# Avoid deceptive patterns

Have you ever checked the box in an app for a free trial, assuming there were no strings attached, only to find out later that your credit card was charged? And even worse, there wasn't an easy way to cancel the membership? Or perhaps you've signed up for a newsletter only to realize after you clicked "Submit" that you'd also agreed to sign up for multiple "related" newsletters. It happens to everyone!

These experiences are examples of deceptive patterns. Deceptive patterns trick users into unintentionally completing an action online. Deceptive patterns can include a range of visual, interactive, audio, or motion elements that are added to designs to deceive users.

Although the term "dark patterns" is often used in the industry, at Google and at other places, designers often use the phrase "deceptive patterns" to avoid referring to something problematic as "dark" and potentially "bad." Instead, the word "deceptive" focuses on the tactic itself that tricks users into doing or buying something they wouldn't have otherwise done or bought.

Deceptive patterns were first exposed in 2010 by UX designer Harry Brignull. He listed 11 types of patterns; some of the patterns overlap with the ones discussed in the video. Let's take a closer look at some common deceptive patterns you might encounter in your work as a UX designer.
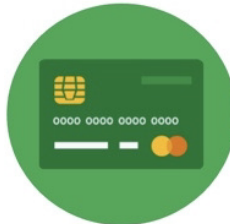
 Forced Continuity

Forced continuity: The practice of charging a user for a membership without a warning or a reminder.

Think back to the scenario from the beginning of this reading: a user clicks a box in an app thinking they're getting a free trial with no strings attached, only to find out later that their credit card was charged, and there's no easy way to cancel the membership. As a UX designer, be upfront and transparent with users.

- Notify users before their free trial ends and before they are charged.
- Make it easy for users to cancel their membership. Don't make users search for the steps to cancel.
- Provide a link to take users through the cancellation process.
- Make sure the visual elements in your designs, like buttons, are labeled clearly.
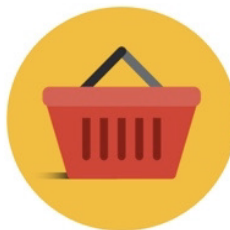
 Sneak into basket

Sneak into basket: When a user has to remove an item from their cart if they don't want to buy it, which is an extra step that could be easily missed.

An example of sneak into basket is when an extra item is added into a user's shopping cart while checking out, or an extra plan or service is pre-selected as "add to my cart" during the checkout process. An easy way to avoid this deceptive pattern in your designs is to make sure no boxes are pre-selected that add items to a user's cart. There should not be any surprises about what the user is expecting to purchase.
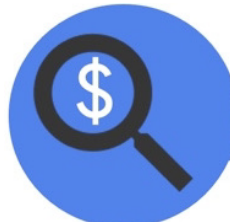
 Hidden costs

Hidden costs: Hidden or unexpected charges in the user's cart that are not revealed until the end of the checkout process.

An example of the hidden costs deceptive pattern is when a user thinks that they're paying a specific amount for a product or service, but at the end of checkout, they find out there are additional fees. Apps and websites add these hidden costs hoping that users will be too tired to find another site with cheaper products and unwilling to go through the entire checkout process again elsewhere.

In your own designs, be sure to give users all pricing related information upfront. A good way to avoid hidden costs is to make a calculator available during shopping where the user can calculate extra costs, like shipping and taxes, before checking out.

 Confirmshaming

Confirmshaming: When users are made to feel guilty when they opt out of something.

An example of confirmshaming is when a user is attempting to make a choice and the copy inside of the button is attempting to make them feel guilty about their choice. These are added with the hope that users will choose to opt-in to a service being provided because they are worried they'll be missing out.

As you design, think carefully about the words you are using on buttons and confirmation screens to avoid manipulating the emotions of your users.

 Urgency

Urgency: Attempting to convince users to purchase an item before they run out of time and miss today's "amazing" price.

An example of urgency can be when a pop up opens on a website to promote a deal just for the next hour or a coupon that expires in thirty minutes. The goal of urgency is to rush the user into making a purchase in a limited amount of time, otherwise they'll miss an amazing deal and have to pay full price.

Urgency is not just about offers and deals that are limited, it's about adding increased pressure on the user to commit to a purchase quickly. In your designs, think about how you are utilizing urgency and ensure you aren't using this deceptive pattern to manipulate your users into making sales quickly.

 Scarcity

Scarcity: When a website makes users very aware of the limited number of items in stock.

An example of scarcity is when a website says that there are only five of this item left, usually followed by a message that urges the user to make a purchase before it's too late. This is one way that a sense of urgency, as mentioned above, can be applied to a product's sale.

In your designs, think about what user's need to know about a purchase that they are going to make and if scarcity is being used to urge them to commit to an impulse purchase or if it is meant to inform users of the availability of a product. Designers should always aim to inform and not deceive users.

What can you do to avoid deceptive patterns?

In your role as a new UX designer, you can help prevent deceptive patterns by being aware of them. That way, when you see a deceptive pattern in action, you'll be able to correct them. Remember, deceptive patterns are unethical and should be avoided. Being clear and honest with your users will strengthen their trust in your brand and product.

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