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## Activity introduction

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In this activity, you will create a full set of paper wireframes for the new product you are developing for your portfolio project. You will need:

A few pieces of plain or graph paper (8.5"x11" or larger)

A writing utensil (a pen or pencil works great)

Remember: A wireframe is a low-fidelity outline of a digital experience, like an app or website. Purposes of wireframes include:

Establish the basic structure of a page

Highlight the intended function of the product

Save time and resources

Your wireframes are made up of elements. Elements are building blocks used for creating a design. Most of the time, you'll use the following elements to draw wireframes:

Lines

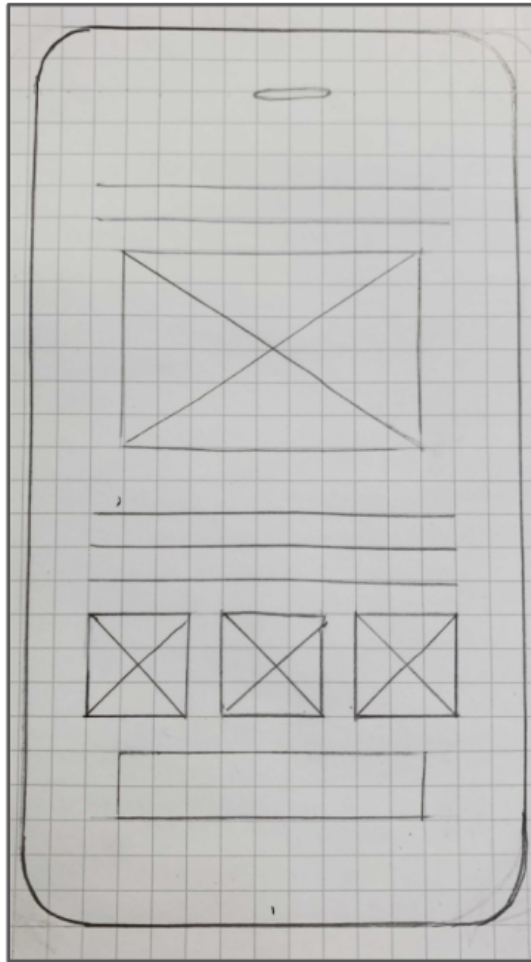
Shapes

Text

To make sure that your wireframes are understandable and straightforward, we use industry standards. Industry standards are common ways to indicate page elements. In the case of wireframes, there are a few industry standards you should be aware of: Horizontal lines represent text.

A square or rectangle with an overlapping "X" represents images, photos, illustrations and icons.

Rectangles and circles often represent calls to action. A good example of a call to action is a "submit" button on a web form.



General benefits of wireframes:

Inform the content to include in your product

Catch problems early

Get stakeholders to focus on structure

Save time and effort

Iterate quickly

With these general standards and benefits in mind, let's apply these wireframing basics to create paper wireframes for your portfolio project.

After completing this activity, you'll have the opportunity to compare your work to a completed exemplar in the following course item.



## Step-by-step instructions

### Step 1: Gather your materials

For this activity, you will need:

A piece of plain paper (8.5"x11" or larger)

A writing utensil (a pen or pencil works great)

### Step 2: Write a quick list of the elements to include in your wireframes

Before you begin drawing, write a quick list of the elements that need to go on the page you're drawing wireframes for. It's important to list this information up front, so you remember to draw all of the elements in each of your wireframes.

To put this list together, think back to the research you've done and the artifacts or deliverables you've built. In particular, the Crazy Eights ideation exercise should help you prioritize features and elements that your potential user will find helpful.

For example, if you're designing a wireframe of your homepage, think about the elements and features that a user will expect and need to use every time they open your app. You might want to include things like navigation, images, text, or a prominent CTA. You're basing those decisions on what you have learned, but remember that you'll be testing to validate these decisions as well. Don't get stuck trying to design the perfect outcome right at this moment.

**Step 3: Create five different versions of how to structure information on the page**  
Start drawing! It's a good rule of thumb to try to create at least five different versions of how to structure information on your homepage. First, for each of your five versions, create an outline for the phone. This can be a simple rectangle. Then fill in these outlines with the page elements you listed in Step 1. Remember, at this stage, your goal is to explore lots of ideas with your wireframes!

Try not to spend too much time on these drawings. Set a timer for two minutes for each version of the five variants, ensuring that you're only spending about 10 minutes total on each page of your product. Think of this as a more focused brainstorm than you've done previously — you're still producing a wide range of ideas, but they're all around a single page now.

**Step 4: Choose which elements to refine**

When you are finished coming up with ideas, it's time to refine the wireframe. Review the versions of the wireframe you came up with, and add a star next to the pieces you think are most effective.

Think about what the potential user will need to do with your product and how you can most effectively solve your problem statement. When looking at your brainstormed variants, pull out the elements that you think best fit those guidelines. This is still early in your process so that you can make changes later. Base your decisions on research and validate with testing!

These elements, from the five variants, will make up the final version of your paper screen.

**Step 5: Combine elements into a refined wireframe**

Having identified the best of your ideas, you can narrow down the parts of your wireframe that you want to explore further in a digital wireframe.

**Step 6: Build out the rest of the wireframes for your main user flow**

Repeat steps three through five until you have built out refined wireframes for all the pages in your main user flow. You've also given some thought to your entire product's information architecture, so build out the key or critical screens first. Building out the "Contact Us" page might help you hit a minimum number of screens, but ask yourself, "is this critical to my user flow?"

**Step 7: Reflect on the completion of this activity**

A good series of wireframes will meet these criteria:

Clearly defines the elements intended for the page.

Includes multiple versions that arrange elements in different ways.

Provides you with distinct examples you can compare and test.

**Step 8: Save your work**

As you complete these activities, remember to take photos of your paper wireframes and save them for your portfolio. In this case, keep photos of the final versions of the pages as well as the five variants that you combined to make it.