Mobile Design Pattern Gallery

Ratings offer important feedback

High ratings are not as valuable as low ratings

Crashing

Lack of key features

Poor navigation

Confusing interface design

Good navigation, like good design, is invisible. Applications with good navigation just feel intuitive and make it easy to accomplish any task, from browsing friends to applying for a car loan.

Focus on seven patterns for the main menu.

Springboard

List Menu

Tab Menu

Gallery

Dashboard

Metaphor

Mega Menu

## Springboard

The springboard is os neutral, working equally well across devices.

Grids for 3x3, 2x3, 2x2 and 1x2 are the most common layouts, but springboard doesn’t have to follow a grid layout.

Utilize size to create a sense of hierarchy.

## List Menu

The List Menu is similar to that Springboard in that each is a jumping off point into the application. There are numerous variations of this pattern including personalized list menus, grouped lists, and enhanced lists. Enhanced lists are simple List Menus with additional features for searching, browsing or filtering.

List Menus work well for long titles or those that require sub text. Applications using List Menus should offer an option on all internal screens for returning to the List Menu, usually a button in the title bar with a list icon or the word “menu.”

## Tabs

Tab navigation is *not* OS neutral since each OS has their own guidelines for tab location and design. When choosing this pattern for your application, be prepared to customize the tab location for the different OSs.

Bottom tabs, favored by iOS, WebOS, and BlackBerry, are the most thumb friendly option.

Horizontally scrolling bottom tabs, as shown in the Starbucks and Blue Mobile apps, provide a useful mechanism for offering more options without having to open up a More...screen.

Top tabs, favored by Android, Symbian, and Windows, look familiar since they are modeled after standard website navigation patterns. Nokia and Windows both use scrolling top tabs that you can flick to reveal more menu options.

Clearly indicate the selected menu item by visually differentiating the selected tab from the others. Use easy to recognize icons or icons with labels.

## Gallery

The Gallery pattern surfaces individual pieces of content for navigation. Content is usually individual articles, recipes, photos, or products and can be arranged in a carousel, grid, or slideshow.

Sometimes the content will be easier to browse if it is grouped. Dwell use side tabs to organize gallery content into manageable chunks.

The Gallery pattern works best for frequently updated content that people want to browse.

## Dashboard

Dashboards provide a roll-up of key performance indicators, KPIs. Each metric can be drilled into for additional information. This primary navigation pattern is useful for financial applications, analytics tools and sales and marketing applications.

Don’t overload the dashboard; conduct research to determine the key metrics to include.

## Metaphor

This pattern is characterized by a landing page modeled to reflect the application’s metaphor. This is used primarily in games, but can also be seen in applications that help people catalog and categorize items, like notes, books, wine, etc.

## Mega Menu

A mobile Mega Menu is like the web Mega Menu, a big overlay panel with custom formatting and grouping of the menu options. The RipCurl website uses a mega menu for navigating into sub categories of clothing.

The webOS version of Facebook uses a megamenu for streamlined navigation, avoiding the extra navigation found in a Springboard pattern. Walmart uses this same pattern in their Android app.

Determine your information architecture before choosing the navigation pattern. Choose a more appropriate pattern, like Tabs, if there are only a few major sections in the app.

## Secondary Navigation

This chapter didn’t feel complete with only menu patterns, so I broadened it to include secondary navigation. By secondary navigation, I mean the navigation within a page or module. For example, the Springboard in the ANZ application is secondary to the primary Tab navigation. Similarly in Jamie Oliver’s Recipes, the List is secondary to the primary Tab navigation.

Any of the primary navigation patterns can be reused as secondary navigation patterns. It is common to see Tabs with Tabs, Tabs with Lists, Tabs and Dashboard, Springboard and Gallery, etc.

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There are some additional patterns that work well for secondary navigation, but probably aren’t ideal for primary navigation:

## Page Carousel

This pattern can be used to quickly navigate a discrete set of pages using the flick gesture. The page indicator (the iOS term for the little dots) displays how many pages are in the carousel; flicking displays the next page. All four examples below use the page carousel within a selected tab.

The page carousel works best for navigating a small number of pages. Use a visual indicator to reflect the number of screens, and current screen. Flick is the common gesture to navigate the carousel.

## Image Carousel

The image carousel may be a 2D carousel or more like the iTunes coverflow. IMDB uses the image carousel to surface the most viewed movies. We used it to display featured products in the retail application we designed for the Adobe Flex Showcase.

The Photo Cookbook is another example of the Image Carousel; however, the images are grouped in columns by recipe type.

ANZ’s banking app displays account information payment sources in a coverflow. While this is attractive and probably demos well, the excitement of flicking through cards to make a payment probably wears thin after the first few uses.

The Image Carousel works best for displaying fresh visual content, like articles, products, and photos. Provide visual affordance, either with arrows, partial images or page indicators (dots) that more content can be accessed.

## Expanding List

The Expanding List allows a single screen drill down to reveal more information. Android Gingerbread uses this pattern in the call log. All calls from the same number are collapsed into one row. Tapping the icon expands the list to show the individual instances.

This pattern is more common in mobile optimized websites than mobile applications, but can work well in both cases. Take for example the Gap.com mobile site. The Expanding List is used instead of a Cascading List to disclose all of the Women’s clothing categories.

The Expanding List pattern works best for progressively disclosing more details or options for an object.

## SLIDE OUT NAV