Section 6 Action Summary

Section summary and checklist of the 9 action items

ONE-LINE SUMMARY OF THIS SECTION

People should be able to consistently tell what's actionable, simply by looking at the interface, without having to sweep the screen with their mouse to discover what's interactive* (the more effort a UI requires, the less use it will get).

* Interactive: Able to be clicked, tapped, double-tapped, long tapped, voice-activated, selected using a keyboard, and so on.

There are 7 key button styling techniques that will help us signify clickability.

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BEST PRACTICE

01

☐ **The Shape Technique:** Shape can indicate to us whether something is a button or not. Rectangles are the safest choice, but other shapes can work too — particularly when coupled with strong signifiers of clickability.

- **Rectangles are the safest choice.** Since the dawn of the web, rectangles have been used for buttons, so our association between rectangles and buttons is very strong. This makes a rectangle a befitting signifier of a button.

- We can, of course, be more creative and **use other shapes if the branding of the digital product calls for it**, just as long as we bring in other strong signifiers that will carry the weight of signifying clickability, as needed.

- **No matter which shape you go with, just make sure to be consistent** with it throughout your digital product.

  *Note: "Consistency" applies to all 7 of these techniques. I just introduced it with the Shape Technique. **Know that if there's ever a head-to-head match between clarity and consistency, always choose clarity.***

INCONSISTENT

**+** | Copy | Remove

CONSISTENT

Add New | Copy | Remove

Example from: smashingmagazine.com/2016/11/a-quick-guide-for-designing-better-buttons/

BEST PRACTICE

02

The Border Radius Technique: A button's border radius can change-up its "personality". From no border radius being more serious to fully-rounded corners being more playful — choose a "personality" that matches the vibe of the brand/digital product.

0px	4px	100%	➕
Serious	In-between	Playful	Floating Action Button (FAB)
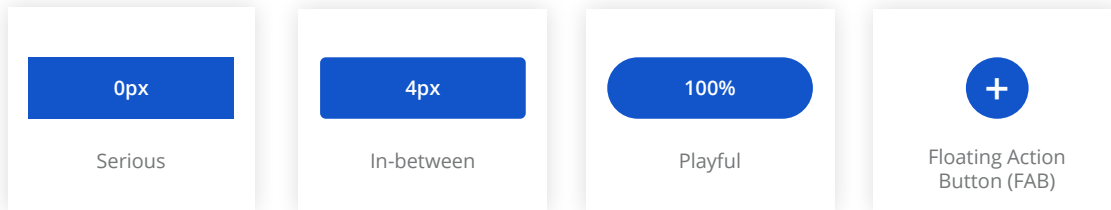
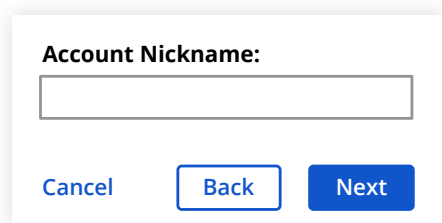*Example from:* uxdesign.cc/ui-cheat-sheets-buttons-7329ed9d6112
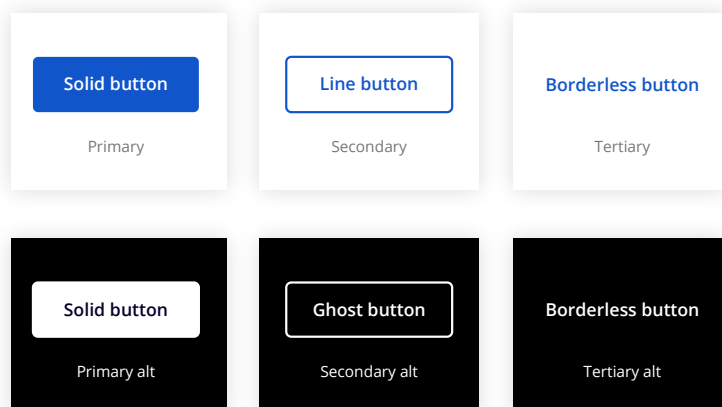
BEST PRACTICE

03

The Fill (and Color) Technique: To convey differences / hierarchy, we use structural changes. When it comes time to stylistically differentiate buttons to visually convey their position in the hierarchy, we do not rely on just different colors to communicate those differences. Instead, we use structural things like fills (e.g. solid vs. hollow-fill), strokes (e.g. outline vs. no outline), and sizes (e.g. micro to jumbo).

An example:
- Primary actions are solid fill buttons.
- Secondary actions are line buttons.
- Tertiary actions are borderless buttons.

Account Nickname:

[   ]

Cancel   Back   Next

Example - on UI.

Solid button	Line button	Borderless button
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

Solid button	Ghost button	Borderless button
Primary alt	Secondary alt	Tertiary alt

Example - in design system/style guide.

BEST PRACTICE

04

☐ **The Shadow (and Elevation) Technique:** Shadows convey elevation. Therefore they are another technique we can use to signify that something can be interacted with. Whether that's a button, card, panel, accordion bar, or anything that needs to show that it's elevated from the page background or stacked over something.

- **No shadow:** Using no shadow but a "heavier" fill color (a color with higher contrast against its background) provides visual dominance and faux elevation.
- **Small shadow:** This simulation of slight elevation can be used to visually signify an element is important, or used as an alternative style for a button (e.g. primary alt, secondary alt, etc.), or it can be used for one of an element's interactive states (e.g. hover).
- **Long shadow:** This simulation of higher elevation can be used to visually command attention, or it can be used as an interactive state (e.g. hover) for an element that has a small shadow in its default state.

No shadow	Small shadow	Long shadow
"Heavier" color for faux elevation: visually dominant action	**Slight elevation:** important action, raised state, or alt style	**High elevation:** action that commands attention, or raised state

To summarize: Use a button color with a somewhat high level of contrast against its background to make it optically appear to elevate. Use a light shadow (small or long, in its default state or as an interactive state) to increase the button's appeared elevation, look of clickability, and visual importance.
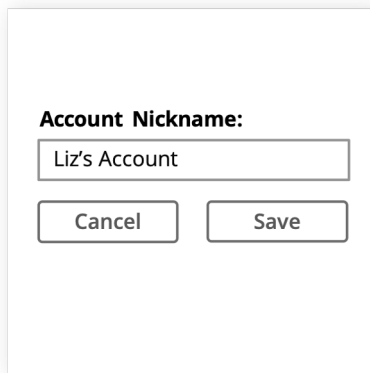
Key things to remember:
- Be consistent with how you use shadows.
- Don't make them too dark.
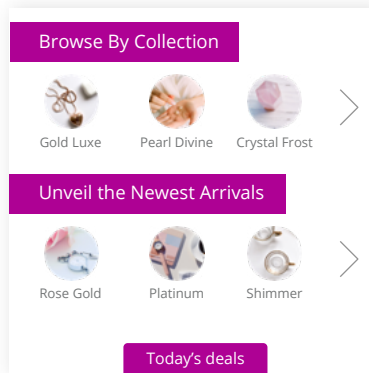- Don't overuse them.

BEST PRACTICE 05

☐ **The Competition Technique:** Similar-styled elements become competition. We want our CTAs (Calls To Action) to stand out clear as day. But it's difficult to visually pick out clickable elements when similar-looking elements compete with them.
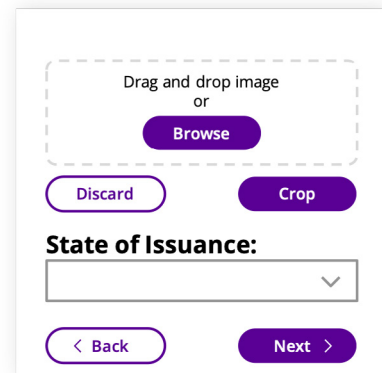
- **Restyle or remove anything that's visually competing with CTAs** (like form elements, a busy background image, rectangle shapes nearby, or even other buttons).
- **Aim to have only one primary button per page or distinct area.**

Account Nickname:

Liz's Account

Cancel   Save

The styling for the input field and buttons are too similar.

Browse By Collection

Gold Luxe   Pearl Divine   Crystal Frost

Unveil the Newest Arrivals

Rose Gold   Platinum   Shimmer

Today's deals

The non-clickable headers look too much like buttons.

Drag and drop image
or
Browse

Discard   Crop

State of Issuance:

‹ Back   Next ›

Try to have only one primary CTA per page (or distinct section).

BEST PRACTICE 06

☐ **The Proximity Technique:** When UI elements are in too close of proximity they can suffocate each other, none will stand out, and interactive elements will be difficult to interact with.

- **Breathability: Use lots of white space, perhaps more than you would normally be inclined to.** This allows our interactive elements to stand out, gives them breathing room, and provides them enough space between each other so people don't select a neighboring interactive element on accident.
- **Relation: Group related items**. This way their relation is clear. Just not too close, because even within families there needs to be breathing room between everyone.
- **Touch targets: Make touch targets large enough to be easily selectable.** Each touch target needs to be big enough for anyone to easily select it *and* not accidentally select neighboring interactive elements.

Upload Magic:

Drag and drop file
or
Browse

Release (Cap it)

Issuing Wizard:

[_____ ⌄]

(‹ Back) (Next ›)

Example: Before proximity technique.

Upload Magic:

Drag and drop file
or
Browse

Release (Cap it)

Issuing Wizard:

[_____ ⌄]

(‹ Back) (Next ›)

Example: After proximity technique.

BEST PRACTICE

07

☐ The final of the 7 techniques, the **Label Capitalization Technique:** **The type of capitalization used for labels can convey different tones of voice.** Sentence case is the safest choice because it's friendly, conversational, and the easiest to read, but when in doubt test it out with users (real or representative).

- If you are unsure which button capitalization to use, just go with sentence case. Or do some testing and find out from real/representative users what works best for them.
- Whichever button capitalization you decide to go with, just make sure to stay consistent throughout your digital product.

Sentence case	ALL CAPS	Title Case	lower case
Friendly, conversational, natural, inviting, easy-to-read	Uniform, strait-laced, authoritative	Formal, impersonal (not preferred)	Casual, low-effort, meek (not preferred)

Aside from the 7 button styling techniques, we also covered two more best practices in this section.

BEST PRACTICE 08

☐ **Reserve Button Signifiers for Buttons Only:** Whichever combination of signifiers you decide to use for your buttons, links, and other interactive elements, just remember: **reserve that combo of signifiers for those interactive elements. Non-interactive elements should not get to use them.**

Also avoid using classic, well-known button signifiers (e.g. rectangle shapes) for non-clickable elements even if you're not using them in your designs.

BEST PRACTICE 09

☐ **Consistency, Similarity, and Distinctness:** Aim for consistency, but do so while keeping the users in mind, not the other pages of the product (or another product). **If you need to sacrifice consistency to aid clarity or usability, then do so.**

Consistency	Similarity	Distinctness
Aim: completely matching, except content	Aim: closely related, like siblings, but not identical twins	Aim: completely different (rationale inferred)
Aids users in transferring their knowledge. Improves: learnability, users' efficiency, and perceptions of trustworthiness, credibility, and reliability.	Use when the user research or usability testing shows that deviations from the style guide can drive or enhance the goals of the user and/or business.	Used to differentiate things OR to draw attention to specific elements (to further the goals of the user experience).