Best Practices for Digital Wireframes

Wireframes are simple, bare-bone illustrations of your app or website. They allow you to ignore the visual and interactive aspects of your prototype and focus on content structure and functionality.

Pros and Cons of Digital Wireframes

Pros of digital wireframes

- You can **quickly change your wireframes**, compared with higher-fidelity prototypes such as app mockups. This is because wireframes don't contain details such as images and colors.

- Wireframes let you **focus on the functionality and content structure** of the product. On top of that, your users will focus their feedback on functional problems, rather than visual preferences. This means you can ignore visuals, such as colors and fonts, in favor of polishing the core functions of the app.

- Wireframes, compared with other low-fidelity prototypes, let you **communicate the relation between different pages in your product**. Users and team-mates can easily see where each page leads, and what clicking each button does.

Cons of digital wireframes

- Since wireframes are still quite bare-bones, **users might struggle** to understand how what you present to them works. You'll need to let users know that they should ignore the visuals of the wireframe and instead focus on functionality and other content such as copy.

- Wireframes **encourage "lorem ipsum", or placeholder content**. This is not necessarily bad since it allows you to design quickly. However, you will need to know that your final copy and images might be significantly different from your placeholders and might thus affect the final user experience.

When to Use Digital Wireframes

- Use wireframes **slightly later** in your design process, when you are ready to flesh out a few design ideas.

- *Don't* **use wireframes until you are ready to focus on the content**, layout, information architecture and space allocation of various elements. In other words, you should not use (digital) wireframes when you are in the divergent stages of your design process. In the divergent stages—where you want to create as many ideas as possible—use other low-fidelity prototypes such as sketches and paper prototypes.

- Use wireframes when you are ready to think about topics such as how to create optimal user flows, what kinds of templates you should use for various screens and pages and how much space to allocate various elements on a screen.

Best Practices and Tips for Digital Wireframes

- Use wireframes to **flesh out the information architecture and layout** of your app, rather than focus on visual elements such as brand colors and typography.

- Wireframes are great tools for you to **think about which layout templates** you need to create your product. Try to stick to as little layouts as you need to create a consistent experience.

- Use wireframes to **focus on functionality**, rather than animations and other visuals.

- **Don't use colors** in your wireframes. If you have to, use shades of gray.

- **Don't use images** in your wireframes. You can use boxes with an "X" to indicate where an image would go in a screen. Images tend to distract you and your users from the main purpose of wireframes, which is to test key user flows and functions.

- **Stick to one font** in your wireframes. Use different font sizes to indicate different heading levels.

- Minimize placeholder copy or "lorem ipsum". Your wireframes should be 100% usable, and you should therefore focus on crafting copy that will help users understand how to use your product. Use placeholder copy only in areas where you know the content will not affect usability—for example, in the body text of an article.

- Some **commonly used wireframing tools** include Balsamiq, Marvel and OmniGraffle.

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