User experience careers

There's a good chance that you enrolled in this certificate program hoping to find work as a UX designer in the near future. UX design is a rapidly changing field with a projected 10-year growth rate of 15% (Burning Glass, 2020). When you check out most job searching sites, you'll find tens of thousands of job postings for UX-related roles. In fact, recruiters around the world are struggling to fill open positions for UX designers because the demand for people with these skills is outpacing the supply of available UX designers. That's where you come in!

While it might be a little early to begin searching for jobs, it's important context to know that "UX designer" is just one of many job titles within the broader user experience field. As you continue with this certificate program, you might become interested in a certain specialty or career path within the field. In addition, as an entry-level UX designer, you will likely work alongside other UX professionals with various areas of expertise. To help you get started, this reading will explore a handful of different careers within the field of user experience.

Interaction designer

Interaction designers focus on designing the experience of a product and how it functions. They strive to understand the user flow, or the path, that a typical user takes to complete a task on an app, website, or other platform. At Google and many other companies, interaction designers are a specialized type of UX designer.

An interaction designer's work answers questions like: What should happen if a user taps on this button? How do we make this action easier for users to complete? And, how are the design elements within the website laid out? Interaction designers focus less on how the product looks and instead strive to make the product easy to navigate and simple for users to interact with.

Visual designer

Visual designers focus on how a product or technology looks. They are often responsible for designing logos, illustrations, and icons, as well as deciding on font color, size, and placement. Visual designers focus on the layout of each page or screen and make all of the design elements fit together in a visually appealing way. At Google and many other companies, visual designers are a specialized type of UX designer.

The role of a visual designer is to answer questions like: What kind of visual style should icons have, in order to fit the product's branding? Or, which color and font should we use for this button? The goal of a visual designer is to delight users with designs that inspire, engage, and excite them.

Motion designer

Motion designers think about what it feels like for a user to move through a product and how to create smooth transitions between pages on an app or website. They may also create animations or visual effects to bring their design ideas to life. At Google and many other companies, motion designers are a specialized type of UX designer.

A motion designer’s work answers questions like: How should an app transition between pages? How do we show the connection between these actions? And, what’s an engaging animation that will help tell our story? Motion designers focus on design elements that move, rather than traditional static designs.

VR/AR designer

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) designers create products that provide users with immersive experiences, unbounded by the limits of the physical world. **Virtual reality** involves a wearable headset that takes over a user's vision; it blocks out their physical surroundings and immerses them in a completely virtual world. For example, VR can feel like you're entering the setting of a magical imaginary land.

On the other hand, **augmented reality** uses the physical world as a backdrop and adds virtual elements on top of it. Users are still contextually aware of their surroundings, but their reality is augmented, or enhanced, by adding elements through a screen. For example, you can sit in your actual kitchen, and an AR experience can add digital images, like a new barstool or a piece of artwork, to the room around you.

A VR or AR designer's work answers questions like: How do we create a user experience that leverages 3D space? Or, will this action cause a user motion sickness? To ensure users are comfortable immersing in a VR or AR experience, designers need to carefully consider everything from sound to lighting.

UX researcher

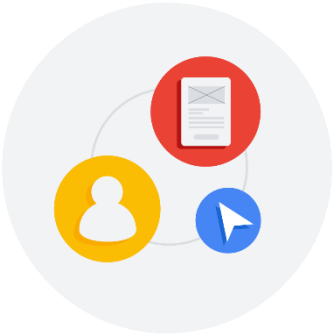
UX researchers conduct studies or interviews that examine how people use a product. UX researchers often identify pain points that users are experiencing and explore how products can help solve those problems. They also explore the usability of existing products, by asking users to complete tasks in an app or website, for example.

UX researchers answer questions like: What problems are users facing? Is the design of this product easy to use? And, would people be interested in this new design feature? The goal of UX researchers is often to understand how a product can provide a solution to a real problem users are having.

UX writer

UX writers think about how to make the language within a product clearer so that the user experience is more intuitive. UX writers also help define a brand's voice and personality. The work of UX writers often includes writing labels for buttons and determining the tone of language used within an app or website.

UX writers focus on answering questions like: What words should be used to communicate this idea clearly? Should the tone for this app be friendly or technical? And, what should the language on this button label say? UX writers often become subject matter experts in order to present content that's easy to understand for all users.



UX program manager

UX program managers ensure clear and timely communication, so that the process of building a useful product moves smoothly from start to finish. This might include setting goals, writing project plans, and allocating team resources.

UX program managers answer questions like: What are the overall goals for this project, and what's the plan to achieve them? And, how can we create and improve processes within the team? UX program managers work across departments to make sure that UX is involved throughout a project lifecycle.

UX engineer

UX engineers translate the design's intent into a functioning experience, like an app or a website. They help UX teams figure out if designs are intuitive and technically feasible.

UX engineers answer questions like: How do we implement each interaction? How do we build this design in a way that stays true to its original intent? And, how might we explore alternatives to determine the best user experience? UX engineers synthesize design and development, bringing product concepts to life.

Conversation designer

Conversational interfaces are everywhere, from intelligent virtual assistants like Google Assistant and Siri, to interactive voice response systems like customer service systems you can talk to. Conversational interfaces even include automobile navigation systems and chatbots! Conversation design incorporates natural, real-world conversational behaviors into the interactions between users and these systems.

Conversation designers make it possible for users to have natural conversations to get things done. They leverage user research, psychology, technical knowledge, and linguistics to create user experiences that are intuitive and engaging. Conversation designers develop the "persona" or personality of the voice, as well as the flow and dialog of the interaction.

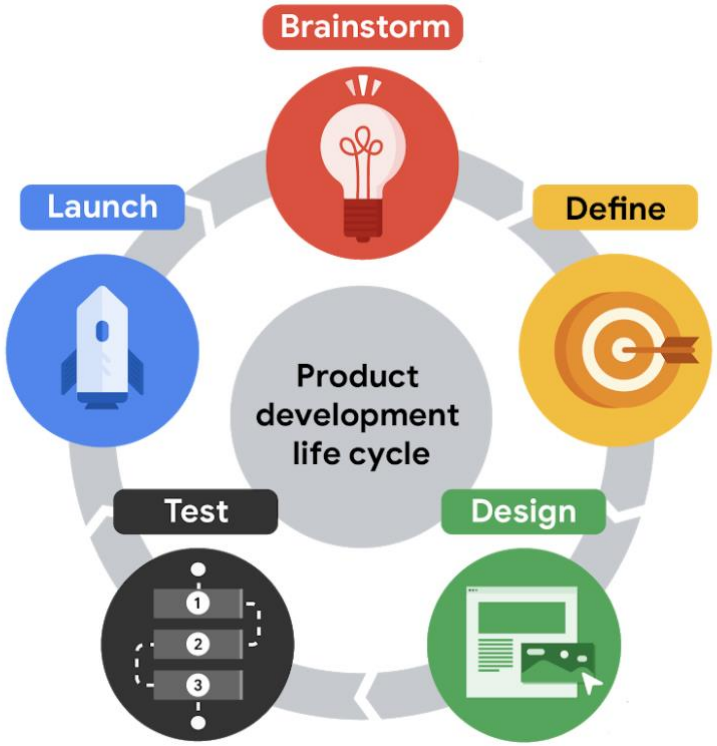
Conversation designers answer questions like: What's the ideal language and flow based on who users are, the task to be accomplished, and the context of the conversation? Does the personality of the virtual assistant seem genuine, engaging, and reflective of the brand values? How does the conversation work with on-screen elements? Does the virtual assistant offer a consistent, usable, and useful experience end-to-end?

Explore careers in the field of UX

You now know about some of the most common jobs in the field of user experience! As you begin your first job as a UX designer, you'll collaborate with fellow UXers, like the ones listed here, to create innovative and beautiful products that people love to use. Pretty exciting, right?

The product development life cycle

Every new product, whether it's an app or a physical object, follows a specific set of steps that take it from the first spark of an idea to the release of the final product. This is called the **product development life cycle**, and it has five stages: **brainstorm**, **define**, **design**, **test**, and **launch**. Depending on where you work, the exact names of each stage might be a little different, but the overall process is generally the same.



Around the circle there are icons for each phase of the lifecycle - brainstorm, define, design, test, launch

In this reading, you'll explore the product development life cycle and how UX design fits into each stage. As you might have guessed, UX designers are most engaged during the *design* stage of the product development life cycle, but they work closely with team members — like researchers, product managers, and engineers — throughout the entire life cycle.

As a product moves through the development life cycle, the team might need to spend longer working in one stage than in others, or repeat certain stages based on feedback. The success of each stage depends on the previous stage's completion, so it's important to do them in order.

Check out each of the five stages of the product development life cycle!

The first stage of the product development life cycle is the **brainstorm** stage, when the team starts thinking of an idea for a product. Your team might already know the user problem that you want to solve when you begin the product development life cycle. If not, coming up with a list of user problems is a great place to start.

It's important to pay attention to the diversity of your team at this stage. Teams that have meaningful diversity across identifiers like race, gender, abilities, family structure, age, and ethnicity are generally more effective at brainstorming because they bring together a lot of different lived experiences.

Consider this example: If you're designing a new app to help working parents and guardians, your team might start the brainstorming stage by listing common problems that working parents and guardians face, like a lack of reliable childcare, transportation concerns, or trouble managing schedules. Your team might review user feedback about other similar products or the results of user surveys to help guide your ideas. After you've brainstormed lots of user problems, your team chooses one and starts coming up with ideas for solutions to that problem.

The brainstorm stage is also an ideal time to check out your product's competitors and identify if there are already similar products available in the market. You want your product to fill a gap in the market or solve a problem better than existing products. Completing research into both your competitors and your users helps determine what problems need to be addressed by the product's design.

One more thing to keep in mind: A UX designer at a large company might not be very involved in the brainstorm stage. But a UX designer at a startup or small business could have a big role to play!

The second stage of the product development life cycle brings together UX designers, UX researchers, program managers, and product leads to **define** the product. The goal is to figure out the specifications for the product by answering questions like: Who is the product for? What will the product do? And, what features need to be included for the product to be successful?

During the define stage, your team narrows the focus of your idea. One product can't solve every user problem. Continuing with the example for an app to help working parents and guardians, your idea should focus on helping parents and guardians find reliable childcare *or* manage their schedules, not

both. In this stage, a UX designer might help the team pin down the focus of the idea, but a product lead will probably be the one to define the scope of the project.

The research you completed in the brainstorm stage comes in handy now. Using what you've learned, you will pinpoint your potential users' problems. Your team can't assume they know what problems users are experiencing without asking the users directly.

The third stage of the product development life cycle is **design**. This is when you, as a UX designer, really get to shine! At this stage, UX designers develop the ideas for the product. Generally, UX designers start by drawing wireframes, which are outlines or sketches of the product, then move on to creating prototypes, which are early models of a product that convey its functionality.

UX writers are also involved in the design stage and might do things like write button labels or other copy within the product's wireframes and prototypes.

At this point in the life cycle, UX designers make sure to include all of the product specifications that were outlined in the define stage. You might also check to ensure that each part of the design fits together in an intuitive way. For example, UX designers might check that the screens of an app flow in a way that makes sense to the user. Or that each interaction, like tapping a button, has a correlating action, like an item getting added to a cart. On the other hand, with a physical product, UX designers might check that one piece of a physical object matches up to the connecting piece. Finally, UX designers also make sure that each task a user needs to complete is clear and easy to understand, like navigating from the homepage to the checkout confirmation page in an app.

Next, your designs move into the **test** stage. UX designers work with engineers to develop functional prototypes that match the original designs, including details and features that fit the company's brand, like font and color choices. This also means writing the code and finalizing the overall structure of the product.

Or, if you want to test your designs earlier, another option is to test a functioning prototype of the product, using a design tool like Figma or Adobe XD. You'll learn how to create prototypes of your designs later in the certificate program.

At this stage, the designs go through at least three phases of testing: internal tests within your company, reviews with stakeholders, and external tests with potential users. A **stakeholder** is a

person you need to work with to complete the project or anyone who has some interest in the project, either within or outside of the company.

Running these tests is typically the responsibility of the UX researcher on your team, if you have one.

- First, the team **tests the product internally** to look for technical glitches and usability problems. This is often referred to as alpha testing.
- Then, the product undergoes a **test with stakeholders** to make sure the product is aligned with the company's vision, meets legal guidelines for accessibility, and follows government regulations for privacy, for example.
- Finally, there's an **external test with potential users**. This is the time to figure out whether the product provides a good user experience, meaning it's usable, equitable, enjoyable, and useful. This is often referred to as beta testing.

Gathering and implementing feedback at this stage is absolutely critical. If users are frustrated or confused by your product, UX designers make adjustments or even create new versions of the design. Then, the designs are tested again, until there's little or no friction between the product and the user.

It's important to call out that the product development life cycle isn't a completely linear process. Your team might cycle between designing and testing a few times before you're ready to launch the product!

Finally, you've arrived at the fifth and final stage of the product development cycle: the **launch** stage, when the product is released into the world! This might involve listing an app in the Google Play Store or Apple's App Store, making a website go live, or putting a physical product on store shelves.

The launch stage is a time to celebrate your work and start promoting the product. Marketing professionals on your team might post about the new product on social media or publish a press release. The customer support team might get ready to help new users learn how the product works.

Program managers also meet with the cross-functional team to reflect on the entire product development life cycle and ask questions like: What worked and what could be improved? Were goals achieved? Were timelines met? Making time for this reflection is super important, since it can help improve the process going forward.

For a physical product, the launch stage might be the end of the product development life cycle. But for a digital product, like an app or website, launching the product to a wider audience provides another opportunity to improve on the user experience. New users might find problems with the product's functionality or features to improve that no one noticed before. So, after the launch stage, teams will often cycle back to the design and testing stages to start working on the next version of a digital product.

Beyond the product development life cycle

You now understand how products are developed and the role UX designers play in the life cycle. Everywhere you look, you'll find products of all kinds — big, small, physical, or digital — that have been through this very process. The more you see the intention and thought put into everyday objects, the closer you'll get to becoming a UX designer

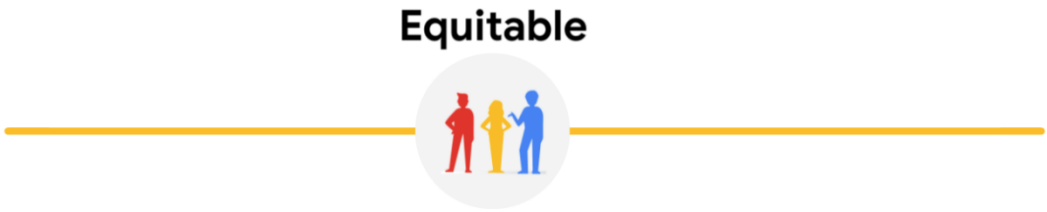
Characteristics of a good user experience

Good design is easy to spot but often hard to pin down. What exactly makes a product effective to its users? Is it a matter of simplicity, structure, or functionality? The answer depends on the product in question.

In the earlier video, "The basics of user experience design", you were introduced to some primary characteristics of good UX. These characteristics—**usable**, **equitable**, **enjoyable**, and **useful**—can help you evaluate a product's design. In this reading, you'll learn more about each one and why they're important.

If a product is **usable**, it means the design, structure, and purpose of the product is clear and easy to use. As you evaluate a product for usability, you can ask questions like: Is everything in the design easy to find? Is the design's functionality easy to understand? Can users accomplish specific tasks within the design? As you evaluate, these questions can help you determine whether the design delivers a usable experience.

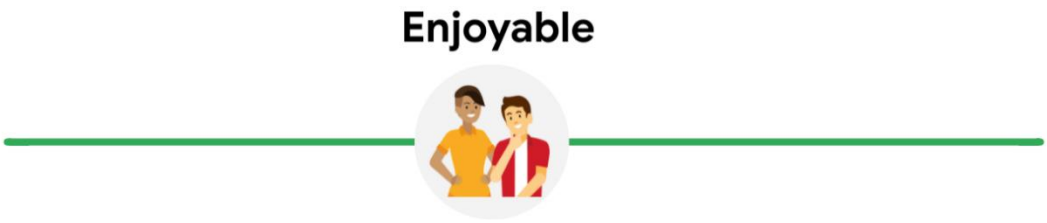
Imagine you are evaluating the usability of an airline app. Assuming the primary purpose of this app is to book a flight, the design should provide a clear and easy way to complete that task. For example, a section where you can easily enter travel and flight details on the homepage would be an example of good usability.



If a product is **equitable**, it means a design is helpful to people with diverse abilities and backgrounds. In other words, the product's design addresses the needs of a diverse audience and ensures a high-quality experience is delivered to all users regardless of background, gender, race, or ability. Equity means providing people with the tools they need to accomplish their goals and support improved quality of life. Equity goes beyond the concept of equality, where everyone is given equal resources, because people often need different tools and support based on their needs. This is especially

important to keep in mind for those in commonly disenfranchised groups. As you evaluate the equity of a product's UX, you can ask questions like: Are the needs of a diverse group of users considered? Does the product's design address the needs of traditionally underrepresented and excluded groups? These questions can help you determine whether the design delivers an equitable experience.

Imagine you are evaluating how equitable a social messaging app is. You might consider the design more equitable if the keyboard emoji list includes different skin tones and gender-neutral avatar options.



If a product is **enjoyable**, it means the design delights the user. The design reflects what the user may be thinking or feeling and creates a positive connection with them. A product's design doesn't have to be enjoyable for it to function properly. But, an enjoyable design adds to an already functional product and can enhance the user's feelings about the experience. As you evaluate how enjoyable a product's UX is, you can ask questions like: Are there aspects of the design that consider the user's feelings? Does the design inspire delight in the user? Does the design keep the user engaged throughout their experience? These questions can help you determine whether the design delivers an enjoyable experience.

Imagine you are evaluating how enjoyable a video streaming app is. Design aspects that might increase how much you enjoy the product include personalized recommendations based on previous watching habits, or the ability to customize the appearance of your account.

If a product is **useful**, that means it solves user problems. In other words, the design intentionally solves a user problem that the designer has identified. It's important to note that, while similar, useful and usable have different meanings. A product that is useful isn't always usable. The same is true for the opposite. The distinction between the two is that usability refers to the product working well and being easy to use, while usefulness refers directly to the ability to solve user problems. As you evaluate how useful a product's UX is, you can ask questions like: Does the design add value to the user's experience? Does the design solve a problem for the user? Does the design help the user achieve a specific goal? These questions can help you determine whether the design delivers a useful experience.

Imagine you're evaluating how useful a banking app is. Users typically download these apps because they need a place to manage their money. With this in mind, aspects of the app that might be considered useful are features that can be used to transfer money between accounts and pay bills.

Explore real examples of great UX design

Observe the world around you and you'll find endless examples of great UX design. Don't believe us?

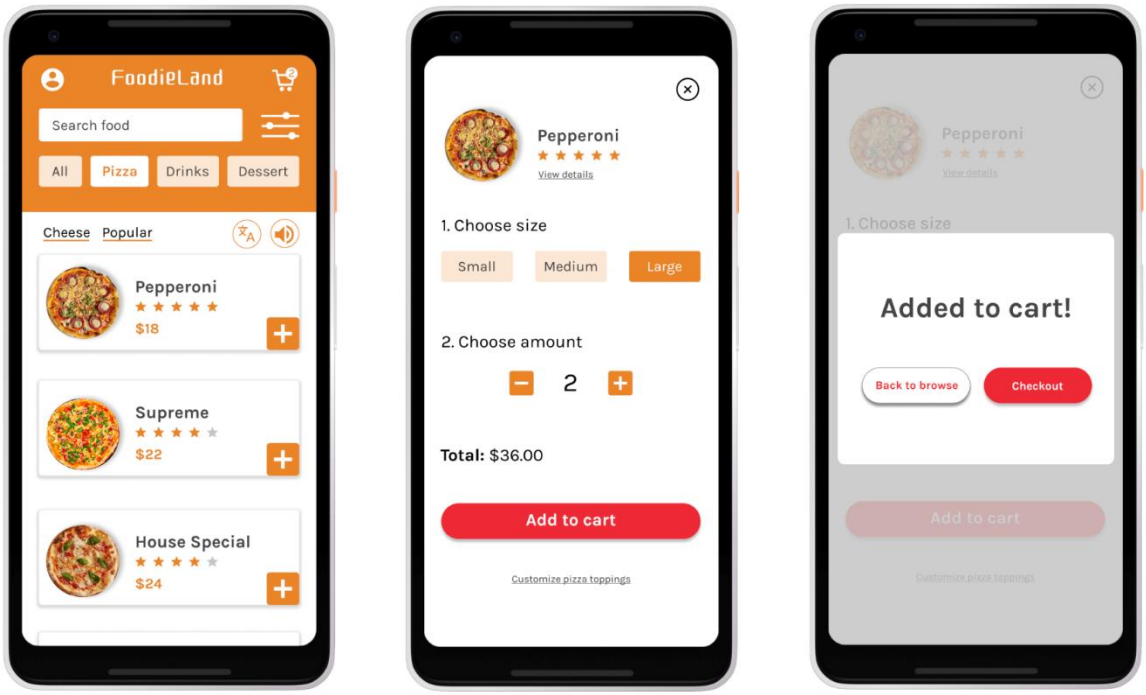
Check out this article about good design from the Google Design team to discover the genius in the designs of everyday objects you might have previously overlooked (click and scroll down).

Activity Exemplar: Identify good user experience

Here is a completed exemplar along with an explanation of how the exemplar fulfills the expectations for the previous activity.

Completed Exemplar

The app images are provided below for easy reference:



Here is the completed Identify Good UX Design exemplar. To see the completed exemplar for this course item, click the link below and select “Use Template.”

Link to exemplar: Identify Good UX Design.

OR

If you don’t have a Google account, you can download the exemplar directly from the attachment below.

Google UX Design Certificate - Identify Good UX Design [Exemplar]
DOCX File

Identify Good UX Design Template

Google UX Design Certificate

Prompt 1: Identify at least one aspect of the FoodieLand app that demonstrates usable design. Explain your reasoning in 1-2 sentences.

Hint: Is the app's design, structure, and purpose clear? Does the app have any elements or features that make it easy to navigate?

Usable	The "Add to cart", "Back to browse", and "Checkout" buttons in the Foodieland app are examples of usable design because they clearly indicate what will happen next when users interact with them.

Prompt 2: Identify at least one aspect of the FoodieLand app that demonstrates equitable design. Explain your reasoning in 1-2 sentences.

Hint: Does the app address the needs of people with diverse abilities and backgrounds?

Equitable	The Foodieland app's translation feature is an example of equitable design because it is helpful for people who speak different languages.

Prompt 3: Identify at least one aspect of the FoodieLand app that demonstrates enjoyable design. Explain your reasoning in 1-2 sentences.

Hint: Does the app inspire a positive reaction from the user by considering their thoughts and feelings? Does the app engage users and make them excited to keep using the app?

Enjoyable	The images used in the Foodieland app are examples of enjoyable design because they are visually appealing and help the user understand what they're ordering.

Prompt 4: Identify at least one aspect of the FoodieLand app that demonstrates useful design. Explain your reasoning in 1-2 sentences.

Hint: Does the app solve the problem of "how to help a busy person working from home select a meal to be delivered?" How does the app help solve this problem?

Useful	The Foodieland app's filter feature allows users to narrow down their search. This is an example of useful design because it helps the user easily select a pizza to order.

Assessment of exemplar

Your responses may differ from the exemplar, but your work should clearly identify one example of each design criteria—usable, equitable, enjoyable, and useful—in the FoodieLand app.

The completed exemplar identifies aspects of the Foodieland app that demonstrate how the app is usable, equitable, enjoyable, and useful.

1. The FoodieLand app's buttons were identified as making the app usable.
2. The FoodieLand app's translation feature was identified as making the app equitable.
3. The FoodieLand app's use of images was identified as making the app enjoyable.
4. The FoodieLand app's filter feature was identified as making the app useful.

Now, compare this exemplar to your answers in the template. What did you do well? Where can you improve? Take this feedback with you as you continue to progress through the course.