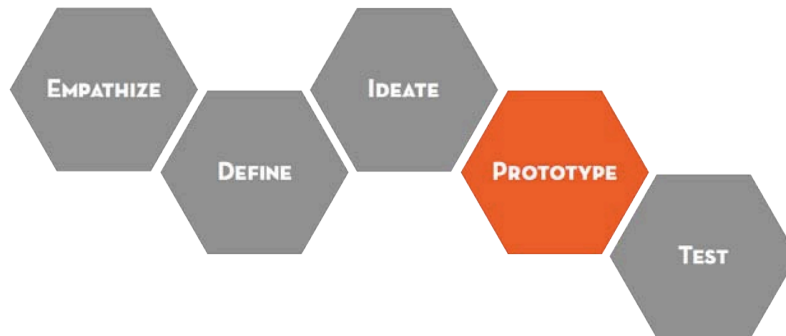# Prototype

WHAT is the prototype mode

Prototyping is getting ideas and explorations out of your head and into the physical world. A prototype can be *anything* that takes a physical form – be it a wall of post-it notes, a role-playing activity, a space, an object, an interface, or even a storyboard. The resolution of your prototype should be commensurate with your progress in your project. In early explorations keep your prototypes rough and rapid to allow yourself to learn quickly and investigate a lot of different possibilities.

Prototypes are most successful when people (the design team, the user, and others) can experience and interact with them. What you learn from those interactions can help drive deeper empathy, as well as shape successful solutions.

WHY do we prototype

Traditionally prototyping is thought of as a way to test functionality. But prototyping is used for many reasons, including these (non-mutually-exclusive) categories:
• **Empathy gaining:** Prototyping is a tool to deepen your understanding of the design space and your user, even at a pre-solution phase of your project.
• **Exploration:** Build to think. Develop multiple solution options.
• **Testing:** Create prototypes (and develop the context) to test and refine solutions with users.
• **Inspiration:** Inspire others (teammates, clients, customers, investors) by showing your vision.

Many of the goals of prototyping are shared across all four of the above categories.
We prototype to:
Learn. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a prototype is worth a thousand pictures.
Solve disagreements. Prototyping is a powerful tool that can eliminate ambiguity, assist in ideation, and reduce miscommunication.
Start a conversation. A prototype can be a great way to have a different kind of conversation with users.
Fail quickly and cheaply. Creating quick and dirty prototypes allows you to test a number of ideas without investing a lot of time and money up front.
Manage the solution-building process. Identifying a variable to explore encourages you to break a large problem down into smaller, testable chunks.

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