Learn more about personas

At this point in the course, you've learned about empathizing with users and building empathy maps to identify user pain points. You are on your way to learning all about the users that you'll design a product for!

Now, it's time to start personifying users. Keeping in mind everything that you've learned so far, you'll soon build your first persona. **Personas** are fictional users whose goals and characteristics represent the needs of a larger group of users. Each persona that you create will represent a group of users with similar characteristics that you've learned about through your research. Personas are key to the design process because they reflect the lifestyles of users and give your team an idea of how to meet users' needs or challenges.

In the world of UX design, the user always comes first. But to put user needs first, we have to know who we're talking about. So let's explore how to build personas.

Building personas

Personas are created by conducting user research and identifying common **pain points**, which are UX issues that frustrate and block the user from getting what they need from a product.

As you create personas, look for the most common themes in your data and group the users who personify those themes together. For example, imagine that the data collected from user interviews for the dog walker app shows that a lot of potential users between the ages of 45 and 60 are concerned about dog walkers having access to their homes. That would definitely be a pain point you'd want to include in a persona that represents that specific age group of users.

Generally, creating 3 to 8 personas is enough to represent the majority of a product's user base. Think of personas as an overview of all of your research and interviews. While it's important for personas to accurately represent users, it's impossible to meet every one of their specific needs. Personas are also context-specific, meaning they should be focused on the behaviors and goals of users interacting with the product effectively.

For the dog walker app, think about a scenario from the perspective of a dog owner:

- Daniela is a 48-year-old freelance film producer who lives with their partner Priya and their two children in Atlanta, Georgia. The family recently adopted a golden retriever puppy named Cisco.

- The family takes regular trips with the kids for gymnastics competitions, and Daniela often travels for long periods of time when filming. Daniela wants to find someone to take care of the puppy, Cisco, while the family is away or busy.

- Daniela's biggest concern is trusting a stranger to come into their home and to take care of their puppy. Daniela would be most comfortable hiring someone who knows how to properly care for puppies and can take Cisco on walks and to dog parks.

Here's what a persona might include for Daniela, using the persona template that was shown in the video:

You can use the information in personas to create designs that speak directly to users, like Daniela. This ensures users have the best experience when using your product! For example, in your designs, you might want to indicate that the dog walkers are screened by the app and must pass background checks, which would reassure users like Daniela that their dog will be safe.

Pro tip: Get your team's opinion on the product's users before you build personas. Then, after you build personas, review those suggestions from your team and compare them to the personas you created. Point out how the data validated or contradicted their suggestions. Everyone on your team needs to understand the personas in order to truly connect with your users.

There are many ways you can create personas. You can explore a variety of persona templates like these persona templates and examples ⧉ from Just In Mind and these customizable persona templates ⧉ from Xtensio. You might notice that some personas are very long and detailed! Or, you might notice different topics in the persona examples that we haven't covered in this course. Feel free to explore and use a persona template that works best for you and your design project.

If you want to learn even more, check out this introduction to personas ⧉ from Interaction Design Foundation.

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