



Designing for Children's Well-Being in Digital Play

The Responsible Innovation in Technology for Children (RITC) project developed, with children from around the world, a framework that maps how the design of children's digital experiences affects their well-being and provides guidance as to how informed design choices can promote positive well-being outcomes.

The RITC-8 Framework was developed working with 787 Children, mainly aged 8-12 years, in 18 countries (Albania, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Cyprus, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Pakistan, South Africa, Taiwan, Tanzania, Tunisia, UK, Uruguay, USA)

COMPETENCE

Digital play experiences contribute positively towards children's perceptions of their effectiveness, ability and skills, facilitating a sense of mastery.

"I felt really nice. Because I want to think that I put in much effort for that game, for what I built. I like building huge houses and it takes me a lot of time to make them. I'm proud of what I did."

EMOTION

Digital play experiences allow children to experience and recognize a range of emotions, and provides opportunities to learn how to regulate them.

"When I go on it I'm excited to see if there's any updates or if I can discover some new secrets in it. I feel excited to see if I can find the secrets."

"Goat Simulator makes me feel happy inside. If I'm feeling angry, sometimes I just go headbutt a tree or something (with the other goats)."

CREATIVITY

Digital play experiences encourage children to engage curiously and use their imagination to build, invent and experiment.

"I made a rollercoaster that went under water and it went all over the place. And then I made a really long one all the way to a village. And then also in that village I made some statues of villagers."

"You need to create things and try to figure out a way around things. I guess that game was designed so that everyone plays differently? You can create anything at all using this ultra hand tool. There's no one way to do things. You could go anywhere, you could go to four places or you could explore... each way kind of links to a story makes the experience really fun."

IDENTITIES

Digital play experiences provide children with opportunities to explore, construct and express facets of themselves and others.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Digital play experiences are designed to represent diverse children and childhoods and serve the access needs of as many different children as possible.

"I used to be able to have a female character. I just want to know how to change the characters. People think that girls can't actually play games."

"I can change into a skateboard if I want to get out of my skates, I just press X, lead my way and then press X again and then go onto the skateboard."

"I think it's quite good to kind of try this game that's got a bit of a different feel. Unlike a lot of the games he talks about and his friends play, they're a bit old really."

"It makes me feel free! Finally! I'm like Charlie dog when he's just been let out of his cage after six hours. Freedom!!"

AUTONOMY

Children freely choose how to engage with digital play, and experience feelings of agency, choice and freedom while playing.

"Creativity. Updates. Lots of other modes. You can do whatever you want. Anything! You can do building mode, you can do anything!"

"My favourite game helps me to concentrate sometimes. It also helps me to do better, like never give up. And try again. Even if it's hard. Try again and again, until I get it."

"I think it does have benefits for his well-being because when he loses, it's hard for him to cope. He gets upset. He's working on this kind of resilience and figuring out how to respond with that stuff doesn't quite go as expected."

RELATIONSHIPS

Digital play experiences facilitate social connection with others and a sense of belonging

"I can play with my school friends. If we have a plan for what we want to do at school, we play one round and while we're playing the round we'll chat about our plan."

"I can go to settings and just turn multiplayer off, so Mummy and Yara can't join me. I can just get rid of it."

"I like the horses, they're just really sweet. Every time I take them to a village they go straight into the carrot patch and eat the carrots."

"Soccer's my life! Every week you have to change one or two players and then if they score a goal that gives you points. Just me and my daddy versus each other, and we're also in one league of all of our people in our Christian congregation."

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1 No single game can do everything at once for all children, just as children do not all have the same needs.
- 2 Not all games are equal in their potential to contribute to children's well-being.
- 3 Different games may support different dimensions of well-being, depending on their design and use.
- 4 The RITC-8 dimensions are not a checklist to be completed for each digital play experience. While safety and security are mandatory and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is fundamental for children's well-being, the other dimensions stand on their own and support different aspects and digital play experiences. You may focus on one dimension or use a combination of a few of the dimensions. However, you should avoid creating games that negatively impact any of the well-being dimensions.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Children feel safe and are kept safe while engaging in digital play.

"It's like a safety blanket for her. It's her self-regulation, it's what she needs at this moment in time."

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