

# Using Storytelling and Gamification to Enhance the Learning Experience of Accounting and Other Business Topics

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As teachers and professors of accounting and other business topics, we always struggle with making these subjects interesting and more relevant to students. Students who have just finished their high school education join business schools, wanting to specialize in business, marketing, or HR because of what they hear from relatives and friends. When it comes to their first course in fundamentals of accounting, they either expect it to be only about numbers like mathematics, fear it, or don't even know what to expect.

Thus, the challenge is how to make students better understand accounting, whilst making the classroom more interactive and fun, and how to make learning and teaching accounting a joyful experience for everyone. Gamification has emerged as an innovative pedagogical approach in teaching practices. In accounting, discipline is often perceived as technical and abstract, gamification helps make concepts more accessible and tangible ([Moncada & Moncada, 2014](#); [Carenys & Moya, 2016](#); [Silva et al., 2019](#); [Butler et al., 2019](#); [James et al., 2024](#)).

## With Alice, It's a piece of cake

Françoise Ferré along with Gwenaëlle Lairer, Hebattallah Aboulmaaty and a team of professors at ESSCA School of Management in France, came up with the idea of creating a character: Alice. Alice is passionate about baking. She creates her own company, "Crazy Cookie," which works with local restaurants. She also organizes birthday snacks for the children of her town. By following Alice in the creation of her

business, students will discover and learn about the mechanisms of accounting and other useful business topics.

The purpose of this project is to combine the benefits of multimodal learning tools, storytelling, and gamification to make accounting more understandable and closer to the students' own experiences.

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Starting 2019 - Ongoing | Books "With Alice, it's a piece of cake": Accounting & many other business topics (in French) |
| Starting 2019 - Ongoing | One or two youtube videos per published book (in French)                                      |
| 2021                    | Game application "Accounting & Information system, it's a piece of cake" (in French)          |
| 2025                    | Game application "Accounting with Alice" (in English)                                         |
| 2026                    | Book "Accounting with Alice, it's a piece of cake" (e-book)                                   |

**Table 1: "With Alice, it's a piece of cake" project's timeline**

The first steps of this project were a series of books started in 2019 and ongoing. Each chapter starts with a story about Alice, the steps of creating her business, and the different situations and challenges she faces. The topic is explained and related to the situation narrated. This is followed by a course summary and a reminder of the main rules. Finally, there is a practice time with MCQs to ensure the basic concepts are grasped and a practice exercise for application. So far, 11 books have been published (in French) and the series is still ongoing.

The second step, parallel to the books, was to create videos that, like the books, combine the benefits of storytelling and academic content in a different tool. So far, 14 videos have been created, freely available on YouTube with 325,000 views.

The most recent step of this project, driven by the need to take it to another level, includes some gamification in Alice's adventures. Earlier, some basic gaming attempts were introduced in introductory accounting classes with some paper games or Microsoft accounting tools. The team finally decided to develop a game application (in French) freely available on [Android](#) and [Apple](#). "Compta & SI c'est du gâteau" or "Accounting and Information System, it's a piece of cake" is an application including a series of games about some basic accounting topics, for example distinguishing between accounting elements, double-entry accounting, income and cash flows, and other related topics. In each game, Alice is there, asking for help. Visual elements from her baking world are used, and students practice accounting topics within Alice's universe.

### **Alice in classroom action**

All of these tools have been introduced to first level business students during the principles of accounting, management control and financial analysis classes. For academic purposes, surveys have been conducted before and after the courses over two academic years. Students agreed that watching the educational videos and using the game application is fun. When it comes to learning accounting, they prefer using digital tools. It helps them approach concepts differently. For discovering new topics and preparing for exams, they still prefer more conventional teaching and educational content like course documents or learning management systems (Moodle, Blackboard...).

### **Using videos and game applications in an accounting course**

This experience raises many questions about the potential of using alternative learning tools such as videos and game applications in learning accounting. Students confirmed the potential benefits of using these tools and how storytelling enhances their understanding of difficult concepts. Though, the ongoing question is, what really attracts the students: is it the storytelling aspect, the gamification aspect, the digital aspect or probably a combination of all these points?

Another issue is the role which should be adopted by the teacher in such learning experiences. So far, the use of these tools was left optional to the students. How should the teacher assist students? Should the use of these tools be mandatory? Should they be used in classroom? Or should its use be autonomously during or outside the classroom hours?

These are questions that call for a continuous debate between academics and game practitioners. Finally, we recall a moment in one of the interviews in which a student highlighted that whilst it is good to play to learn “When I play, I want really to PLAY, I want the challenge, I want to feel the adrenaline...” For this, and for the next steps of this project, we just finished an international version (IFRS) of the game application (in English). “Accounting with Alice” is a game application now available on Appstore and Playstore. In this version, we enhance the gamification aspects through a more complex points system, challenges, badges and ranking. We are also working on an English edition of the book “Accounting with Alice, it’s a piece of cake” to be published in 2026.

We will be delighted to share with you further details about this project as well as our experience using the game applications. Feel free to reach out for us for future collaboration or for running joint trials.

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