Introduction

Data is the basis of information system. Without data there is no system, but data must be fed in correct way so that the information produced must be in a format acceptable to the user. So the form is a tool that provide informational output to system that goes to people.

What is a form?

Form, such as fee collection form in a college, purchase order form are primary carriers of data. They are the user request for some action. Using forms, you do the following:

-Obtain information most efficiently.

-Disseminate information easily.

-Store information effectively and economically.

Meaning of forms designing

A form designing means deciding the contents and layout of forms for the purpose of collecting and processing the required information economically and efficiently.

Objectives of Good Form Design

A good form design is necessary to ensure the following −

- To keep the screen simple by giving proper sequence, information, and clear captions.
- To meet the intended purpose by using appropriate forms.
- To ensure the completion of form with accuracy.
- To keep the forms attractive by using icons, inverse video, or blinking cursors etc.
- To facilitate navigation.

Classification of forms:

A printed form is generally classified by what it does in the system. There are three primary classifications

1. Action form: This type of form requests the user to do something.

Example: application form, purchase orders.

2. Memory form: This form is a record of historical data that remains in a file, is used for reference, and serves as control on key details. **Example:** Inventory records, purchase records

3. Report form: This form guides supervisors and other administrators in the activities. It provides data on a project or a job.

Example: profit and loss statements, sales analysis report

Requirements of form design:

Form design follows analyzing forms. Since the purpose of a form is to communicate effectively through forms design, there are several major requirements.

1. Identification and wording: The form title must clearly identify its purpose. Columns and rows should be labeled to avoid confusion. The form should also be identified by firm name or code number to make it easy to reorder.

2. Maximum readability and use: The form must be easy to use and fill out. It should be legible, intelligible and uncomplicated. Ample writing space must be provided for inserting data.

3. Physical factors: The forms composition, color, layout and paper stock should lend themselves to easy reading. Pages should be numbered when multipage reports are being generated for the user.

4. Order of data items: The data requested should reflect a logical sequence. Related data should be in adjacent positions. Data copied from source documents should be in the same sequence on both forms.

5. Ease of data entry: If used for data entry, the form should have field positions indicated under each column of data and should have some indication of where decimal points are.

6. Size and arrangement: The form must be easily stored and filed. It should provide for signatures. Important items must be in a prominent action on the form.

7. Use of instructions: The instructions that accompany a form should clearly show how it is used and handled.

8. Efficiency considerations: The form must be cost effective. This means eliminating unnecessary data and facilitating reading lines across the form.

Types of Forms

1. **Flat Forms**

- It is a single copy form prepared manually or by a machine and printed on a paper. For additional copies of the original, carbon papers are inserted between copies.
- It is a simplest and inexpensive form to design, print, and reproduce, which uses less volume.

2. **Unit Set/Snap out Forms**

- These are papers with one-time carbons interleaved into unit sets for either handwritten or machine use.

- Carbons may be either blue or black, standard grade medium intensity. Generally, blue carbons are best for handwritten forms while black carbons are best for machine use.

3. Continuous strip/Fanfold Forms

- These are multiple unit forms joined in a continuous strip with perforations between each pair of forms.
- It is a less expensive method for large volume use.

4. No Carbon Required (NCR) Paper

- They use carbonless papers which have two chemical coatings (capsules), one on the face and the other on the back of a sheet of paper.
- When pressure is applied, the two capsules interact and create an image.

Layout Consideration

When a form is designed, a list is prepared of all the items to be included on the form and the maximum space to be reserved. The list should be checked by the form user to make sure it has the required details.

1. Form title and number: The first consideration in forms design is a brief, descriptive title that tells what the form is and what it does. Since we read from left to right and from top to bottom, the upper left corner of the form is an appropriate place for a title on forms that go outside the organization, the title is placed in the center at the top of the form.

2. Data classification and zoning: List all the items that must be present in the form and classify them into local groupings. Then data is placed in the appropriate zones. Thus

3. Rules and captions: In designing forms, use rules (lines) to guide the human eye to read and write data groups.

A caption is similar to a column heading. It specifies what information to write in the space provided. Rules and captions go together.

Rules guide and separate where as captions guide and instruct. Since a caption is used to guide, one or two different sizes of captions are usually used.

A form is designed with a combination of rules and captions. Rules can also be used to make boxes in which the user places data. The caption tells the user what information goes in a particular position.

4. Box design: Whenever possible, it is advisable to design the form using the box style rule, with captions in the upper left corner.

5. Size and shape of entry spaces*:* In a form there must be sufficient space to allow for data capture. This kind of data will determine shape.

6. Use of Ballot box and check off designs: Using ballot or check off boxes for questions that can be answered by yes or no can reduce the amount of space for required writing.

7. Form instructions: A well-designed form with clearly stated captions should be self-instructing. A form becomes self-instructing by means of clearly stated captions and brief, procedural instructions.