Duolingo is replacing hearts with energy

Duolingo is making a big change: it’s moving on from hearts in favor of a new “energy” mechanic. The idea is to switch from a system that punishes mistakes to one that’s intended to feel more motivating — and a bit more gamified.

Under the old system, you’d lose a heart if you made a mistake while doing a lesson. To earn hearts back, you could do things like watch an ad, pay for a full refill using Duolingo’s Gems currency, or just wait for the hearts to refresh.

Under the new system, you’ll spend one unit of energy to complete an exercise, and a mistake will cost one energy. But you’ll also get extra energy back at a randomized rate for completing multiple lessons right in a row. As a result, users should be able to do more lessons, and that’s what’s showing up in the data, Moses Wayne, a senior staff engineer at Duolingo, tells *The Verge*.

“We feel like this is a way that we can motivate you to focus on things you’re getting right rather than penalizing for the things that you’re making mistakes on,” Wayne says. He also says that “we wanted to find a way to gamify the experience a little more.”

A full energy bar is 25 units of energy (versus five hearts). Energy regenerates over time, like hearts do, Wayne says. You can also buy more energy with Gems, and subscribers to Super Duolingo and Duolingo Max will have unlimited energy, similar to how subscribers of those tiers have unlimited hearts, according to Duolingo spokesperson Monica Earle.

Wayne points out that, under the hearts system, you could fail out of your first lesson of the day. “In an energy world, that’s really not going to happen because we’re not penalizing you for mistakes anymore,” Wayne says. Duolingo’s aggregate metrics show that, in general, people are able to engage “a lot more” with Duolingo now than before.

The change is rolling out first on iOS over the next weeks and months, and the aim is to bring it to Android later this year. If you happen to play Duolingo across iOS and Android right now, your Android app will stick with hearts, while the iOS app will stick with energy; they won’t sync, Wayne says.

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