Lab 9: Prototyping

Submit Assignment

Due Saturday by 11:59pm **Points** 20
Submitting a website url, a media recording, or a file upload **Available** after Jul 15 at 12pm

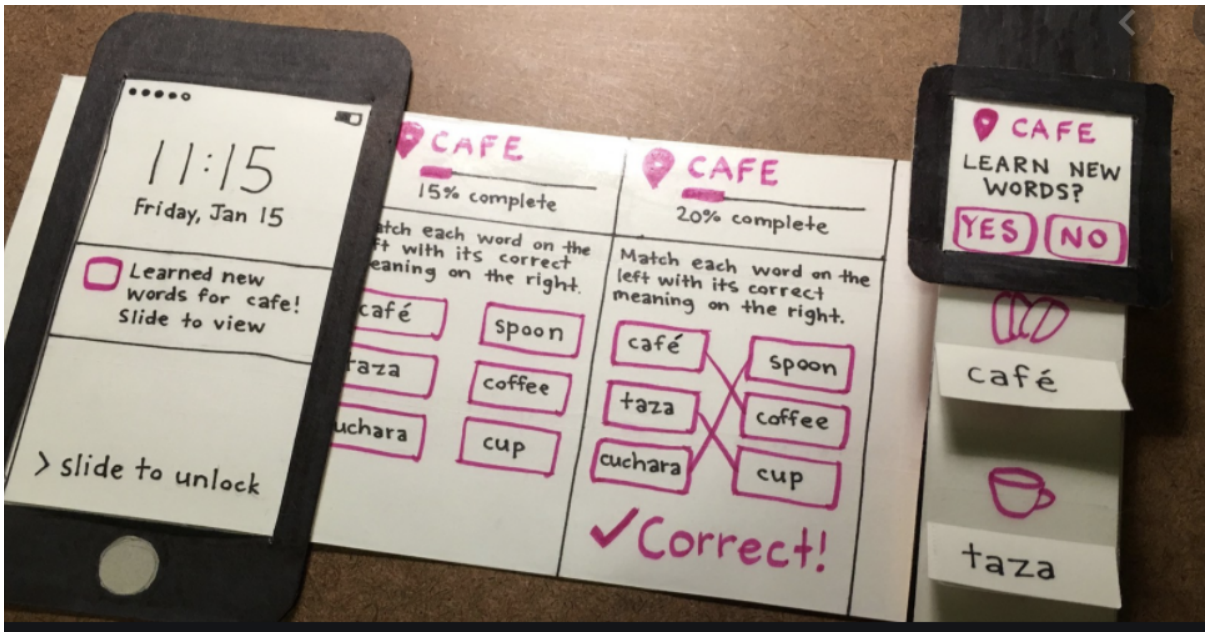
Prototyping

The time has finally arrived, it's time to create a prototype or your idea to get feedback from your users. This is an individual lab.

Quite simply, a prototype is a simulation or sample version of a final product, which is used for testing prior to launch anything. A prototype doesn't usually have to be very complex in order to learn what you need to know. **The purpose of your prototype is to be able to put it in front of users and get feedback to validate your hypothesis.** Will your design idea actually solve the user's problem you identified? You will then take that feedback and iterate (ie improve) your prototype.

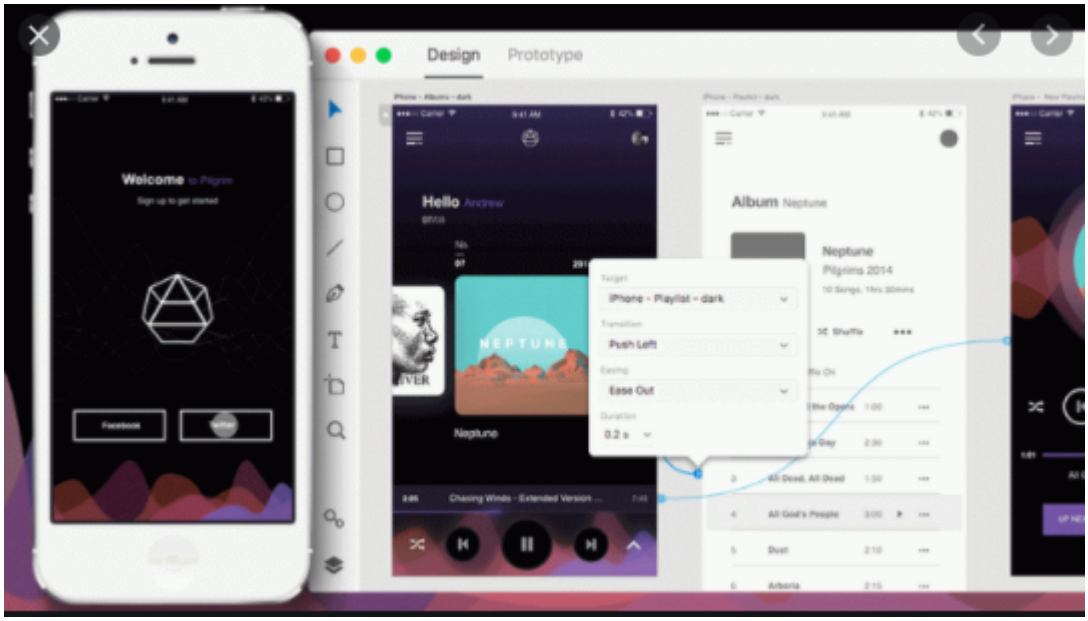
The chapter by Houde and Hill should give you an idea of how to break down a big concept into something that's small and testable. You sketch concept may have a lot of elements to it, pick one thing you want to validate and create a representation of that design idea that you can use to solicit feedback.

Keep in mind, this prototype can be a paper prototype, like this. Paper prototypes are good if you need general information about your design concept. A paper prototype can look like this:



or even this, yes, a storyboard may be what you need to determine if you should move forward with your idea or not:

If, for example, you're focusing on redesigning something that already exists or adding new features and you feel pretty solid about your concept, you may need to get more specific feedback. In that case, a high-fidelity prototype is what you want. It could look something like this:



Your prototype should be whatever you need to test your hypothesis. It may be a digital prototype (using a tool like Figma or Proto.io) it may be a storyboard or a 3D-printed object.

Sometimes you have to get really creative in how to test your hypothesis. Don't worry about failing, you're not graded on how awesome your prototype is or how well it tests. You're graded based on showing that you're following the UX process and learning from user feedback.

The steps I've outlined below will help you determine what form your prototype should take place for this first round (you will be making two iterations of your prototype for this project). But if you are stuck on how to prototype your idea, check out **IDEOs Design Kit blurb on prototyping (https://www.designkit.org/methods/34)** . This is prototyping in a nutshell (note the degree of difficult they rate prototyping, so don't feel bad if you think this is hard, it is!) Still stuck? Contact me and we'll set up a zoom call to brainstorm your prototype.

Step 1: Set a clear goal for your prototype

What do you want to *learn* from your prototype. Remember, you don't yet know how the ideas you sketched will be received by actual users of the product. If you haven't already, spend a few minutes taking a lesson from LeanUX and create a hypothesis statement.

Here's the LeanUX hypothesis template:

We believe that [doing this] for [these people] will achieve [this outcome]. We'll know this hypothesis is valid when we see [this feedback (in user testing)].

Here's an example (from a text book):

We believe that adding hotel room images on the booking screen for app users will increase customer conversations. We will know this hypothesis is valid when we see a higher conversion rate for rooms that have an image.

Here's another one (from my interactions with students):

We believe that creating a Zoom Cafeteria where users can "bump" into each other and join their zoom room will decrease feelings of isolation and create new social connections during "shelter in place." We'll know this hypothesis is valid when users report the formation of new acquaintances and feelings of belonging after interacting with our prototype.

Think of your prototype as your MVP, your minimum viable product, to prove this hypothesis. If you get the feedback you're looking for you know you're on the right track to developing a solid product. If you don't see the feedback you're looking for you know you need to iterate. Perhaps you need to go back to the users and do more interviews, more research, perhaps you need to make a few design changes to your product.

Step 2: Outline the tasks you want to accomplish with your prototype

Pick 1-3 tasks you want to test on users in order to test your hypothesis statement. Sketch what each interface would look like. This is often best done on a whiteboard or with post-it notes so that you can easily rearrange items until you get it right. This will save you so much headache! Once you have these steps determined, then you'll create the prototype elements for users to complete these tasks.

Step 3: Create your prototype!

You have a little more time than usual to create a prototype that you can get in front of users to get feedback. Testing these prototypes may be tricky given that everything is currently remote, so just let me know if you're having a hard time figuring out a testable prototype and I am happy to help you brainstorm.

In terms of turning in your prototype, it may be a link to a prototyping tool, or maybe a video if you created a role-playing prototype of a physical prototype that you want to share.

Recruiting Users

You'll need to find users that fit your personas, you'll be testing your prototype with them to get feedback to iterate on. Sometimes it can be tricky to schedule with these people, so take some time now to start recruiting these testers and be thinking through how you'll test your prototype remotely (an added layer of challenge).