

What Does a UI Designer Do (2024)

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UI design is not just beautiful typefaces and colors. In this video, we will cover the tasks and responsibilities of a UI designer and help you to decide whether this is something for you. Hey, my name is Zeyu, I'm a design team lead here at CareerFoundry, and today I will go into more detail in what UI designers do on a daily basis and the skills they are required to succeed in this field.

This will help you make an informed decision if you are considering getting into this field yourself. A job in UI design offers plenty of variety and requires you to wear many hats. Of course, UI designers need a keen visual eye, but the psychological aspect is not to be underestimated.

To design user-friendly interfaces, you need to understand how people work and how each visual, interactive element shapes their experience. So let's start off with the visual aspect of the job. UI design focuses on the user's visual experience.

It determines how a user interacts with a user interface, which can be an app, a video game, or a website. It's about how the users navigate from A to B through different visual touch points. You can think of tapping a button or swiping through pictures.

So a UI designer has to design all the screens through which a user will move and to create a visual element and their visual properties that will facilitate this movement. At the same time, a UI designer works with the human behavior in mind. Also, a good user interface requires barely any thoughts from the user.

Think about your favorite app. It is visually pleasant and simple to use, right? When you first installed it, you didn't spend ages to figure out how to get from A to B. It was just obvious. UI designers use patterns, spacing, and colors to guide a user to the expected user behavior.

Intuitive is the keyword here. The UI designer is not only creative, but also put themselves in the user's shoes, anticipate what they expect at each stage. They use this empathy to design visual, interactive elements that responds to the user in a natural way.

When it comes to the skills that a UI designer needs, it's a lot more diverse than you might think. Sure, a UI designer needs a keen eye for details, but being a UI designer is more than just sitting in front of a screen. Let's take a look at some of the core soft and hard skills that every UI designer should have.

I will start with the soft skills. Firstly, communication is key in UI design. When you hand off your design to developers, you need to communicate effectively the intended functions of each element you designed.

Communicating with your clients and stakeholders is a big part of the UI designer role too. You often need to explain and justify every design decision you made in as much detail as possible. Working well in a team is an essential skill, which involves listening and troubleshooting together to get into the roots of a problem.

Empathies enable UI designers to put themselves in the user's shoes. Lastly, keeping accessibility and inclusivity at the forefront of your mind is vital for creating interfaces that all users will enjoy. If you place aesthetics and creative visuals above usability, you won't get very far.

Now let's look at some hard skills that a UI designer should take good command of. First of all, you need to possess proficiency in at least one of the following industrial standard tools. Figma, Sketch, Adobe XD, and InVision.

Once you have learned one of these tools well, it will be easier to learn other tools much faster. At the same time, a solid understanding of the fundamental UI theory, methods, and practices that form the basis of UI design is required for UI designers. This includes color theory, typography, and UI design patterns.

So now you know the skills you need to have as a UI designer. Let's see what a UI designer can expect to see on their to-do list. First of all, designing UI elements such as buttons, icons, scroll bars, and sliders.

Then designing the interactivity of each element. For example, what does a button do when you click on it? Afterwards, designing each individual screen with which the user will interact, such as the layout, what should go where, how much space should be between each element, what visual elements and hierarchies makes for an intuitive user experience. Very importantly, considering how an app will react on different screen sizes and think about responsive design.

Regarding the styling of the design, UI designers have to use their comprehensive understanding of the color theory to create an awesome unique color palette to inject some personality into the product. They also need to choose the correct font and type sighting. Most of the cases, they are in charge of creating a style guide that is used across the product, ensuring consistency and familiarity for the user.

The design stage may include putting up a mood board, creating wireframes, and sketching out different ideas on how an interface might look. As a UI designer, it's also important to repeatedly test the idea. That's where the prototype comes in.

Prototypes enable UI designers to showcase their visual design in action, help them to quickly identify any flaws, and smooth over any rough edges. It will allow them to ensure the final product tick all the boxes before the launch. It's worth noting that there are three different types of prototypes.

Low-fidelity, mid-fidelity, and high-fidelity prototypes. Low-fidelity wireframes are basic layouts

and elements that are drawn on paper or whiteboard. That are quickly used to come in an idea with the minimum cost and effort.

Once the user flow and the screen layouts are defined, clickable prototypes that are static screens, that contain a medium to high level of details are created. High-fidelity prototypes usually feature advanced transition and interactions and resemble the final product itself. This is the stage where any fine-tuning design are taken place before handed over to the developers.

UI designer can use a combination of tools to create their prototypes. For example, programs like Figma is great for creating design and basic interactions for a prototype. Other popular prototyping tools include Adobe XD and Sketch.

Your level of involvement in any of these stages may differ depending on the companies and the role you will be working in. So check out carefully the job description in the roles of the companies that you are applying to. A quick note, if you enjoy this video, please like and subscribe to CareerFoundry's YouTube channel.

We'll be covering more topics on UI design, so stay tuned. Now you know what to expect if you decide to dive in in this prospective career. UI design comes with its own set of tasks and therefore calls upon many different skill sets when comparing to many other careers.

So now that you know exactly what they are, you can aim to learn and study them to get into the goal of getting your first work experience more quickly. If you'd like us to go into more detail or give you more hands-on tutorials, just leave a comment below. Also, if UI design sounds like something for you, CareerFoundry offers a free UI design short course.

With it, you will get a hands-on introduction to UI design and design your very first app screen. So sign up for the short course in the description below. I hope you enjoy the video and subscribe for more videos on UI design in the coming weeks.

And if you'd like to see how the industry is changing and how you can make the most out of your skills in the UI design work, have a look at this video here. In it, we cover everything you should expect for the UI design industry for 2023 and beyond. And prepare for the upcoming changes.

Check it out here. Thank you for watching and I will see you in the next video.

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