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## The UX behind designing better forms

Forms are omnipresent on the internet these days. We all come across them, be it before purchasing items, signing up for subscriptions...



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Forms are omnipresent on the internet these days. We all come across them, be it before purchasing items, signing up for subscriptions, social networking or joining a discussion forum. It's hardly an overstatement that they're an indispensable element for information sharing today.

complicated and sometimes get too personal.

Well, let's see how this humdrum experience can be made more intuitive and effortless for the users.

*Before we dive in, I should caveat that while most of these guidelines are based on experiments and statistically valid data, they shouldn't be considered as the ultimate truth. Forms are highly-contextual design elements and depend on more than just these guidelines to increase conversions. With that said, let's jump in.*

We'll be working on revamping this rudimentary TV subscription form in the next 10 steps 🙌

Start your TV Show subscription

!!! Form could not be submitted. There is one error in the form !!!

Please input name

(compulsary)

I am a

(compulsary)

Write email id

(compulsary)

Type it again

(compulsary)

My password is

(compulsary)

Write your Date of birth

(compulsary)

Email id again

(compulsary)

Some of my favorite TV shows

Phone no.

(compulsary)

Mobile No.

Ok

Cancel

Sample form design

## 1. Align the sections

efficient, effective scanning and limiting errors or missed fields.

Various approaches can be taken to organise content, but let's look into just the text arrangements. Have a look at these 4 options which have center, left, right and top-left aligned elements.

Please input name
(compulsary)

I am a
(compulsary)

Write email id
(compulsary)

Type it again
(compulsary)

My password is
(compulsary)

Write your Date of birth
(compulsary)

Email id again
(compulsary)

Please input name
(compulsary)

I am a
(compulsary)

Write email id
(compulsary)

Type it again
(compulsary)

My password is
(compulsary)

Write your Date of birth
(compulsary)

Email id again
(compulsary)

× DON'T

× DON'T

Please input name
(compulsary)

I am a
(compulsary)

Write email id
(compulsary)

Type it again
(compulsary)

My password is
(compulsary)

Write your Date of birth
(compulsary)

Email id again
(compulsary)

Please input name
(compulsary)

I am a
(compulsary)

Write email id
(compulsary)

Type it again
(compulsary)

My password is
(compulsary)

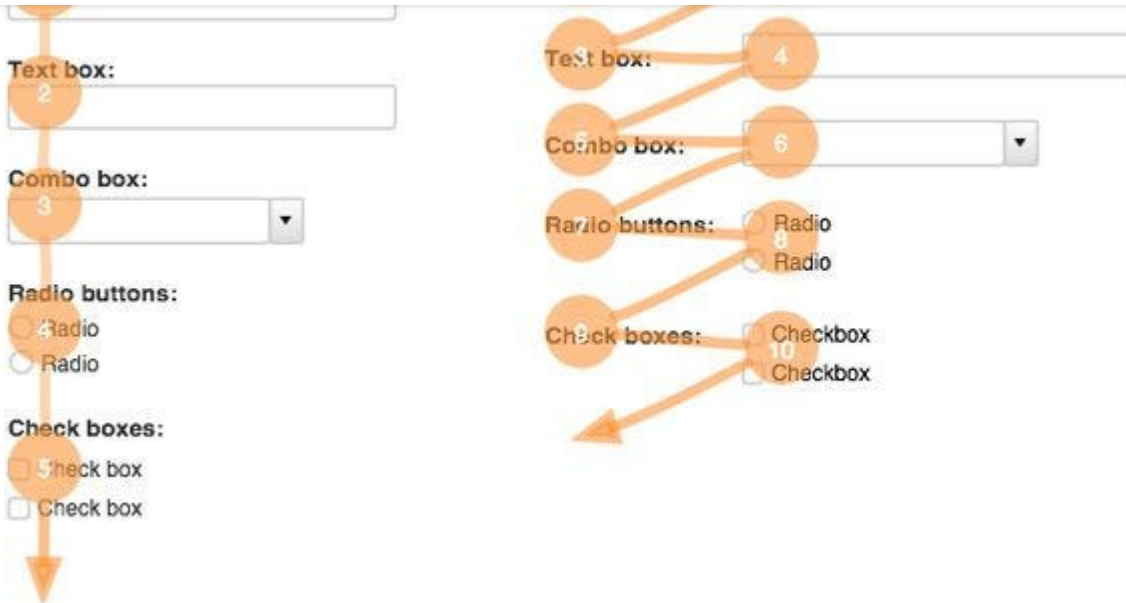
Write your Date of birth
(compulsary)

Email id again
(compulsary)

✕ DON'T

✓ DO

Basically, having the label text as close to the input field makes the grouping more relatable. It is easier to associate them due to their proximity. So the top-left aligned labels work pretty well in this case. It has upper edge as it required fewer '*visual fixations*', helping the viewer scan the form in one go.



<https://www.ventureharbour.com/form-design-best-practices/>

## 2. Group related fields

Grouping information into chunks is an easy way to highlight association. If the form has more than six fields, it is recommended to group them into logical sections. These steps are even more emphasised if each section is given their respective header, and are neatly arranged in a top-down order.

### Tip

Don't forget to provide a good amount of breathing space (padding/ distance) between the individual sections to distinguish them.

### 3. Write clear labels

Using succinct and crisp labels. It helps the user understand what information is required in one glance. Avoid using complete sentences to explain simple questions, just one or two words generally suffice.

This comparison shows two versions of a registration form. The 'DON'T' version (left) uses verbose labels like 'My first name is', 'My last name is', 'I am a', 'My date of birth is', 'My email id is', 'My password is', 'My phone no. is', and 'My mobile No. is'. The 'DO' version (right) uses concise labels: 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Gender', 'Date of birth', 'Email id', 'Password', 'Phone no.', and 'Mobile No.'. Both forms include compulsory field indicators and a section for favorite TV shows.

### 4. Input field format

Don't make the user guess the input the information format. It's considered a good practice to design the input fields in a customised manner, which explicitly shows how the information is to be fed in. Even short help messages (like password setting guidelines) mentioned clearly next to the input box reduce errors while form filling.

This comparison shows two versions of a registration form focusing on input field formatting. The 'DON'T' version (left) has generic input fields. The 'DO' version (right) provides specific format hints: 'DD / MM / YYYY' for the date of birth, a calendar icon, and '+91' for the mobile number. It also includes a note '(Should contain 7 symbol)' for the password field. Both forms include compulsory field indicators and a section for favorite TV shows.

**Tip**

solid white while the borders are made subtler.

The image shows a comparison of two form styles. On the left, labeled 'BEFORE', the form has a light gray background. The labels 'Email id' and 'Phone no.' are in a dark gray font. The input fields have a thin black border. To the right of each input field is the text '(compulsary)' in a red font. On the right, labeled 'AFTER', the form has a white background. The labels 'Email id' and 'Phone no.' are in a dark gray font. The input fields have a thin gray border. To the right of each input field is the text '(compulsary)' in a red font. The 'AFTER' version is visually cleaner and more modern.

## 5. Adding visual cues

Generally users find it tough to answer questions in which they have to manually type in the input. Giving a few suggestions upfront is a good way to get their thoughts running. And representing these options with additional visual cues can turn out to be even better, as it requires minimal cognitive load and provides a direction of thought.

The image shows a comparison of two form styles for a registration form. On the left, labeled 'DON'T', the form has a light gray background. It is divided into three sections: '1. Personal Information', '2. Contact Information', and '3. Interests'. The 'Personal Information' section has fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Gender' (with radio buttons for Male, Female, Other), and 'Date of birth' (with a date picker). The 'Contact Information' section has fields for 'Email id', 'Password', 'Phone no.', and 'Mobile No.'. The 'Interests' section has a text area for 'Favorite TV shows'. On the right, labeled 'DO', the form has a white background. It is divided into three sections: '1. Personal Information', '2. Contact Information', and '3. Interests'. The 'Personal Information' section has fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Gender' (with radio buttons for Male, Female, Other), and 'Date of birth' (with a date picker). The 'Contact Information' section has fields for 'Email id', 'Password', 'Phone no.', and 'Mobile No.'. The 'Interests' section has a section titled 'Pick your favorite TV shows' with a grid of TV show thumbnails (Game of Thrones, The Big Bang Theory, Sherlock, etc.) and a text area for 'Not enough options? Tell us what you love...'. The 'DO' version is visually cleaner and more modern.

## 6. Optional vs compulsory



ones in words. Also, make sure to align this text next to the top label, and not the input field.

1. Personal Information

First Name (compulsary)

Last Name (compulsary)

Gender (compulsary)

Male

Female

Other

Date of Birth (compulsary)

DD / MM / YYYY

2. Contact Information

Email address (compulsary)

Password (compulsary)

Telephone (compulsary)

Mobile (optional)

+91

3. Interests

Pick your favorite shows

Not enough options? Tell us what you love...

✗ DON'T

1. Personal Information

\*First Name

\*Last Name

\*Gender

Male

Female

Other

\*Date of Birth

DD / MM / YYYY

2. Contact Information

\*Email address

\*Password

\*Telephone

Mobile (optional)

+91

3. Interests

\*Pick your favorite shows

Not enough options? Tell us what you love...

✓ DO

## 7. CTA conversion

Now that the form looks pretty neat, let's concentrate on the call to actions. Most forms will have at least two call to actions — proceed and cancel. Here, submitting the form is definitely more important, hence it is the primary CTA, whereas cancel the Secondary one. Prominence must be given to these accordingly depending on their significance.

CTAs can either look like a solid rectangular button, or a text link. Depending on your use case, make sure that only ONE of them is the prominent one.

3. Interests

Favorite TV shows

Cancel

Ok

✗ DON'T

3. Interests

Favorite TV shows

Cancel

Ok

✗ DON'T

The image shows two side-by-side form examples. Both forms have a title 'Favorite TV shows' and a text input field. Below the input field, there are two buttons: 'Cancel' (red text) and 'Ok' (green text). The left form also has a red button with 'x DONT' and a green button with '✓ DO'.

## 8. Tailor your CTA

The most effective CTAs work because they offer a clear value proposition. They exactly mention what's going to happen once you hit on the button. This clarity is essential for great CTAs, and can go a long way in making the design more compelling and trustworthy.

The image shows two side-by-side form examples. Both forms have a title '3. Interests' and a subtitle 'Favorite TV shows'. Below the subtitle is a text input field. Below the input field, there are two buttons: 'Cancel' (red text) and a green button with a specific CTA. The left form's green button says 'Proceed to Payment', and the right form's green button says 'Submit'. Both forms also have a green button with '✓ DO' and a red button with 'x DONT'.

## 9. Validate the form

Generally speaking there are three important messages that a good form validation should convey to the user:

- **An error has occurred.** Display clearly that there is an error in the form, preferably using a red color signal to attract attention
- **Where the error occurred:** Highlighting the fields that caused the error
- **How the error can be repaired:** Provide information on what needs to be different in order for the field to validate

All these have one clear goal: to avoid confusion. To minimise drop-outs, make sure to create validation that eliminates any risk of customers being confused.



The image shows two side-by-side form designs for a user registration process. The left design is labeled 'DON'T' and the right is labeled 'DO'.

**Left Design (DON'T):**

- Header:** Two input fields for 'Charmie' and 'Kapoor'.
- Gender:** Radio buttons for 'Male', 'Female', and 'Other'.
- Date of Birth:** A date picker showing '30/05/1995'.
- 2. Contact Information:**
  - Email address:** 'charmie@gmail.com'.
  - Password:** A field with '\*\*\*\*\*' and a red error message: '(should contain 7 symbols)'.
  - Telephone:** '040-11119999'.
  - Mobile (optional):** A field with '+91' and a red error message: '(optional)'.
- 3. Interests:**
  - Pick your favorite shows:** A row of show thumbnails including 'Friends', 'The Big Bang Theory', 'The Office', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', and 'The Mindy Project'.
  - Suits:** A text input field.

**Right Design (DO):**

- Header:** Two input fields for 'Charmie' and 'Kapoor'.
- Gender:** Radio buttons for 'Male', 'Female', and 'Other'.
- Date of Birth:** A date picker showing '30/05/1995'.
- 2. Contact Information:**
  - Email address:** 'charmie@gmail.com'.
  - Password:** A field with '\*\*\*\*\*' and a red error message: '(should contain 7 symbols)'.
  - Telephone:** '040-11119999'.
  - Mobile (optional):** A field with '+91' and a red error message: '(optional)'.
- 3. Interests:**
  - Pick your favorite shows:** A row of show thumbnails including 'Friends', 'The Big Bang Theory', 'The Office', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', and 'The Mindy Project'.
  - Suits:** A text input field.

## 10. Use colors efficiently

Colors can be cleverly used to direct the user's attention, and add an aesthetic appeal to the design. The trick is to stick to not more than 2 main colors in the page. Just make sure to use them wisely, keeping the main goal of the form in mind.

The image shows two side-by-side form designs for a user registration process. The left design is labeled 'DON'T' and the right is labeled 'DO'.

**Left Design (DON'T):**

- Header:** A teal banner with the text 'Watch your favorite TV shows anytime, anywhere!'.
- 1. Personal Information:**
  - First Name:** 'Charmie'.
  - Last Name:** 'Kapoor'.
  - Gender:** Radio buttons for 'Male', 'Female', and 'Other'.
  - Date of Birth:** A date picker showing '30/05/1995'.
- 2. Contact Information:**
  - Email address:** 'charmie@gmail.com'.
  - Password:** A field with '\*\*\*\*\*' and a red error message: '(should contain 7 symbols)'.
  - Telephone:** '040-11119999'.
  - Mobile (optional):** A field with '+91' and a red error message: '(optional)'.
- 3. Interests:**
  - Pick your favorite shows:** A row of show thumbnails including 'Friends', 'The Big Bang Theory', 'The Office', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', and 'The Mindy Project'.
  - Suits:** A text input field.

**Right Design (DO):**

- Header:** A teal banner with the text 'Watch your favorite TV shows anytime, anywhere!'.
- 1. Personal Information:**
  - First Name:** 'Charmie'.
  - Last Name:** 'Kapoor'.
  - Gender:** Radio buttons for 'Male', 'Female', and 'Other'.
  - Date of Birth:** A date picker showing '30/05/1995'.
- 2. Contact Information:**
  - Email address:** 'charmie@gmail.com'.
  - Password:** A field with '\*\*\*\*\*' and a red error message: '(should contain 7 symbols)'.
  - Telephone:** '040-11119999'.
  - Mobile (optional):** A field with '+91' and a red error message: '(optional)'.
- 3. Interests:**
  - Pick your favorite shows:** A row of show thumbnails including 'Friends', 'The Big Bang Theory', 'The Office', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', 'The Mindy Project', and 'The Mindy Project'.
  - Suits:** A text input field.

Alright then! We've come to the end of this form revamp.

Using the most basic of design principles, a simple form can easily be made more engaging, aesthetic and usable. Do have a look at the drastic difference between the before and after. 🤔

Form could not be submitted. There is one error in the form.

Please input name  (compulsary)

I am a  (compulsary)

Write email id  (compulsary)

Type it again  (compulsary)

My password is  (compulsary)

Write your Date of birth  (compulsary)

Email id again  (compulsary)

Some of my favorite TV shows

Phone no.  (compulsary)

Mobile No.

\*First Name

\*Gender ☐ Male ☒ Female ☐ Other

2. Contact Information

\*Email address

\*Telephone

3. Interests

\*Pick your favorite shows

Suits

\*Last Name

\*Date of Birth

\*Password  (Should contain 7 symbols)

Mobile (optional)

Ok

Cancel

Cancel

Proceed to payment

Thanks for reading guys! Hope this was helpful. 😊 Also, do let me know if there are any particular elements or patterns you'd like to learn about.

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