

User Personas

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What are User Personas?

Personas are fictional characters designers use to reflect user types, pinpointing who they are and what they do with products in relevant contexts. Designers create personas from user data, to *understand* user characteristics, needs, goals, etc. and gain valuable *insights* into user journeys, and later, test prototypes.

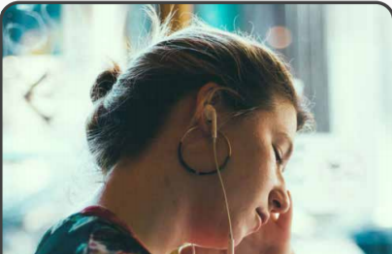


Learn how using Personas means better designs.

Personas Are More Than “People”

Personas are distilled essences of real users. With personas, we build empathy with target users, focus on their world, share insights/knowledge with other stakeholders to gain consensus, make defensible decisions reflecting the persona's/user group's exact needs, and gauge our designs' effectiveness through their eyes. Crucially, we create personas from *observations* about real users, not faceless masses – mapping users' needs to a design's functionality demands clearly defining needs *and* users. We shape personas iteratively. In dividing users into

manageable groups, we represent each with a typical “embodiment” – a persona. For instance, “Amy” represents a user group—18-year-old females adapting to college life—for an app helping students budget properly. With Amy, we see how our app helps these users in their day-to-day activities. For context, Amy’s just started banking online, lives in shared housing and works weekends. Her goal is saving money; her scenario – stretching \$70 to cover her week’s groceries. Using this goal-directed persona allows early testing of our design. Other approaches include the role-directed perspective—for addressing user groups’ needs, etc. in a *workplace*—and the engaging perspective, where we apply our *own* experiences in identifying with users as people, not stereotypes.



Rebecca

Casual audiophile

Age 26
Occupation Frontend developer
Education Bachelor degree
Marital status Single
Location Mountain View

Online locations Work and mobile
Computer(s) iPhone and MacBook Pro
Internet usage 8-9 hours

TECHNOPHOBIC TECH WIZ

CDs MUSIC STREAMING

CASUAL LISTENER HARDCORE GEEK

Music is essential to Rebecca's life. She is listening to tunes almost every second of her life, particularly while working.

Obstacles Rebecca faces:

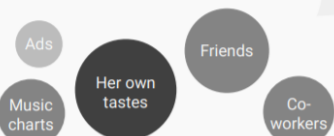
- Too busy to explore new music artists she might like
- Streaming music consumes a lot of data

How will Rebecca interact with Spotify?

Questions Rebecca will ask:

- How do I keep updated on new releases by artists I follow?
- How do I learn of new artists I haven't heard of?
- Can I listen to music in a data-efficient manner?
- How can I listen on both my MacBook and my iPhone?

Who influences Rebecca?



Rebecca's situation

Goals, motivations:

- Listen to great music to keep her productive at work
- Relax and unwind at the end of the day
- Superior music quality for full enjoyment of tracks
- Expand the circle of music artists she listens to

Key words
music, jazz, r&b, pop, artists, new releases, top charts, background music

Rebecca's story

Music is a big part of my life; I like to think that I always have a “background music” running in each scene of my life. I love working while listening to music; somehow, it gives me a lot of focus on my task.

I regularly talk to my co-workers about music and singers – that’s what we like to talk about over lunch. We’re constantly looking for new artists to inspire us and to expand our music library, but lately it seems a little tough to do that. Everything seems to have a “filter bubble” effect, and we keep listening to the same genres and artists.

I really enjoy finding new artists that match my subjective taste, and most of the times I get those from my close friends. I wish there were a way to find more music and artists without having to rely on the serendipity of life!



INTERACTION DESIGN FOUNDATION

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Creating Effective Personas

Personas should feature early in the design process. To create them, you:

1. Collect extensive data on target users.
2. Develop a hypothesis from the research, determining the qualities of and differences between users.
3. Ensure stakeholders agree on the hypothesis about the users.
4. Determine a number of personas – more than one per project, but focus *especially* on one.
5. Name and describe each persona in 1-2 pages, including:
 - A picture.
 - User’s values, interests, education, lifestyle, needs, attitudes, desires, limitations, goals and behavior *patterns*.
 - Extra details about the persona (e.g., interests) – anything to make him/her more real and relevant and help build empathy. A written story is better than bullet points.

6. Describe several situations/scenarios prompting the persona to use your product – put him/her in contexts with *problems* to overcome.
7. Include everyone involved in the project so they'll accept the persona (or advise revisions).
8. Send them the persona to use in their work.
9. Ensure everyone develops scenarios – exposing the persona optimally to potential use cases.
10. Make continuous adjustments – revisit the persona, adding new features; add required new personas; discard outdated personas.

“Personas are the single most powerful design tool that we use. They are the foundation for all subsequent goal-directed design. Personas allow us to see the scope and nature of the design problem... [They] are the bright light under which we do surgery.”

– Alan Cooper, Software designer, programmer and the “Father of Visual Basic”

Using personas helps stakeholders avoid designing for themselves or stretching generic users to fit designs. Personas also help in quick prototype testing. You can confirm a persona works well by ensuring “he”/“she”:

1. Stays in context – What specific points about his/her situation can you map to how he/she can use your product *now*?
2. Reflects a target user's *real* behavior patterns, attitudes, skillset, motivations and goals within the product's domain.
3. Has an end-goal – What does the user want to *achieve*? What features would help him/her do that *best*?
4. Faces realistic, relevant scenarios, written from the *persona's perspective*, to envision how users would find using the product to attain a particular goal.
5. Occupies a clear *setting* (a day-in-the-life-of approach exposing what he/she encounters in what environment).
6. Has visible pain points – What's the *hardest/most frustrating* aspect of his/her situation/context?

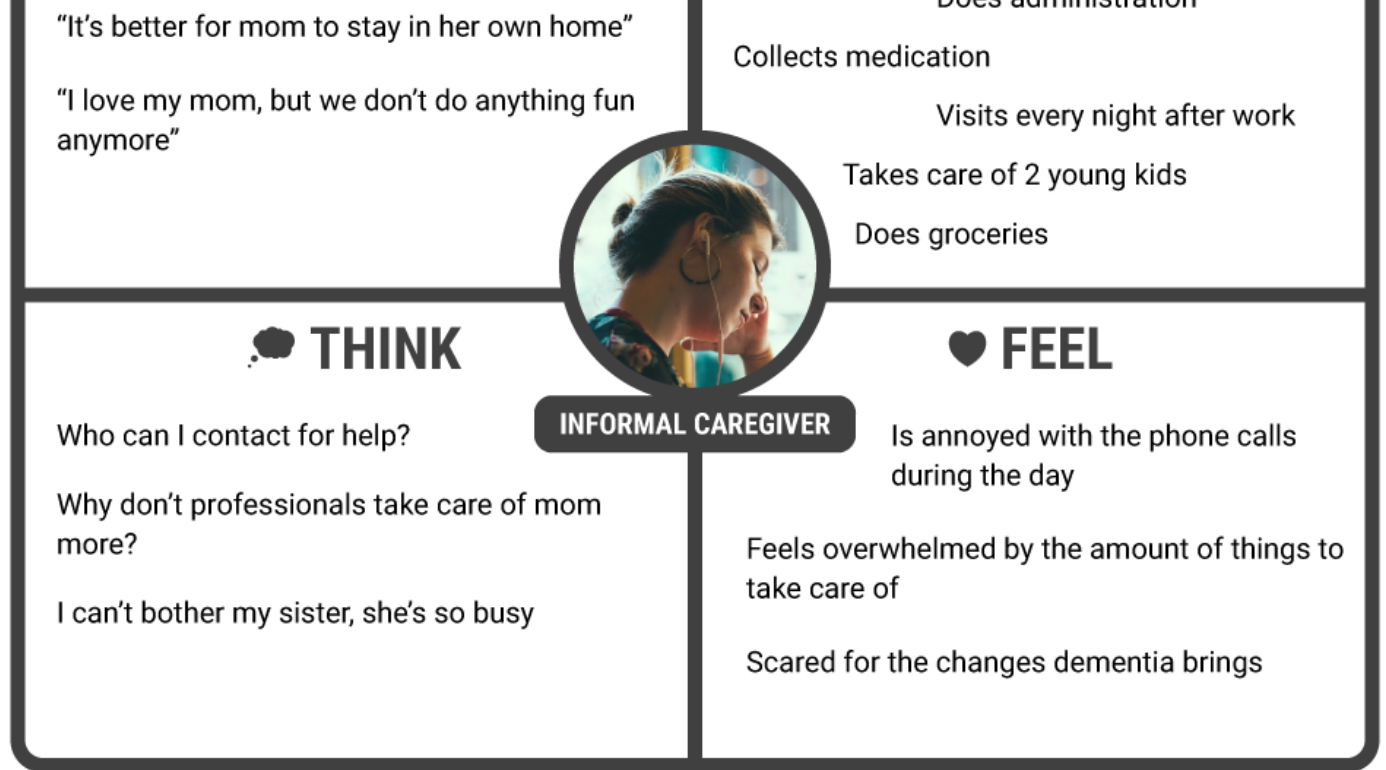
SAY

“I’m so stressed out, but I can’t take a break”

DO

Work in office 4 days a week

Does administration



Bring the Persona closer to home with an Empathy [Map](#).

Learn More about Personas

The IDF has courses examining Personas (e.g., Design Thinking, Gamification):

<https://www.interaction-design.org/courses>

The IDF's encyclopedia entry on Personas: [https://www.interaction-](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/personas)

[design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/personas](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/personas)

An in-depth look at Role-Directed Personas: <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/08/a-closer-look-at-personas-part-2/>

This detail-rich piece addresses accommodating plural Personas:

<http://whatusersdo.com/blog/design-product-two-different-personas/>

Learn how to avoid what can go wrong: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/why-personas-fail/>

LITERATURE ON USER PERSONAS

Here's the entire UX literature on **User Personas** by the Interaction Design Foundation, collated in one place:

FEATURED ARTICLE

Personas – A Simple Introduction

Personas are fictional characters, which you create based upon your research in order to represent the different user types that might use your service, product, site, or brand in a similar way. Creating personas will help you to understand your users' needs, experiences, behaviours and goals. Creating personas can help you step out of yourself. It can help you to recognise that different people have different needs and expectations, and it can also help you to identify with the user you're designing for. Personas make the design task at hand less complex, they guide your ideation processes, and they can help you to achieve the goal of creating a good user experience for your target user group.

As opposed to designing products, services, and solutions based upon the preferences of the design team, it has become standard practice within many human centred design disciplines to collate research and personify certain trends and patterns in the data as personas. Hence, personas do not describe real people, but you compose your personas based on real data collected from multiple individuals. Personas add the human touch to what would largely remain cold facts in your research. When you create persona profiles of typical or atypical (extreme) users, it will help you to understand patterns in your research, which synthesises the types of

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Ch 30: Personas

The persona method has developed from being a method for IT system development to being used in many other contexts, including development of products, marketing, planning of communication, and service design....

BOOK CHAPTER

Ch 8: Contextual Design

Contextual Design is a structured, well-defined user-centered design process that provides methods to collect data about users in the field, interpret and consolidate that data in a structured way, use the data to create and...

BOOK CHAPTER

User Personas for Mobile Design and Development

The user persona is one of the most valuable tools in UX work. It allows the entire design and development

team to keep a simple user story or user stories in mind as they work. This results in products that are better...

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7 UX Deliverables: What will I be making as a UX designer?

What does a UX designer actually produce? Here, we will explore the concept of UX Deliverables, a term that describes the outputs of a UX design process during its various stages. The deliverables produced by UX...

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Creating Personas from User Research Results

When you're in the beginning stages of your design project and you have just finished some highly informative interviews and observations in the context of your users, your head is full of impressions. You have a feeling fo...

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Ch 3: Chapter 3: Player

"In every real man a child is hidden that wants to play." — Friedrich Nietzsche 3.1 Know your PlayerKnowing your target audience is important to the success of any design endeavor, and gamification is no exception. It is...

BOOK CHAPTER

Methods to Help You Define Synthesise and Make Sense in Your Research

So you've got piles of data gathered from the inspiring empathy research activities you've undertaken, and you're blankly staring at the data thinking, "Where to from here ...?" and "What do I do with all this information?..."

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Improving Your Content Design Strategy using UX Ideas

Content design strategies are usually, though not always, based around enabling websites to convert visitors into customers. There are a million ways to develop kicking content and there's no tried and tested formula tha...

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