

TODO: Designing a To-Do App That Balances Simplicity and Flexibility

1. Introduction

TODO is a productivity-focused mobile app designed to simplify task management while keeping users motivated and organized. The app helps users manage their daily, upcoming, and long-term tasks through an intuitive navigation system and smart features such as prioritization, reminders, and project grouping.

My Role: I acted as the Lead UI/UX Designer, responsible for user research, wireframing, prototyping, and visual design.

Scenario: With the growing number of task management apps, TODO aims to stand out by offering a minimal, intuitive, and highly customizable task flow—helping students, professionals, and everyday users to stay on track without cognitive overload.

2. Objectives

- Create an app that makes task creation and management seamless.
- Enable users to prioritize tasks effectively and stay reminded of what matters.
- Build an intuitive 3-section navigation system (Today, Upcoming, Browse).
- Provide flexibility for projects, lists, and reminders while maintaining simplicity.

Success Metrics:

- Reduce task creation time to under 10 seconds.
- Ensure users can find today's tasks in one tap.
- Improve user satisfaction (goal: 85%+ positive feedback in testing).

3. Research Goals and Methods

Research Goals:

- Understand how users currently manage tasks.
- Identify pain points in existing to-do apps.
- Define features users find essential vs. nice-to-have.

Methods Used:

- Competitive analysis of apps like Todoist, Microsoft To Do, and Google Tasks.
- Surveys with 15 participants (students, professionals, freelancers).
- Light user interviews to validate navigation preferences.

Key Insights:

- Users wanted simplicity + customization.

- Calendar-based planning was a must-have.
- Priority-driven reminders were considered more helpful than generic notifications.

4. Problem Definition

Many existing to-do apps are either too minimal (lacking advanced features like projects) or too overwhelming (cluttered with features). Users need an app that balances clarity with flexibility—where they can quickly add, organize, and track tasks without losing focus.

5. Defining the Audience

Primary Audience:

- Students (18–25): Assignments, deadlines, personal tasks.
- Young Professionals (25–35): Organize work projects and personal goals.
- Busy Parents (30–45): Need reminders and task grouping for family/work-life balance.

Persona Example:

- Name: Emma, 26
- Occupation: Marketing Associate
- Goals: Keep track of meetings and deadlines while balancing personal errands.
- Pain Points: Existing apps feel cluttered and take too long to add new tasks.

6. Brainstorming

Techniques used: Mind mapping & Crazy 8s.

Ideas explored:

- Calendar + Priority-driven reminders.
- A 3-tab navigation system (Today / Upcoming / Browse).
- One-tap “+” task creation accessible from any section.

We narrowed down ideas to balance speed (for task entry) and control (for organization).

7. The Process

- User Flows: Created login, onboarding, task creation, and navigation flows.
- Wireframes: Low-fidelity sketches mapped out navigation and task details.
- Information Architecture:
 - * Today → Focused view of tasks due today.
 - * Upcoming → Calendar-based future tasks.
 - * Browse → Lists, projects, completed tasks, and settings.

8. The Solution (Design)

Final Design Highlights:

- Splash & Onboarding: Multiple login options.
- Task Creation: Floating “+” button for quick task setup.
- Navigation System: Today, Upcoming, Browse sections.
- Priority Levels: Low/Medium/High with notification rules.
- Reminders: Smart time-based notifications.

Visual System:

- Colors: Blue accents + white background for clarity.
- Typography: Clean sans-serif font.
- Icons: Simple line icons for navigation clarity.

9. Testing & Iteration

Testing:

- Usability tests with 5 participants using interactive prototypes.
- Tasks: Create a task, set a reminder, navigate to completed tasks.

Findings:

- Users loved the fast “+” button flow.
- Some confusion around Browse → improved with clearer labels.
- Calendar was highly valued.

Iteration:

- Refined Browse navigation.
- Improved button labels.
- Adjusted color contrast for accessibility.

10. Conclusion & Final Thoughts

TODO bridges the gap between simplicity and control. By focusing on fast task creation, clear navigation, and customizable organization, it ensures productivity without overload.

Lessons Learned:

- Simplicity beats feature overload.
- Visual hierarchy improves usability.
- Prioritization tied to notifications creates real value.

Next Steps:

- Add collaboration features.
- Explore gamification (streaks, progress stats).
- Integrate with Google/Outlook calendars.