

Hick's Law

Hick's law states that with every additional choice the time it will take for one to make a selection increases (logarithmically). This means that the more options a user has when using an interface the more time it would take and generally more difficult it will be to use.

What this means for designers is that they should generally minimize the amount of choices a user has to select from.

- Desktop Interfaces: Desktop interfaces are WIMP interfaces, so there are plenty of ui elements to interact with and simplifying the design here is a challenge. Although you have more space, using the space efficiently to display the most relevant choices is what a good design aims for. Example: Microsoft introduced the Ribbon interface for Microsoft Office, which cuts the number of choices displayed, keeping them to the most used ones.
- Mobile: Mobile is a restrictive interface where you have to present the relevant information in a small screen. The space constraints can lead to misclicks or misinterpretation of the design elements. Also the interface is operated by hands, so space which can be covered comfortably should be used effectively. Therefore there needs to be emphasis on selecting the most important and relevant choices.
- Ebook interfaces: The usual interactions involve turning pages, small taps, configuring the reading screen, and browsing the book catalogue. Since ebooks are marketed to and used by all age groups, the interface needs to be simplified, unambiguous. Choices need to be limited, and long hierarchical menus are avoided. Options or possible actions are displayed with a simple button in a convenient location. Familiar Gestures like swiping are preset so that its ready to use by default. Hick's law plays an important role in keeping the options and configuration to only the essentials.