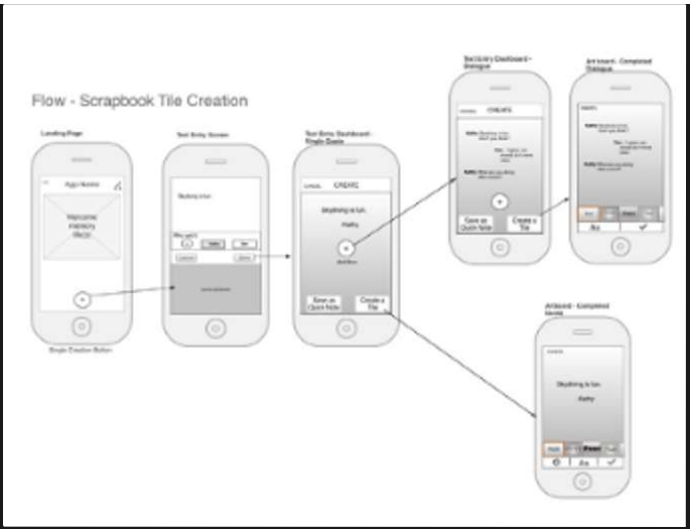
Wireflow diagrams

The essentials

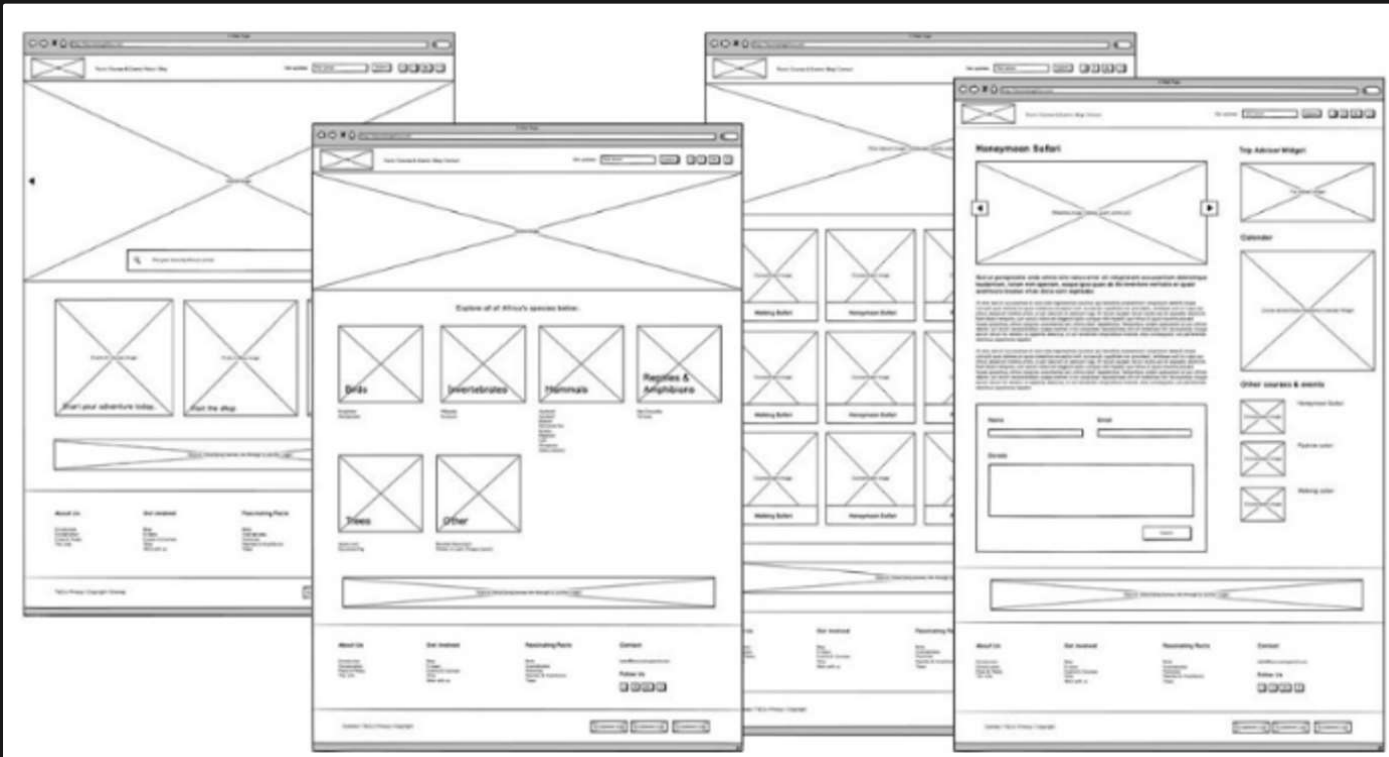
Wireflow diagrams are a combination of *wireframes* and *flowcharts*. They are used in various fields such as software development, user experience design, and business processes to illustrate the flow of information or tasks within a system or application. It is a way to visualize user interaction in a simple manner, showing both the design of the screens and the path the user takes. Such a way of sketching the interaction is suitable for creating a Functional Design (FD).



Example of a wireflow that shows the flow of actions within a specific mobile app

Wireframes

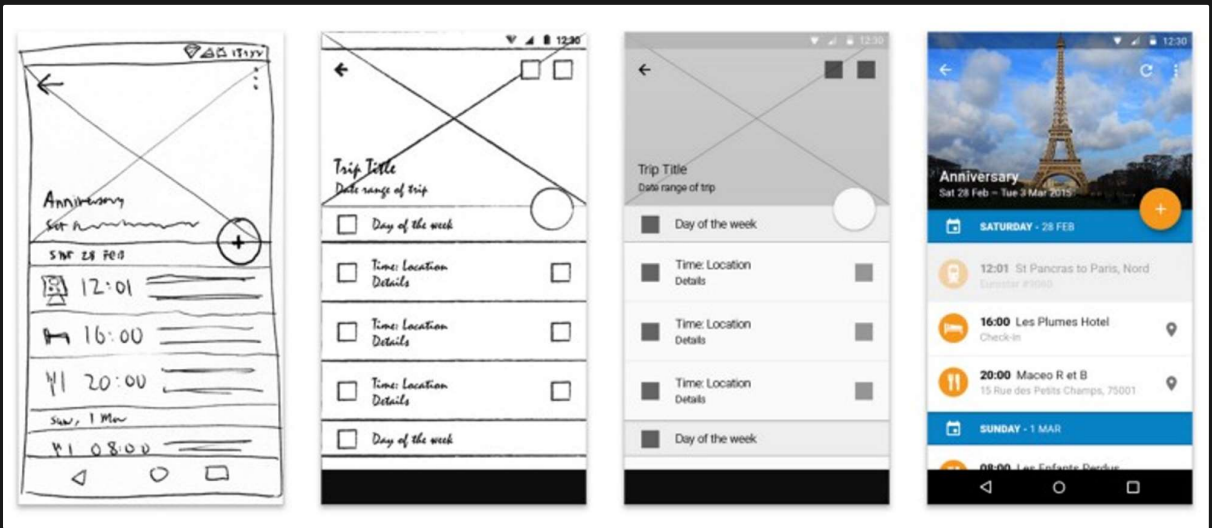
A wireframe is a static 2D image of the interface of a screen (typically a webpage). It is a way to create a prototype. In this visualization, you determine the skeleton of the page: what are the key elements and where are they located? Wireframes can make it clear which functionalities are possible, which content is most important, and what a user can do (the behavior that is possible).



Examples of wireframes

Lo-fi and Hi-fi

We typically distinguish wireframes in low fidelity (lo-fi) and high fidelity (hi-fi). The difference between lo-fi (low-fidelity) and hi-fi (high-fidelity) wireframes lies primarily in their level of detail, fidelity, and purpose within the design process. Lo-fi wireframes are quick, basic sketches used for early exploration and iteration, while hi-fi wireframes are more polished representations used for detailed design, validation, and communication of the final product vision. Each type of wireframe serves its purpose within the design process, with lo-fi wireframes focusing on ideation and exploration and hi-fi wireframes focusing on refinement and validation.

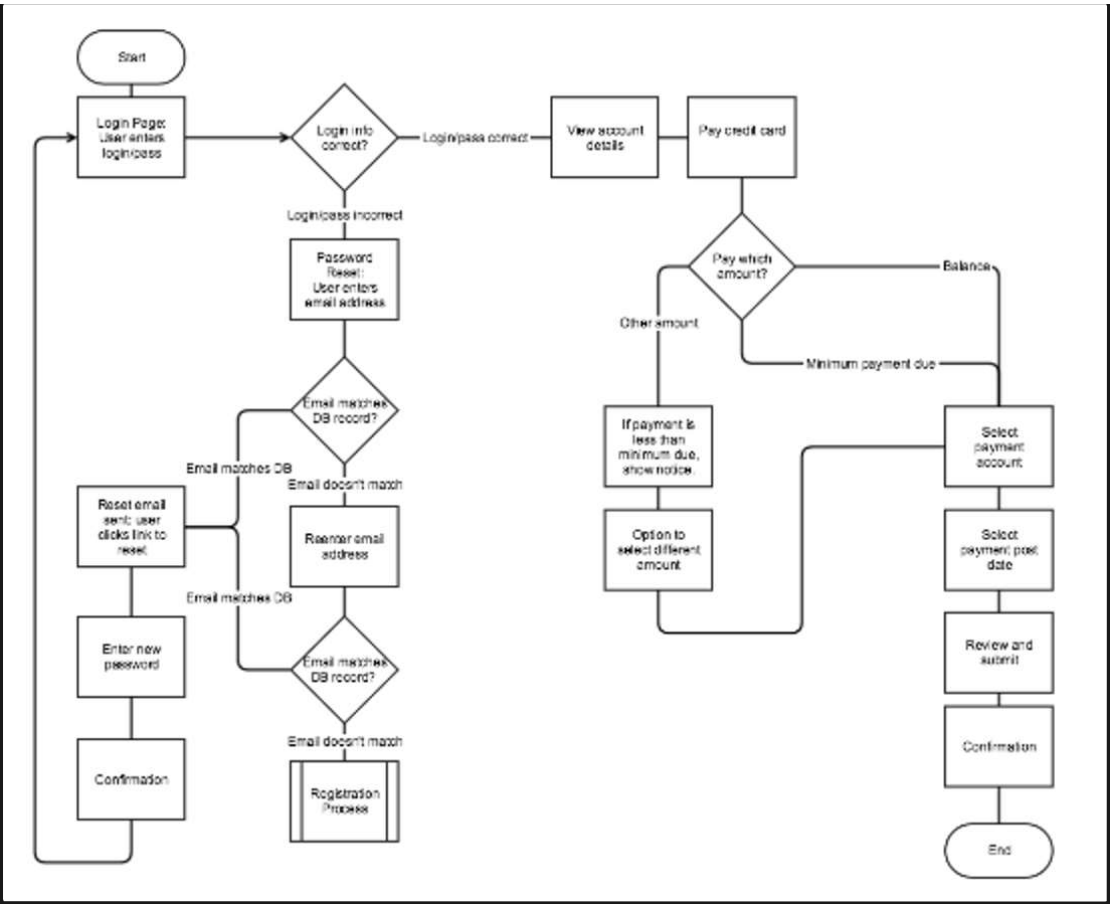


Lo-fi (to the left) versus hi-hi (to the right), with intermediate visualizations that can either be classified as both, pending on the situation

Wireflows typically uses the lower fidelity ones. It is only required to show the essence of the page content and it’s actions that lead to other pages.

Flowcharts

Flowcharts are used to, as the name implies, represent a flow. It is a way to schematically visualize the steps a user can take to achieve a goal. Flowcharts are particularly useful for illustrating interactions: they show the possibilities of how a user can move from a starting point to an endpoint (the user's goal). Each element in a flowchart describes an action or a choice/decision, and the elements are connected to each other by arrows.



Example of a flowchart

Wireflow construction

A wireflow diagram is consists the following components:

- **Nodes or Steps**: These are represented by boxes or rectangles and represent individual screens, pages, and/or actions within the system.
- **Connections**: Arrows or lines connecting the nodes indicate the flow of information or user navigation between different nodes.
- **Annotations**: Additional text or annotations can provide context, instructions, or descriptions for each step.

When constructing wireflows, consider the following:

- Sketching on pen and paper is preferred for its speed and flexibility
- Use lo-fi wireframes. They should at least show which screen it is (i.e. it's title) and relevant navigation items and form inputs and other relevant actions
- Flows should show happy and alternative flows

Digging deeper

Tools

Although pen an dpaper is the preferred tool, various software tools and applications are available for creating wire flow diagrams, ranging from simple drawing tools like Microsoft Visio and Lucidchart to specialized UX design platforms