progress, supporting player agency and the ability to express their personal play style. The player can feel extrinsic rewards in addition to this by the benefits and bonuses provided by obtaining Skill Mastery. Competence is fulfilled through the gradual mastery process and relatedness is reinforced through NPCs.

Iterative Documentation

Design Outputs Iteration 1

The first iteration of the Skill Mastery System introduced the core concept of player-selected Mastery Titles, which would grant unique bonuses once a License reached its maximum level. At this stage, the focus was on exploring the idea itself rather than defining exact numerical increases or balance considerations. The iteration established the overall structure of the system but did not yet specify detailed percentages or skill-specific effects.

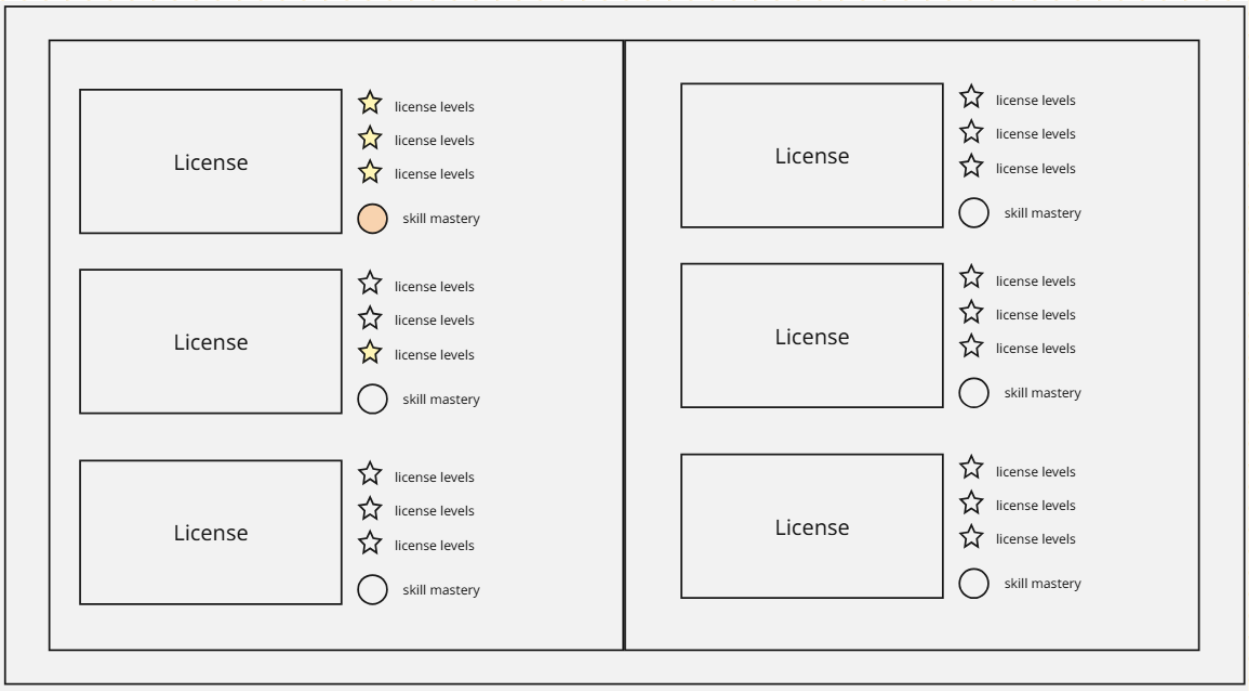
The following design outputs were created upon the initial iteration:

Skill Mastery table:

License	Skill Mastery Buff
Mining	Reduced stamina cost for mining actions
Deep Mining	Increased efficiency and reduced stamina usage in the Deep Mines
Logging	Enhanced stamina regeneration when logging
Fishing	Increased catch rate
Fish Farming	N/A
Excavation	Reduced stamina usage in excavation tasks
Metal Detecting	Increased detection range
Hunting	Reduced stamina usage when hit during hunting
Trapping	Increased efficiency and strength when trapping animals
Farming	Chance of a crop yield bonus
Irrigation	N/A
Animal Handling	Increased efficiency in leading animals and harvesting produce

License	Skill Mastery Buff
Toolbelt	N/A
Landscaping	Reduced material cost to craft landscaping items
Building	Reduced material cost to craft building items
Vehicle	Increased durability of vehicles
Commerce	15% more when selling items
Agriculture	N/A
Sign Writing	N/A
Water Scaping	N/A
Brewing	Faster processing time and increased selling price
Animal Processing	Faster processing time for goods
Cargo	N/A

UI Mock-up:



Iteration 1 Evaluation

An ‘overall level system’ that would be calculated by the total progress the player had made so far (town buildings, NPC relationships, skill levels, licenses unlocked, etc.) was considered as a way to balance when players could access Skill Mastery, but it was ultimately not adopted. The existing License and Mastery systems already provide clear indicators of progress and player growth. Introducing an additional overall level would add complexity without improving gameplay clarity or balance.

Specific values for the buffs and benefits needed to be designed, so this meant the design needed further refinement in the next iteration.

Design Outputs Iteration 2

The second iteration of the Skill Mastery System focused on refining the bonuses so that each Mastery Title better reflected the nature, pace, and function of its specific skill. Instead of using generalised % reduction/bonuses, Iteration 2 introduced skill-appropriate, individually balanced benefits.

This iteration resolved issues identified in Iteration 1 by ensuring bonuses were no longer too similar across all skills. Instead, each skill's Mastery Title was redesigned to match its gameplay loop and resource flow.

Skill Mastery Table

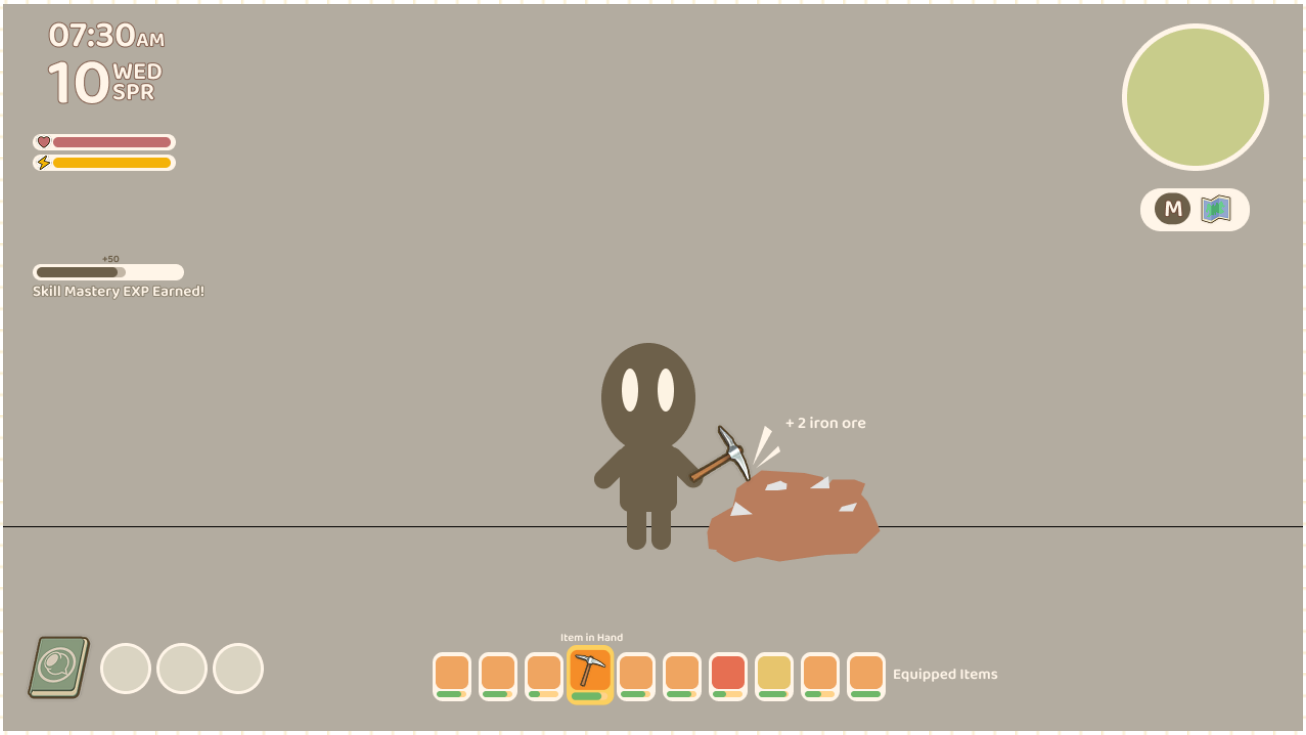
Some Licenses marked N/A as they relate to things like inventory size or other passive upgrades, rather than actionable player skills.

License	Skill Mastery Buff
Mining	10% reduced stamina cost for mining actions
Deep Mining	5% reduced stamina usage in the Deep Mines
Logging	Increased stamina 10% regeneration when logging
Fishing	5% Increased catch rate
Excavation	10% reduced stamina usage in excavation tasks
Metal Detecting	Increased detection range when using metal detector (+1 tile)
Hunting	5% reduced stamina cost if injured during hunt
Trapping	Increase strength when trapping animals (traps last +3 seconds)
Farming	+25% chance of a crop yield bonus
Animal Handling	Increased efficiency in leading animals (Animals will follow the player for longer +8 seconds when using animal whistle)
Building	5% Reduced material cost to craft building items
Vehicle	20% Increased durability of vehicles
Commerce	15% more when selling items
Brewing	10% Increased selling price
Animal Processing	Faster processing time for goods - 5% reduction of overall time
Fish Farming	N/A
Landscaping	N/A
Irrigation	N/A
Toolbelt	N/A
Agriculture	N/A
Sign Writing	N/A
Water Scaping	N/A
Cargo	N/A

UI Mock-ups

Made in Figma

Example of how Skill Mastery EXP will be earned in game:



Iteration 2 Evaluation

The Skill Mastery Title benefits are designed specifically for the type of benefit they provide.

This Skill Mastery System engages the player by allowing them to customise their playstyle while also providing tangible gameplay benefits. At different stages of the game, players might focus on various aspects of gameplay as they unlock new systems. For example, in the early game, players may focus on accessible skills such as Logging or Mining, but as they progress, they are introduced to a wider range of activities and Licenses.

Bonuses and economic benefits that can be gained from the Skill Mastery System are limited at 5-15% to remain within the scope of the balanced economy.

Design Outputs Iteration 3

In this iteration, stamina benefits were adjusted. With stamina affected bonuses, instead of a flat % increase, it would instead increase the base value of stamina. The player already naturally reduces stamina usage by levelling core skills (Mining, Hunting, Farming, Foraging), because of this, stamina affected buffs were changed to change base stamina points available instead of stamina cost.

The overall aim is to keep benefits capped at a certain value to not impact the balance of the pacing and daily routine. Play-testing would be needed to test how effective these bonuses are and for future adjustments. In addition to this, experience progression was designed for this iteration, considering impacts of gaining experience points within Skill Mastery in order to earn the Title and its benefits.

Skill Mastery Table

Licenses marked N/A as they relate to things like inventory size or other passive upgrades, rather than actionable player skill

License	Skill Mastery Buff
Mining	+5 base stamina
Deep Mining	5% reduced stamina usage in the Deep Mines
Logging	Increased stamina 10% regeneration when logging
Fishing	5% Increased catch rate
Excavation	+5 base stamina
Metal Detecting	Increased detection range when using metal detector (+1 tile)
Hunting	5% reduced stamina cost if injured during hunt
Trapping	Increase strength when trapping animals (traps last +3 seconds)
Farming	+25% chance of a crop yield bonus
Animal Handling	Increased efficiency in leading animals (Animals will follow the player for longer +8 seconds when using animal whistle)
Building	5% Reduced material cost to craft building items
Vehicle	20% Increased durability of vehicles
Commerce	15% more when selling items
Brewing	10% Increased selling price
Animal Processing	Faster processing time for goods - 5% reduction of overall time
Fish Farming	N/A
Irrigation	N/A
Landscaping	N/A
Toolbelt	N/A
Agriculture	N/A
Sign Writing	N/A
Water Scaping	N/A
Cargo	N/A

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Iteration 3 Evaluation

This iteration refined the stamina bonuses provided by the skill mastery titles. This refinement aligns the bonuses more naturally with the existing core-skill levelling system which already reduces stamina cost over time.

Rationale for Potential Changes

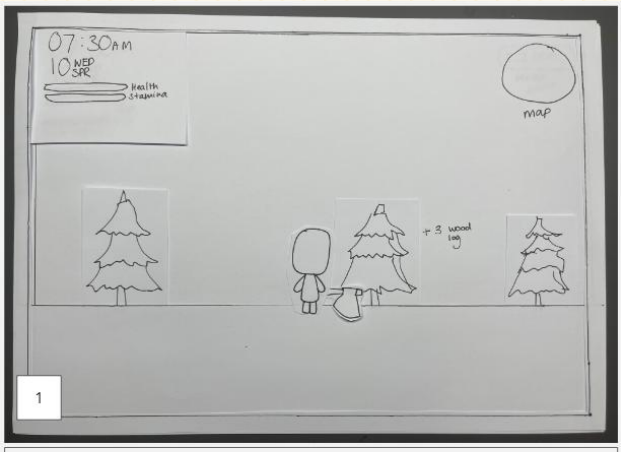
While the system successfully provides long-term goals and player choice, there is potential for it to be used in unintended ways during the mid-game. Players might invest heavily in Skill Mastery for one skill, such as Mining, without yet having full access or knowledge of later Licenses, which could make other Mastery Titles feel less relevant. However, rather than seeing this as a negative outcome, this behaviour can be embraced as part of the player's natural progression. Overall this iteration can be seen as an improvement from the previous as its design is significantly more refined.

Prototyping

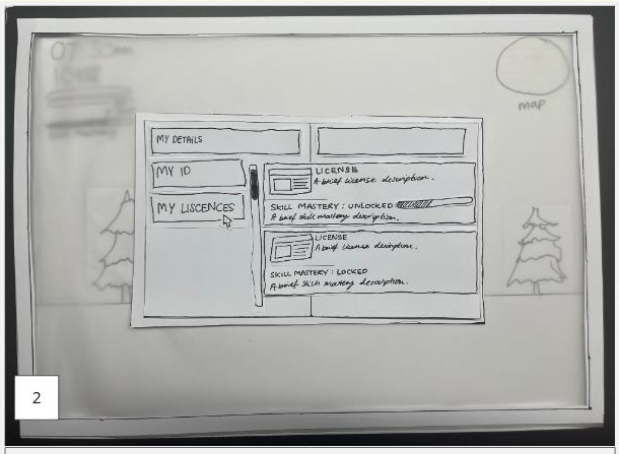
Rationale for Prototyping

A paper prototype was created to test the flow and clarity of the Skill Mastery System before committing to detailed UI mock-ups or digital wireframes. Paper prototyping allows system behaviours; such as XP progression and stamina usage to be explored at a low cost and without technical constraints.

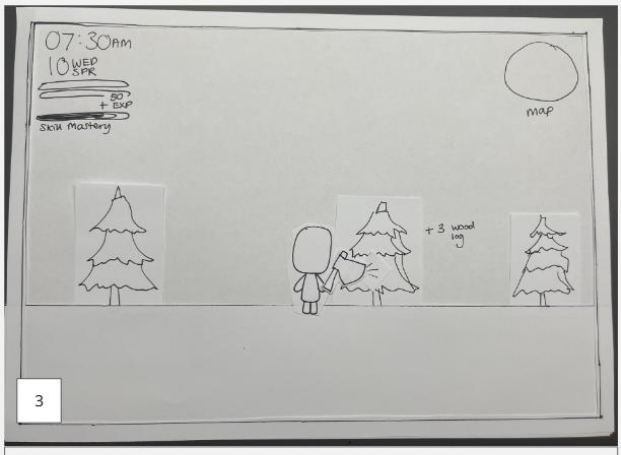
Documentation of Prototype



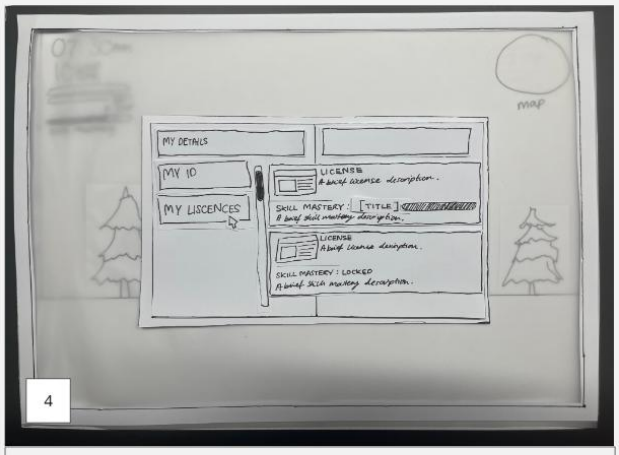
The player engages in skill at maximum license level, in this example, logging.



Skill Mastery Unlocked: The player can earn EXP



The player earns EXP from repeatedly doing action.



Player accumulates enough EXP to receive the Mastery Title, unlocking its benefits

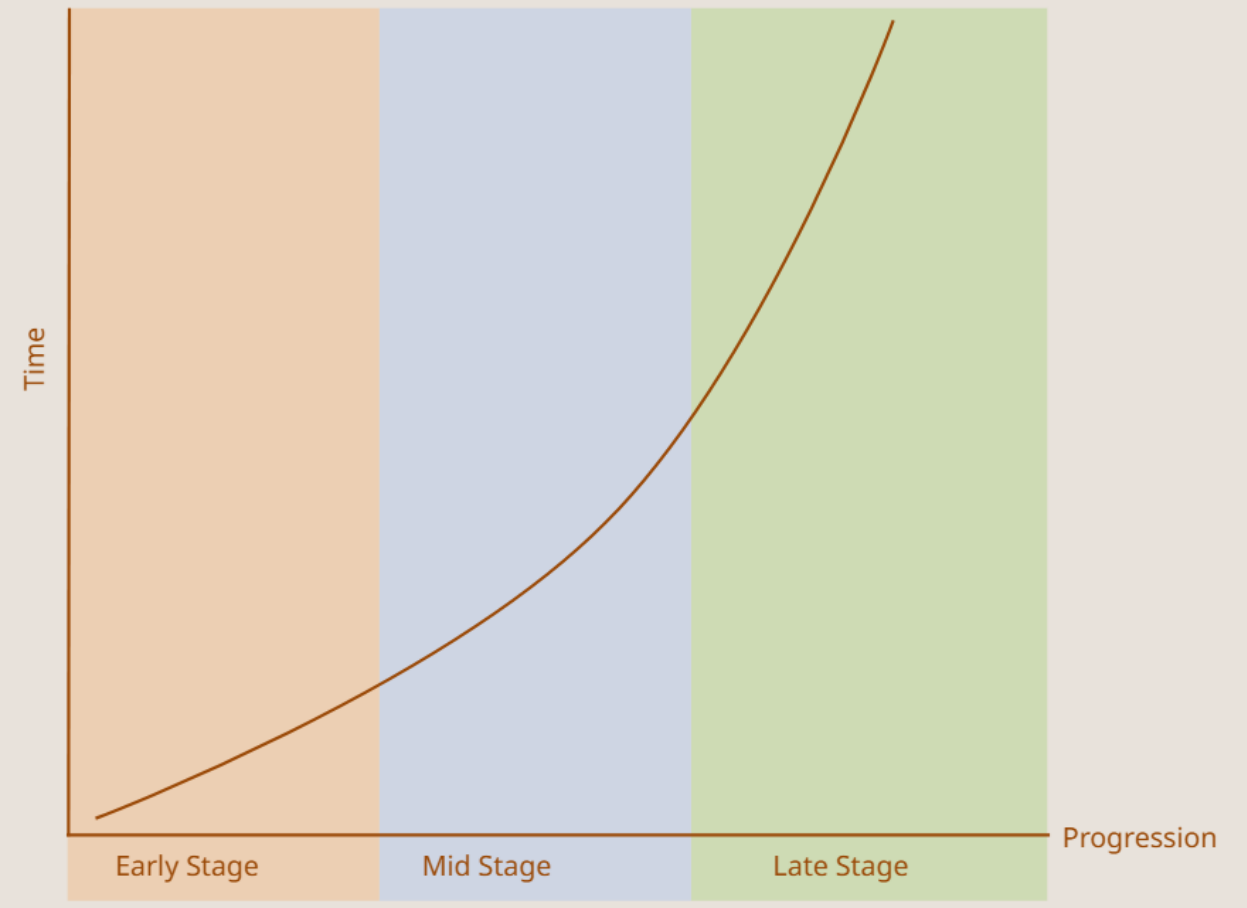
Evaluation

The prototype highlighted that experience pacing could become a significant issue within the Skill Mastery System. Even in a simplified form it became clear to see how easily players could progress too quickly if EXP values are not balanced. The act of repeatedly performing the same action allowed the player to reach noticeable progress toward Mastery in a very short time frame, suggesting that an overly generous EXP rate would undermine the sense of long-term investment the system is intended to create. This would also create the problem of players achieving Mastery Titles earlier than expected, overshadowing other aspects of progress later in the game.

Progression Pacing

Experience Pacing

Graph to illustrate desired progression curve



Early stages of Skill Mastery will provide relatively quick progress as it will be introduced during the mid-game stages where players are still accumulating skills and progressing through the game. As the player enters the next stage, progress begins to slow, requiring more consistent engagement with the skill as the player reaches late-game. The late stage of Mastery is the steepest part of the curve, reflecting the long-term investment expected for reaching full Mastery. Experience values for each action will be fine-tuned to follow this curve, ensuring that the Skill Mastery Title as the final reward maintains impact and balance within the game.

At least 4,000 experience points total required to reach the Mastery Title, but if this value needs to increase based on evaluation on player behaviour or potential playtesting, this value could increase to 8,000.

Table for Skill Mastery EXP per Action

Skill Mastery	Simple Action Example	EXP Gained	Moderate Action Example	EXP Gained	High-Level Action Example	EXP Gained
Mining	Break basic rock	+5	Break ore rock	+15	Break rare ore rock/Obtain rare ore	+50
Deep Mining	Travel distance in deep mine	+10	Break rock in deep mine	+15	Obtain deep mine material	+20
Logging	Cut regular gum tree	+5	Cut Blackwood Trees	+12	Cut large stumps	+18
Fishing	Fishing time (10s)	+5	Catch common fish	+15	Catch uncommon fish	+50
Excavation	Dig dirt	+5	Uncover buried item	+15	Large excavation zone	+50
Metal Detecting	Find common item	+10	Break buried bin	+20	Find rare item	+25
Hunting	Hunt small creature	+5	Hunt medium animal	+20	Hunt large creature / boss	+50
Trapping	Catch small animal	+8	Catch medium animal	15	Catch aggressive animal	+50
Farming	Plant or water seed	+5	Harvest crops	+10	Harvest expensive crops	+20
Animal Handling	Feed/milk/shear	+5	Collect produce	+10	Raise/Maintain happiness level	+25
Building	Place structure/decoration	+8	Complete building task	+12	Large build area	+25
Vehicle	Travel distance	+8	Transported items	+10	Long-distance travel	+18
Commerce	Sell common items	+8	Sell crafted goods	+15	Sell high-value items	+25
Brewing	Brew basic drink	+8	Brew multi-ingredient drink	+12	Sell brewed drink/Brew rare	+25

Since the system isn't implemented in-game and can't be fully tested, I made reasonable and scalable values based on relative difficulty, how often the player will do this action, and the output of each action.

Multiplier system: Mastery EXP = Base EXP * Output Quantity

In addition to the base EXP values shown in the table, certain actions will use multipliers to ensure that experience gain reflects the scale, difficulty, or quantity of the output produced. For example, harvesting a crop, breaking an ore node, or cutting a tree may yield several items, making actions with larger outputs more rewarding. This prevents the system from feeling too slow at higher levels and ensures that more advanced or labour-intensive activities grant proportionally higher Mastery experience.

References

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