An introduction to prototyping

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In this video, we'll introduce the concept of prototypes. Why it's important to create them before you start building anything and what forms they can take. Prototype is a word that means a model or a mock-up or an early version of something before it is built in real life. An app or website can be prototyped using pen and paper. A city can even be prototyped with a miniature model.

The idea is to experiment, test, and communicate your ideas before you spend money and time investing in something that might not work or might need improving. It's a lot easier to understand a concept if it's drawn out, even if it's not quite like the real thing. It makes it tangible, something to base conversations on, which is especially important for digital where the key focus is users interacting with something. Prototypes can come in many forms, even just for a website or an app.

The type you use will depend on where you are in the design phase, how much budget you have, and your goals for that prototype. Generally, early on, a prototype will be simple with only a couple of details, maybe on paper or cards as sketches. As you progress through your design, you start adding more details. Maybe you want to draw them in some design software, maybe even make them interactive, and turn them into a replica of your website.

A good place to start is paper prototyping. It's really fun. It's like going back to primary school. You get to play with paper and pens and glue. It might seem silly, but it's an important part of the UX process and something that most UX designers do. So how do you make a paper website? You start with a user journeys you've created and draw out rough sketches of each of the steps in that flow. You can lay them out and see how the journeys flow and link together.

The benefit of doing this is that you can make changes quickly and easily, even on the spot in front of users when you're doing usability testing. Rough sketches help you really focus on how it works in the flow and not get caught up with how it looks.

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