

Week 1: Usability Fundamentals & User-Centered Design

Learning Objectives:

- Understand core principles of intuitive design.
- Learn how users actually behave vs. how we think they behave.
- Discover how to reduce cognitive load in digital products.

Topics Covered:

1. **What is Usability?**
 - “Usability means making sure something works well... that a person of average ability and experience can use it.” – Krug
 - Affordances, Signifiers, Constraints, and Mappings – Norman
2. **Don't Make Me Think Principle**
 - Every click should be obvious.
 - Self-evident navigation is key.
 - Example: Amazon's one-click purchase.
3. **Mental Models & Conceptual Models**
 - Norman: Users form mental models based on previous experiences.
 - Your interface must match or gently reshape them.
4. **Gestalt Principles in Design** (from *Laws of UX*)
 - Proximity, Similarity, Closure, Continuity, Figure/Ground
5. **Hick's Law**
 - Time to make a decision increases with number and complexity of choices.

Assignments:

- UX diary (document 3 good/bad user experiences).
 - Redesign a basic login page with annotated UX improvements.
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Week 2: Human Psychology in UX & Interaction Design

Learning Objectives:

- Apply cognitive psychology to UI/UX design.
- Evaluate existing products through usability principles.
- Learn principles of interaction design.

Topics Covered:

1. **Fitts's Law**

- “The time to acquire a target is a function of the distance to and size of the target.”
 - Larger buttons are easier to click, especially in touch interfaces.
2. **Recognition vs. Recall** (Norman)
 - Interfaces should minimize the need to remember. Show options.
 - Example: Recently viewed items, predictive search.
 3. **Jakob’s Law**
 - Users prefer your site to work the same way as all other sites they already know.
 - Design for familiarity over originality.
 4. **Feedback and Error Prevention**
 - *Norman*: Provide feedback for every action.
 - Slips vs mistakes: Design should prevent both.
 5. **Miller’s Law**
 - Users can hold 7 ± 2 items in working memory.
 - Break tasks into smaller steps.

Assignments:

- Compare 2 competing apps using UX laws.
 - Heuristic evaluation using Nielsen’s 10 principles.
 - Sketch a landing page using 3 Gestalt principles and 2 UX laws.
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Week 3: Usability Testing & Flow Optimization

Learning Objectives:

- Build and test low-fidelity prototypes.
- Learn basic UI writing and microcopy principles.
- Understand how to design for accessibility.

Topics Covered:

1. **Usability Testing (Krug’s Method)**
 - “Testing one user is 100% better than testing none.”
 - Test early, test often.
2. **Serial Position Effect**
 - People best remember the first and last items.
 - Apply to menus, steps in onboarding, form flows.
3. **Tesler’s Law (Law of Conservation of Complexity)**
 - You can’t eliminate complexity, only shift it.
 - Don’t offload it onto the user.

4. Error Messages and Microcopy

- Write with empathy.
- Use familiar language.
- Actionable, non-blaming phrasing.

5. Von Restorff Effect (Isolation Effect)

- Distinct elements are more memorable.
- Use to highlight CTAs, alerts, upgrades.

Assignments:

- Conduct a usability test on a paper prototype.
 - Redesign 5 microcopy examples with better tone and clarity.
 - Create a brand style tile (colors, fonts, button styles).
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Week 4: Prototyping, Design Systems, and Final Showcase

Learning Objectives:

- Consolidate knowledge into a full user flow.
- Develop and present a complete UI/UX prototype.
- Understand the principles behind scalable design systems.

Topics Covered:

1. Design Systems

- Components, tokens, spacing, typography.
- Atomic Design methodology.

2. Aesthetic-Usability Effect

- Users perceive more aesthetically pleasing designs as more usable.
- Emotional impact matters.

3. Accessibility Principles

- WCAG guidelines (color contrast, keyboard navigation).
- Inclusive language and design.

4. Flow Optimization and Speed (Doherty Threshold)

- Systems should respond within 400ms to keep users engaged.

5. Final Recap: The Five Essentials from Each Book

- Krug: Don't make users think; test early; clear navigation; remove distractions; build for scanning.
- Norman: Good mapping; feedback; constraints; affordances; user-centered design.
- Laws of UX: Base design in cognitive psychology to improve usability.

Final Project:

- Full user flow for a budgeting app or wellness tool (Web + Mobile)
 - Deliverables: Wireframes, Style Guide, UX Law Annotations, Microcopy, Prototype
 - Present with rationale and user testing summary
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Optional Tools & Platforms:

- Design: Figma, Adobe XD
- Collaboration: Miro, Notion, Slack
- Testing: Maze, Useberry, Lookback
- Accessibility: Stark Plugin, Axe DevTools

Certification Criteria:

- Weekly submissions and participation
 - Final prototype and presentation
 - Peer feedback participation
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End of Curriculum