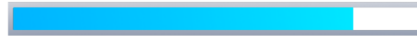# LEVEL UP

GENERIC SEASON PASS SYSTEM

Design Document created for the Level Up Season Pass Workshop
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Generic Season Pass System

Overview

In each month-long season, players earn **XP** by completing **daily missions** to level up through **tiers** of rewards. The **premium pass**, which players pay to unlock, provides **bonus missions** and even better **rewards**.

Goals

In designing this system, we want to ensure that we keep our goals in mind with every decision. Here are some goals for a season pass system:
- The season system is built on the core loop and drives players to engage with all of the game's systems and content
- Players are motivated to complete the entire season's missions
- Players understand how to make progress in a season
- The overall season experience leaves players excited for the next season

Let's take a closer look these goals and how they influence the feature's design:

1. **The season system is built on the core loop and drives players to engage with all of the game's systems and content**
   a. The seasons system is built on the core loop
      i. Players must participate in the core loop in order to make progress in the seasons system
   b. Missions touch all systems in the game
      i. Tying missions to every system in the game serves several functions:
         1. It surfaces those systems to players who might not be aware of them (for this reason, the season pass a good way to drive players into brand-new features, as well)
         2. It gives players a variety of things to do, so that completing the day's missions doesn't become boring
         3. If there's a system that a player doesn't enjoy, they have other missions that they can focus on instead
   c. Missions touch all of the game's content
      i. Tying missions to the various types of content in the game allows you to:
         1. Surface that content to players who may not be aware of it (for example, an area of the map that they haven't explored yet)
         2. Require players to make progress in the game in order to make progress in the season (for example, by adding different types of pets to their collection)

     ii.   Choose your requirements carefully; you don't want to block your players from making progress too long, or make them spend the majority of their play time each day trying to catch up

2. Players are motivated to complete the entire season's missions
   a. Missions are manageable and do not consume the player's entire playtime each day. This means that most missions should be completable for the average player within a single session
   b. Missions appeal to different playstyles by having a variety of tasks
   c. The season UI clearly displays the player's progress and the rewards for completing each tier
   d. The rewards are commensurate with the amount of effort required to complete the tiers, with the final premium season pass award being the most exciting. Final rewards can even be exclusive, so that only players who participate in that season will have the prestige of owning them

3. Players understand how to make progress in a season
   a. Players are automatically enrolled in the seasons system; they do not need to remember to opt in every new season
   b. Season UI is highly visible, with little to no effort required to access it
        i.   For example, via a very obvious and enticing button on the in-game HUD
   c. Season UI is easy to use
        i.   Mission and season progress are clearly communicated
        ii.   It is communicated whenever the player completes a mission or unlocks a new reward tier
        iii.   The remaining time to complete the season is clearly visible
   d. Missions are presented in concise, precise language that gives players enough information to complete it

4. The overall season experience leaves players excited for the next season
   a. The rewards, especially the premium and final rewards, are worthwhile
   b. Players wonder what the next season's theme and final rewards will be

User Interface Preview

These wireframe mockups illustrate one way that this feature could be implemented in your game. Creating wireframes like these helps everyone on the team to visualize the feature, ensures that the user interface remains consistent from screen to screen, and ultimately makes it easier for the coder implementing the UI.

Additional wireframes illustrating various states of player progress can be found in the Season Pass UI Wireframes document. Note: These wireframes are generic in design. Depending on how the dialogs are accessed in your game, you may want to customize them -- for example, by including buttons or tabs that allow players to easily move between the Daily Missions and Reward Tiers screens.

Daily Missions

Reward Tiers

Season Pass Rules

Season Length

- Season Length: the duration that a season is available to players. You can define the length based on your team's bandwidth
  - A good starting point is one month in duration
  - **For the purposes of the Level Up exercise, our seasons will last one month**
- Cadence: how often season events are available
  - It's a good practice to allow at least a one-week rest period between the end of one season and the start of the next. This buffer week does the following:
    - Gives players a bit of a break after a hard push to earn the last tier, in order to protect them from burnout
    - Provides the development team with more time to produce missions and rewards
  - **For the purposes of the Level Up exercise, we will have a one-week break between seasons**

Tiers

- Tiers: the milestones that players meet in order to earn rewards throughout the season
- To climb the tiers, players complete missions in order to earn XP
- When players earn enough XP, they graduate to the next tier and receive rewards for the one they just completed
- You can decide how many tiers your season will have
  - Ten tiers would be a good place to start -- it's long enough that players feel like they're making progress frequently, but short enough that the number isn't daunting at the start of a season
  - **For the purposes of the Level Up exercise, our seasons will have ten tiers**

Tier Rewards

Whenever a player accumulates enough XP to graduate from one tier to the next, they earn tier rewards. The rewards should be commensurate with the amount of effort needed to complete the tier (based on amount of XP required).

If your team has the bandwidth to create a brand-new asset for the final reward, that would be a great option for the final tier reward for either the free or premium pass. You might even consider retiring that item after the season is done, in order to make it exclusive to the season pass system, and even more desirable.

Tier rewards should include items that players want, but aren't too valuable (you want them to chase after those final tier rewards!) Here are some ideas:

- Consumables: health potions, food, power-ups, ammo
- Currency: soft or hard (small amounts)
- Temporary buffs: 10% shield, damage boost, resource generation
- Customization items: small avatar pieces, a new paint color for a home

Although automatically rewarding players when they tier up seems convenient, the best practice is to require players to claim rewards via a button in the season pass UI. This does two things:

1. It ensures that players know that they received rewards, and what they were. Automatic rewards run the risk of being overlooked or misunderstood
2. It drives players back into the season pass UI, potentially engaging them with the feature for the first time, or re-engaging them

Make sure that it's obvious to the player that they have rewards to collect. Placing an icon on the feature's button to badge it is one way to draw their attention. At the season's end, if a player has uncollected rewards, then it is a good idea to automatically award them (ideally with a message explaining where they came from!)

One last general note on rewards: Although your Tiers UI will show the rewards that players will earn, it's a good practice to also display any 3D model-based rewards inside your game world, as well, so that players can better appreciate them. Things like cars, houses, pets and avatar clothing are much more compelling "in person" than simply a little 2D image in a UI. The job of the Tier 10 final rewards is to drive your players to engage throughout the entire season; making those rewards as exciting as possible will only help with that goal.

Free Pass

- The free pass is available to all players
- Players are automatically enrolled in the free pass, so they do not have to remember to opt in each season in order to complete missions and earn rewards
- The free pass gives players an amount missions every day that they can complete to earn XP
  - The number of missions and amount of XP will be defined in a separate tuning document
- Free passholders will NOT be able to complete premium missions or earn premium tier rewards unless they upgrade to the premium pass

Premium Pass

- Players have to pay to get access to the premium pass
  - The price of the pass is up to you. Consider common price points ($5.00, $10.00)

- - ○ Make sure that the rewards you're offering feel "worth it" for the price
  - Premium passholders are given additional missions and have the opportunity to earn additional rewards
    - The number of missions and amount of XP will be defined in a separate tuning document
  - When premium passholders complete a tier, they earn <u>both the premium and the free rewards</u> for that tier. Essentially, consider them enrolled in both passes
  - Free players who upgrade to the premium pass mid-season are awarded all of the premium reward for tiers that they have already completed
    - So they get the full value out of the pass and aren't penalized for waiting

Mission Rules

Daily Missions

- New missions unlock every day. This incremental drip of content does the following:
  - It encourages daily engagement from your players
  - It prevents highly-engaged players from consuming the season's content too quickly
- Missions reset daily. Players either complete them or lose their progress at the end of the day
- Missions vary in category, to ensure gameplay variety within each day's set of missions
- Missions vary in difficulty -- Easy, Medium, and Hard -- in order to give options for both casual and higher-achieving players
- Missions may repeat during a season, but try to have as many unique missions as possible. If you do not have a wide variety to start with, that's ok -- you can add more in future updates
- Missions never require spending hard currency, as this would exclude free players *and* require premium season pass players to spend even more (angering both groups and driving them out of the season pass system)

Free Pass

- Free players receive a number of missions every day, as defined by your team
  - **For the purposes of the Level Up exercise, free players will receive two missions every day**

Premium Pass

- Premium passholders receive bonus missions every day, as defined by your team
  - **For the purposes of the Level Up exercise, premium players will receive one bonus mission every day**

- These additional missions are visible to everyone, but are only completable by premium passholders. This means that paying players will have extra opportunities to earn XP, making it easier for them to complete the season (a selling point of the premium pass)

Mission Categories

Deriving mission categories from the different activities in your game is an easy way to ensure that you are assigning players a variety of tasks. Here are some ideas:

- **Exploration**: traveling a required distance, traveling to landmarks, finding secret areas
- **Collection**: adding, trading, or leveling up items in a collection
- **Combat**: fighting other players or NPCs
- **Social**: throwing a party, joining a team, participating in a multiplayer minigame
- **Customization**: modifying an avatar, pet, or home
- **Survival**: gathering supplies, setting traps, surviving to the end of the match

Your game's categories may look very different, depending on the systems that you have available. Try to keep them broad enough to encompass multiple activities, and aim for at least three categories.

Mission Difficulty

When presenting players with multiple missions and a time limit for completing them, it's important to consider the difficulty of the tasks. Difficulty can come from the quantity required to complete a mission (*Eat 5 Berries* is easier than *Eat 25 Berries*) as well as the tasks themselves (combat is probably harder than driving a car).

Like categories, you can designate easy, medium and hard difficulties for tasks and use that information to provide players with an achievable set of missions for the season.

- **Easy**: very quick to complete
- **Medium**: the baseline difficulty
- **Hard**: takes more effort to complete

Difficulty designations also help you determine the appropriate amount of XP to award for completing each mission (harder missions should be more rewarding) as well as balance the overall difficulty of your tiers.

Remember, these missions are meant to be completed within a day, so don't overdo the difficulty. If players regularly fail to complete their missions, they will lose interest in the season pass feature.

Players probably also don't want to spend *all* of their playtime completing your objectives -- make sure that you leave them some time to play however they want, and to do the things that they already love to do in your game.

Example Missions

Below is a list of potential mission types and tasks chosen to illustrate the variety within a given category. *Difficulty* is a judgement call based on the relative ease of completing the task a single time. The difficulty increases from this baseline when the quantity (AMOUNT) increases.

It is not important to define what the quantity for each mission will be -- that will be done in a separate balance spreadsheet. The goal here is just to list as many mission types as you can think of.

Mission Category	Task	Difficulty	Notes
WORK	Earn {AMOUNT} dollars	Medium	Players must earn a required amount of money through jobs or other means
WORK	Complete {AMOUNT} jobs	Easy	Players can choose any job
WORK	Fulfill {AMOUNT} orders as a Barista	Hard	Basically the same mission as above, but for a specific job -- which makes it more difficult to complete
SOCIAL	Compete in {AMOUNT} races	Medium	If the activity requires other players, it's generally more difficult than solo tasks
SOCIAL	Throw or attend {AMOUNT} parties	Easy	This one doesn't require other players (no one has to show up to the party you throw) so it's a little easier

Surfacing

When adding any new system to your game, make sure that you're doing everything you can to surface it to your players -- to make it as easy as possible for them to discover the feature and engage with it.

Here are some common surfacing methods:
- Make your buttons for the feature highly visible (large, colorful)

- Make the timer for the event's duration highly visible, as well, to drive a sense of urgency
- Update your menu/HUD with graphics touting the current season's theme and rewards, or teasing the upcoming one
- Add a brief message or tutorial the first time a player logs in after the system goes live, letting them know what's changed
- Badge the button when there's an update that the player needs to know about
    - Add an icon over the button to draw players' attention
    - Let them know that they have new or completed missions, or tier rewards to collect
- Create an-world prize showcase
    - Although prizes for the season will be displayed in the seasons UI, it can be even more effective to show them in the world
    - If you have a lobby or other common area in your game, this is a great place to display rewards
    - Putting rewards in the world allows players to appreciate them even more, and be more motivated to complete the season

Asset Requests

Listing the assets that you know you'll need in order to ship the feature makes it much easier to scope how much time will be needed and allocate your resources appropriately. Make sure to break out each asset separately so that the entire scope of the work is clear.

It's not important at this stage to know what these items will look like, just to know what type of assets they are and how many you'll need.

Here are some assets that we've identified in this document:

- Evergreen - create them once and they're done:
    - Season UI screen
    - Missions screen
    - Icons for each mission type (list them!)

- New each season:
    - Final Tier 10 reward item
    - Themed marketing assets for each season
        - List both in-game banners and images for social media posts

Tech Requests

Likewise for tech requests, getting these down and getting agreement with the coder who will be working on the feature helps to define the scope of the work. There's a good chance that you'll discover something in development that you didn't account for here, but that's why you build buffer time into your release schedule!

As above, be specific and granular in these requests. Here are some identified in the document:

- Data hooks that track player progress in each mission
    - List the ones you'll need
- Implementation of seasons UI
- Implementation of season progress tracking

Future Updates

When designing a new system, it's necessary to think about how it will be supported and improved in the future. You're putting a lot of effort into developing it, so you want it to remain relevant and exciting for players long term! Here are a couple of ideas:

1. **New missions**: When you add a new feature to your game, add new missions that make use of it
    a. This introduces fresh missions into your game, increasing variety
    b. It also helps to get players into the new feature, surfacing it to them and rewarding them for engaging with it

2. **Cooperative missions**: Players form a team and work together, which each contributing toward the group's progress
    a. Adding a social component to a system is a good way to reinvigorate it
    b. Players feel social pressure to contribute
    c. It allows players to work together to complete a goal

3. **Catch-Up mechanic**: Players earn double XP in the final week of the season, so that players who are behind have the opportunity to catch up
    a. This is a goodwill feature that shows your players that you understand the challenge of finishing the season in time, and that you want them to be successful

4. **Weekly missions**: Once a week, players receive a batch of missions in addition to their dailies. These missions give high-achieving players more to do throughout the season, and something to look forward to each week

a. Weekly missions drop on the same day every week, to encourage players to log in that day
b. These missions are much more difficult, requiring multiple sessions of effort to complete
c. They award more XP than dailies, due to their difficulty
d. Unlike dailies, players do *not* lose progress on the previous week's missions when the new ones unlock. They can keep grinding on those missions all season long
e. Players who come into the season late have access to all missions from the previous weeks