Glossary

Google UX Design Certificate
Terms and definitions

A

Above the fold: The content on a web page that doesn't require scrolling to experience

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, or environments for people with disabilities

Advertising agencies: Teams of creatives hired by clients to build marketing campaigns

Affinity: A feeling of like-mindedness or compatibility toward something or someone

Affinity diagram: A method of synthesizing that organizes data into groups with common themes or relationships

Aggregated empathy maps: Represent a visualization of everything designers know about an entire segment or group of similar users

Alternative text (alt text): Text that helps translate something visual, such as an image or graph, into a description that can be read by screen readers

Apprenticeships: Long-term positions providing paid, on-the-job training to help you develop real skills

Assets: Everything from the text and images to the design specifications, like font style, color, size, and spacing

Assistive technology: Any products, equipment, or systems that enhance learning, working, and daily living for people with disabilities

Asymmetrical layout: Having purposeful imbalance between different sides of a page

B

Back-end developer: Someone who writes code for the website's architecture and data storage or retrieval, based on the sitemap and functionality

Basic grid: Intersecting lines that divide pages into small squares, which allows you to easily lay out elements in a design

Bias: Favoring or having prejudice against something based on limited information

Big picture storyboard: A series of visually rendered panels that focus on the user's experience

Brand Identity: The visual appearance and voice of a company

Borders: A method of containment that uses continuous lines that often form shapes, like squares or rectangles, to break up sections of a page

Box layout: A web page layout that consists of boxes or squares of various sizes and proportions

Budget estimate: Details the expenses and profit margins that add up to an appropriate cost for services

C

Call-to-action (CTA): A visual prompt that tells the user to take action

Cards: Rectangle parts of a design that contain content and actions about a single subject, which are often used in mobile app design

Carousels: Scrolling feeds of images or cards on a UI that can be sifted through with a click or that automatically loop while you're on the page

Case study: Leads the user through your design process from the beginning to the end

Case studies: Summarized presentation of a design project that typically includes

- Project goal and objectives
- Your role on the project
- Process your team followed

- Outcome of the project

Close-up storyboard: A series of visually rendered panels that focus on the product

Color modification: Features that increase the contrast of colors on a screen, like high-contrast mode or dark mode

Common region: The Gestalt Principle that describes how elements located within the same area are perceived to be grouped together

Competitive audit: An overview of your competitors' strengths and weaknesses

Complementary: Taking into account how the product design on each device can make the overall user experience better

Confirmation Bias: Occurs when you start looking for evidence to prove a hypothesis you have

Consistency: Having a uniform design, so users can expect the design to feel familiar across devices and products

Containment: The use of visual barriers to keep elements of a design neat and organized; the four methods of containment are dividers, borders, fill, and shadow

Context: Designing for the needs of a specific device and the way in which the user will use that device in any given situation

Continuity: Providing users with a smooth and uninterrupted experience as they move between devices

Conversion rate: Measures the percentage of users who complete a desired action

Corporation: A company with thousands of employees working on lots of different projects

Curb cut: The slope of the sidewalk that creates a ramp with adjoining street

Curb cut effect: A phenomenon that describes how products and policies designed for people with disabilities often end up helping everyone

Customizable text: A feature that allows users to change how text is displayed in order to read the text more easily

D

Database model: A website structure that mixes a database, or an organized collection of information, with search functionality

Deceptive patterns: UX methods that trick users into doing or buying something they wouldn't otherwise have done or bought

Dedicated mobile app: Built to live on the mobile device and is accessed through an icon on the phone's home screen

Define: The phase of design thinking that involves leveraging the insights gained during the empathize phase to identify the problem you'll solve with your design

Design agency: Provides a one-stop shop for the look of brands, products, and services

Design critique session: A planned period of time where UX designers present their work to team members and listen to feedback

Design research: Answers the question: How should we build it?

Design Sprint: A time-bound process, with five phases typically spread over five full 8-hour days. The goal of design sprints is to answer critical business questions through designing, prototyping, and testing ideas with users

Design system: A series of reusable visual elements and guidelines that allow teams to design and develop a product following predetermined standards

Design thinking: A UX design framework that focuses on the user throughout all five phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test

Digital literacy: A user's level of ability related to using digital information and technologies

Direct competitors: Companies that have offerings similar to your product and focus on the same audience

Dividers: A method of containment that uses single lines to separate sections of a page

Domain: Address of your website

Dopamine: A natural chemical in the brain that's released when something pleasurable happens, which makes us feel good or intrigued

E

Edge case: What happens when things go wrong that are beyond the user's control

Elements: Building blocks for creating a design

Empathize: The phase of design thinking that involves getting to know your user through research

Empathy: The ability to understand someone else's feelings or thoughts in a situation

Empathy map: An easily understood chart that explains everything designers have learned about a type of user

Emphasis: A way of attracting attention to text, a button, or another object in a design

Entry-level job: Roles that do not require prior experience in the field

Equality: Providing the same amount of opportunity and support

Equity-focused design: Designing for groups that have been historically underrepresented or ignored when building products

F

F-shape layout: A website layout that assumes that users will likely browse content on the page following an F-shaped pattern

Facilitator: Runs the critique session and guide the process

False consensus bias: The assumption that others will think the same way as you do

Featured image layout: A website layout that places the user's focus on a single image or video that often takes up the entire page above-the-fold

Feedback: Asking for or receiving ideas about what is or isn't working

Feedback loops: The outcome a user gets at the end of a process

Fidelity: How closely a design matches the look and feel of the final product

Fill: A method of containment that assigns colors to borders and shapes

Focal point: A specific and distinct area that sticks out on a web page or mobile screen design, to guide the users' attention

Font: The size, thickness, and emphasis of characters of text

Foundational research: Helps designers understand why or if they should build the product and to better understand the user problem they are trying to solve

Framework: Creates the basic structure that focuses and supports the problem you're trying to solve

Friendliness bias: The tendency of people to agree with those they like in order to maintain a non-confrontational conversation

Front-end developer: Someone who writes code for all the user-facing interface, based on the UX designer's specifications

G

Generalist: A UX designer with a broad number of responsibilities

Gestalt Principles: Describe how humans group similar elements, recognize patterns, and simplify complex images when we perceive objects

Gesture: Any method of interaction a user has with information on their device using touch

Goal statement: One or two sentences that describe a product and its benefits for the user

Graceful degradation (top-down designing): A method of designing from the largest screen, with a lot of features and interactions, to smaller screens, where features and interactions are scaled back

Graphic designers: Create visuals that tell a story or message

Grid of cards layout: A website layout that features a series of cards, which are often square or rectangles, that provide previews of more detailed content

H

Hamburger menus: A nickname for the type of navigation menu that is represented by an icon with three lines. When you click on the icon, it unfolds by sliding in from the side or taking over the whole page, revealing a menu of options to navigate through pages

Happy path: A user story with a pleasant ending

Heading: Titles or subtitles that stand out at the beginning of a paragraph, article, section, or another area of a website

Hierarchy: A visual design principle that orders elements on a page and highlights them by their importance

Hierarchical model: A top-down approach to structure that starts with broader categories of information (parent) and narrows into more detailed information (child)

High-fidelity (hi-fi): A design that closely matches the look and feel of the final product and is more refined or polished; called "hi-fi" for short

High-fidelity prototypes: Polished designs that exhibit functionality and closely match the look and feel of the final product

Hypothesis statement: Our best educated guess on what we think the solution to a design problem might be

I

Iconography: A system of graphic images or symbols associated with a subject or an idea

Ideate: The phase of design thinking that involves brainstorming all potential solutions to the user's problem

Ideation: The process of generating a broad set of ideas on a given topic, with no attempt to judge or evaluate them

Implicit bias: The collection of attitudes and stereotypes associated with people, without one's conscious knowledge

Inclusive design: Making design choices that take into account personal identifiers like ability, race, economic status, language, age, and gender

Indirect competitors: Have a similar set of offerings but focus on a different audience, or have a different set of offerings and focus on the same audience

Information architecture (IA): Organizes content to help users understand where they are in a product and where the information they want is

Initial focus: How you attract a user's attention to help them accomplish a task

Insight: An observation about people that helps you understand the user or their needs from a new perspective

Interaction designers: Focus on designing the experience of a product and how it functions

Interactivity: Makes the prototype function

Internship: A short-term role with limited responsibility

Interviews: A research method used to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings

Iterate: Revise the original design to create a new and improved version

Iteration: Doing something again, by building on previous versions and making tweaks

K

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Critical measures of progress toward an end goal

Key terms: Important words in a job posting that tell you the specifics about the role

L

Landmarks: Features — like navigation bars, search boxes, fixed sidebars, and footers — used to break up a lot of text on a web page and help improve the use of assistive technology

Layout: The structure that supports how visual components on a page are arranged

Layout grid: A series of columns and alleys that allow you to organize elements in a design

Lorem ipsum: Meaningless placeholder text written in Latin that you can use to show where content will go and how a page will be laid out

Low fidelity (lo-fi): A design that has a lower amount of complexity and is less refined or polished; called "lo-fi" for short

Low-fidelity prototypes: Simple interactive structures that provide a basic idea of how products will look and behave

M

Matrix model: A website structure that allows users to determine their own path, since content is linked in several ways

Mental models: Internal maps that allow humans to predict how something will work

Methodology: The steps to take to conduct research, collect data, and analyze data

Mobile-first philosophy: A method of design that starts by designing the mobile version of a product and later adapts it to fit larger screens

Mockup: A static, high-fidelity design that's used as a representation of a final product

Motion: A way to animate static design elements to focus the user's attention and tell stories

Motion designers: Think about what it feels like for a user to move through a product

Multi-column layout: A web page layout that uses two or more columns for content

N

Navigation: The way users get from page to page on a website

Negative (white) space: The gaps between elements in a design

Next Billion Users (NBU): The billion people around the world who are accessing the web for the first time

Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA): A contract that gives one party legal protection against another party stealing their ideas or revealing proprietary information before a product is launched

Notetaker: The person who captures all of the ideas and feedback from the reviewers during a design critique

P

Pain points: UX issues that frustrate the user and block the user from getting what they need

Payment schedule: A list of expected payment dates, including upfront costs and contingencies

Peer reviews: Assignments that enable learners to provide feedback on each other's assignment submissions

Persona: A fictional user whose goals and characteristics represent the needs of a larger group of users

Personal brand: The way in which your personality, unique skills, and values as a designer intersect with your public persona

Personally Identifiable information (PII): Specific details that could be used to identify a user

Platform: The medium that users experience your product on

Portfolio: A collection of work you've created that shows your skills in a certain area

Post-launch research: Helps designers understand if the product worked as expected

Presentation: A group of slides, where each slide has new information to share and promote insights

Presenter: The designer who is sharing their work with others in the session

Primacy bias: Remembering the first user more than others

Primary research: Research you conduct yourself

Problem statement: A clear description of the user's need that should be addressed

Product: A good, service, or feature

Product designer: Someone who is responsible for figuring out how the whole product comes

together

Product goal statement: One or two sentences that describe a product and its benefits for the user

Production designers: Make sure first and final designs match in the finished project materials and that the assets are ready to be handed off to engineering team

Progressive enhancement (bottom-up designing): Designing from the smallest screen, with the basic capabilities of the product design, to the largest screen, where more advanced features and interactions are added

Project background: provides a description about the background of the study, including why the insights were needed and what impact they will have on decisions being made

Project stakeholders: People who are involved in the project or who will be impacted by its results

Proportion: The balance or harmony between elements that are scaled

Proposal: Outline of an approach to successfully deliver work that is scoped with a client, including timeline and budget estimates

Prototype: An early model of a product that demonstrates functionality

Proximity: The Gestalt Principle describing how elements that are close together appear to be more related than those that are spaced apart

Q

Qualitative research: Focuses on observations about why and how things happen

Quantitative research: Focuses on data that can be gathered by counting or measuring

R

Recency bias: Most easily remembering the last thing you heard

Representative sample: A subset of the target population that seeks to accurately reflect the characteristics of the larger group

Research report: A document with fewer visuals containing the same information as a presentation to share and promote insights

Research study: A step-by-step examination of a group of users and their needs, which adds realistic context to the design process

Responsive web app: An actual website that adapts to the device the user is on and is accessed through a mobile phone's web browser

Responsive web design: Allows a website to change automatically depending on the size of the device

Retrospective: A collaborative critique of the team's design sprint

Reviewier: Gives feedback about the design and offers clear actions to take

S

Scale: Concept that's used to explain the size relationship between a given element and the other elements in the design

Scalable: Describes a system that's able to maintain performance levels when workload increases

Scope creep: This is when the details of a project you're planning, or scoping, slowly increase until the project is much more complex than what was originally planned

Scope of work: A document that outlines the project that will be completed with a client

Screen reader: Software that reads aloud any on-screen text, interactive elements, or alternative text

Screener survey: A detailed list of questions that helps researchers determine if potential participants meet the requirements of the research study

Second round of interviews: Interviewers explore a job candidate's experience in more depth, often in person, so that the team can understand how the candidate's background fits the role

Secondary research: Research that uses information someone else has put together

Sensitive Personally Identifiable Information: Data that if lost, compromised, or stolen, could cause your users financial harm, embarrassment, or discrimination

Serial position effect: When given a list of items, people are more likely to remember the first few and the last few, while the items in the middle tend to blur

Shadows: A method of containment that creates dimension in combination with borders or fill

Similarity: The Gestalt Principle describing how elements that look similar are perceived to have the same function

Single column layout: A web page layout that has only one column for content

Sitemap: A diagram of a website or application that shows how pages are prioritized, linked, and labeled

Social desirability bias: The tendency for people to answer questions in a way that will be viewed favorably by others

Specialist: A UX designer that dives deep into one particular UX design role, like interaction, visual, or motion design

Speech to text: Software that allows users to compose text by speaking into their device

Spreadsheet note-taking: A simple and easy method to keep your notes organized using a spreadsheet

Sprint Brief: A document that you share with all your attendees to help them prepare for the sprint

Startup: A new business that wants to develop a unique product or service and disrupt the market

Statement of Work: A legally binding document that includes a list of detailed deliverables, their due dates, and a payment schedule

Storyboard: A series of panels or frames that visually describes and explores a user's experience with a product

Sunk cost fallacy: The idea that the deeper we get into a project we've invested in, the harder it is to change course

Surveys: An activity where many people are asked the same questions in order to understand what most people think about a product

Switch device: An assistive technology device that replaces the need to use a computer keyboard or a mouse

System Usability Scale (SUS): A questionnaire to measure the usability of designs

T

T-shaped designer: A designer who specializes in one kind of user experience (e.g., interaction, visual, motion) and has a breadth of knowledge in other areas

Test: The phase of design thinking that involves facilitating and observing user tests with your design prototypes

The human factor: Describes the range of variables humans bring to their product interactions

Tiered layer cake layout: A web page layout where individual rows, or layers, are stacked on top of one another, and within each row, there can be different numbers of columns

Time on task: The amount of time it takes for a user to complete a task

Traversal order: The navigation flow for a user on an app or a website

Typography: The technique of arranging letters and text to make the language readable, clear, and visually appealing

Typographic hierarchy: The ordering of typefaces and fonts in a layout to create divisions that show users where to focus and how to find information

Typeface: The overall style of the characters

Type classification: A general system to describe styles of type, like serif and sans serif

U

Unity: Measures how well elements of your design work together to communicate an idea

Universal design: The process of creating one product for users with the widest range of abilities and in the widest range of situations

Usability study: A research method that assesses how easy it is for participants to complete core tasks in a design

Use of navigation vs. search: The number of people who use a website or app's navigation compared to the number of people who use the search functionality

User: Any person who uses a product

User-centered design: Puts the user front-and-center

User error rates: Indicate the parts of a design that cause users to make errors

User experience: How a person, the user, feels about interacting with, or experiencing, a product

User flow: The path taken by a typical user on an app or a website, so they can complete a task from start to finish

User group: A set of people who have similar interests, goals, or concerns

User interface (UI) designer: Someone who is concerned with how a digital product's interface looks and functions

User journey: The series of experiences a user has as they interact with a product

User story: Fictional one-sentence story told from a persona's point of view to inspire and inform design decisions

UX designers: Focus on how users interact with a product

UX engineers: Translate the design's intent into a functioning experience

UX program managers: Ensure clear and timely communication so that the process of building a useful product moves smoothly from start to finish

UX research: Understand users and learn about their backgrounds, demographics, motivations, pain points, emotions, and life goals

UX researchers: A type of researcher that conducts studies or interviews to learn about the users of a product and how people use a product

UX writers: Create the language that appears throughout a digital product, like websites or mobile apps

V

Value proposition: The reason why a consumer should use a product or service

Variety: Differentiating the elements in your design to add visual interest

Visual balance: The sense that a design is equally weighted on both sides of its emphasized center

Visual design: How a product or technology appears to users

Visual designer: Someone who focuses on how the product or technology looks

Visual weight: A measure of the force that an element exerts to attract the eye

Voice control: Allows users to navigate and interact with the buttons and screens on their devices using only their voice

Vulnerable populations: Groups of people who have limited ability to provide their consent or have special privacy concerns

W

WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

WebAIM: Web Accessibility in Mind

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG): A set of rules that explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities

Wireframe: An outline or a sketch of a product or a screen

Z

Z-shape layout: A website layout that assumes that users will skim information starting left to

right, then move diagonally to the left, before scanning to the right again, in the shape of a Z