3	Introduction to mock-ups & Hierarchy		Introduction to mock-ups, transitions from low-fidelity to high-fidelity designs, Introduction to foundational elements of visual design, Importance of typography, grids to guide layouts
			Emphasis & Hierarchy in UX design, Give & receive feedback as a UX designer, The basics of design critique sessions, Best practices for critique sessions, Introduction to mock crit session, observe a mock crit, Turn crit session feedback into actions, Iterate on mock-ups based on feedback from crit sessions

➢Introduction to mock-ups

Mock-ups are used by designers mainly to acquire feedback from users about designs and design ideas early in the design process. Mock-ups are 'very early prototypes' made of cardboard or otherwise low-fidelity materials. The user, aided by the designer, may test the mock-up (imagining that it works) and thus provide valuable feedback about functionality/usability/understanding of the basic design idea/etc.

The advantages of mock-ups (and prototypes) are numerous. For example:

- **Mock-ups incite criticism from users because they are low-cost (can be made of cardboard) and low-fidelity. If a user is presented with an early version of a system that has required substantial work, he/she is likely to be more reluctant (as well as able) to criticise it.**
- **When using mock-ups of cardboard or similar materials, the user and designer can collectively change the design using familiar tools such as**

pens, scissors etc. As such, mock-ups are a discussion medium and a discussion facilitator between designer and user.

- Not only can the mock-up function as a discussion medium between designer and user but also between the members of the design team. Thus, mock-ups may help facilitate work across disciplinary borders, bringing together a disparate team.
- Mock-ups make it possible to do usability testing early in the development process.
- Mock-ups incite and legalise experimentation as they are inexpensive to alter.
- Mockups focus on content and functionality and turn attention away from details of graphic design.

Artboard Studio

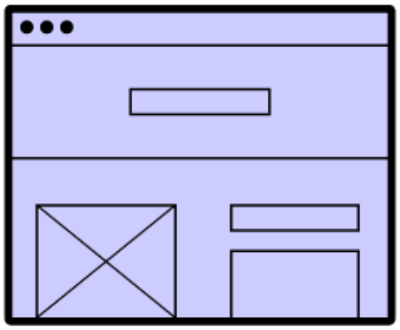
Artboard Studio Mockups allows you to create, animate and design your creative projects in your own scene with their extensive library of items.

From app and website mockups to T-shirt and book covers, you can choose from their carefully crafted mockup templates to fit your needs.

Refer your practical for more mockups.

➢ transitions from low-fidelity to high-fidelity designs

Low-Fidelity Prototyping



Whether UX designers use paper or digital wireframes, low-fidelity prototyping is the first step in testing design ideas and user flows.

Low-fidelity prototypes are either hand-drawn or basic digital wireframes without color or content. These low-tech designs allow UX teams to visualize each screen's layout, test navigation, and experience user flows.

A great example of a digital low-fidelity prototype is a typical eCommerce checkout flow. After creating a wireframe or low-fidelity mockup, UX designers will use buttons or links to connect each screen and create a checkout flow.

The checkout flow might look something like this:

home page > product page > cart > payment/checkout > confirmation > thank you.

Using a low-fidelity prototype, UX designers can experience the checkout flow—ensuring each screen has the correct elements and the user can navigate forwards and backward throughout the flow.

Types of Low-Fidelity Prototypes

- **Paper prototypes are the fastest way for teams to create user flows and imagine interactions. Paper prototyping is particularly beneficial during design sprints when teams have limited time to develop flows and iterations. With paper "screens" laid out on the desk or whiteboard, teams can visualize flows together, allowing effective collaboration and idea-sharing. None of the elements are clickable, but paper prototypes enable teams to design screen layouts and flows, reducing the time needed to create initial digital wireframes.**
- **Clickable wireframes are a low-fidelity digital representation of how screens and flows. Each frame will usually have simple lines and shapes with a prominent CTA for navigation. Modern UX tools like UXPin enable teams to collaborate effectively with comments, replicating the energy and excitement of a paper prototyping session.**

Pros of Low-Fidelity Prototyping

- **Designers can make low-fidelity prototypes fast! This speed allows designers to make quick changes during testing or meetings to visualize fresh ideas.**
- **Low-fidelity prototypes are time efficient – inexpensive, which means teams can test multiple variations and iterations at a low cost.**
- **Anyone can create low-fidelity prototypes because they only use simple lines and shapes—even non-design team members can provide valuable input.**

Cons of Low-Fidelity Prototypes

- **Due to the basic layout and functionality, low-fidelity prototypes don't provide accurate results during testing. Stakeholders might also battle to visualize the final product resulting in poor feedback or confusion.**
- **Without color, interactions, transitions, or animations, low-fidelity prototypes can feel dull and underwhelming.**

High-Fidelity Prototyping

High-fidelity prototyping is where a product begins to take shape. Using mockups with color and content, designers can create hi-fi prototypes that look and function as close to the final product as possible.

Now designers can add interactions, transitions, and animations to create an immersive user experience—making high-fidelity prototypes perfect for usability studies and presenting to stakeholders.

If we go back to our eCommerce example, designers can include product images and colored CTAs to entice users down a particular flow—like completing a checkout.

UX designers can also add interactions, like an overlay showing the user's cart when adding a new item. They might also add screen transitions to indicate a user's movement through the checkout flow.

Types of High-Fidelity Prototypes

- **A high-fidelity prototype using mockups gives users an accurate sense of how a product will look and function. The designs will include color and content, while every link and button should work as it would in the final product.**
- **A high-fidelity prototype using code takes prototyping one step further. For example, with UXPin Merge, designers can use React or Storybook components to create prototypes that function exactly like the final product. Research teams using prototypes from UXPin Merge get better results from usability studies and testing and cut down time to market.**

Pros of High-Fidelity Prototyping

- **High-fidelity prototypes provide meaningful feedback during usability studies because participants can interact with the prototype like they would the final product.**
- **UX designers can test interactions, animations, and transitions.**
- **Hi-fi prototypes provide stakeholders with an accurate representation of the final product. These prototypes could help startups get early-stage funding or pitch product concepts to clients.**

Cons of High-Fidelity Prototypes

- **UX designers must spend more time making changes with greater detail, so high-fidelity prototypes cost more to produce.**

- **Without clear objectives, UX designers can get distracted trying to find the “perfect” interactions, animations, or transitions while creating high-fidelity prototypes. This fixation could lead to unnecessary delays.**

Which Prototype to Use and When?

Now that you have a solid foundation of high-fidelity vs. low-fidelity prototyping, we can begin to explore which you would use and when.

When to Use Low-Fidelity Prototypes

Low-fidelity prototypes are best for the early stages of the design process. UX teams can use paper prototypes before they even sit down at the PC. These low-tech paper designs are also great for collaboration and exploring lots of ideas at speed—perfect for design sprints!

Digital low-fidelity prototypes help UX teams organize information architecture and user flows before committing to mockups.

When NOT to Use Low-Fidelity Prototypes

Unless you’re testing basic user flows, low-fidelity prototypes do not provide meaningful feedback during usability studies. Users might get distracted by the unfamiliarity of the product and thus focus on the wrong elements.

When to Use High-Fidelity Prototypes

UX teams should only move from lo-fi to hi-fi prototyping once designers have completed mockups to complete at least one user flow for testing.

These mockups must include clickable links and elements, color, and content—but might not require interactions, animations, and transitions for the first round of usability studies.

High-fidelity prototypes are helpful for testing layouts and how page transitions or scrolling might affect content and elements. UX designers can also test how interactions, animations, and transitions affect the user experience.

High-fidelity prototypes should be the last stage of the design process before handing over to engineering.

When NOT to Use High-Fidelity Prototypes

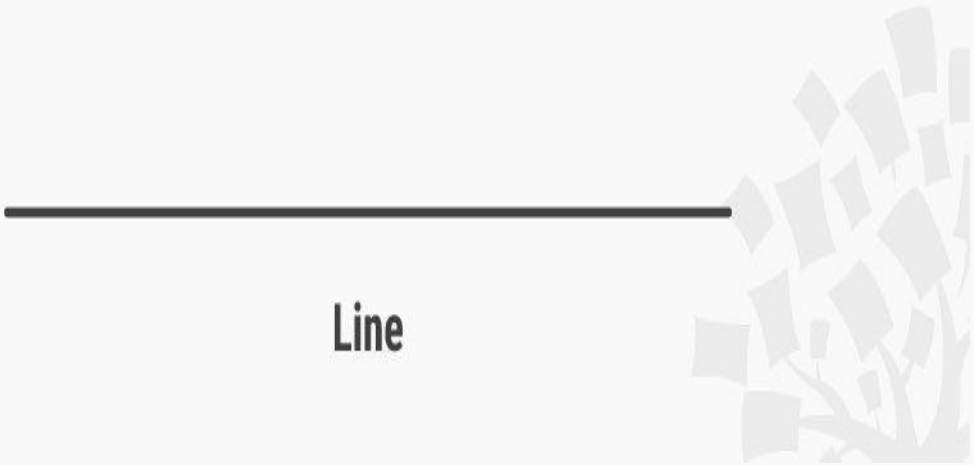
UX designers must not build high-fidelity prototypes before researchers have thoroughly tested lo-fi prototypes and created mockups with content, and color.

If teams want to test design concepts fast, creating and editing high-fidelity prototypes will severely hamper progress.

Introduction to foundational elements of visual design

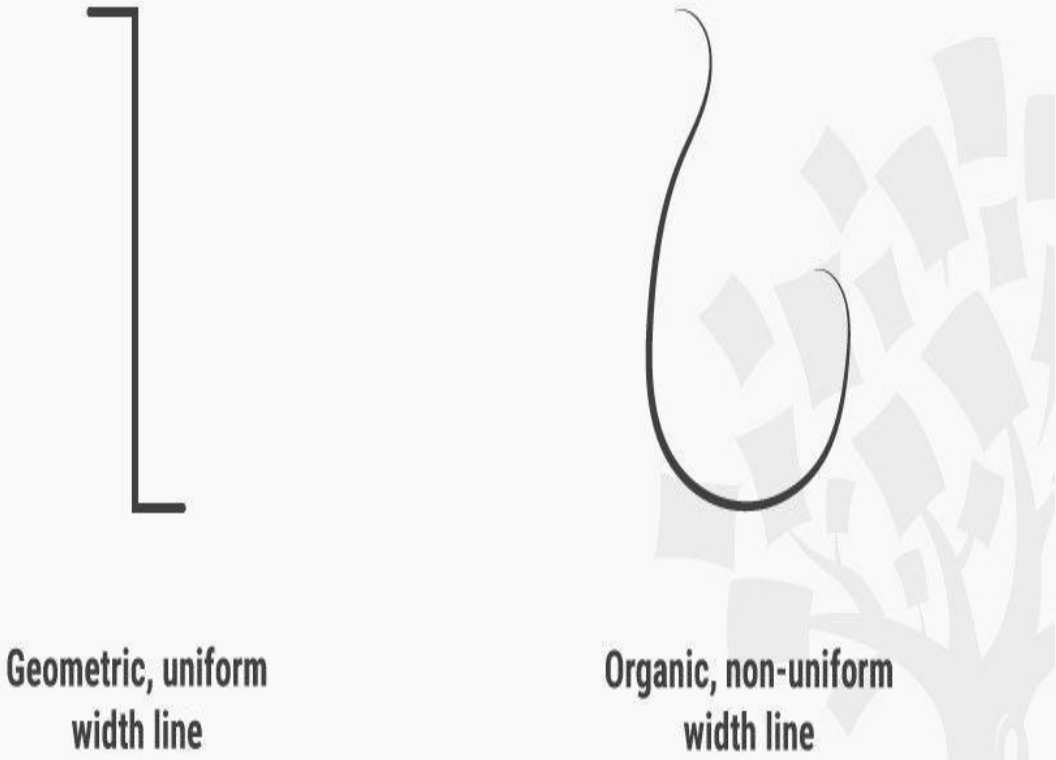
Line

Lines are strokes connecting two points, and the most basic element of visual design. We can use them to create shapes, and when we repeat them, we can form patterns that create textures.



A line connects two points and is the simplest element of design. Put it this way, you can't strip down any lower than a one-dimensional object in the world of design. (In science, you can, but that's another story.)

Although simple, lines can possess a large variety of properties that allow us to convey a range of expressions. For example, lines can be thick or thin, straight or curved, have uniform width or taper off, be geometric (i.e., look like they are drawn by a ruler or compass) or organic (i.e., look like they are drawn by hand).



Lines are simple, but can convey different emotions by using different properties.

A line can also be implied: that is, *suggested* by forming an invisible connection between other elements. In the logo of the Interaction Design Foundation, for instance, the words “Interaction Design Foundation” around the tree connect to create a semicircular implied line.

Shape

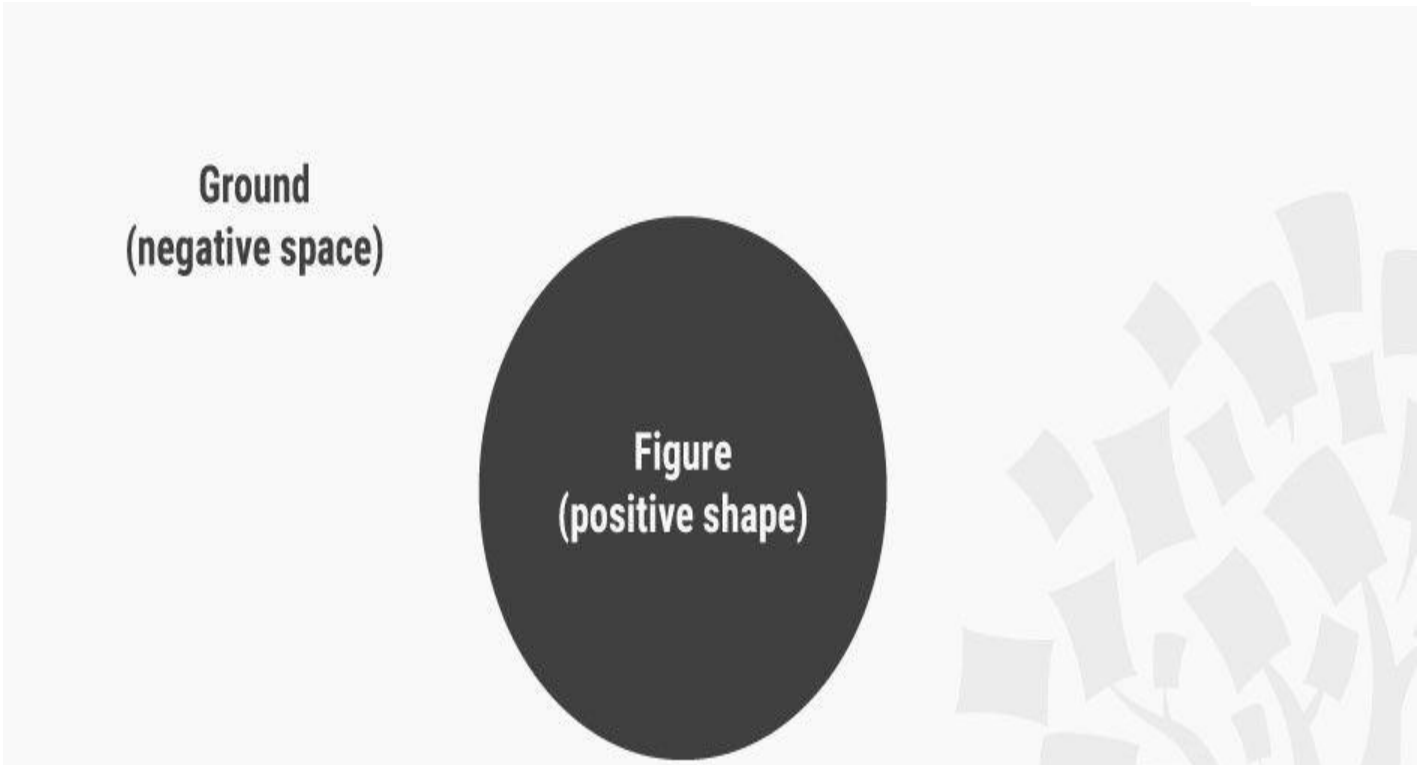
Shapes are self-contained areas, usually formed by lines (although they may also be formed by using a different colour, value or texture). A shape has two dimensions: length and width.

Shape

We tend to identify objects by their basic shapes, and only focus on the details (such as lines, values, colours and textures) on closer inspection. For this reason, shapes are crucial elements that we designers use for quick and effective communication.

Negative/White Space

Negative space (also known as white space) is the empty area around a (positive) shape. The relation between the shape and the space is called *figure/ground*, where the shape is the figure and the area around the shape is the ground. We should be aware that when designing positive shapes, we are also designing negative spaces at the same time. Negative space is just as important as the positive shape itself — because it helps to define the boundaries of the positive space and brings balance to a composition.



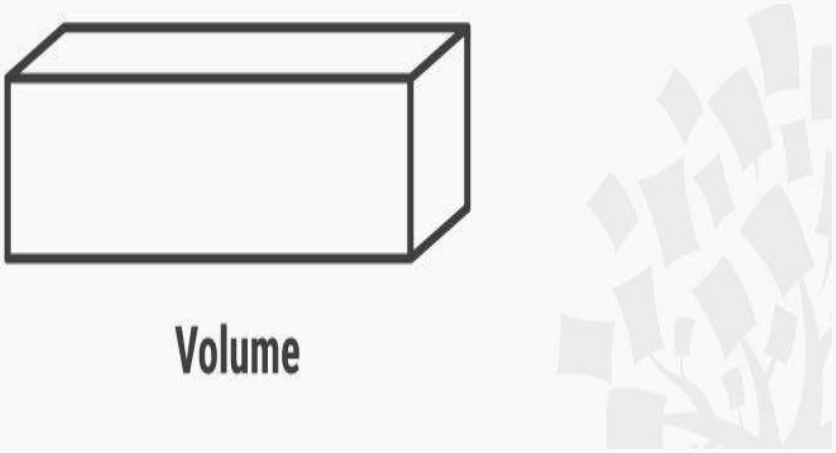
Negative space, also called white space, is the empty area around a positive shape. You can choose to see this as a blue ball set against a light blue rectangle — or, is it a light blue rectangle with a hole in it?

Some designs make use of negative space to create interesting visual effects. For example, the famous World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) logo makes use of the confusion between positive shape and negative space to create the image of a panda.

WWF's logo doesn't explicitly draw out the entire panda: it cleverly uses negative (white) space around the black shapes to suggest the rest of the panda.

Volume

Volume applies to visuals that are three-dimensional and have length, width and depth. We rarely use volume in visual design, because most digital products end up being viewed on a 2D screen, although some apps and websites do use 3D models and graphics. (Technically, though, 3D images viewed on a 2D screen are still 2D images.)



Volume has 3 dimensions: length, width and depth. This image is a simulation of volume in 2D graphics.

Value

Value, quite simply, describes light and dark.

Light value vs. dark value: value describes lightness and darkness.

A design with a high contrast of values (i.e., one which makes use of light and dark values) creates a sense of *clarity*, while a design with similar values creates a sense of *subtlety*. We can also use value to simulate volume in 2D, for instance, by using lighter values where the light hits the object and darker values for shadows.

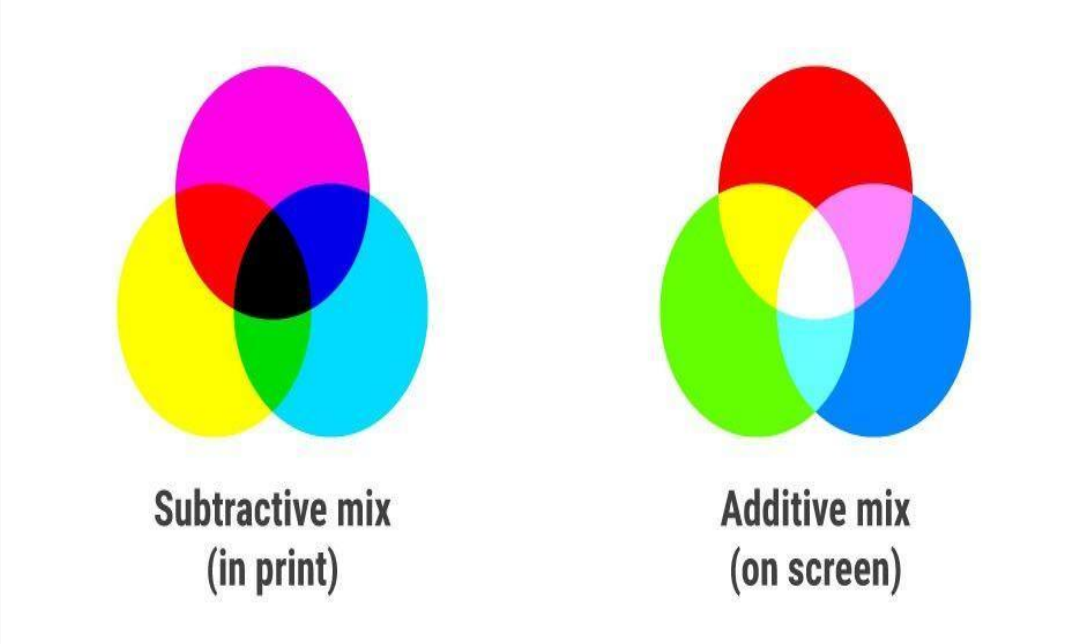
Colour

Colour is an element of light. Colour theory is a branch of design focused on the mixing and usage of different colours in design and art. In colour theory, an important distinction exists between colours that mix subtractively and colours that mix additively.

In paint, colours mix *subtractively* because the pigments in paints absorb light. When different pigments are mixed together, the mixture absorbs a wider range of light, resulting in a darker colour. A subtractive mix of cyan, magenta

and yellow will result in a black colour. A subtractive mix of colours in paint and print produces the CMYK (i.e., **C**yan, **M**agenta, **Y**ellow and

In digital design, where the product shows up on a screen, colours mix *additively*, since the screen emits light and colours add to one another accordingly. When different colours are mixed together on a screen, the mixture emits a wider range of light, resulting in a lighter colour. An additive mix of red, blue and green colours on screens will produce white light. An additive mix of colours on digital screens produces the RGB (i.e., **R**ed, **G**reen, **B**lue) colour system.

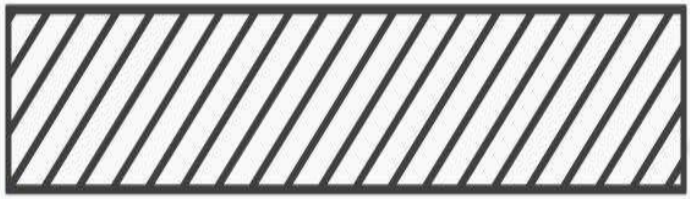


The subtractive mix of colours in paint and print produces the CMYK colour system. The additive mix of colours on digital screens produces the RGB colour system.

We use colours in visual design to convey emotions in and add variety and interest to our designs, separate distinct areas of a page, and differentiate our work from the competition.

Texture

Texture is the surface quality of an object.



Texture

Texture can be created by a repeated pattern of lines, or by using tiled images of textures. Above, the diagonal lines add a 'grip' effect to an otherwise 'smooth' rectangle.

As a designer, you can work with two types of textures: *tactile* textures, where you can feel the texture, and *implied* textures, where you can only see — i.e., not feel — the texture. Most visual designers will work with implied textures, since screens (at least as far as the state of the art had pushed them by the mid-2010s) are unable to produce tactile textures.

The app icon designs in iOS 6 and earlier mimic the glossy texture of glass to incite users to tap them. Later, Apple (in)famously introduced a linen fabric texture to much of its user interface. With the popularity of flat design (a minimalist style that features clean spaces and two-dimensional, flat illustrations), the use of textures in visual design would greatly decrease by the mid-2010s — although they *can* still be very useful.

Around 2011, Apple introduced a widespread use of linen texture (which first appeared on iOS) in all of its operating systems.

Importance of typography

When someone visits your website, they don't care much about the graphics, they just go through the textual content. This is because, texts are the major sources of information. So while creating a content for your website you should take care of balancing the graphics and text. This is where typography comes into play.

Typography is all about adjusting the text within the design while creating powerful content. It provides attractive appearance and preserves the aesthetic value of your content. It plays a vital role in setting the overall tone of your website, and ensures a great user experience.

Typography is an art of arranging all the contents of your website, giving a feel to it and presenting the information in a professional way. If you are a web designer, then you should give typography some priority. Here are 8 reasons why.

1. It is a medium of communication.

A website may be related to a business or art or some specific product. When you visit a website, you can easily determine what sort of information it provides. This is due to the use of typography.

The arrangement of the contents, the colors and fonts used and other minute details provide a way of communication between the visitor and the website owner.

2. It attracts the readers.

The basic approach of using typography is selecting the correct font. The font should be as clean as possible. It shouldn't be too small and crummy. Using fonts that are easy to read are key to presentation.

The fonts add value to your text. It helps readers to perceive information from the text. The correct choice of color, font and text size can prove to be vital for attracting your target audience.

3. It holds the audience's attention.

It's easy to attract the readers using typography but holding their attention requires more creativity. You can work on creating some interest within the content by highlighting texts that are captivating.

Every content may contain some mundane text. If used effectively, typography can make them look attractive. The correct approach might be the use of some attractive graphics.

4. It conveys a certain mood or feeling.

A content might be an advertisement of a computer game. It might contain some exciting features of the game. In such case, you should design the content that is fun, playful and glamorous.

If your content requires some seriousness, you should choose fonts that are simple, plain and professional. The choice of such typeface determines how the content is understood.

5. It establishes an information hierarchy.

Information hierarchy means categorizing the texts inside a content according to their importance. You can use different font types and sizes to differentiate the texts that are most important.

You can highlight the important topics by using bigger font sizes. This will help the audience to easily determine the information that they should pay more attention to.

6. It helps to create harmony.

If you design a typography and repeat the same pattern throughout your presentation, then it creates a harmony. Harmony is the leading feature in typography design.

Harmonic design provides an artistic effect to your website. Using same font for similar contents provides continuity. The alignment of fonts with correct proportion organizes your presentation and makes it uncluttered.

7. It reflects professionalism.

The correct addition of typography in a design project reflects great professionalism. Appropriate use of text font and size gains the trust of customers. This will add benefit to the marketing of your product if your website is based on business.

The professional approach of design includes typography at its core. Typography defines the importance of content you provide and customer feel secure regarding the information they gain.

8. It creates and builds recognition.

If you follow a pattern on using fonts and present your site with some rhythm, it adds a great value to your company brand. The audience always remembers the fonts that you use in presenting the visuals.

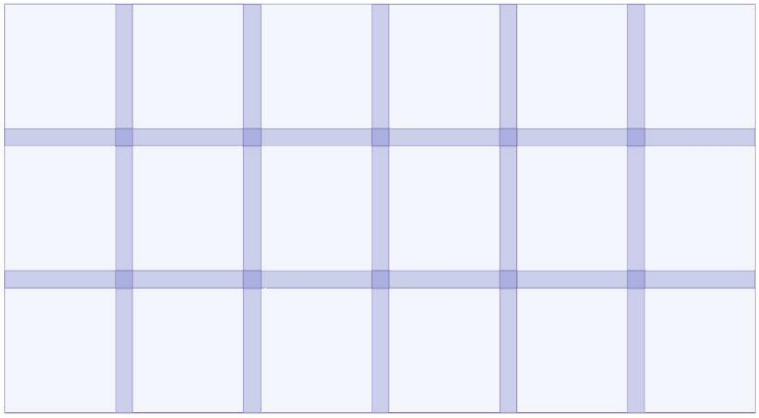
Typography specializes your company and it works as an identification for the viewers. With the help of typography each of your content gains your company's presence.

grids to guide layouts

A grid is like invisible lines that hold a style along. It is a series of vertical and horizontal lines that are used to separate a page vertically and horizontally into margins, columns.

When starting a design, grids are used to organize the elements. This helps to maintain the balance between page and slide.

In today's world, all visual interactions are screen based, where content is viewed in multiple screens i.e.mobile phones, tablets, laptops, TVs and smartwatches. As a designer in any UI UX Design Company, this is our responsibility to deliver the pleasurable and friendly user experience to people. Grids can help us do that.



ANATOMY OF A GRID:

1. Format

The format is the full space in which designs are set out. In print style, the format is the page while on the web, the format is the size and area of the browser window.

2. Margin

Margins are the empty areas between the sides of the format and content. We can also say that margins are the negative space between the inner edge of the format and the outer edge of the content.

3. Column and alleys
A grid is formed of 2 main components: columns and alleys. Columns are square measure building blocks of grids. The area between columns is remarked as alleys.

4. Modules
Modules are the building blocks of the grid. They are basically the spaces between the columns and rows. Vertical groups of modules, together, create columns. Horizontal groups create rows.

TYPES OF LAYOUT GRIDS:

There are a lot of different types of grid, and they all serve different purposes.

• manuscript grid

• column grid

• modular grid

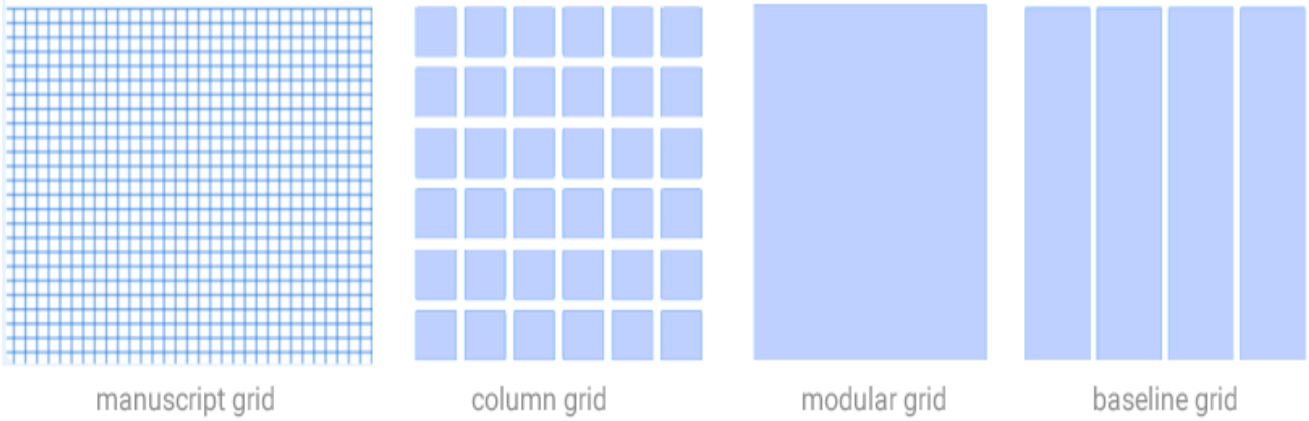
• baseline grid

Manuscript Grid:
This is a one-column grid which simply determines that where the text will sit, in a page. Manuscript grids are utilized in documents, e-books, pdf and display with uncountable text.

Column Grids:
These are used for magazines to set content in columns, making it easier to browse. This is the most widely recognized kind of grid utilized by graphic and website designers.

Modular grids:
A modular grid is similar to a column grid, however, it additionally has rows. Modular grid separates a page both vertically and horizontally into modules.

Baseline Grids:
A baseline grid is a heavy and dense grid of equally spaced horizontal lines that determine where the text will sit. Baseline grids are often used in combination with column grids, to make sure that the lines of text in each column align uniformly across a spread. This grid creates a decent reading rhythm for any style with uncountable text.



Emphasis & Hierarchy in UX design

Hierarchy provides the user with a road map to navigate throughout your design. In an era where attention spans and patience are limited, hierarchy can be the secret weapon that ensures your users find what they need, while encouraging them to explore further. Considering the importance of user experience, hierarchy is often critical to the success of an interface.

Hierarchy in design is a big topic. Many other design principles (alignment, emphasis, proportion, white space etc.) can help influence a hierarchical structure in your design. In this lesson, we'll focus on a higher-level overview of how to create hierarchy in UI Design.

The Two Types of UIs

Generally speaking, user interfaces are either text-heavy or visually engaging. While some UIs strike a good balance between both, we often find ourselves on pages that are more of one than the other. Both types serve a different purpose.

- Interfaces that are **text-heavy** are generally intended to be more informative. Blog posts, news articles, and stories would fall under the "text-heavy" umbrella.

- Interfaces that are **visually engaging** are generally intended to be more exploratory. Online games, homepages, and landing pages would fall under the “exploratory” umbrella.

This distinction is important because either type can influence the way you’ll use hierarchy in your design.

Text-Heavy Content

The first UI type we’ll look at is text-heavy content.

Ever since we began using text as a form of communication, three important things have happened:

1. We've been conditioned to read from left to right.
2. We've been conditioned to read from top to bottom.
3. We've been conditioned to "skim" content

…unless you are reading this in Arabic, Aramaic, Azeri, Dhivehi / Maldivian, Hebrew, Kurdish (Sorani), Persian / Farsi, Urdu, Hanuno'o, Batak, or Tagbanwa (source).

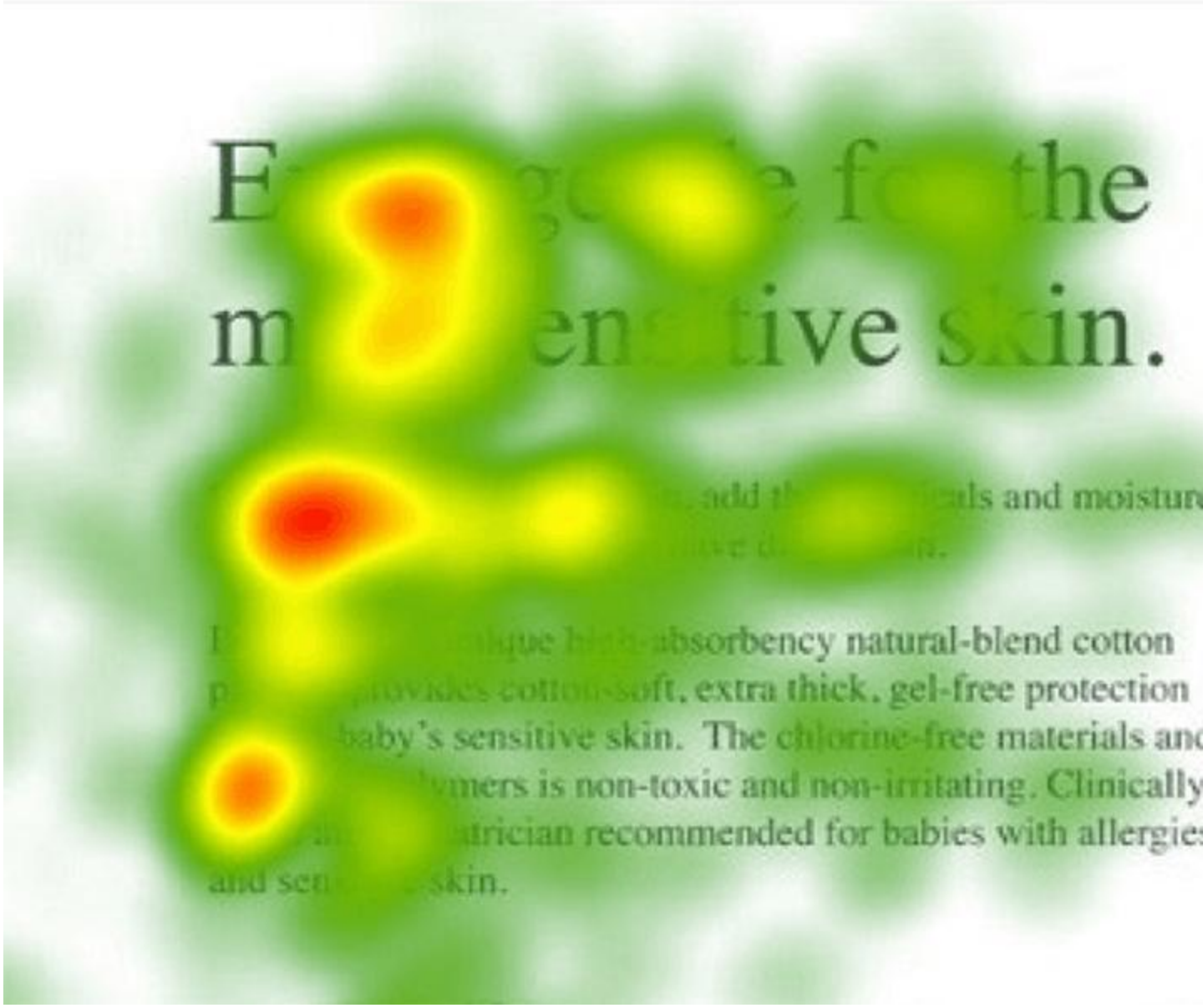
Understanding this behavior influences our use of hierarchy for text-heavy content. This is known as **typographic hierarchy**.

How Text Has Shaped User Expectations

The points mentioned above partially explains an observation known as the "F" pattern. Many researchers have conducted eye-tracking experiments to arrive at this conclusion:

People skim content first, then continue reading only if you've grabbed their attention.

This heat map illustrates the pattern that we follow when confronted by text.



The red to yellow areas represent where the most focus is given. In this example, we can see that people scan from the top and down first, along the left side of the text block. Attention is moved to the right areas that demand the most attention.

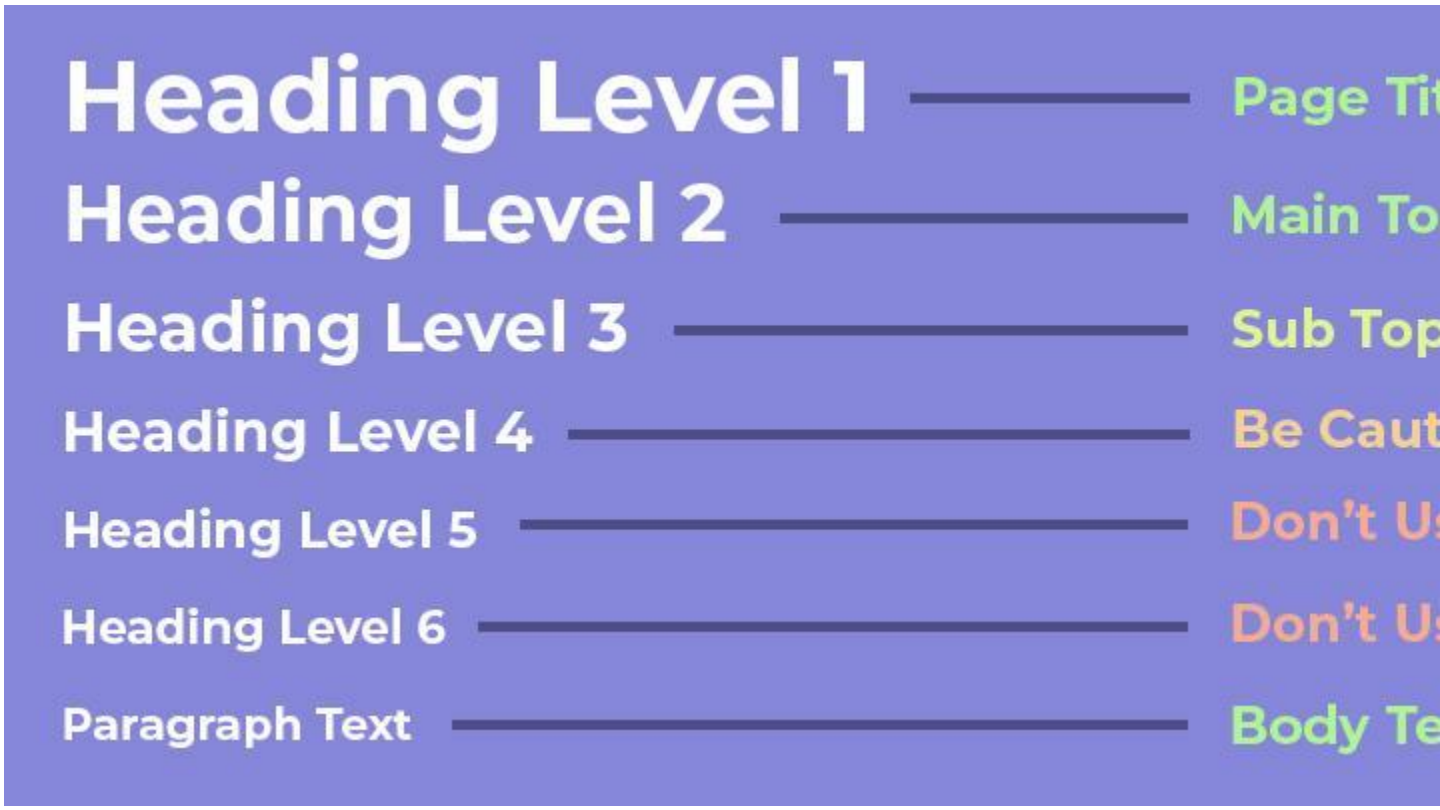
Given this behavior, we can see the importance of typographic hierarchy.

Typographic Hierarchy

People are not interested in reading every single word you have to say. Typographic hierarchy allows you to organize your content in a way that helps readers find the information that is most pertinent to their needs.

In its most basic form, typographic hierarchy is created with headings, followed by body text. If you're familiar with HTML, you'll know that there are six levels of headings that can be applied to content.

From an SEO perspective, it may be worthwhile to take advantage of all six heading levels. However, from a design perspective, more than 3 – 4 levels of hierarchy becomes very difficult to follow.



As a general rule of thumb, when creating text-heavy content, headings and body text should be used in this manner:

Heading Level 1

Your most dominant heading (heading level 1) should be reserved for the title of the page. Just as every book only has one front cover, a page or interface should only have one main heading.

Heading Level 2

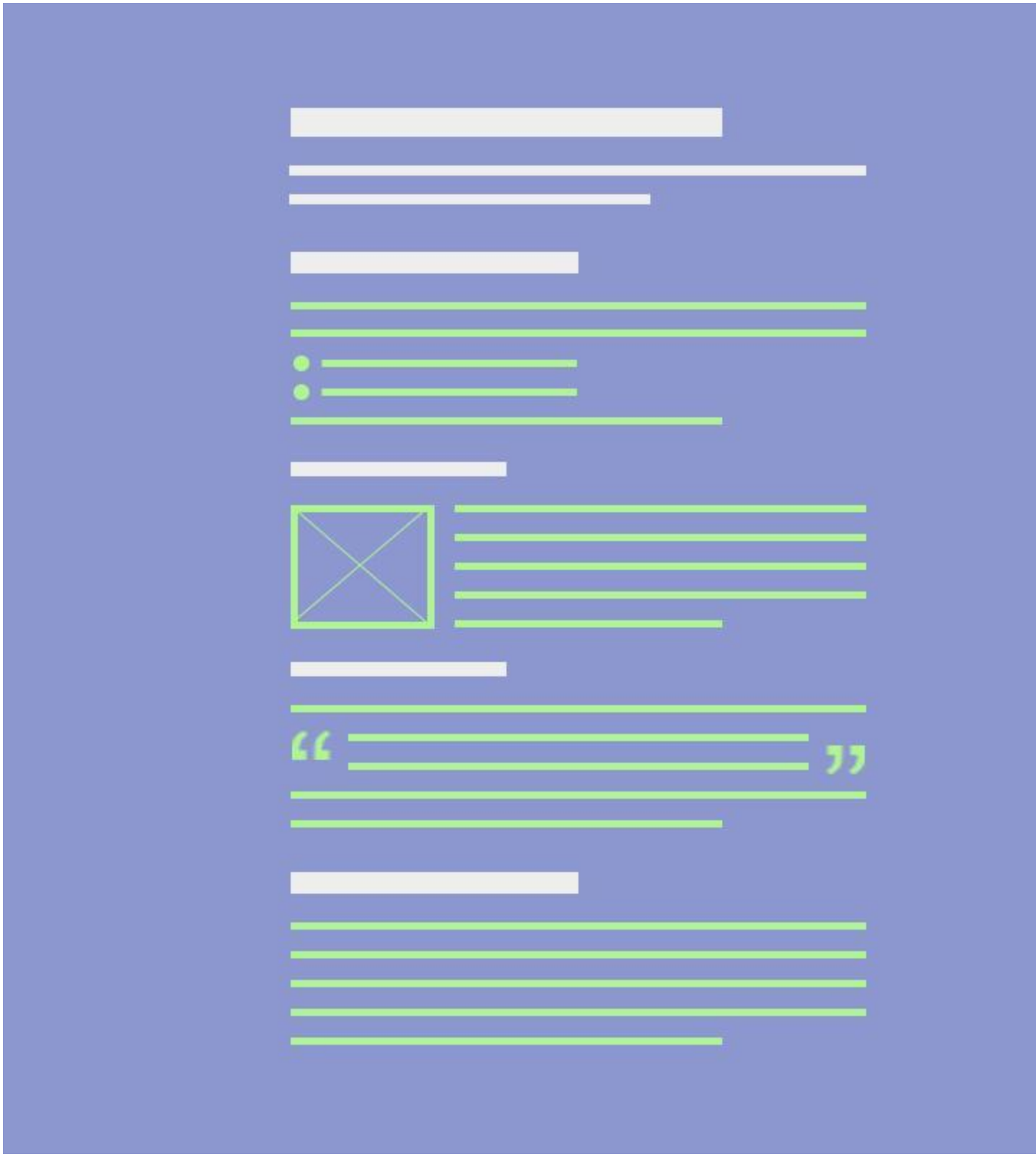
The second most dominant heading (heading level 2) should be used as markers to break up your content into logical sections. These headings assist readers in finding the content they want to engage in, so make them relevant, inviting, and captivating.

Heading Level 3

The third most dominant heading can be used to further explain a more dominant heading or break up larger sections into smaller ones between your level 2 headings.

Body Text

Body text is used between the headings. To avoid monotony and keep content digestible, it helps to break up the layout of your content with the use of bullet points, bold text, italics and images.



All combined, this creates typographic hierarchy, helping the reader move through the content in priority order.

➢ Give & receive feedback as a UX designer

Set a process and clear expectations

Before you ask for your first round of feedback, explain this to your client:

1. **Precisely what you want feedback on** (so your client focuses on the right things). At this stage in the project, are you worried about navigation, layout, typography, content, colour, etc. Don't ask for feedback on *"anything that comes to mind"*. Ask for specific feedback with a specific goal in mind, something like *"Please comment on this proposed navigation wireframe. Do you feel this layout will allow your customers easy to access your most important information?"*
2. **Who is providing feedback?** It this a single person or a committee? Is there one point of contact who will be responsible for consolidating all feedback for you? Is there

one person's voice who has the power to overrule the others? You need to understand the dynamics of the feedback group. The bigger the group, the more likely that it will have conflicting feedback, so encourage your client to downsize that core group as much as possible to keep things focused.

3. **How do you want to receive feedback?** In-person? By phone or email? In InVision comments? Consider how you are you most comfortable receiving feedback, and also what format is most efficient for your design process. I often say *"Please consolidate all of your feedback and post it as InVision comments, so we can keep discussions in a single place, and in-context."*
4. **What timeframe you expect the feedback to be complete?** Twenty-four hours? One week? These timeframe greatly impact on the project's momentum and should have been agreed upon as part of your initial engagement. I usually request *"Please provide feedback within 24 hours. If that's not possible, please notify me so I can adjust my schedule accordingly."*

Your clients aren't mind-readers. It's your responsibility to set these expectations and continue to remind your client about them until you feel that you're both on the same page and have a mutual understanding of what is needed for successful design process.

Start early and ask often

Gone are the days of the big reveal from the celebrity designer, when you present a nearly finished concept to your clients and hope for a "wow" response. Especially with digital products, it's essential to start the feedback and iteration process as early as possible, because the best work is deeply collaborative. Don't head too far down any path without feedback first. This keeps thing efficient and on-budget, which will please your business-conscious clients.

Aim for frequent small updates and continuous feedback rather than large chunks of work with occasional feedback between. This has the added benefit of making your client feel more involved too.

Don’t be afraid to pull in others for feedback right from the get-go. Your developer(s) should have eyes across the design and UX early on, to help pinpoint areas that may cause dev headaches and cost overruns.

Stay open-minded and don’t take it personally

Take critique with grace and dignity. Never get defensive. Remember your client is only trying to help you create the best design outcome. Critique of your design is not personal. Your client may see things from a very different perspective than you, and that perspective is valuable. The feedback process is the most important way for you to improve as a designer, so take everything constructively and try to learn and grow from it.

Lose your ego and stay open-minded to ideas no matter where they come from. If you have to shoot-down an idea, use data and experience to justify your thinking. Stay polite at all time, even if you feel your client isn’t.

Clarify and find the root of the cause

Ask **why?** all the time! If your client doesn't provide adequate justification for their requests, demand it. If feedback gets too prescriptive or subjective, focus back to goals and metrics for project success, and frame your clarifying questions in those term to force the ensuing discussion down the right path. Don't end that discussion until you're satisfied you fully understand the motivation behind that piece of feedback.

Question your own assumptions too! As a designer it's easy to get stuck in a rut and keep reusing the same design solutions over and over. But the right solution for one project mat be wrong for another. Learn to step back from your work from time to time to question yourself.

Present better solutions, and know how to justify them.

If your client requests a design solution that you believe is inferior to your ideas, **show it to them anyway**. And then present your "better" solution along with it as comparison. This ensures your client that you're listening to their ideas rather than dismissing them, so they feel they don't lose control of the outcome.

You must be able to clearly articulate why you think one potential solution is better than another — and please leave out the design jargon and buzzwords. Talk in a simple language your client will understand. Remember, you are encouraging your client to keep things objective and goal-oriented, so you must do the same. You're not allowed to say *"I like this option better"* without backing that up with a strong mixture of:

- UX logic
- Industry experience
- User testing
- Hard data from other sources

- Industry best-practices

If you take this approach, more often than not your client will agree with your preferred solution. And after repeating this process a few times you will earn their trust and find they allow you more freedom in your design decision making.

Take praise with grain of salt too!

Sometimes you'll have clients who seems to love everything you produce, and offer very little feedback. This can feel wonderful and make for a quick and smooth design process. However, does it produce the best design outcome?

Even the best of us don't always get things right the first time around. Critical examination through someone else's eyeballs is an important part of the design process, and it often forces us out of our comfort zones to discover better design solutions.

If your client is too full of love and not enough critique, push them a bit harder to uncover the more subtle concerns they may have. They might be too polite to bring something up. They may not be thinking in the right terms, because you haven't set expectations clearly. Force them to play devil's advocate or view the design from a different perspective to find areas that could use improvement. The final design will be better off with as much scrutiny as possible.

➢ What Is a Critique?

Definition: A design critique refers to analyzing a design, and giving feedback on whether it meets its objectives.

A design critique usually manifests as a group conversation with the ultimate goal of improving a design. It does not mean simply judging a design.

There are two distinct breeds of design critiques: **standalone critiques** and **design reviews**. Standalone critiques are gatherings with the sole purpose of improving a particular piece of work. Design reviews, in contrast, are usually evaluations of a design based on a set of heuristics; they can be done by a usability expert or in a meeting held at the end of the creative process in order

to gain approval and move forward. In this article we will focus specifically on standalone critiques.

In a standalone critique, there are two roles: the presenter and the critiquer. The **presenter** shares the design, while the **critiquer** acts as the critic, offering informed thoughts or perspectives. (Both roles can involve multiple people.) Critiques can, and should be, crossdisciplinary. They can happen at any stage in a design process, and usually there will be different critique sessions for several iterations of the same design.

Throughout this article you'll observe 3 underlying themes of effective critiques:

1. **Clear scope for the conversation.** Too often critiques become unwieldy due to lack of scope. Critiques will only prove beneficial if there are unambiguous boundaries for what can and should be critiqued. Once boundaries are set, participants, duration, and formality can be determined.
2. **Agreed-upon design objectives for the work.** In order to analyze a design and whether it meets its goals, there must be agreement on the problem that needs to be solved. This likely means a clear understanding of users and their needs. Without these, any feedback is subjective and baseless.

3. **Conversation rather than command.** Commands, or directives, can very quickly ruin the exact purpose of the critique, which is to foster open discussion in order to improve the outcome..

The word “critique” has slightly negative connotations in everyday language, but when conducted according to this definition, a design critique is a positive event that should feel good for all parties involved.

Why Critique?

It is nearly impossible to improve a design without feedback from others. Their input helps you avoid mistakes and thus create higher quality work. The old saying rings true: two brains (or more in this case) are always better than one.

A positive culture of critique supports team building in multiple ways. First, from the get-go, everyone is able to stay up to date and in the loop on the work. Sharing designs early allows for earlier buy-in from team members that otherwise may not feel confident about the work and builds team consensus. Over time, this practice creates team trust and prevents any destructive egos from causing too much damage to a project.

Second, design critiques enable cooperation and collaboration. Your work can influence the work of others. For example, developers could build more extensible code throughout the current release if they have an understanding

for what designs may come in the future. In this same way, they could question technical feasibility when the designs are still in progress and can be changed without throwing time and money away. Multiple designers who work on different parts of a big project can pick up possible inconsistencies across the overall user experience when they all participate in early critiques of each other’s draft designs.