



# Developing an educational game for teaching social situations and skills to younger players.

Author: Charlie Keirl (2103411) Email: 2103411@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

## Summary

Social Shuffle is a single-player educational game designed to help children aged 6–9 build empathy and emotional understanding. Through scenario-based gameplay, players face realistic social situations and choose responses from a deck of interactive cards. The project explores how video games can promote Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) using engaging, accessible mechanics tailored to young users.

## Aims and Objectives

**Aim:** Design and create an educational card-based video game to help young players develop social skills by navigating various social situations.

### Objectives:

- Analyse key social skills and their role in childhood development to identify game requirements.
- Develop a card-based game that teaches players how to navigate social situations.
- Create a user-friendly interface and simple mechanics tailored to children aged 6 to 9.
- Evaluate the game's effectiveness through playtesting and feedback from adults representing young players.

## Background Research

This project draws on key SEL frameworks (CASEL [1]) that emphasise empathy and social understanding in young learners. It uses Scenario-Based Learning [2] to immerse players in realistic situations that promote emotional growth. Educational games like Minecraft Education and Kerbal Space Program [3-4] inspired the use of interactive, engaging learning mechanics.



## Game Design and Mechanics

- A drag and drop card-based game made in Unity.
- Each level presents a scenario with 4 possible cards.
- Each card is worth points depending on how empathetic the card is.
- Multiple rounds (scenarios), accumulating a final score and grade.



How the game looks when being played:



## Game Modifiers

The game includes rounds with modifiers applied to add diversity and challenge to the gameplay:

- Quick Thinking:** Player must play while a 30s timer is present.
- Swap Response:** Pick a “bad” card and swap it with a better scoring one.
- Limited Choices:** Player must choose from a limited number of cards than before.

## Developmental Process

- Scriptable Object database for scenarios, cards, feedback and scores.
- Designed in Unity using C#.
- UI built with large buttons, friendly icons and readable fonts.
- Added music and transition logic.
- Deployed to “itch.io” for testing.

## Evaluation

- Play tested with adults representing children aged 6-9.
- Measured usability, clarity and emotional engagement.
- Positive feedback on accessibility, gameplay and design as well as use as a tool for SEL.
- Modifier confusion identified as potential improvement.

*“The game did feel like it was aimed at children, the scenarios included were ones a child would experience, the vocabulary used is easy to understand and the graphics and music used is child friendly.”* – Response from a tester.

## Conclusion and Future Work

Through testing, the game was found to encourage empathetic thinking and help develop emotional understanding. Future work includes:

- Expand game by including new levels and modifiers.
- Refine game usability based on user feedback.
- Test on intended target audience for accurate results on effectiveness.

## References

- [1] CASEL. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), January 2017.
- [2] Squire, K. “Video Games and Learning: Teaching and Participatory Culture in the Digital Age”, Teachers College Press, 2011.
- [3] Microsoft. “Minecraft Education,” Microsoft, 2024. Available: <https://education.minecraft.net/en-us>
- [4] Squad. “Kerbal Space Program,” Private Division, 2024. Available: <https://www.kerbalspaceprogram.com/>