



Case Study Template

A case study documents the story of a design project in a way that makes it easy to share with your team, your colleagues, potential clients or employers. A case study documents the key parts of the process, the lessons learned and the outcomes. A *great* case study does this by presenting it in a compelling and memorable way.

This template contains one way to structure a case study by including some of the most important parts of your design process:

- Your initial **Hypotheses** about the situation, the problem and possible solution.
- The **Research** that you conducted to test your initial hypotheses.
- **Insights** from the research that you then used to identify the root problem.
- The **Problem** that you identified through your insights and eventually addressed in your design.
- The **Ideas** you developed and iterated to address the problem.
- The **Experiments** you carried out to test each of your ideas.
- The **Solution** that you chose from your best performing ideas.
- Your **Conclusions** about the process, what was achieved and what you learned.

Please adapt this template to fit your own needs. If you need to create a short case study, you might write a short paragraph for each point and fit them all on a single page. For a detailed case study, you could expand each point to several pages. If a project did not include many iterations on an idea or did not include a substantive research phase, you might remove those points altogether. And in some cases you may need to add a section, like a project timeline or descriptions of the people who were involved.

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Case Study Outline—Questions

If a case study is a story, then what you see below is a pretty good plot structure. It describes your initial thinking, then how you figured out the root problem, the ways that you attempted to solve it, and finally what changed and what you learned. Answer the questions below and your case study will be off to a great start!

Hypotheses

What do you **think is the root problem**, the system and the solution?

Research

What **steps** did you take to **check and adapt the initial hypotheses**?

Insights

How did your **thinking change** about the initial hypotheses?

Problem

What is the **root problem** your design was intended to address?

Ideas

What were your **design ideas** for solving the root problem?

Experiments

How did you **roll out and test** the best design ideas for the root problem?

Solution

Which of the experiments you rolled out and tested **performed the best**?

Conclusion

What was the overall **effect of your solution** and what did you **learn**?

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Case Study Outline—Example

Below is an example of how a designer might answer these questions for a project about designers who need to be better prepared for 21st century challenges. After answering these, the designer would use them as the outline for a full case study.

Hypotheses

- Designers are not ready for 21st century problems.
- Design tools are insufficient for the tasks.

Research

Interviewed

- 3 Designers
- 2 Design Educators
- 1 CEO

Insights

- The tools are fine.
- Design education doesn't teach Systems Thinking (ST).
- Designers not ready for ST-type decisions.

Problem

- Designers don't learn or practice ST.
- ST is always developed with other people.

Ideas

1. Local ST Design practice groups
2. Online ST Design method repository

Experiments

1. Online repository for one month (failed)
2. Local ST group for one month (still active)

Solution

Local, weekly ST Design practice groups with 5-10 members and simple curriculum.

Conclusion

- Designers are not ready for 21st century problems.
- Developing ST design skills together is promising.

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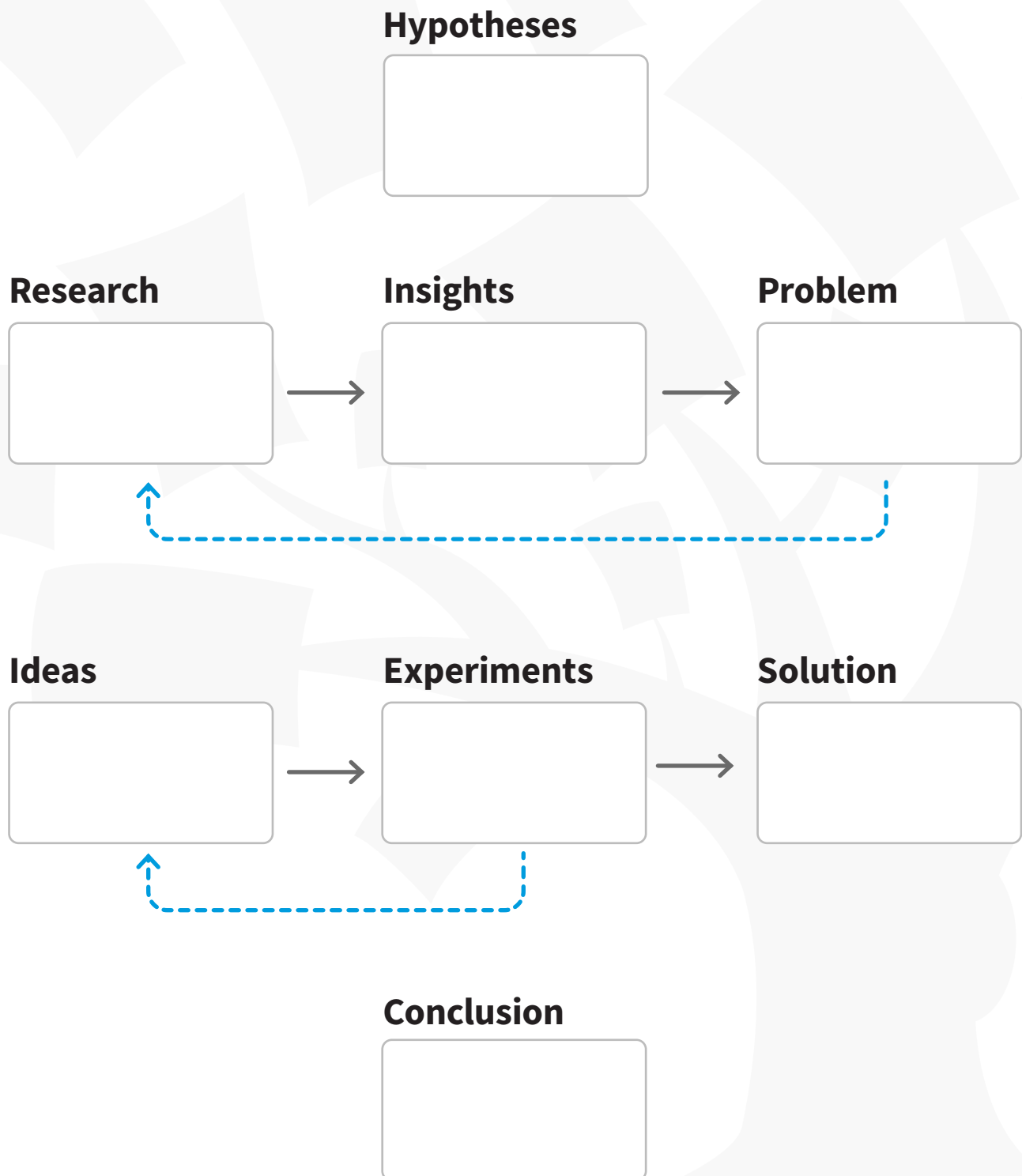


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Case Study Outline—Blank

Use the template below as a starting point for your own case study. You can also use it at the start of your next project to plan your steps.



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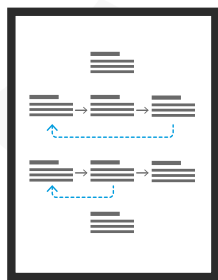


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Case Study Pages

Once you have completed your outline, expand it into a full case study!



Outline



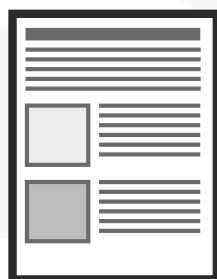
Introduction



Hypotheses



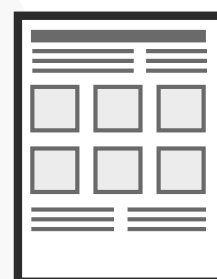
Research



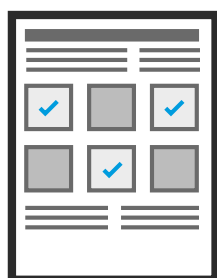
Insights



Problem



Ideas



Experiments



Solution



Conclusion

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Design for the 21st Century with Don Norman

Beginner Course

In this course taught by Don Norman, co-founder and Principal Emeritus of Nielsen Norman Group, you'll learn **how designers can improve the world**, how you can apply human-centered design to **solve complex global challenges**, and what 21st century skills you'll need to **make a difference in the world**. Each lesson will build upon one another to increase your knowledge of human-centered design and provide you with practical skills to make a difference in the world. You'll also learn:

- How designers can improve the world
- How to use human-centered design to solve global challenges
- Why we evolved from User-Centered design to People-Centered design
- The difference between Wicked Problems and Complex Socio-technical Systems
- How to focus on people when you solve complex global challenges
- What feedback loops are and why they are so important
- How to tackle major problems by muddling through and taking small steps to generate successful innovative results

If you understand **why human-centered design is so important**, learn from its history and integrate its principles into your work, you will produce positive results that enhance peoples' lives. It can be done. So let's begin.

Learn more about how you can apply human-centered design to solve complex global challenges in the course [Design for the 21st Century with Don Norman](#).

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