SPOT THE TRICK DESIGN CHALLENGE

CHAPTER ONE

INSTRUCTIONS

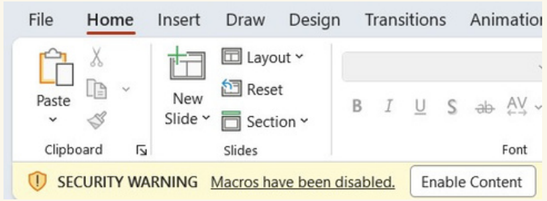
Interactive deconstruction of online slot product design.

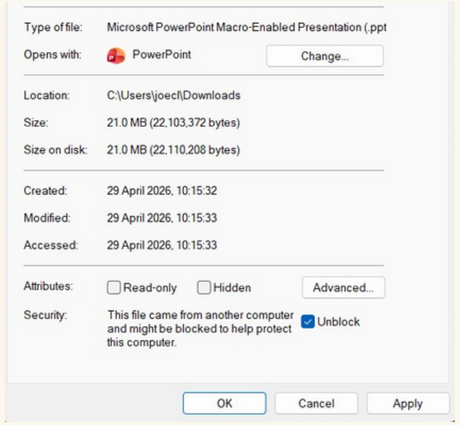
SCAN OR CLICK FOR HELPFUL RESOURCES

STEP 1

Download the interactive interface and run from PowerPoint on your desktop (not via the web app). Once downloaded, enable Macros.

To use the interface in your session, launch the slide in Presentation Mode. Once Macros are enabled, this will allow you to click through the different interactive features via the buttons on the left of the screen.





STEP 2

Step through the interactive app using the buttons on the left of the interface and clicking the 'Gamble' button.

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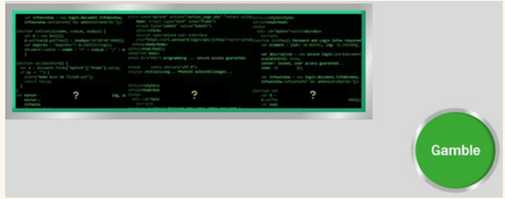
STEP 3

ASK: What is an algorithm?

Answer: set of mathematical instructions used in computing to help calculate the answer to a problem



CLICK GAMBLE BUTTON: **You are playing a piece of code.**

ASK: Ask if anyone knows what an algorithm does

Explain to the class that in any 'slot' type machine, all you are doing is playing a piece of code

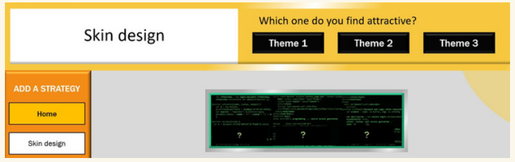
To keep you playing (and therefore ensure the house edge) the gambling companies design attractive, 'sticky' interfaces that use several strategies, some of which are shown on the menu on the left

STEP 4

CLICK: **Skin design (Appearance)**

CLICK: **Through the different themes**

ASK: Ask the class to select one of the skin designs by show of hands



Discuss why you are attracted (or not) to the different skin designs

How would they affect your likelihood to play a certain machine?

How can the gambling designers target different segments of the population?

Vote for a skin to pick for the rest of the demonstration and say why

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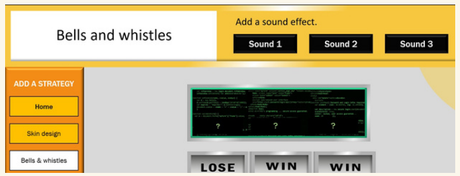
STEP 5



CLICK: Bells and whistles (Sounds)

ASK: Ask the class to select one of the sound options

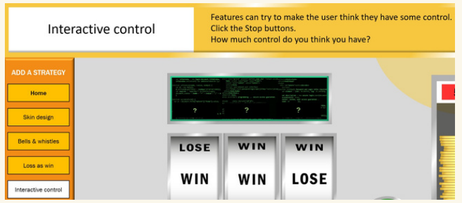
Discuss the effect on your attitude of the three different sounds when combined with gambling

Sound effects and music are added for entertainment, but also because some sounds can make losing seem less bad

How would playing your favourite band each time you lose affect your feelings?

Vote for a sound to pick for the rest of the demonstration and say why

STEP 6



CLICK: Interactive control – "You're in control"

ASK: Ask the class what difference it makes when you use the manual 'stop' buttons on the reels

Answer – none. The algorithm decides the outcome before you have even interacted

Gambling product designers can add interactive elements that create the illusion that you have some control

How does the illusion of control make you feel?

Players actually believe that they have control

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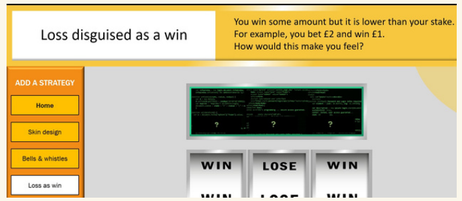
STEP 7

CLICK: Frequency/Speed of play

ASK: Ask the class what effect different pauses will make

- Ask the class what effect different pauses will make
- For eg. An online roulette wheel does not spin at the same speed as one in a casino – it is quicker for higher frequency betting
- Try longer and shorter waits and discuss what effect it has on you
- Longer wait increases your sense of 'anticipation' so more compelling
- Shorter waits allow you to gamble (and lose) more quickly

STEP 8



CLICK: Losses disguised as a win

ASK: How can the designers fool you into thinking you have won?

- This example shows telltale signs that you have 'won'... 50% of your stake (it is a loss)
- Gambling designers calculate different levels of payout on different reel results to achieve 90% RTP (return to player)
- Discuss how you feel with this 'win'
- Game designers want you to feel the thrill of winning even if you have lost

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STEP 9

CLICK: **Near misses – “Oh so close”**

EXPLAIN: Game designers can design how the reels stop

- How does it make you feel when they stop like this?
- How do you think that has changed your chances of getting a win on the next spin?
- If you don’t win for a while – how does that affect the chance of you winning on the next spin?

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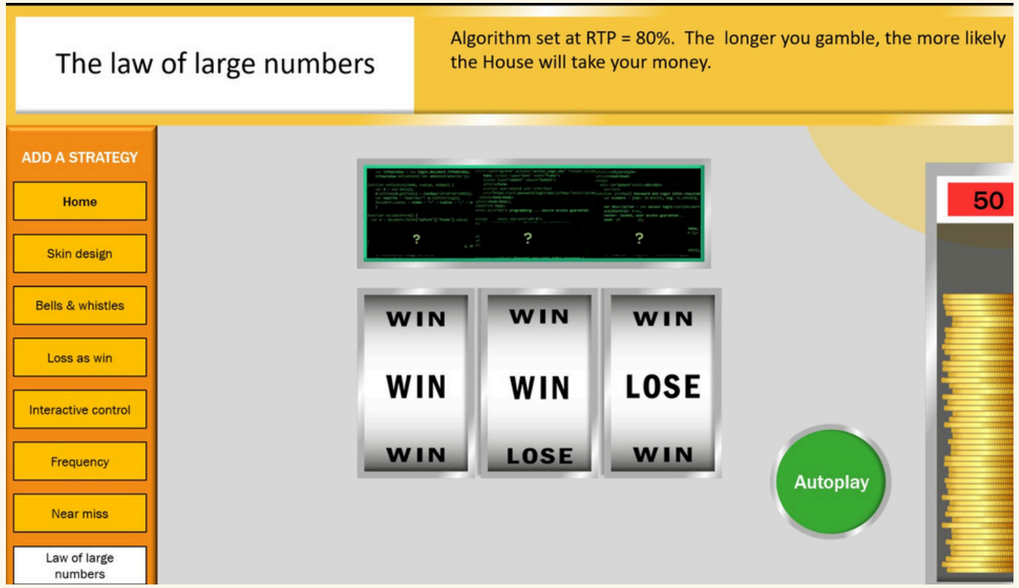
STEP 10

CLICK: **Law of Large Numbers**

This app works with a real 'Return to Player' algorithm. You need to expect that it could take between 50 and 150 spins to lose all of your coin stack. This will take between 1 and 3 minutes.

While the simulation is running you can reinforce the understanding of the Law of Large Numbers:



EXPLAIN: The game designers test their algorithms millions of times to ensure that the house edge is maintained. The more you play, the more inevitable it is that you lose.

- You may win something in the short term – but over time you will certainly lose
- The longer you play, the more the actual results align with the programmed loss
- The algorithm used in this example is based on what is used in the gambling industry

ASK: Ask someone to volunteer to explain the concept behind the Law of Large Numbers (refer to previous statistics knowledge?).

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OR

EXPLAIN: The Coin Flip Example

- We all know that a fair coin has a 50% chance of landing on Heads and a 50% chance of landing on Tails.
- If you flip a coin only 10 times, you might get 7 Heads and 3 Tails (70% Heads). If you stopped here, you might assume the coin is rigged or that 'Heads is on a streak'. This is where the industry tricks players - they see a small sample size and are encouraged to think it's a permanent pattern.
- The Law of Large Numbers: If you flip that same coin 10,000 times, the 'chaos' of those first few flips starts to matter less and less. You might have a streak of 10 Heads in a row at some point, but over thousands of flips, the total percentage will get closer and closer to exactly 50%.

In this design challenge, the 'coin' (or rather, the slot game) is weighted in favour of the house.

- Every spin is like a coin flip where the House has a 51% chance and the Player has a 49% chance.
- In the first 20 spins, you might be up because of random luck (like getting 7/10 Heads).
- Because the app performs 150 spins in a few minutes, it forces the maths to settle. The Law of Large Numbers ensures that the 2% disadvantage for the player eventually swallows their entire stack of coins.

The algorithm should now have finished running and all the coins have been gambled away.

If you need to rerun the exercise, click on the menu button again.

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