

WHAT IS KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID (KISS)?

Keep it simple, stupid (KISS) is a design principle which states that designs and/or systems should be as simple as possible. Wherever possible, complexity should be avoided in a system—as simplicity guarantees the greatest levels of user acceptance and interaction. KISS is used in a variety of disciplines, such as interface design, product design, and software development.

The term was first used in the US Navy and is thought to have been coined by Kelly Johnson, who was the lead engineer at the Lockheed Skunk Works. Johnson told the designers at Lockheed that their designs should be simple enough to be repaired by a man in a combat situation with only some basic mechanic's training and simple tools. If their products weren't simple and easy to understand, they would not only cost lives but also quickly become obsolete in combat conditions and thus worthless. In the world of user experience design and related disciplines, the KISS principle borrows from such a scenario in that users who tend to lead busy lives will quickly abandon a complex design. In the case of designing for mobile devices—where the users' context finds them operating their phones with their fingers, often with one hand—this philosophy is even more vital to follow.

The KISS principle also exists in other variations with the same meaning. Examples are “Keep it short and simple” and “Keep it simple and straightforward.” Though both phrases technically introduce an “A” into the acronym, they both deliver the same message as “Keep it simple,

stupid.” The objective of any process is to deliver the *simplest* possible outcome. As such, the KISS principle speaks to flowing with the intuition of any new user, easing in nuances with care.