

CSE 440:  
Introduction to HCI

# 17: Visual Aesthetics

May 21, 2024

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# Overview

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## Visual Aesthetics

Designing Posters

Layout

Content

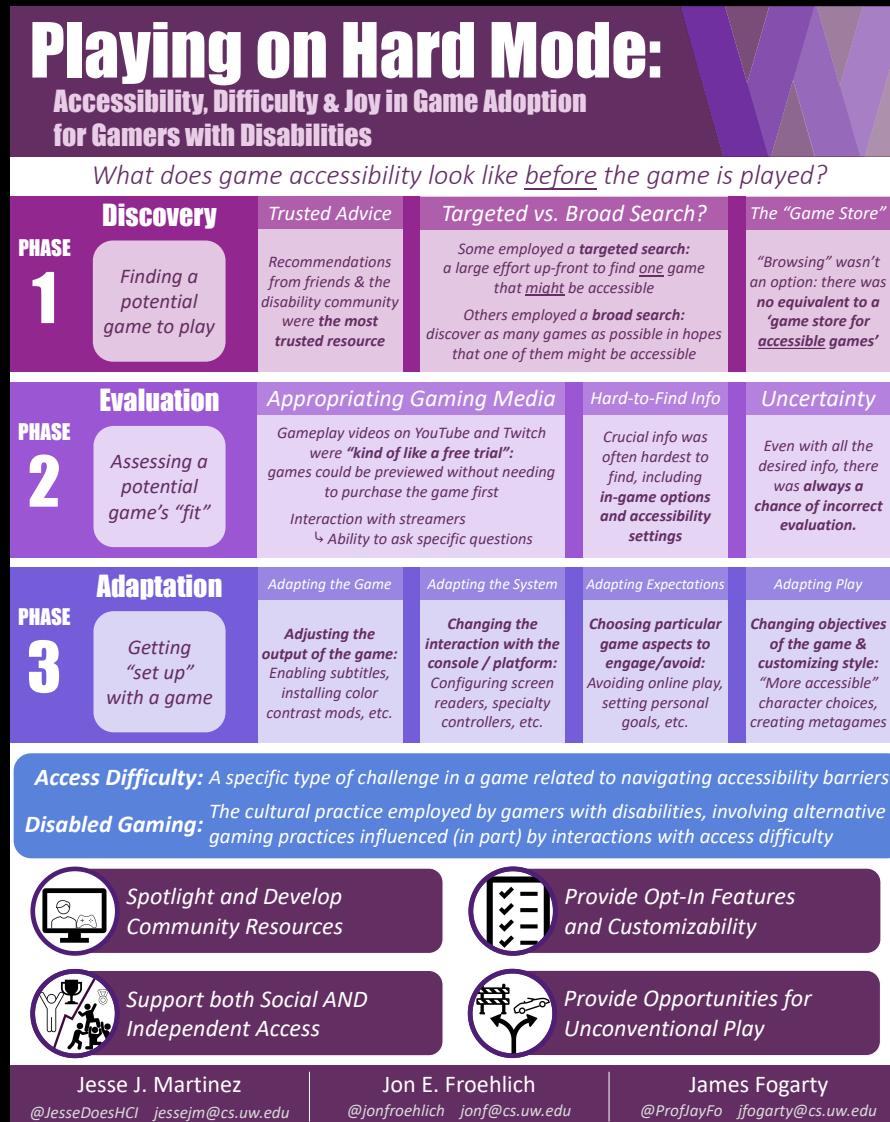
Styling

Branding

Avoiding Common Mistakes

# Designing Posters: Layout

# An Example: My own work



## Positives

- Good flow, decent narrative
- Strong grouping
- Strong branding/theming

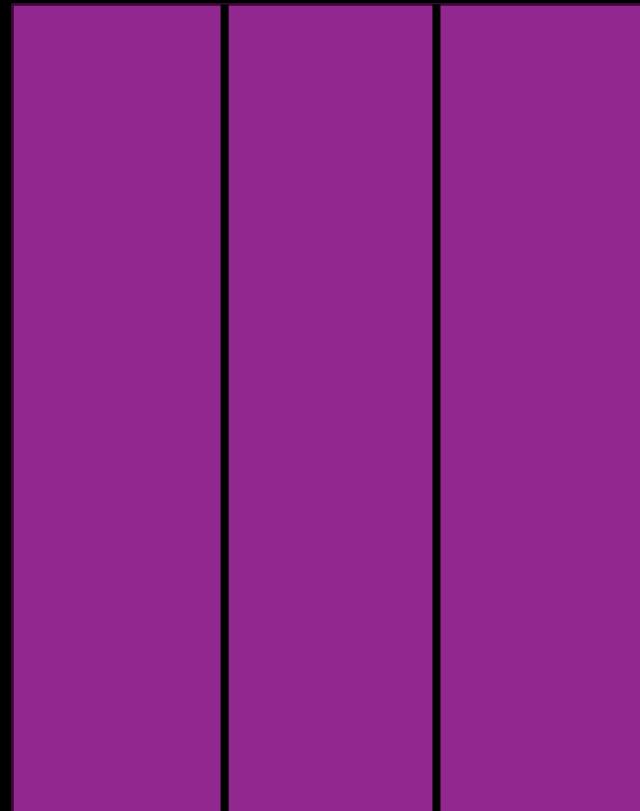
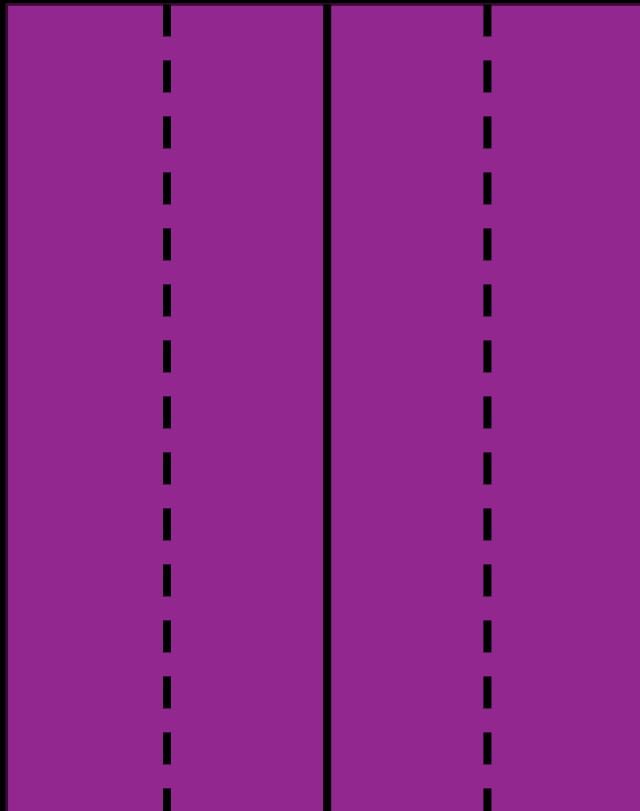
## Negatives:

- Way too crowded/cluttered
- Too much text
- Hard to find the “takeaway”

Decent on layout, meh on content.  
3/5 stars.

# The Grid

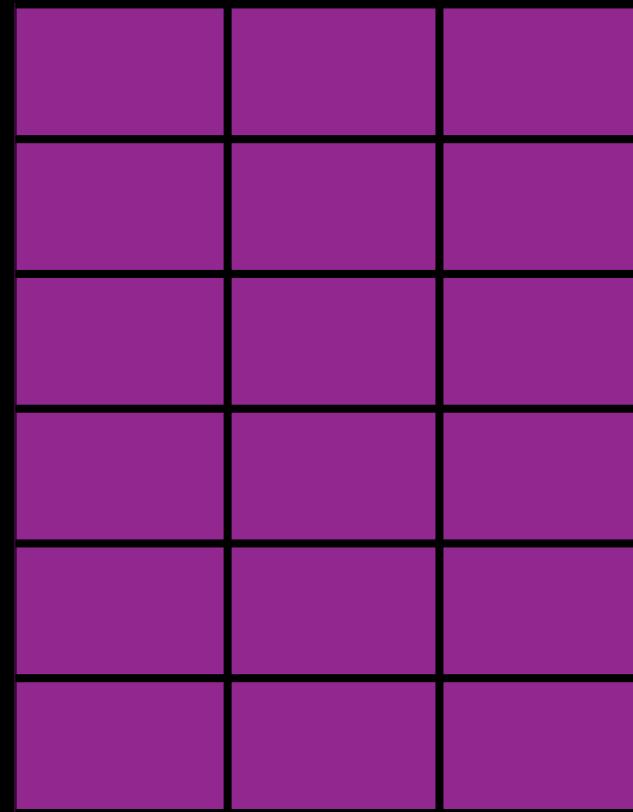
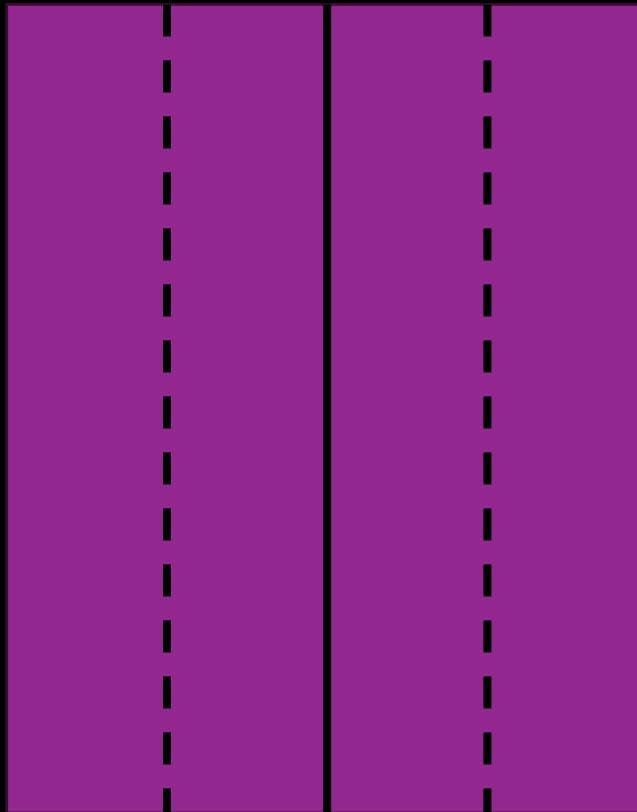
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Vertical Grid:  
Generally expect halves/quarters  
or thirds

# The Grid

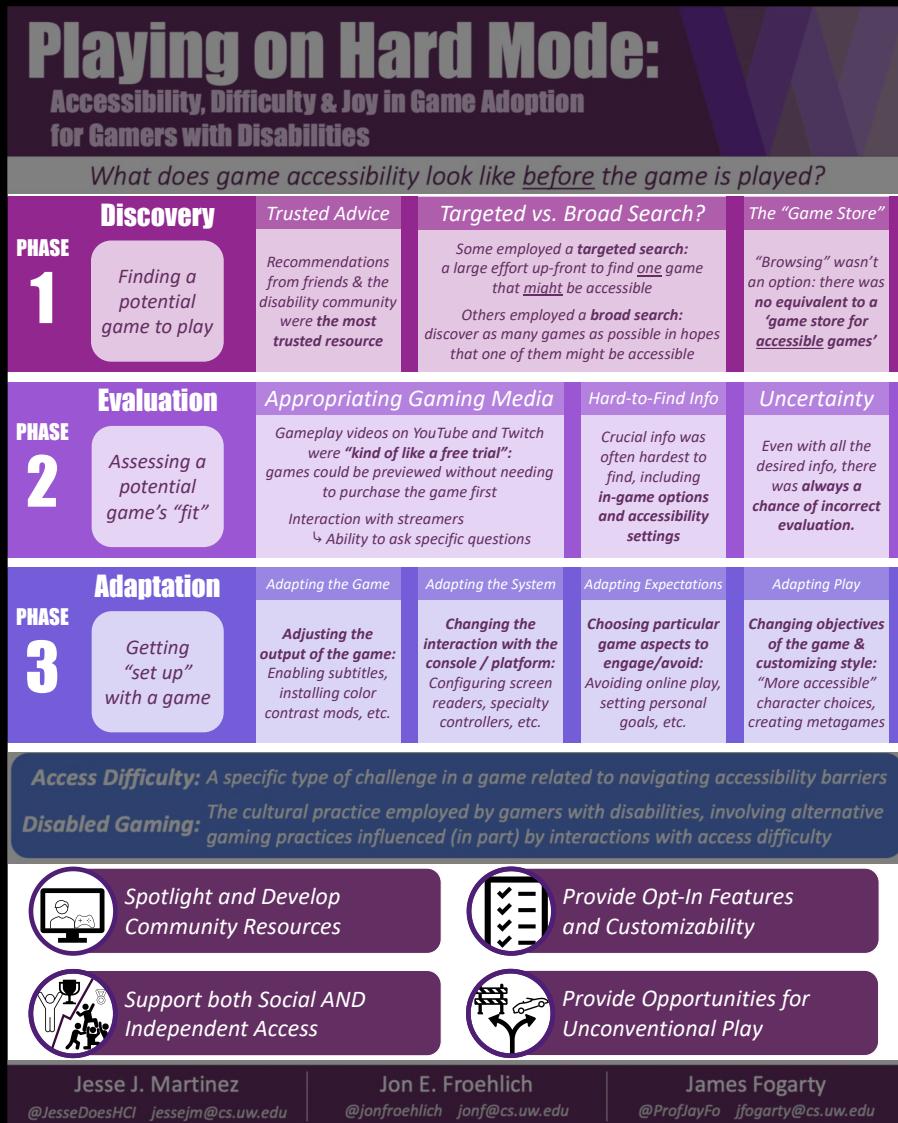
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Generally expect halves/quarters  
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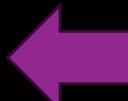
Horizontal Grid:  
Up to you to decide the row  
height, but be **consistent**

# The Grid

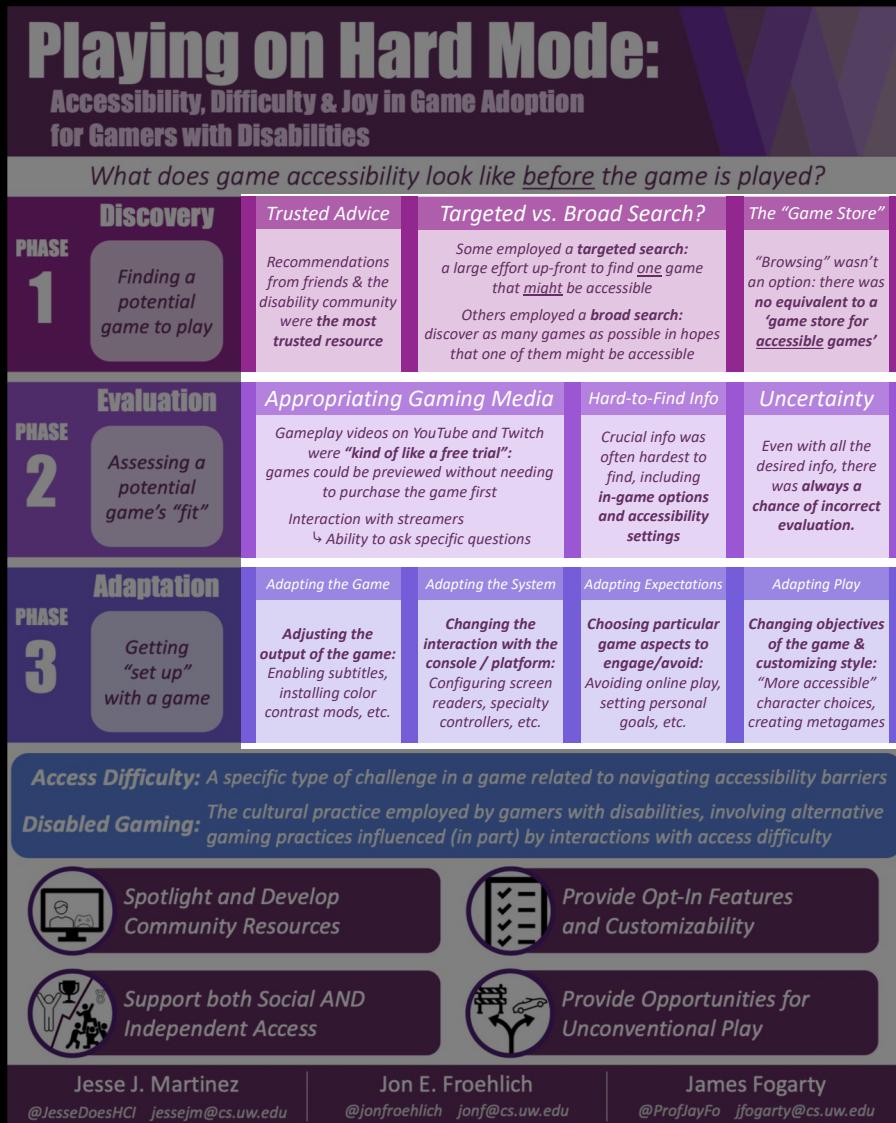


CAN have multiple grids,  
but BE CAREFUL.

Make sure you have a clear visual separation between different grids



# The Grid



If you break the grid,  
BE INTENTIONAL

There are ways to “break the grid”  
without *really* breaking the grid  
↳ grabs attention without being  
visually upsetting

# Grouping

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Remember Gestalt:

**Proximity:** items close to each other are “grouped”

**Similarity:** items with visual commonalities are “grouped”

**Continuity:** patterns are presumed to continue

↳ setting up a clear pattern (grouping) implies later patterns (groupings)

# Grouping

<b>PHASE 1</b>	<b>Discovery</b> <i>Finding a potential game to play</i>	<b>Trusted Advice</b> <i>Recommendations from friends &amp; the disability community were the most trusted resource</i>	<b>Targeted vs. Broad Search?</b> <i>Some employed a <b>targeted search</b>: a large effort up-front to find <u>one game</u> that <u>might</u> be accessible Others employed a <b>broad search</b>: discover as many games as possible in hopes that one of them might be accessible</i>	<b>The “Game Store”</b> <i>“Browsing” wasn’t an option: there was no equivalent to a ‘game store for accessible games’</i>	
<b>PHASE 2</b>	<b>Evaluation</b> <i>Assessing a potential game’s “fit”</i>	<b>Appropriating Gaming Media</b> <i>Gameplay videos on YouTube and Twitch were “kind of like a free trial”: games could be previewed without needing to purchase the game first Interaction with streamers ↳ Ability to ask specific questions</i>	<b>Hard-to-Find Info</b> <i>Crucial info was often hardest to find, including in-game options and accessibility settings</i>	<b>Uncertainty</b> <i>Even with all the desired info, there was always a chance of incorrect evaluation.</i>	
<b>PHASE 3</b>	<b>Adaptation</b> <i>Getting “set up” with a game</i>	<b>Adapting the Game</b> <i>Adjusting the output of the game: Enabling subtitles, installing color contrast mods, etc.</i>	<b>Adapting the System</b> <i>Changing the interaction with the console / platform: Configuring screen readers, specialty controllers, etc.</i>	<b>Adapting Expectations</b> <i>Choosing particular game aspects to engage/avoid: Avoiding online play, setting personal goals, etc.</i>	<b>Adapting Play</b> <i>Changing objectives of the game &amp; customizing style: “More accessible” character choices, creating metagames</i>

# Grouping

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Color stripes denote groups:

Proximity  
Color similarity

# Grouping

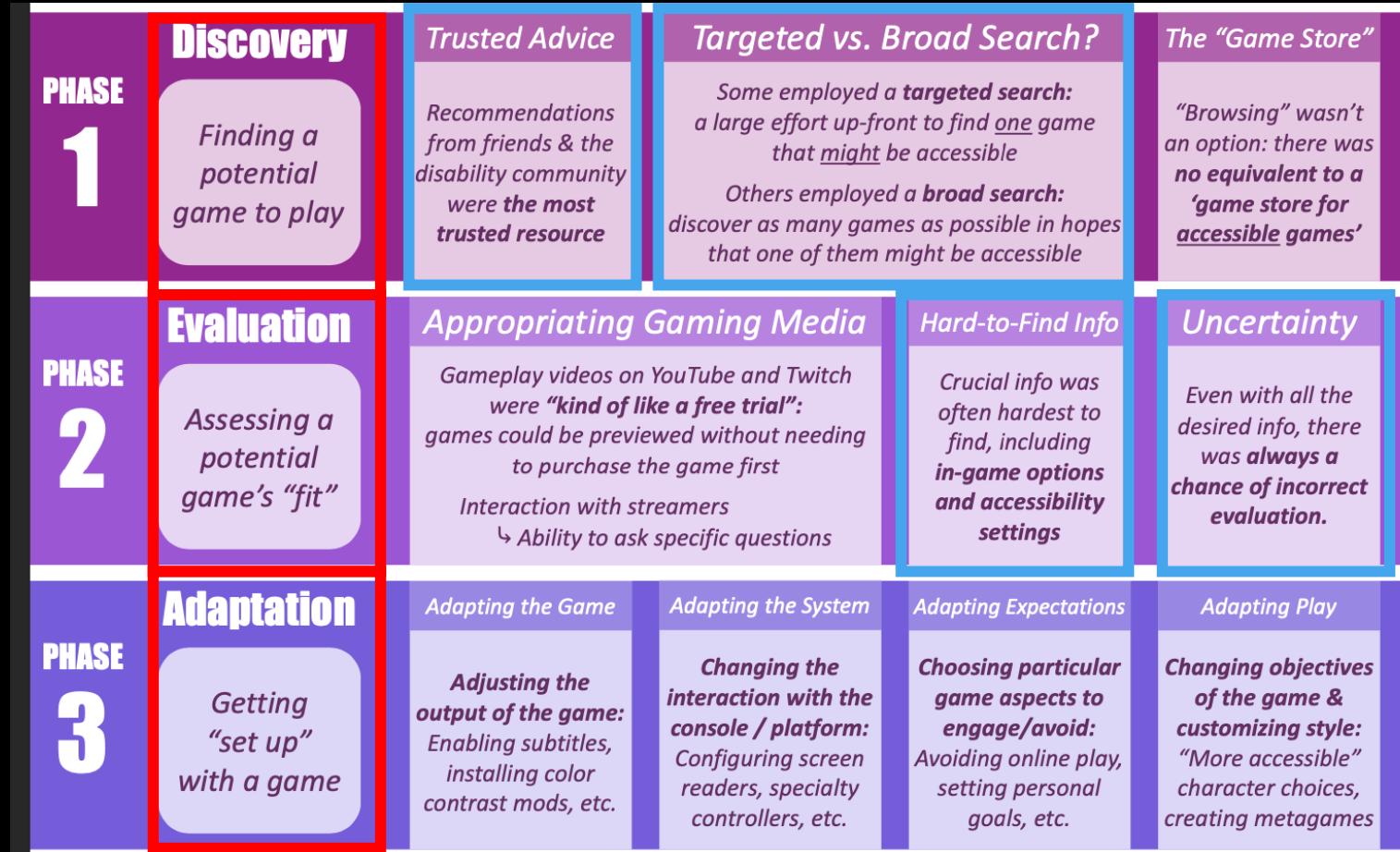
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Consistent shaping / patterning implies same category/“tier” of content

Still holds even for different sizes

# Grouping

Different shaping implies different category of content



Consistent shaping / patterning implies same category/"tier" of content

Still holds even for different sizes

# Sequencing

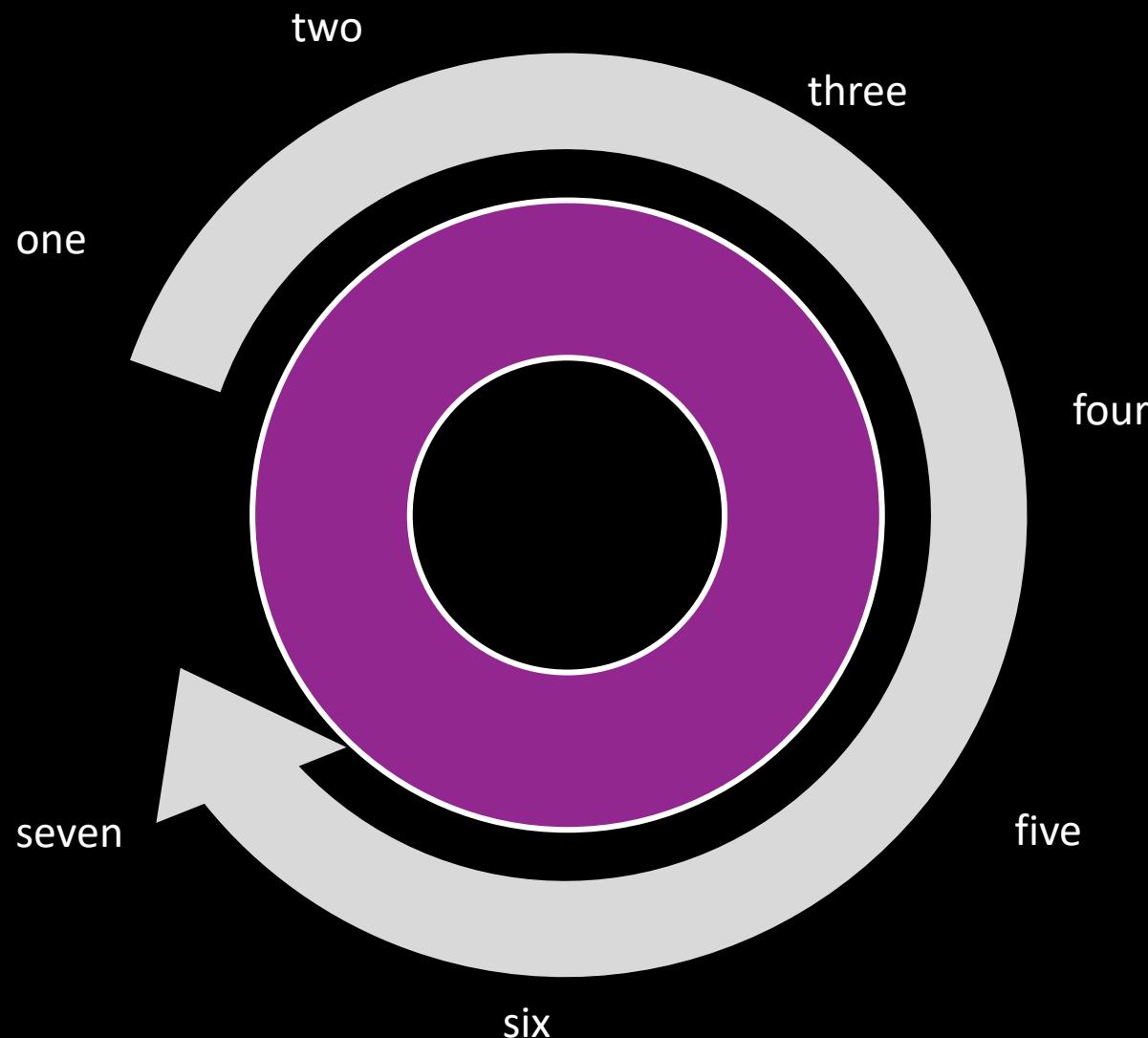
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When things have an ordering,  
**that should be reflected in the layout**

“Default” Ordering: Reading Order

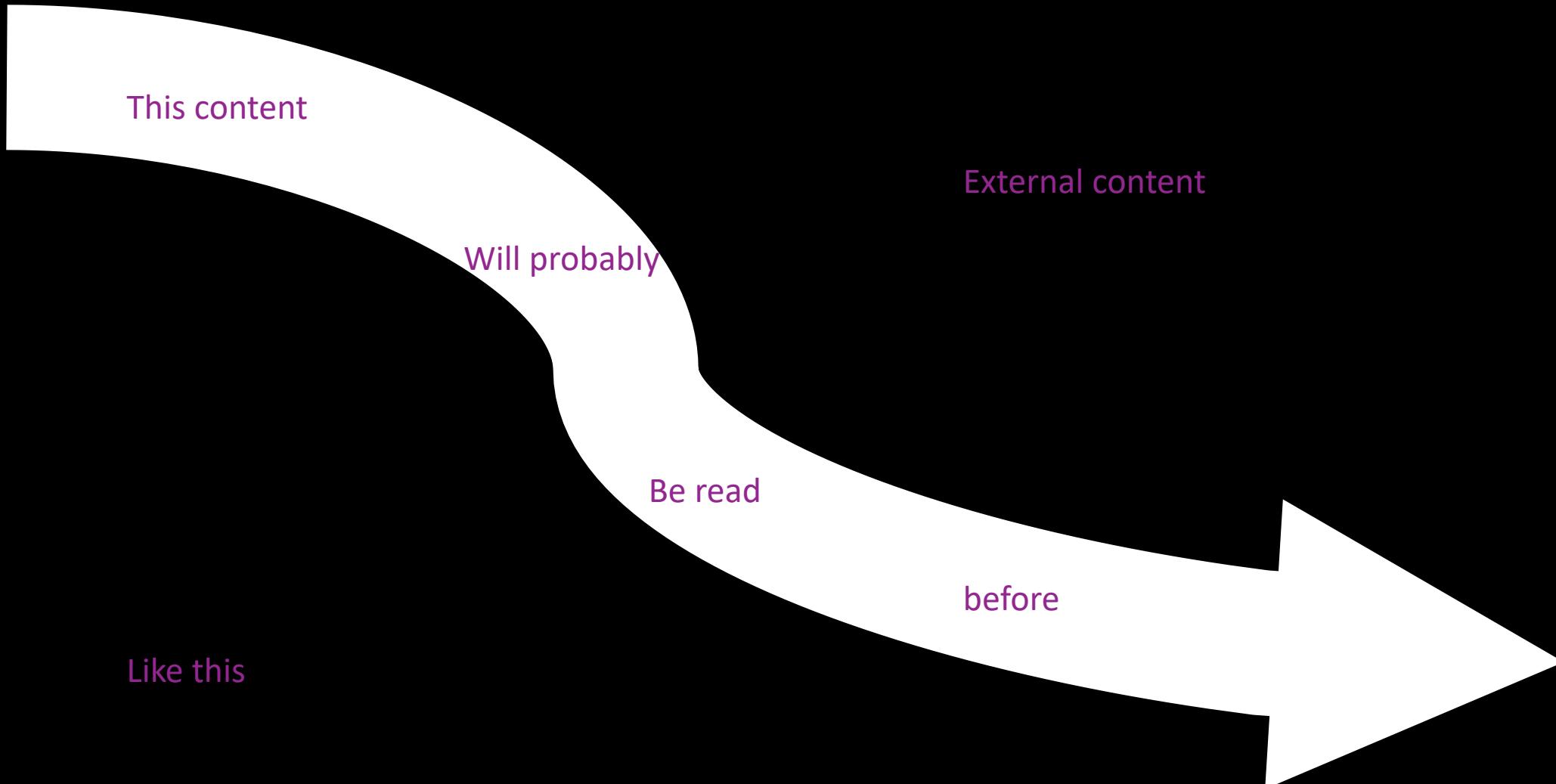
Can manipulate Sequencing with layout

# Sequencing



Take advantage  
of continuity &  
closure!!

# Sequencing



Like this

# Designing Posters: Content

# Storytelling

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**What story is your poster is trying to tell?**

- Process Narrative?
- Persuasive Argument?
- System/Design Walkthrough?

Break your story down into “beats”:

An important thing that happened

A step in a logical argument

A key aspect of a design

# How Much Text?

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A Balancing Act:

Poster should “speak for itself”

BUT/AND

You should be able to add “color”

# How Much Text?

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Keep it to about 1 text element per “story beat”

If the beat has an image: keep the text **MINIMAL**

# Images & Figures

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Same as in Slides: Rich but Distracting!

Make sure the viewer knows what to take away

# Annotated Images

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Often an effective middle ground between text & images!

However:

Usually still needs some introduction / setup

Often difficult to control reading flow

Also usually benefits from a conclusion / wrap-up

# Annotated Images

## Design Insights

The image shows a digital interface for managing multiple conversations. At the top, there are tabs for "Ashley" (Lisbon, Portugal) and "Bryan" (Seattle, WA). A yellow callout box labeled "Tabs for Multiple involving Participants:" explains that solid-lined tabs indicate the focused conversation. Below the tabs, a message from Ashley is displayed: "Hi MOM! I'M DOING MIDTERMS SOON. WISH ME LUCK!". A pink callout box labeled "Control your Conversation:" indicates that users can edit, delete, hide, or show messages. To the right, a red flag icon is positioned above a text box labeled "Need for Navigation and Clarity:", which states that a dotted text box serves as guidance for where to write or send their message. In the center, there's a placeholder text "". At the bottom, a green input field shows a message: "Good luck! We're cheering you on!" with a placeholder "Hold here to Speak...". A numeric keypad and a keyboard icon are visible. A yellow callout box labeled "Favorability of Modes in Different Ages:" notes that older folks can choose to write or speak, while younger ones can use a keyboard.

**Tabs for Multiple involving Participants:**  
Helps track multiple conversations simultaneously, with solid-lined tabs indicating the focused conversation.

**Control your Conversation:**  
Those interacting with the board has the option to edit, delete, hide, or show messages.

**Need for Navigation and Clarity:**  
A dotted text box serves as guidance for where to write or send their message.

**Favorability of Modes in Different Ages:**  
Older folks can choose to write or speak, while younger ones can use a keyboard.

OrcaPod, Wi24

# Poster Design: Styling

# Fonts

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Try to keep it to two fonts:

Body Font

Emphasis / Accent font

(Usually fine to have a separate title font)

Font Mixing:

Serif + Sans Serif: Usually fine!

Serif + Serif: Usually fine!

Sans Serif + Sans Serif: ONLY if the two fonts are very different

Otherwise things just read as ‘weirdly off’

# Font Sizes

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Rule of Thumb: 30pt = Legible at 6ft

Be careful anytime you go below 30pt!

Not “forbidden”, but make sure you have a good reason

e.g., 24pt is “fine” if you have a lot of body text

But frankly, that might speak to having too much body text!

# Capitalization

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## Title Case:

Capitalize Everything but Articles, Prepositions, and Conjunctions

Exception: First word & words after colon or em dash (—) also capitalized

Used for Titles, top-level (“h1”) headers, and *some* subheaders

Rule of thumb:

*If you don't want the header to read like a sentence, use Title Case*

## Sentence Case:

Only capitalize the first letter of the first word and Proper Nouns\*

*\*Sometimes you can decide to make certain words*

*“Proper” Nouns for communication purposes*

Used for body text & low-level headers (e.g., list headers)

# Branding 101

# What's My Brand?

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Every product/design has a “brand”

Your Brand is ***what you want people to associate with your design***

What it does

How it makes people feel

Its values, goals, reasons to use it

# Naming a Design

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References / Imagery are useful (up to a point):

iPhone: Night Mode, AirDrop; Do Not Disturb “Focus” ?

Beware overused imagery / phrasing:

HeadSpace, TalkSpace, Headway...

“The Middle Schooler Test”

Come up with innuendos / ways to make fun of the proposed name

If it's too easy / it's really bad, you've failed the test

E.g., “WoofArt” does NOT pass the middle schooler test

# Naming a Design

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The challenge of Acronyms / Backronyms:

The thing you abbreviate to **should have its own relevance**

BUT the Unabbreviated version also needs to be intelligible!!

Don't try to force an acronym by using convoluted words

GOOD Example:

**DENIM: *Design Environment for Navigation and Information Models***

*Memorable Name*

*Unabbreviated name is to-the-point & digestible*

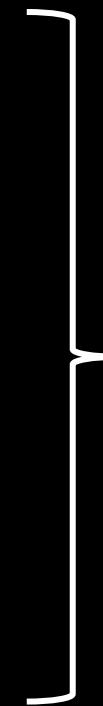
*Denim imagery emphasizes “informal” nature of the tool*

*Part of a larger brand: “SILK” “SATIN” “VELVET”*

# Naming a Design: The Namestorm™

Make a bunch of lists:

- Verbs that describe...
  - What the design does
  - How the user interacts/does
- Adjectives that describe...
  - The design
  - How the design makes the user feel
  - General vibes
- Nouns describing...
  - Characteristic elements of the design
  - Goals / objectives / values
  - Relevant imagery



- 1) Generate as many items as you can
- 2) Review your lists for what stands out
- 3) Repeat Namestorm™ for *those* items
- 4) Continue until you have:
  - Strong imagery
  - Well-defined values/descriptors
  - Something that lends itself **neatly** to an acronym

# The Logo / Iconography

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Once again: consider **imagery that relates to what you want users to associate with your design**

Consider how your logo works:

Alongside your Design Name

Independent from your Design Name

A logo should still be meaningful on its own!

# Color Palettes

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Tool Simona recommended: [coolors.co](https://coolors.co)

Tips on selecting a color palette:

- Are there colors already associated with your imagery?
  - E.g., an app with Tiger imagery needs orange & black or the user will end up feeling confused / looking for something that doesn't exist
- How strongly do you want your user to feel about your design?
  - Bold/intense colors: strong feelings, but might push away users who don't feel strongly about it
  - Pale/weaker colors: unobtrusive; doesn't necessarily evoke feelings, but doesn't push anyone away
- There's plenty of research on what colors evoke what emotions...
  - Very few "universal" associations, but it's good to consider *possible* associations

# Avoiding Common Mistakes



# Running with Friends

Erica Putsche, Heidi So, Luke  
Chang, Linsen Wu



## Things to Do (Tasks)

1. Ability to record running statistics such as distance run, speed, number of runs, etc.
2. Share statistics with friends
3. Create running events and invite friends
4. Send mass notifications to friends for a spontaneous run
5. Find a SmartMatch (based on various criteria) to run with
6. Write and search for reviews on the route/experience

## Too Much Text Breaking the Grid and Crowding



### Contextual Inquiry - Insights

Johnson (20, undergraduate, CSE 006 Lab)

- Perception ≠ Observation
- Distracted by people talking and noise
- More focused at CSE Labs than at home

Steve (25, graduate, Mercer Court)

- Motivated by seeing people working
- Distracted by people and social media
- Takes breaks often

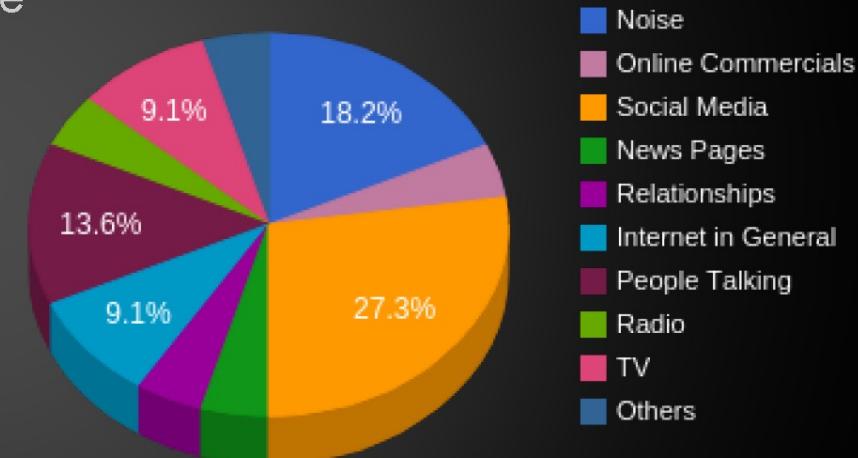
George (25, graduate, Odegaard Library)

- Turns notifications off while studying

Group (4 undergraduates, Yunnie Bubble Tea)

- Distracted by each other and apps
- Use headphones (music) to focus

Distraction Sources



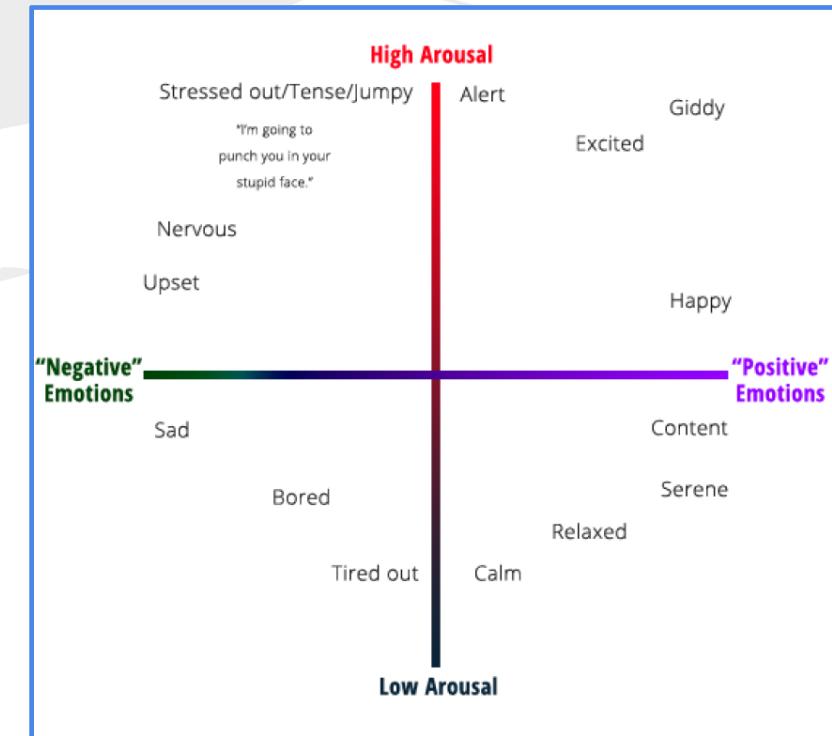
## Too Much Text Too Much “People”



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### Our three inquiries showed us:

1. People valued the insights acquired from a mood journal.
2. People thought journaling was a hassle.
3. People were interested in what triggers their mood
4. People want to share information with a mental health professional



Focus on the  
Right Thing



# Contextual Inquiries



Suzzallo Library



Husky Union Building



Paccar Hall

One person still uses food journaling consistently and has a positive experience.  
One person stopped food journaling because she reached her goal and had a nutritionist.  
The third person loves taking pictures of her food and just seeing what she's been eating.  
Had them take us through their process during mealtime, motivations, difficult, benefits

# We can help

Watch the Selling

Remember Stories  
Have Audience  
and Purpose





## Tasks

1

Engage a work session.

2

Record digital and non-digital behavior.

3

Prompt for taking breaks.

4

Reflect on recorded data relative to time and location.

5

Find a productive work place.

6

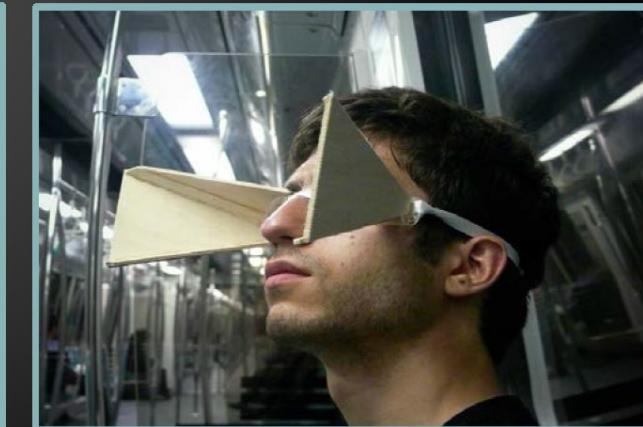
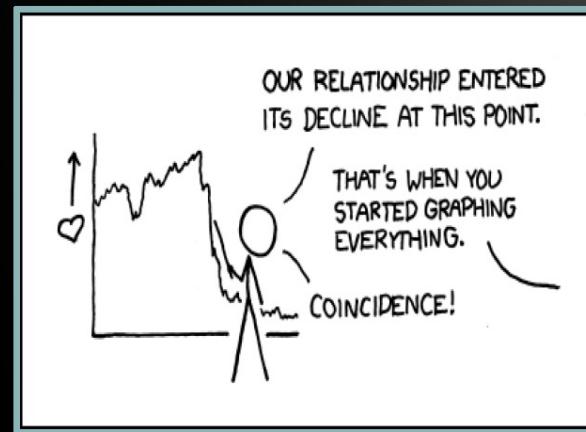
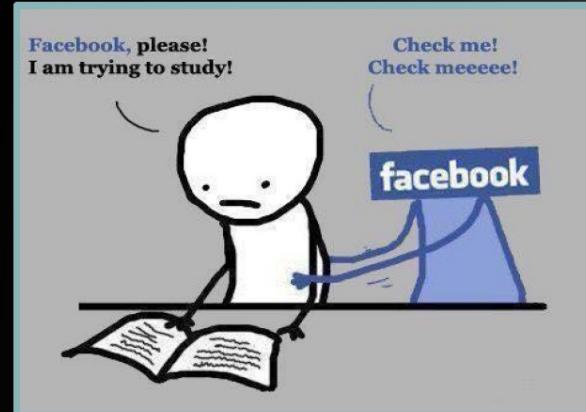
Find and implement methods/strategies to stay focused.

# Distracting

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## Tasks



Many people make **general** budgeting goals.



**Large** items are monitored.

Small items cumulative impact  
**not considered**.

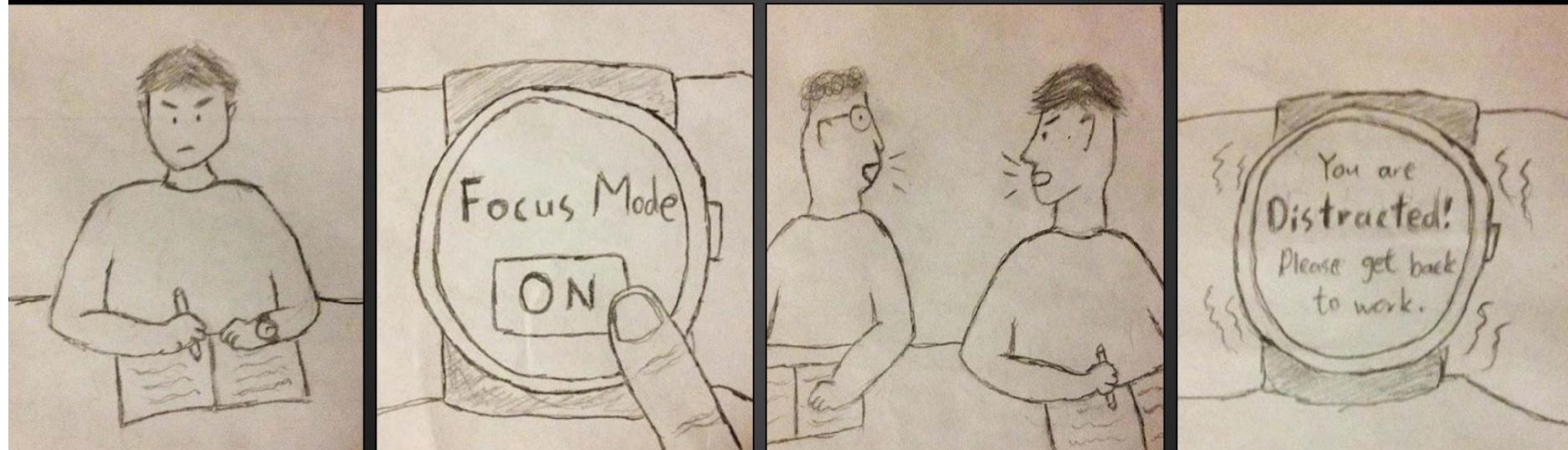
**Challenging** setting up budgets.

Complicated input leads to **less use**.

## Consistency of Emphasis



Task: Find and implement methods/strategies  
to reduce distractions and increase focus



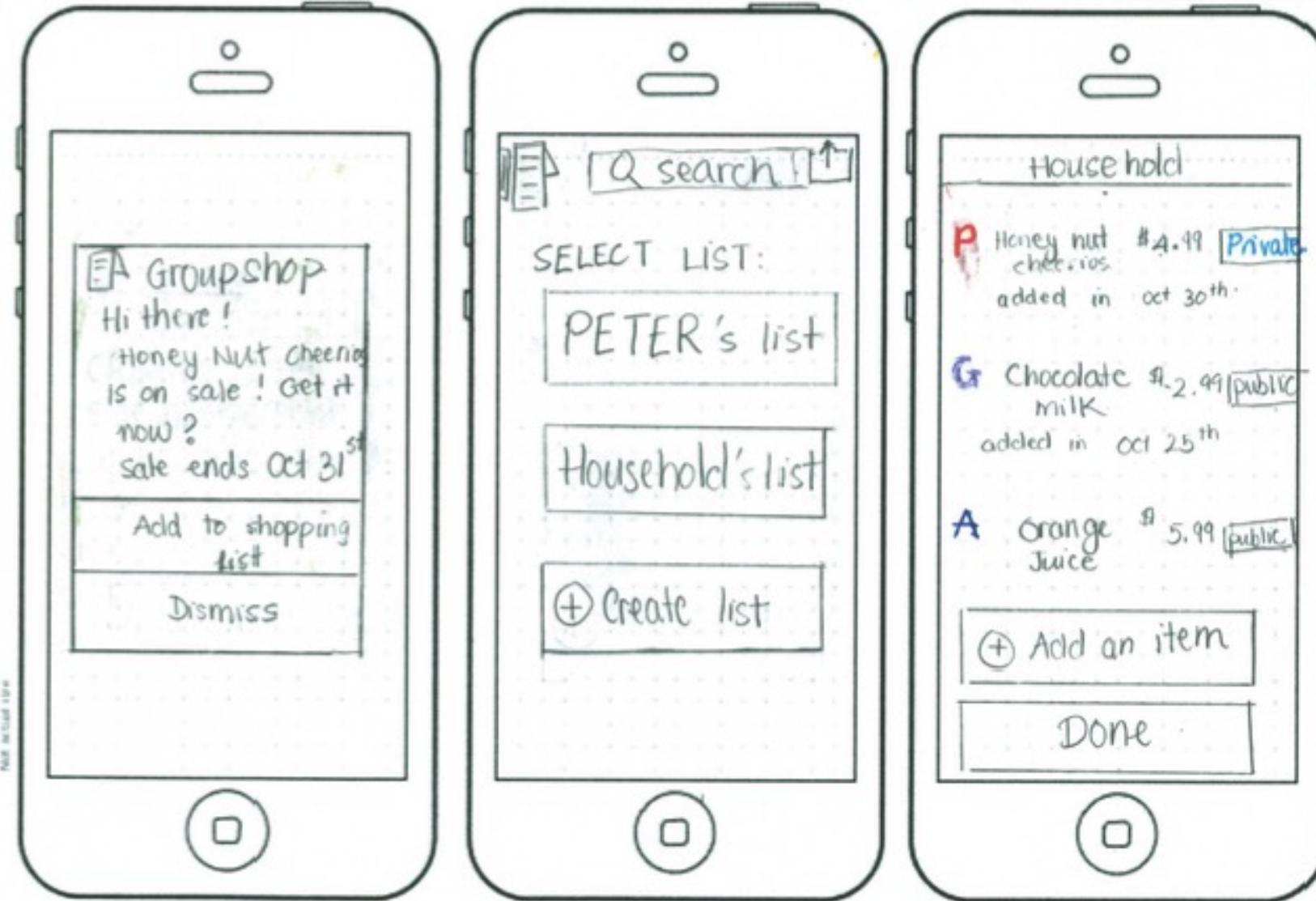
# Pre-shopping

## Design 1

Naming  
Designs



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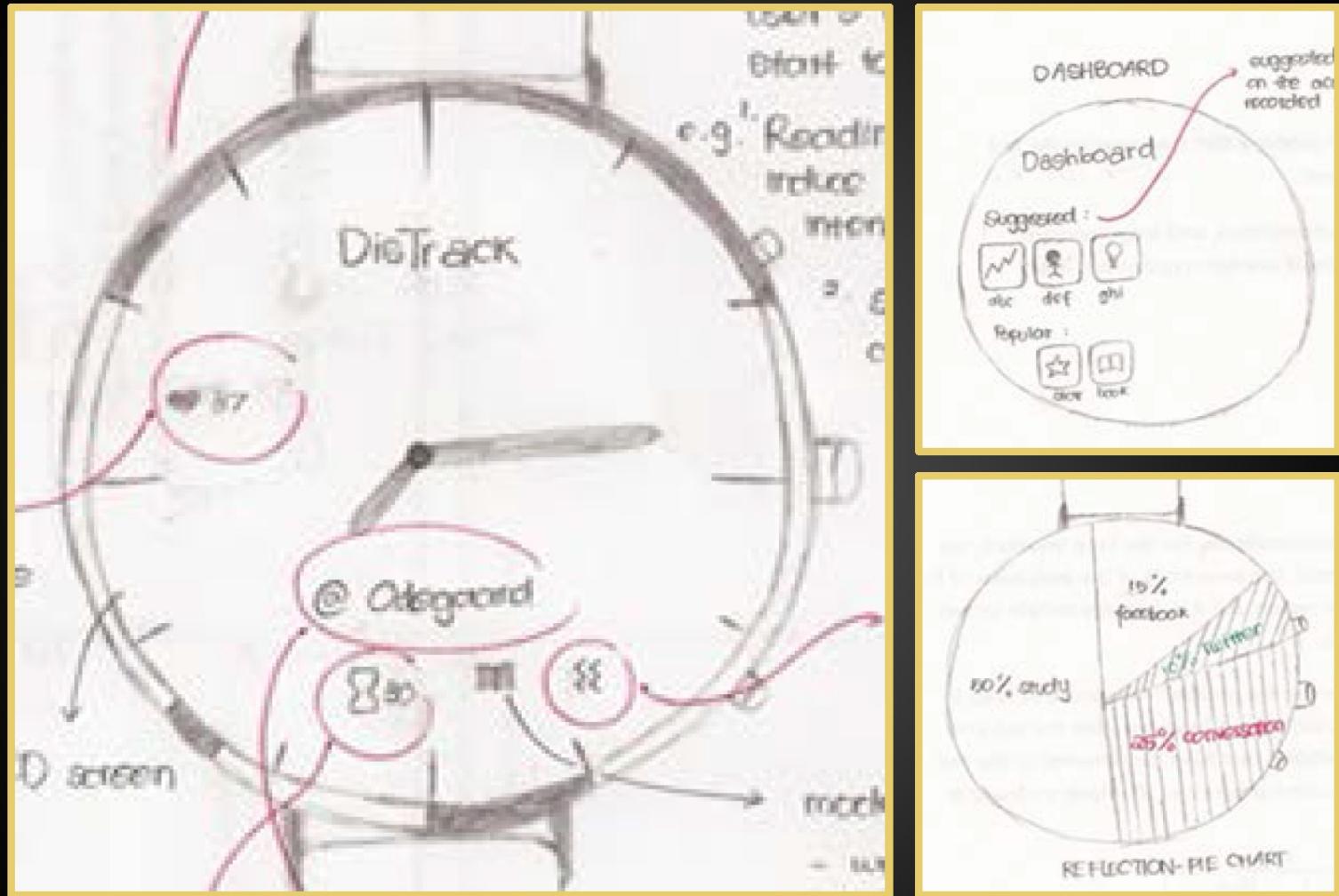


## Blurry Images

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### Design 3





# Initial Paper Prototype

## Task 1: Finding a SmartMatch

Criteria

Level	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avg Dist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avg Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Route Pref	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Match!**

Criteria

Level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Avg Dist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avg Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Route Pref	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* Finding Match      **Match!**

Frank

About: Happy guy who runs casually  
Level: Novice  
Rating: ★★★★

Add      Find Another

Jenn

No more matches found!!

Rating: ★★★

Add      Find Another

# Tasks

Distracting  
Background



## Categorize Time Spent

What qualifies as work or play?

## Set Goals For Each Category

How much time should you spend on each activity?

## Share Schedule and Free Time

Who should be notified?  
Who is free right now?

## Decide What To Do While Waiting

What can get accomplished within that time?

## Adapt Correctly To Schedule Changes

What can be pushed back and what has a solid deadline?

## Get Reminders for Flexible Tasks

When is the best time for lunch?

CSE 440:  
Introduction to HCI

# 17: Visual Aesthetics

May 21, 2024

Jesse J. Martinez | Avery Mack | Simona Liao