SensorTower

Why Chance-Based Mechanics Keep Us Hooked

Monopoly Go examples

Deconstructions by Sensor Tower

Deconstructions, Sensor Tower's state-of-the-art platform for analyzing Live Ops, enables you to dive into a rich repository of events, updates, and monetization offers across hundreds of top games. Whether you're designing a new offering, reengaging existing players, or optimizing your monetization tactics, use **Deconstructions to secure your competitive edge in the mobile gaming world.**

This report gives you a preview of the rich insights available in-platform — use these evidence-based recommendations to move with confidence, and revamp your strategy ahead of the holiday season.

The Nature of Thrill and Excitement

When most people hear *thrill*, they immediately think of casinos – slots, gambling, risky bets.
But that's just the loudest and most obvious example.

In reality, **thrill is much broader than gambling**.

Thrill is about waiting.
It's about risk, belief and probabilities.

Thrill (excitement) is not about winning.
Its core is a tense mix of 3 feelings:

- **Anticipation** – *"Something good might happen."*
- **Risk** – *"But maybe it won't."*
- **Hope** – *"I'll try anyway."*

Thrill lives **between certainty and hopelessness**.

Anticipation

Have you ever had the feeling that waiting for something – a vacation, a trip, a holiday – was just as exciting and emotionally intense as the event itself?

That feeling is **anticipation**. It's a powerful emotional state

From a psychological perspective, dopamine is released not when we receive the reward, but when we ***expect*** it.

The real thrill there doesn't come from the final result – it comes from the ***moment before*** it.

What's funny is that **regardless of the outcome**, it makes you want to keep going:

- If you **WIN**, it works as positive reinforcement:
  I won once, so I might win again.

- If you **LOSE**, thrill shows up differently:
  *It didn't work out this time – but **it will next time**.*
  And besides, I need to win it back.

Near Miss, FUUUU-factor

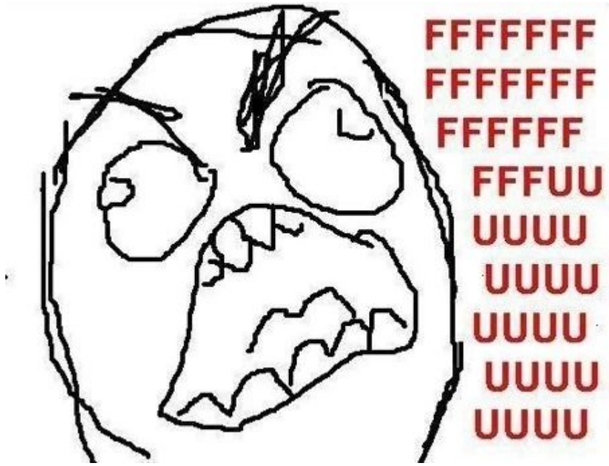
A loss often turns into:
“It didn’t happen this time – but it will next time.
I can’t stop now.”

Your brain starts to believe that because the reward didn’t drop **now**, the chance of it dropping **next time** is higher – even though it isn’t.

This belief becomes even stronger with a **near miss**.

When you’re just one step away – your brain doesn’t read it as failure, but as progress.

Almost winning feels closer to winning than to losing!



FUUUU – I almost had it!

- when the combination needs **one more move**,
- the jackpot **stops right before** the winning symbol,
- the collection shows ***9/10***,
- or you lose when the boss has **1% health left**

It Finally Hit

A win is more than a reward.
It’s purest **positive reinforcement**.

I took an action → I believed → I waited → I won.

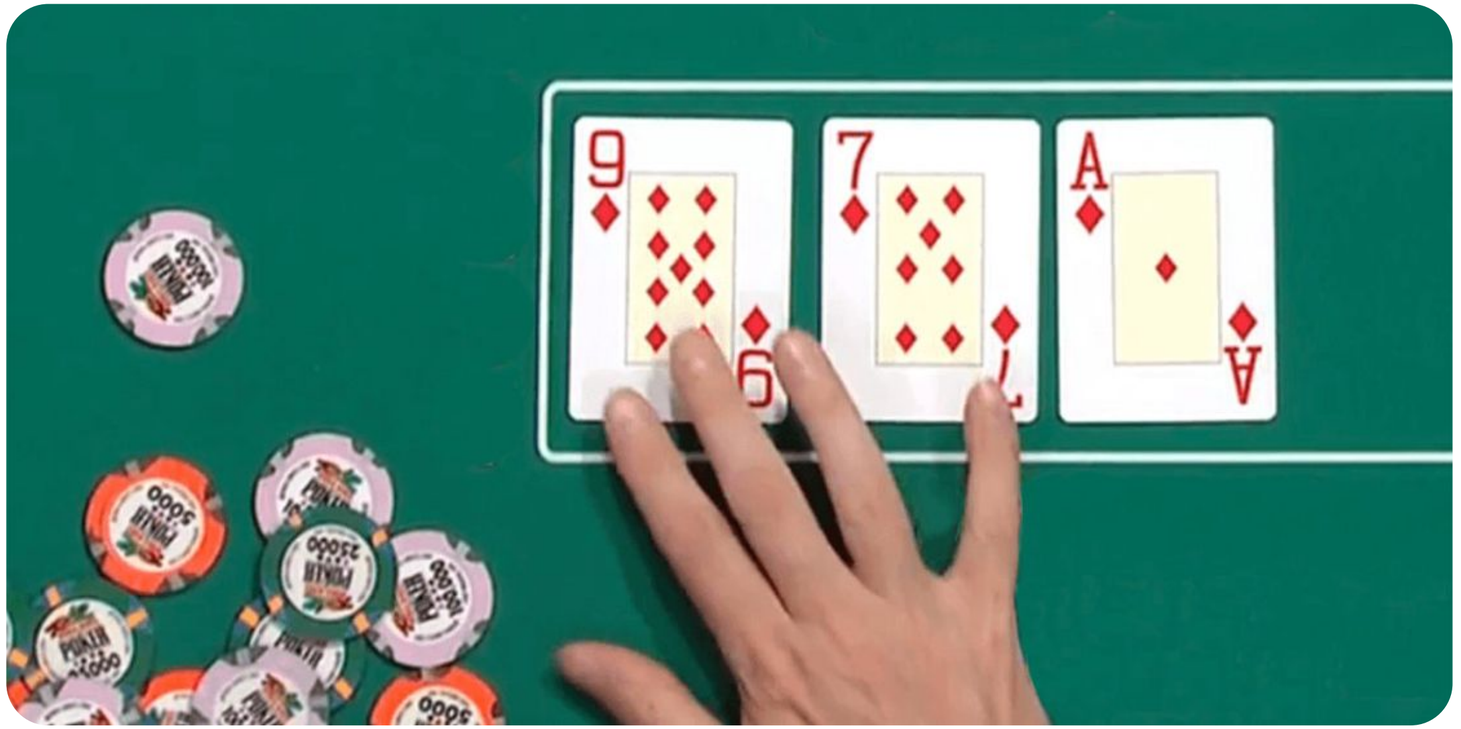
it teaches your brain an important lesson:
It worked once. That means it can work again.

Games amplify this moment on purpose: celebratory sounds, slow-motion reveals, exaggerated rewards screens.

But there’s a special kind of win that feels even stronger.

The **‘It finally hit’** moment.

- When the chance was low.
- When you were already making peace with a loss.
- And then – luck suddenly lands on your side.



That moment multiplies the emotional effect.

- When the **last card** completes a **‘Full House’** in poker.
- When the **last move** in a match-3 level triggers a perfect booster chain.
- When a long-awaited **legendary** finally drops from a pack

The Chance to Win Big

It needs the *possibility* of a big one.

People don’t think in expected value or real odds.
They believe in the **best possible outcome**.

A rare big win reshapes perception.
Even if small wins are far more likely.

Casinos know this well.
When someone hits a jackpot – a bell rings.
Everyone hears it. Everyone sees it.

The message is simple:
Big wins are real. It can happen.

This feeling fuels stories:
What if I’m next?

Skinner Box

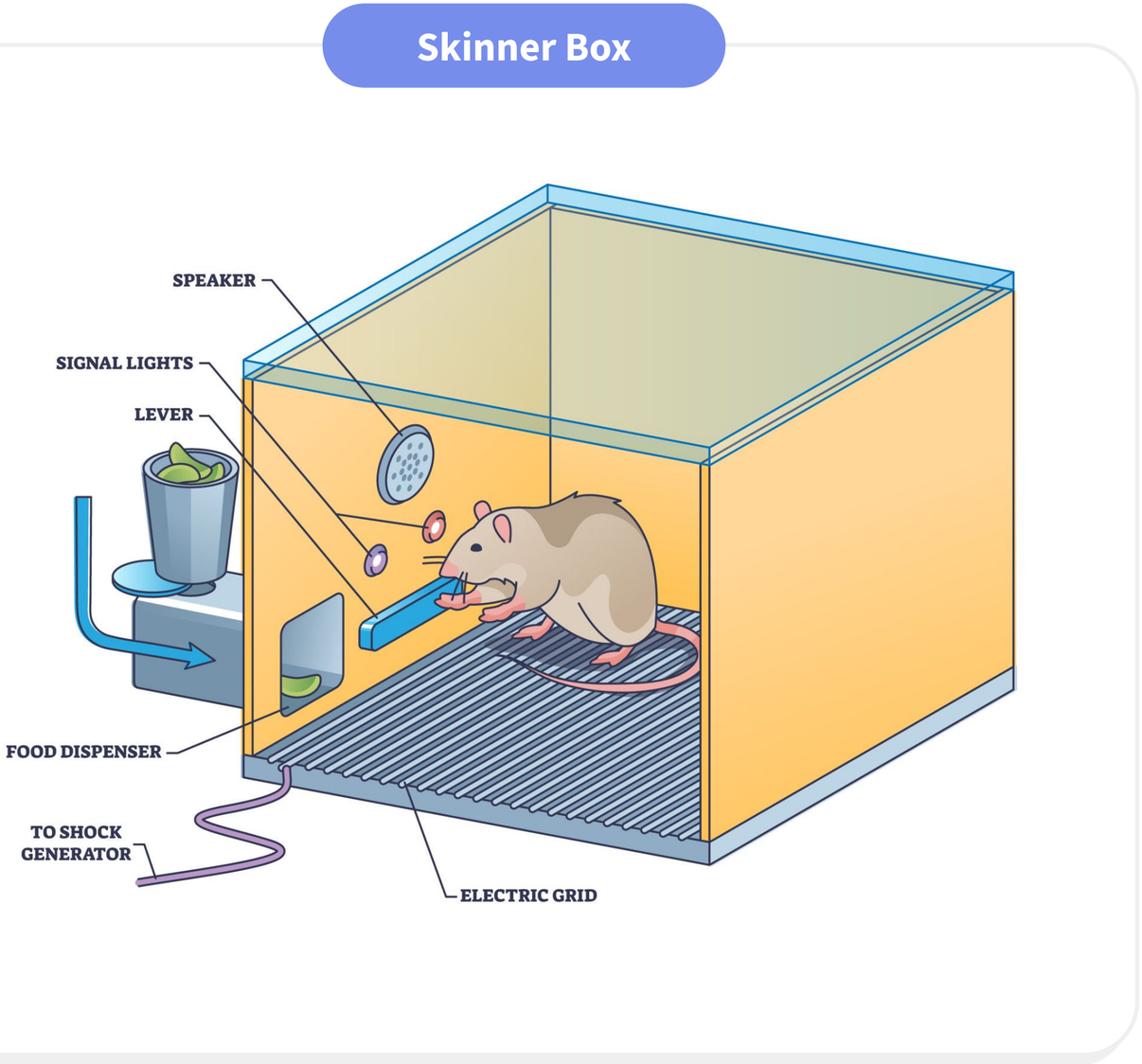
The Skinner Box is about rewards that don’t show up every time.

- If you get a reward always → it becomes boring.
- If you never get it → you stop trying.

But when the reward appears *sometimes* – unpredictably – you want to try again.

You don’t know ***when*** it will happen.
But you believe it ***can*** happen

Reward after an unpredictable number of actions.
📌 Not every tap → reward.
📌 Not every 5 taps → reward.
📌 But *maybe* ***the next one*.**



Monopoly GO!: One of the Best Chance-Based Systems

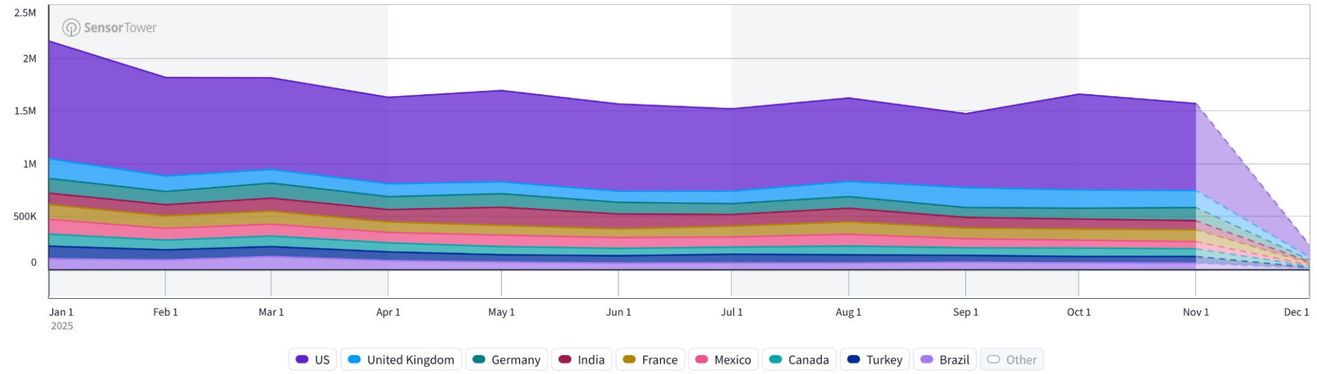
Monopoly GO

MonopolyGO has been in the **TOP-30** for a long time and continues to hold key positions.

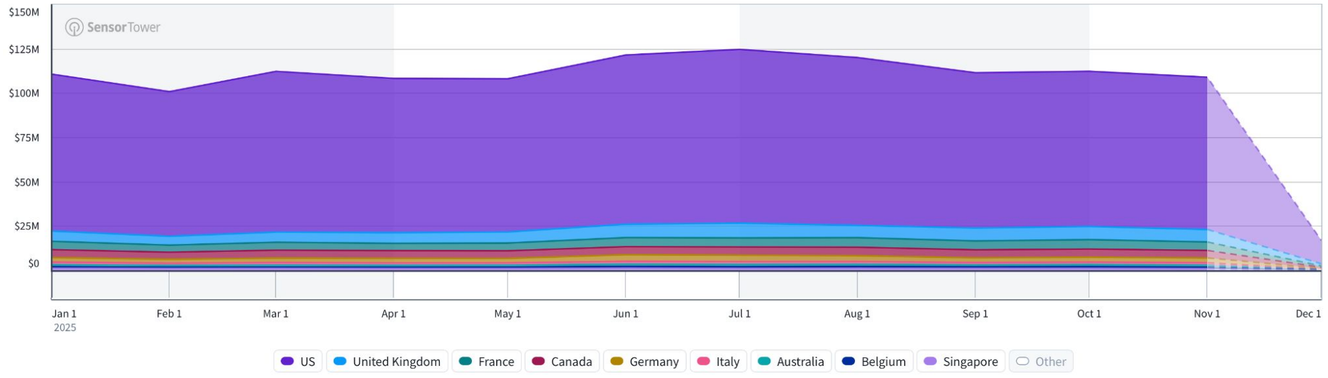
Its **IAP Revenue** remains stable at around **$100-125M** per month

While monthly **downloads** sit at roughly **1.5M**

Downloads



Revenue



Monopoly GO:
Game of Chances

At first glance, Monopoly GO! looks simple and familiar.

Roll the dice → Move forward → Something happens.

But the game isn't just about Monopoly IP.
It's about **what might happen next**.
It keeps tension alive.

Its core loop is built on **probability, delayed outcomes, and emotional tension** – the same forces that power slot machines, but wrapped in social systems, progression, and daily goals.

Monopoly GO! doesn't ask players to master mechanics.
It asks them to **wait, hope, and believe**.

Researcher Portrait

How This Analysis Was Done

To break Monopoly GO! down properly, the analysis was based on hands-on gameplay rather than theory alone.

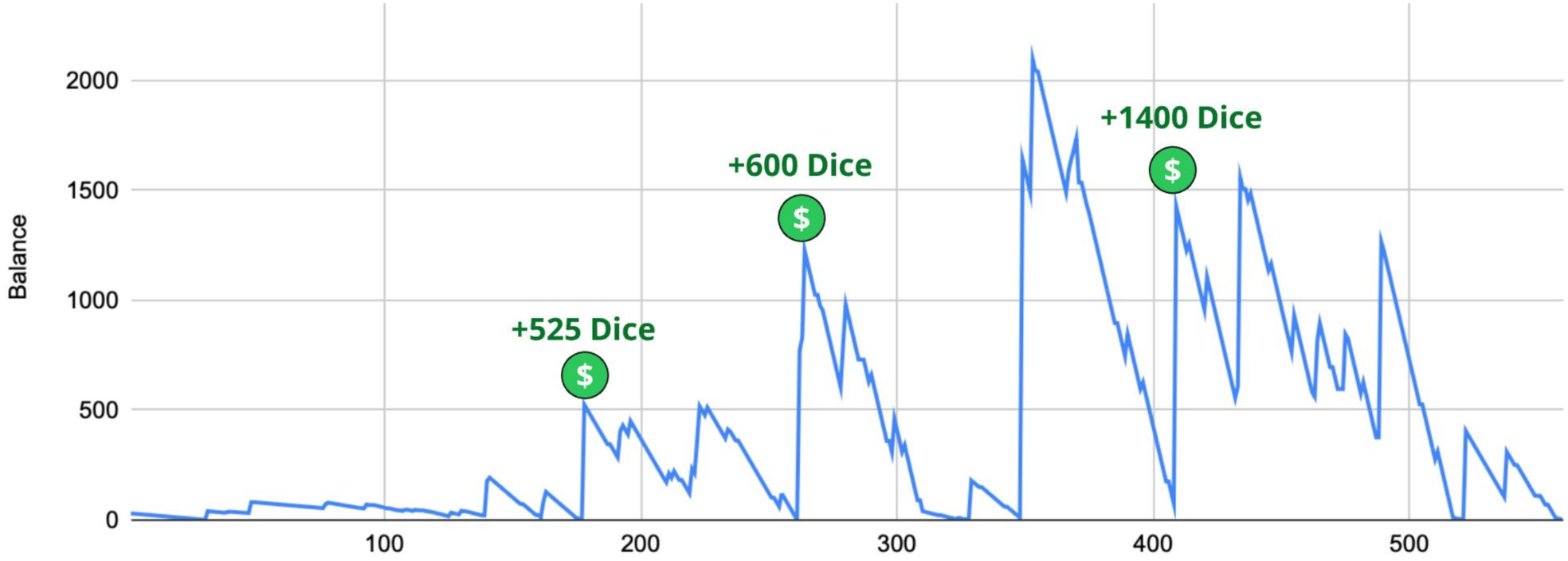
- **20 Locations** completed
- **14,550 Dice** rolled
- **3 In-App purchases** made

This level of exposure provides a solid view of the core loop, LiveOps structure, and monetization beats – without drifting into late-game edge cases.

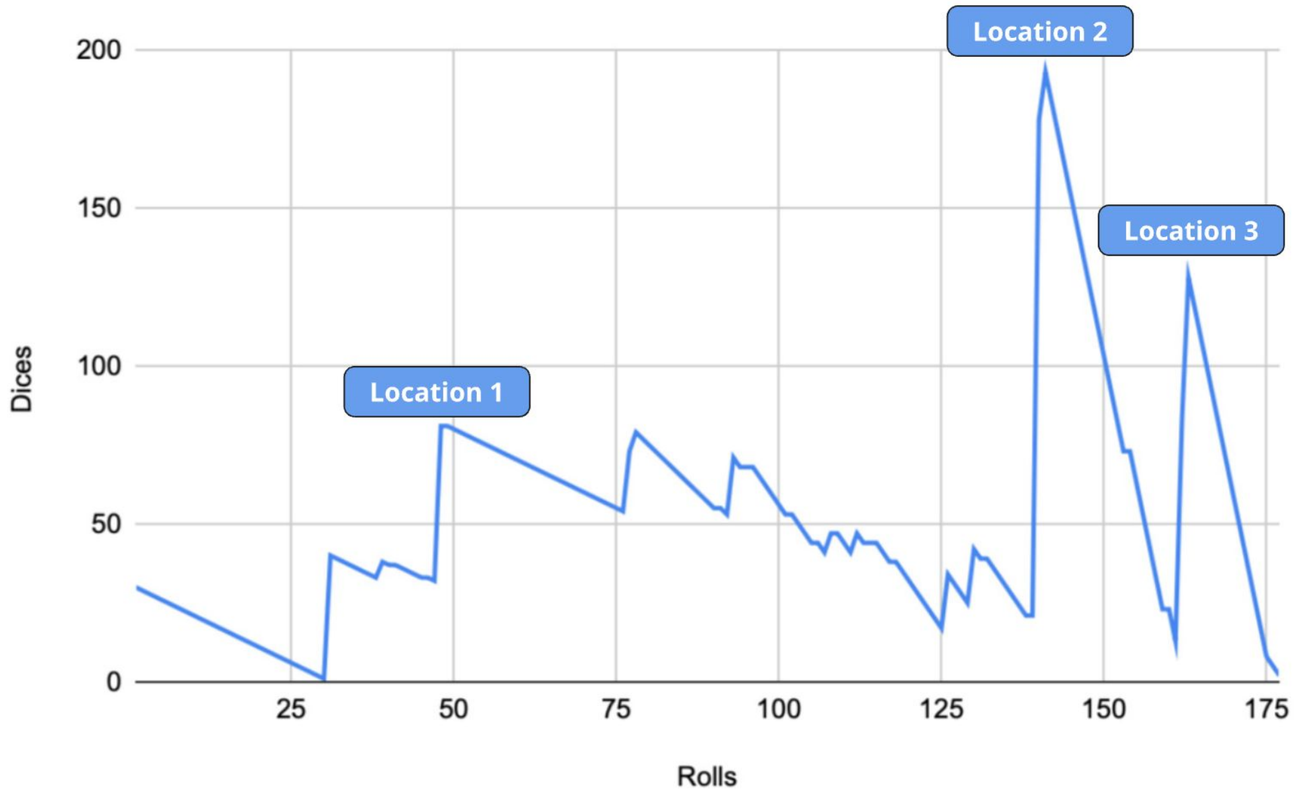
Now, let’s look at how the game actually works.

Core Gameplay: The Ups and Downs

Looking at ~500 moves, the dice balance shows a clear '**saw-tooth' pattern**, with regular spikes and drops typical of difficulty tuning. Notably, these spikes don't come only from Purchases – many are driven by Events and a well-balanced **income-outcome flow** design, creating constant tension and relief.



Phase 1:
Before the 1st Purchase



The player starts with **30 dice**, but the balance quickly stabilizes in a **50-100 range**

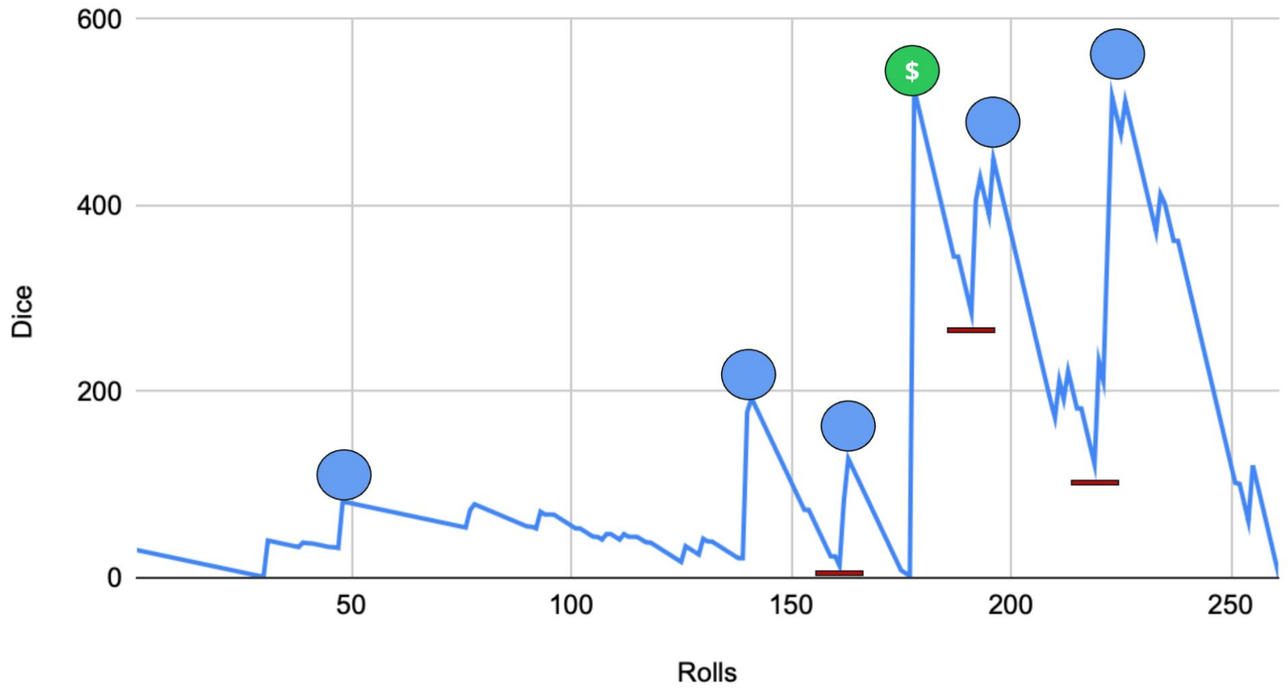
Soon after, dice are almost fully depleted – until a **location upgrades, unlocks daily tasks and events**, creating a sharp spike up to **~200** dice.

The **pattern then repeats**:
near depletion → progression unlock → temporary relief → back to pressure.

This **sets the rhythm** early – teaching the player that running low is expected, and recovery comes through continued play and progression.

Phase 2:
Before the 2nd Purchase

From the Start of the 2nd Purchase



After making a purchase, the peaks and drops continued:

- the player **dropped** to nearly 300 dice, **rose** again to 400+
- then **dropped** close to 100 – and eventually **recovered** to almost the same level as right after the purchase – 500+ dice

Even after a purchase, the tension remains. **'Lucky' moments and dice inflows** are now driven primarily by events rather than spending.

Notably, these event-driven inflows grow over time – especially when compared to the pre-purchase phase

Phase 3:
Before the 3rd Purchase

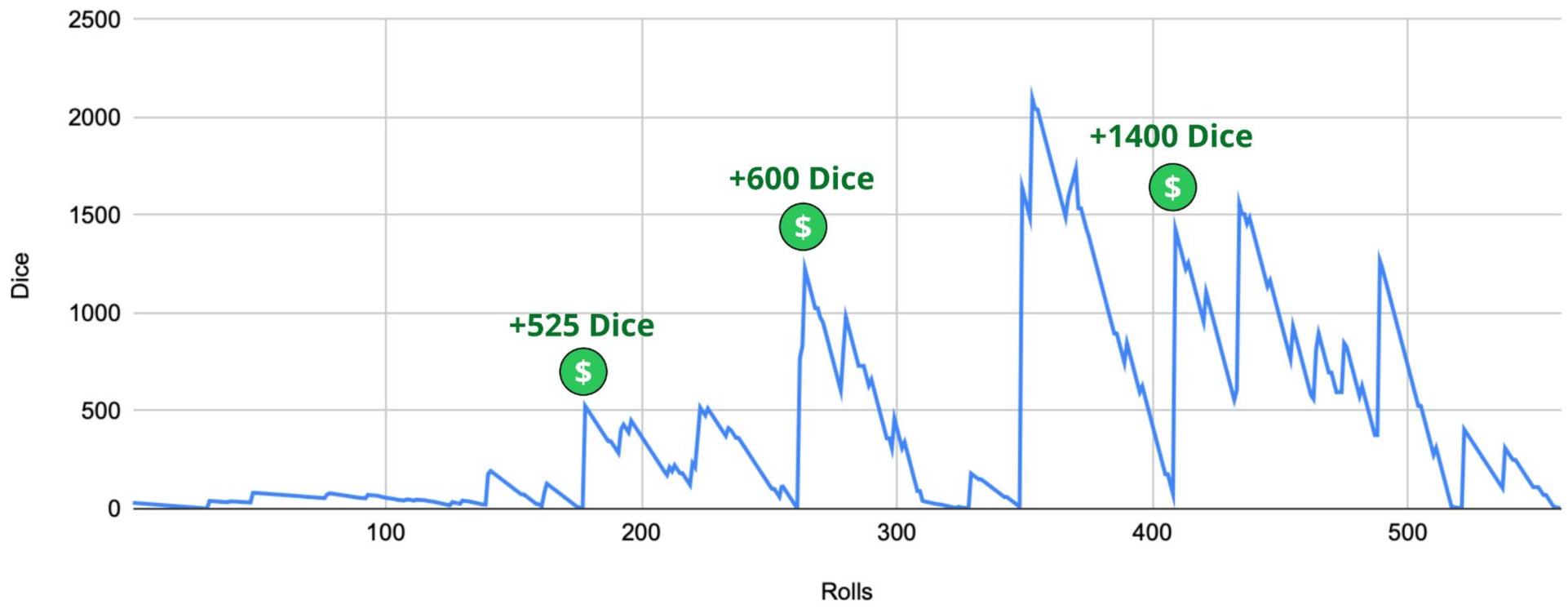
Here, it’s also clear how the game almost drains the player down to zero - and then suddenly injects ‘luck’, **pushing the balance even higher than it was** right after the purchase.

These sharp surges are what **amplify thrill and excitement**, while the drops **prevent the experience from becoming ‘boring’**: flat or predictable – making every peak feel more rewarding.

The Full Progression

The full progression shows a constant cycle of pressure and release.
Near-depletion creates tension, while sudden **‘lucky’ spikes** reignite thrill and reinforce the urge to keep playing.

Full Progression



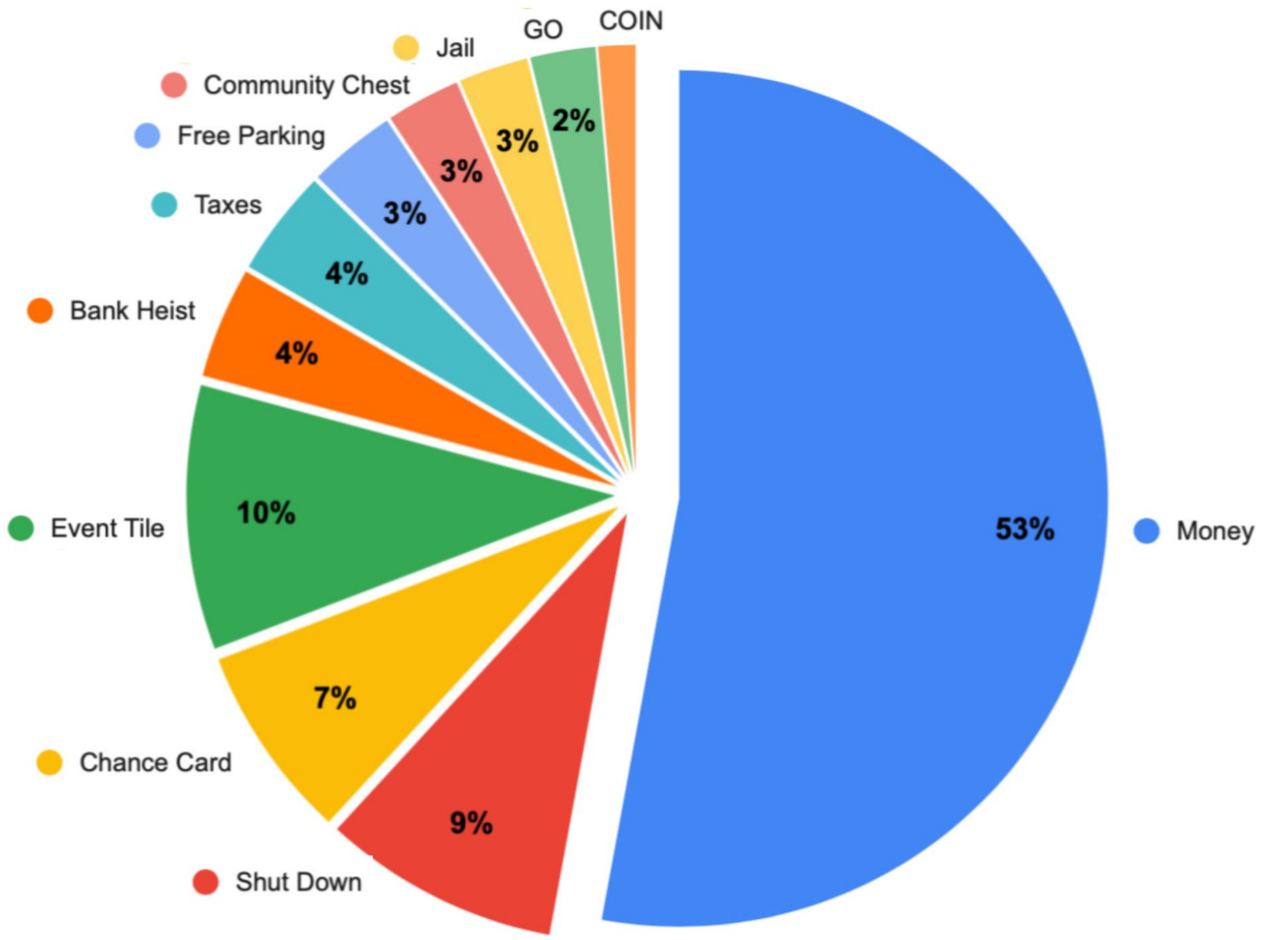
Core Gameplay Mechanic Deconstruction

Board Tiles Overview

Let’s break down the **board tiles** themselves – what types exist and how they convey thrill and excitement:

- **Property: Money tiles** – basic income used for Meta progression
- **Event tiles** – feed LiveOps progress
- **Bonus tiles** – visually highlighted, create excitement spikes
- **Negative tiles (Jail, Taxes)** – apply pressure and resource drain
- **Chance Card tiles** – introduce uncertainty and surprise outcomes
- **Community Chest** – social layer, linking individual turns to shared systems
- **Other (GO, Free Parking)** – relief and reset points

Tile Landing Frequency



The number of tiles and the overall board structure remain **the same** across locations.

When looking at tile distribution:

- around **50% of landings** are standard **Property: Money tiles** with basic payouts
- while the other **50%** involve tiles with special mini-games, events, or modifiers that add variation and excitement.

Property Tiles

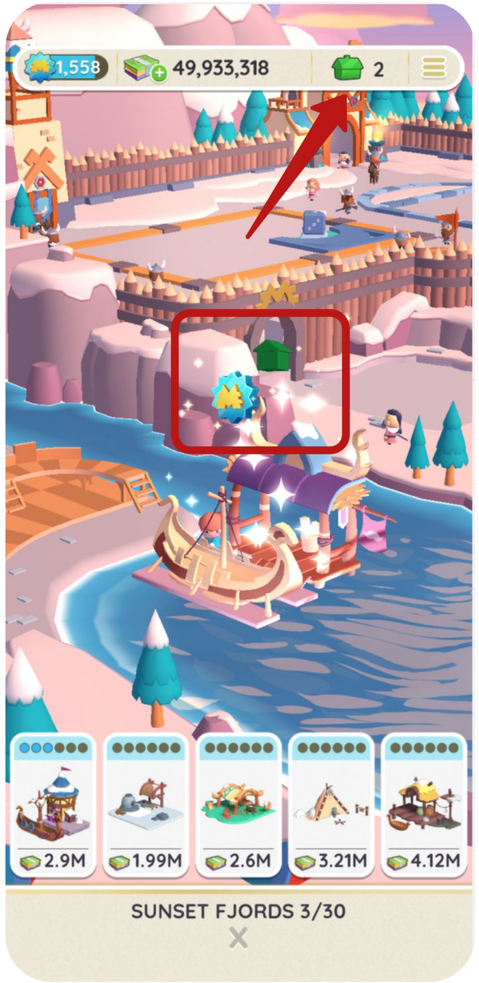
When players upgrade buildings, they unlock **Color Sets** – houses placed on property tiles.

These upgrades directly affect rewards in 2 ways:

1. **Rent from other players –** Other players are distributed across multiple tiles. When they land on a property tile you own, they pay **Rent** – and the more upgraded the property is, the higher the rent they pay.

2. **Color Wheel bonus** – Once all property tiles of the same color have a hotel, an additional Color Wheel bonus becomes available

These 2 mechanics creating another **anticipation-driven reward** opportunity.



Wheel of Fortune: Visualization

Wheel of Fortune is one of the most powerful and widely used chance-based mechanics – but only when it's designed correctly.

What's the first thing players notice when the Wheels appear?

For the **1st Wheel**, it's the **Safe** at the center that immediately catches your eye. It's instantly perceived as the *most valuable* and *most desirable* reward.

The **2nd Wheel** highlights the 3 largest prizes

And that's the trick.

You add a few **juicy rewards** to spark excitement – and then you **visually emphasize them** so they dominate attention.

In reality, the **average payout** here is around **900K**.
But let's be honest – no one spins a wheel thinking about averages.

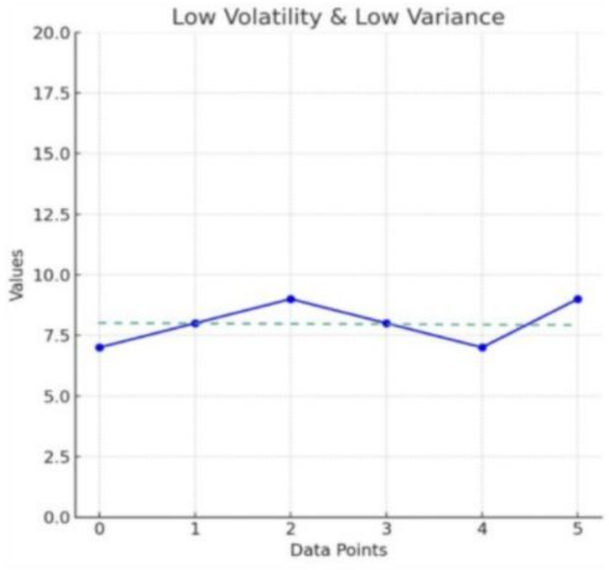
Emotionally, players see a **chance at the jackpot – 4M+**.
And *that* is what makes the spin exciting.

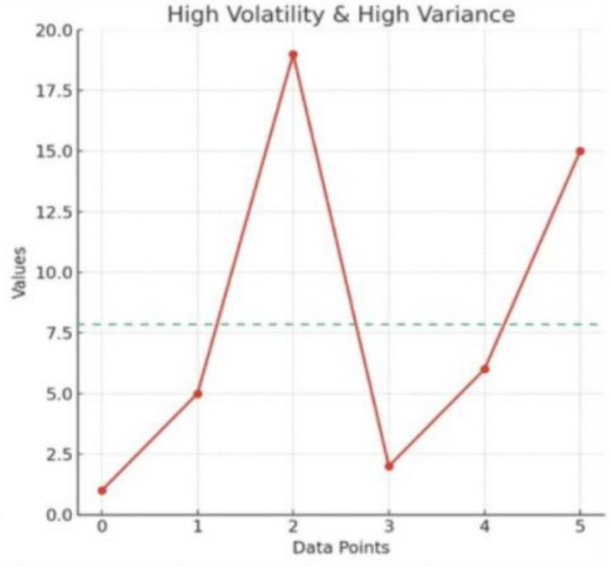
Wheel of Fortune: Balance

Let’s talk about What **high volatility** actually means and why it works?

Here are 2 reward systems: **Both distributions have the same expected value (mean) = 30.**

- When variance and volatility are ***low***, outcomes stay close to the average.
- When variance is ***high***, results are spread across a much wider range.





They feel completely different

- **The blue one?**
  It's predictable – and safe.
  But also... kind of boring

- **The red one?**
  It's alive – you Win big, you Lose hard – you feel *something*

Shut Down + Shield

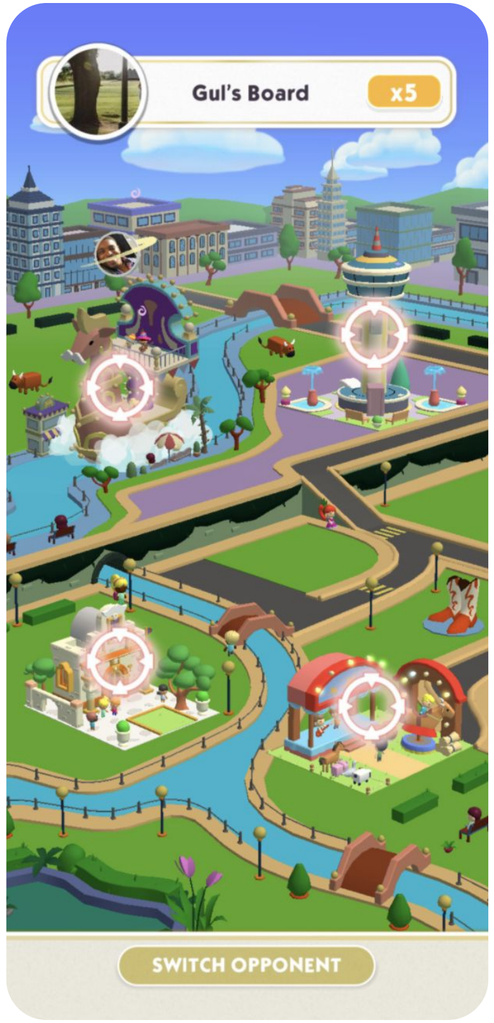
Shutdown is one of the bonus mechanics

Beyond its **social aspect**, Shutdown adds a strong layer of Probability and Anticipation:

- the size of the **reward depends on whether the opponent has an active shield or not**
- while the animation plays – the crane swinging toward the building – the player is already mentally **placing a bet** on the outcome.
- According to the observed data, **60% of Shutdowns resulted in the maximum reward**, while the remaining **40% were blocked by shields**.

There's also a 2nd layer to this system: **Acquiring Shields**.

- Shield icons are scattered across the board, placed on top of other tiles. Landing on them grants shields, which means that when a player runs out of shields, they actively ***hope* their next roll lands on one**



Bank Heist:
Why It Works

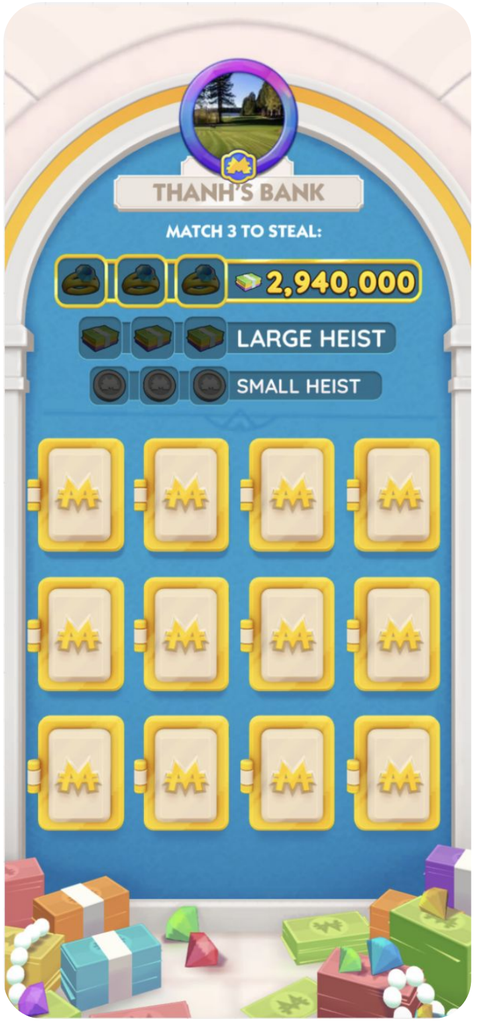
Heist is a short, high-intensity mini-game built entirely around **anticipation and chance**.

Players open hidden tiles, trying to **match 3** identical symbols to determine the payout – Small Heist or Large Heist. Every tap is a **Micro-Bet**

The mechanic amplifies excitement through:

- **Anticipation on *Every* reveal**
- **Near-miss moments** (2 matches out of 3)
- **Illusion of control** – you choose the tiles
- **Escalating tension** as matches build up
- **Big-number framing** – the reward is visible upfront

Notably, across ALL plays, the **lowest-tier prize appeared in only 13% of cases**. This could be a coincidence, but more likely it's a deliberate tuning choice – reducing the frequency of 'bad luck' outcomes to avoid making players feel unlucky



Bank Heist:
Why Flow Matters

Example A

1–1–3–2–2–3–2

- The player starts by revealing **2 TOP-tier symbols**, immediately creating strong tension: every next reveal feels like it *could* complete the best prize.
- Each click reinforces the belief that the next one will hit – but the final outcome lands on a **mid-tier reward**.

Example B

3–3–2–1–1–2–1

- Here, the 1st reveals point to a **LOW-tier result**, gradually killing confidence.
- Even after a few more picks, hope remains low.
- Then, at the very end, the **TOP prize hits** – a classic ***'it finally landed'*** moment, when hope was almost gone but luck turns everything around.

Example C

3–3–1–2–2–1–3

- After the previous experience, even a bad early start doesn't fully break belief.
- The player now ***remembers* that a top prize is still possible** – reinforcing **long-term trust** in the system.

Example D

1–3–2–2–1–3–2

- A more balanced reveal pattern: no strong bias early on, but steady intrigue until the end.
- With 2 symbols of each type, anticipation stays alive because **any outcome remains possible**.

Bank Heist:
Extra Excitement

The game introduces a limited-time bonus event where, for the **limited time**, players have a chance to trigger **Mega Heist** – further intensifying excitement.

Thrill is amplified through **stacked probability layers**:

1. **Chance to land on a specific board tile** (only two exist)
2. **Chance to trigger a Mega Heist** instead of a regular one
3. **Chance to Win Big** inside the Mega Heist itself

Each layer builds anticipation before the previous one fully resolves.

Visually, the effect is reinforced even more:

- Small rewards are *replaced* by noticeably larger ones, supported by bold animations, brighter colors, and a distinct background.

Together, these elements transform a familiar mechanic into a short-lived, **high-stakes moment**

Chance Card

There are several types of **Chance cards** in the game – but the player **never knows in advance** which one they'll get.

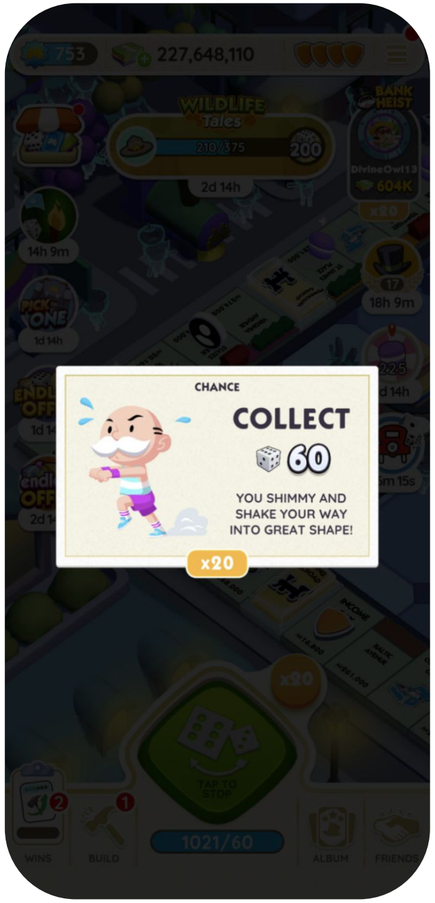
When landing on a Chance tile, the player draws a card and only then reveals its effect. This delay creates immediate **intrigue and anticipation**.

Each draw can result in **1 of 3 reward types**:

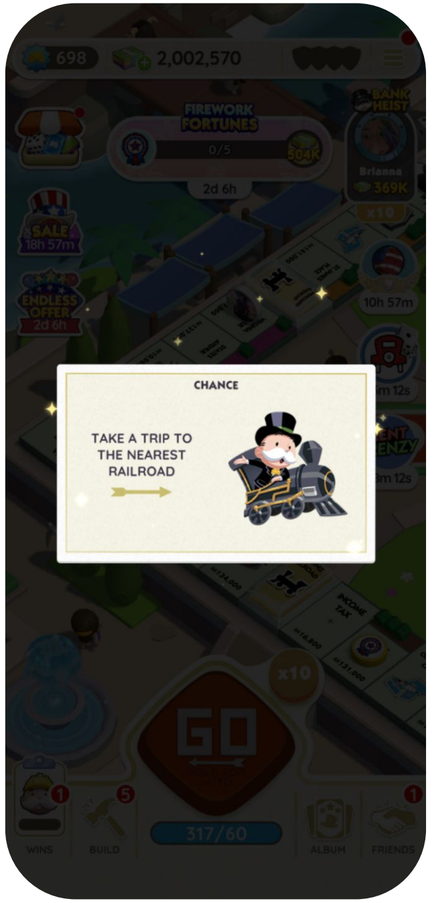
- Cash
- Dice
- Or one of the Bonus Games

.. turning every landing into a small suspense moment driven purely by uncertainty.

55% Chance



17% Chance



29% Chance

Community Chest

Community Chest is primarily a **social feature**, but it works from 2 sides at once:

1. Players need to complete **tasks** together with a friend → in order to earn **keys**.
2. In the core gameplay loop, landing on a **Community Chest tile** of the corresponding color fills the shared progress bar for that chest.

Because both conditions are required, the mechanic naturally **increases the desire to land on Community Chest tiles** – turning otherwise neutral board spaces into highly anticipated targets.

Lucky Coin: Press-Your-Luck

Lucky Coin is another example of a chance-driven mechanic – a classic *press-your-luck* design.

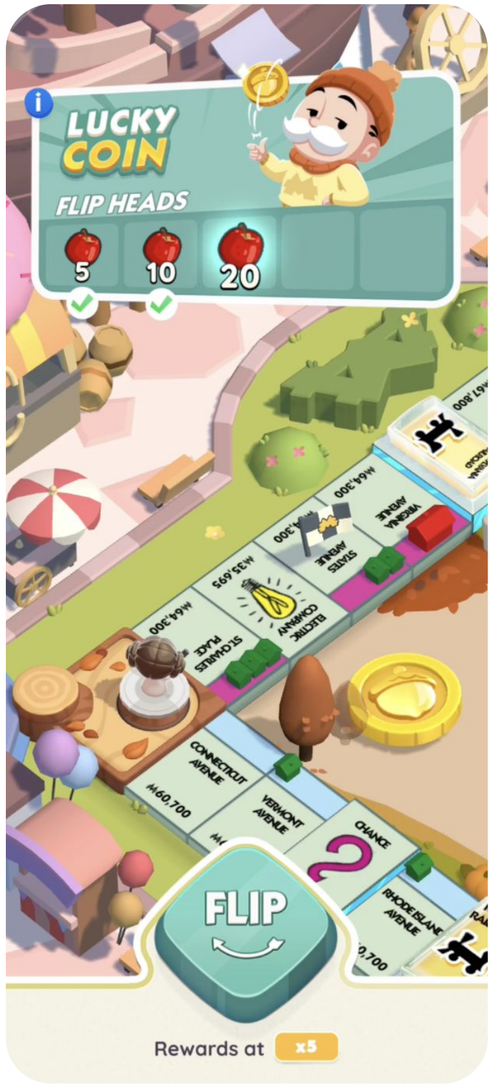
On each step, the player flips a coin:

- Each flip either grows the reward – and the **tension** – or ends the run.
- However, the strength of this mini-game lies in real **risk**: without the possibility of loss, thrill disappears.

Another point – balance matters:

- In practice, around **35% of runs ended on the very 1st step**, resulting in a reward of **‘0’.**
- From a purely mathematical standpoint, this makes sense – the chance to fail on the first flip is **50%**. But emotionally, this is one of those cases where slightly ***unfair* probabilities → could create a better player experience**.

Walking away with nothing – especially when the run visually promises five steps – feels frustrating rather than thrilling.



Jail:
Punishment or Hidden Reward?

The board includes not only positive, but also **“negative” tiles** – although they aren’t truly negative once you look closer.

When landing in Jail, the player gets a chance to escape by rolling a **double on 2 dice within 3 attempts**. Each roll becomes a mini moment of anticipation – another **chance to *get away*.**

If the player does roll a double, they don’t just escape – they’re also **rewarded with extra dice**.

What’s especially interesting is the actual outcome distribution:

- **27%** of the time, escape happened on the **1st roll**
- **53%** of the time, on the **2nd or 3rd roll**
- Only **20%** of the time did the player end up paying the fine

Statistically, the truly negative outcome is rare.
Most of the time, Jail turns into a fun escape moment – often with a reward – reframing what looks like **punishment into another anticipation-driven experience**.

Other Tiles

Free Parking – neutral, even ‘boring’ tile: gives nothing, takes nothing, and is the least exciting space on the board

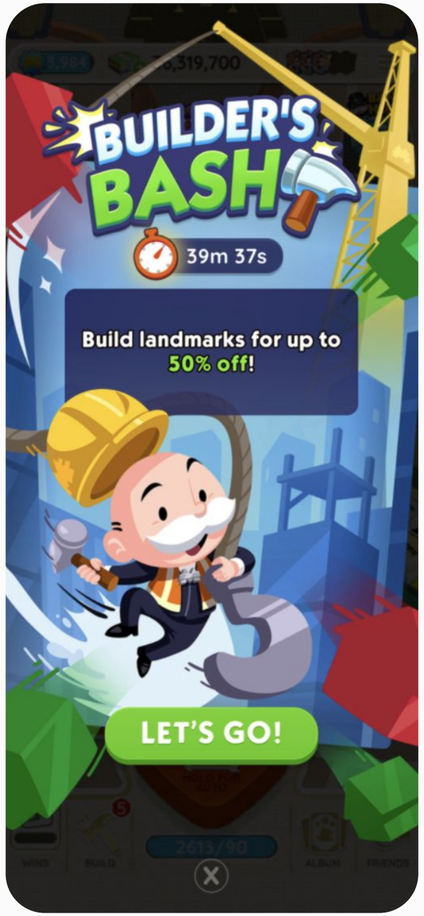
GO – the anchor tile: always rewards the player, even when passed, providing consistency and relief

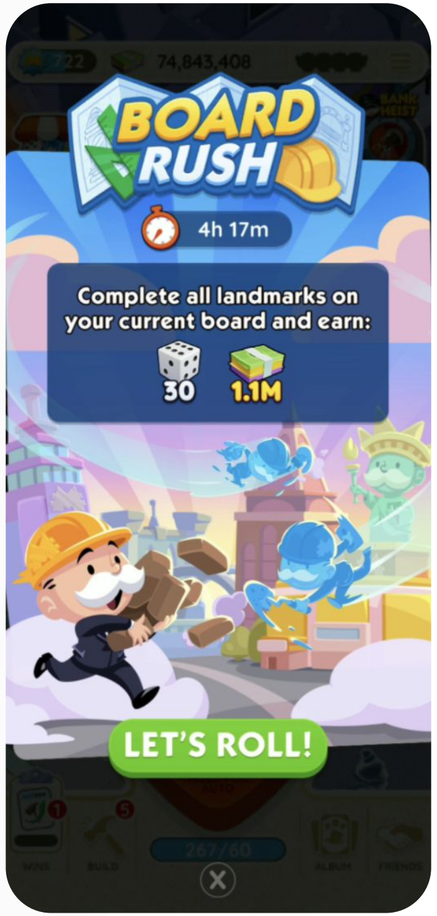
Taxes – removes a small, symbolic amount of money to add light tension without real punishment

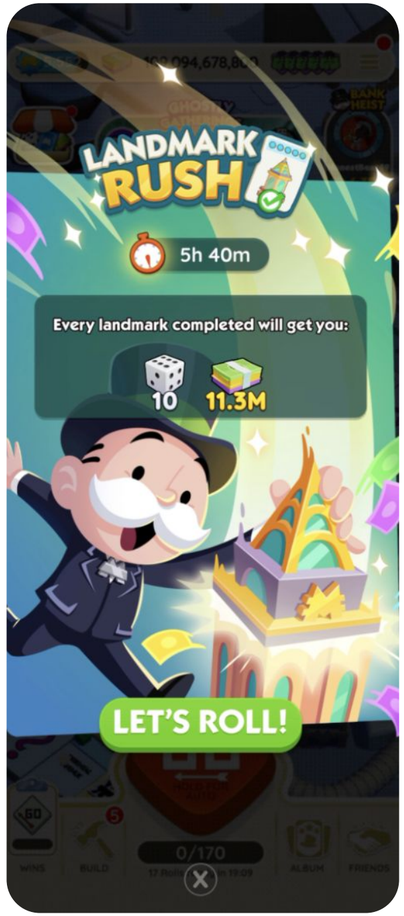
Bonus Time
Limited Events

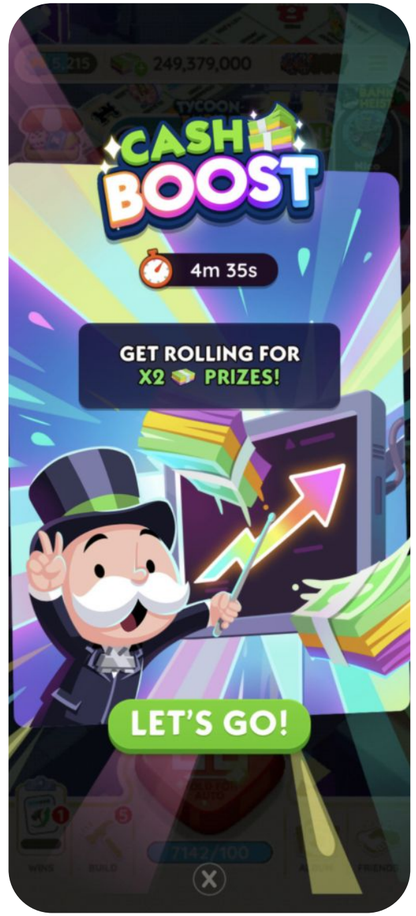
Group 1: Location Boosters

They encourage the player to play as actively as possible to fully leverage the booster's potential.
To buy more dice in order to play longer – and to spend more in order to play at higher stakes.

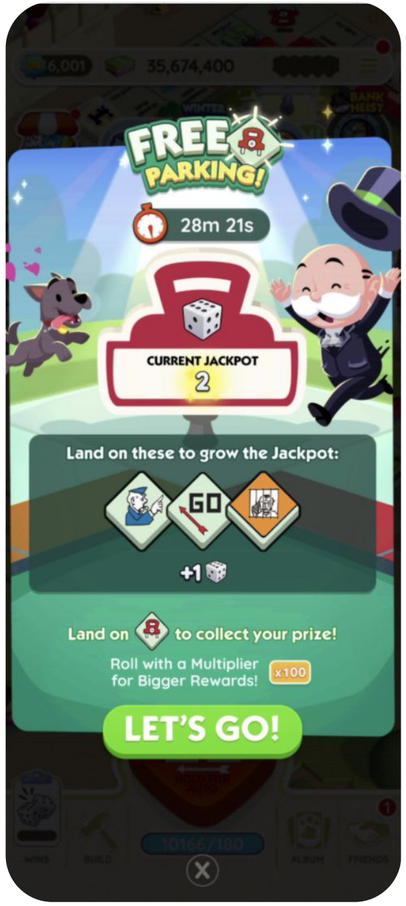






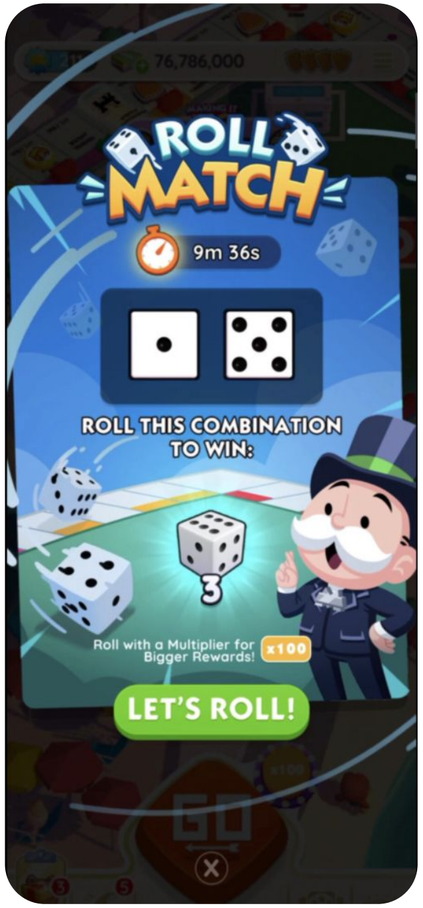


Group 2: Focusing Boosters

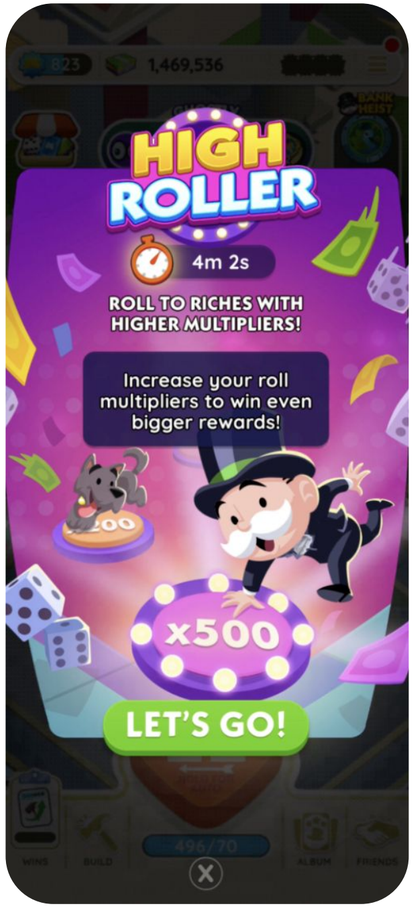


It highlights the corner tiles
+Even making **Free Parking** feel relevant

It makes hunting for **Friend-related tiles** more engaging



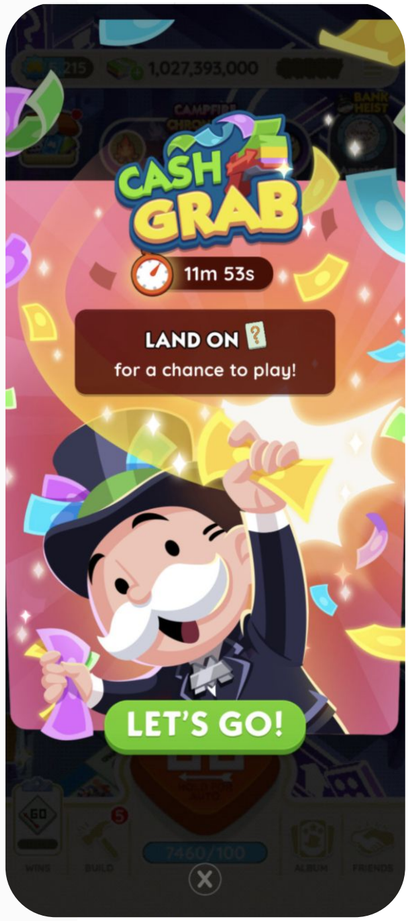
Shifts focus from single tiles to **Dice combinations**, adding another strategic layer

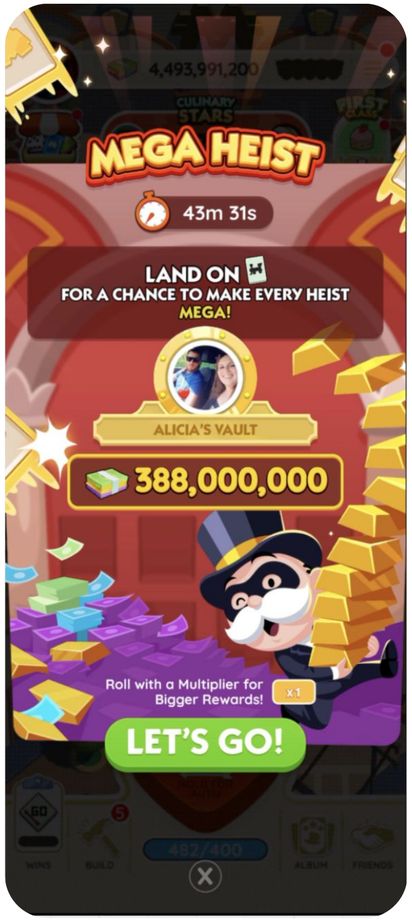


It encourages higher-stakes play, making players
Spend dice even faster

Group 3: Mini-Games Boosters

This type of booster makes already thrill-driven special tiles and bonus games even more impactful, **Multiplying Anticipation around landing on them**. There are only a few of these tiles on the board – which makes them feel even **More Valuable**.





LiveOps and Features

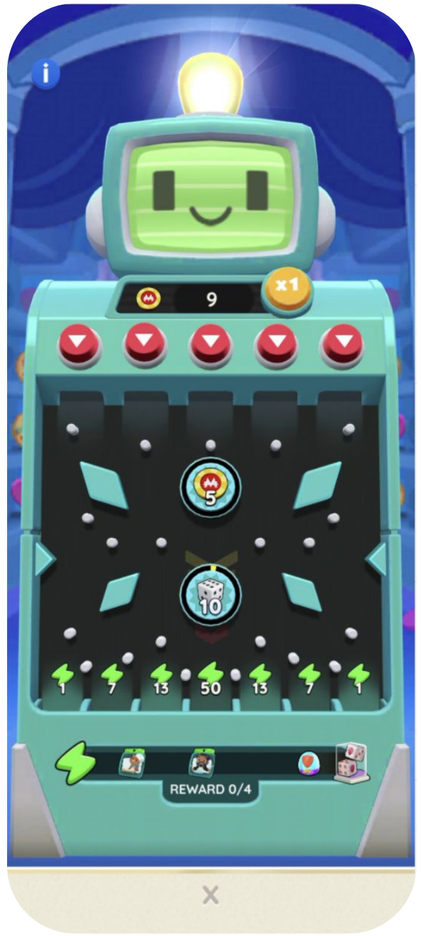
Basic Events

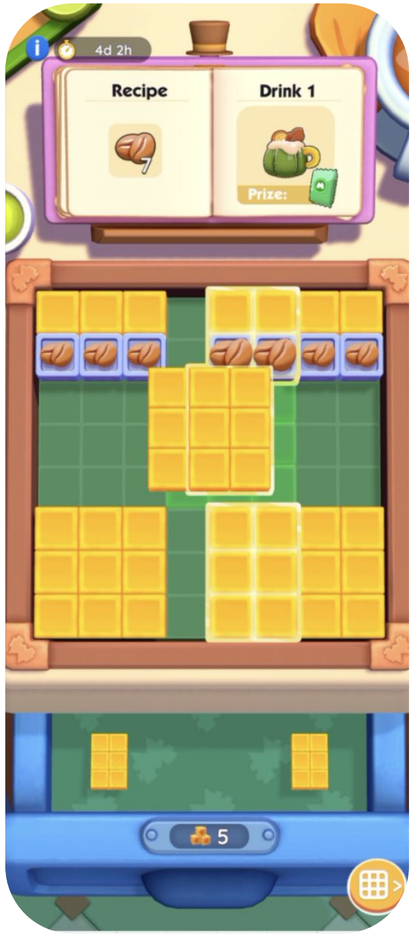
Basic events put a spotlight on **specific board tiles**, since they are the main source of event currency.
What's important is that different events target **different tiles** – but always ones that are **rare and highly visible** on the board

- When dice are ***running low***
- The event is ***90%*** complete
- and you're waiting for ***that one tile*** with currency Anticipation peaks.

Complex Mini-Games

Current events are more complex. Their currency often comes from *other* events and features.
So where does the **thrill** come from here? From the **event mechanics themselves**.

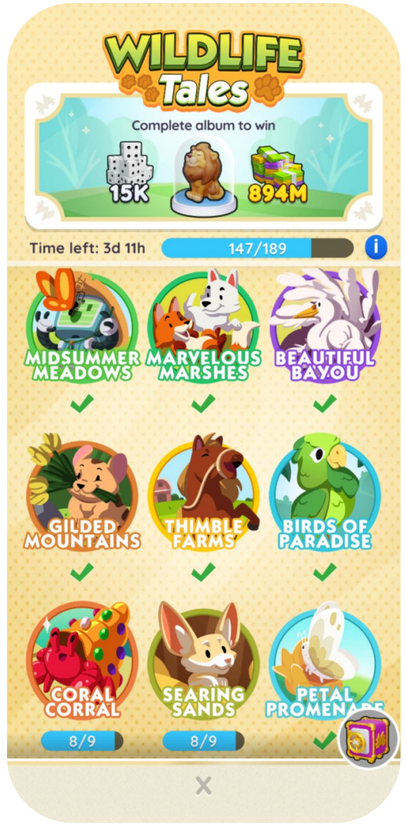


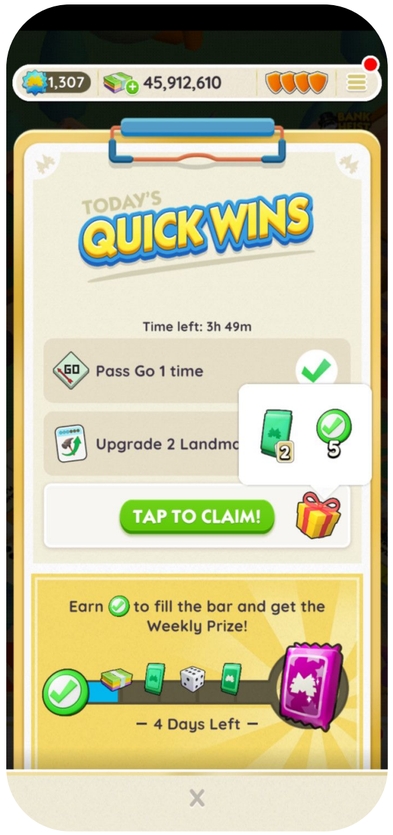


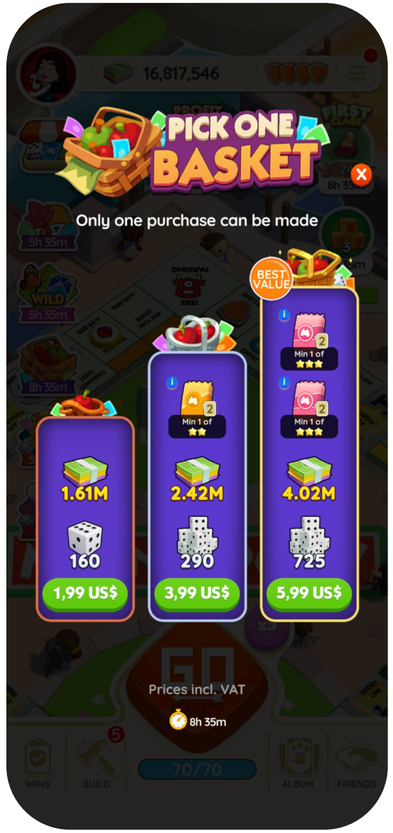
- How will the ball fall in pachinko?
- Is this the correct color order?
- Which tile is the ship hiding behind?
- What shape will appear next?

Album Collections

Album collections are one of the strongest probability-driven mechanics in the game. At their core, they are classic **Gacha / Loot Boxes**: you open a pack never knowing exactly what's inside – but always believing it could contain *that one rare or missing card*.







This uncertainty is the key.

Each pack is less about the cards you get – and more about the **hope of getting the one you need**.

Album Collections: Packs

The game features **5 types of sticker packs**.
As expected, the rarer the pack → the higher the chance of getting rare cards.

But Monopoly GO! makes this experience even more exciting.

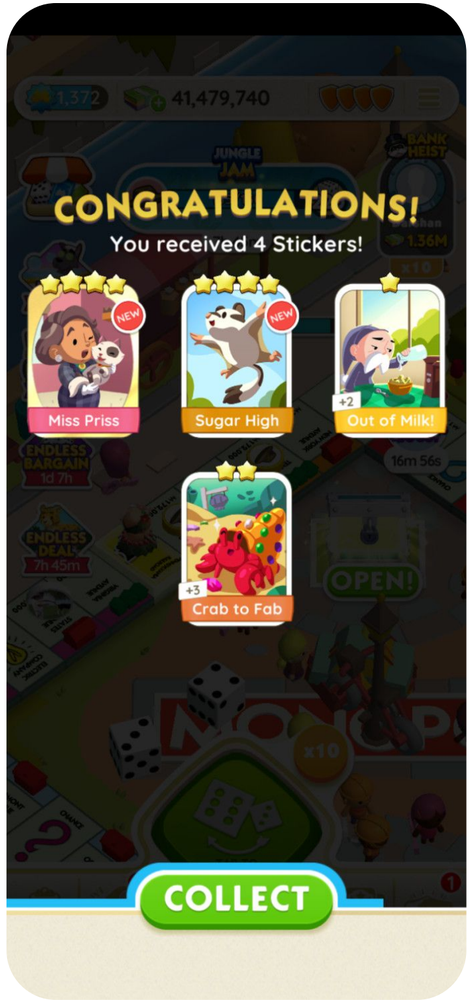
For example

- in roughly **78% of cases**, **orange packs** drop only **Tier 1-2 cards**.
- however, the remaining **22%** create powerful emotional spikes – moments when a higher-tier card appears.
  In one case, even a **Tier 5 card** dropped.

Why does this matter?

- After receiving a rare card once, the player believes ***it's real***
- Every next pack is opened with the same thought:
  "What if there's another rare one inside?"

This is how a low-probability outcome turns into a **long-term belief** –
and belief is what keeps anticipation alive through countless openings.



Album Collections: Packs

Want to amplify the effect even further?

Beyond mathematical probability tuning,
Visual presentation matters deeply.

- Add **distinct lighting and opening animations** for rare cards – or for the *last missing cards* in a player's collection.
- Slow down the pack-opening moment itself, stretching those final seconds to heighten tension and **intrigue**.

These small delays and visual cues dramatically **strengthen anticipation.**

A great reference here is **Hearthstone**.
Even people who've never played the game recognize its pack-opening animation – because it turns uncertainty into a memorable emotional moment.

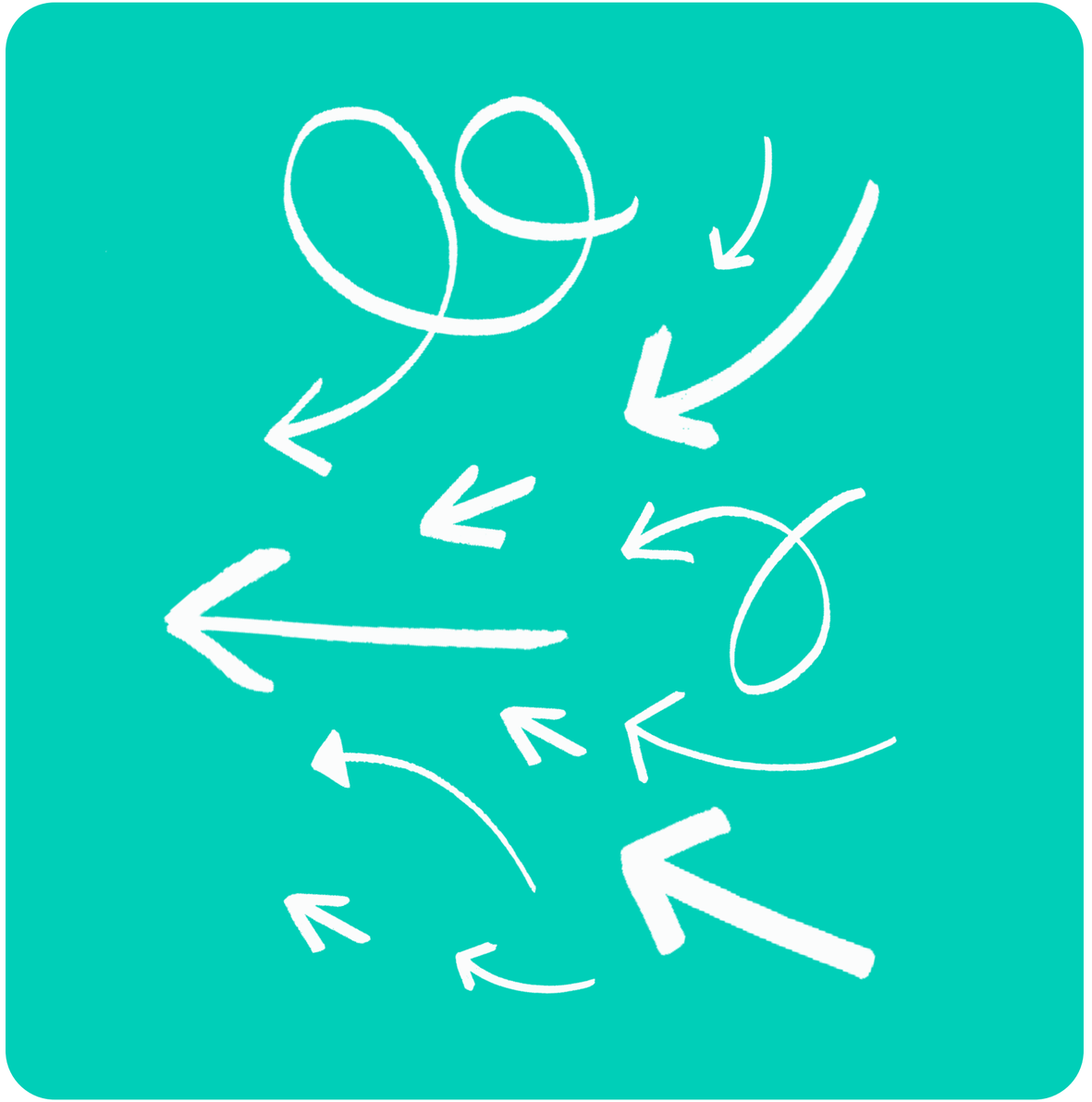
When done right, visuals don't just reveal the result – they **sell the possibility** before it appears.

Final Thoughts

Chance-based mechanics work not because players love randomness, but because they **love anticipation**.

Monopoly GO! shows that thrill isn't created by wins alone – it's built through tension, near misses, visible possibilities, and carefully timed relief.

Give players emotions through your chance-based mechanics. Don't focus only on the moment of reward – let them enjoy the **waiting**, the **hoping**, and the **journey toward it** just as much.



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