**Input masking** is a technique used in user interfaces to control and format the data a user enters into input fields in real-time. It allows users to input data in a specific format by guiding them through the input process, such as by automatically adding symbols like dashes, slashes, or spaces. It also improves the user experience by preventing incorrect formatting and reducing the chance of errors.

**Common Uses of Input Masking:**

1. **Phone Numbers:**
   * When entering a phone number, the mask may automatically add dashes or parentheses.
   * Example: (123) 456-7890
2. **Dates:**
   * When entering a date, the mask may insert slashes for the user.
   * Example: MM/DD/YYYY → 12/31/2024
3. **Credit Card Numbers:**
   * Input masking may divide the card number into groups for better readability.
   * Example: 1234 5678 9012 3456
4. **Social Security Numbers:**
   * It may automatically insert dashes to match the SSN format.
   * Example: 123-45-6789
5. **Currency:**
   * When entering amounts, it may format the numbers with commas or symbols.
   * Example: $1,234.56

**Benefits of Input Masking:**

* **User-Friendly:** It guides users to enter data in the correct format without confusion.
* **Improves Data Accuracy:** Reduces errors by ensuring data is formatted correctly before submission.
* **Data Security:** Sensitive fields (like passwords or credit card numbers) can be masked to hide actual input, showing dots or asterisks instead (e.g., \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* 1234).