

## CHAPTER 8

# Mobile Web UX Design: Some Simple Guidelines

4 min read

If you're going to design for mobile, then it's likely you're going to need to consider the way that the device is used and the specifics of the device itself. There are some general principles that can help you begin designing for mobile, but don't forget that these don't replace the need for user research. They are guidelines, not hard and fast rules.

There are many things to consider when designing for mobile. On top of standard UX considerations, there are also going to be mobile-specific design considerations. For instance, are you going to integrate your mobile offering with your current offering? Will you use responsive design or adaptive design?

A lot of this will boil down to context—that is, the context in which users will use their mobile devices to do whatever tasks we have in mind. If your users access the mobile web from their desks, that's awesome, but many users don't. They're going to be trying to use them in the supermarket, on their daily commute, on the walk to the coffee shop, etc.

*"If your business isn't mobile friendly, your business is dead."*

— Jonathan Stark, Best-selling mobile technology author



## 8. Mobile Web UX Design: Some Simple Guidelines

Space and occasion (i.e., context) should be foremost in your mind. As the era has freed people from having to anchor themselves to desks in order to get online, the places in which they interact with their devices are virtually limitless. That means you're going to have to consider how to reduce distractions and make it easy for the user to focus on the task in hand, too.

Josh Clark, the author of *Tapworthy - Designing Great iPhone Apps*, offers three categories for mobile web access:

1. Microtasking: When users interact with their devices for brief but frenzied periods of activity
2. Local: When the users want to know what's going on around them
3. Bored: When the users have nothing better to do and are looking to be entertained or otherwise diverted

# Basic Design Considerations for the Mobile Web

## Small Screens

You don't have as much screen real estate for mobile devices as you do for PCs and laptops. That means, normally, you'll be designing for multiple screen sizes. You need to make a decision early as to whether to use responsive design (where the device handles the changes in display) or adaptive design (where your servers handle the changes).

You want to focus on a 'mobile first' approach, which means designing for the smallest mobile platforms and increasing complexity from there.

A good process to follow would be:

- Group device types based on similar screen sizes, and try to keep this to a manageable number of groups.
- Define content rules and design adaption rules that enable you to display things well on each group of devices.
- Try to adhere as closely to web standards as possible when implementing flexible layouts.

Don't forget that there are many different browser types available for the mobile web and the wider Internet, too. You want to ensure that you support as many of these as possible.

## Keep Navigation Simple

Keypads and touch screens don't make for precise navigation like mice do, so try to:

- Prioritize navigation based on the way users work with functionality—the most popular go at the top
- Minimize the levels of navigation involved
- Ensure labelling is clear and concise for navigation
- Offer short-key access to different features
- Remember to offer a 30x30 pixel space for touch screen tap points
- Ensure that links are visually distinct, and make it clear when they have been activated, too
- Make it easy to swap between the mobile and full site (if you choose to implement separate versions)

## Keep Content to a Minimum

Don't overwhelm your users—respect the small screen space. Keep content to a minimum; save the deluxe treatment for the desktop platform (while being careful not to make the mobile user feel short-changed if the desktop version seems vastly superior).

Make sure that content is universally supported on all devices or avoid it. Think Flash and then don't use it, for example.

Make page descriptions short and to the point—for relevant bookmarks.

## Reduce the Inputs Required from Users

The less the users have to fiddle with their phones, the more they're going to enjoy using your mobile web offering.

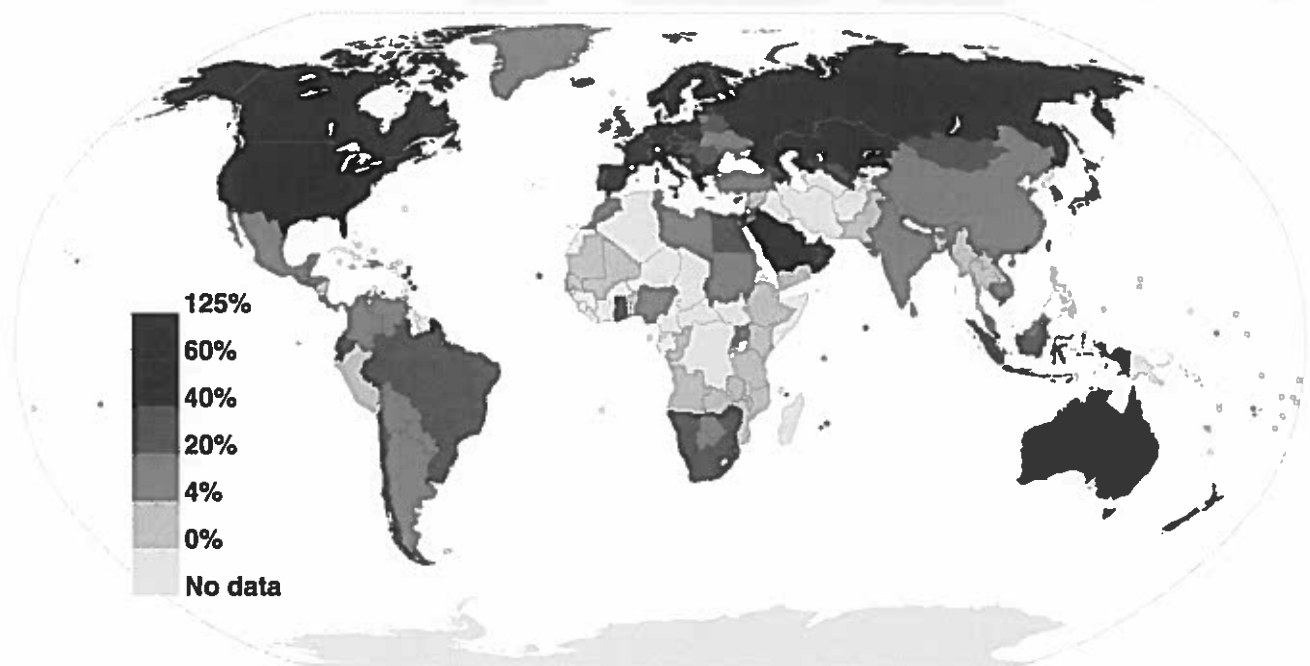
## 8. Mobile Web UX Design: Some Simple Guidelines

Consider:

- Keeping URLs short
- Offering alternative input mechanisms (video, voice, etc.)
- Minimizing inputs in forms (You can always ask for more data when the user logs on to the desktop.)
- Allowing permanent sign in (Most smartphones are password or fingerprint protected – the risks of staying logged in are less hazardous than on the desktop.)
- Keeping scrolling to a minimum and only allowing scrolling in one direction

## Remember Mobile Connections Are Not Stable

Mobile connections can be a colossal pain in the ass in areas with patchy service. Don't make things hard on your users. As the global mobile broadband internet penetration map below shows, not all areas around the world have readily accessible mobile connections.



Author/Copyright holder: Jeff Ogden. Copyright terms and licence: CC BY-SA 3.0

## 8. Mobile Web UX Design: Some Simple Guidelines

Try:

- Retaining data so that it's not lost in a connection break
- Minimizing page size for rapid loading
- Killing off ad-networks, etc. on mobile sites which consume huge amounts of bandwidth and data
- Keeping images to a minimum and reducing the size of those images
- Reducing the numbers of embedded images to a minimum (speeding up load times)

## Continuous Integrated Experiences

As users move between mobile and the desktop, they're going to expect similar experiences.

Remember to:

- Maintain continuity. If they log into your webstore on mobile, they should be able to track orders and make purchases just like they would on the desktop.
- Maintain consistency. Offer the option to switch between mobile and desktop offerings at will.
- Maintain brand. The look and feel of each version should be similar. Any deviations between the logo and such can have disastrous repercussions due to loss of trust.

## The Take Away

Mobile is different from the traditional desktop environment. Moreover, while standard UX and usability considerations are needed in a mobile context, the mobile environment also demands design considerations of its own. This will frequently involve a balancing act as you try to condense needed features from the desktop version while shaving down on data demands, and all the while being careful to maintain the organization's presence through a credible presentation so as to win and keep users' trust. Get it right, though, and you will be another step closer to impactful designs that can catch users anywhere, anytime.

When we see the next billion smartphone users on the horizon, we know that mobile is *the* big thing now. You cannot take any chances when it comes to mobile design—the good thing is you don't have to... sign up for our course "**Mobile User Experience (UX) Design**" now!

# Mobile User Experience (UX) Design

## Intermediate course

Have more questions about designing the optimal mobile user experience? The user experience is different on mobile. Sure, you could learn that through trial and error, but that would take time and cost a lot of money before you get it right. The good news is that many of the differences are now clearly understood. Our course **Mobile User Experience Design** is built on evidence-based research and practice. It is taught by the CEO of ExperienceDynamics.com, Frank Spillers, a distinguished speaker, author, and internationally respected Senior Usability practitioner.

[Learn more about this course >](#)

## Testimonials from Course Takers



"The overall organization of this course was great. I really liked the overview and wrap-up included in each module that introduced and summarized the information that was presented. The overall material was in-depth and very relevant to current trends and best practices."

**Jennifer Steiner-Kotch**, United States



"A very well planned course with details up to the point, no extraneous information. The pace is also well maintained. Overall a beneficial course for those who are interested in learning more about Mobile UX principles"

**Ajayraj**, India

## 8. Mobile Web UX Design: Some Simple Guidelines



"A very concise course with relevant information. The examples provided were thought provoking. Doing research on other mobile apps and or websites was very useful; we might take for granted what is out there since we interact with it everyday but seeing it in action and comparing to what is taught in the course is valuable."

**Tony Evreniadis, United States**

[View the course curriculum >](#)

