

Mobile Application Storyboarding with Balsamiq




Introduction

In this tutorial we will learn how to construct a storyboard for a mobile application using the online and desktop wireframing tool, Balsamiq. To follow along with this tutorial, you will need a Balsamiq account (trial or non-trial), which can be made on <http://www.balsamiq.com>. The goal of this tutorial is to become more familiar with the software as well as to learn how to create a clear storyboard for business partners and developers to understand.


What does Balsamiq Offer?


For the purpose of this tutorial, I will only be using Balsamiq's free web app trial. It might be helpful for you to choose this option as well so that you can get a feel for the application without committing right away.





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When you first create your account, log in, and choose to create a new mock-up you will see a large variety of options to begin your storyboard. Balsamiq is unique in that it does not only cater to mobile app wireframing, but also to tablet apps, web apps, desktop apps, and websites.

You will find that Balsamiq offers drag and drop graphics that have a sketched or drawn feel to them. Because these are pre-made for you, it becomes very easy to wireframe and storyboard your application.

Lastly, it is also important to note that Balsamiq is not really meant to help you with the graphic design of your app, but is rather geared towards helping you depict the page-by-page navigation/flow in order to enhance user experience.

Getting Started

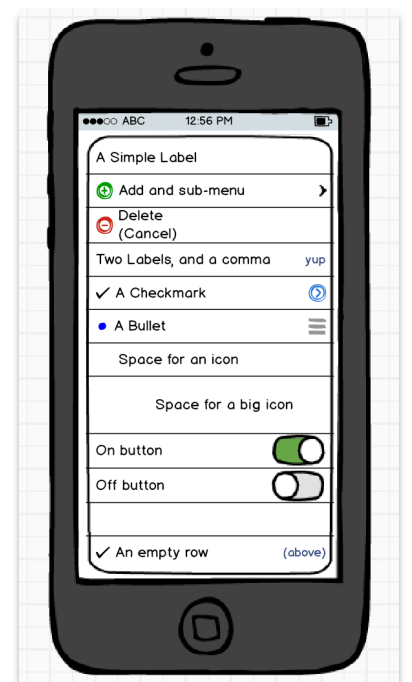
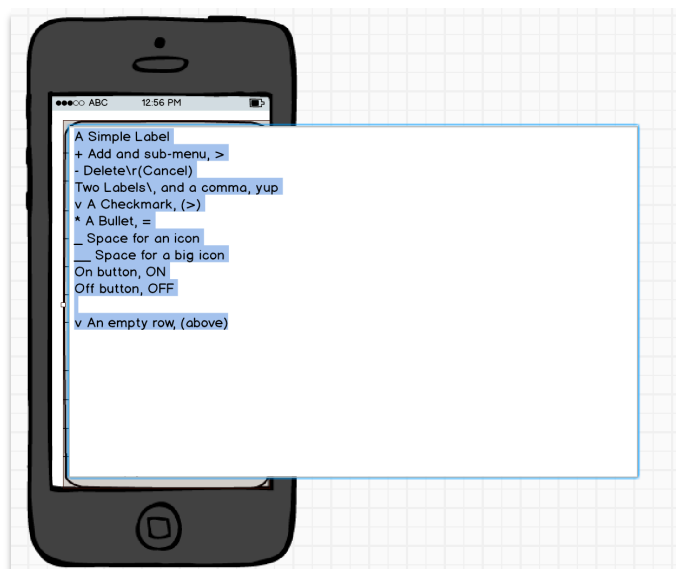
As mentioned earlier, one of the best features about Balsamiq is that all the graphics are drag and drop. The tools of the software are also very user friendly.

In this tutorial we will storyboard a simple music player/radio application. Begin by dragging and dropping the iPhone image under the "iOS" tab into the mockup clipboard.

Your clipboard should look similar to the following:

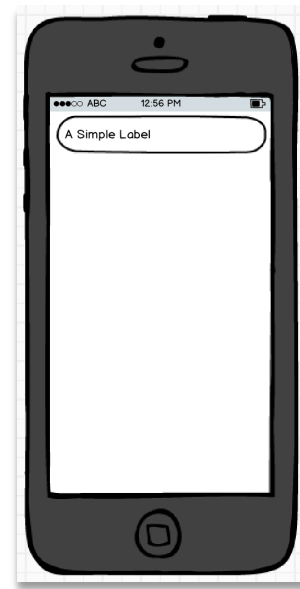
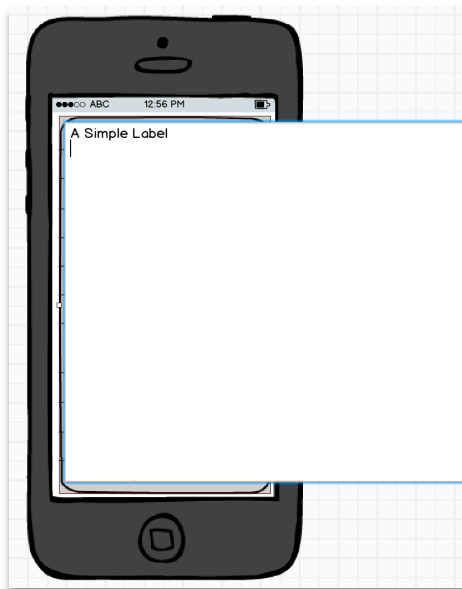
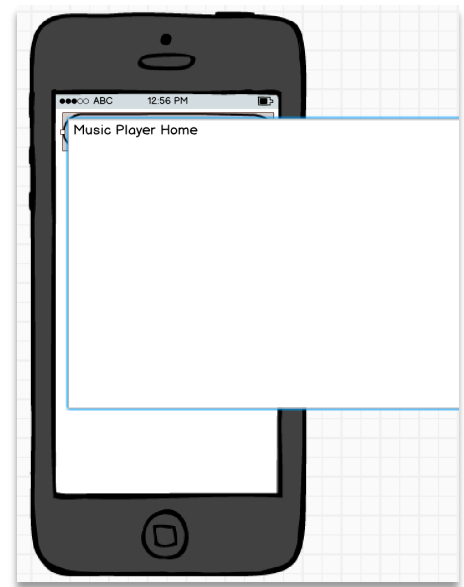
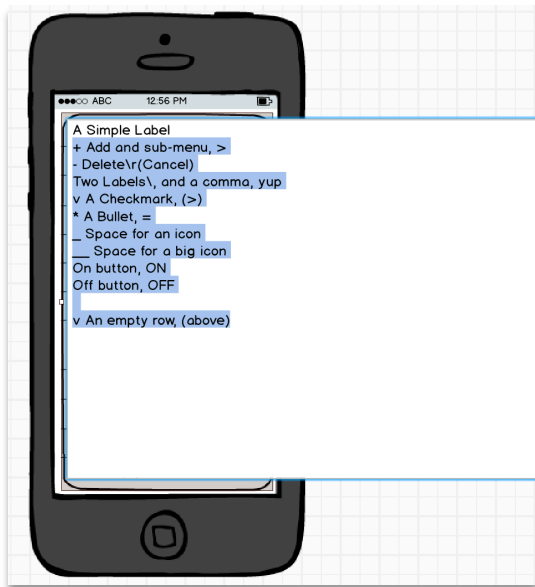


This first page can be the music player's main menu, containing a list of playlists. To start filling in the iPhone screen, drag and drop the "iOS Menu" graphic onto your clipboard. You will get a number of menu options after doing so such as a "Simple Label", a sub-menu, a bullet, and more.

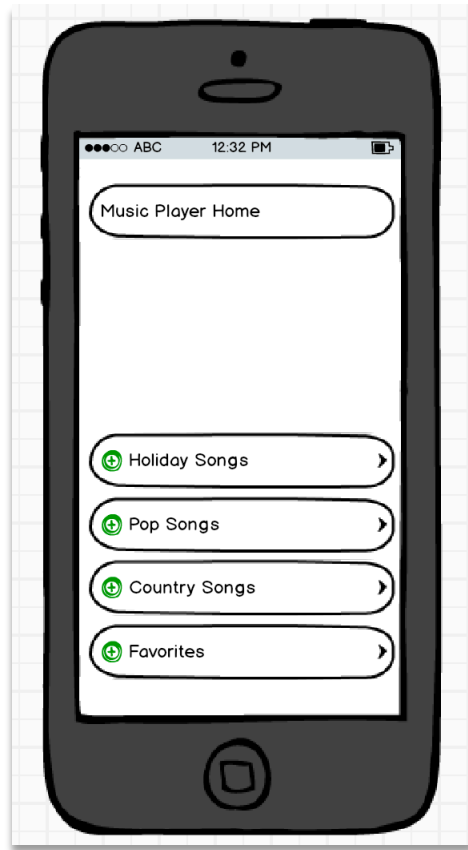


For this page, we only want “A Simple Label” at the top and multiple “Add and sub-menu” buttons to label each playlist. This can be done by double clicking the “iOS Menu” and deleting all the text other than the menu you need.

Then, double click “A Simple Label” again to edit the title of the button to “Music Player Home.”

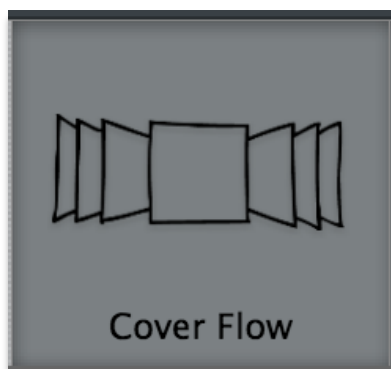


Repeat this process with the “Add and sub-menu” buttons to achieve the following wireframe of the home menu:

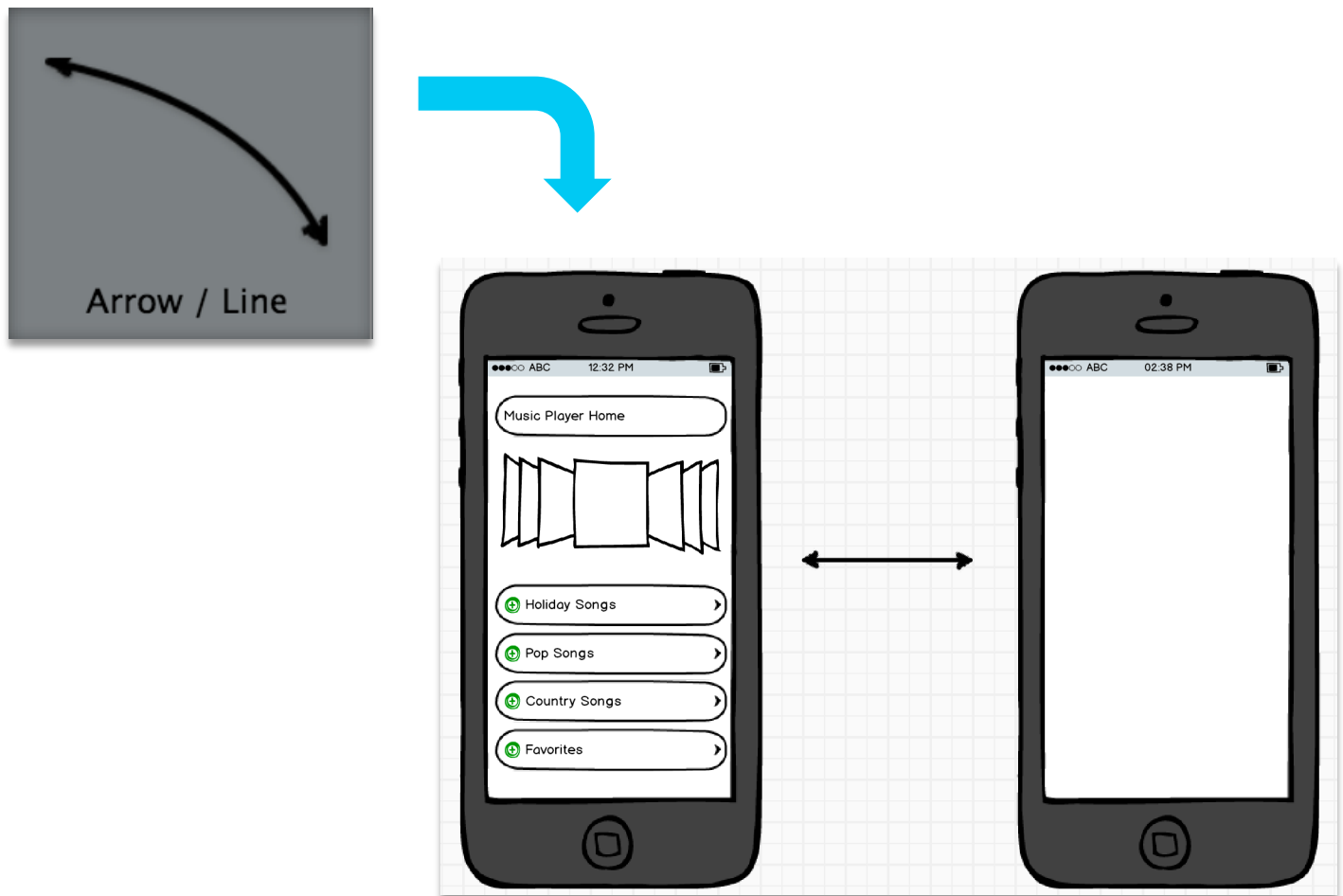


Next, to add a bit more dimension and detail to our wireframe, we can drag, drop, and resize a “Cover Flow” graphic under the “Big” tab into our iPhone screen.

Your home menu should now look similar to the following:

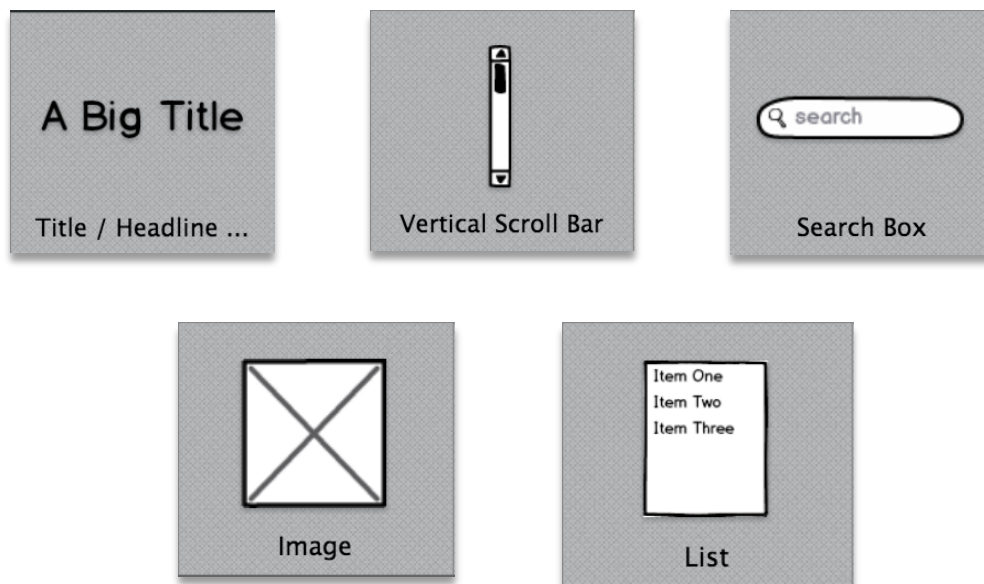


We are now done wireframing the first page of our storyboard. The next page should clearly flow from its previous page. We can depict this flow in Balsamiq using an arrow icon found under the “All” tab. Following the arrow, drag and drop another iPhone screen to begin the next page.



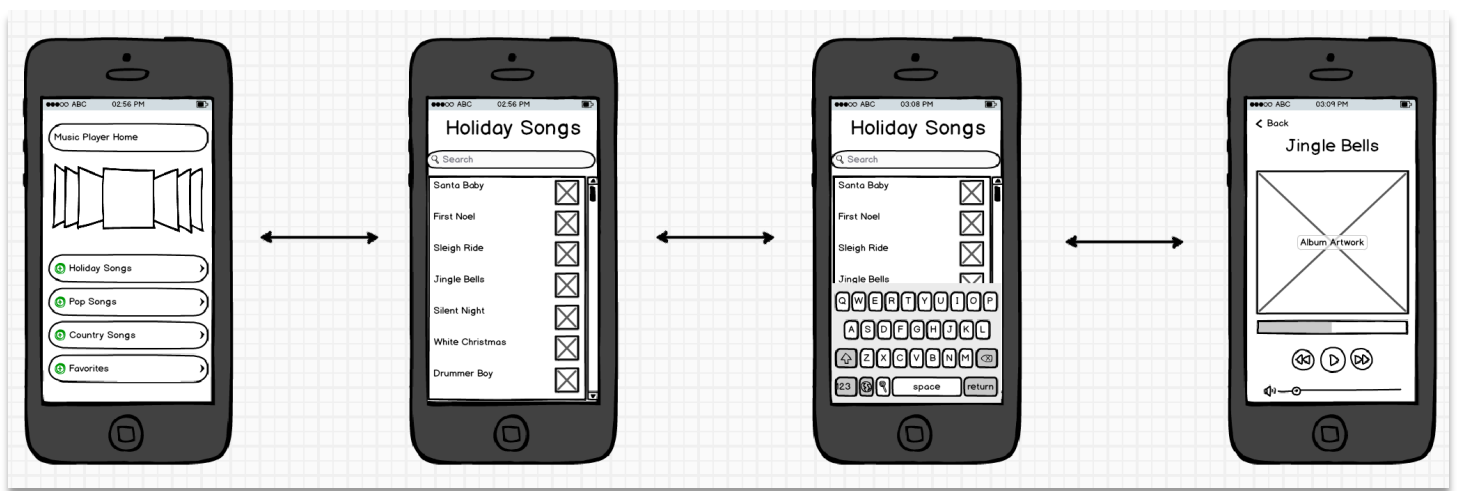
On this next page we will create a list of songs that have been grouped under one of the playlists. In the following wireframe I have dragged, dropped, and edited the following graphics to lay out the next page.

Each of these graphics can be found under the “All” tab.





At this point, you should now be familiar with the basic and user-friendly tools that Balsamiq offers its users. You can repeat the processes above to create more wireframes and eventually produce a working storyboard similar to the following:



Conclusion

You are now ready to use Balsamiq for future application projects! As you can see, the storyboard becomes very helpful for the beginning steps of mobile app development. It tells developers the functional requirements of each page in a picture format. Storyboards are also helpful when creating a vision with your client for their desired product.

Using the steps and tools above, you will be able to easily create basic storyboards for mobile applications.