# League of Legends Matches Are Getting Shorter, and Why That's Great

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It's not an unreasonable opinion to say that League of Legends games feel shorter as of late. However, I ask myself the question— are shorter games simply more efficient, or is there something else at play?

To answer the first question, yes. League of Legends matches have been becoming shorter since the start of the game. The why is the fun part of it, however.

Factors in Game Duration
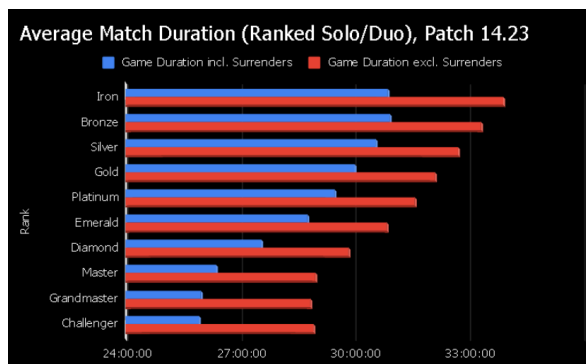
League of Legends games have become noticeably shorter over the years. In Season 5, the average game in Gold elo used to be 34:40, compared to 30:00 today. In Challenger, game length dropped from 31:00 all the way down to 25:54. These changes may seem small, but there's a very strong and stable correlation over millions of different matches towards lower game duration.

I argue that this is not due to players becoming better over the years, or a change in the strategies employed. This is an intentional effect of a number of small changes that have been happening as early as Season 2, based around the reforging of League of Legends' identity, and the transition of MOBAs into the 2010s and 2020s.
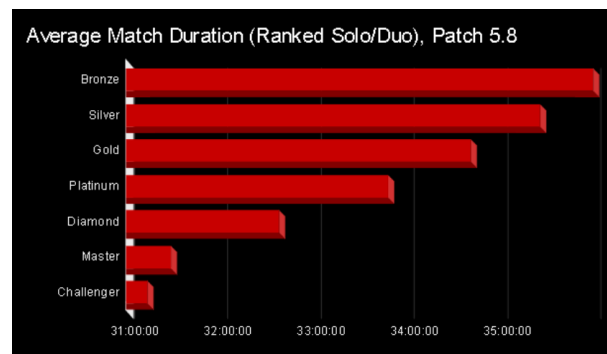

The reasons for this are a little unclear. One hypothesis is that more games end in surrender at higher elo. In the chart, you'll notice the difference between games with and without surrenders tends to get bigger. This matches up with the statistics on surrenders.

Gold and Platinum players tend to surrender the least on average, at 28.3% of games, and Challenger players tend to surrender the most, at 45.3%, almost half of their games.

This is an extremely steep and consistent increase. The reasons for this are pretty simple, though. Higher elo players make less mistakes, and thus, comebacks generally tend to become less and less likely as you climb the ranks.

Even when accounting for surrenders, though, we see that higher elo players still tend to have slightly shorter matches. It's the same reason for why comebacks are less likely to happen, though.

Players in higher ranks close out games faster and more decisively than those in the lower ranks. Objectives and towers tend to be taken earlier, and people spend more time farming and scaling, leading them to get their powerspikes sooner than later.

Games Surrendered vs Ranks (Ranked Solo/Duo), Patch 14.23
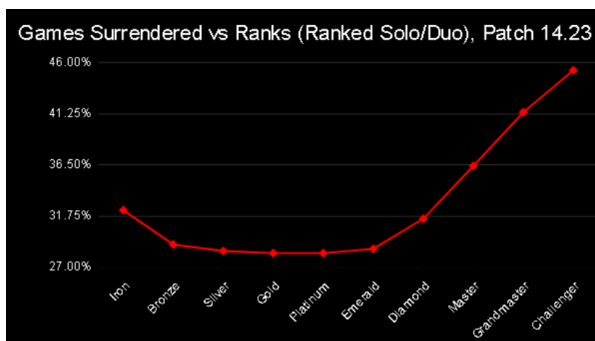
In general, trying to have shorter games is actually not bad advice, if you're trying to climb. Lower skill players struggling to close out games is exactly the reason why champions like Nasus and Kayle have an easier time in lower elo.

- **Composition and Team Strategies:** Naturally, having more picks in your comp that require a lot more gold or farm to function at top efficiency will lead to those champions trying to stretch the game longer.

  This doesn't necessarily mean that picking a scaling champion will lead to longer games, though. However, picking a strong early game champion that falls off hard, like Pantheon, Elise or Draven, or having a comp mostly composed of similar early-game picks, will lead to you either winning because you closed out the game quickly, or to you losing to a surrender.

  In summary, **choosing scaling champions doesn't seem to influence average game length, but choosing early game champions does.**

- **Taking Objectives:** The rule of thumb here is, the earlier you take an objective, be it a tower, dragon, grubs or baron, the better. This also extends to kills, as well.

  Statistically, the team who took first blood has a winrate of 57%. Taking the first dragon gives that team a 60% winrate. The team who takes first baron is at a polarizing 80% winrate. The first team who takes an inhibitor has an astounding 90% winrate.

  Teams that take the initiative on objectives earlier increase their chances to win sooner, leading to shorter games.

The main point to these changes, at the start, was to differentiate the game from DoTA. However, as these changes rolled out, it became clear that the player base simply preferred the faster gameplay. Shorter games, over time, became what League was known and played for in contrast with DoTA and other MOBAs.

Jungle Changes and Gold Income

Summoner's Rift has undergone a number of changes since its initial iteration. Let's start with some of the most basic changes: **the addition of more neutral monster camps**. Each

side of the map added the Wight camp in Season 3, which would eventually become the Gromp camp.

Having more monster camps presents more income for junglers, and later on, for any champion who might happen to be walking past the area where the camp spawns. Even though the Wight and Gromp were the camps worth the lowest gold in their respective times, going from 3 to 4 camps in each quadrant of the jungle meant a 25% increase in jungler income.

If we take into account that more gold is, generally speaking, more progress towards ending the game, just the bare addition of these two jungle camps would get junglers to scale 25% faster, and once the game hits mid-game, to progress that 25% faster, with the extra amount of gold on the map.

The second camp meant to make games faster were Rift Scuttlers, or just scuttles. It scales up very quickly in gold value throughout the game, starting at 55 gold and exceeding 80 gold by the 10 minute mark.

At the time of their introduction, the gold was actually higher, at 70 gold at level 1 and 100 gold at 10 minutes, another big increase to jungler income.

Scuttle Crabs became so valuable that they'd commonly serve as the first source of conflict between jungers, which paved the way for a trend of early game-centric junglers that would be able to snowball off of bullying the other jungler from both scuttles, and using the speed buff to gank and rotate around the map faster.

Rift Herald

The Rift Herald, in its earliest iteration, was the most obvious addition intended to make the game faster. Back in earlier versions of League of Legends, winning a midgame teamfight would often mean claiming a tower. If your side wins the same midgame teamfight and has the Rift Herald in tow, it's easy to claim two towers while the other team is reviving, sometimes three towers. It wasn't hard to see inhibitors falling prior to 20 minutes during Season 9 because of Rift Herald.

Elemental Dragons

The creation of elemental drakes created the opportunity to add additional bonuses to

champions that help to further accelerate winning teams further ahead. The Infernal Drakes are the best example of this, with their percentage bonus to attack damage (AD) and ability power (AP), and the amount of that bonus was increased even further in Season 9.

In their introduction, Infernal Drakes would grant a whopping 10% additional AP and AD for the first one, up to a maximum of 24% with three Infernal Drakes.

Other dragon types were useful in their own fashions too, whether it's the Mountain Drake making it easier to kill towers and Baron, or the Ocean Drake providing health and mana regen to keep pushes going longer, or the Cloud Drake for faster movement around the map. If everyone in the game is moving faster, well, that's the most basic way possible to have shorter games.

Elemental dragons also spawn faster than the previous drake, every 5 minutes as opposed to every 6 minutes, creating more opportunities to stack up these champion bonuses and making it more difficult for a losing team to stall out the game.

If a game stretches too far into the late game, the addition of the Elder Dragon provides another way for a leading team to polish off their opponents and close out the game.

The Elder Dragon + Baron combination into a push or team fight is designed to be almost impossible to stop; the days of CLG EU stalling out a game to 70 minutes with endless wave clear are long since dead and buried. It was created with the intention that a winning team could not be stalled out by another team with really great waveclear.

Baron Nashor Buff

The Baron buff itself was also changed, compared to the older seasons. It still grants 40 AD and AP, but it didn't always grant a buff to minions. The current Baron buff makes it very difficult to stop pushes, especially with cannon minions which can remain outside of tower range and continue to take potshots at structures. Clearing the buffed Baron minions is hard and risky, so it's far harder to stall out a Baron push than it used to be.

Changes to Minions

Minions themselves do more damage these days than they used to. After Season 9, cannon minions started appearing in every other wave after 15 minutes, and then on every wave after 25 minutes. This was another change that was very obviously meant to make minions more oppressive in the late-game, and generally make all waves push faster with less champion

interference. In other terms, it became easier to make progress towards a game-end state, with less intent from the players themselves.

Changes to the Map

The default map of the game, Summoner's Rift, also had quite a few iterations over the years. Some of the more recent ones have been added to create a bigger sense of asymmetry in the map, where one side will have a slight advantage in specific areas of the map, and a slight disadvantage in others. However, the most vital changes to the map happened in Season 5, with the introduction of jungle plants and new, neutral jungle camps, that gave more benefits than just gold to junglers and their laners.

The Speed Shrines that appear after killing the Rift Scuttlers are the most obvious example of a map change, but Blast Cones also generally made moving around the map easier. The net effect is the same thing that we've been seeing again and again: faster movement leads to shorter games. No one of these changes were huge on its own, but the net effect of so many small changes to the Rift is unmistakable.

Runes and Itemization

Items over the years have been moving towards being more gold efficient. Items have more stats in them, do more things, or have more utility for a lower amount of gold. 15 minutes today is considered "late" for building Rod of Ages, for example. The general rule in Season 2 and 3 for RoA was 20 minutes, though. It's even cheaper nowadays, to boot.

On top of that, runes have become a more important part of your early game, or of your entire game, even. Running a full AP rune page with the older rune system would result in 35 AP, which would be considered somewhat high back then.

The then-new Conqueror rune, however, translated 20% of damage against enemy champions into true damage. Electrocute would add 30-180 damage to trades. Even the non-keystone runes had, and still have, a lot of power built into them.

Having so many strong options in the different rune trees balances them out with each other, but that doesn't offset the total increase in champion power level for the wider game.

Skillshots, Mana and Recalling

Whereas in classic League of Legends there was a real need to manage health and mana as resources, the current version of the game rarely puts players in a situation where players find themselves out of either, unless they've

committed a mistake.

As time went on, more and more abilities became skillshots— abilities you need to aim with an indicator— rather than targeted abilities. Players found it fun to express their mechanical skill in aiming and dodging skillshots, and many new champions found their identity on having incredibly high damage and safety, at the cost of all their abilities being skillshots.


The change was gradual, starting all the way back in 2012, with the incredibly good reception of champions like Ahri, Ziggs and Nautilus, who had incredibly consistent value, if they were able to land their abilities. Then it progressed onto 2013-2014, when we started seeing champions whose entire kits revolved around hitting skillshots, something the game hadn't seen so far, outside of exceptions like Blitzcrank.

These two things, the increase of both health and mana regeneration, and the increase of skillshot abilities in the game, are interconnected by design. They are there because players found them fun.

Abilities, by nature, already were gated by cooldowns since the start of the game, but the existence of Recalling as a game mechanic meant that, compared to DotA, it would be far easier to squeeze out as much value as you can out of your abilities while in lane, to get yourself in a state where you can recall at a low cost.
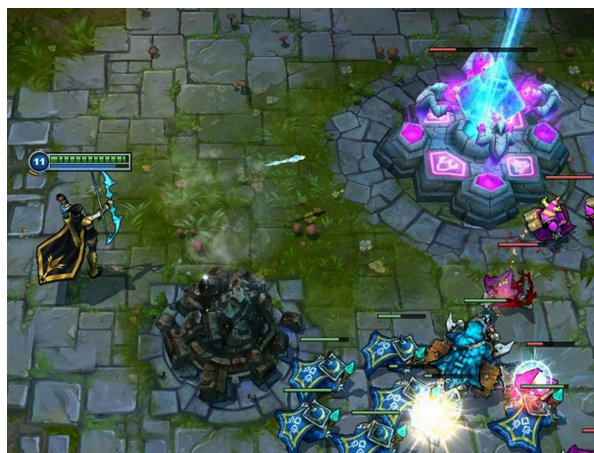

In-game, people usually call these "cheat recalls". They're not new in the slightest, and in fact, have been an intended emergent mechanic since day one.

However, mana regeneration was intended to prevent this from being too hard to play against. With time, waiting for an opponent's cooldowns and striking while they're out of abilities simply became more fun than waiting for them to run out of mana, then pathetically running them down the lane and killing them.

It was **more interactive**, **more dynamic** and **better received by players** to focus on cooldowns and hitting abilities, rather than focusing on resource management.

This would eventually become how Riot Games would find the "in" they needed to finally distinguish League of Legends from DotA. Starting in 2011 and 2012, the main thing drawing in new players away from DotA and into League of Legends would be this more dynamic and arcade-y gameplay style, compared to DotA's slower and more measured rate of play.
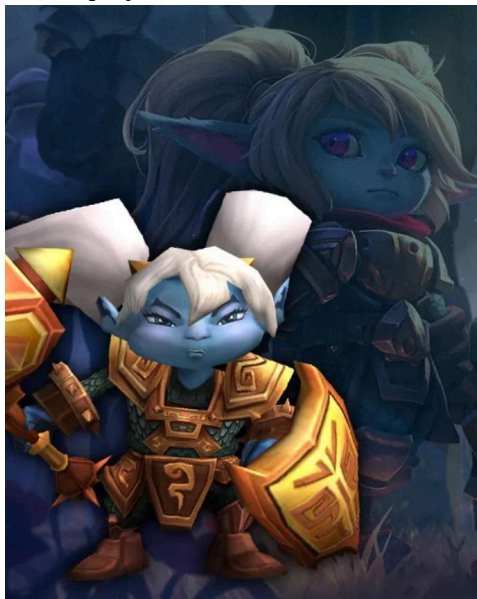

So, let's zip back all the way to 2025.

Mana regeneration is at a point where abilities that reward you with mana are a rare commodity. There's simply more sustain in the game in general, removing the need for "healbot" supports like Soraka and Sona, or the lane strength of champions that were designed around out-sustaining your opponent, such as Vladimir.

Champions generally have higher base health and mana regen than previous seasons. Potions are cheaper and more accessible, runes and items now grant more regen or lifesteal, jungle pets grant all junglers high sustain, Ocean drakes grant sustain, and then you've got honeyfruits in the jungle and.. you get the picture.

Being low on health or mana is no longer an intended consequence of your champion's kit, it's direct evidence of your own mistakes. If you're playing the game right, and you're not making a ton of mistakes, you shouldn't find yourself out of mana or low on health too often.
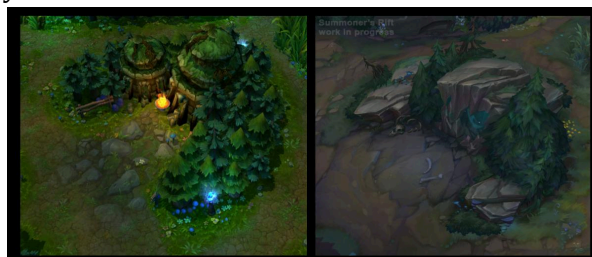
Mana costs are also lower across the board. Blitzcrank was somewhat infamous for only being able to use his Rocket Grab twice before he ran himself out of mana back when he was released, and many players would open with a Sapphire Crystal for higher max mana because his base mana was so low. Nowadays, pretty much everybody gets a few tries at hitting their abilities. Mana problems are relative in modern League of Legends. You may be low on mana in lane because your current opponent has more efficient uses for their mana (or uses no mana at all), but you may be considered mana efficient in an entirely different matchup. Mana problems only arise when you are unable to match your opponent's waveclear, rather than from your champion doing what they're supposed to do.

The general intention of these changes is pretty solid, though. They haven't made mana or health, or even recall timers, completely irrelevant. However, time spent recalling and walking back to lane is time you spend doing basically nothing. If you need to recall several

times before level 6 for mana or health, naturally this is going to lead to games being longer.

The changes to mana and health are not only intended to make the game **feel** faster and more skill-expressive, but also succeeds in cutting down game length, and gametime you spend doing basically nothing.

Why Games Will Continue to Become Shorter

Although explaining how League of Legends became a faster game over the years takes a bit of history-reading, explaining why it became a faster game takes one sentence:

It makes more money, and players find it fun.

Simpler games that take less time to pick up simply make more revenue than otherwise harder games, and it is specifically this style of faster gameplay that allowed Riot Games to rake in billions (yes, with a b!) ever since these changes dramatically accelerated in 2017.

Regardless, it doesn't seem like many players complained at the time that games were too short. If anything, some of these changes were some of the most heavily supported by the

community. Nobody these days would dream to suggest older dragons that would just give your team 200 gold for killing it, or removing rift scuttles.
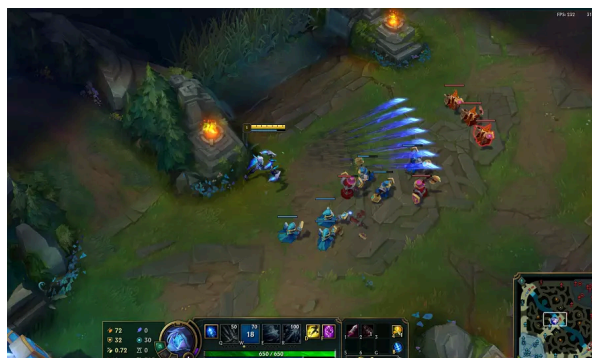
More than pushing for shorter games, these changes also pushed players to have more things to do during all stages of the game.

The Drawbacks: FF15, go next

The sad drawback of these changes is one that is too fresh on the mind. Surrendering has become more and more common over the years. With there being more things to grab on the map earlier in the game, snowballing became more common. It's not rare to look at the map 10 minutes in and realize you have no control over anything. No dragons, no grubs, no winning lanes. With how important objectives have become, it becomes obvious that you have very little chance of winning the game, at earlier and earlier stages of the match.

The development team noticed this, adding the capability of being able to surrender the match 15 minutes in, if your entire team wishes to.

This leads to a culture of "ff15, go next". If you're not at a strong spot 5 minutes in, just surrender.

While it's extremely annoying to see your teammates give up after losing one kill or one dragon in an early fight, then tune out and play with one eye closed for the rest of the game because of it, they might not be exactly wrong.


As we've seen before, the team who gets the first kill is 10% more likely to win, statistically.

It may seem obvious that doing well early leads to you being more likely to win the game, but the numbers can be extremely polarizing. Regardless, that's no reason for you to run that 40% chance to win into a 0% chance to win. Go for the mental diff, and understand that the person trying to surrender might not be having the best day right now. It's your chance to mute them and force them to break their losing streak.

Why Games *Should* Be Shorter

League of Legends gameplay, as a whole, ultimately does not suffer from being shorter.

Old League of Legends was tedious, and anyone who was around back in the early days can testify to its problems. Riot hated the concept of support champions when they first emerged and resisted making gameplay changes to accommodate them, thus resulting in long months where 0 CS supports were forced to make due with gold/10 items and function as wardbots with little to no gold to spend. There was no way to queue up for specific roles, and in fact Riot deliberately fought against the concept of having roles at all long after it was obvious from competitive play that they were an inherent part of the gameplay.
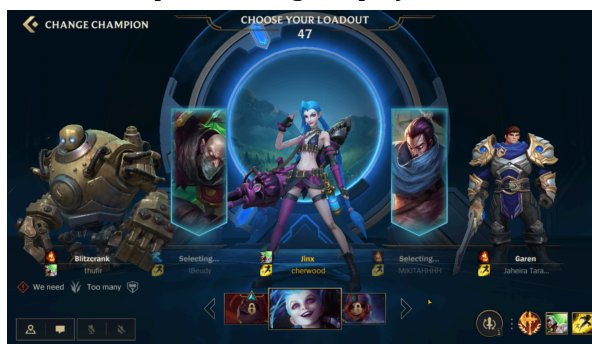
The few nostalgia private servers for older versions of League that have come out over the years have mostly failed. The truth is, although the art style and gameplay is nostalgic, the state of the meta was just not very good. League of Legends is an entirely different game nowadays. **It's not better or worse. It's faster, which means it's simply different.**