

Zeigarnik Effect Cheat Sheet

BONUS CONTENT



2 Psychology principles related to Zeigarnik Effect

Here are more *psychology principles* related to the Zeigarnik Effect that can be used for a more impactful interaction:

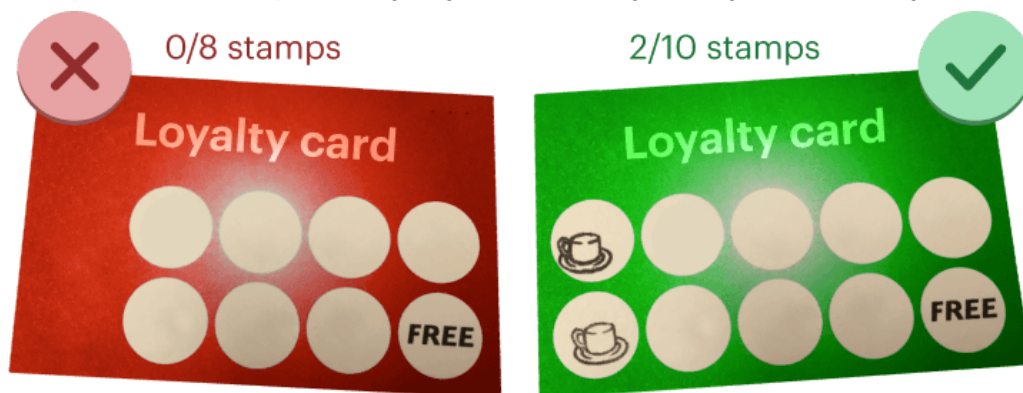
1. Endowed Progress Effect

As shown in the case study, if you give people a sense of progress from the start, they will be more likely to have the motivation to complete a task. In short, you want to give your users a head start whenever you can.

2. Goal Gradient Effect

Motivation increases as users get closer to their goal. The closer users are to reaching a milestone (e.g., completing a task, reaching a goal, etc), the faster they work towards reaching it. Interestingly, even estimated progress indicators can help to motivate users. That's why it's crucial that your experience provides a clear indication of progress.

The perfect example is loyalty cards. They always give it to you with a few stamps:





DO's and DON'Ts

DON'T use the *Zeigarnik Effect* if it's:

- ☐ **Too short:** Don't sacrifice the joy of completing a task.
- ☐ **Too easy:** Also, don't over-design something that can be accomplished rapidly.
- ☐ **Unethical:** See *3 Ethical Rules* checklist below.

DO use the *Zeigarnik Effect* if...

- ☐ **The goal is within reach.** In other words, if you people are close to finishing a task, make sure you reward them with the right information (as shown in the Turo example).
 - ☐ Make sure to show previously completed tasks.
 - ☐ Highlight what's left to complete.
- ☐ **The task is complex or hard:** If you have a product that's more complex or that needs more intense focused tasks, make sure to support people in their effort:
 - ☐ Remind them of how far they've come.
 - ☐ Take them by the hand and try to specifically mention how they can go to the next step in their journey. Don't let them guess.
- ☐ **The task is core to your product:** If you have a key task that people absolutely need to go through in order to understand what your product is all about, try to find ways to incorporate this principle within the interaction.



3 Ethical Rules

As demonstrated in the case study, the Zeigarnik Effect can be powerful if used in the right situation. However, we must make sure we use it to bring value to people and not just manipulate them into getting addicted to your product (as we also saw in the case of Clash of clans).

When it comes to applying the zeigarnik effect (and related principles above) ethically:

- ☐ Make sure it is not used repeatedly (or too often). So you don't hold people hostage.
- ☐ Make sure the first steps are actual steps people took (when using Endowed Progress Effect). Don't fake steps, so you don't have to start at zero.
- ☐ Make sure to provide an endpoint. Don't keep a task "open" forever by always adding new milestones.



Additional Resources

- [The impact of progress indicators on task completion](#)
- [Moving the Finish Line: The Goal Gradient Hypothesis](#)
- [The Zeigarnik Effect: Why it is so hard to leave things incomplete.](#)
- [An Overview of the Zeigarnik Effect and Memory](#)
- [Zeigarnik Effect \(Coglode\)](#)
- [Endowed progress effect: Give your users a head start](#)



Want to use psychology to build better products?

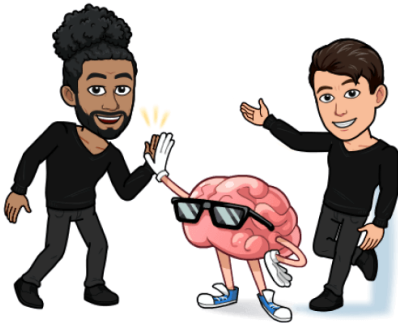
If you're looking for more ways to sharpen your product skills using psychology, check these out:



Product Psychology Masterclass.

If you want to learn how to use psychology to create better experiences for your customers, check out our course:

<https://growth.design/course>



Cognitive Biases Cheatsheet.

100+ cognitive biases and design principles that affect your product experiences. Tons of product examples, tips, and checklists to improve your user experience:

<https://growth.design/psychology>

—Dan Benoni & Louis-Xavier Lavallée