

# Forma UI design guidelines

### Keep it Simple



1. Help the user progress
2. Focus on what's important NOW
3. Make the next action clear

### Stay Consistent



1. Provide a sense of familiarity
2. Build trust with a strong brand
3. Cater to diverse needs

### Make it Delightful



1. Create an enjoyable experience
2. Make big impact with small details
3. Break complexity with great visualization

### Be Innovative



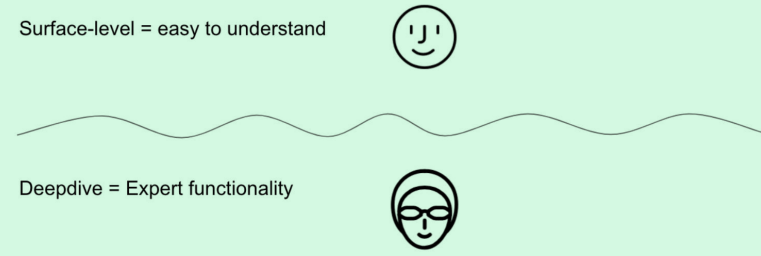
1. Think new
2. Adapt to change
3. Enable flexible workflows

## Keep it Simple



**1. Help the user progress**

Our users come in with different backgrounds and skillsets. In the beginning of their journey, some might need more time to understand the essentials. It's our job to make it simple for any users, and, as they gain more proficiency, help them gradually progress with Forma and dive deeper into more advanced workflows and capabilities.



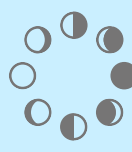
**2. Focus on what's important NOW**

Prioritize for the user so they easily understand what's important in the context of their current work, at a given moment in their journey. Instead of trying to show them all Forma is capable of at once, focus on what matters the most NOW to decrease cognitive load and motivate action. To make this happen, we aspire for aesthetic and minimalist design.

**3. Make the next action clear**

We would like Forma to feel doable without the need to do prep work or read extensive documentation. Through our designs, we would like to make it clear for the user what to do next or how to solve issues they might encounter. Prioritize clear over clever.

## Stay Consistent



**1. Provide a sense of familiarity**

Consistency is one of the most powerful usability principles. When consistency is present in your product, people can transfer knowledge to new contexts and complete tasks quickly without pain. This way they can focus on executing the task and not learning how the product UI works every time they switch the context. We use Weave design patterns and components when they exist and fits the use case and should contribute to develop Weave for modern SAAS products.

Using well-established interaction design conventions and patterns from other modern SAAS products helps our product become more usable, as the users will be familiar with the interactions from before. We should only reinvent the wheel when it is appropriate.

**2. Build trust with a strong brand**

The Autodesk brand is not just the company logo, name, or tagline. Rather, it's the positive feel a customer gets when interacting with the company's products. Providing a consistent, cohesive experience and visual profile is essential for establishing a strong brand that is recognized and trusted by customers. Becoming a globally used AEC platform raises our bar on how professional Forma should look and feel.

**3. Cater to diverse needs**

Keeping accessibility top of mind is a shared responsibility of everyone involved in building Forma. Making Forma accessible means enabling people of all abilities to interact with, understand, and navigate our product. It requires understanding the users' journeys and proactively anticipating their needs. This is where it is critically important to use consistent structure, design conventions and patterns to make Forma predictable and familiar.

## Make it Beautiful



**1. Create an enjoyable experience**

Research has shown that users perceive an interface to be more usable when they also believe it to be more aesthetically. This is known as the aesthetic-usability effect.

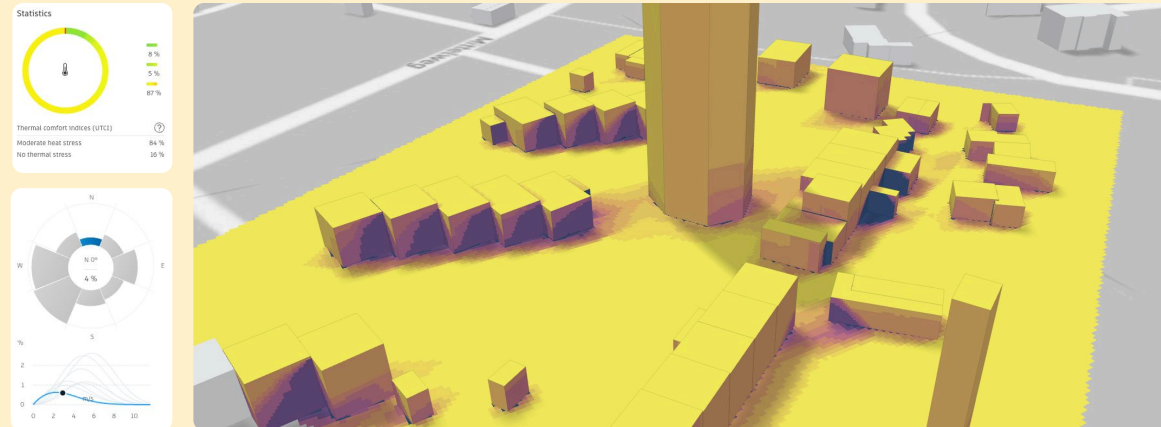
An aesthetically pleasing design creates a positive response in people's brains and leads them to believe the design actually works better. People are more tolerant of minor usability issues when the design of a product or service is aesthetically pleasing.

**2. Make big impact with small details**

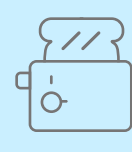
Spacing, white space, icons, animations, hover, press - when combined in a cohesive experience, all these little things matter. Micro interactions enhance how information is presented and add dynamism to otherwise static experiences. But, just like any other design element, they shouldn't ever overwhelm or distract people from the task at hand. What customers read is also as important to their experience as the interactions and visuals. Clear and meaningful labels and copy are an important part of an interface, too.

**3. Break complexity with great visualization**

Forma is a design platform, and, top of that, our product experience is associated with a lot of data. Our job is to declutter difficulty so our users don't have to spend time on it. We use visualization as a way to break complexity, reduce cognitive load, and help users "read" the data so that the outcome is always in the spotlight.



## Be Innovative



**1. Think new**

We are creating something totally new. We get inspired by other SaaS, Creative and Data Visualization tools, but we are paving the path for something new. Always be curious, test out new design ideas and patterns, but don't reinvent the wheel if it is not adding something to the concept!

**2. Adapt to change**

Technological development is always offering new opportunities for innovative design. But innovative design always develops in tandem with innovative technology, and can never be an end in itself.

Yes, good design is innovative, but it must first be user-focused. Start with the user experience, then work back to innovative technology. If you're designing a product to be innovative without worrying about the user experience, you're going to fail. Experience design should always be your driving force. Technology should be used to support that.

**3. Enable flexible workflows**

Our product is used by different users with various backgrounds and needs. Instead of forcing them through a predefined workflow, we strive for letting them do whatever they want at any time in the process. This way we ensure that the product can be used on every unique project, in a way that fits the users' individual needs and preferences at the time. Users should be able to create and evolve the project at any stage, and in their preferred workflow.

**The Forma interface is Minimalistic**

As VXD, our ultimate task is the art of subtraction. Instead of adding to the UI, our mission is to strip away unnecessary distractions and reduce cognitive load. We challenge every element in the UI, continuously testing its necessity to achieve a clean design that provides a calm and focused first impression. By showing content contextually, revealing ui bit by bit and meeting the user where they are in process, we can keep the overall expression of the interface calm and easy to scan.

**The Forma interface is friendly and human**

Minimalistic doesn't mean cold. Forma is delightful and enjoyable, giving our users a positive, personable experience within our product. Soft and rounded visual elements such as rounded corners, simple icons, and friendly illustrations help connect with the users and provide a welcoming feel. Approachable language in texts and prompts, avoiding technical jargon, provides a warm interaction. Personalization options that allow users to tailor their experience to their preferences also contribute to a personable experience.

*Note: We refrain from being overly whimsical and cute, but also avoid being too literal, complex, and corporate. We aim to find a middle ground where icons and illustrations are somewhat abstract and soft, yet always smart and professional.*

**The Forma interface is spacious**

Spacing plays a crucial role in communicating hierarchy and ensuring that users can easily navigate and understand the interface. Proper spacing creates visual separation between different elements, making it clear which items are related and which are distinct. It helps to guide the user's eyes through the content in a logical order, highlighting the most important elements and creating a sense of rhythm and balance. Without adequate spacing, a UI can appear cluttered and overwhelming, which can lead to confusion and a poor user experience.

**The Forma surface color is all-white (or black)**

While it can be tempting to introduce background colors to help divide content, we generally refrain from using light gray backgrounds. By minimizing these visual cues and opting for an all-white, simplistic interface, we ensure a clean, contemporary design that stands the test of time.

**The Forma interface uses color thoughtfully**

The main idea is to let the content on the canvas shine while keeping the panels as subtle as possible. So, we focus on adding color to the canvas and limit it in the panels to push them into the background. Of course, buttons and other important elements need color, but we try not to add extra colors unless they're absolutely necessary.