Use Card Sorting to Create Information Architecture

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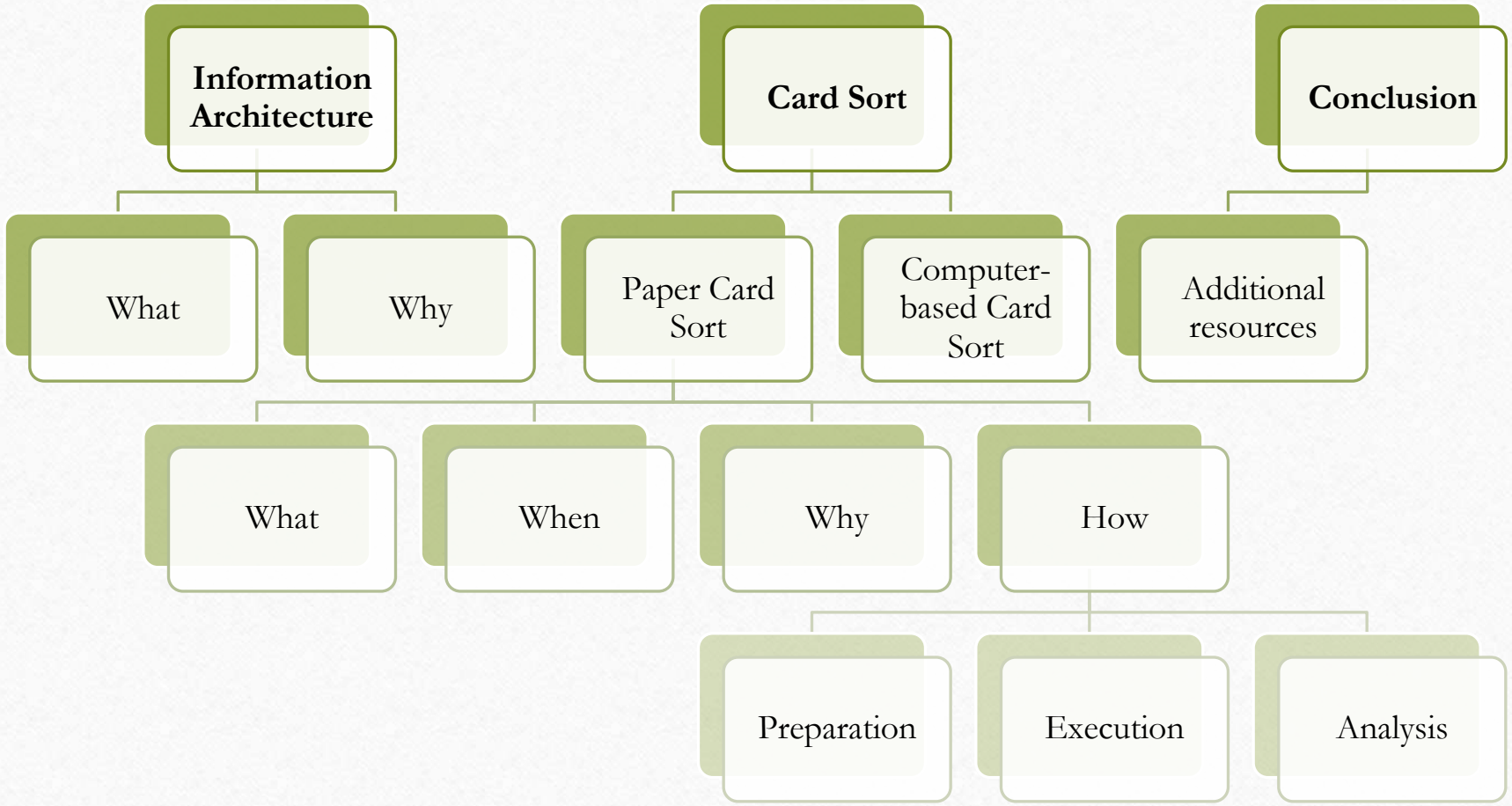
Information Architecture
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1. Information Architecture

We define information architecture as the art and science of organizing and labeling websites, intranets,
online communities and software to support **usability** and **findability**.

---Information Architecture Institute (iainstitute.org)

2. Card Sorting Method

2.1 What is card sort?

- Card sorting is a **user-centered design** method for increasing a system's findability.
- The process involves sorting a series of cards, each **labeled** with a piece of content or functionality, into **groups** that make sense to users or participants.

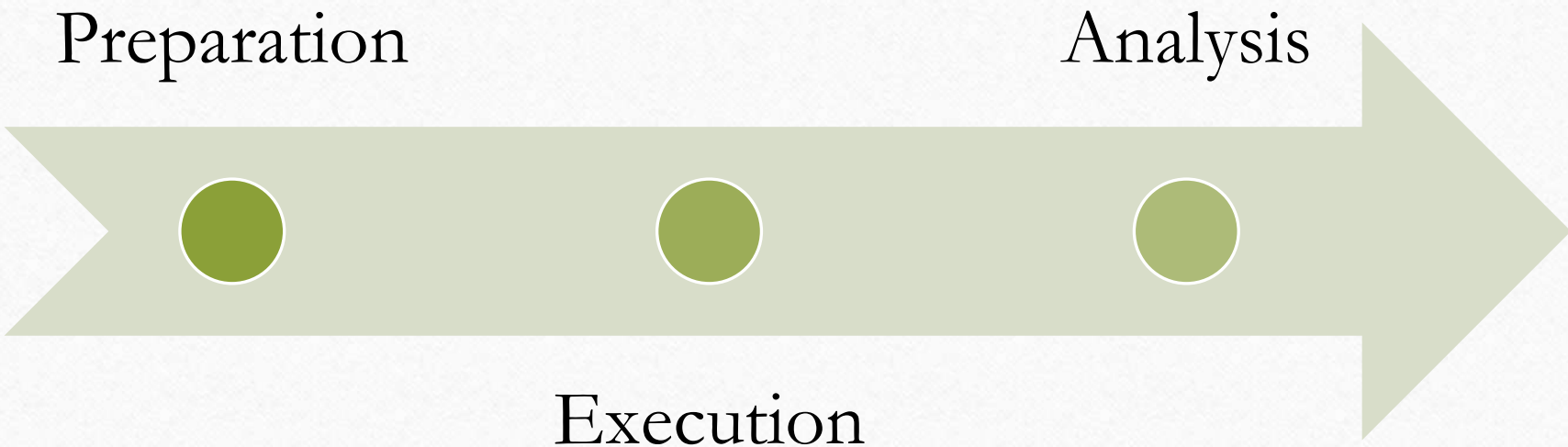
2.2 When to use card sort?

- designing a new site
- designing a new area of a site
- redesigning a site

2.3 Why use card sort?

- **Advantage**
  - Simple
  - Cheap
  - Quick to execute
  - Established
  - Involves users
  - Provides a good foundation
- **Disadvantage**
  - Does not consider users' tasks
  - Results may vary
  - Analysis can be time consuming
  - May capture "surface" characteristics only

2.4 How to use card sort?



Preparation

1. **Selecting content**
   - Content or tasks
2. **Selecting participants**
   - Individuals: 7-10
   - Groups: 5 groups of 3 participants
3. **Preparing the cards**
   - Label the cards
   - 3” x 5” (10cm x 15cm) Index cards
   - between 30 and 100 cards

Execution

- **Give participants basic instructions**
- **Facilitating card sorts**
  - Main job: observe and listen
  - Secondary job:
    - No leading questions
    - Take notes

Analysis

- **Smaller numbers of cards**
  - looking for broad patterns in the data
- **Larger numbers of cards**
  - using a spreadsheet

Computer-based Card Sort Tools

- Mac: xSort (xsortapp.com)
- PC: UXSORT (uxsort.com)
- OptimalSort

3. Conclusion

Card sorting is a great, reliable, inexpensive method for finding patterns in how users would expect to find content or functionality. (Donna Spencer)