

EYLA — SYSTEM-FIRST DESIGN & PRODUCT SPEC

Version: v3.1 (Consolidated)

Status: Canonical Design Document

Scope: MVP + Foundation for Scaling

1. What EYLA Is (And Is Not)

EYLA is **not**:

- A task manager
- A kanban board
- A productivity dashboard
- A to-do list replacement

EYLA is a **cognitive orientation system**.

Its purpose is not to optimize execution speed, but to:

- Reduce mental friction
- Preserve continuity over time
- Clarify what matters *now*
- Protect the user from cognitive overload

Every design decision must answer one question:

Does this reduce cognitive load — or merely redistribute it?

If it only redistributes load, **it does not belong in EYLA.**

2. Core Design Philosophy: SYSTEM FIRST

EYLA follows a **system-first** philosophy.

- The system protects the user
- The system guides attention
- The system limits choice
- The system favors long-term calm over short-term stimulation

Aesthetic decisions are **subordinate** to system integrity.

3. Mental Design Tokens (Non-Negotiable)

These are **mental design tokens**.

They are not UI components, colors, or layouts.

They are **immutable rules**.

TOKEN 1 — AXIS = ONE

The entire EYLA experience lives on **one primary vertical axis**.

EYLA is not:

- A canvas
- A board
- A map

Consequences

- One dominant vertical flow
- No competing horizontal structures
- No floating elements breaking alignment

TOKEN 2 — FOCUS = ONE_AT_A_TIME

The user can only be mentally focused on **one step at a time**.

Consequences

- One active step is visually dominant
 - All other steps degrade in emphasis
 - Focus is never duplicated elsewhere
-

TOKEN 3 — PAST = CALM

The past does not shout.
It accompanies.

Consequences

- Completed steps remain visible
 - Lower contrast
 - Reduced animation
 - Never crossed out
 - Never visually “disabled”
-

TOKEN 4 — FUTURE = SILENT

The future reassures; it does not compete.

Consequences

- Future steps are visible but passive
 - No strong CTAs
 - No dominant hover states
 - No invitation to act prematurely
-

TOKEN 5 — FORM = STABLE

Form does not communicate state.

State communicates state.

Consequences

- Cards retain constant geometry
 - No resizing, morphing, or shape changes
 - Emphasis changes via tone, contrast, depth
-

TOKEN 6 — PATH = PERCEIVED, NOT DRAWN

The path is not literally drawn.

The path is **felt**.

Consequences

- No long guiding lines
- No zig-zag connectors
- No explicit trajectories

Progress is conveyed through:

- Vertical rhythm
 - Spacing
 - Hierarchy
 - Repetition
-

TOKEN 7 — CTA = HIERARCHICAL

There is never more than **one primary action**.

Consequences

- One dominant CTA per screen

- Secondary actions are discreet
 - Destructive actions are always subdued
-

TOKEN 8 — COPY = GUIDANCE

Text does not decorate.

Text **orients**.

Consequences

- Every screen answers: *“What should I do now?”*
 - Calm, human microcopy
 - No poetic copy without function
-

TOKEN 9 — EMOTION = CALM_CLARITY

EYLA reduces anxiety.

It does not manage it.

Consequences

- Gentle motion
 - Slow transitions
 - No urgency
 - No dopamine loops
 - No pressure
-

TOKEN 10 — SYSTEM_FIRST

The system has priority over expression.

Consequences

- Fewer arbitrary aesthetic decisions
 - Strong long-term coherence
 - The system protects the user from themselves
-

4. Main Workspace Model

The **main axis** is the primary workspace.

It contains:

- The roadmap
- The current phase
- The active step
- Perceived progress

It is:

- Vertical
- Centered
- Calm
- Predictable

No secondary panels compete with it.

5. Sidebar Model — Peripheral Memory

The sidebar is **not a second workspace**.

TOKEN — SIDEBAR = MEMORY

The sidebar remembers.
It does not decide.

Rules

- No critical actions originate here
 - It never duplicates focus
 - It never competes with the main axis
-

Sidebar Functions

1. Projects

- Project list
 - One active project
 - States: active / paused / archived
 - Switching projects = switching mental context
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2. Soft Timeline (Anticipation)

TOKEN — TIMELINE = ANTICIPATION

The timeline is **not**:

- A calendar
- A task list
- An agenda

It exists to preserve continuity.

Structure

- TODAY
- NEXT
- LATER

Rules

- Derived from the roadmap
 - Read-only
 - Passive
 - Never changes focus
-

3. Idea Capture

TOKEN — CAPTURE = ZERO_FRICTION

Idea capture exists to avoid losing thoughts — not to organize them.

Rules

- Always accessible
- Free text
- No categorization
- No required destination

Later (optional):

- Send to project
 - Turn into step
 - Delete
-

4. Archive

- Completed projects
- Read-only
- Memory, not action

Implicit message:

Nothing is lost. Everything remains.

6. Reminders — System-Assisted Core Feature

TOKEN — REMINDER = INTENT, NOT TASK

A reminder represents an **intention**, not an obligation.

The user does **not** manage reminders.

The system executes them.

Valid Origins of a Reminder

A reminder may only originate from:

- Conscious interruption (“not now”)
- Incomplete closure
- Future intention
- Detected friction

Never from:

- Standalone tasks
 - Settings
 - Generic to-do lists
 - Calendars
 - Artificial deadlines
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Creation

- Free text
 - Natural language
 - No mandatory dates
 - Minimal confirmation (“I’ll remind you.”)
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Execution

TOKEN — NOTIFICATION = INVITATION

Notifications are:

- Calm
- Human
- Contextual

Examples:

- “You wanted to revisit this.”
- “This project has been waiting.”

Never:

- Alarms
 - Urgency
 - Guilt
-

Allowed Actions

- Continue
- Later (intelligent snooze)

- Dismiss

TOKEN — DISMISS = FORGIVEN

Ignoring a reminder has **no penalty**.

Automatic Closure

If the user:

- Resumes the project
- Advances
- Completes the step

The reminder closes automatically.

The system observes.
It does not interrogate.

7. Micro-Interaction Rules

- **MOTION = RESPONSE_ONLY**
Nothing moves without explicit user action
 - **FEEDBACK = WHISPER**
No celebrations, no confetti
 - **INTERACTION = OPTIONAL**
Sidebar interactions are always opt-in
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8. Intended Emotional Outcome

Using EYLA should feel like:

- Clarity

- Calm
- Continuity
- Accompaniment

Never:

- Urgency
 - Pressure
 - Multitasking
 - Noise
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9. Technical Acceptance Checklist (MVP)

The MVP is acceptable **only if all items below are true.**

Orientation & Focus

- Only one step is visually dominant
- The user understands what to do now without documentation

Layout & Structure

- Single vertical axis governs all primary content
- No UI element breaks axis alignment
- Layout does not shift unpredictably

Sidebar

- Sidebar never competes with main content
- No critical action exists only in the sidebar
- Sidebar is contextual, not operational

Timeline

- Timeline items are read-only
- Timeline never changes focus
- Timeline conveys anticipation, not obligation

Reminders

- Can be created without dates
- Notifications are invitations
- Ignoring has no penalty
- Auto-close on progress

Idea Capture

- No categorization required
- Faster to capture than to decide

Emotional Integrity

- One dominant CTA per screen
- No animation without user action
- Interface feels calm, not demanding

10. Closing Statement

This document defines the **design and product contract** of EYLA.

If something:

- Violates a token
- Duplicates focus

- Introduces anxiety
- Requires unnecessary management

👉 **It does not belong in EYLA**, regardless of visual appeal.

EYLA does not impress.

EYLA sustains.