Worth it? Tools and Resources Review

slide 1: Introduction

Hi guys! Welcome to [Fundamentals of User Experience Design ], a Tuts+ premium course. I’m [Sarah Kahn] and today is the final Lesson of this series. We’re going to talk about some tools and resources that are helpful for getting started.

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Here’s what we’re going to cover:

* + Reference Books
  + Make some Friends
  + Conferences & Meetups
  + Software and other goodies
  + Assignment

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[Reference Books]

Here’s a quick list of some of the books that are on my shelf, that I find myself turning to again and again over time. There are tons and tons of awesome UX books out there, so don’t limit yourself! But consider checking out some of these. (I’ll provide a list of all this stuff in the lesson resources)

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[Reference books]

Jakob Nielsen is considered one of the grandfathers of the UX movement. He has years of research and lots of valuable information. Do be aware that he can be kind of overbearing. Take his information as information, not as absolute rules.

Steve Krug is a more lightweight beginner’s approach. It’ll help get you fired up to get started.

Tufte is more of the era of Nielsen- very academic, but solid, research-based information.

Finally, I tossed in Luke Wroblewski’s book on webforms because I feel like I end up designing a form almost every day, and they’re just so important.

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[online resources]

in addition to books, I just wanted to briefly highlight some good places to look online for articles and resources.

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[online resources]

* + *UX Magazine-* [*http://uxmag.com/*](http://uxmag.com/)
  + *UX Booth-* [*http://www.uxbooth.com/*](http://www.uxbooth.com/)
  + *Smashing Magazine UX Design-* [*http://uxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/*](http://uxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/)
  + *Web Design Tuts+-* [*http://webdesign.tutsplus.com/*](http://webdesign.tutsplus.com/)

there are a lot more than these out there, but these are just some to get you started.

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[make some friends]

I’ve found since I began doing UX that one of the best ways to keep current and learn what others are doing and how I can be doing better is to follow the great practitioners on social media.

To that end, follow these folks on twitter right now:

Jeffrey Zeldman, of world wide blue beanie fame. He’s a big advocate for web standards and usability in general.

Nick Finck is the principle UXer at Ubermind, and is a regular on the UX conference beat.

Luke W, of the web forms book that I just recommended, also a great UX tweeter and conference regular.

Jeff Gothelf is a Lean UX advocate and author of a book on Lean UX that’s coming out from O’REilly soon.

Jane Wells is the principle UXer for Wordpress.

There are hundreds and hundreds more, and I advocate following widely and reading what gets posted. You’ll be amazed at the wealth of great information that just gets passively filtered to you.

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[conferences and meetups]

it’s also important to check in at good conferences and meetups every once in awhile, to network and learn from other professionals.

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[conferences]

these are some of the best known ux conferences, but of course there are a lot more out there. i’m listing ones that i’ve been to in the US because i live in the US and I haven’t had the opportunity to attend any international conferences.

* + An Event Apart is put on by a list apart, and it’s really just fabulous. it’s not restricted to just ux, there are presentations on a variety of topics.
  + IxDA is put on by the interaction design association.
  + Agile UX agile ux is pretty new, so the jury’s still out.
  + IA Summit is put on by the information architecture institute
  + CHI or computer human interaction is an academic conference put on by the Association for Computing Machinery or ACM’s special interest group on computer human interaction. Which sounds like a mouthful. but you’ll get some solid information there if you ever have the opportunity.

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[meetups, the poor girl’s conference]

ok, I kid. meetups are awesome in their own rite, and fulfill a totally separate need from conferences, even if there is some overlap and a lot less cost involved.

meetups will vary widely depending on your location. here are some that are local to my part of the world, to give you an idea of what to look for.

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[software and other goodies]

and finally, some toys. i’m not as much into buying lots of software and hardware as some UXers are, mostly because i work for a young startup and we try to avoid expensive things. but that doesn’t mean there aren’t a lot of great things out there that could be useful to others. there’s no one right way, and if a tool helps, you should use it!

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[software]

some of the software i’ve liked enough to buy a subscription or license for includes

wireframing tools mockingbird and balsamiq,

and adobe fireworks,

remote testing tools usabilla, and trymyui, and skype premium

surveygizmo for conducting surveys. they’re more flexible than surveymonkey and allow you to develop custom themes and more advanced question logic.

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[other goodies]

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[ux sketchbook]

i couldn’t live without 2 things- my ux sketchbook,

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[ui stencils]

and my ui stencils. when you’re doing low fidelity wireframes, little details like this help things to look polished and professional, even if they aren’t complex or detailed.

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[optiflow pens]

i’ve also recently developed an addiction to optiflow pens, even though i used to be completely devoted to mechanical pencils.

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[brains behavior and design]

and last, but not least, the brains, behavior, and design toolkit. it’s free, and it’s basically a care package to help get you started from ground zero. And again, I’m attaching a list of urls in the lesson resources, so you’ll be able to find all of these things.

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[assignment]

For our last assignment, go shopping! It helps to undertake a new endeavor with a few shiny new toys. Treat yourself to a book or a new sketchpad to celebrate the beginning of your UX journey!

This is the last lesson in [Fundamentals of User Experience Design ]. I really do hope it’s been helpful, if you have any UX related questions or stories to share please feel free to look me up on twitter at @aarahkahak. This is [Sarah Kahn], and from all of us here at Tuts+, thanks for listening!