

Here are general comments that apply to many of the topics submitted for assignment 4. I did not always write these in the comments for specific projects, so please scan this for those that apply in your case.

- Many project areas have tens or even hundreds of competitors and it was not possible to differentiate the proposed app from the crowd. That is not a strong starting point. Just from the app description the reader should feel as though s/he wants to try the app and that it has something special.
- Stating your app is “fun” or “the best” in a description is not convincing. In fact, it reduces credibility. Saying you are the “the first” is especially not helpful, because people won’t care about that if there is a better alternative.
- Please pick one project category and do it well. Some people selected multiple categories but it is unlikely you can hit more than one and do them well, given how they are described.
- The Get Moving category should target people who are couch potatoes, not people who are already athletes. Many of the apps are only going to attract people who are already runners.
- The Exergame category should get someone sweating. It should be intense exercise for an extended period of time.
- Too many ideas are too much like fitness tracker applications. There are a few good ones and many bad ones, but even the good ones are not that fun to use and most people just use them for short periods of time before they abandon them. You want to design something that does not have that problem.
- If you are using GPS to show the city map, then you should really think about ways to make the game more interesting by exploiting the real-world city as well. This is not always possible, but in some ideas it is.
- For those targeting Get Moving, answer this question: Will your app get people out of the chair to start walking/running? Is it THAT good? (It better be really good!) Or is it going to be an add-on for when people are walking/running already? Most ideas proposed are the latter.
- Many of you have text like this in your descriptions: “unique and fun way”. It’s great to say this, but I (and your downloaders) won’t believe it until they see why. Saying it does not make it true! PROVE it with a great design that is obviously innovative and engaging.
- Remember that most people in the U.S. use cars as their main mode of transport. Also remember that when most people go for walks for exercise they will be somewhere where they may have limited choices about where to go (e.g., they may be walking in a mall, walking on a path through the woods, etc.). Your game will have a much more limited audience if you assume everyone lives in downtown Boston. Most parts of the U.S. don’t look like Boston.
- Specify the age of your target users. It is difficult to create an app that will be equally appealing for young children, teens, college students, and older adults. Pick one group and design for them and do it well. Don’t design a spork.
- Get Moving is actually one of the harder categories, but many people have targeted it. If you have been encouraged to find another topic, consider a different category.

- Virtual characters (e.g., tomagochi) are popular to propose but VERY difficult to pull off. The apps are too dependent on cuteness and not dependent enough on gameplay that people actually want to do. Unless you are an artist and really good at making incredibly cute characters, you should be wary of these ideas. Also, keep in mind that these virtual creatures might be fun for a few days, but the novelty can wear off fast. It can become a responsibility/burden rather than an app that solves a real problem and reduces burden.
- “Very” isn’t a very powerful word. Remove it from all of your text.
- Don’t just tack real-world behaviors on to games where it doesn’t actually improve the game! You don’t want to “force” someone to do a physical activity.
- The reason that people don’t run/walk is usually not because those activities are “boring” and giving them a game is going to make them do them. What are the REAL barriers to running/walking?
- “Given his age, weight and sex that will be entered before the game actually starts, the app will recommend how many miles he needs to run every day.” This is difficult to do well. Instead, consider keeping the user in control. Some people are proposing that the app will infer/guess at things that would be difficult for the app to do well. So don’t do it. Let the user do it. Have the app do what it can do well!
- For a game that runs when someone does a small errand, I think you need to have it running the background and decide when to prompt to play. People will not remember to play if they must play many times during the day in short bursts. Try to detect the times they need to play and (gently) remind them.
- Just mixing two games doesn’t necessarily make them better. (E.g., it could make game play harder, therefore making the game less fun) You need to articulate exactly why one game captures properties the other does not, and why combining them creates a better experience.
- Location games MUST deal with noise in the sensing. Almost nobody has built clever strategies for dealing with noise into their ideas (yet).
- Location-based games that use real-time positioning and must run for long periods of time are difficult to test. Keep that in mind if you pick them, because if you can’t test them well, then when we test them we are more likely to get bugs. Robustness is critical for the final project.
- Don’t underestimate the difficulty of dealing with noisy sensing. (E.g, in physical movement, if you are using GPS, you would need reasonable distances before you will be sure someone has moved in a particular direction.)
- Remember that even though people say they want to be healthy, many people will take very little action to make sure that this is true, even something you might say would be extremely easy. People need incentivizing.
- Avoid saying this: “Super easy to use” or something similar. Describe why it is easy rather than telling us it is easy. Let us infer that it is easy from the design.
- Using a new sensor might seem innovative to YOU, but unless it provides an obvious benefit to the user, the user might not see it that way versus some other app. Just because you use sensing doesn’t mean your app is better than a competitor.

- Using “???” or “!!” does not increase your credibility. Typos also reduce it. Well written English is your friend in describing your app.
- An app that tells people something they already know (e.g., it’s loud, cold, etc.) isn’t going to be of much real help. Your app must help people do something that they can’t do without the app!
- Does this sound like something that someone would do for fun or as punishment: “*encourages* sedentary adults to walk by *making* them play a word game” I’ve added the emphasis. Yikes! Entice, don’t prod.
- Forgetting is a big deal, even for people highly motivated. How can you help people not forget without being burdensome?
- Apps have no way to determine indoor movement and location from sensing. Only outdoors for longer distances can you get that, and even then it can be noisy.
- Many project descriptions are not in a format suitable for posting on the Play Store to advertise your apps. Clearly, succinctly describing your app with proper English is important to get people to try it.
- People are more busy than “lazy.” Don’t assume people are lazy, as many of you wrote.
- Do a small number of things very well and in an innovative way in your app. Many people are throwing in too many features but not focusing heavily enough on what is innovative and excellent.
- The fundamental problem/disincentive with running isn’t that it is boring, but that it is hard! Following that is the problem that extended running is time consuming and people are short on time.
- With all the walking/running apps, tuning the game so you get the right balance between challenge and reward (given the GPS errors) will be tricky. You need a plan for how you will do that.
- Someone wrote, “The app does not make assumptions about the person playing. He may be a student, employee or older adult.” Targeting is actually a good thing.
- “Requiring” (which appears in some descriptions) should be a word that makes you step back and think again. People can always circumvent this ... by cheating or, more likely, just using another app that doesn’t have that requirement. Your app should pull people into doing what you want them to do, not require it as an add-on to something that people really want to do.
- The age of your target audience is very important. Young children are not going to be out walking for 1-2 miles by themselves. They are going to stay in the home or in the yard. Older kids might go out on their own, but they are going to have quite different tastes in terms of maturity of an experience.