

Localization

Overview

International design is a complex challenge that goes beyond translation. The aim of it is to create interface that is equally usable, relevant, and meaningful across the world to amplify the experiences of global users. Acknowledging cultural characteristics and differences is the first step to create richer, world-ready digital experiences. There are a number of factors we need to consider when designing for our content so that the user experience remains the same around the world and so everyone can understand our interface in their own language. These guidelines will help you design interface and write content that can be used in every part of the world.

If you were here to understand date and time zone formatting, please visit the [Numbers, Dates & Time](#) page.

Text Expansion

One of the biggest challenges to designing for a global audience is to create interfaces that can efficiently adapt to different languages that have different writing and reading systems, grammar rules and typographic convention. Another is translating content that leads to textual content that can differ drastically in length.

When interfaces are localized, the content will often expand in length. In some languages, text can expand up to 50% longer in vertical space on average than English. For character-based languages, text wrapping and line breaking can't always rely on spaces to separate words. Our interface needs to be flexible enough to accommodate language-specific formatting and text expansion without changing its context of use.

<p>correlation between the number of characters in a text field and the amount of text expansion. These experimental values clearly indicate that shorter text fields are more susceptible to text expansion, and these values can help us predict the effect on our user interfaces. This table was taken from Adobe Spectrum's page on International Design: https://spectrum.adobe.com/page/international-design/</p> <p>Below is an example of how text can vastly expand or compress depending on which language it is translated in.</p>	Characters	Max. Estimated Expansion	Likely Mapping To:
	up to 10	300%	buttons, pickers, tabs
	11 to 20	200%	labels, input fields
	21 to 30	180%	large headers
	31 to 50	160%	small headers, tooltips
	51 to 70	140%	short paragraphs
	70+	130%	longer paragraphs

	Chinese	日期和时间应包括事件发生的时区。
	English	Dates and time should include the time zone where the event occurred.
	Greek	Οι ημερομηνίες και η ώρα πρέπει να περιλαμβάνουν τη ζώνη ώρας όπου συνέβη το συμβάν.

- Best practices:**
- Always assume the worst-case scenario for text length, especially on mobile and in layouts such as tables and columns.
 - Work with linguistic experts to review line breaks and word wrapping for character-based languages, like Chinese or Japanese, to ensure they don't break sentences.
 - Lay out the elements in a way where text expansion does not hinder your information hierarchy.
- Pay particular attention to content elements that only have a few words. In English, labels and buttons exclude words such as "a" or "the", but many other languages need to include them.
 - Overall these small pieces of text may expand up to 300%.
 - Adjust the line-height value of paragraphs to create some extra breathing room between lines, and when necessary, increase interline spacing between characters.

Do

Ensure the right amount of padding for a clean and easy to read interface.

Use single columns to stack elements flexibly to accommodate for text expansion.

Welcome to Product

Description text about what this coachmark is highlighting. Should be written in plain English, and should be a maximum of 400 words.

PREVIOUSNEXT

↓

бүтээгдэхүүнд тавтай морилно уу

Энэхүү дасгалжуулагчийн тэмдэглэл буй зүйлийн тайлбарын төгсгөл. Энгийн англи хэл дээр бичигдсэн байх ёстой бөгөөд хамгийн ихдээ 400 утгай байх ёстой.

ӨМНӨХДАРЛАЧИЙН

Don't

To prepare for drastic text length changes, avoid using narrow columns.

Do not place too many elements beside each other to ensure security in horizontal space.

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ӨМНӨХДАРЛАЧИЙН

Internationalization

Writing systems

In a right-to-left script (RTL), writing starts from the right of the page and continues to the left, proceeding from top to bottom for new lines. This strongly contrasts our left-to-right writing system, which means that the content our interfaces will also reflect this when localized. For the elements within most of our components, they will be mirrored when they are localized in RTL languages. Below are some examples of our components in this state.

Snackbar:

Item has been deleted.

UNDO

LTR

هفتش صشس بشلفي بخق و

عريشس

RTL

Application Banner:

NOKIAProductDescription

ABC Telecom99+admin

ABC Telecom

ابوصح ان انر

NOKIA

LTR

RTL

Word order

Word order can change dramatically in translation. If the layout and functionality of the interface is dependent on a certain word order, it is likely to break when localized.

Do

- Assume the word order of every sentence in your interface will change when translated.
- If the elements in the content needs to stay in a certain position on the page, implement them as separate labels, outside of the sentences.
 - Sometimes the order of sentences often need to change in translation to make sense.
- When including links in body text, only use a single and descriptive term or a small part of a phrase as the link.

Warning/Confirmation Messages

Like placeholders, all messages should be written concisely and kept short so that users can accurately follow the instructions.
Refer to [Dialog's Best Practices](#) for more details.

Don't

- Don't use full phrases as links. Word order changes might break the link into several parts when translated.
- Avoid using UI components to build sentences.
- Avoid splitting one sentence into several strings, known as concatenated strings.
 - Translators won't be able to change the word order and their translations won't make sense.
- Avoid using variables in your strings as it will translate differently.

Warning/Confirmation Messages

Like placeholders, all messages should be written concisely and kept short so that users can accurately follow the instructions.
For more details, [read over Dialog's Best Practices](#).

Iconography & Imagery

There are a few things to keep in mind in terms of how visual metaphors are being perceived differently culture by culture. When possible, use universally known icons and illustrations. Be mindful of when using country-specific icons and where they are surfaced. To learn more about the design standards and localization of RTL icons, visit the [Iconography](#) page.

Metaphors

We often use icons to represent real life objects that we use everyday and are familiar to the human eye. That being said, we need to be careful in what our icons could represent in different cultures.

For example, the thumbs-up gesture is a sign of approval in most countries. However, in several countries in West Africa and the Middle East, including Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, the gesture has the connotation of the middle finger in the US.

Colors

Be mindful of using colors to represent meaning since they can hold discrete connotations in different cultures. When designing content, capturing the right tone and emotions from the local audience is key because colors can have a big impact. It is important to research specific markets from a cultural standpoint to choose the right creative decision.

For example, let's look at the three colours we use to represent the different states of dialogue and it's connotation in western cultures. We use red to symbolize errors or situations that need immediate attention to and blue (sometimes green) for situations that represent the opposite (for confirmation or neutral messages). It is natural that we would use yellow for messages that sit between the emotions for these two colors (for warnings).

In others countries however, like in China, red represents good luck, success and happiness. Because of this association, they usually use green/blue to represent bad performance.

When approaching the design of user interfaces for a global audience, colors should not be the only indicator of a specific status or use case. It is always better to integrate it with textual or other visual clues.

Internal Server Error

Wed Dec 02 2015 10:06:38 GMT-0500 (EST)

Hide Detail

The expanded portion of this dialog box consists of detailed information about the error.

OK

Best practices

- When using photos, illustrations, or icons, make sure the visuals are not offensive or culturally insensitive.
 - If you are unsure about a visual you are using, research it or ask someone with local knowledge.
- Avoid colloquial words, idioms, and references to popular culture. It is difficult to translate them in a meaningful way.
- Avoid embedding text within icons, illustrations, and images as the content is not easy to translate and as the icons are not meant to adapt to text expansion

Currency

Currencies are formatted differently in different countries and languages. The currency formatting framework works to localize currency for users around the world and unify the display of mixed currencies.

Since there are not many occasions where we deal with currency, we have kept our rules short and simple by mainly following the Common Locale Database Repository (CLDR). The CLDR is the recognized international standard that says to automatically format numbers and currency based on the user's locale.

Design guidelines

Short format is the default format and is used for currency that users are familiar with. It is the more efficient format and includes the currency symbol and currency value.

In the cases where it is important to provide clarity for users who deal with unfamiliar currencies in multi-currency stores, use explicit format. It includes the currency symbol, currency value, and ISO code (for example, "USD" and "CAD").

Short format uses:

- For unit, itemized or installment prices
- When showing non-total amounts with total amounts
- If there are enough indicators to let users know which currency they're looking at

Explicit format uses:

- When showing total amounts, an amount within a button, table, or in a paragraph
- When displaying currency side-by-side with currency that is localized in a different country

Summary

Items subtotal\$50.00

Shipping\$4.00

Tax\$6.50

Total\$60.50 CAD

Non-total amounts in short format

Total amounts in explicit format

CHECKOUT \$60.50 CAD

Converts to \$48.87 USD

Amounts in a button in explicit format

Displaying local currency side-by-side with localized currency in explicit format

Use the number form of \$1 when you need a more casual, neutral tone or if there is a space constraint and you can round off to the nearest dollar. Use the numerical form of \$1.00 when formality is needed, or when the number is dynamic and might include cents. Note that some currencies do not use decimals like Japanese yen.

For more information on how to format numbers and units, visit [Numbers, Dates & Time](#).

Do

Your target budget per month:

\$40

Subtotal: \$28.67 CAD

Subtotal: ¥2800 JPY

Don't

Your target budget per month:

\$40.00 CAD

Subtotal: \$28 in CAD dollars

Subtotal: ¥2800 in yen

Major currencies in their local formats

This table shows some commonly-used currencies in short and explicit formats. To see a full list of the design guidelines with their symbol and locale, visit <https://www.xe.com/symbols.php>

Currency	Locale	Short Format	Explicit Format
US Dollar (\$, USD)	en-US	\$12.50	\$12.50 USD
Canadian Dollar (\$, CAD)	en-CA fr-CA	\$12.50 12,50 \$	\$12.50 CAD 12,50 \$ CAD
Australian Dollar (\$, AUD)	en-AU	\$12.50	\$12.50 AUD
Euro (€, EUR)	de-DE, fr-FR en-IE nl-NL	12,50 € €12.50 €12,50	12.50 € EUR €12.50 EUR €12,50 EUR
British Pounds (£, GBP)	en-GB	£12.50	£12.50 GBP
Japanese Yen (¥, JPY)	ja-JP	¥1250	¥1250 JPY
New Zealand Dollar (\$, NZD)	en-NZ	\$12.50	\$12.50 NZD
Danish Krone (Kr, DKK)	da-DK	12,50 kr.	12.50 kr. DKK