

User Journeys – The Beginner’s Guide

Our Beginner’s Guide series is designed to help those who are just starting to learn about user experience, or those who want to brush up on the basics. In this part, we take a look at user journeys.

What is a user journey?

A user journey is a series of steps (typically 4-12) which represent a scenario in which a user might interact with the thing you are designing. They can be used for 2 main things:

- Demonstrating the way users **currently** interact with the service / website / product
- Demonstrating the way users **could** interact with the service / website / product

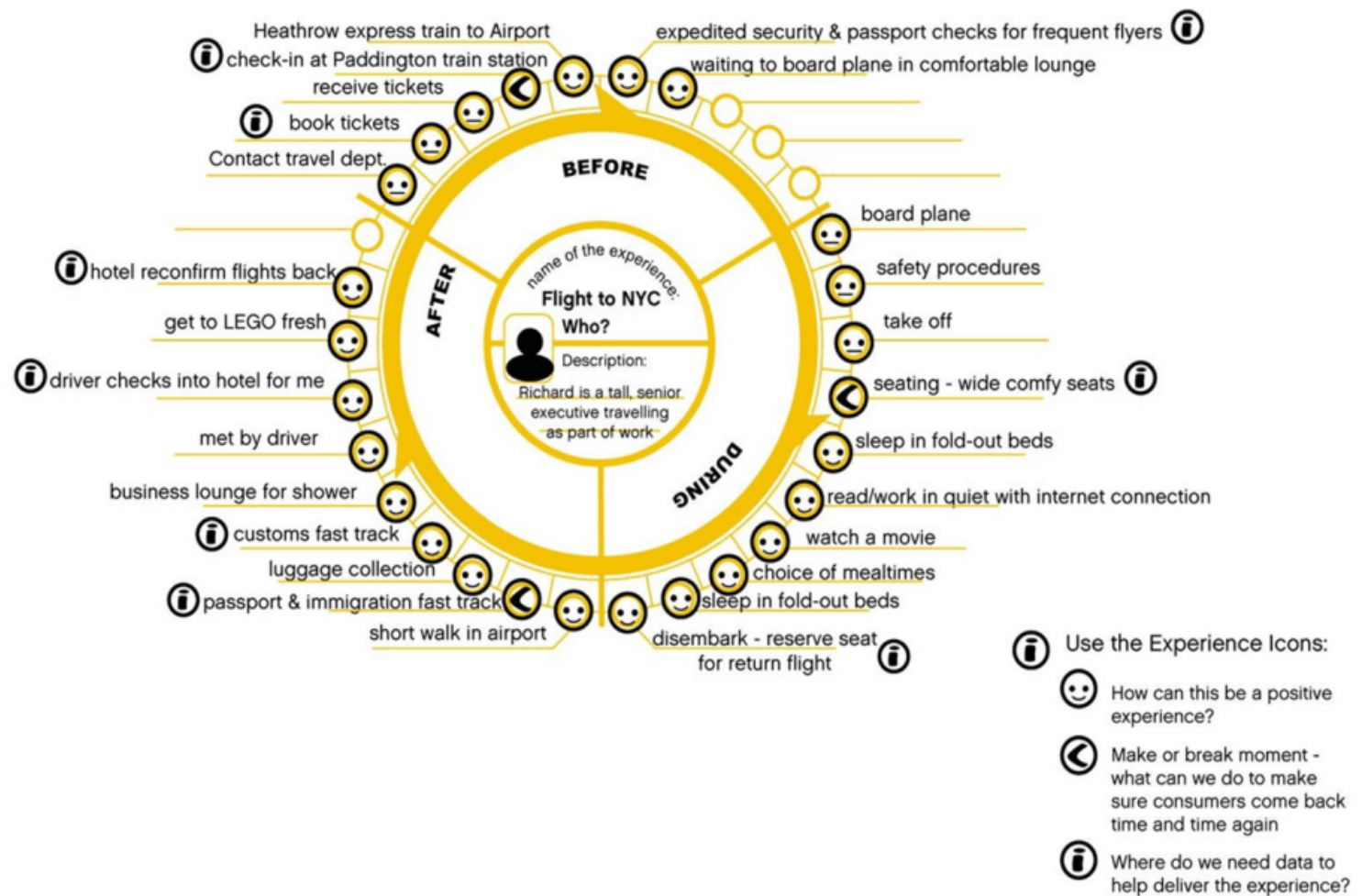
Why should I use a user journey?

There are many benefits to investing time into user journeys:

- *Demonstrating the vision for the project* – user journeys are a great way to communicate what you are trying to achieve with stakeholders. They show an example of what the future state of whatever it is you are designing could be. Along with personas they can be one of the key outputs from the requirements gathering stage at the beginning of a project.
- *They help us understand user behavior* – User journeys can help you work out how users are going to interact with your system and what they expect from it.
- *They help identify possible functionality at a high level* – by understanding the key tasks they will want to do to you can start to understand what sort of functional requirements will help enable those tasks .
- *They help you define your taxonomy and interface* – By understanding the ‘flow’ of the various tasks the user will want to undertake you can start to think about what sort of taxonomy can help support those tasks and what kind of interface the user will be needing to accomplish them.



Designing the Experience - Example WOW



A different way to show a journey – Experience map of an executive visiting Lego

When do I create a user journey?

User journeys typically come towards the beginning of a project in the discovery or requirements gathering phase, normally after [personas](#). This is both to visualise the user requirements and help feed into other design activities such as information architecture or [wireframing](#). However, they can also be used further down the line when scoping out pieces of functionality in more detail.

How do I create a user journey?

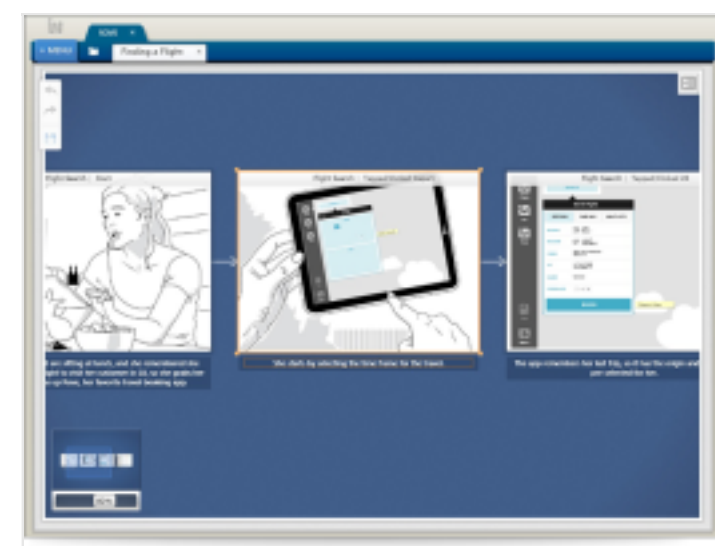
If you have already done personas then congratulations, you already have a lot of the input you need to create a user journey. Before attempting a user journey you should understand:

- Your user's goals
- Their motivations
- Their current pain points
- Their overall character
- The main tasks they want to achieve

For a full guide on how to capture these attributes make sure you read our [beginner's guide to](#)

[personas](#) first.

User journeys tie back to [personas](#) and real people. You will want to create at least one journey for each of your primary personas at a bare minimum.



We recently did an [interview with Ambrose Little](#) from Infragistics – their free tool Indigo Studio can help you put together user journeys quickly and effectively with plenty of out of the box sketches.

What should a user journey contain?

The main thing a user journey should contain is a series of steps. It is up to you to decide how many you need to best represent the journey.

You will want to think broadly in each step about things such as:

- *Context* – Where is the user? What is around them? Are there any external factors which may be distracting them? *Further reading:* [Contextual product backlogs](#)
- *Progression* – How does each step enable them to get to the next?
- *Devices* – what device are they using? Are they a novice or expert? What features does the device have?
- *Functionality* – What type of functionality are they expecting? Is it achievable?
- *Emotion* – What is their emotional state in each step? Are they engaged, bored, annoyed? [Read more about mapping emotion to user journeys](#)

If the purpose of your user journey is to show the current state of affairs then make sure to highlight any changes to pain points which a future solution will solve. If it is to show the future state then think of ways which an ideal world could look, highlighting the benefits to the user and the business.

Depending on the project you may wish to go totally blue sky on this, however it is generally best to at least speak to your development team when creating your user journeys to ensure things are at least feasible (if not optimistic!).

What should a user journey look like?

There is no set template, and a lot can depend on who the audience for the user journey is. If it is to communicate to developers, they may be happy enough with a purely text based journey. If it is for an executive committee then you may want to think about adding illustrations to each step (think comic

