What are common design terms to help you communicate with designers?

As a developer, you may need to work closely with designers. If you understand basic design terminology, you'll have a shared vocabulary and you'll be able to participate in the design process more actively. This can make your workflow more efficient and result in a better user experience.

So let's dive in. We'll start with the term layout. Layout is how the visual elements are arranged on a page or screen to communicate a message. These elements may include text, images, and white space. The layout is like the blueprint of a design. Designers must consider the placement, size, and hierarchy of each element.

The term that is closely related to layout is alignment. Alignment is how the elements are placed in relation to one another. Using alignment correctly is helpful for making the design look clean and organized. Designers create visual order by aligning elements along imaginary lines, edges, or a central point.

Great. Now let's talk about composition. Composition is the art of arranging elements to create a harmonious design. It determines how elements like images, text, and shapes relate to each other and contribute to the design in an artistic way. While layout mostly focuses on the placement of the elements, composition also considers the artistic impact that this placement will have in the overall design.

Composition is closely related to concepts of balance. Balance is how the visual weight is distributed within a composition. Designers aim to create an equilibrium through symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangements. A balanced design feels harmonious.

Hierarchy is another important concept that you should know. Hierarchy establishes the order of importance of the elements in a design. It's about making sure the most important information is noticed first. You can implement a visual hierarchy with size, color, contrast, alignment, white space, and even typography.

To create clear distinctions between the elements, you can use contrast. Contrast is helpful for guiding user attention to what you want to emphasize. You can do this through variations in color, size, shape, texture, or any other visual characteristic. Strong contrast is also helpful for improving readability.

Another helpful term is white space. White Space, also known as "negative space", is the empty space in a design. It's the area surrounding the elements. You might be surprised to know that white space is not necessarily white. Actually, it can be space in any color or texture. Its purpose is to improve the readability and enhance the visual hierarchy of a design.

These are general design concepts that you will find very often, but you may also find design terms that are more closely related to software development.

The user interface, also known as UI, is how humans interact with computers. A user interface includes the visual and interactive elements that users can see on their screens, like icons, images, text, menus, links, and buttons.

The user experience, also known as UX, is about how users feel when using a product or service. An application with a well-designed user experience is intuitive, easy to use, efficient, accessible, and enjoyable. The user interface plays a key role in making the user experience as easy and enjoyable as possible, so they are very closely related.

These are some of the common terms that you should know to communicate with designers. With this knowledge, now you can take a more active role in the design process.