

Study Buddy Final Prototype

Strawberry Mountain

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1 Introduction

Study Buddy is a mobile based application. It is an idea app targeted to those individuals who are more focused and productive when surrounded by a group of people. The kind of environment you only get when sitting in a university library or study room. By using this app, each user could gain companionship and benign competition in a fun way, while getting inspiration from other hard-working people and staying motivated.

Additionally, the increase in non-traditional students and online programs will contribute to the usefulness of Study Buddy. The users will be traditional and non-traditional students who fit in the above categories. This iteration of the prototype increases the usability of the app based on research gathered from previous empirical and analytical evaluations.

2 Materials

The final interactive prototype is located at the following link:

<https://idoc.mockplus.com/run/qDS0Fde2r>.

The workflow describing the overall flow of the application is in Appendix A at the end of the report.

3 Design Justification

3.1 Design Principles

The creation of the Study Buddy app has gone through an iterative process to reach its current state. From the initial prototype through the final iteration, we followed the PRICPE design process. After gathering information and planning, we created the first prototype using low fidelity sketches. These were designed to display all the information the user would need on the main page in a way similar to other social media apps. The layout of the buttons and navigation system were all mirrored after similar applications to ensure easy learnability. The early design only had a few screens, so as more were added, adjustments had to be made to maintain continuity in the flow of the application. Our icons for the interfaces were chosen to ensure a strong scent. Users should have an idea on how to get to the information they want. Some of the icon designs, however, had to be changed later

on due to feedback from actual users. This displays the importance of following an iterative process.

In our application, we wanted to make creating and joining the study rooms the first thing the users seen once they log in. The “current room” takes up the majority of the main page, with large boxes below it with other rooms the user can join. This makes all the users frequent rooms easy to access, reducing the amount of searching the user has to do. Creating a new room is also showcased on the main page. Using an empty “room” box and a large plus sign, the user is able to easily click on this to create the new study room.

All the other functional parts of the application, including the settings, messages, and followed users sections, were designed with the same ideas of usability in mind. Users can access information using the simple UI and move between pages using the four indicators on the bottom of the screen. Some of these designs went through iterative changes that are discussed in the following sections.

3.2 Changes Based on Feedback

Through our group’s most recent post to the Design Gallery Week 8, we generated a lot of feedback. We learned that there was a lot of confusion with the starting place that the app takes you to on the first load. Our app is based on a user having an account to post social media like posts, but we had forgotten to add a login screen. Our new prototype now uses a login screen as the landing page. Hopefully, this clears some confusion for the user. We also noted that one of our elements on the Home page was not explicit enough for users to understand what it was meant for. The element was a camera icon placed in the top left of the Home page. This camera icon was meant to be a quick link to making a post to your followers. Now instead of the camera icon, we made the notification dialogue on the webpage. This hopefully will make the path to posting content more intuitive for our users.

3.3 Analytical Justification

After two of our team members conducted their analytical evaluation on our high-fidelity prototype, we learned that we had to make some small tweaks based on Nielsen’s Heuristic Guidelines. The first of these being the absence of a back button. This meant that if the user was a few screens in they could not navigate back without returning to either the Home page, Following page, Messages, or My Account page. Adding this in would be fairly simple and allows the user to have more granular control of the navigation. You can see this change reflected in

pages that are deeper in our user interface, pages like Home will not contain a back button.

3.4 Empirical Justification

The user interface design decisions did not change much since Project 8, so the design considerations from the last submission based on empirical work are valid. A major problem that we had noticed from our empirical work was the lack of continuity between the home page and the ability to create a room/create a new post. Therefore, we created a larger “new post” and “create room” buttons on the user interface to make their availability and functions more obvious to the user.

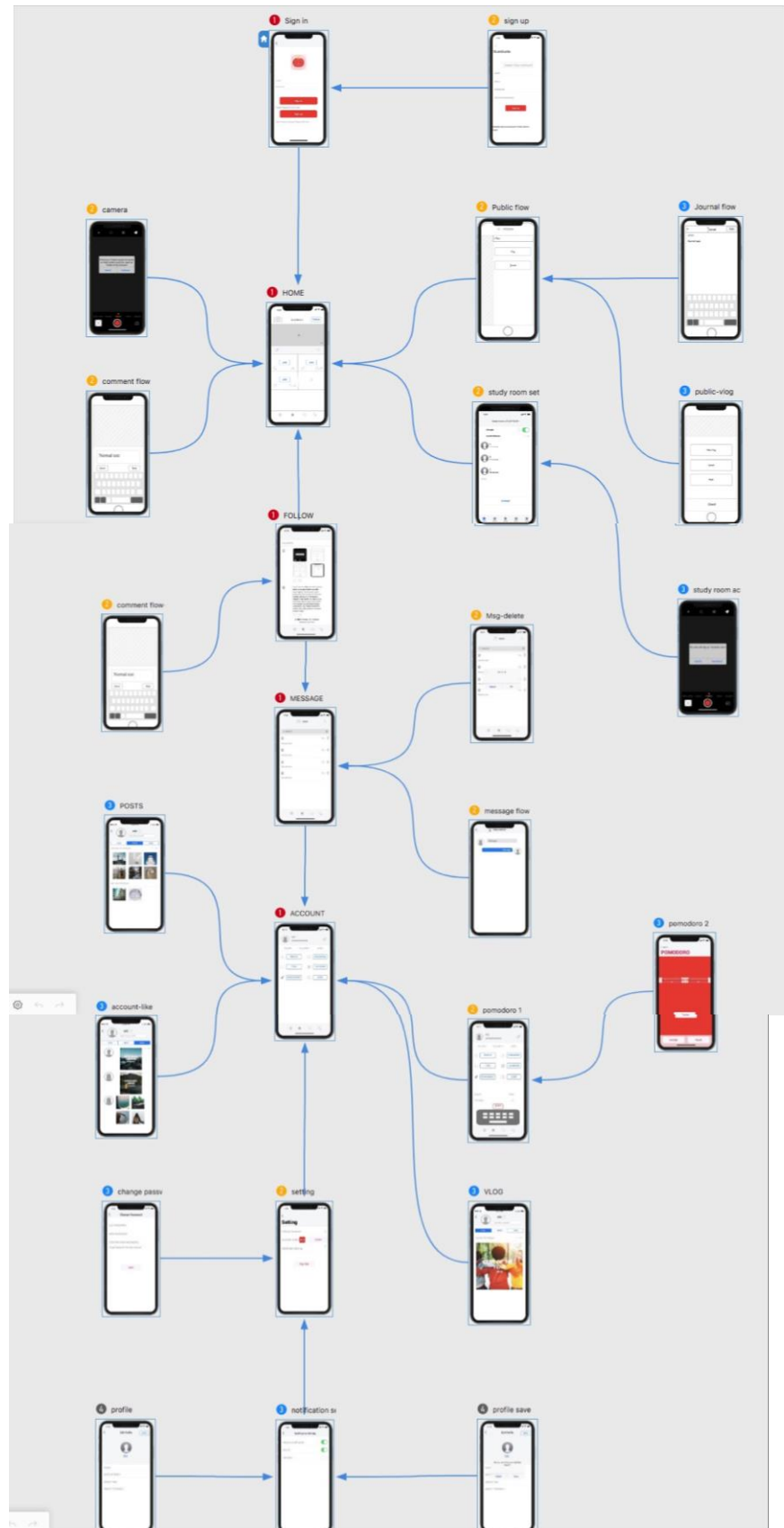
We also reduced the amount of information on the home screen, as previous testers from the recent evaluation felt that it may have been too cluttered. New users should find the design and its functionalities to be intuitive. Therefore we reduced the number of options on the home screen and increased the sizing of the options for the user to easily view his or her choices.

The workflow of the messaging functionality was also revised in the latest prototype. In an earlier prototype, the button selected to message another user did not lead the user to a new message screen, but rather the inbox screen which proved to be confusing to the users. Both users in previous evaluations claimed that they were used to seeing a new message screen instead. Therefore, we created a new screen for users to draft a new message instead, which is reflected in the final prototype. Furthermore, we decided to add more transition screens, such as a screen for the user to select a vlog or journal for the type of content he or she would like to create/post. We also designed a screen to prompt the user to allow camera access for the vlog so that they are informed that they are about to be recorded for confirmation. A comment screen was also created for when users to draft comments on content. We have also created a prompt screen for prompting the user that he/she is creating a study room, as well as a prompt screen for when the user deletes a message in his/her inbox. These features are crucial so that the user can confirm the deletion of the message, as the message may be accidentally deleted if the feature weren't there. The verification of being recorded is also great for people who do not want to be unintentionally recorded, protecting their privacy.

We added a Pomodoro timer screen, which is commonly used within the context of studying in order for users to take a break typically after every 25 minutes to reduce pressure while studying for longer periods of time. This allows users to experience a productive work session while also minimizing stress with breaks. This our target audience of students and learners in general.

Lastly, the team modified the “like” button, which was previously designed as a plus symbol and has now been modified to appear as a heart symbol. This made it more obvious to the user, as the user should not have to guess to distinguish the follow button and like button apart from each other.

Appendix A – Workflow



Peer Evaluation

Name	Role	Worked On	Completeness (0-5)
Nicholas Kiddle	User Research	Analytical justifications, Feedback justification based on Design Galleries	5
Ruosha Pang	Design	Interactive mockup improvements, workflow	5
Will Dang	Writing/Deliverables	Justification Based on Empirical work	5
Tyler Betley	Management	Justification based on design principles, Conversion to ACM format	5