Design for mobile first

Mobile first is a design philosophy that seeks to start the design process with the mobile version of a product and later adapt it to fit larger screens, like a tablet or computer. In this course, you'll design for mobile first by creating a dedicated mobile app and a responsive website, where you'll start your project by designing for a mobile screen size.

A mobile-first design philosophy is related to the practice of **progressive enhancement**, which is designing for the smallest and most basic version of a product before creating larger, more complex versions. By starting with a small screen size, designers have to choose the most important elements to prioritize on the screen. This approach contrasts with **graceful degradation**, which is designing for a larger screen with a lot of features and interactions first, then scaling back the designs to fit a smaller screen.

Access to the internet

More people than ever are using mobile devices as a primary means of accessing the internet. According to the World Advertising Research Center ⬏, by 2025, 72% of all internet users will use smartphones as their only method of accessing the internet. A large portion of these users are the **Next Billion Users**, who are the people around the world who are starting to use the internet for the first time, often through mobile devices. The content, interactions, and features of products you design need to be accessible for the Next Billion Users, so a mobile-first philosophy is key. To learn more, check out this video about designing for the Next Billion Users ⬏ from earlier in the certificate program, and this article from Google Design that shares nine ways designers can be more empathetic and effective when creating products for emerging markets ⬏.
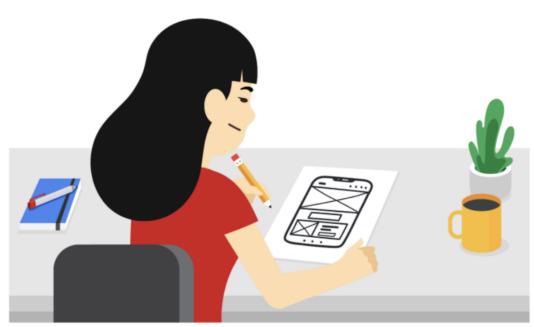
Designing for mobile first through the project you create in this course will help showcase work in your portfolio that demonstrates your awareness and understanding of these changing user needs.

Reduce load time

Mobile-first designs help users quickly access content because fewer elements and features have to load. This is important because mobile phones don't have as much computer power as desktop computers do. If you design for a larger screen size first, it can be difficult later to incorporate all of the design elements of a complex screen into a smaller one without impacting load time. This is just another reason why a mobile first design philosophy can be useful.

Curious to learn more? Check out this article about the making of YouTube Go ⬏, a mobile-first version of YouTube for users who have limited data or don't have access to a stationary, local network connection.

Learn more about designing for mobile first

How does designing for mobile first come into play in the real world? Here's an example! For many years, Google Search's method of search indexing, a system used to rank the search results of all webpages, based its model on desktop computers. When the Google Search team realized that most users were accessing Search through mobile devices, they switched the ranking system to prioritize these mobile searches.

Let's say you search for a restaurant. In the early 2000s, you would have been provided a list of food review websites. Today, however, you are more likely to get results for directions first, rather than customer reviews, since mobile users are likely on-the-go. In other words, indexing is determined by what mobile users would want to access first.

The mobile-first philosophy is revolutionizing the way UX designers approach the design process. As you start your UX design career, you need to be able to think about the devices that users are most likely to experience the product on, and design with that device in mind.

To explore more on mobile first designs, check out Medium's What is Mobile First Design? Why It's Important & How To Make It? ⬏ article on the importance of mobile first design.

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