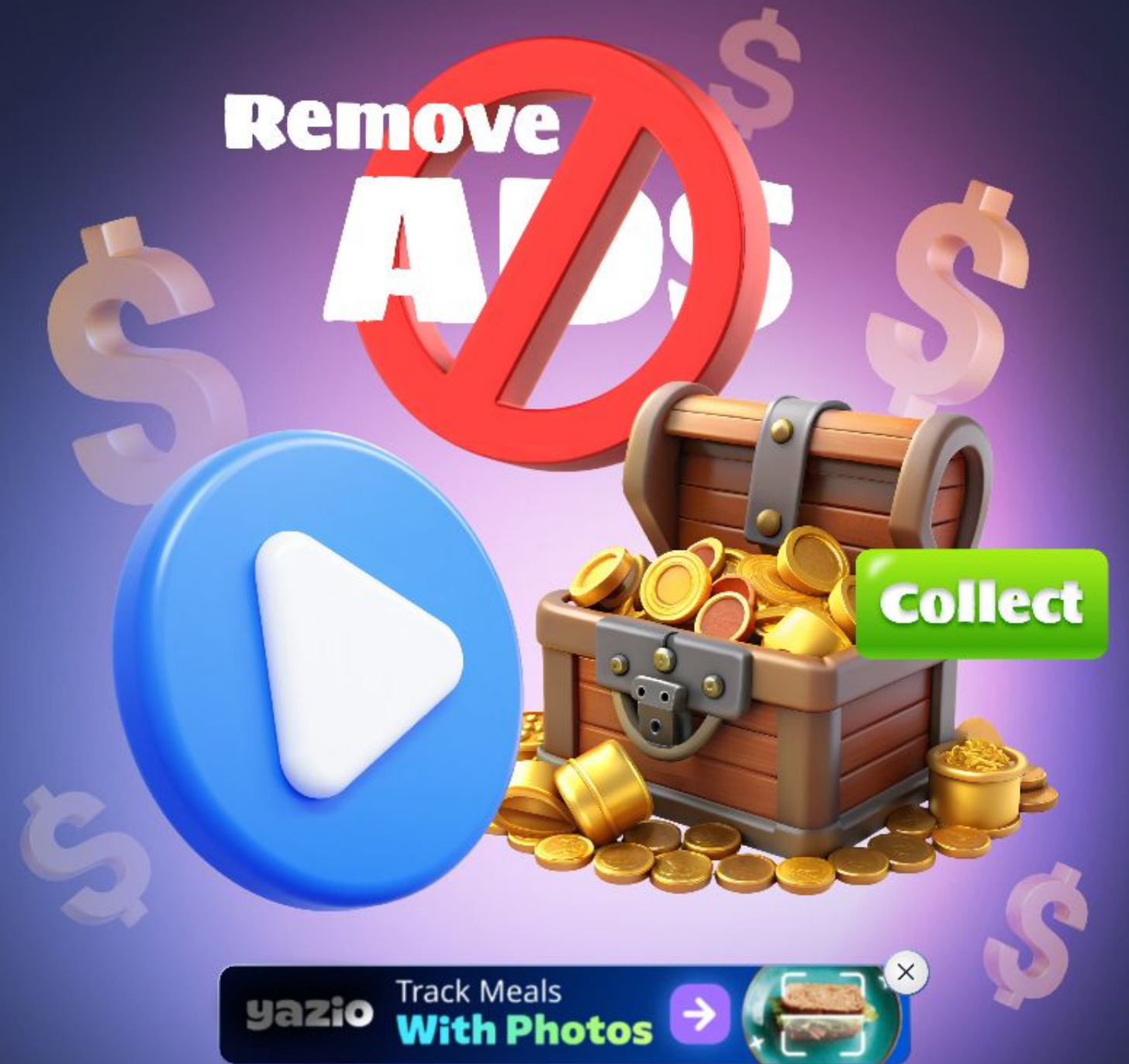


Ad Monetization Without Killing Retention

Best Hybrid Practices





Playliner by Sensor Tower

Playliner, 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 **Playliner 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 for 2026.

Three Ad Types We'll Break Down

Bad Ads kill Retention.

Good Ad architecture scales LTV

Ads are often treated as pure negativity. In Hybrid games, that's a mistake – Ads can support the player and scale revenue without killing retention. The key is to treat ads as a **design system**: right format, right moment, right pressure.

Interstitials

Your main tool for **coverage** – monetizes a large share of players, fast.

But it's also the easiest way to **damage retention** if you place it in the wrong emotional moment (e.g., after a loss) or stack it too often.

Goal: maximize coverage while **minimizing negative impact** on retention

Rewarded Video (RV)

The most flexible and safest Ad format:

- RV is the most player-friendly format: can **support progress, grants extra currencies**
- but can also **break the economy** and difficulty curve if it starts replacing coin sinks

Goal: improve engagement and progression **without cannibalizing IAP**

Banners

Usually the **lowest eCPM** and often a smaller share of total Ad revenue – added late as an extra layer.

Their real risk is not revenue – it's **distraction**: bright competitor creatives, misclick zones

Goal: add **incremental revenue** – while minimizing negative impact =with **minimal distraction**

Core Building Blocks of an Ad System

1

Fundamentals

Interstitials + banners = scale, but
minimize damage
RV = value exchange

2

Triggers & Timing

End-of-level (WIN vs LOSE) + risky
triggers (unpause, mid-level).
Match ads to the player's emotional
state.

3

Placements

- Proven RV spots
- Banner-safe screens
- Interstitial-safe moments

4

Control Knobs

Start gates (level + playtime),
frequency, cooldowns, daily caps,
per-placement limits and others.

5

Strategy by Monetization Model

Different rules for Ads-first, IAP-first,
and Hybrid: start timing, RV coverage,
No Ads logic

6

Extra Tips & Edge Cases

Creative filtering, banner refresh sweet
spot, offline rules – small details that
protect trust & retention.



Interstitial Ad

Triggers: After Level Completion

Most Common Trigger: After Level Completion

But this is actually **two separate triggers**:

After IN – The Lowest Risk Variant

WHY?

This is a natural emotional release point.

Level completed, Reward Granted → the loop is closed, and the player is in a positive state

When Exactly Should You Show the Ad?

Most common placement:

- After tapping 'Collect' on the reward screen
- Before returning to lobby

WHY it works?

- Emotional release already happened
- But consider this:
 - a. What if the player wants to Double reward via Rewarded Video?
 - b. If you show Interstitial first – You block a higher-value RV and interrupt monetization hierarchy

After LOSE – Higher Risk Trigger

Most common trigger is after level end.

But Lose must be treated separately from Win.

- Player already experiences frustration
- Adding an Interstitial may create a double negative
- Lose + Ad = higher churn risk

Choose the Timing Carefully

Show Interstitial only **after** the full Lose flow is completed:

- Show the main Lose popup → Show LiveOps loss warnings

At every step, the player may convert.

If you show an Interstitial too early:

- You increase frustration and block higher-value monetization (Continue the level via Ad or Coins)

In many cases, it's smarter to sacrifice one Interstitial than to lose a Revive conversion.

Triggers: Unpause and Mid-level

On Unpause (App Return)

When a player returns after minimizing the app:

- They are still motivated to continue
- They are unlikely to quit immediately
- This can be a relatively safe interruption point

Mid-Level

This is not a user-friendly trigger by default.

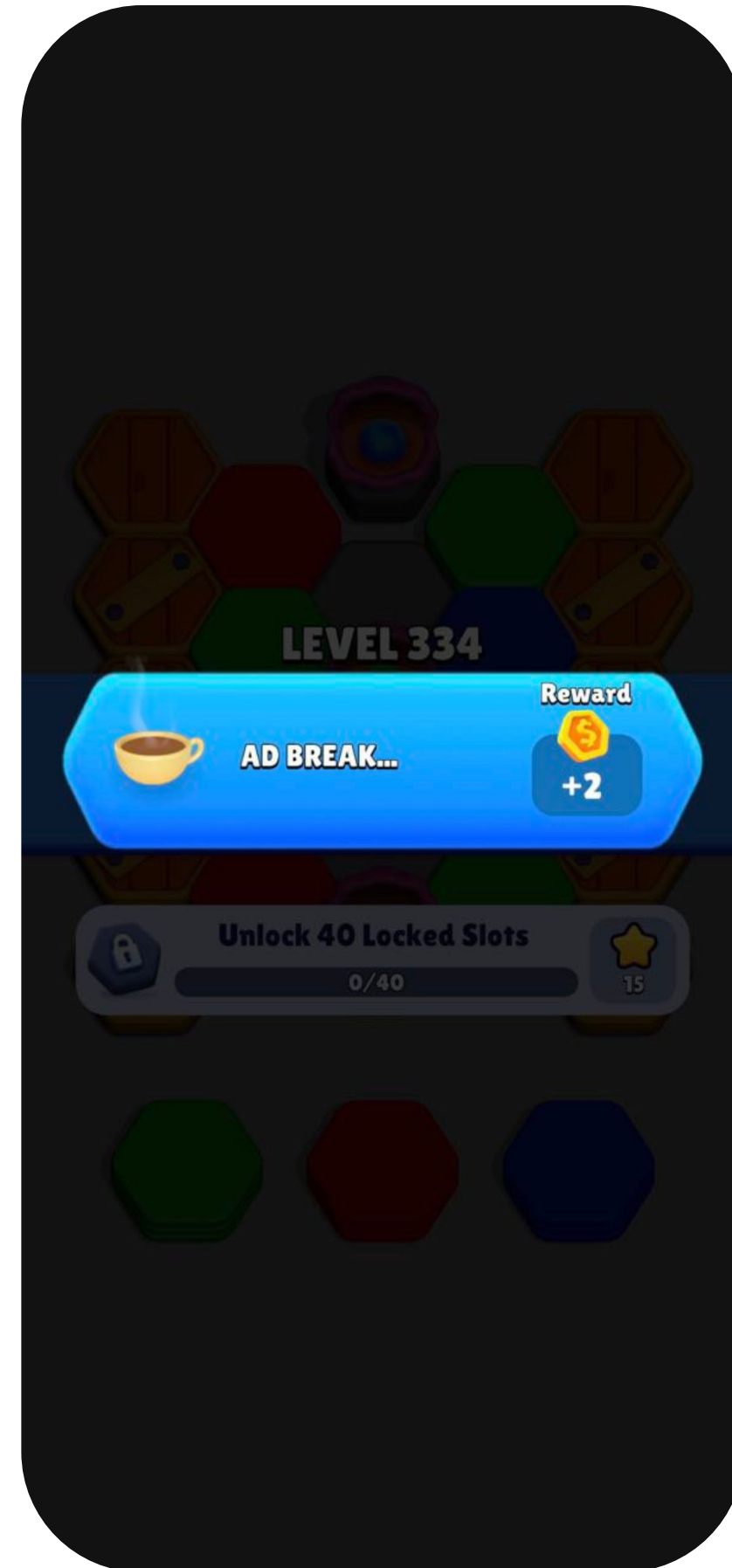
Use only when: Levels are truly long (5+ minutes)

How to Smooth Both Triggers

Don't interrupt instantly. Use a **pre-ad pop-up** first.

Pre-ad pop-up should:

- Warn the player that an ad is about to start
- Show a clear reward for watching
- Reinforce progress and motivation: 'You're already 50%+ through the level'



When to Start Showing Interstitials?

It's highly game-specific, but here are the key principles to guide the decision

Many teams aim for the end of the 1st session, so the player:

- gets engaged and enjoys the gameplay without interruptions
- unlocks core features
- but you still monetize a wide share of users (including those who churn after the 1st session)

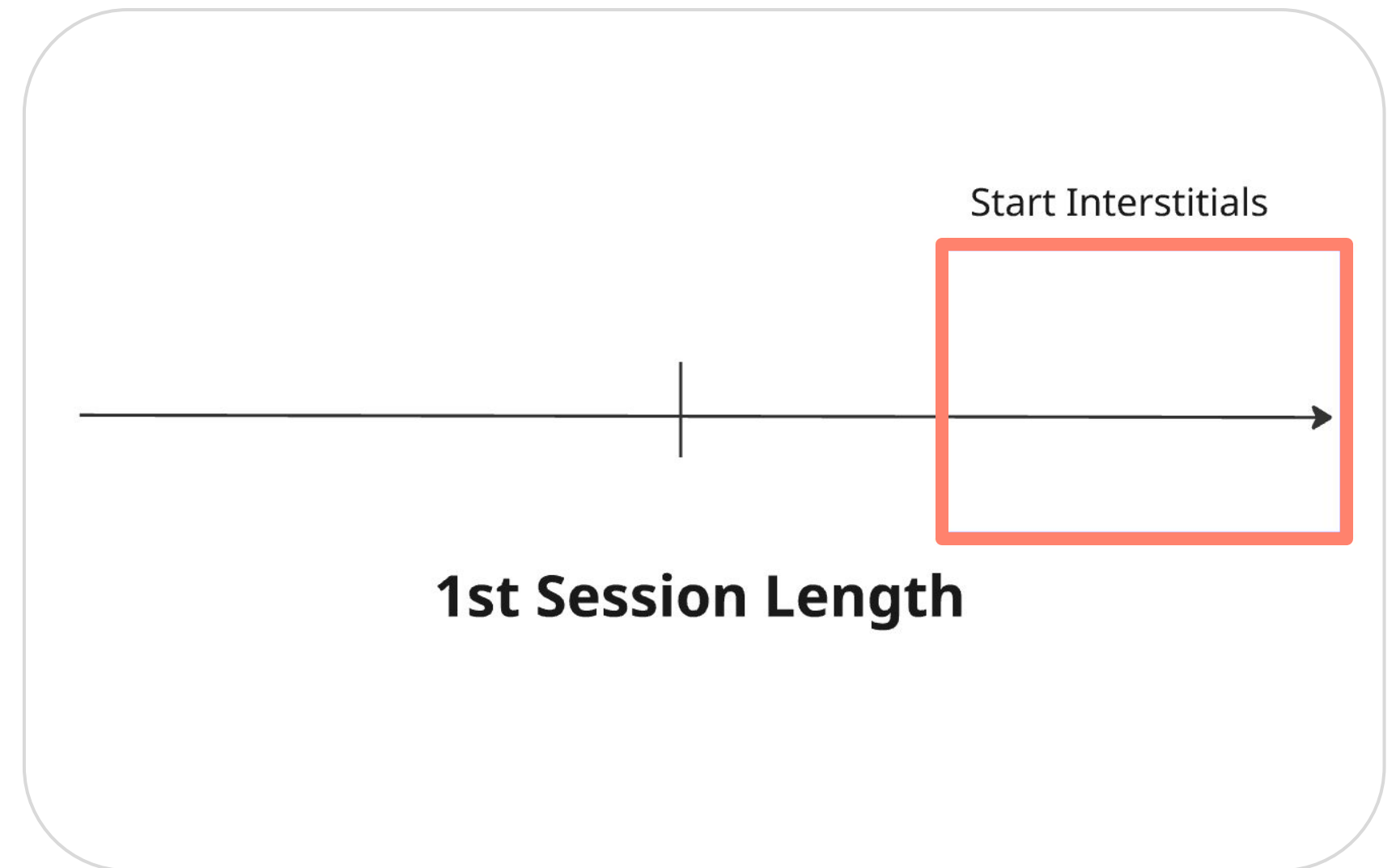
A common range is around **Level 10-20**.

⚠ But the real driver is **Playtime**, not level count:

- level length varies
- first-session duration varies across games

Extra factor: your monetization focus

- If your focus is **IAP-focused**, you can delay Interstitials further
- If your focus is **Ads-focused**, you usually start earlier (but still after engagement is established)



Setup Parameters

1

Every X Level + Cooldown

1. **Basic Parameter** – Set a rule for **every N levels** (in most of the cases – every level)
2. **Add Cooldowns (Best Practice)**
A stronger setup is combining N-level logic with cooldowns:
 - 2.1 **Time since last Interstitial**
 - If the player clears levels quickly, you avoid back-to-back ads
 - 2.2 **Time since last Rewarded Video**
 - If the player just watched RV (revive / booster / multiplier) – avoid stacking ad fatigue

2

Interstitial Start Conditions: Unlock Level

Two key start parameters:

1. **Level reached**
2. **Total playtime**

Best practice: use **both** as a gate.

Start showing Interstitials only when:

- the player reached **Level X, and**
- session playtime is **above Y minutes**

3

Session Start

Don't show ads in the first minutes of a session
– give the player time to get engaged first.
(short cooldown ~ 1-3 minutes)



The bigger the game and the more diverse your players are, the more value you get from expanding the system with extra parameters.

(when implemented and tested carefully)

Offline Mode: Pixel Flow case

Offline mode creates a clear conflict:

Option 1: Block Offline Play

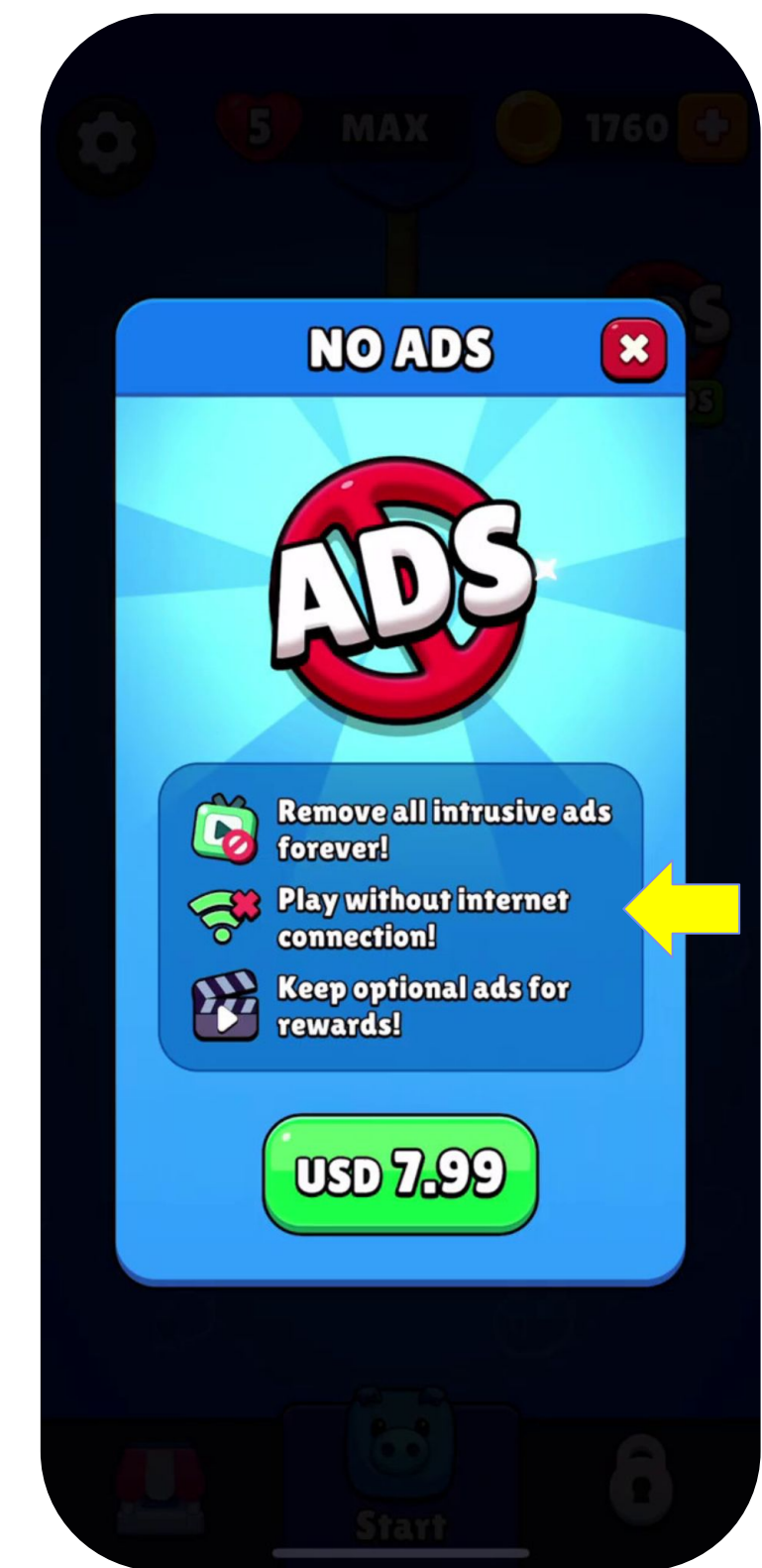
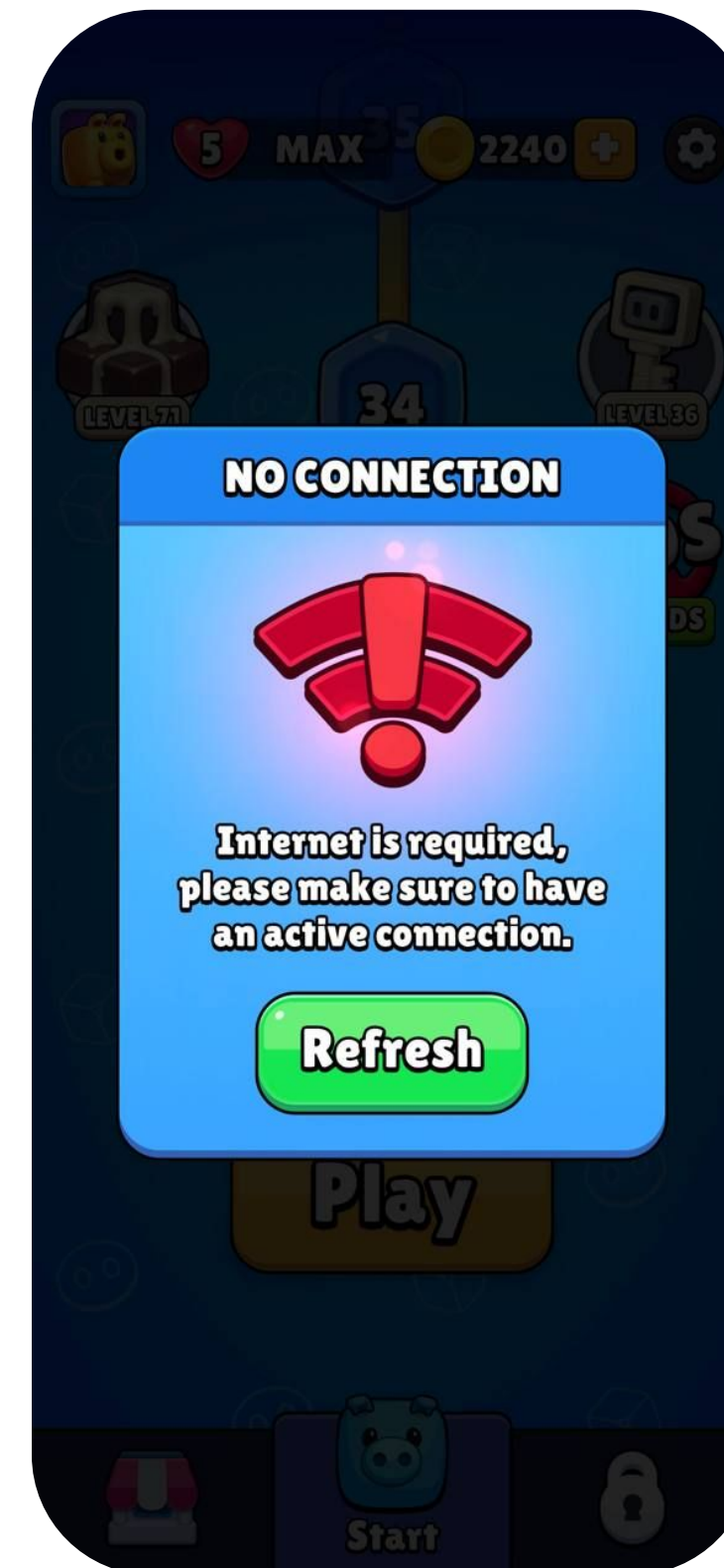
- Protects ad revenue
- But may frustrate players
- Risk: negative UX in real offline situations (metro, flight, poor signal)

Option 2: Allow Offline Play

- Better player experience
- But creates ad revenue leakage
- Risk increases if players intentionally abuse offline mode

Smart Hybrid Solution (Pixel Flow example)

- If player HAS No Ads purchase → Allow offline play
- If player DOESN'T have No Ads → Block offline play



Banners



Banner Ad

Banner Ads – Often the Most Unpleasant Ad Format Why?

- **Lowest eCPM + usually the smallest Ad Revenue share**

Banners are often added last as a 'small extra layer' – typically assumed to bring ~**10-15%** incremental ad revenue (varies by genre and game specifics)

- **Retention risk**

Bright, animated competitor creatives:

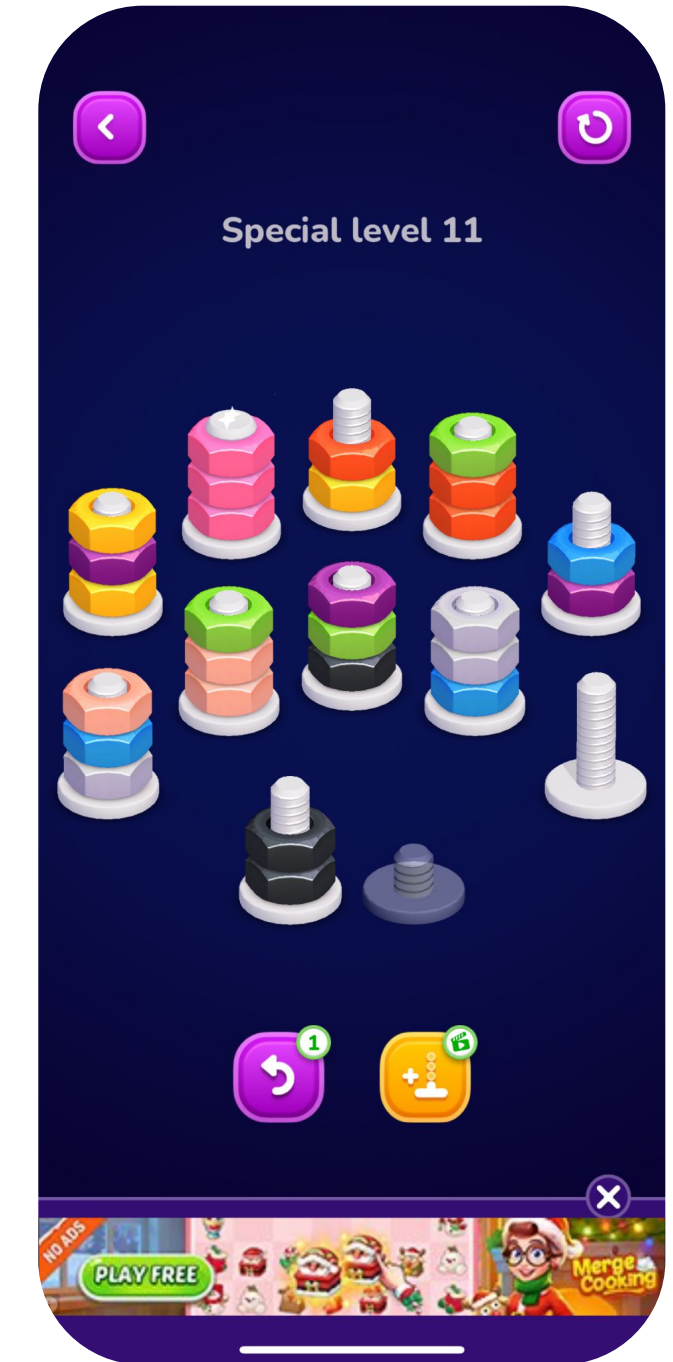
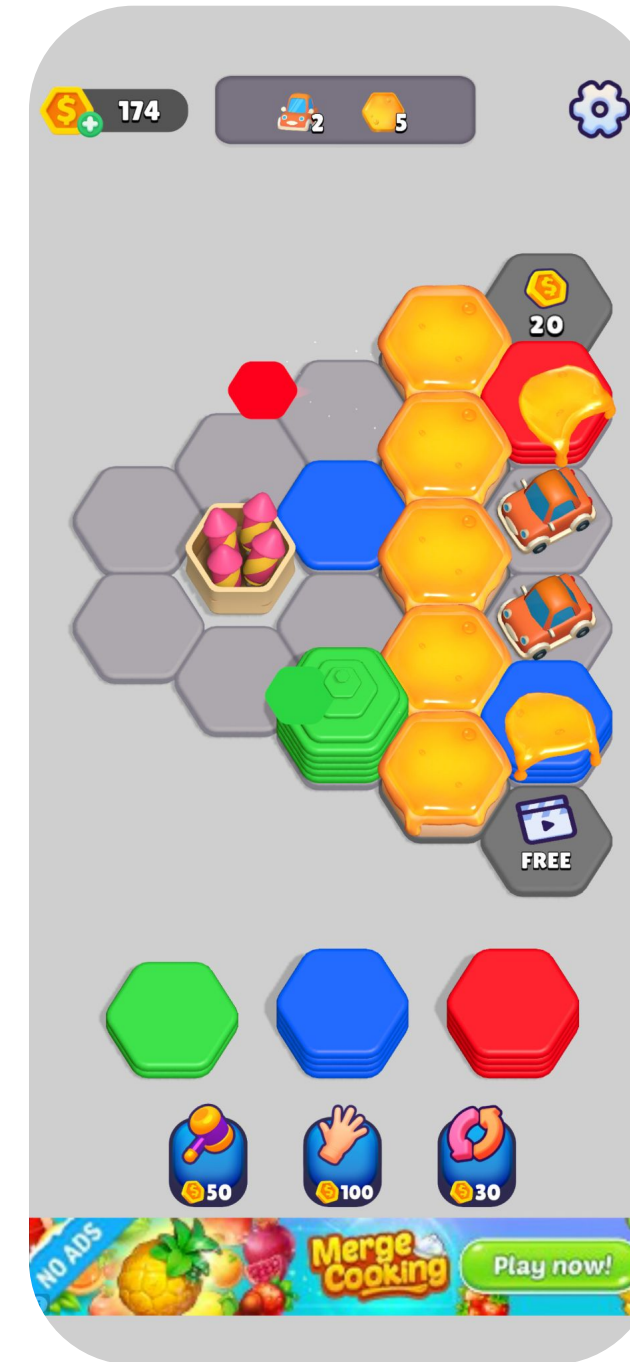
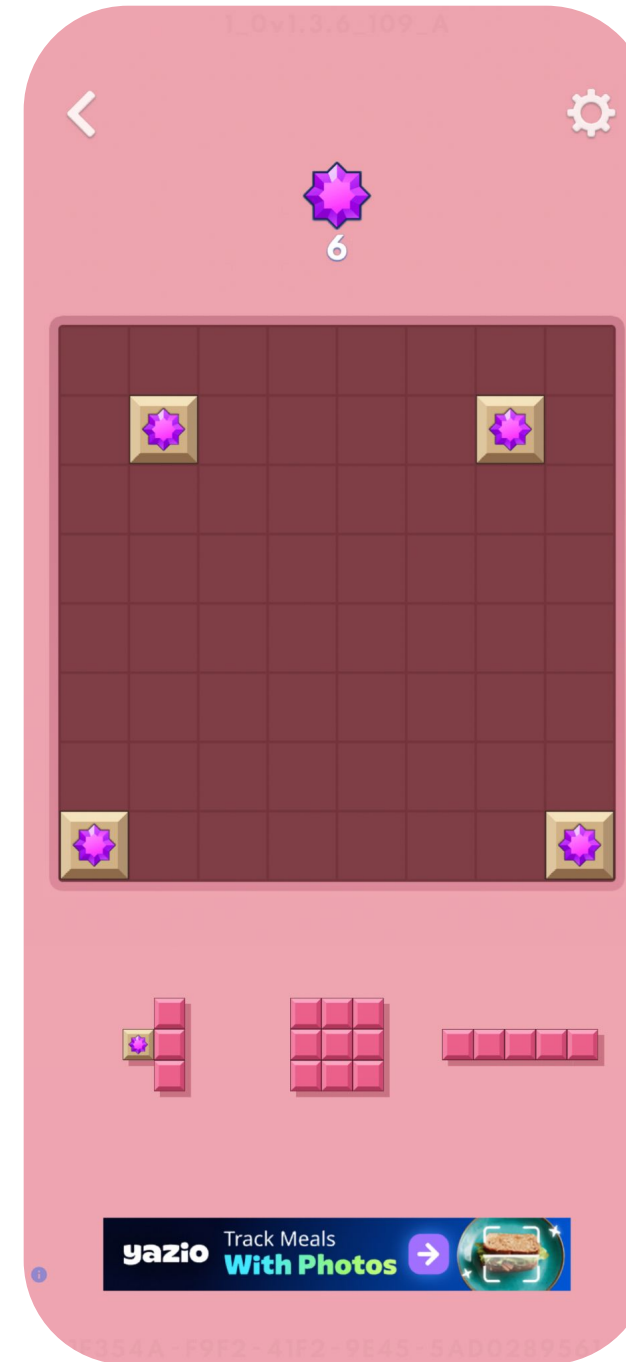
- distract from your game
- irritate players
- pull attention to competing titles

The calmer / flatter your UI style is, the more aggressive banners will look inside it.

- **They require UI planning upfront**

If you plan to add banners at any point, reserve space from the start.

- Your screens must look clean **with banners and without them** – otherwise you'll end up with broken layouts or a rushed, ugly integration.



Banner Placement: Top or Bottom?

In most games, banners are placed **at the bottom**.

How to choose?

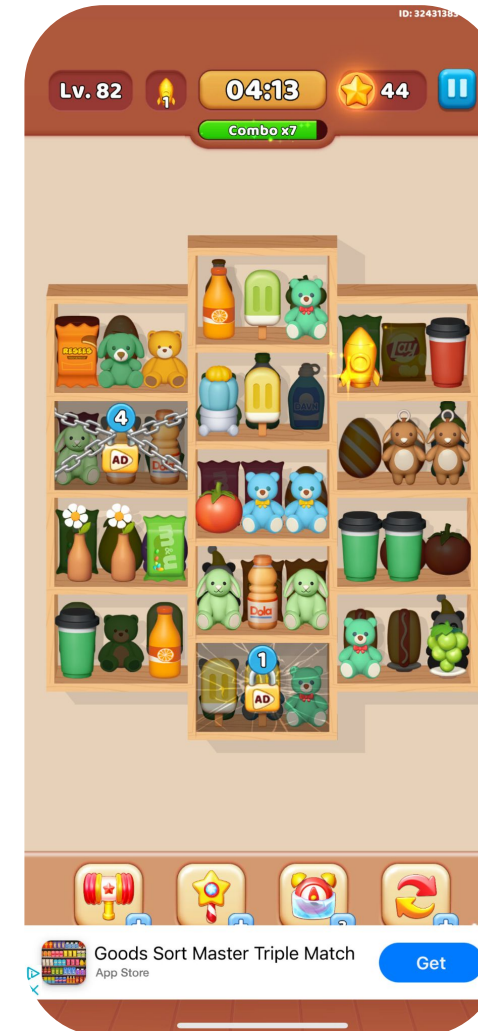
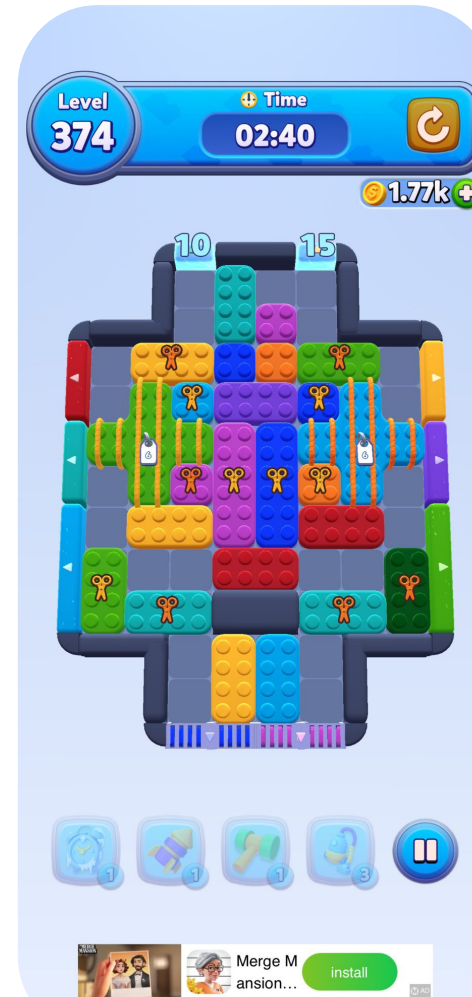
Why bottom often works:

- Player attention is usually higher on the screen (core UI / goals / progress)
- Bottom area is often partially covered by the player's hand during active play

Key risk: tap zones & misclicks

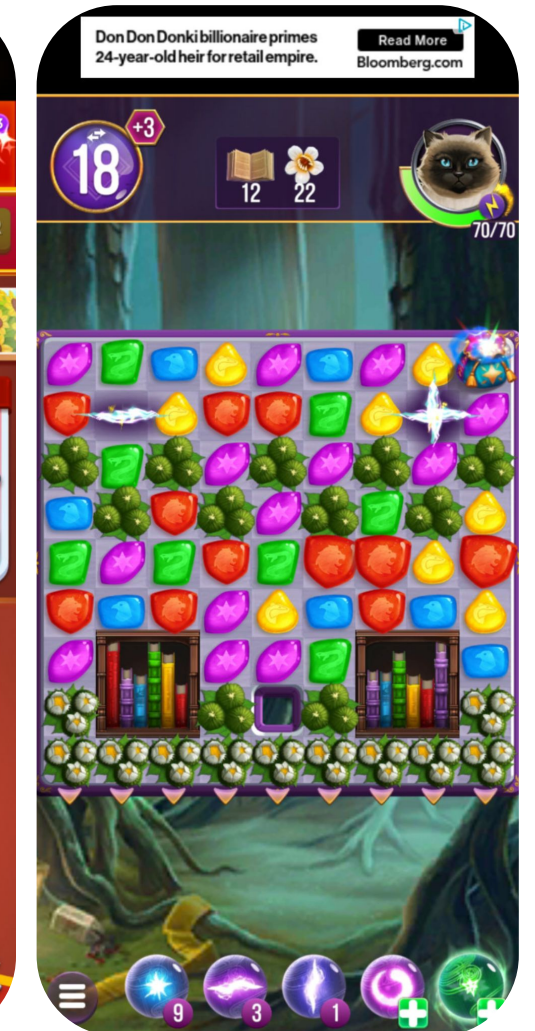
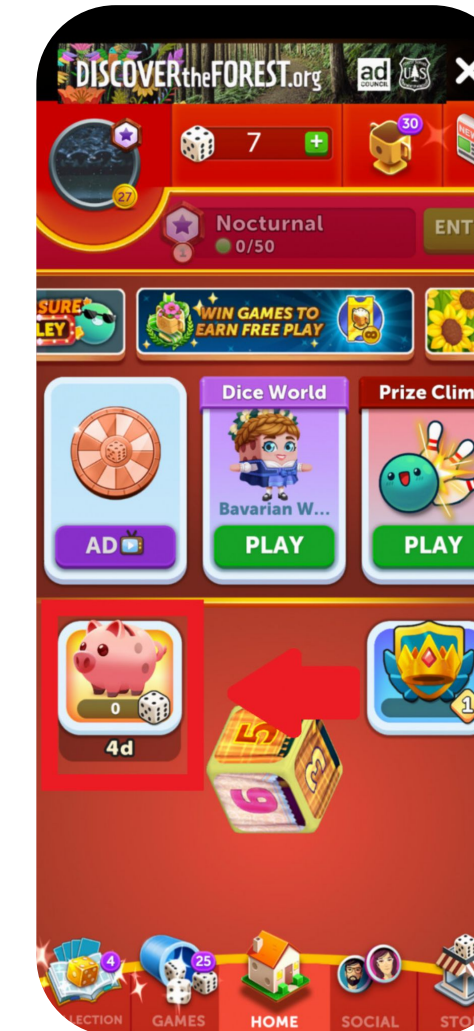
- Boosters / core action buttons are often placed at the bottom
- If zones are too close, players will misclick the banner when they intended to use boosters → irritation + retention damage (and potentially lower-quality traffic)

Top Placement



VS

Bottom Placement



Practical tip: Always verify layout across multiple resolutions / aspect ratios. Otherwise you can end up with broken UI where banners overlap key elements (like the 2nd screen – Goods Sort example).

Where to Place Banners? (and Where Not To)

Most Common Placements

- **Gameplay (TOP exposure)** – players spend the most time here
- **Secondary screens** – e.g., Settings, sometimes Win screen

Lobby – Usually NO:

- conflicts with bottom navigation and high misclick risk
- exception: a simple, low-density, flat lobby with clean spacing

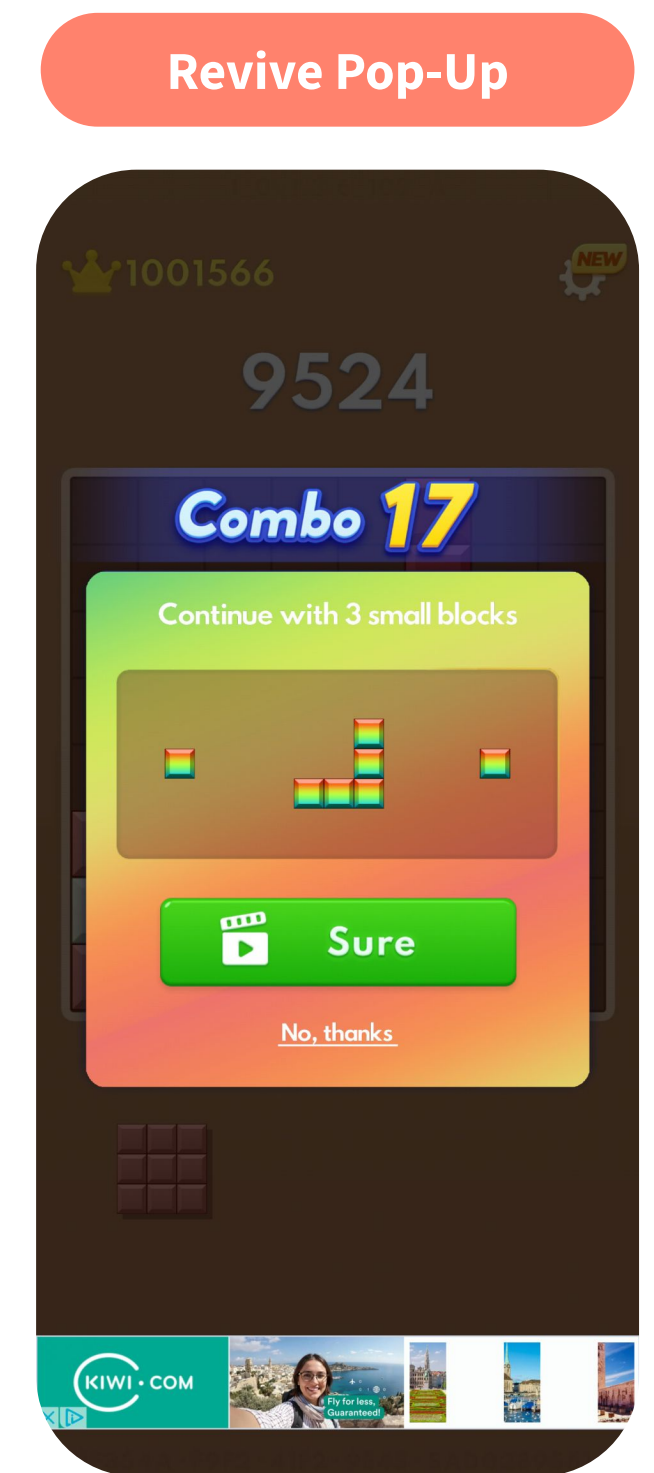
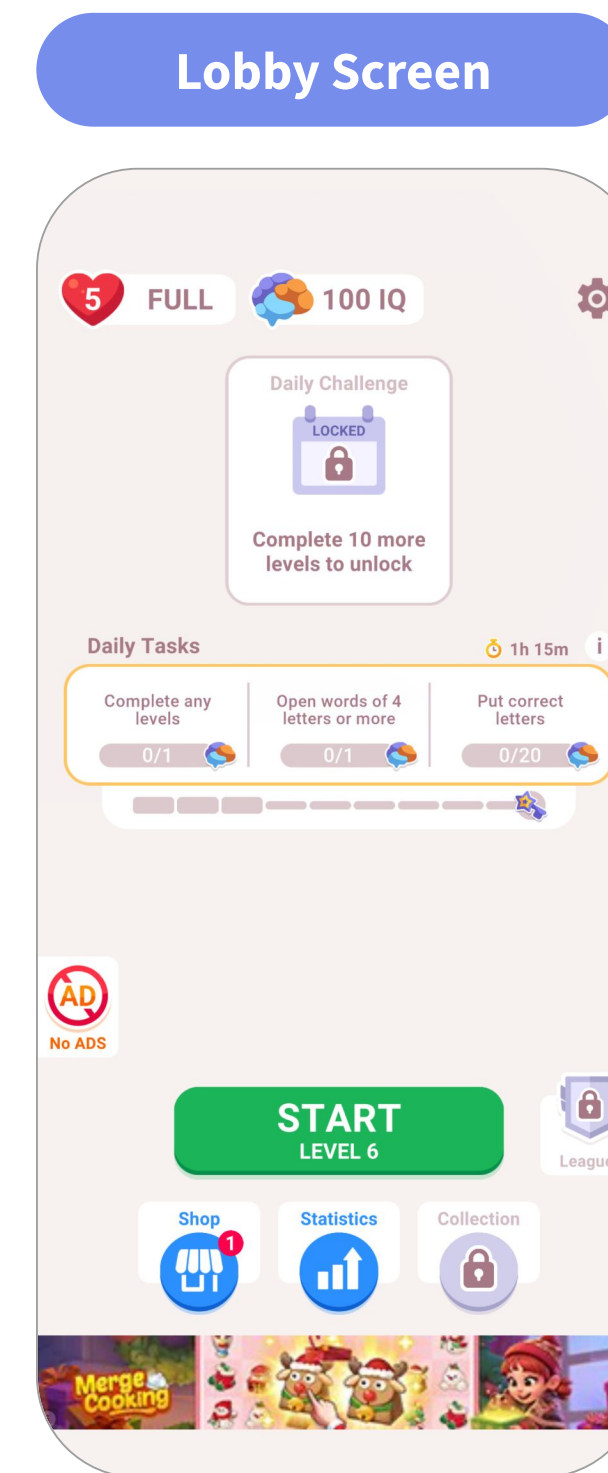
Store – Usually NO:

- you want full focus on purchases
- store visitors already show high intent → don't distract them

Revive pop-ups – Controversial:

Depends on your monetization focus:

- **Hybrid monetization games:**
 - often avoid banners here
 - focus attention on Continue options (coins / RV)
 - use the banner Offer Instead
- **Ads-monetization games (e.g., Block Blast, Cryptogram):**
 - they still keep RV as an option, but maximize ad surface and often place a banner even on Revive screens



Setup Parameters

1

Same Control Rules as Interstitials

In general, banners should follow similar rules to Interstitials:

1. When to start showing

Use both gates:

- Level reached
- Session playtime

2. And decide whether banners appear:

- from session start, or
- only after X levels and/or t minutes (early-session protection)

2

Refreshing banners more often **doesn't always increase revenue.**

- Too frequent refresh can **drop eCPM**
- It can also **increase annoyance** → lower loyalty
- Plus **extra device load** (performance, battery, heat), especially on weaker phones

Best practice: test and tune

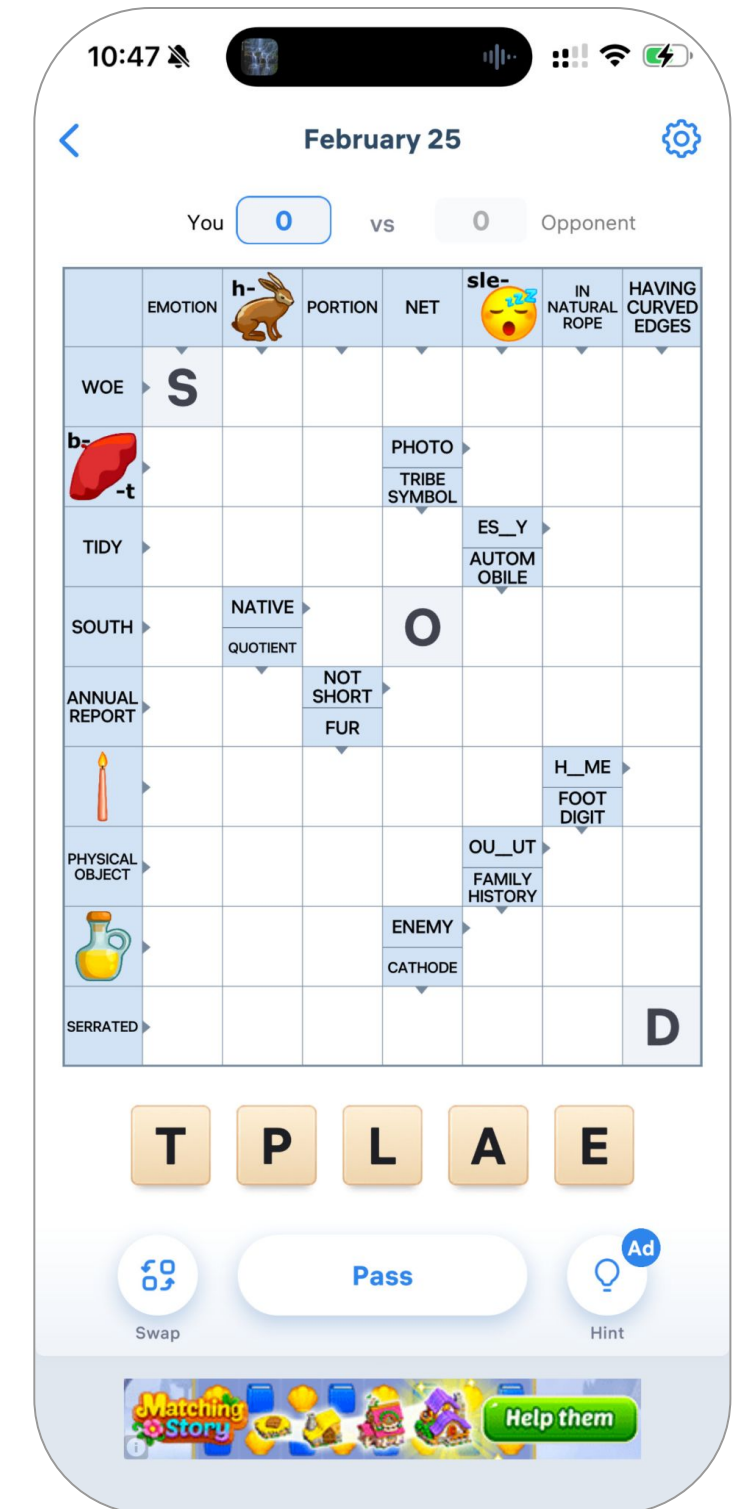
3

Creative Cleanup / Blocking

Competitors often run banners with:

- a. fake buttons (CTA imitation)
- b. overly aggressive animations

Track these creatives and **block/ban them** to protect UX and retention.





Rewarded Video Ad (RV)

Rewarded Video Ads

Ads are often treated as pure negativity.
But Rewarded Video is different:

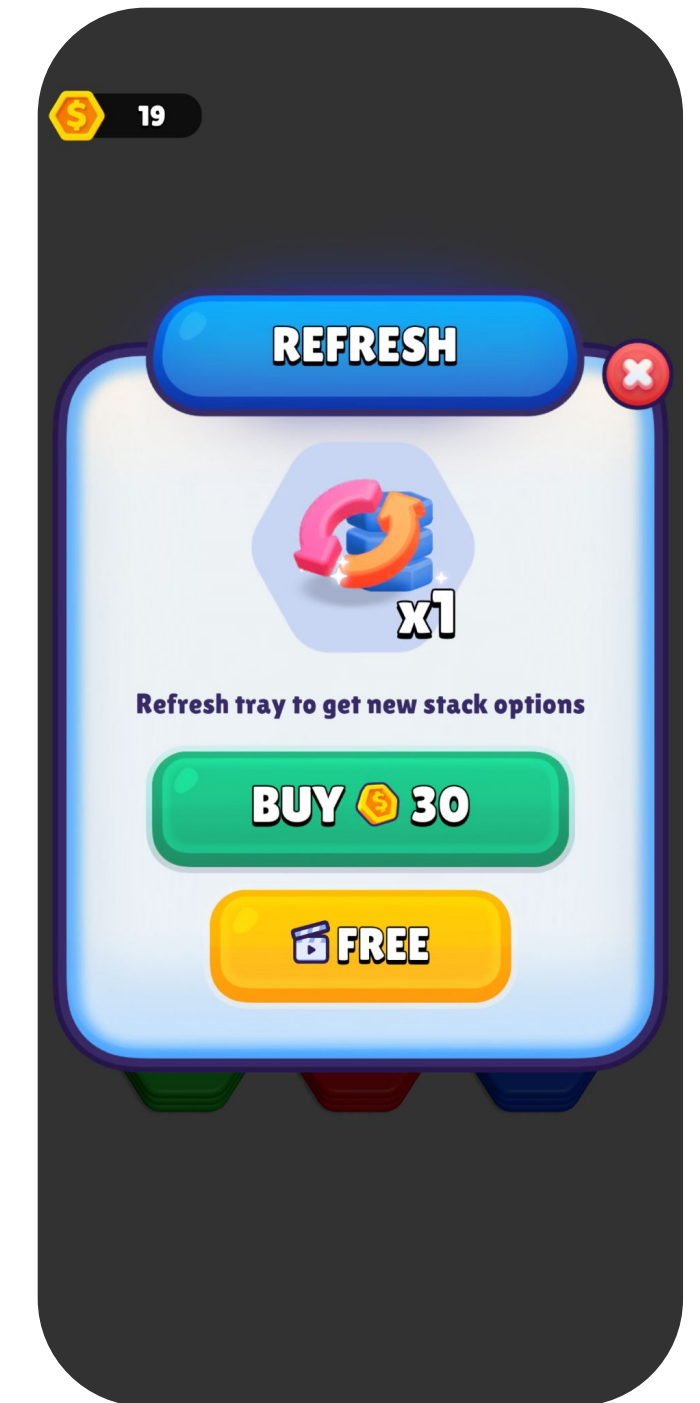
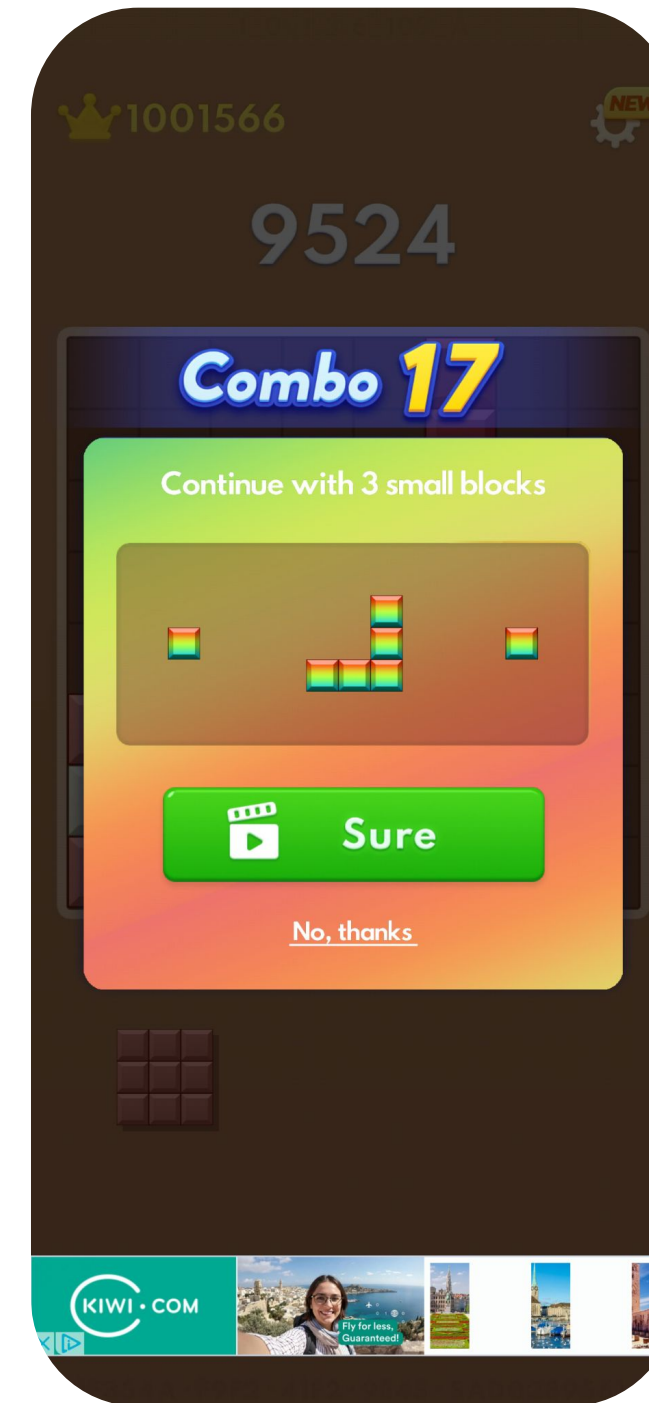
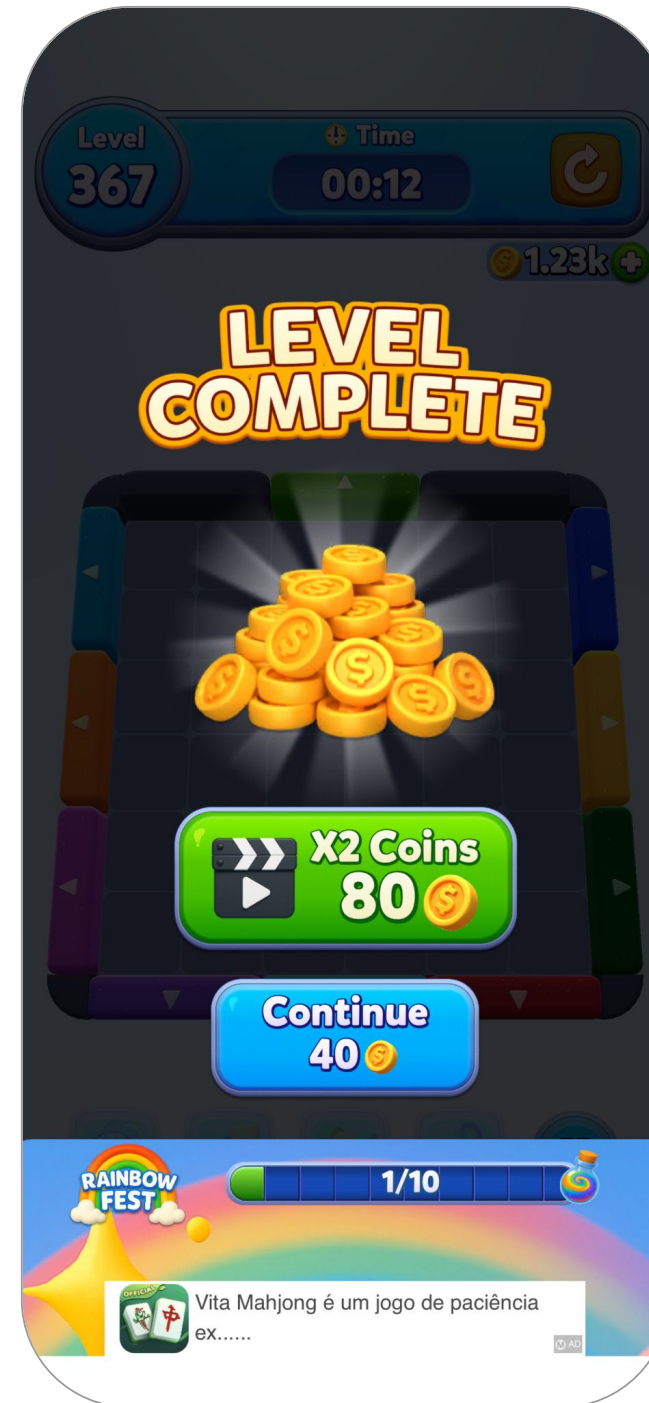
- it can **HELP** the player, not punish them.

The real question is not: 'Where should I place RV?'
It's: '**What player behavior am I buying with this placement?**'

Every RV button trains a habit:

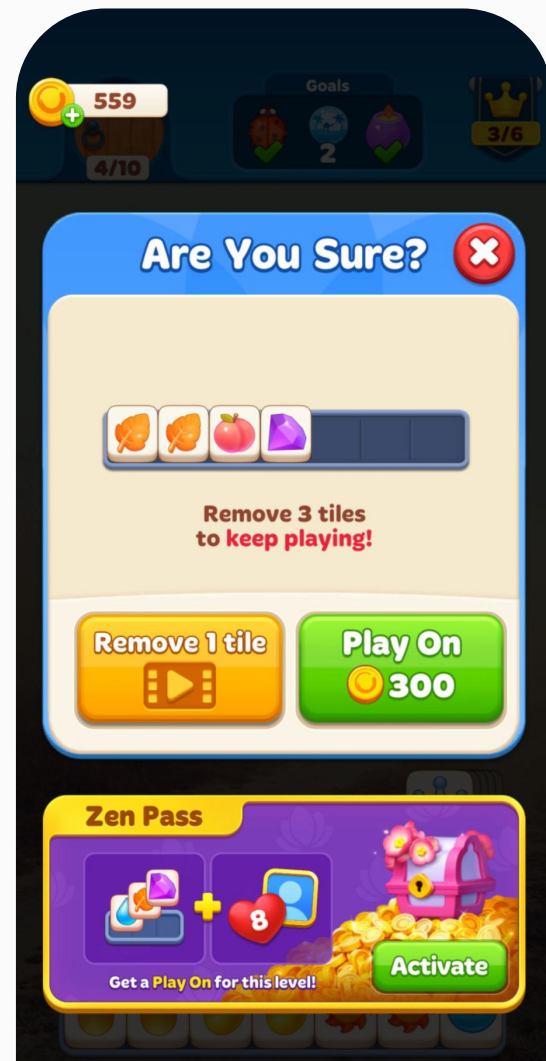
- Revive, save progress
- grind more
- get additional rewards
- skip friction
- or simply keep playing longer

Great RV systems monetize
motivation, not desperation.



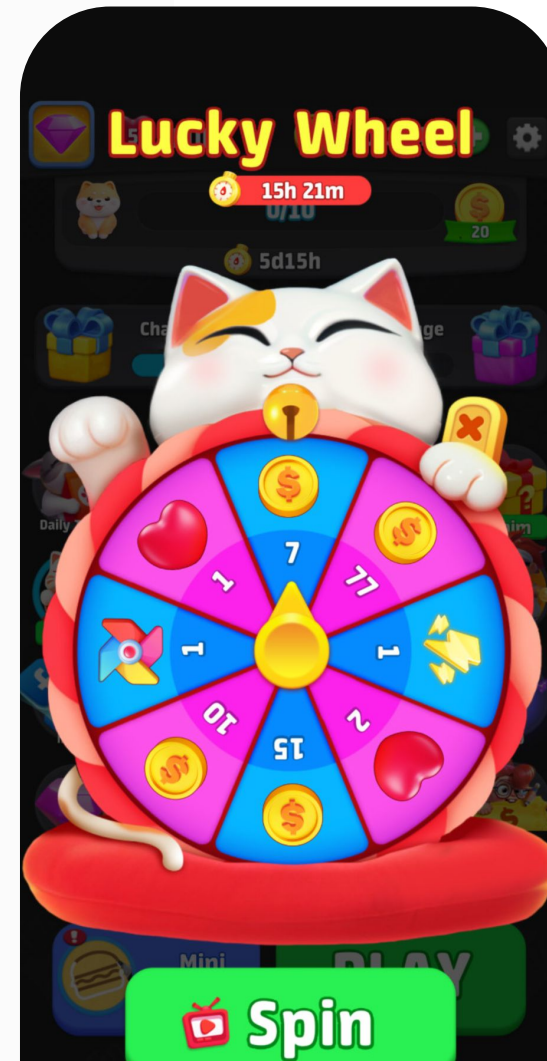
Why RV is Helpful for the Players?

RV is useful because it turns a **'paywall moment'** into an alternative: instead of paying money/currency, the player can pay with **Time + Attention**. This strengthens the **F2P** loop.



Progress Save

- Continue instead of losing e.g., +30 seconds, +5 moves, extra attempt



Currency & Resource Income

- Soft currency, boosters, consumables
- An extra source of income



Easier Gameplay

- Extra board space / extra slot
- Extra boosters at the right moment



Faster Gameplay / Boost

- Speed up timers
- Accelerate event progress (e.g., x2 event currency)

What Drives Players to Watch RV?



Habit Pressure: Daily Limits

- 'I have 2 RV views per day' → I should use them
- Creates a routine and planned consumption



FOMO: Missed Value / Opportunity Cost

- If I don't take the RV booster → I progress slowly
- If I skip the extra reward → I'm being inefficient
- Feels like 'leaving value on the table'



Urgency: Time-Limited

- 'You have 60 seconds to decide'
- Uncertainty about the next chance increases conversion
- Scarcity + urgency pushes less rational decisions

RV Visual Standards

1. Dedicated RV Button Color

- Pick **one color** for all ad-driven actions
- Use it consistently across the whole game
- Don't overlap with other button types (IAP / Claim / Continue)

Common choices: **Yellow** (most common) and **Purple** (less common)

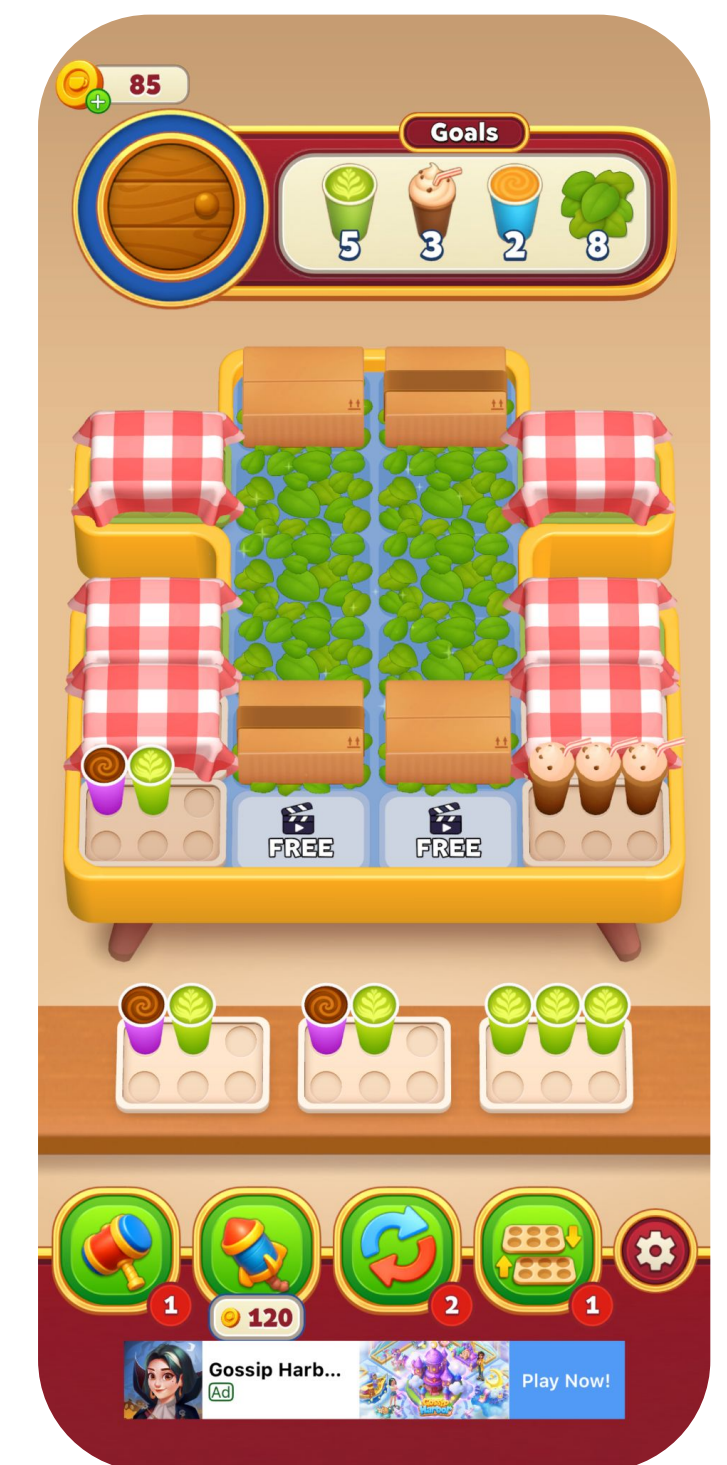
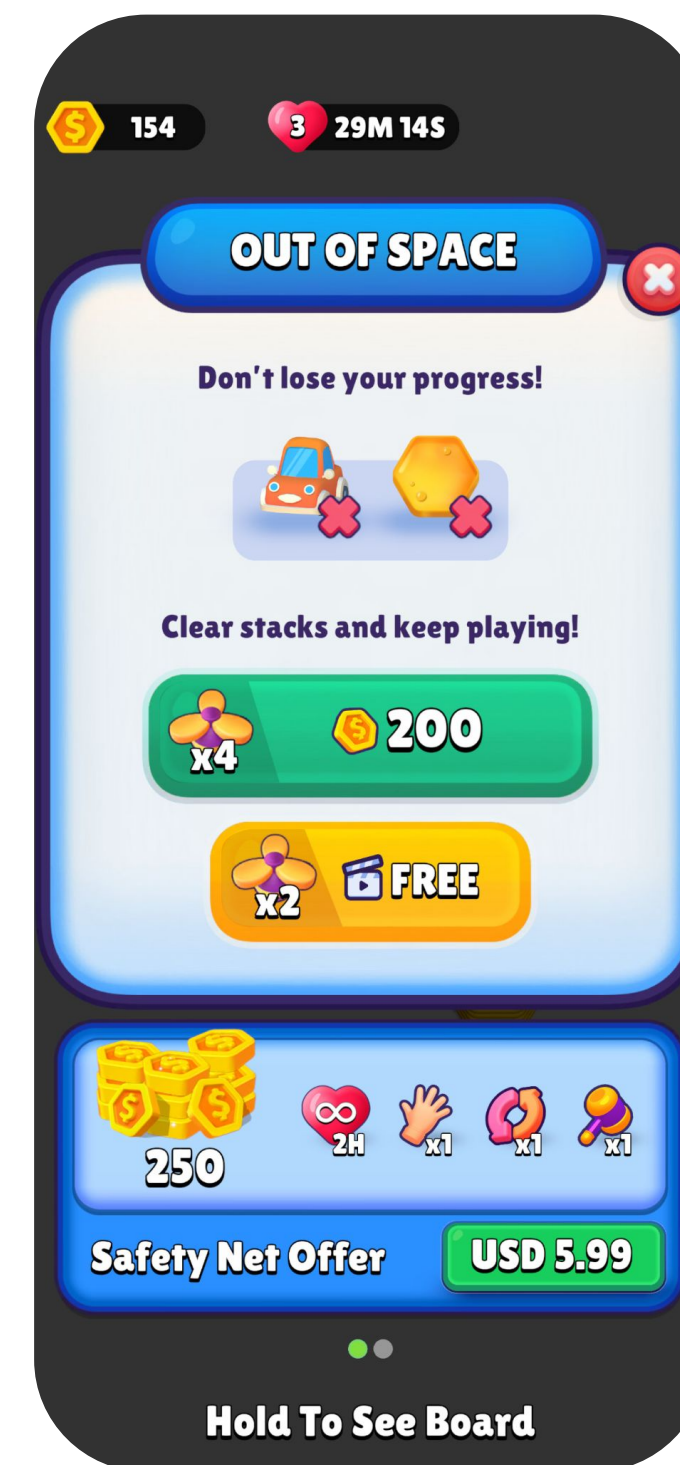
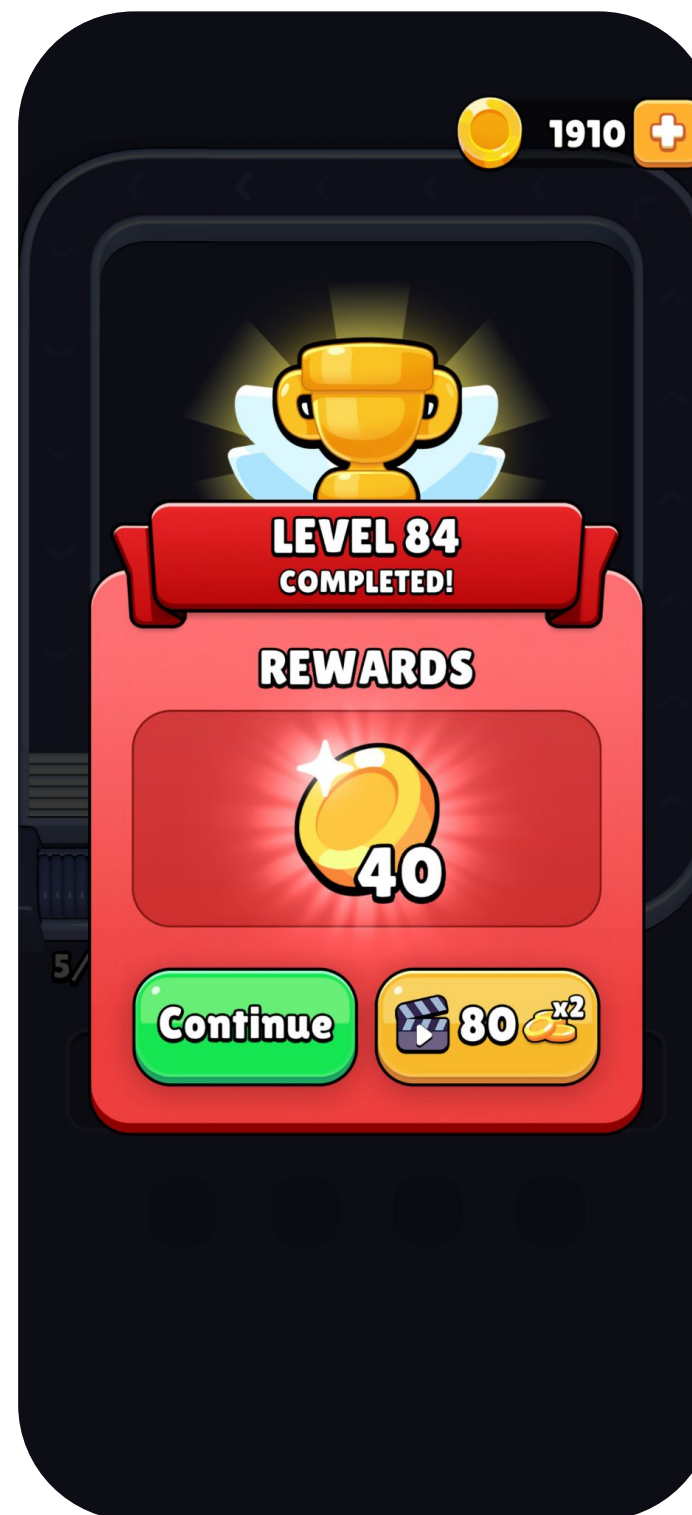
2. Universal Ad Icon

- Use the most recognizable market icon: **the clapperboard**
- Add it to every RV button for instant recognition

3. 'FREE' Label

Works – Even If it's not 100% True

- Yes, the player pays with time + attention
- But 'FREE' often increases conversion because the mental comparison becomes:
 - pay money vs spend time



The most popular RV placements



Revive (Play On)

Revive is one of the **TOP monetization points** in most games, so it's also a top RV placement. But it needs strong economic protection.

1. Don't devalue coins with Revive

Offer **different value** for Coins vs RV:

- Coins = better value (more benefit)
- RV = minimum viable help (good, but clearly weaker)

This keeps RV available, while keeping Coins attractive.

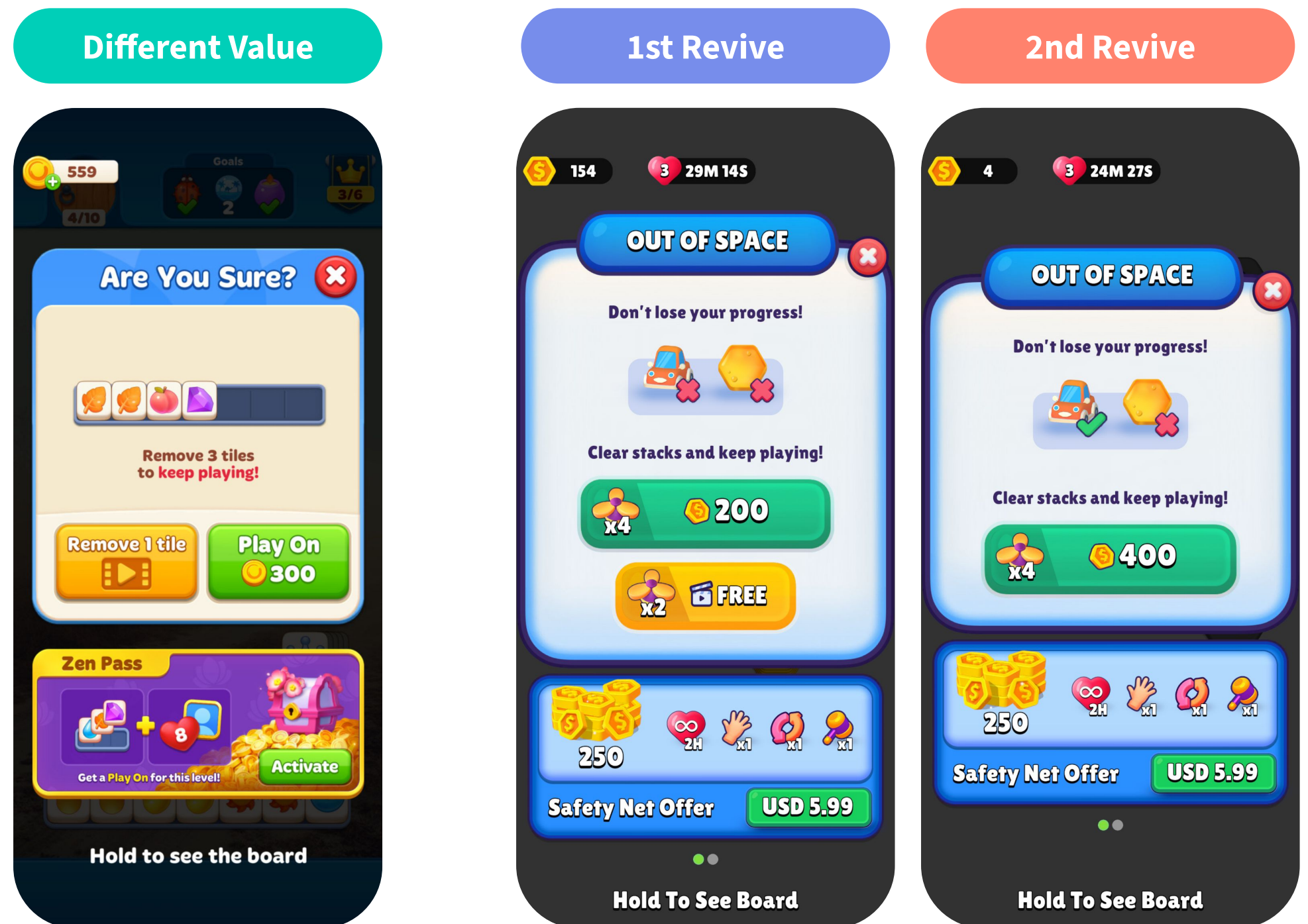
2. Protect the economy with repeat-fail logic

A strong pattern:

- 1st fail on the level → allow RV revive
- If the player fails the same level again → remove RV, keep Coins only

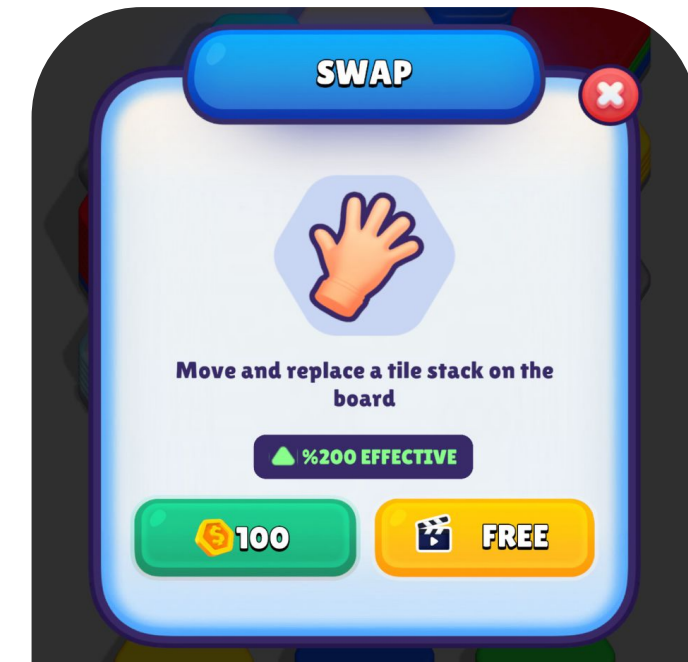
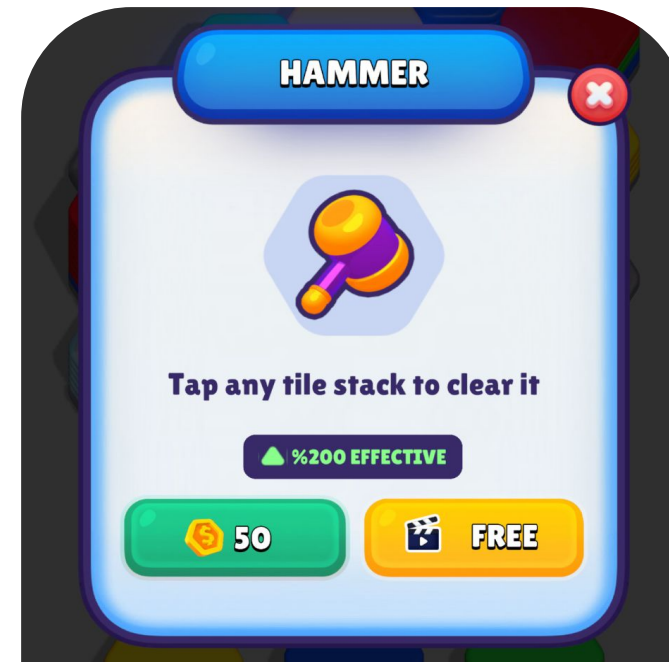
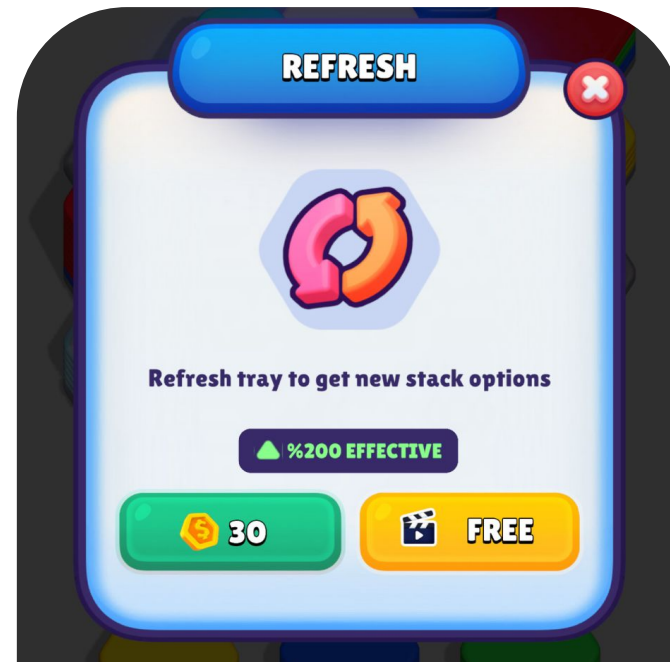
WHY it works:

- Players have already invested effort once
- Skipping a 2nd revive feels irrational
- Increases coin spend and purchase motivation without inflating rewards



Buy Booster

Booster usage is another TOP monetization point. Common setups:



1. Different value: Coins vs RV

Show clear value gap:

- Coins = more (e.g., 3 boosters)
- RV = less (e.g., 1 booster)

Keeps coins meaningful while still offering RV access.

2. Same amount for both (the 'player trap')

Offer **1 booster** for Coins and **1 booster** for RV.

Often seen: different boosters have different coin prices, but **the same RV price**

As a Result: 30 vs 50 vs 100 = 1 RV

Looks unbalanced – but can be intentional:

- Players feel they 'outsmarted the system' by using RV on the most expensive booster
- You get what you want: an RV Ad view

3. Ad Monetization games: RV-only boosters

For Ad-monetization focused games:

- No coin option at all
- Boosters are **RV-only**, 1-click access, always available

High revenue potential, but must be paced to avoid turning gameplay into an ad loop.

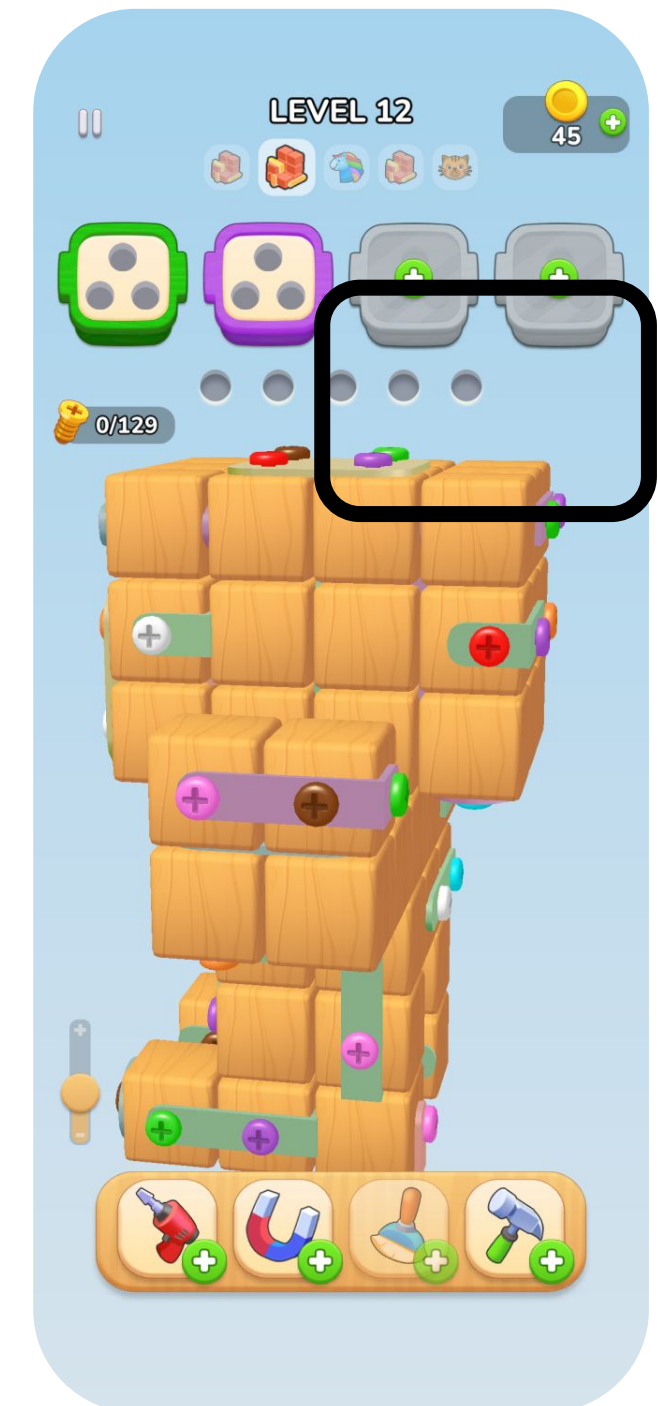
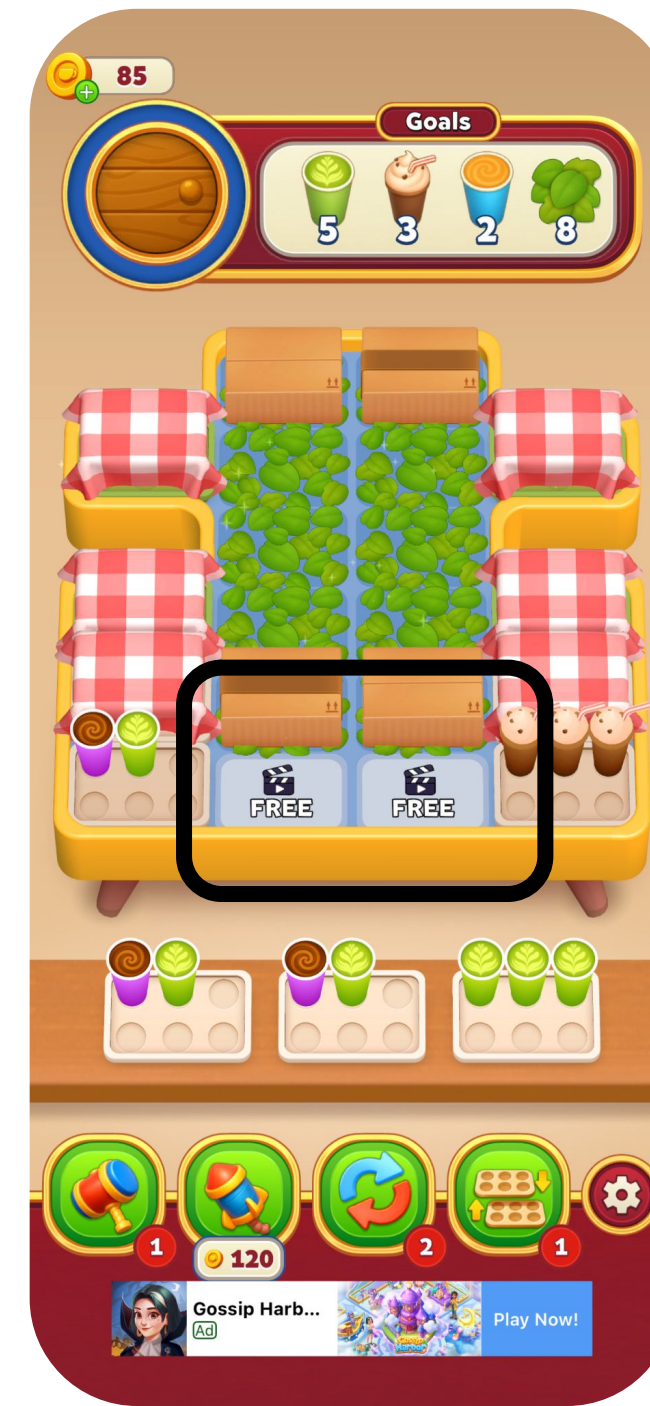
Core Gameplay: Extra Shelf

A very effective placement is embedding RV directly into gameplay:

- **an extra empty slot / extra space on the board** (for limited-space mechanics).

WHY it works:

- Player can still win without it – but it becomes much easier with the extra slot
- You can add it only on **Hard / Super Hard levels** – with space-deficit situations
- The key advantage: it appears **before the player loses**
 - the problem is visible
 - but the negative emotion hasn't started yet
 - the player can prevent failure proactively ('one step ahead')



Time Limited Reward: Bulb

This mechanic came from **Merge-5**, expanded into **Merge-2**, and is now actively used in **expedition games** and even **casual puzzles**.

Core idea

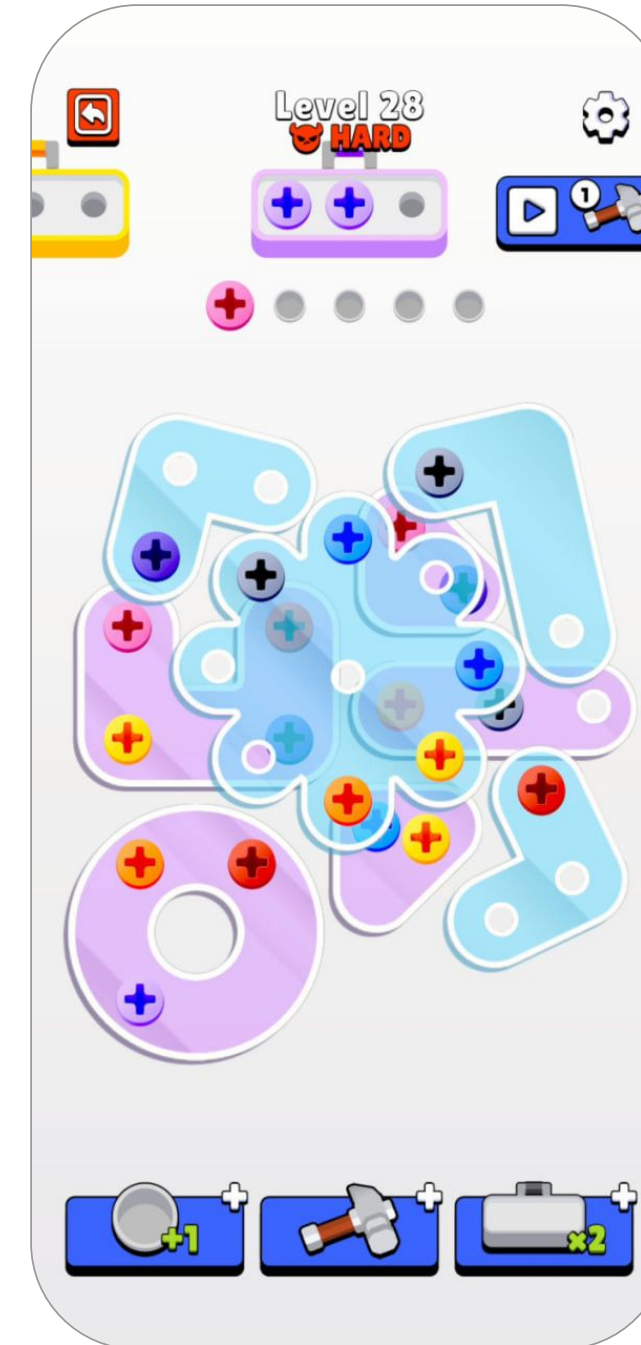
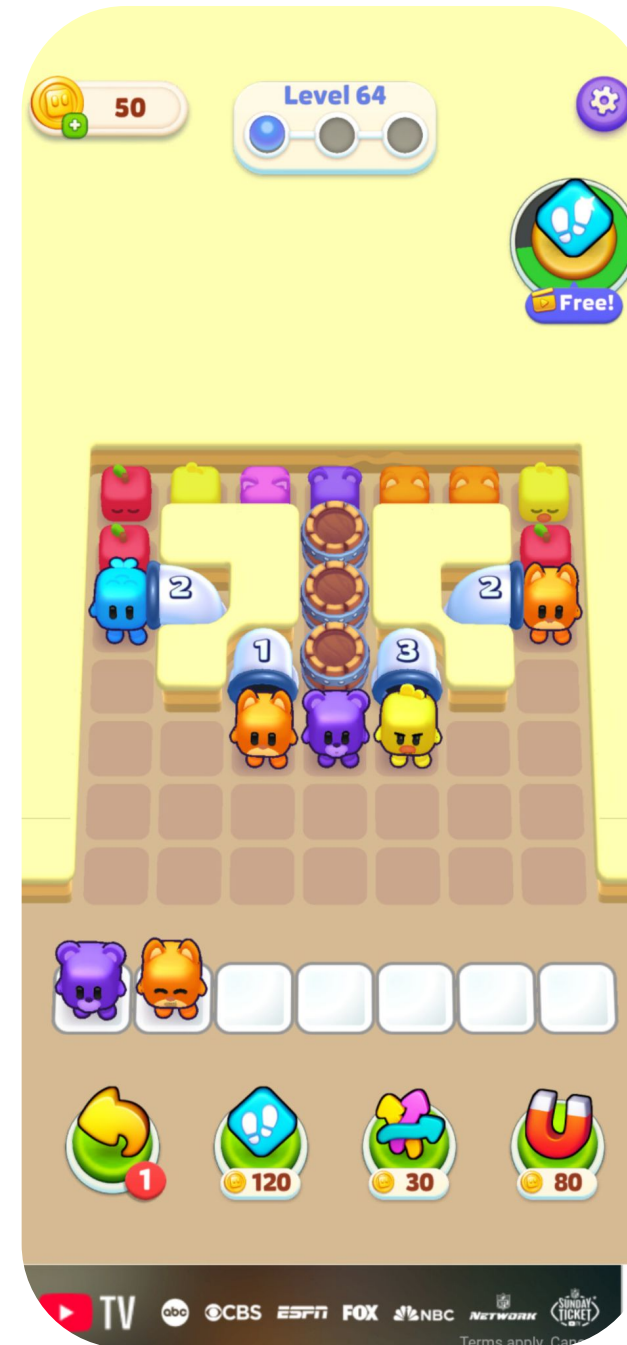
- A **bubble** appears unexpectedly (ideally at a moment of difficulty):
 - 'Watch an RV to get a reward'
- The offer is **time-limited** (e.g., only ~1 minute)

WHY it converts:

- The player doesn't know when (or if) it will appear again → scarcity
- Time pressure pushes less rational decisions → urgency

Extra monetization leverage

- If the same booster is normally **coins-only**, RV feels like a 'freebie' → very high uptake
- In Merge-2 this often becomes a classic value comparison:
 - **Fast** (hard currency) vs **Cheap** (RV)



Reward Mult

Unlike scarcity/failure-driven RV, this one is a **positive trigger**: the player already won – and wants to make the win feel bigger.

2 common implementations

- 1. Multiplier 'Tap Meter' (skill/fortune)**
 - a. Player taps to 'land' on a multiplier
 - b. Pros: fun, perceived control
- 2. Fixed Multiplier (usually x2)**
 - a. Simple, fast, predictable
 - b. Often more popular today

What to consider

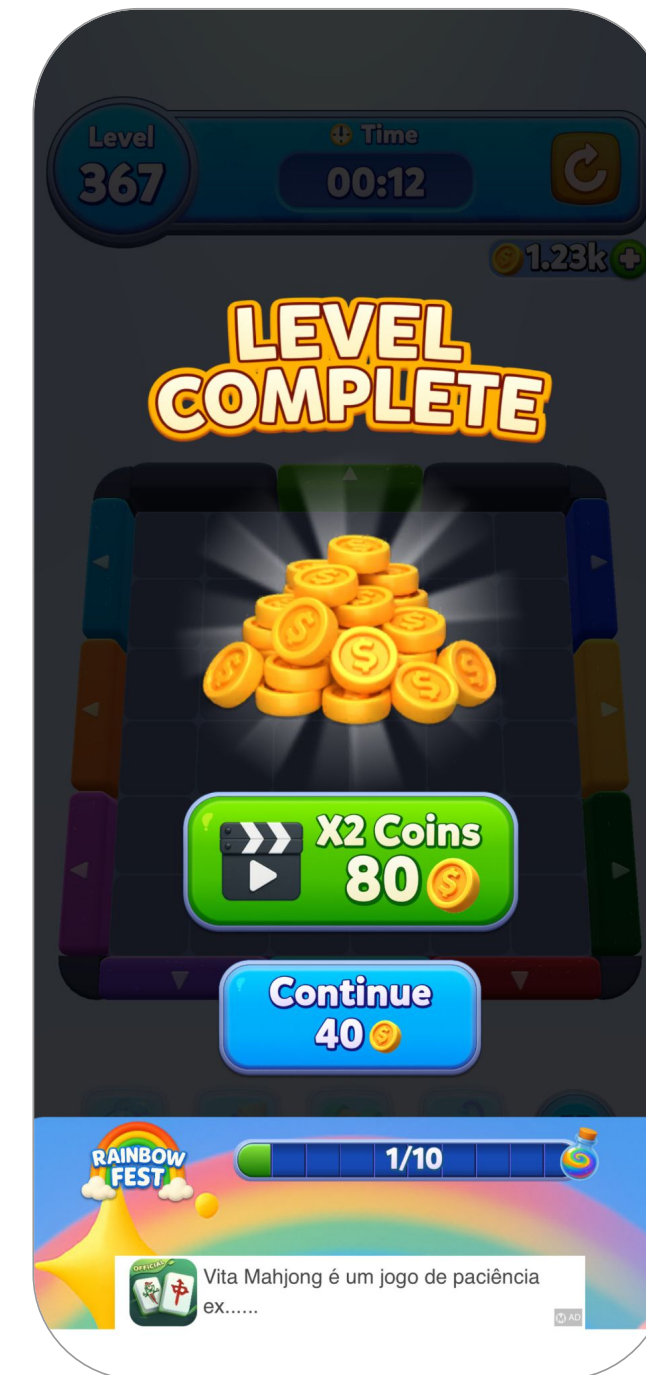
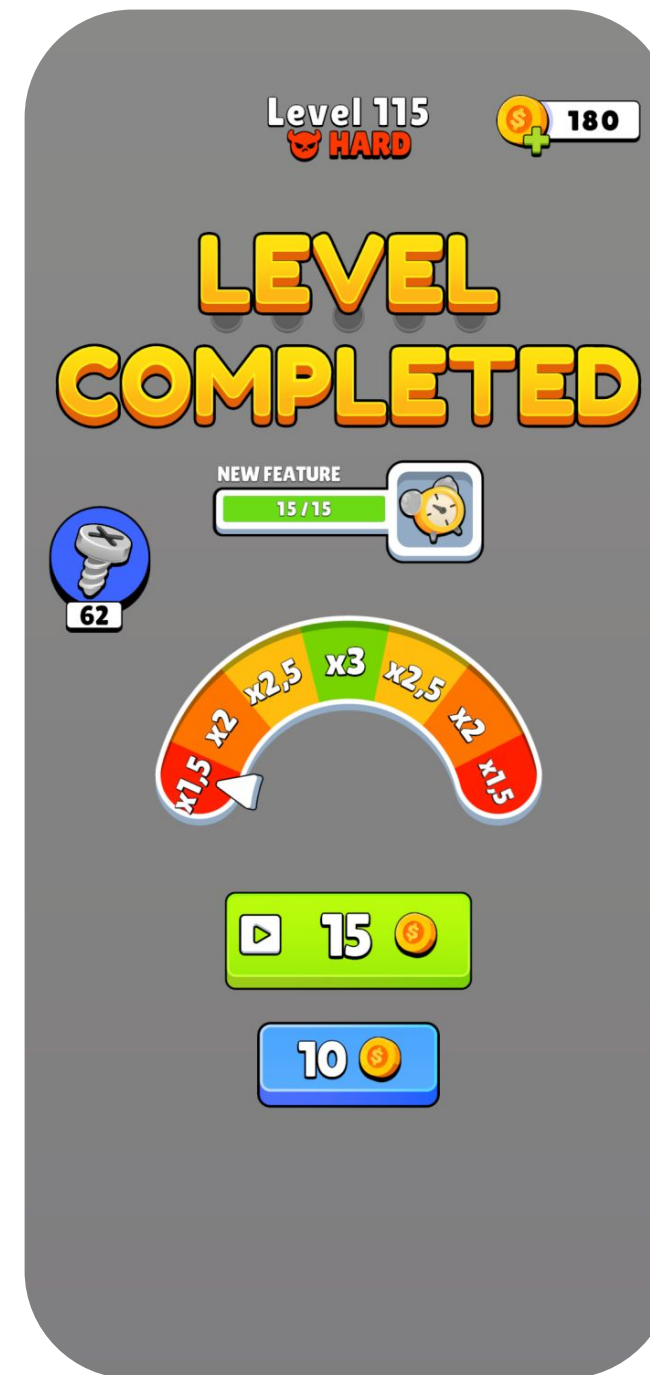
Your multiplied reward must feel meaningful.
Players won't watch an ad for +10 coins if a revive costs 1000.

Best focus: Special Levels

Put the strongest emphasis on Special Levels: Bonus / Hard / Super Hard levels

WHY?

- Rewards are already higher (sometimes 2-3x baseline)
- RV multiplier becomes 'worth it' in the player's head



Expectation setting: Don't expect players to multiply every level. With good framing, they'll use it mainly on high-reward special levels.

Soft Currency income

This placement is especially strong in **non-level-based games**, where continued play depends on having enough soft currency.

1. Classic F2P Value Contrast

You offer a clear choice:

- Fast / simple / large** → IAP or hard currency
- Slow / small chunks / 'free'** → Rewarded Video
(**'free'** = paid with time + attention)

This is the core F2P principle and it naturally self-segments players:

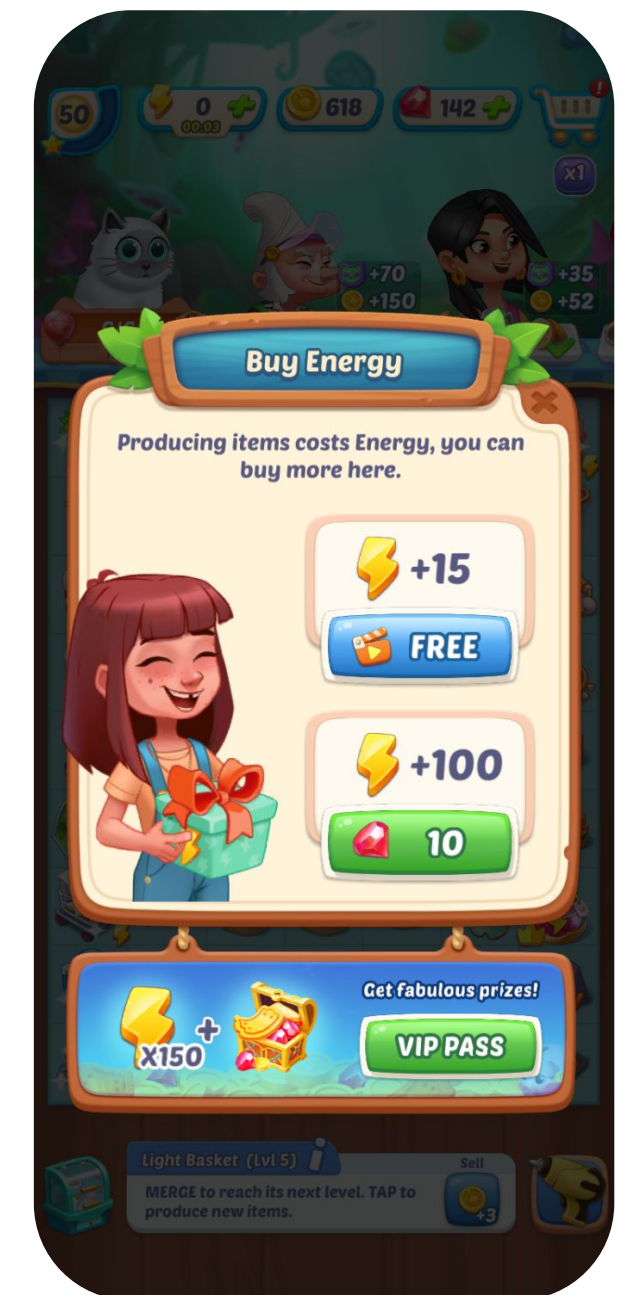
'Some pay with money, others pay with time'

2. How to Avoid Breaking the Economy

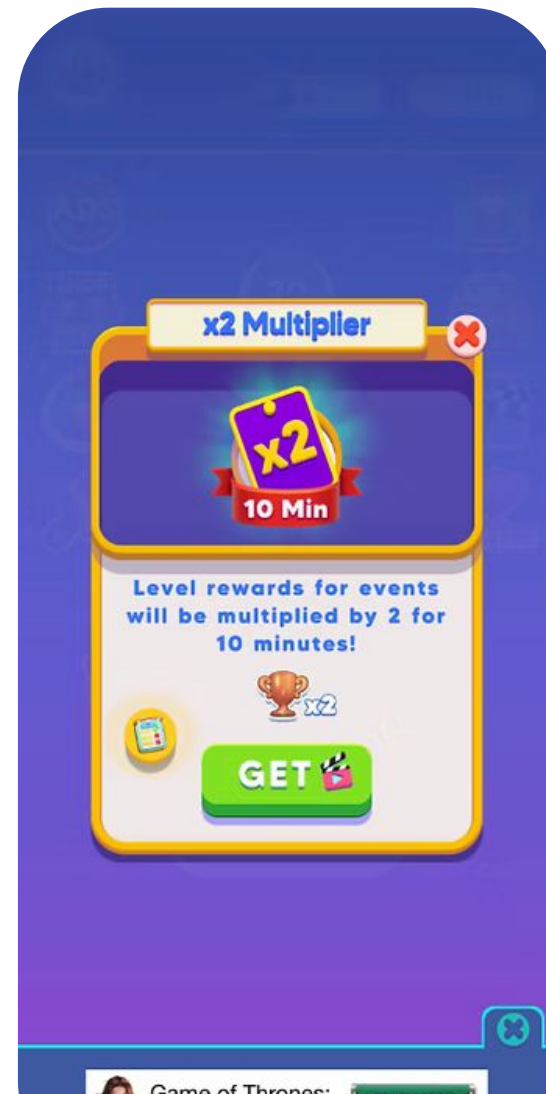
- Key risk: players who would have paid now switch to ads
- A common solution: **hard cap soft currency from RV** (e.g., 4 times/day pattern)

WHY it works:

- lets players play longer 'for free'
- builds habit + desire to continue
- but keeps control over when more aggressive monetization must kick in

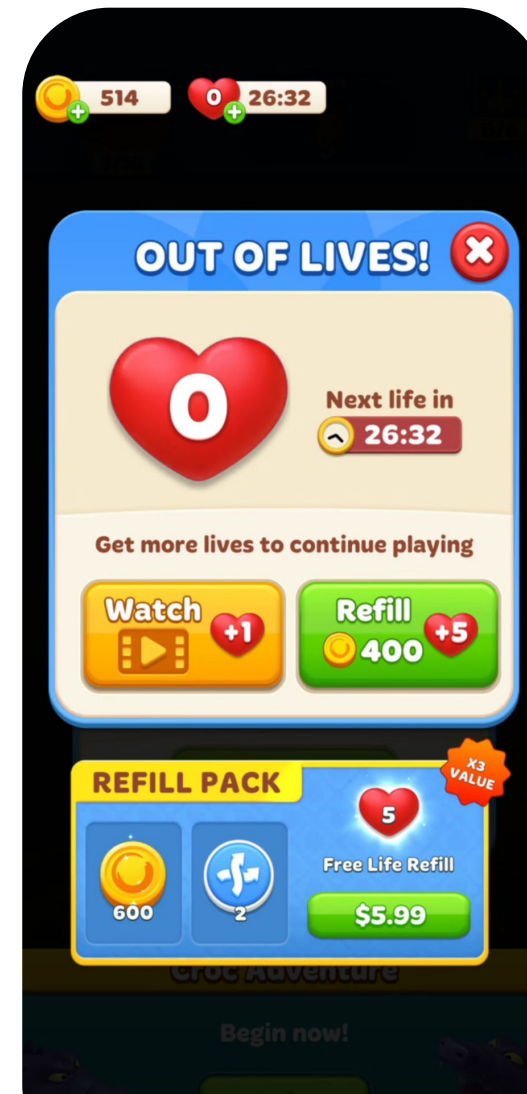


Additional placements: Part 1



LiveOps Booster (x2 / x3)

- Works both ways: if a player enters an event, they're more likely to activate a booster.
- If they activate a booster, they're more likely to keep playing the event until it expires (to 'use it fully').



Lives

- Common tradeoff: refill +5 Lives pack for coins VS +1 Life for RV
- RV helps soften friction without fully removing the sink



Pre-Level Booster

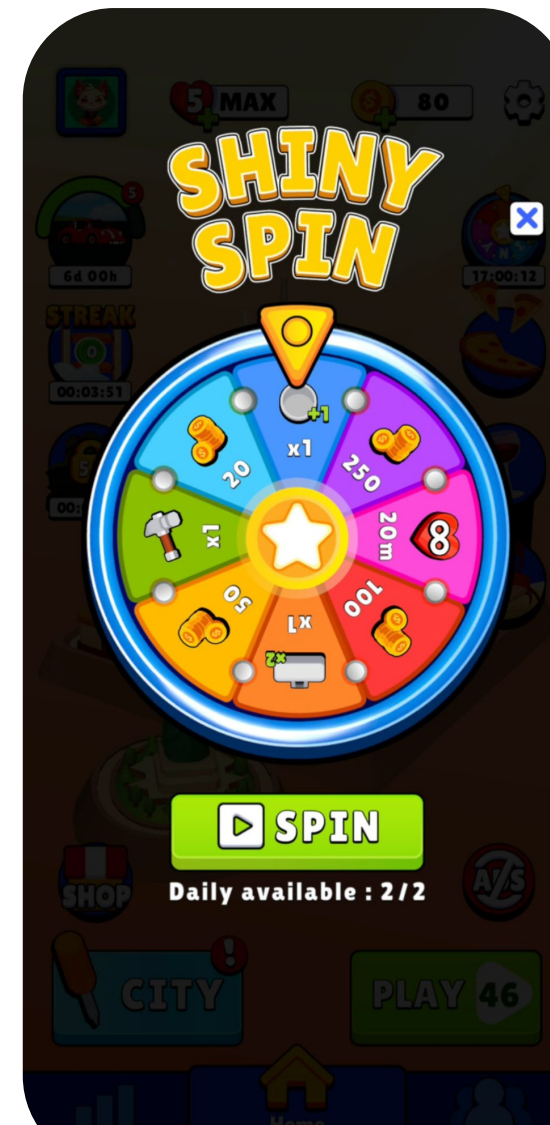
- Provides a 'helper' for the upcoming level via a booster
- Works best right before Hard levels: frame it as a 'support' to beat a difficult stage

Additional placements: Part 2



Core Mechanics Help

- Pay RV to unlock a feature temporarily (e.g., open a shelf early)
- Place it where valuable resources are visible → clear perceived value



Wheel of Fortune

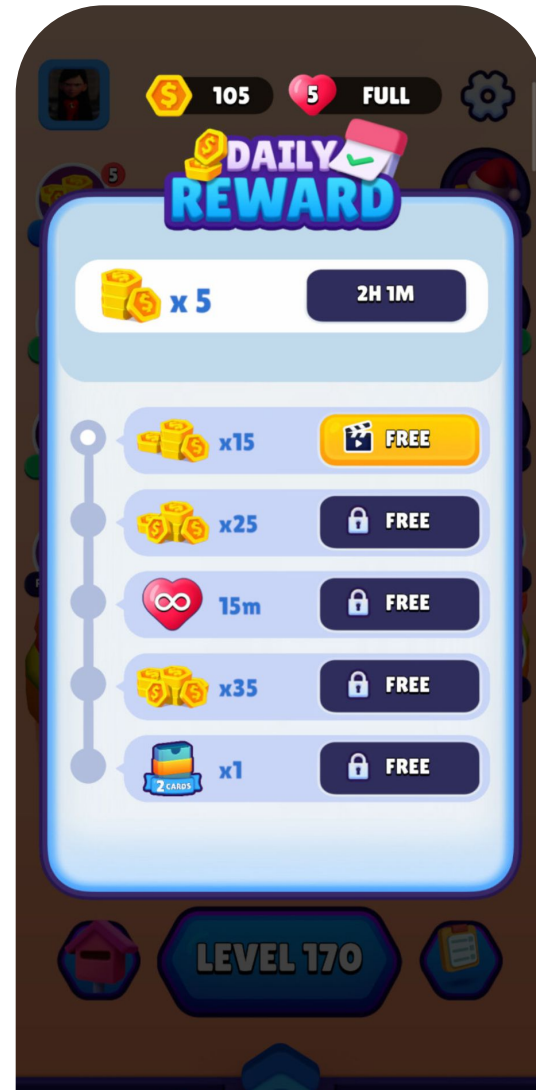
- An extra resource source
- Best surfaced at session start so players don't forget it



Daily Calendar Quest Catch-up

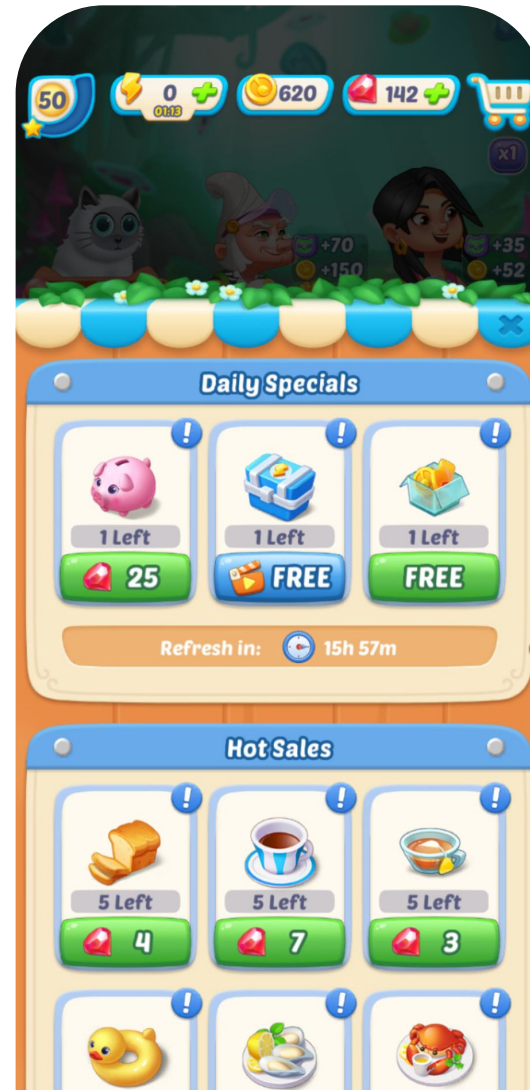
- If a player missed a day → replay it via RV
- Supports retention (daily habit) + recovery for missed days

Additional placements: Part 3



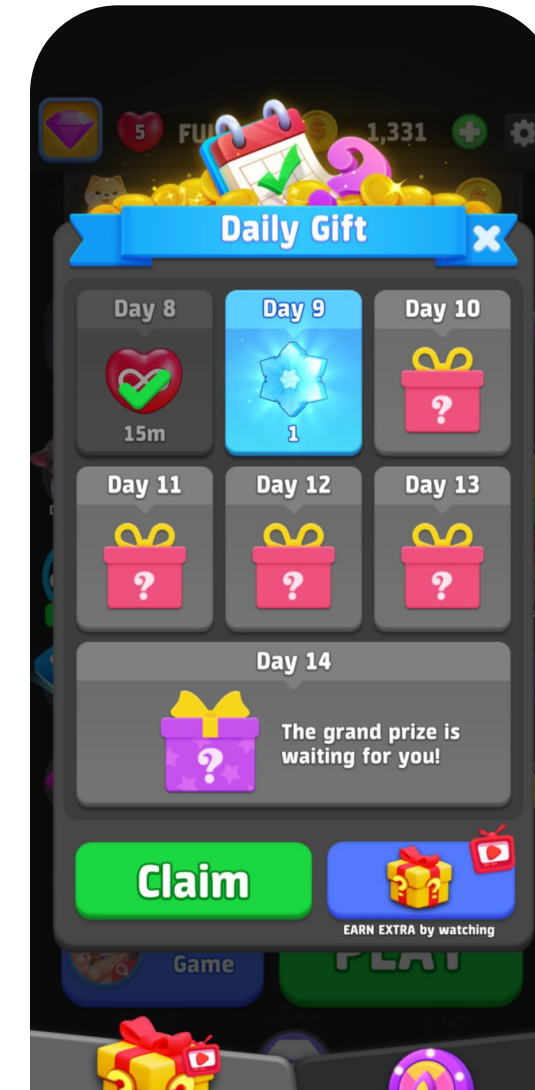
Ad Endless Offer (RV-only)

- Increasing rewards in the chain
- Few users max it, but many take 1-2 steps/day → great at scale



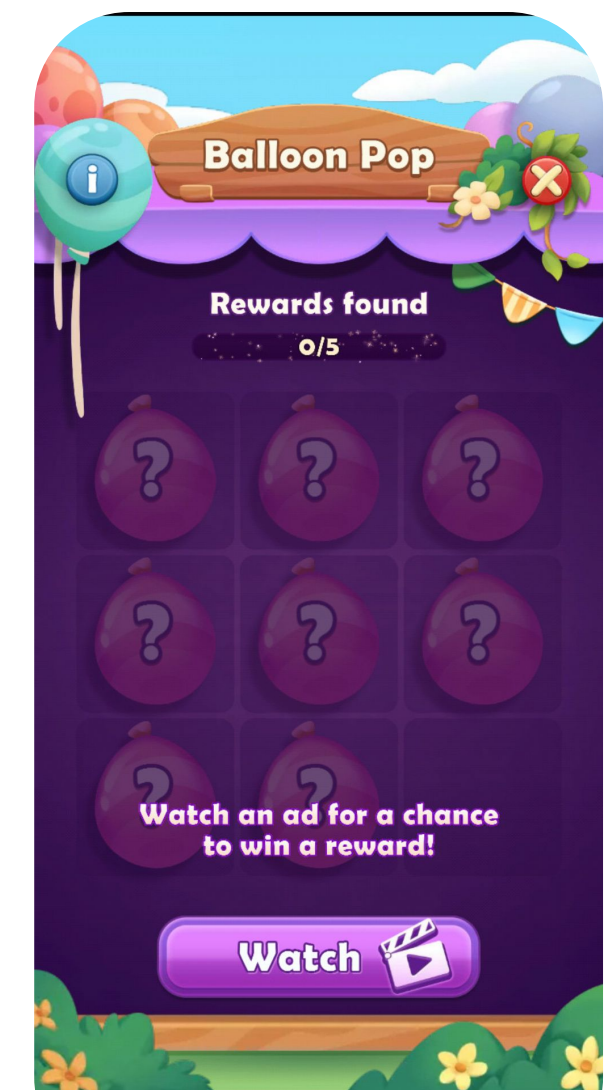
Daily Shop Bonus

- Drives traffic into the store
- Should feel meaningfully valuable (otherwise ignored)



Extra Reward on Top (Bonus for RV)

- Not watching feels like missing out
- Position it as 'bonus' rather than 'required'



NoAds



NoAds: WHY do you need it?

Whenever we create friction in a game, it's smart to design the solution at the same time:

- Low on coins → offer a deal
- Falling behind in a tournament → offer a booster

Same logic applies to ads.

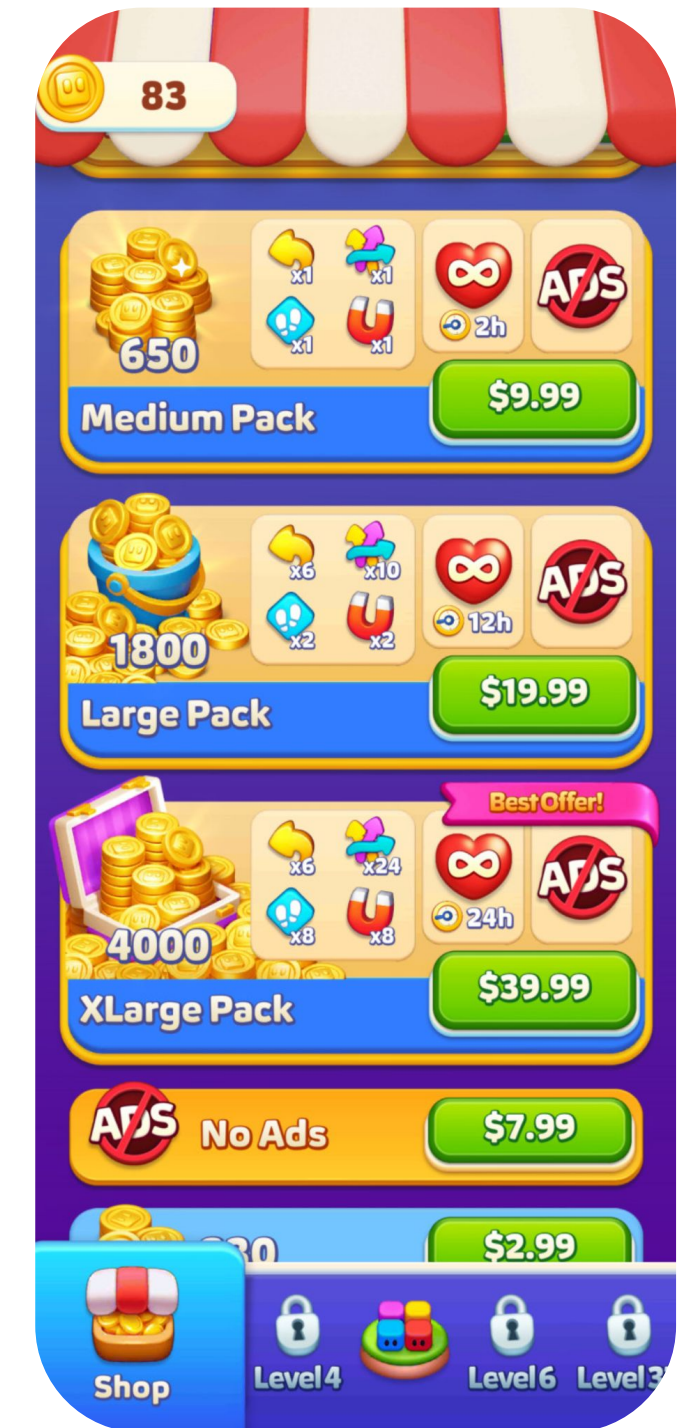
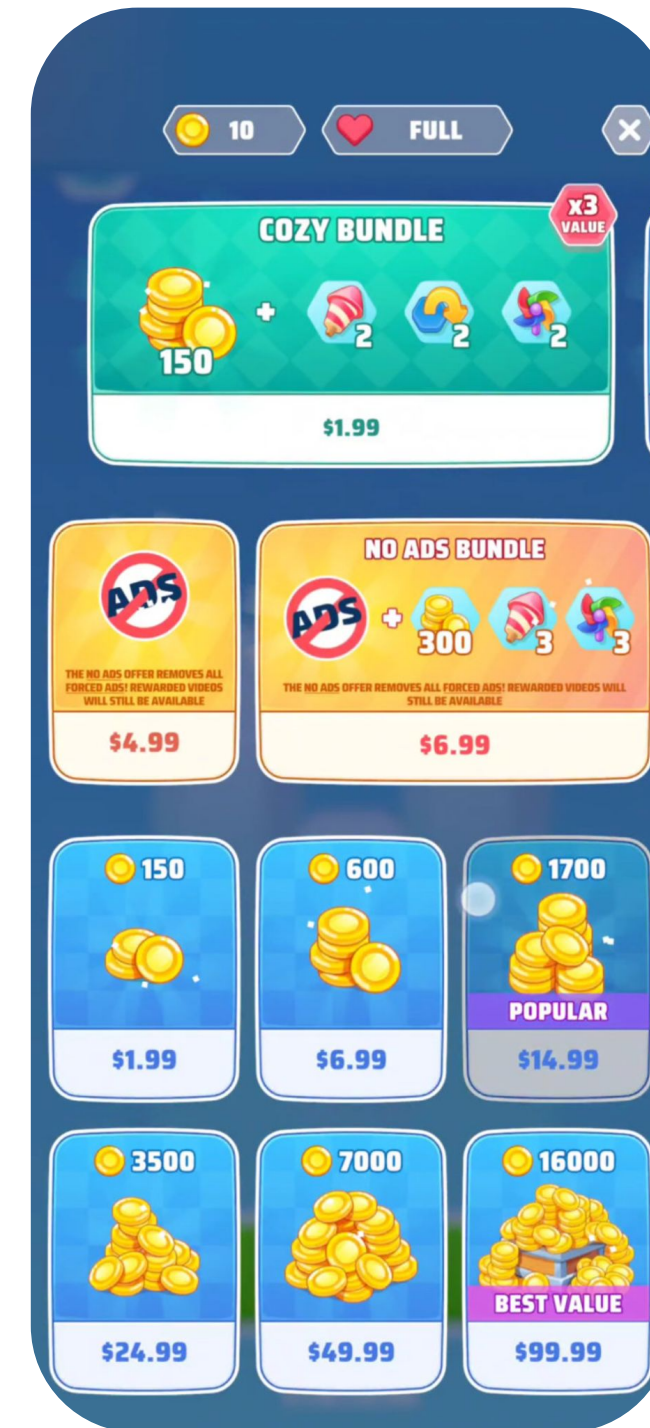
Annoyed by ads? → offer **No Ads**.

For the player: a clear way to pay for comfort and remove interruptions

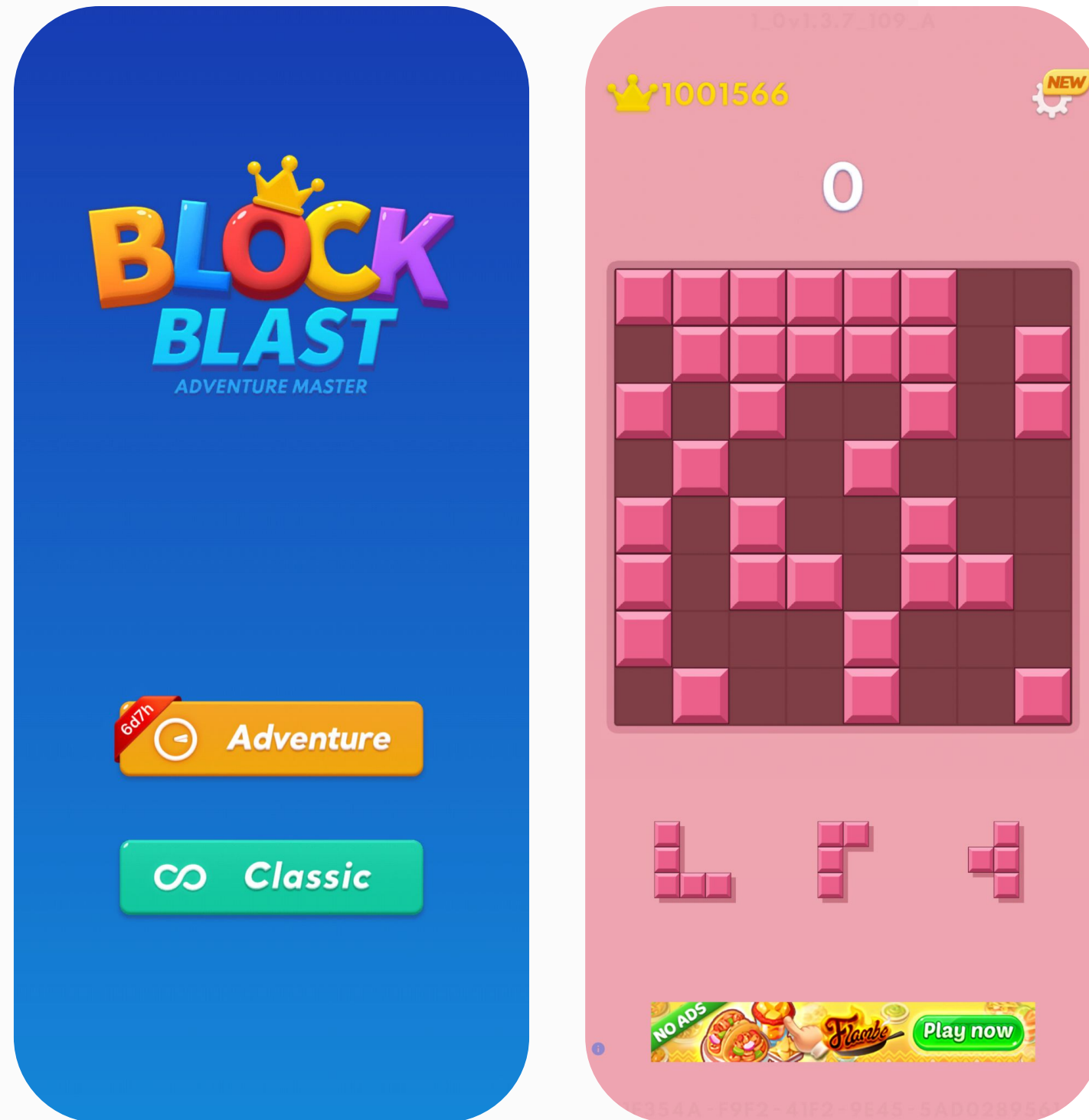
For the game: a direct way to compensate the revenue you would've earned from ads

It's also important to clarify what '**No Ads**' usually means:

- **Remove the annoying ads:** Interstitials + Banners
- **Keep the useful,** player-beneficial ads: Rewarded Video (RV)



NoAds: BUT, Is It Always Worth It?



Many teams treat No Ads as the default. But it's not always the best business decision.

Block Blast example (Hungry Studio)

Block Blast runs **all Ad formats**, yet players report **NO option to pay to Remove Ads**. So yes – a top game can exist without No Ads.

WHY might 'No Ads' be worse for revenue?

No Ads is basically **Ad Revenue 'compensation'**:

- you trade ongoing ad impressions for a one-time (or limited) purchase.

In some games (high engagement / long sessions), the ad revenue from an active player can exceed what No Ads would bring – especially if:

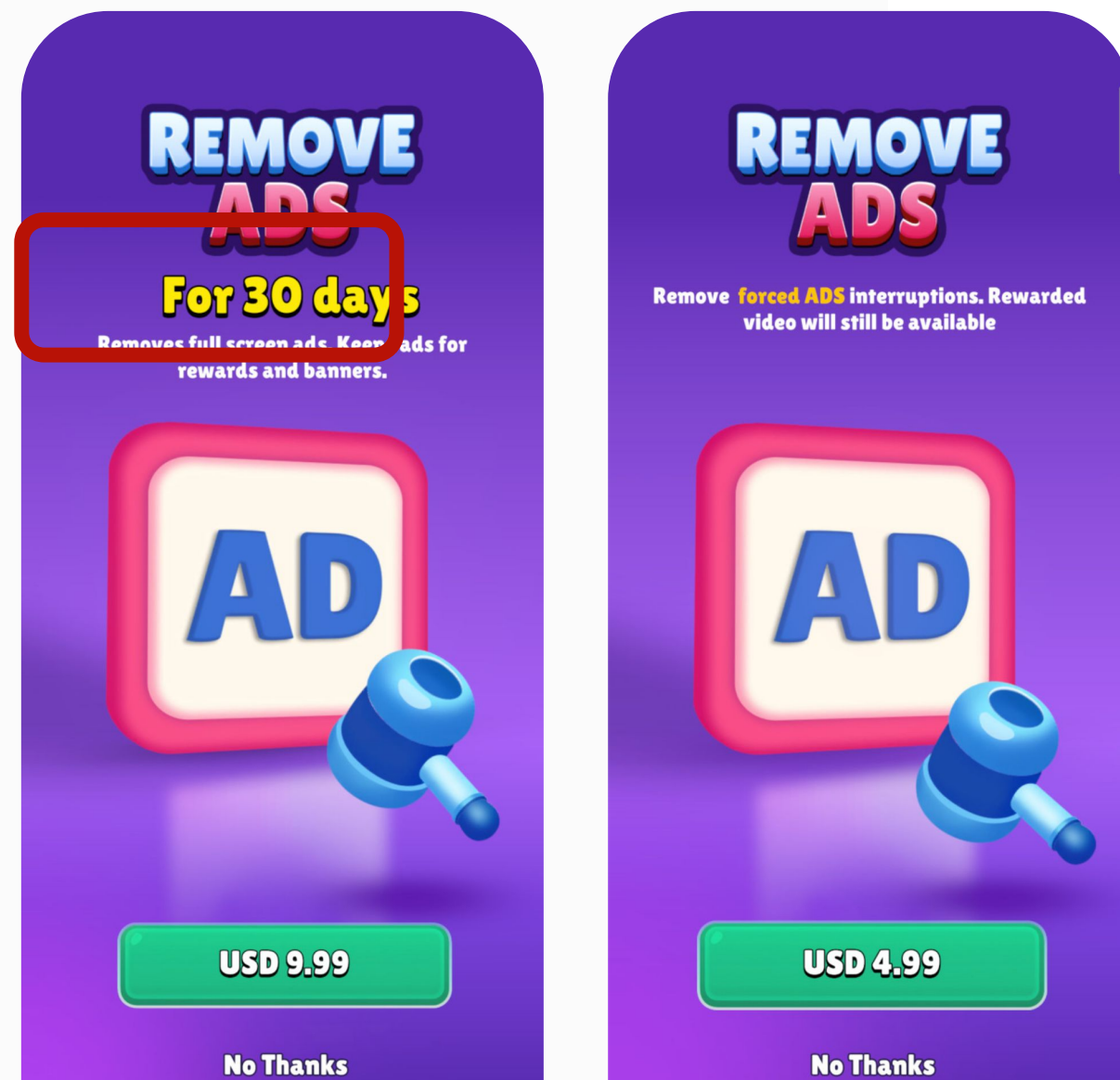
- Retention + Playtime are strong
- Interstitial pressure is softened (e.g., longer gaps between interstitials in Classic Mode)

Self-check question:

Have you modeled this for YOUR game?

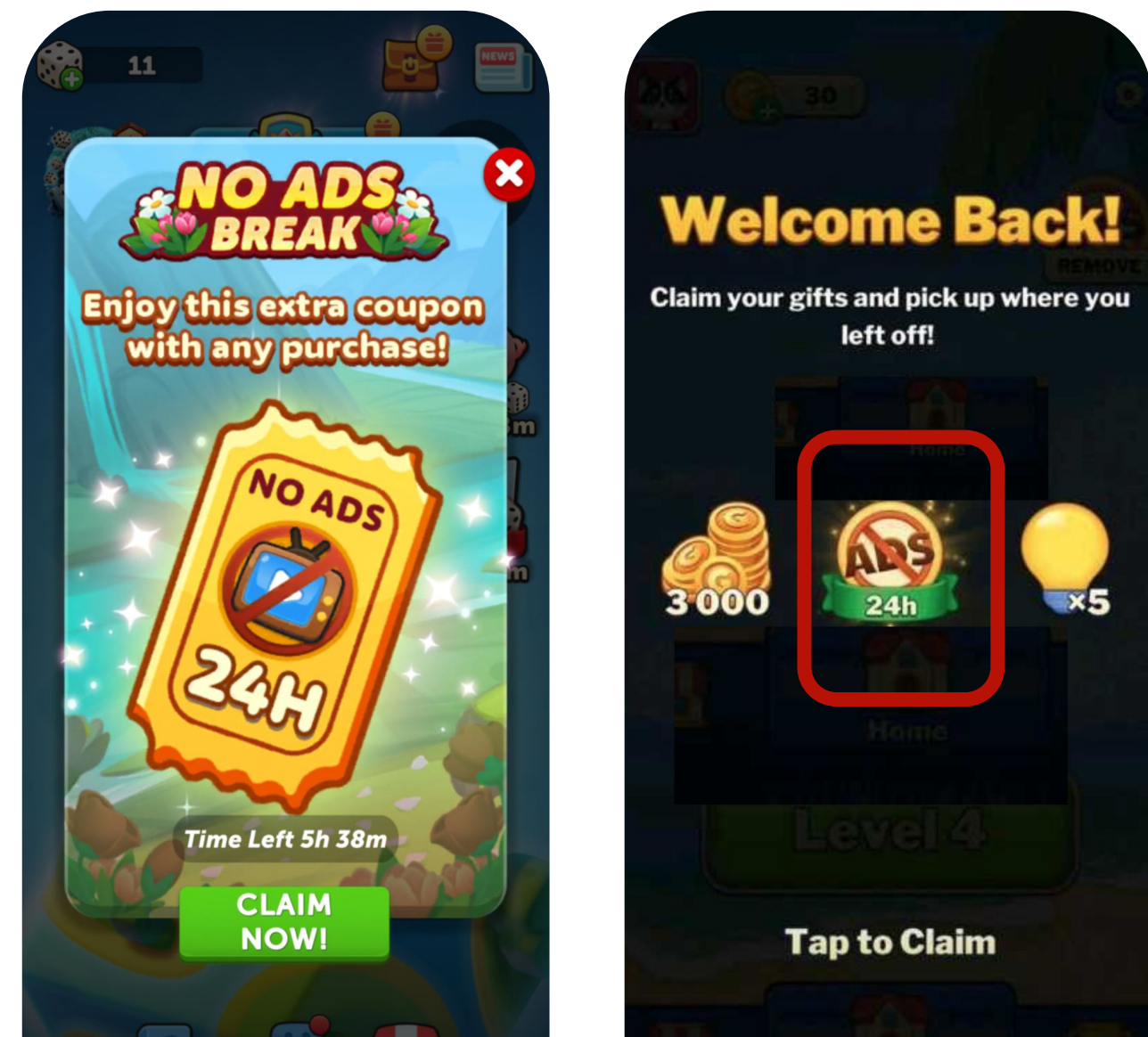
- Expected ad revenue per engaged user (with current ad gaps)
- No Ads price × predicted conversion rate (and lost ad impressions)

No Ads: Temporary or Permanent?



Most games sell **No Ads forever**

However, you can experiment with **time-limited No Ads**
(just make sure you reserve enough time to run a proper test)



Interesting uses of **Temporary No Ads**:

- **Event reward:** let players taste the game without ads – when ads return, they're more willing to pay to get that comfort back.
- **Welcome Back reward:** remove ad pressure right after a return, reducing the risk of a quick churn on return.

How to Sell No Ads: The 'No Ads Offer'

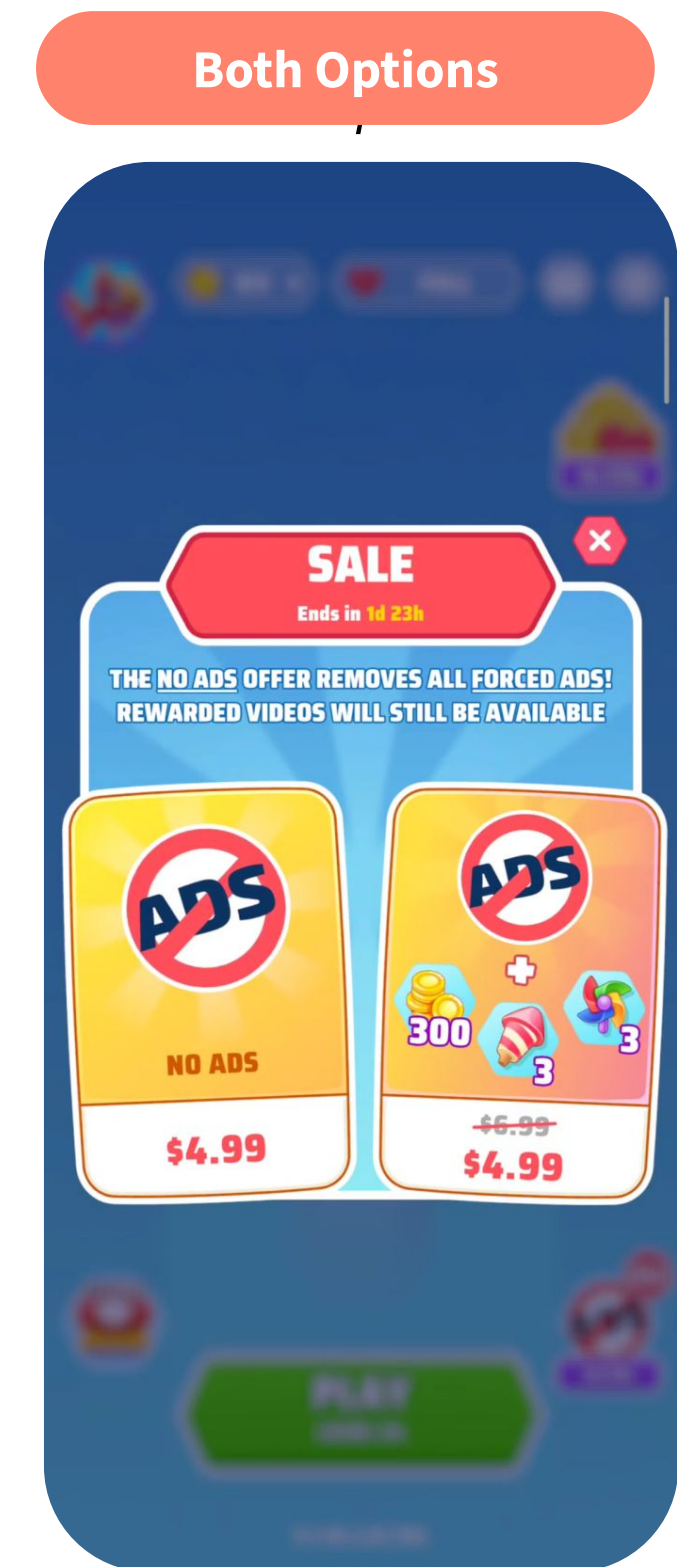
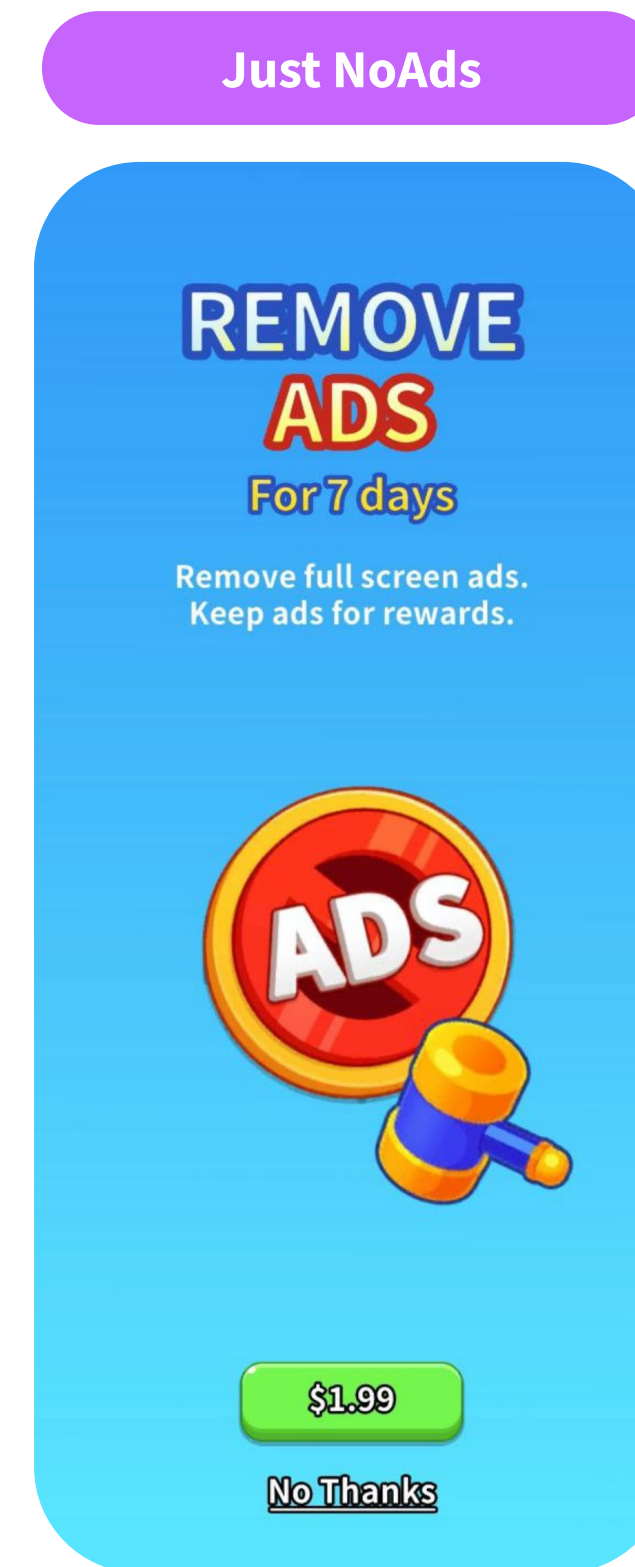
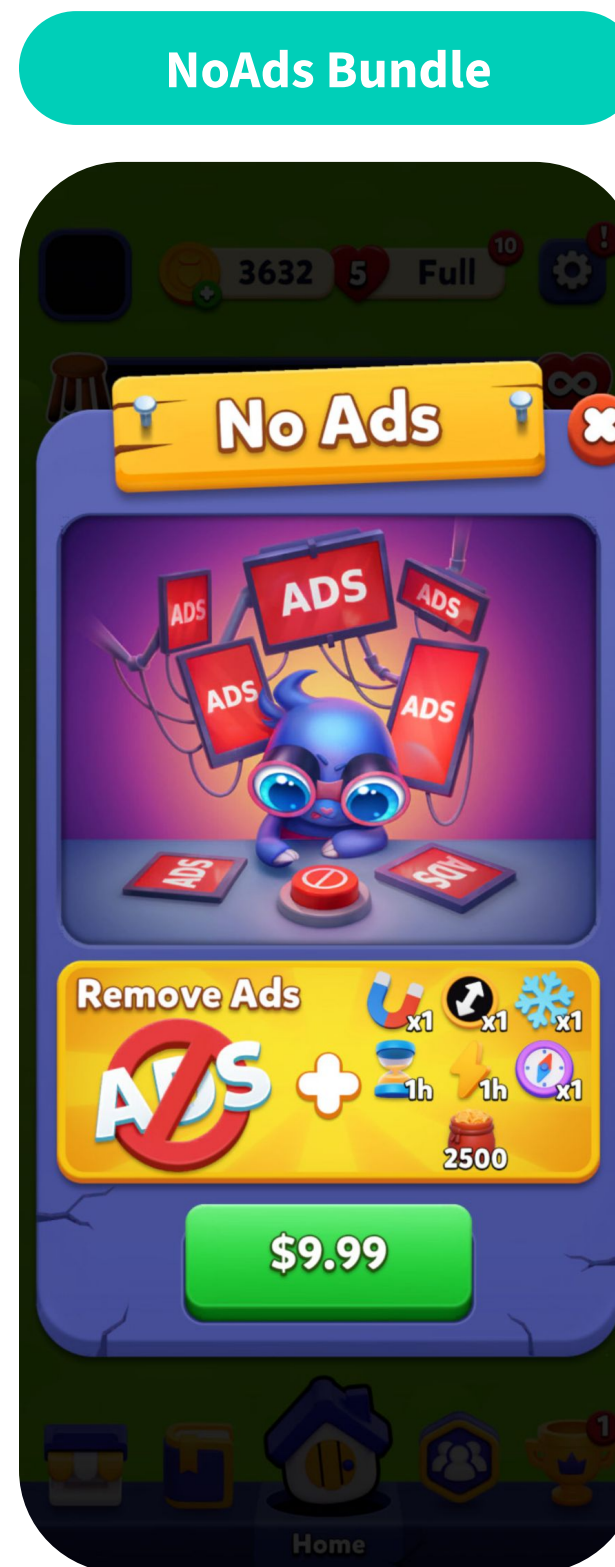
A common best practice is to create a dedicated **NoAds Offer**.

Compared to hiding No Ads in the Shop, it has clear advantages:

- A lobby widget (sometimes even visible in core screens) → always **reminds** the player
- A session-start pop-up, plus extra **triggers** (e.g., right after an Interstitial) → unlike the Shop version, where the player must remember to go find it

Typical offer structure

- Most often it's a Bundle: No Ads + extra currency/resources
- More rarely (not necessarily worse):
 - No Ads only
 - Both options (No Ads only + Bundle) shown side-by-side



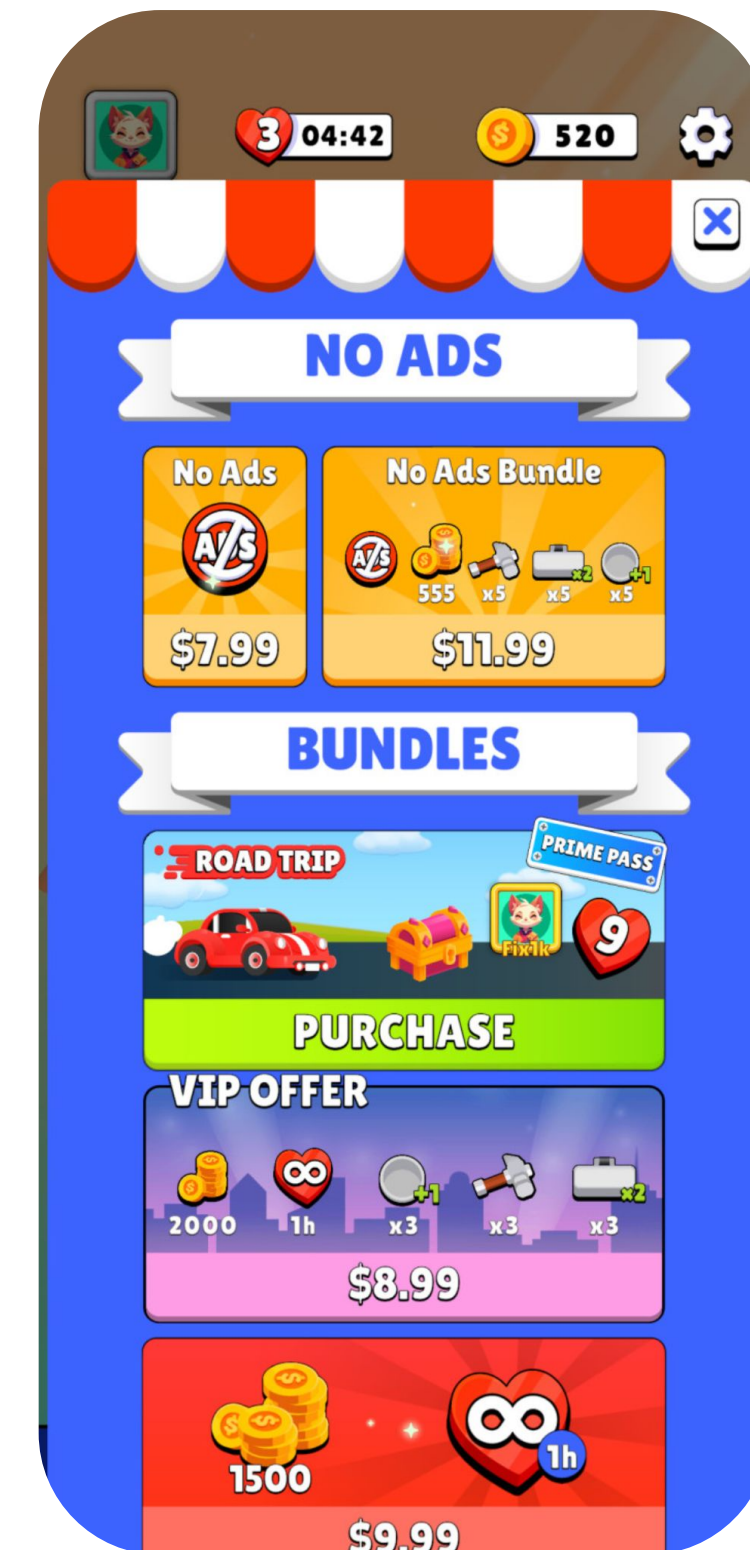
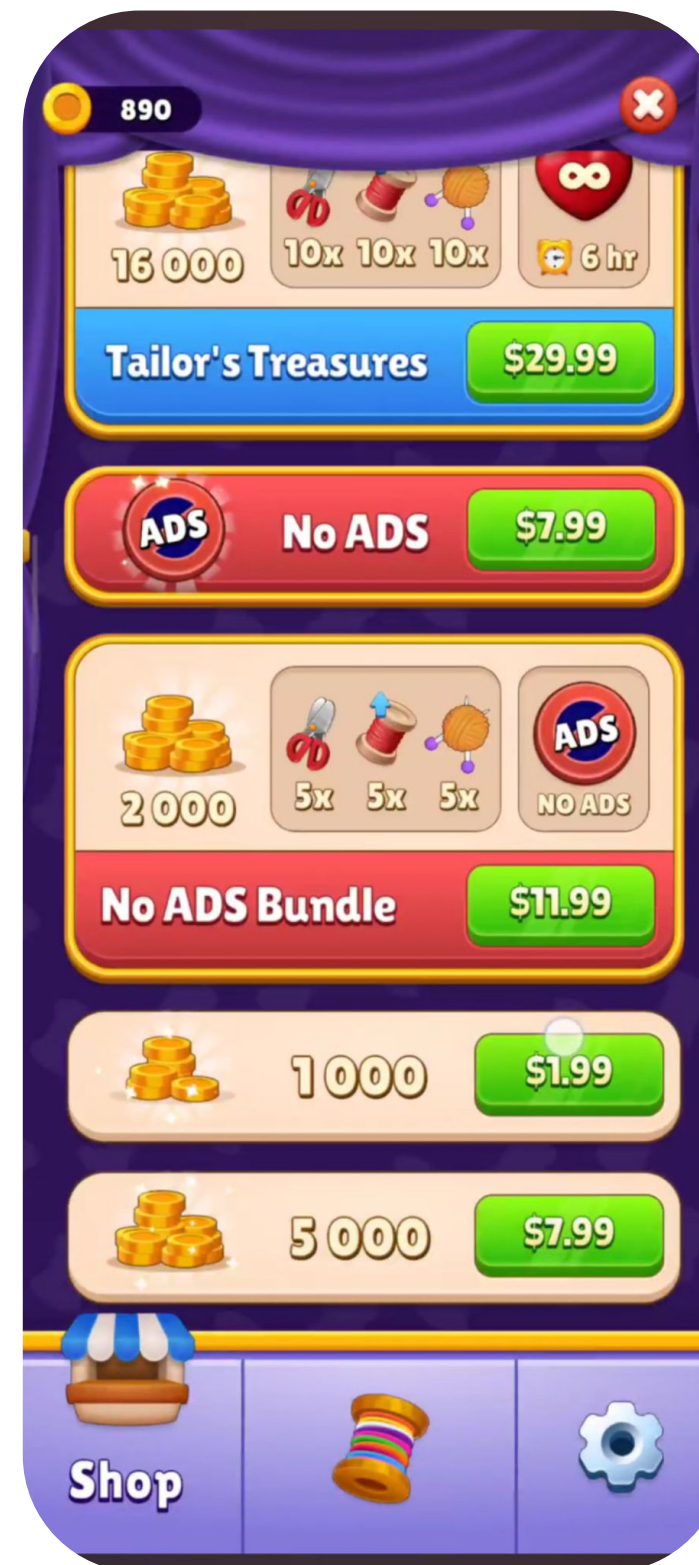
How to Sell No Ads: Shop NoAds Bundles

'Just No Ads' + 'No Ads Bundle' (Side-by-Side)

- Place two offers next to each other:
 - **Option A:** No Ads only
 - **Option B:** No Ads + extra currency/resources
- Often the bundle is visually larger → stronger attention pull
- Make **No Ads** offers stand out from the rest – use distinct color, animation, and visual treatment to separate them from standard shop items.

WHY it works:

- **Anchoring effect:** value of the bundle is much higher, while price is only slightly higher
- Pushes players toward the bundle as the 'smart choice'



How to Sell No Ads: with ANY Purchase

When is this setup is especially good?

If your game is **IAP-focused**, it can be smarter to:

- earn less from No Ads,
- but **protect Payer Retention** and reduce churn risk.

Extra control lever:

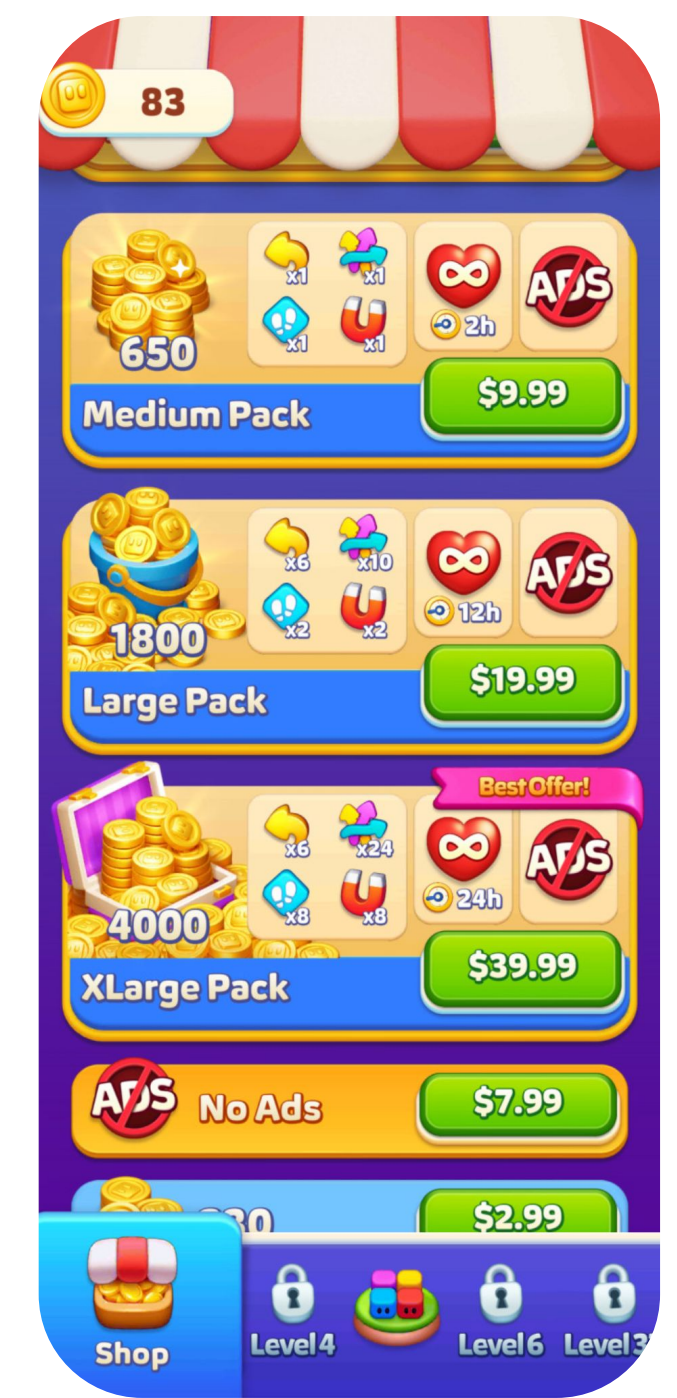
- Gate No Ads behind a **minimum price** tier (e.g., No Ads included only in purchases \$6.99+, not in the cheapest offers)

This keeps high-value bundles attractive:

- If a player is ready to spend \$30 → they buy the \$30 bundle and get boosters + No Ads
- Otherwise they must choose: Best Value bundle vs No Ads (best case: they buy both over time)

Self-check metrics (to validate your setup)

- What % of payers buy **only No Ads**?
- What % of payers **never buy No Ads**, but still purchase other IAP?

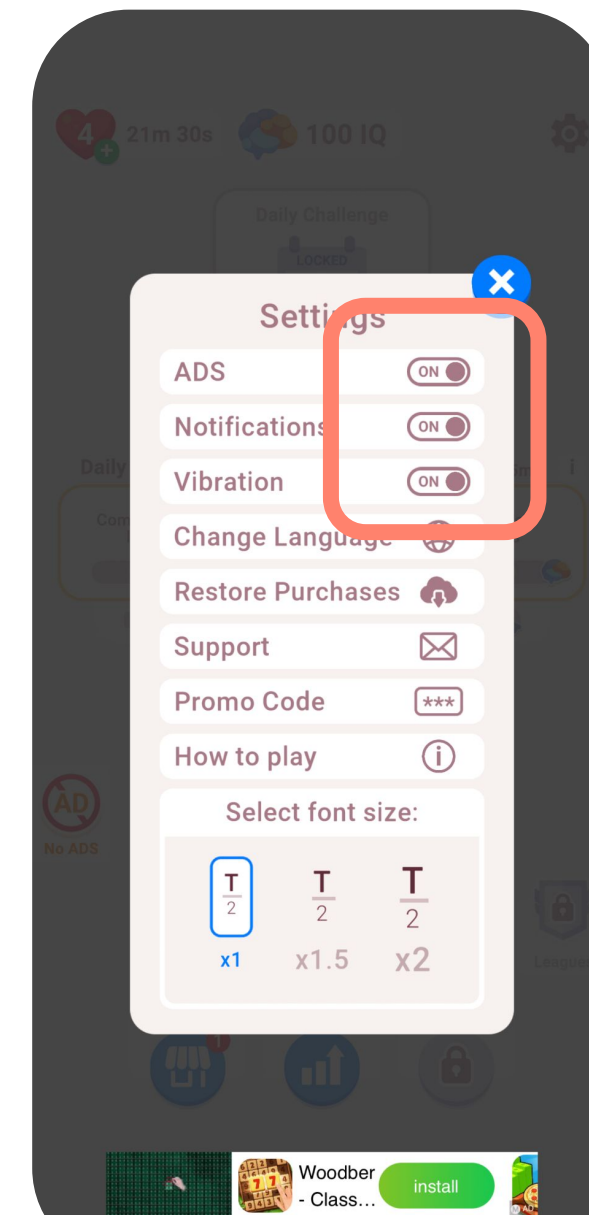


How to Sell No Ads: Extra Examples



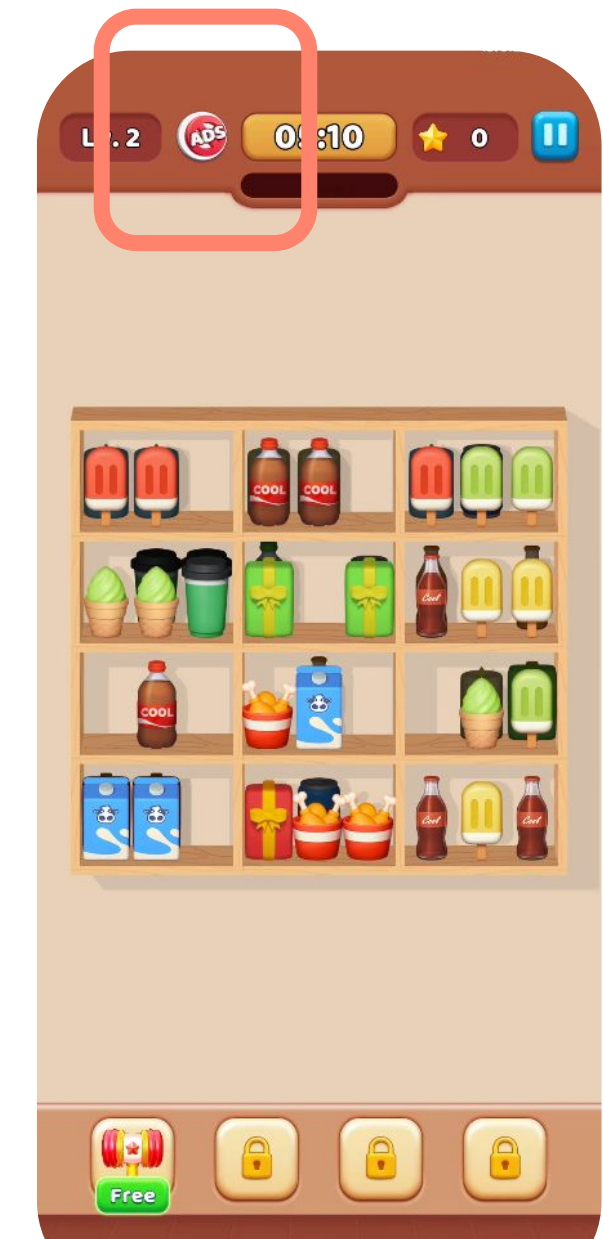
'Close' Button on the Banner

Player expects to close the banner, but tapping the Close Button → opens a **No Ads offer** instead.



'Disable Ads' Toggle

A toggle placed in core gameplay or Settings (alongside other toggles) that naturally leads into the **No Ads purchase flow**.



Core Gameplay Icon

Useful when players rarely return to the lobby – keeps No Ads **always accessible**.



Choosing Ad Strategy by Monetization Type

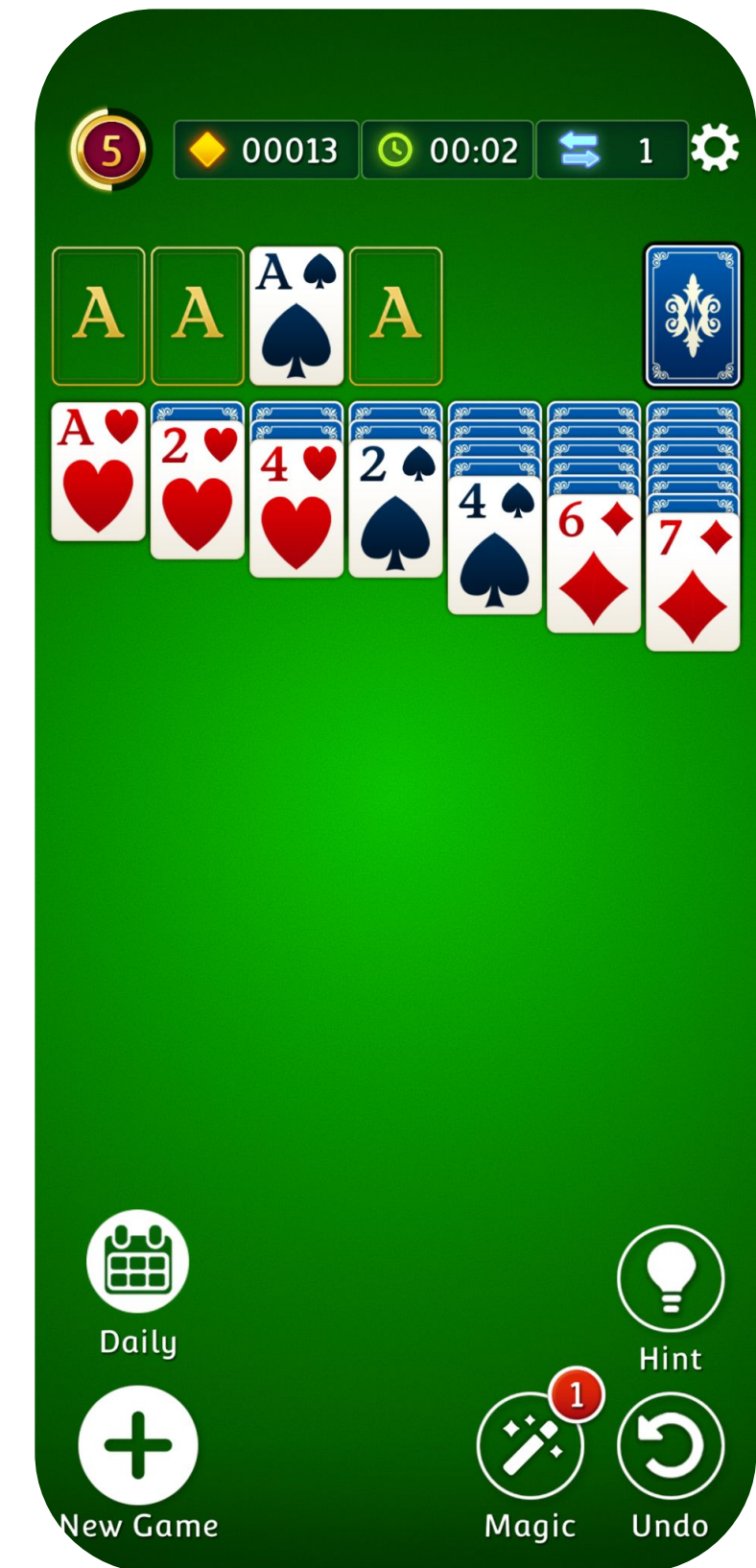
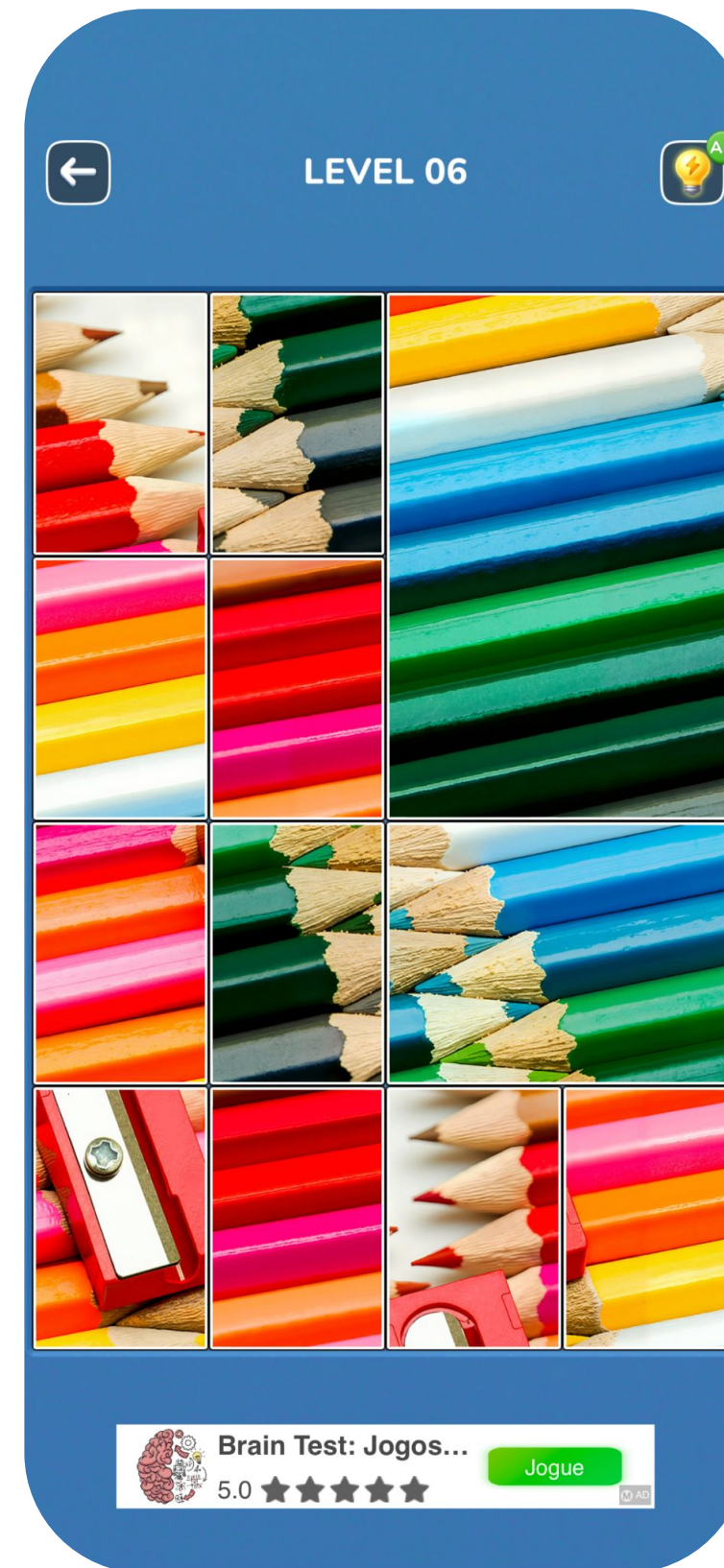
Ad Monetization Focus: Interstitial Ad

'Meditative' / Low-Fail Games → Interstitial-driven

When gameplay is relaxing and it's hard to lose, **Interstitials** often generate the majority of **Ad Revenue**.

What matters most:

- Higher **Retention + Playtime** = higher revenue
- Session limiters are often removed (lives / energy)
- Level pacing supports more ad opportunities:
 - **short levels** → more end-of-level inter triggers
 - or **long levels** → higher engagement, but with **ad breaks**
- Interstitials + banners can start earlier (after initial engagement gates)



Ad Monetization Focus: Rewarded Video

If the core has real challenge, **RV becomes the main monetization tool.**

Key design question: Do you need soft currency (coins) at all?

Coins can:

- create an IAP bridge
- but also add friction, fake value, and unnecessary choice layers

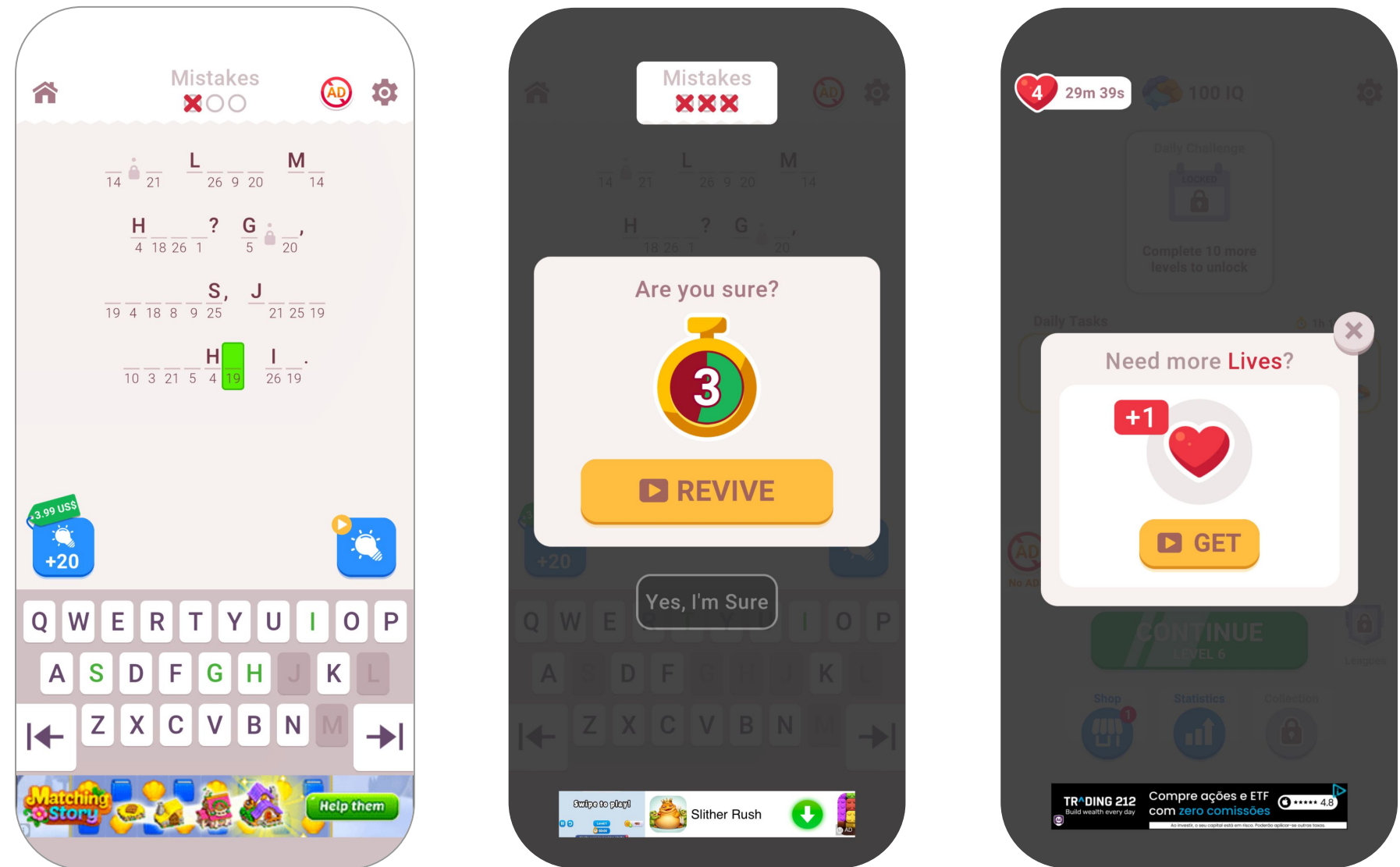
In ads-first games, a cleaner approach is often:

- Failed level? → **+5 moves for RV**
- Hard level? → **RV booster**
- Direct, one-click RV – instead of 'coins vs ad' comparisons

RV Reward Size: How Much Do You Give?

A key tuning question: **what's the RV payout?**

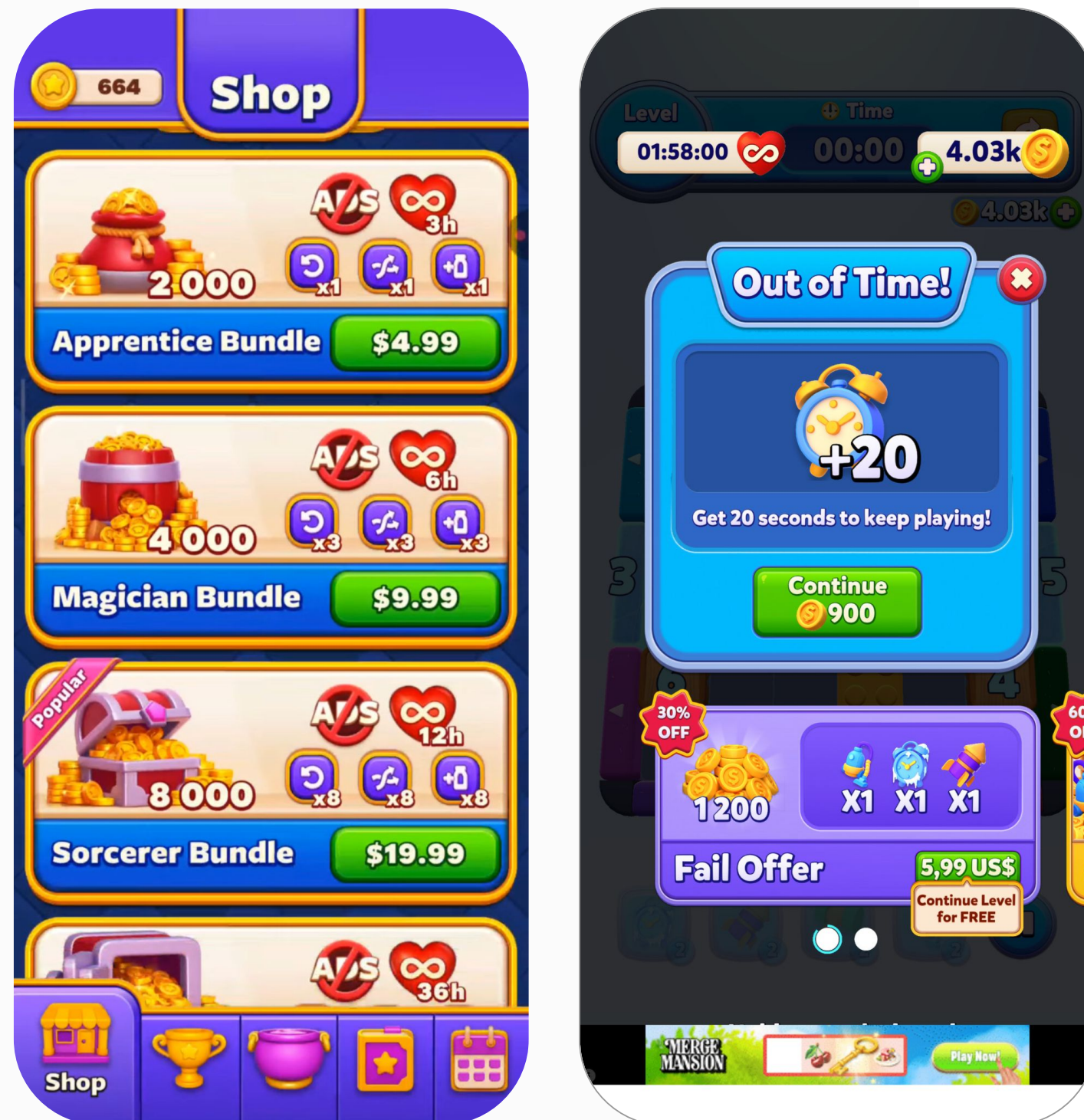
- **1 booster** → drives more frequent RV views
- **2+ boosters** → increases the chance the player keeps playing (because they feel 'powered up')



How to decide:

- Run an A/B test (payout size vs retention + RV volume)
- Check the real need frequency: How often does a player actually need a booster? Are they willing to watch ads that often?

Hybrid IAP-focused Monetization



Interstitials + Banners

- In long-run IAP projects, you can **skip Inter + Banner entirely**
- If you still add them: start **later than usual** and use **longer cooldowns**

No Ads

- Best fit: **'No Ads with ANY purchase'**
Once a player buys anything, they've 'opted out' of annoying ads.

Rewarded Video (RV)

- Often remove RV from core monetization points:
 - Revive / Continue
 - Booster purchase moments
- Use RV for **controlled currency inflow** instead:
 - mini-games / periodic bonuses
 - but **limit it** (X times per day)

Goal: Keep coins valuable vs ads

Hybrid Monetization

Whenever you have a **coin sink**, you can often add an **RV placement** as an alternative path.

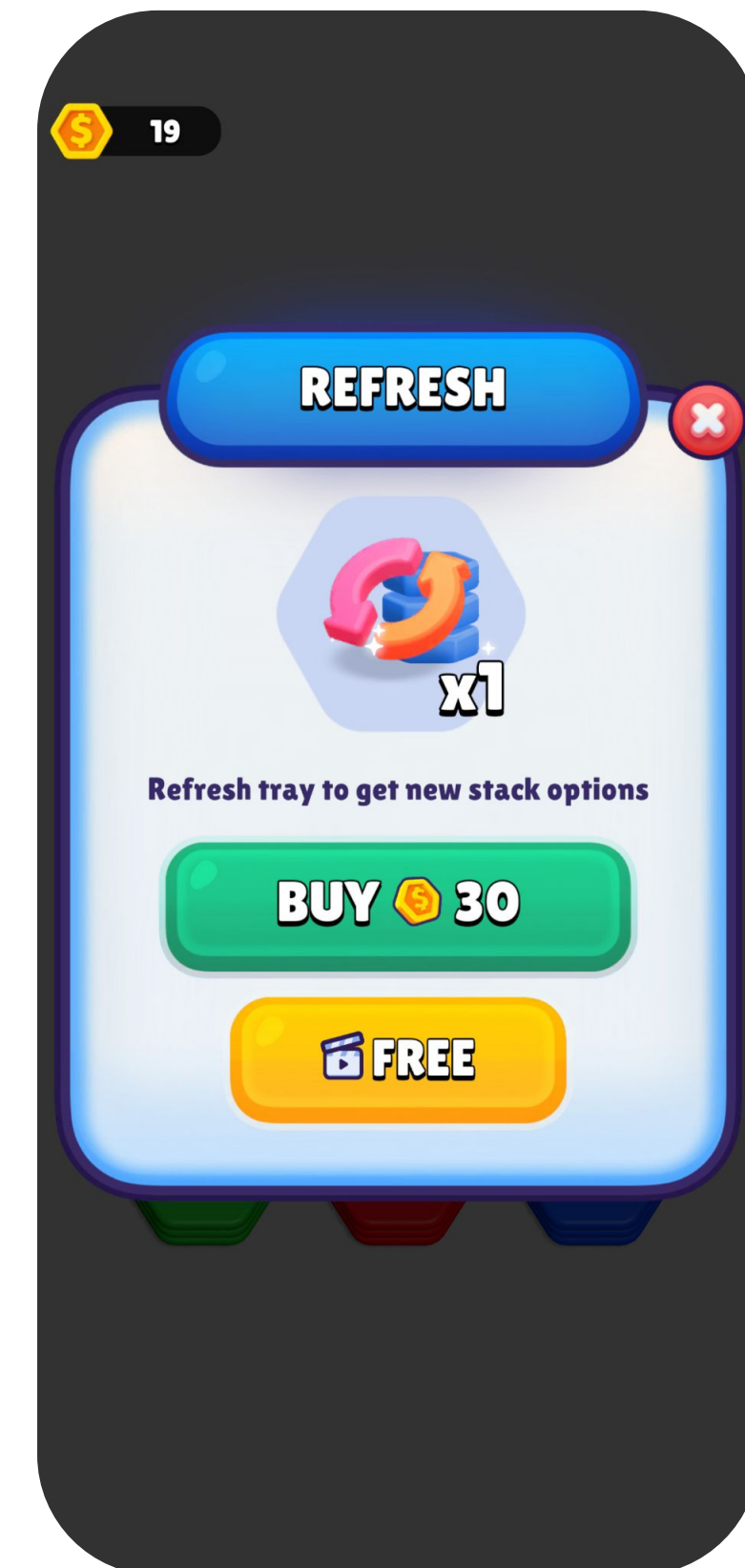
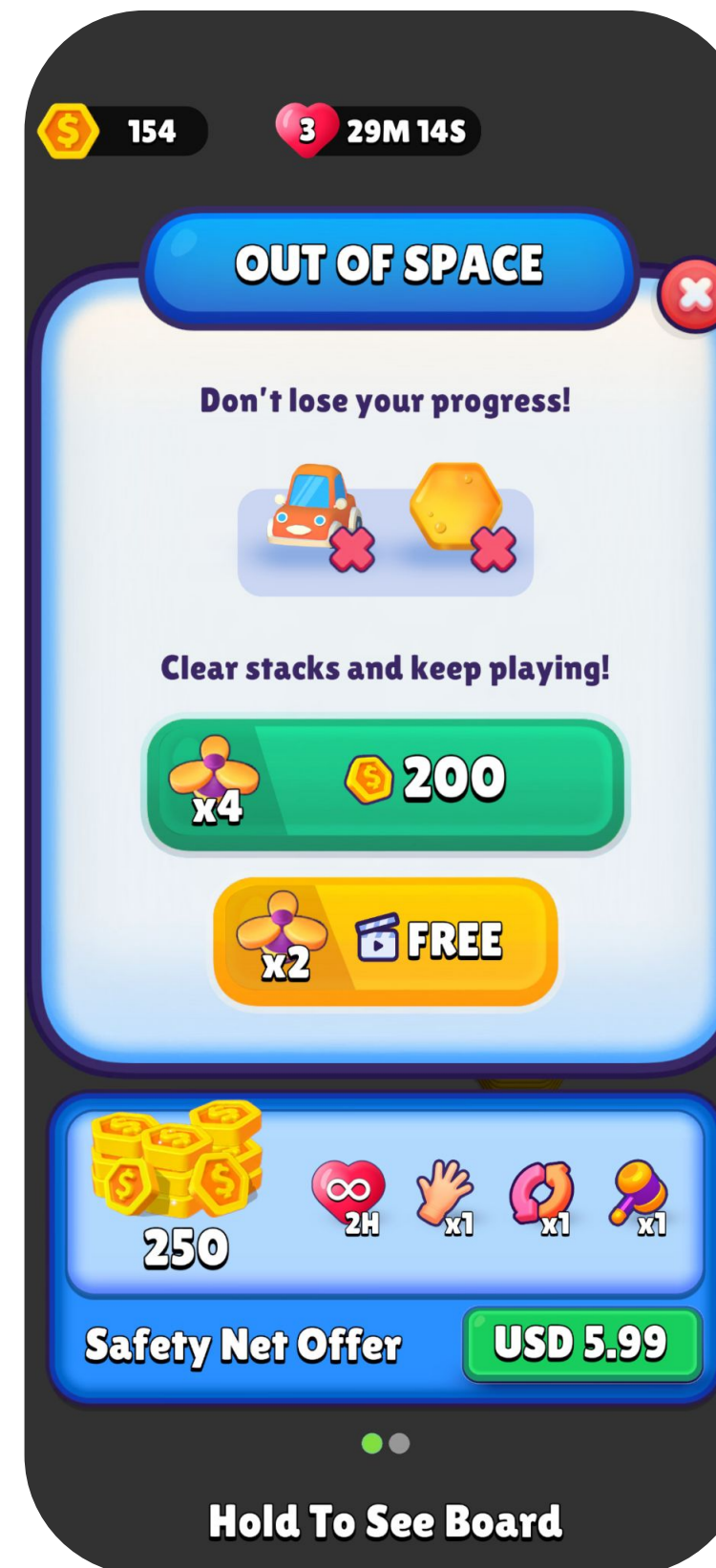
- When Coins and RV are side by side, use **anchoring** to highlight the option you want to be the 'optimal' choice.

For hybrid monetization, segmentation is a must:

- Treat **payers** like an IAP-first audience (with lower ad pressure)
- Treat **highly engaged non-payers** more aggressively with ads

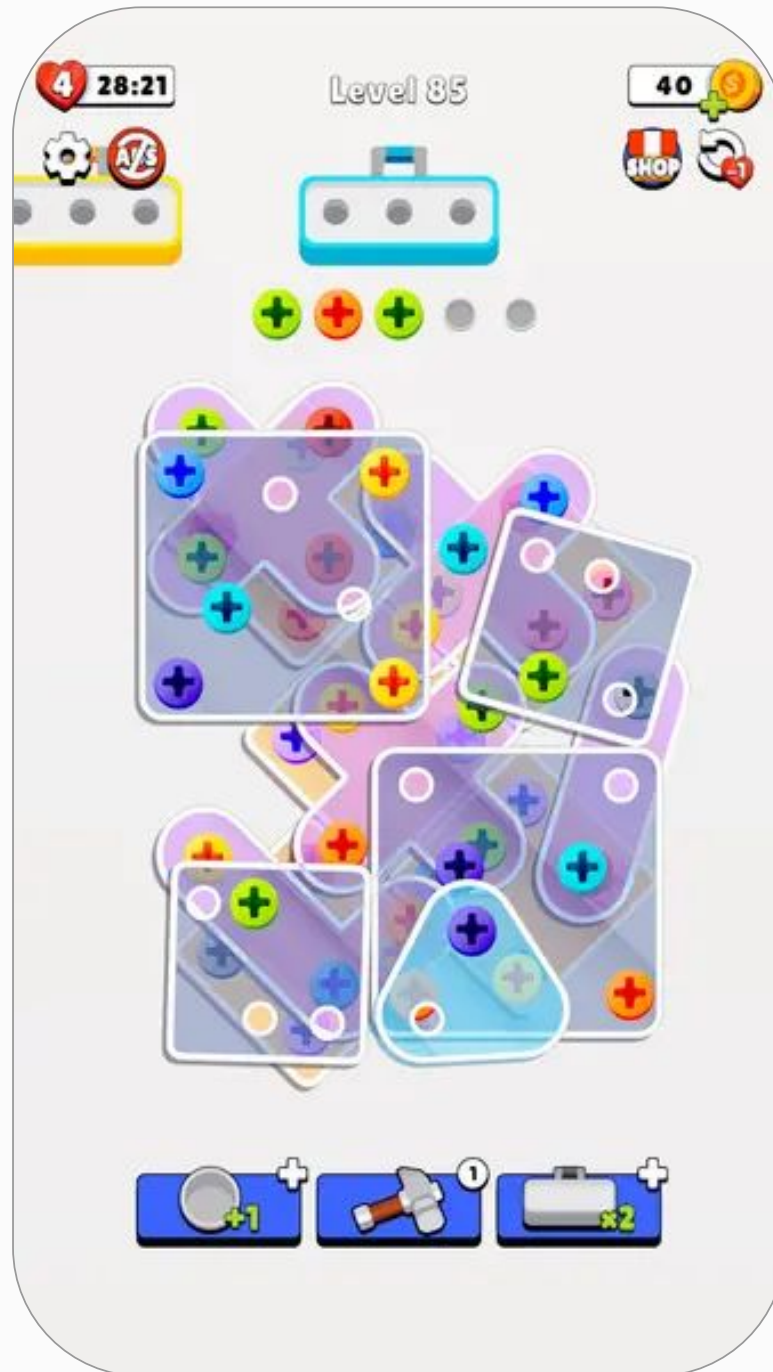
And keep testing continuously:

- Coin value next to ads (does RV devalue coins?)
- RV presence on monetization moments (does it cannibalize purchases?)
- Ad pressure tuning: unlock points, cooldowns, overall aggressiveness



Same Genre - Different Monetization: Screw Jam example

Screw Jam



Screwdom 3D



Screw Jam (early pioneer)

- IAP-focused monetization
- Almost no RV placements (mostly: Wheel of Fortune, +1 life)
- Mid-length levels, high variability, relatively high difficulty

Next wave: Screw Pin / Screwdom / etc.

- Same core loop (almost 1:1)
- Hybrid monetization
- Often **no Interstitials**, but **RV covers most monetization moments**
- Slightly easier level design (still with challenge)

- Clones didn't win by 'better core' – they won by **monetization accessibility**
- RV-heavy coverage can outperform IAP-first setups when:
 - difficulty creates frequent 'help' moments
 - RV is placed as a solution (revive, boosters, extra moves)
 - pressure is tuned to avoid churn (cooldowns, pacing)

Key idea:

Same gameplay + different monetization architecture = different ceiling.

Same Genre - Different Monetization: Magic Sort example

Nut Sort (earlier wave)

- Very easy levels, minimal challenge
- Very short levels (fast clears)
- Ads-first monetization: no coins, lots of Interstitials

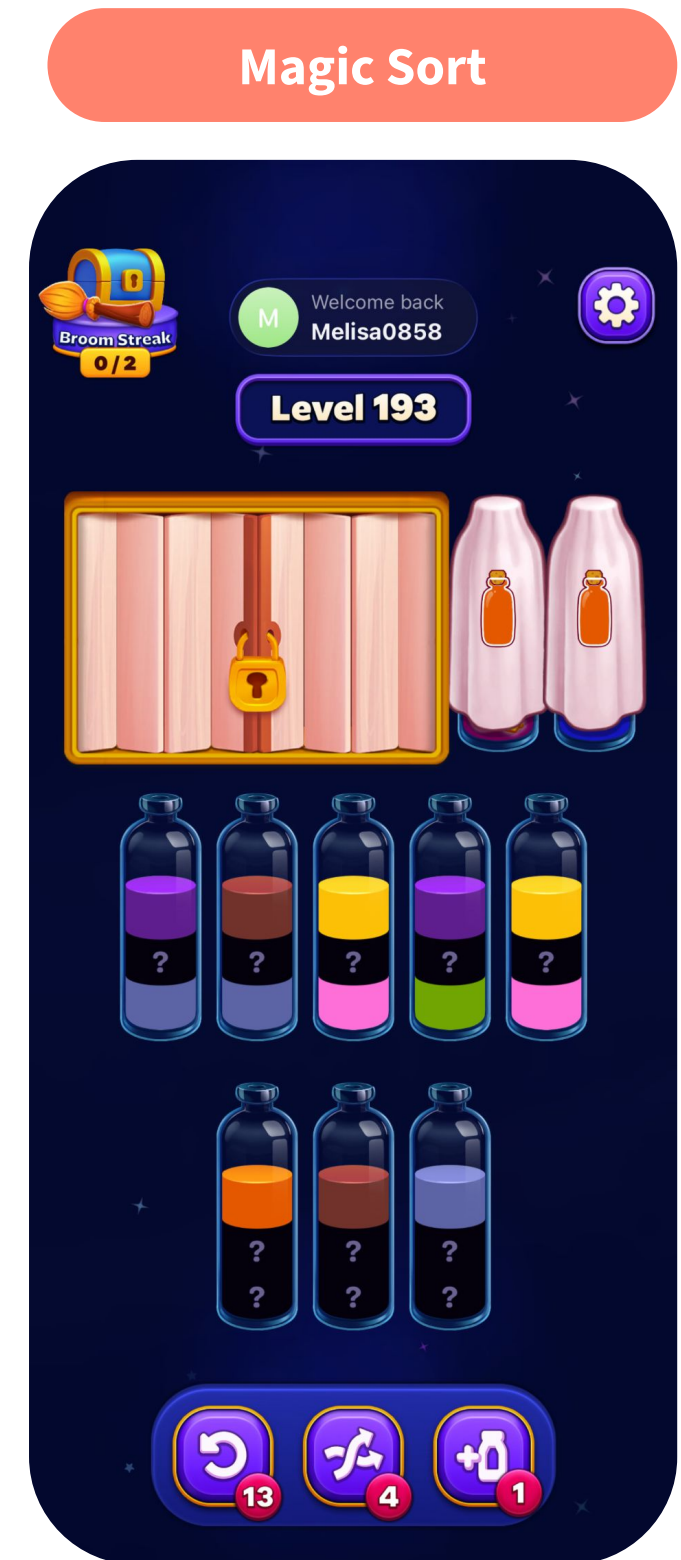
Magic Sort (opposite strategy)

- Harder levels with more non-deterministic mechanics (built-in challenge)
- No revive, no RV boosters (no 'ad-based help')
- Result: they significantly outperformed Nut Sort

Key takeaway:

More ads ≠ better results.

Sometimes stronger core challenge + clean experience scales better than aggressive ad pressure.





Segmentation

Segmentation Parameters (What to Segment By)

1

Acquisition

- **UA type** (Ad-, Blended-, IAPROAS)
- **Source / network / campaign**
- **Country / region** (different eCPM + different ad tolerance)

2

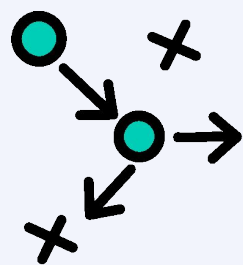
User Behavioral (Engagement)

- **Lifetime** (days since install)
- **Level progress**
- **Playtime / session length**

3

User Behavioral (Monetization)

- **Payer vs Non-payer**
- **Whale vs One-time buyer**
- **Recency**: how long since last purchase



Strategy note:

For payers, it's often better to **earn less from ads** but win on **retention + future IAP**.

Also, payer segments often have **higher eCPM**, so lighter ad pressure doesn't always mean proportional revenue loss.

What Should You Segment in an Ad System?

People often say: 'Whales should have no ads.' But a more flexible approach is to keep ads for everyone – just **dose them**.

How to do it:

- Set a **daily total cap** on ad impressions
- Set **per-placement caps** (e.g., limit Revive RV separately from bonus RV)
- Add **cooldowns** between ad views to avoid back-to-back pressure

This approach can also help build a habit:

when ads are limited and predictable, players tend to 'use their daily views' intentionally instead of feeling spammed.



Interstitials

- **Start conditions:** Level X + Playtime Y
- Pressure control via **Cooldowns** (especially for payers)
 - every N levels
 - time since last Inter
 - time since last RV

Rewarded Video (RV)

- **Limits + cooldowns** (per session / per day)
- Enable/disable specific RV placements
 - turn off RV on monetization moments to protect IAP
 - keep RV for 'support' / periodic income

Banners

- Enable/disable by segment
- **Start conditions:** Level X + Playtime Y
- Refresh rate

Extra Notes



Interstitial Instead of RV (On Reward Placements)



Sometimes you can **replace a Rewarded** placement with an **Interstitial**.

Why it can work

- **Higher eCPM:** Interstitials may monetize better than RV (or roughly the same) in some cases.
- **Lower churn:** because the ad is shorter, there's less interruption – and a lower risk the player quits during the ad. Keeps the player in the flow, especially in high-frequency reward taps (boosters, small bonuses)

Key idea:

Optimize not only revenue per view, but also **revenue per retained player**.

Ad Creative Filtering (Protect UX & Retention)

Not all ads are equal. Some creatives actively damage your game experience – and your metrics.



What to filter out

- **Annoying / misleading creatives**
Overly aggressive, intrusive, or deceptive interactions
- **'Gross' creatives**
Pimple popping, dirt/cleaning – anything that can disgust players.
- **Political or highly triggering topics**
Polarizing content that can create negativity and complaints unrelated to your game.
- **Too bright / attention-stealing ads**
Especially banners with neon / acidic visuals and 'screaming' CTA buttons – they hijack attention and feel toxic inside a calm UI
- **Direct competitors**
Yes, they often have high eCPM – but they also raise churn risk by pulling players into similar games with stronger hooks.

Key idea: Creative filtering is not 'nice to have'.

It's a retention safety system: remove the ads that monetize today but lose players tomorrow.



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