

**Duolingo solved this
once.**

**Then stopped
halfway.**

They moved the sign-up screen from before the first lesson to after it.
Roughly +20% DAU.

The principle underneath it: deliver value before you ask for
commitment.

It was applied to the account wall.

It was never applied to the questionnaire.

Six screens still stand in front of first value

How did you hear about us

Which language

What's your level

Why are you learning

What's your daily goal

Can we send notifications

► FIRST LESSON

If value-before-commitment was worth 20% DAU on the account wall, what is it worth on the six screens still in front of it?

Cutting them is not free

Each screen produces something that compounds.

1

Notification opt-in

Feeds a channel Duolingo has measured at
+5% DAU

2

Stated motivation

Powers the coaching copy that moved
+7.2% D14

3

Daily goal

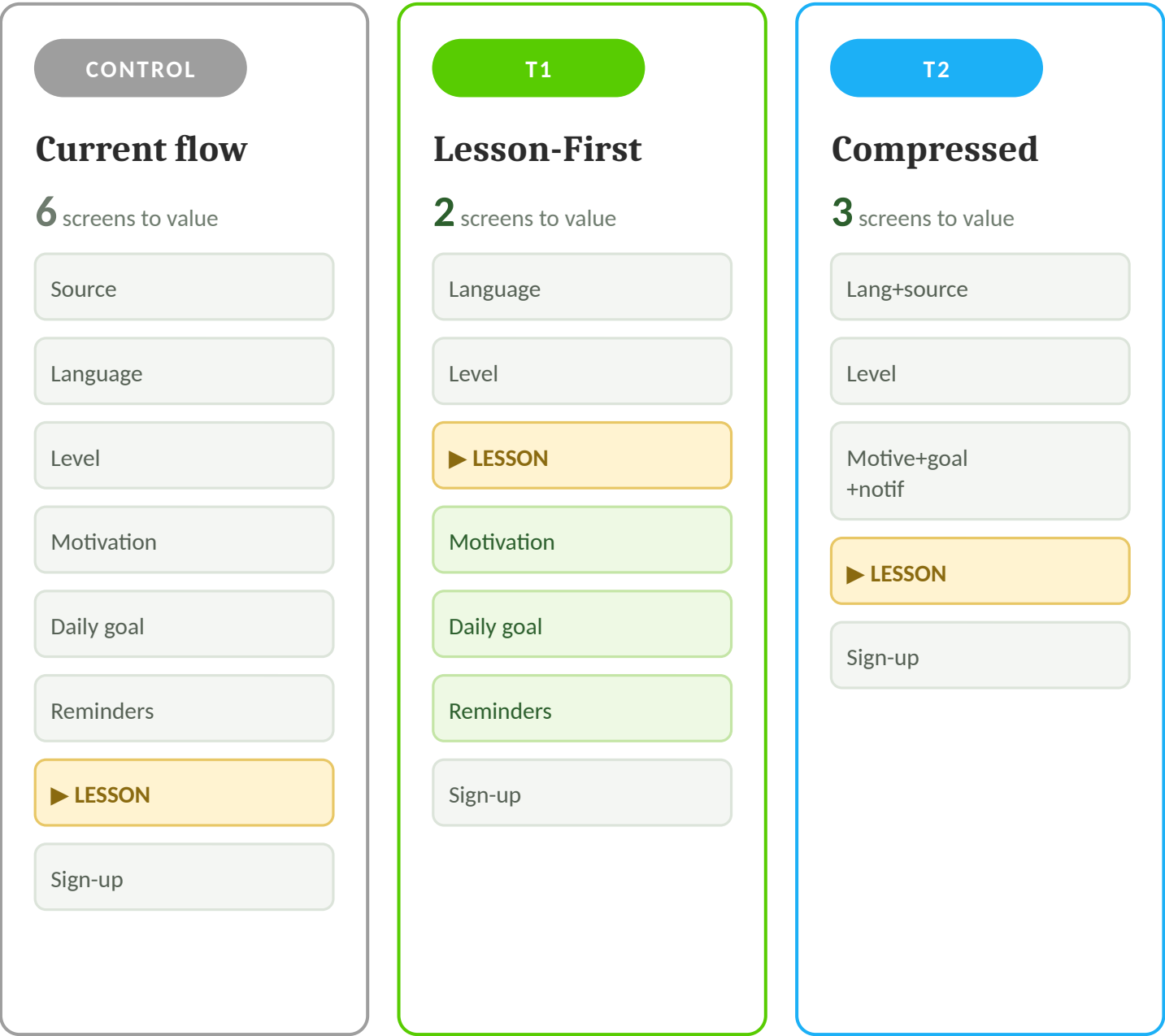
A commitment device — you can't fall short of a pace you never set.

Strip the intake and you may buy activation — and pay for it in retention infrastructure.

SO I DESIGNED THE TEST

Three arms

Equal allocation, new installs only.



In T1 the reminder prompt now protects a streak that exists — not a hypothetical one.

T2 is the one I'd fight for

Without it, a T1 win is unreadable. You can't tell whether the driver was sequence — or just fewer taps.

● T1 wins • T2 flat

The driver is SEQUENCE

The principle generalizes to every remaining pre-value ask in the product.

● T1 $\approx$ T2 • both win

The driver is SCREEN COUNT

Ship T2. Same lift, a fraction of the cost.

One of those answers is a principle. The other is a UI tweak.

Primary metric: D7 retention

✗ Not first-lesson completion

It rises in T1 by construction — you removed four screens standing in front of it. It would report a win for an experiment that did nothing.

✓ D7 retention

Far enough downstream that the change has to actually work. Close enough that the readout lands in three weeks, not three months.

Knowing which metric would lie to you is most of the job.

ONE MORE THING

**There's no real
data behind
any of this.**

I don't work at Duolingo and their funnel numbers aren't public, so every baseline is modelled and flagged as an assumption.

**The result was never the point.
The reasoning was.**

Full design doc — power analysis, guardrails,
pre-committed decision rules — in the comments.