

Starting Out Your UIUX Career

Module 5

Icons

Ali Samanipour

Jan. 2023

1

Icons

2

Icons Styles

3

Icons Consistency

4

Icons Legibility

5

Icons Size

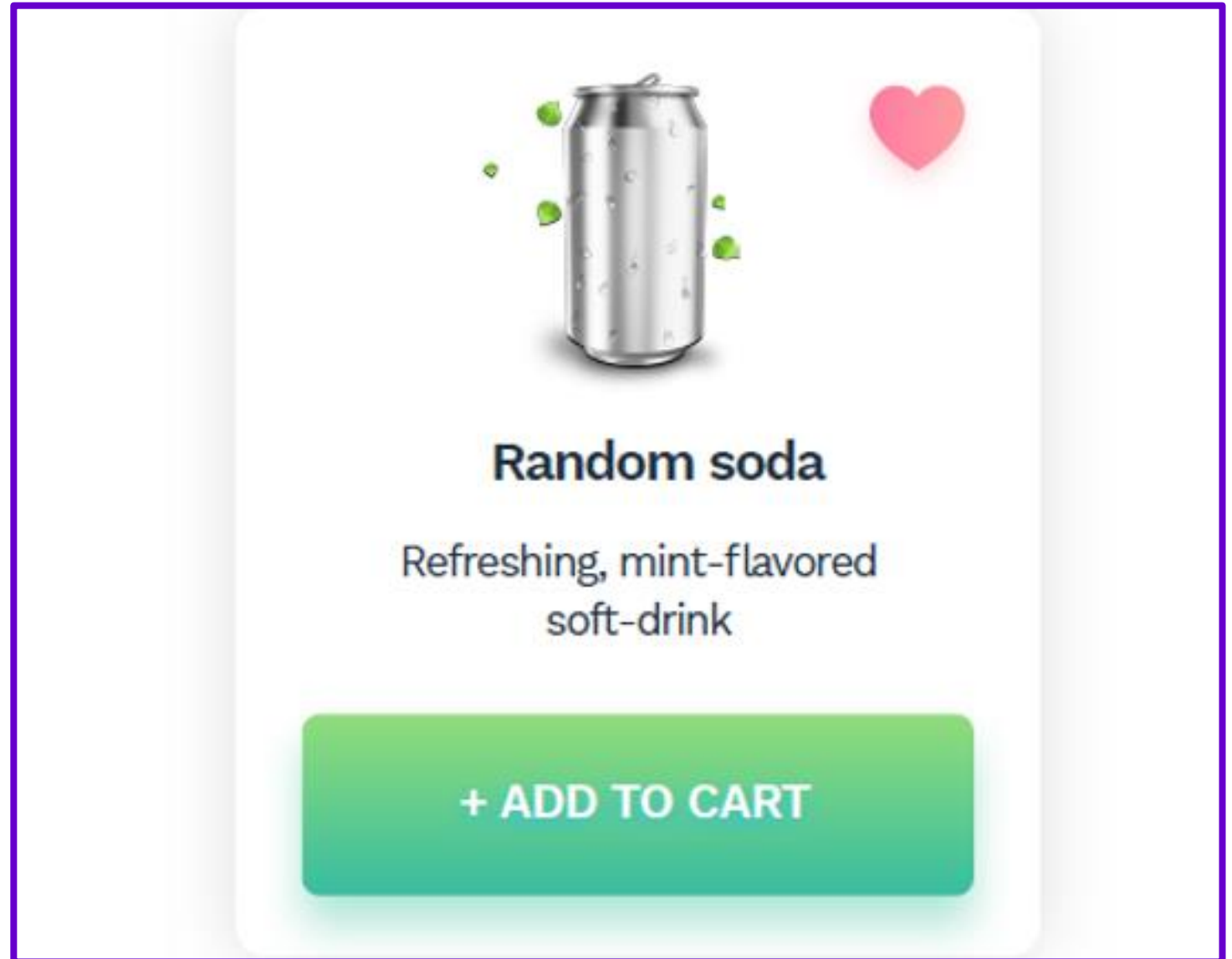
Icons

An icon is a small pictogram that either symbolizes a function or status.



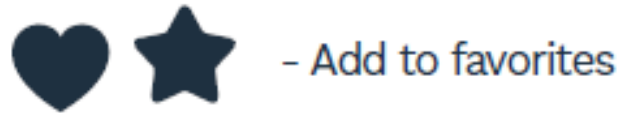
Icon Meanings

The meaning of an **icon is not always universal.** and even the most obvious shapes can be interpreted the wrong way by some users.



ICONS AND LABELS

While having a label always helps, you can safely **skip it for universal icons** that mean the same thing in many other products



- Add to favorites



- Open the Camera app



- Map Pin



- Remove



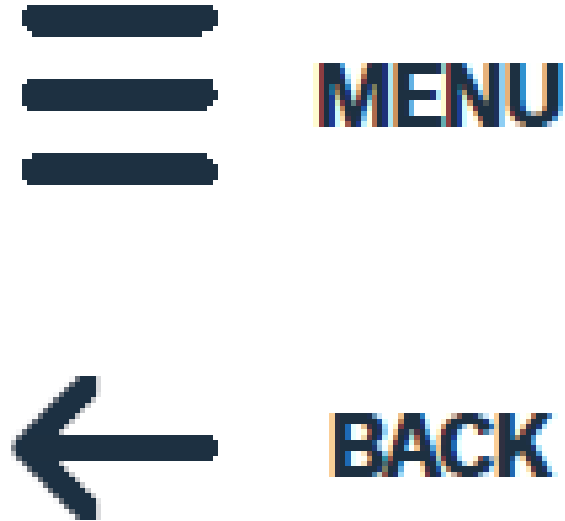
- Refresh / Reload



- Search

ICONS AND LABELS

We can also skip the labels with icons related to top-level navigation like the hamburger menu and the back arrow



Why We Use Icons In Design

Icons are a way of setting the tone and style of the product, **making it more user-friendly.**

But we need to remember that they are mostly there for **aesthetic** or **space-saving** purposes

Try to make the icons **simple** enough to **convey the right message.**

WHAT ARE ICONS MADE OF?

Most icons are simple shapes that you can create yourself in any design tool.



1

Icons

2

Icons Styles

3

Icons Consistency

4

Icons Legibility

5

Icons Size

ICON STYLES (LEVEL OF DETAIL)

The best interface icons are usually simple, but you can do a more realistic, very detailed icon when necessary.



Simple / abstract shapes



realistic, detailed shapes

ICON STYLES (FILL VS OUTLINE)

Our icons can be a full shape, filled with a color, or outlined, empty inside with a specified stroke width.



solid icons



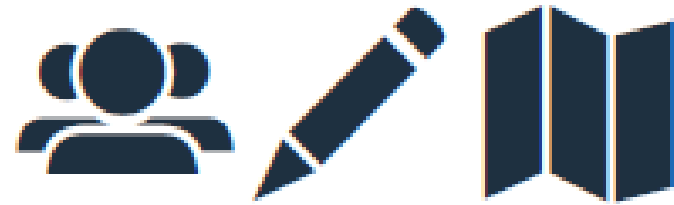
outline icons

ICON STYLES (ROUNDNESS)

The edges and corners can be straight and sharp or rounded, which is considered more user-friendly.



Rounded edges



Sharp edges

- 1 Icons
- 2 Icons Styles
- 3 Icons Consistency
- 4 Icons Legibility
- 5 Icons Size

CONSISTENCY (ROUNDNESS)

All icons should have the same type of edge and corner rounding. Avoid mixing rounded and sharp corner icons.



Consistent
corners



Varied
corners

CONSISTENCY (FILL)

Unless it's intentional for setting the state (on vs. off), avoid mixing outline and filled icons on one design.



Same type
of fill



Different types
of fill

CONSISTENCY (LEVEL OF DETAIL)

The smaller the icon, the less detailed it should be. the more detail you add, the longer it will take to process.



Similar Level
of Detail



Various Levels
of Detail



A simple, small sized
icon



More detailed,
larger icon

CONSISTENCY (WEIGHT)

If you decide to use outline icons, remember to have them all use the same stroke width at all sizes. The thicker the stroke, the more visual impact (weight) the icon has.



Same stroke
width



Different stroke
widths

CONSISTENCY (FRIENDLY VS SERIOUS)

Friendly icons tend to be more rounded. Outline icons to be considered friendly should have a thicker stroke.



Friendly, outline
icons



Friendly, filled
icons

CONSISTENCY (FRIENDLY VS SERIOUS...)

Serious,
(professional) icons
are either very subtly
rounded or made
with sharp corners.
They're often more
minimal and use a
much thinner stroke.



Serious, outline
icons



Serious, filled
icons

LEGIBILITY

When picking the icon style, try to test various icon sizes to see how they scale down and how much detail they lose in the process.

Lower quality displays can also show some of the more detailed ones as blurry.

- 1 Icons
- 2 Icons Styles
- 3 Icons Consistency
- 4 Icons Legibility
- 5 Icons Size

LEGIBILITY (SIMPLE + FILLED)

Simple, filled
shapes with
rounded corners
look pretty good at
any scale.



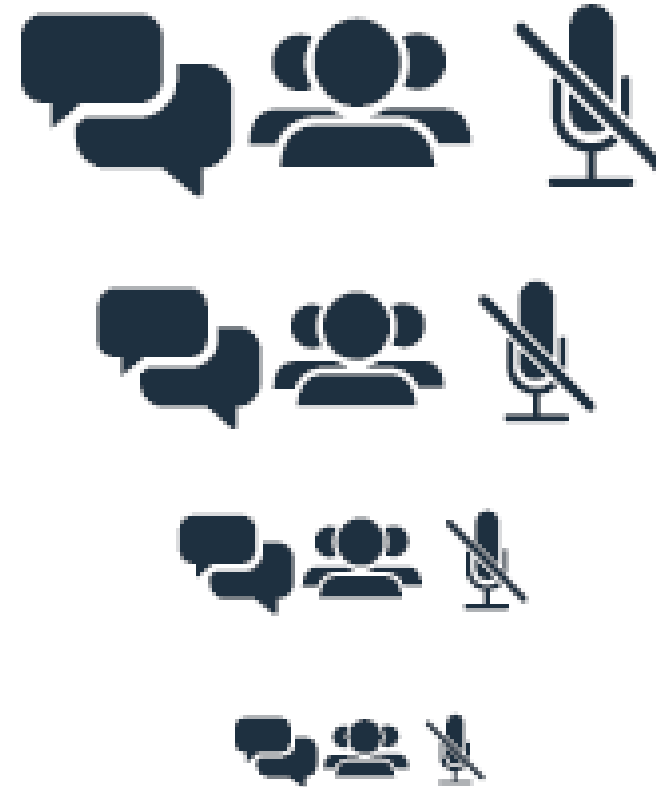
LEGIBILITY (SIMPLE + OUTLINED)

Outlined icons with a thick stroke are pretty clear at most sizes. They lose some detail when very small, so it's crucial to test if they're still fully visible.



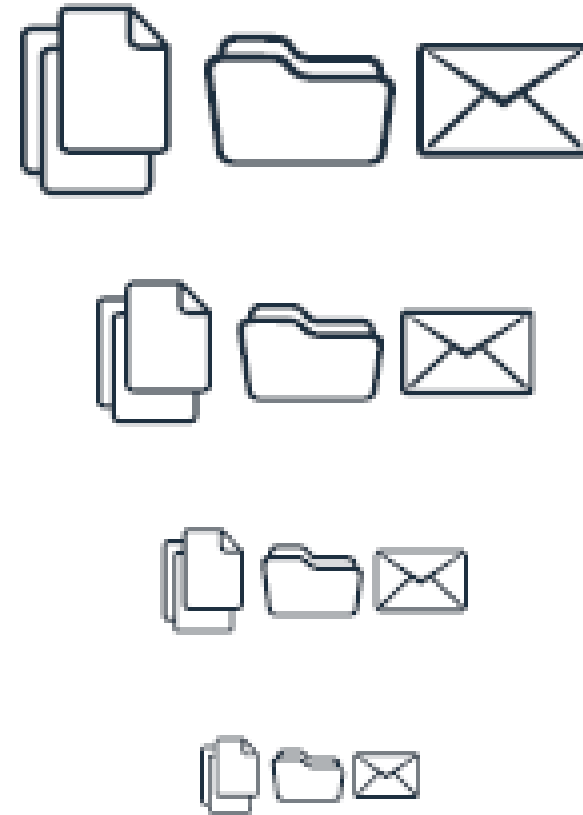
LEGIBILITY (COMPLEX + FILLED)

Filled icons with sharp corners and more detail, lose some of their legibility when scaled down to a smaller size.



LEGIBILITY (COMPLEX + OUTLINED)

Thin, detailed outline icons lose a lot of the detail when we scale them down. Some lines start to disappear when anti-aliasing is applied, making them blurry and hard to see



1

Icons

2

Icons Styles

3

Icons Consistency

4

Icons Legibility

5

Icons Size

ICON SIZE

Shapes can have a different **optical weight**. It means an object can take less visual space, even if it's the same height or width in pixels as the other one



ICON SIZE ...

All icons (and especially icons used in the same context) should be proportionally scaled.

We can't allow for one icon to feel bigger and stronger than the rest, as it will make it stand out more and break the **visual harmony**.

Having all icons be the same size in pixels does not guarantee they "look" the same size.

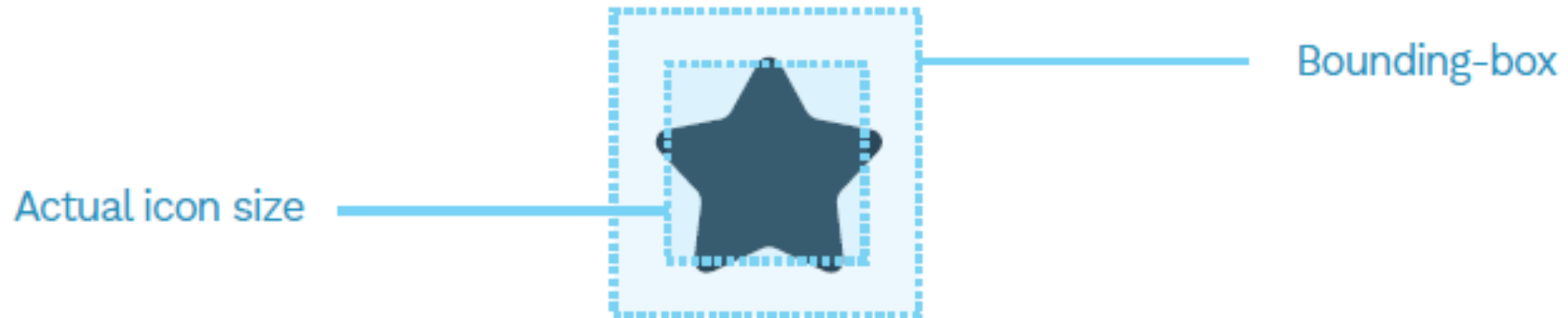
ICON SIZE ...

The **optically smaller icon can be slightly bigger** to make up for the lost space on the sides. The **goal is to have both shapes have a similar visual weight.**

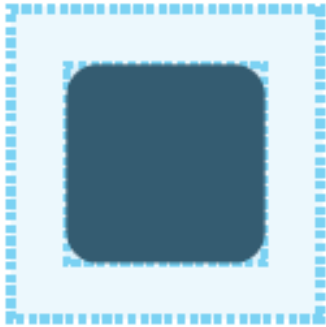


SAFE AREA / BOUNDING BOX ...

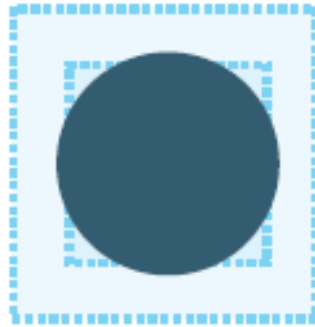
A **bounding-box** is a safe area around the icon that we can use for irregular shapes to take a bit more space.



SAFE AREA / BOUNDING BOX ...



Square icons are the easiest ones to start with. They're for setting the bounding box for other shapes.

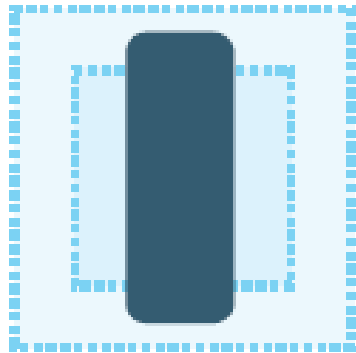


We need to make oval based shapes slightly larger to compensate for the missing space.

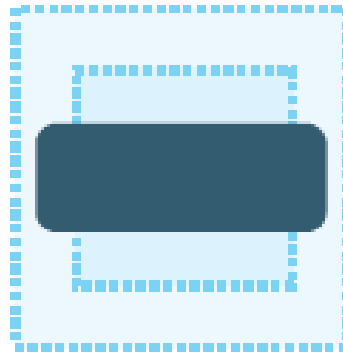


Adjust triangular shapes the same way, so that their weight matches the square.

SAFE AREA / BOUNDING BOX ...



Narrow, vertical icons need to be much taller than the square to have a similar visual weight.



Wide, horizontal icons need to be even wider to compensate for their lower height.



Irregular icon shapes are the hardest to scale right. Test them close to the other icons to see if they're big enough.

Course References

- ***Designing User Interfaces***, Michal Malewicz & Diana Malewice, 2020
- ***UI Design Styles: Trends and Design Patterns***, Michal Malewicz & Diana Malewice, 2020
- ***What UX Is Really About :Introducing a Mindset for Great Experiences***, Celia Hodent, CRC Press, 2022
- ***Lean UX: Designing Great Products with Agile Teams 3rd Edition***, Jeff Gothelf & Josh Seiden, O'Reilly, 2021
- ***Laws of UX: Using Psychology to Design Better Products & Services***, Jon Yablonski, O'Reilly, 2020
- ***Designing and Prototyping Interfaces with Figma***, Fabio Staiano, Packet Publishing, 2022

Accessing Course Resource



[linkedin.com/in/Samanipour](https://www.linkedin.com/in/Samanipour)



t.me/SamaniGroup



github.com/Samanipour