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User Experience (UX) Design

Your constantly-updated definition of User Experience (UX) Design and collection of topical content and literature

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What is User Experience (UX) Design?

User experience (UX) design is the process design teams use to create products that provide meaningful and relevant experiences to users. UX design involves the design of the entire process of acquiring and integrating the product, including aspects of branding, design, usability and function.
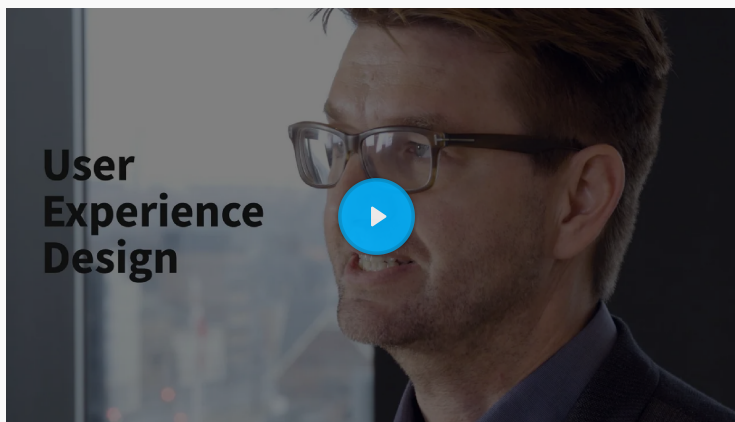
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Designing an experience includes not only making the software easy to use but also designing the other experiences related to the product, for example, the marketing campaign, the packaging and after-sales support. Most importantly, UX design is concerned with delivering solutions that address pain points and needs. After all, no one will use a product that serves no purpose.

What UX Designers Do Goes Beyond UI Design

"User Experience Design" is often used interchangeably with terms such as "User Interface Design" and "Usability." However, while usability and user interface (UI) design are important aspects of UX design, they are subsets of it.

A UX designer is concerned with the *entire* process of acquiring and integrating a product, including aspects of branding, design, usability and function. It's a story that begins before the device is even in the user's hands.

> "No product is an island. A product is more than the product. It is a cohesive, integrated set of experiences. Think through all of the stages of a product or service – from initial intentions through final reflections, from the first usage to help, service, and maintenance. Make them all work together seamlessly."
>
> — Don Norman, inventor of the term "User Experience."

Products that provide a great user experience (e.g., the iPhone) are thus

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designed with the product's consumption or use in mind and the entire process of acquiring, owning and even troubleshooting it. Similarly, UX designers don't just focus on creating usable products; they concentrate on other aspects of the user experience, such as pleasure, efficiency and fun.

Consequently, there is no single definition of a good user experience. Instead, a good user experience meets a particular user's needs in the specific context where they use the product.
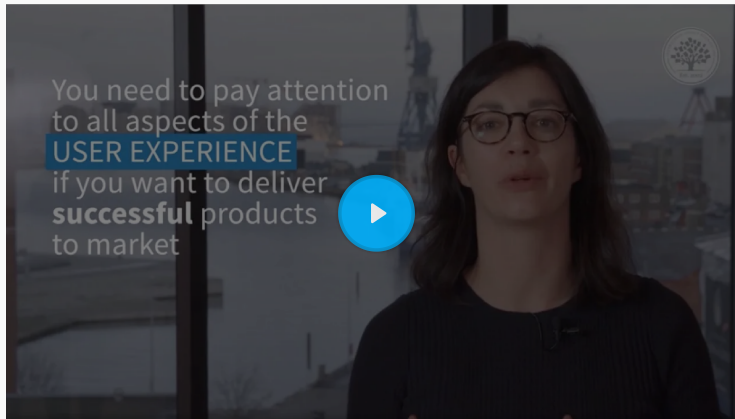
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A UX designer attempts to answer the question: "How can we make the experience of interacting with a computer, a smartphone, a product, or a service as intuitive, smooth and pleasant as possible?"

UX Design—A Formal Definition

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines user experience as:

> *"A person's perceptions and responses that result from the use or anticipated use of a product, system or service."*
>
> *— ISO 9241-210, Ergonomics of human-system interaction—Part 210: Human-centered design for interactive systems*

We can break this definition into two parts:

1. A person's perceptions and responses.
2. The use of a product, system or service.

In user experience, designers do not have much control over a person's perceptions and responses—the first part of the definition. For example, they cannot control how someone feels, moves their fingers or controls their eyes as they use a product. However, designers can control how the product, system or service behaves and looks—the second part of the definition.

> *"One cannot design a user experience, only design for a user experience. In particular, one cannot design a sensual experience, but only create the design features that can evoke it."*
>
> *— Jeff Johnson, Assistant Professor in the Computer Science Department of the University of San Francisco*

The simplest way to think about user experience design is as a verb and a noun. A UX designer designs (verb)—ideates, plans, changes—the things that affect the user experience (noun)—perceptions and responses to a system or service.
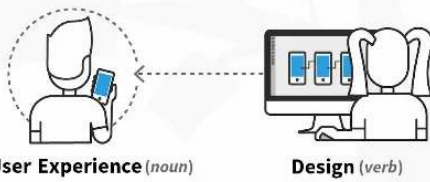
The simplest way to think about user experience design is as a verb and a noun.

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For example, when using a physical device, such as a computer mouse, we can control some aspects of the product that influence whether the user enjoys looking at, feeling and holding it:

- The way it fits in their hand. Is it snug? Is it too big and cumbersome?
- The weight. Does it affect their ability to move it as they wish?
- Its ease of use. Can they use it automatically, or do they have to think hard about it to achieve a goal?

When a person uses a digital product, such as a computer application, a few aspects that we can influence include:

- How intuitively they can navigate through the system.
- The cues that help guide them to their goal.
- The visibility of the essential aspects of a task at the appropriate time.

UX Designers Consider the Why, What, and How of Product Use
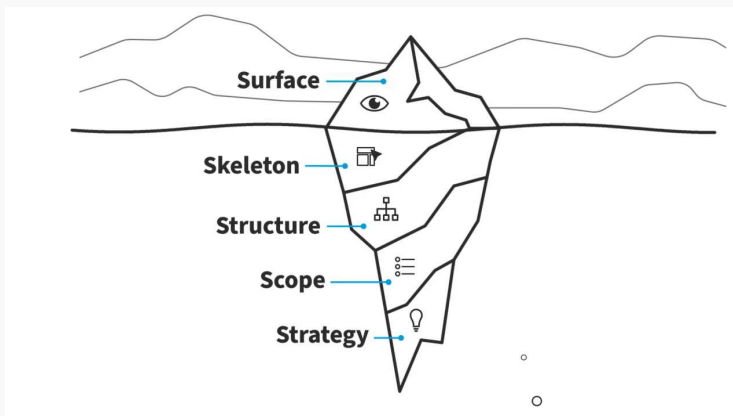
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As a UX designer, you should consider the *Why*, *What* and *How* of product use. The *Why* involves the users' motivations for adopting a product, whether they relate to a task they wish to perform with it or to values and views that users associate with the ownership and use of the product. The *What* addresses the things people can do with a product—its functionality. Finally, the *How* relates to the design of functionality in an accessible and aesthetically pleasant way.

UX designers start with the *Why* before determining the *What* and then, finally, the *How* to create products that users can form meaningful experiences with. In software designs, you must ensure the product's

experiences with. In software designs, you must ensure the product's "substance" comes through an existing device and offers a seamless, fluid experience.

UX Design is User-Centered

Since UX design encompasses the entire user journey, it's a multidisciplinary field—UX designers come from various backgrounds such as visual design, programming, psychology and interaction design. To design for human users also means working with a heightened scope regarding accessibility and accommodating many potential users' physical limitations, such as reading small text.

A UX designer's typical tasks vary but often include user research, creating personas, designing wireframes and interactive prototypes, and testing designs. These tasks can vary significantly from one organization to the next. Still, they always demand designers to be the users' advocates and keep their needs at the center of *all* design and development efforts. That's also why most UX designers work in some form of user-centered work process and keep channeling their best-informed efforts until they address all of the relevant issues and user needs optimally.

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User-centered design is an iterative process where you take an understanding of the users and their context as a starting point for all design and development.

Learn More about UX Design

You can read and watch more about UX design from the inventor of the term, Don Norman, on the [Nielsen Norman Group website](#).

Learn about UX design by reading the insightful, funny and inspiring material about UX on [Medium.com](#).

If you want to start learning how to work in UX Design now, the [Interaction Design Foundation's online courses](#) are a great place to begin.

Literature on User Experience (UX) Design

Here's the entire UX literature on **User Experience (UX) Design** by the Interaction Design Foundation, collated in one place:

Featured article

How to Change Your Career from Graphic Design to UX Design

If there's an occupation that is 100% linked with the public's idea of what design is all about, it's [graphic design](#). From the familiar golden arches of the McDonald's brand to the [typography](#) and colors of movie posters, graphic designers create some of the most iconic and ubiquitous designs

Learn more about User Experience (UX) Design

Take a deep dive into User Experience (UX) Design with our course **User Experience: The Beginner's Guide** .

If you've heard the term user experience design and been overwhelmed by all the jargon, then you're not alone. In fact, most practicing UX designers struggle to explain what they do!

> "[User experience] is used by people to say, 'I'm a user experience designer, I design websites,' or 'I design apps.' [...] and they think the experience is that simple device, the website, or the app, or who knows what. No! It's everything — it's the way you experience the world, it's the way you experience your life, it's the way you experience the service. Or, yeah, an app or a computer system. But it's a **system** that's everything."
>
> — Don Norman, pioneer and inventor of the term "user experience," in an interview with NNGroup

As indicated by Don Norman, **User Experience is an umbrella term that covers several areas**. When you work with user experience, it's crucial to understand what those areas are so that you know how best to apply the tools available to you.

In this course, you will gain **an introduction to the breadth of UX design** and understand why it matters. You'll also learn the **roles** and **responsibilities** of a UX designer, how to confidently talk about UX and **practical methods** that you can apply to your work immediately.

You will learn to identify the overlaps and differences between different fields and adapt your **existing skills** to UX design. Once you understand the lay of the land, you'll be able to chart your journey into a career in UX design. You'll hear from **practicing UX designers** from within the IxDF community — people who come from diverse backgrounds, have taught themselves design, learned on the job, and are enjoying successful careers.

If you are new to the Interaction Design Foundation, this course is a great place to start because it brings together materials from many of our other courses. This provides you with both an excellent introduction to user experience and a preview of the courses we have to offer to help you develop your future career. After each lesson, we will introduce you to the courses you can take if a specific topic has caught your attention. That way, you'll find it easy to continue your learning journey.

In the first lesson, you'll learn **what user experience design is** and what a UX designer does. You'll also learn about the importance of portfolios and what hiring managers look for in them.

In the second lesson, you'll learn **how to think like a UX designer.** This lesson also introduces you to the very first exercise for you to dip your toes into the cool waters of user experience.

In the third and the fourth lessons, you'll learn about the most common **UX design tools and methods**. You'll also practice each of the methods through tailor-made exercises that walk you through the different stages of the design process.

In the final lesson, you'll step outside the classroom and **into the real world.** You'll understand the role of a UX designer within an organization and what it takes to overcome common challenges at the workplace. You'll also learn how to leverage your existing skills to successfully transition to and thrive in a new career in UX.

You'll be **taught by some of the world's leading experts**. The experts we've

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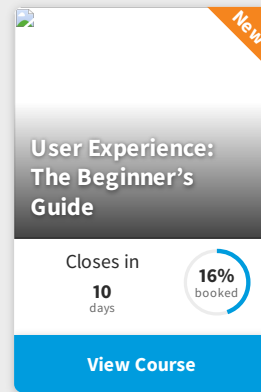
handpicked for you are:

- **Alan Dix**, Director of the Computational Foundry at Swansea University, author of *Statistics for HCI: Making Sense of Quantitative Data*

- **Ann Blandford**, Professor of Human-Computer Interaction at University College London

- **Frank Spillers**, Service Designer, Founder and CEO of Experience Dynamics

- **Laura Klein**, Product Management Expert, Principal at Users Know, Author of *Build Better Products* and *UX for Lean Startups*

- **Michal Malewicz**, Designer and Creative Director / CEO of Hype4 Mobile

- **Mike Rohde**, Experience and Interface Designer, Author of *The Sketchnote Handbook: The Illustrated Guide to Visual Note Taking*

- **Szymon Adamiak**, Software Engineer and Co-founder of Hype4 Mobile

- **William Hudson**, User Experience Strategist and Founder of Syntagm

Throughout the course, we'll supply you with lots of **templates and step-by-step guides** so you can start applying what you learn in your everyday practice.

You'll find a series of **exercises** that will help you get hands-on experience with the methods you learn. Whether you're a newcomer to design considering a career switch, an experienced practitioner looking to brush up on the basics, or work closely with designers and are curious to know what your colleagues are up to, you will benefit from the learning materials and practical exercises in this course.

You can also **learn with your fellow course-takers** and use the discussion forums to get feedback and inspire other people who are learning alongside you. You and your fellow course-takers have a huge knowledge and experience base between you, so we think you should take advantage of it whenever possible.

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