UI/UX Design Cheatsheet

# 1. Layout & Structure

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Grid System | Use 8pt or 12-column system for clean alignment | Tailwind grid, CSS flexbox |
| Spacing & Rhythm | Stick to multiples of 8px | 8 / 16 / 24 / 32 px |
| Visual Hierarchy | Bigger, bolder = more important | H1 > H2 > Body Text |
| Responsive Layouts | Design for mobile-first, adapt upward | Collapse sidebar to drawer |
| Flow & Page Structure | Clear user journey: top→down, left→right | Landing > Sign up > App view |

# 2. Visual Language

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Typography | Max 2 font families; use weight & size for contrast | Display vs body fonts |
| Color Palette | Stick to 1–2 primary colors + neutrals | Blue + cream + gray |
| Contrast | Light on dark or vice versa for readability | WCAG contrast ≥ 4.5:1 |
| Depth & Elevation | Use shadows, blurs, gradients for layering | Glassmorphism cards |
| Iconography | Keep icons consistent and minimal | Outline or filled—not mixed |

# 3. Interaction Design

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Affordance | Make buttons look clickable; inputs look editable | Shadows, borders, hover state |
| Feedback | Confirm every interaction (success/failure/loading) | Toast, spinner, error message |
| Microinteractions | Tiny transitions enhance clarity & joy | Button tap, card hover bounce |
| State Variants | Always define: default / hover / active / disabled | Button states |
| Accessibility (a11y) | Support keyboard nav, labels, and screen readers | `aria-\*`, focus ring, tabIndex |

# 4. UX Psychology

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Cognitive Load | Show only what’s needed; hide complexity | Accordion menus |
| Hick’s Law | Fewer options = faster decisions | 2–3 CTAs max |
| Zeigarnik Effect | Show progress to drive completion | Onboarding tracker |
| Emotional Design | Match mood with visuals, animations, words | “Storm has passed” feeling UI |
| Consistency Heuristic | Reuse patterns for buttons, cards, navs | Same color = same function |

# 5. System Design Principles

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Design Tokens | Store spacing, colors, fonts as variables | `--color-primary`, `--gap-md` |
| Component System | Reuse UI blocks; separate logic + style | <Card>, <Dialog>, <Sheet> |
| Atomic Design | Atoms → Molecules → Organisms → Templates → Pages | Button > Form > Modal |
| Theming | Support light/dark mode and brand palette switches | `theme.js`, Tailwind themes |
| Modular CSS / Tailwind | Prefer class-based styling for reusability | class="text-lg font-bold" |

# 6. Testing & Validation

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Usability Testing | Watch real people use it → iterate | Remote video test |
| A/B Testing | Try 2 versions for conversion improvement | “Try now” vs “Get started” |
| Accessibility Audit | Use tools like axe, Lighthouse | Chrome DevTools > Lighthouse |
| Error States | Handle failure gracefully, with helpful context | “No internet. Try again.” |
| Empty States | Turn “no data” into encouragement or art | “No memories yet—start one!” |

# 7. Motion & Transitions

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Easing Functions | Use `ease-in-out` or `spring()` for natural movement | Framer Motion transitions |
| Page Transitions | Animate page change to reduce jarring effect | Fade or slide-on navigation |
| Micro-Delight | Add “sparkle” moments subtly | Confetti on milestone |
| Duration | 200–400ms for UI, 600–900ms for large page change | Login transition |

# 8. Architecture & Navigation

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| Concept | Tip / Mental Model | Example |
| Information Architecture | Group related content logically | Home > Journals > Entry |
| Navigation Patterns | Side menu, top nav, tabs—don’t mix styles | Tab bar on mobile |
| Onboarding Flow | Teach by doing; reduce friction | 3-step walkthrough |
| CTA Hierarchy | Primary action first, secondary clear | “Add Story” > “View Past” |