Shneiderman's Eight Golden Rules of Interface Design

Overview

Ben Shneiderman articulated eight practical rules distilled from empirical studies and design experience, guiding HCI practitioners toward more intuitive interfaces.

The Eight Rules

- Strive for consistency – uniformity in sequences of actions, terminology, encoding.
- Enable frequent users to use shortcuts – function keys, macros, abbreviations.
- Offer informative feedback – system responses for every user action.
- Design dialogs to yield closure – clear openings, middles, and closings in tasks.
- Offer error prevention and simple error handling – restrict, confirm, and allow recovery.
- Permit easy reversal of actions – support undo and redo within context.
- Support internal locus of control – users initiate and control actions.
- Reduce short■term memory load – keep displays simple, utilize meaningful defaults.

Practical Checklist

- Audit interfaces for shortcut availability tailored to expert flows.
- Check error messages for clarity and constructive guidance.
- Ensure consistency across pages and device breakpoints.

Reference

Shneiderman, B. Designing the User Interface, 5th ed., Pearson, 2010.