



# Principles of UX



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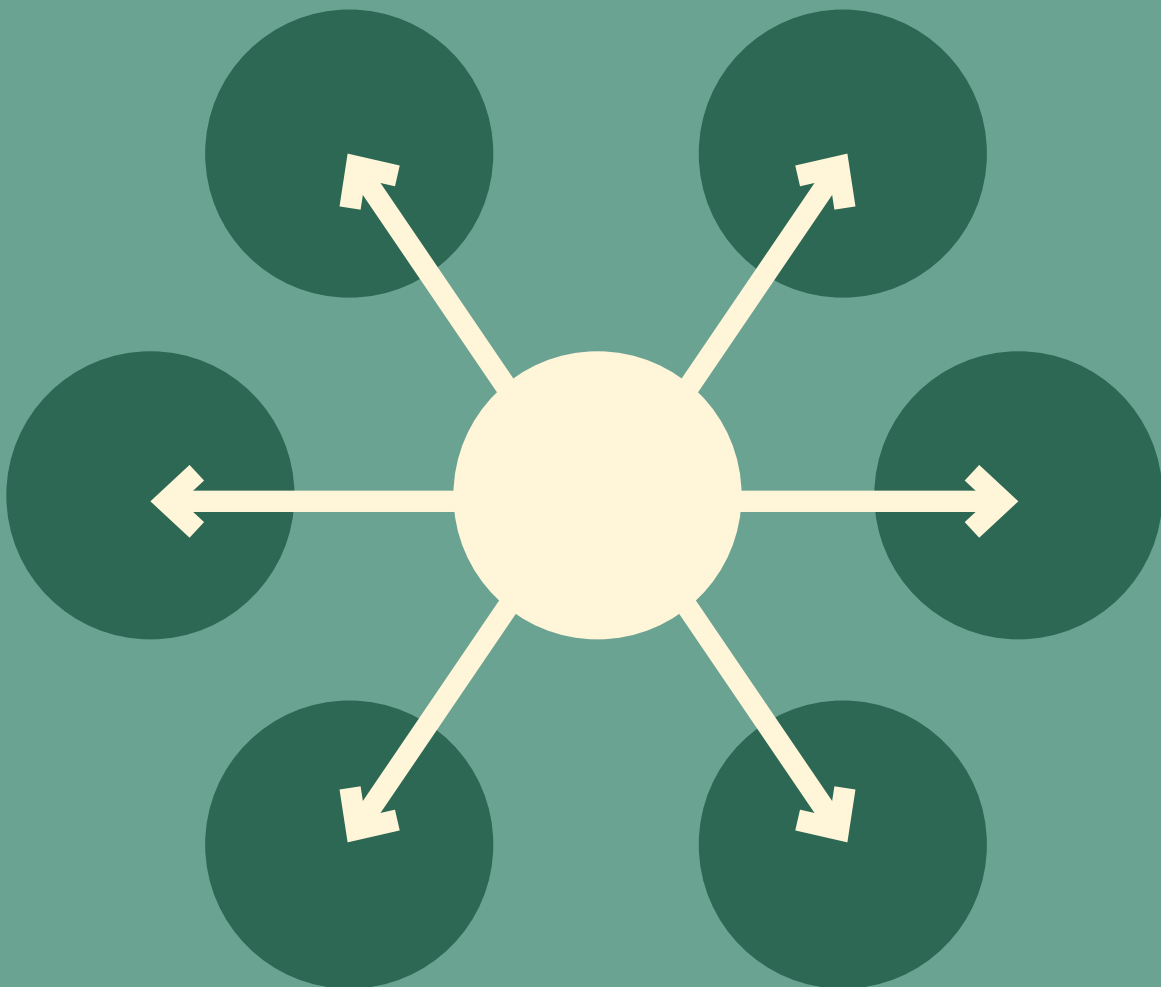
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# Design for your users, not yourself



# 01. Design for your users, not yourself

This can be a bit of a mind shift for less experienced designers but you have to design something that your audience will like and understand. Your own personal tastes are not as important as the end users. This doesn't mean that you can't include any of your own personality but just keep in mind who your design is for. You should put the user at the centre of your design.

To design for your users you'll first have to get to know them and what makes them tick rather than just making assumptions

## How do you get to know your users?

Well the easy answer here is just talk to them, although, we're going to go a bit deeper than asking them what they did on Saturday night and how the weather is. We're going to conduct what is known as a user interview.

### User interviews

To start off with we're going to get to know their story, who they are, what they like and what are their needs in life. This should give us a good idea of what type of person they are. Next up we're going to be a little more specific and we're going to discover what they are trying to achieve in relation to the product we are designing. By discovering what their desired end point is we can then design a solution on how to get there, rather than imposing our own predetermined idea to what they need.



One tip is not to ask them what they want. Just as Henry Ford said “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” It’s your job to design a solution for their needs.

### **The 5 Whys**

Asking a user why they want to carry out a particular task helps us to uncover a deeper truth about what they really want to achieve. This can totally redefine what our product is or at least give us a better understanding on how to design it.

We used the 5 Whys technique when designing an African money transfer app. Here is an example of the Q&A.

**Interviewer:** What are you trying to do?

**User:** Transfer money

**Interviewer:** Why do you want to transfer money?

**User:** So my family in Ghana can have money.

**Interviewer:** Why is that?

**User:** So they can be more independent.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell me why you’d like them to be more independent?

**User:** So they can buy a laptop for my little brother.

**Interviewer:** Why is that?

**User:** So he learn more and do well at college.

**Interviewer:** Can you tell why one more time?

**User:** So he can improve his life.

Ok, we started to get deep really quickly there. Now we know what the user is really trying achieve we can think about how this can improve our app

.

Perhaps rather than transferring money to accounts we can transfer to a mobile money wallet or a virtual card. We might even think about collaborating with charities that help fund free education.

Other ways you can get to know a user is by watching the same TV shows as them or joining an online forum where they hangout .

Can then produce what’s know as user personas. These personas are a fictional character created to represent a user type that might use a site, brand, or product in a similar way.

Remember to set a goal for the interview. What do you want to find out?

What do you need to know before you start designing your product?

**Example questions.**

Start off with some informal questions to make them feel comfortable like, how's your day been so far or did it take you long to get here?

Then move on to some questions to get to know their background. Always let them know that this information will be kept secret and if they feel uncomfortable they don't have to answer them.

Are you married or single?

How old are you?

Can you tell me what you do for a living?

How often do you use apps on your phone, what type of apps do you use the most?

What's the most frequent website you visit?

Then you can move on to some more specific questions about what they are trying to achieve in relation to your product. So for example if we are designing an app for pregnant mothers we might ask these questions:

What worries you the most about being pregnant?

What are the most important things for you to consider while your pregnant?

What's the toughest thing about being pregnant?

What's the best thing about being pregnant?

What apps or websites do you use to inform yourself about your pregnancy?

Do you have any health goals while your pregnant.

Obviously the questions will change depending on your product but you generally want to know what are the users frustrations and needs. Then you can design product that helps address them.

# Feedback



## 02. Feedback

Hello is there anyone out there? Feedback is as important with interfaces as it is with people. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who doesn't reply to your questions or give you visual cue and feedback to what your saying? That conversation would feel pretty strange. Our interfaces are designed to be used by people so we should treat them as people. Just as you expect a reply when you say hi to friend you should expect some feedback whenever you interact with an interface.

Feedback is necessary so the user knows that an interaction has been received and is being acted upon. This can be as simple as a button changing colour when tapped then showing a loading icon to show the user that the interface is in the process of loading the next screen or content. Now imagine tapping a button and the interface not showing any feedback. What the hell is going on you might think? Is this thing working? Is my data safe with this company? Feedback also helps to build trust.

### How can we show feedback in our designers?

#### Haptic feedback form a physical button.

One advantage physical buttons have over touch screens is that you don't have to be looking at them to know you've pressed it. This is particularly useful in cars where touch screens are being evermore popular. Imagine driving and having to take your eyes off the road to know where you have pressed a button correctly? The MacBook's touch bar is also another





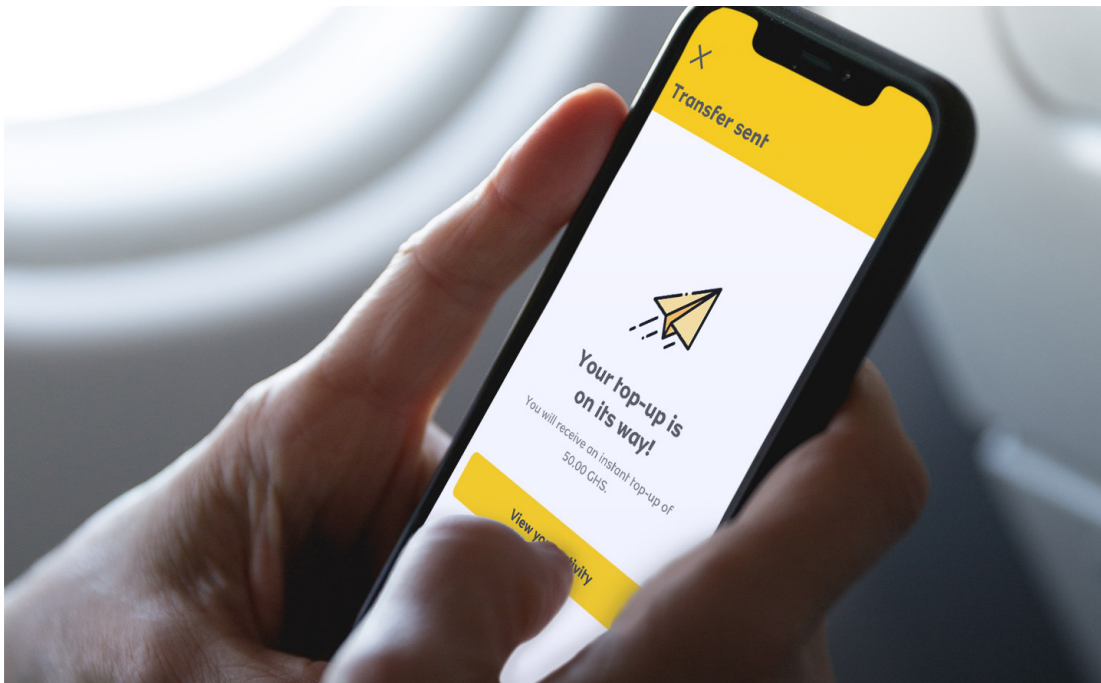
example of where physical buttons have an advantage. It also just feels more satisfying to press a real button that jab your finger at a screen.

### **Visual feedback**

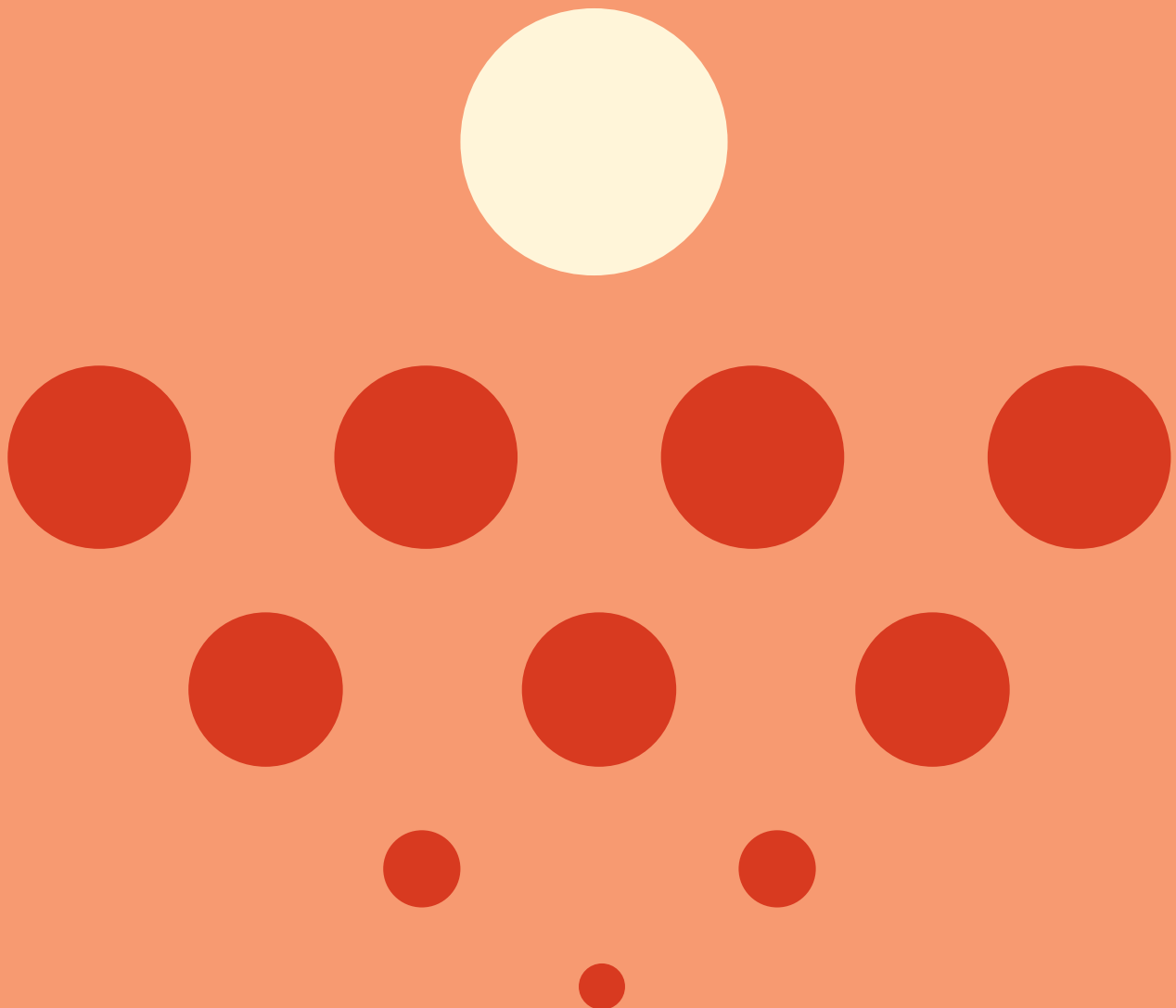
If we can't have a physical button one way of feeding back that it has been touched is visually changing its visual state. This may be as simple as changing its colour. Once we've pressed a button to send something like a message we also need a confirmation that the action has been carried out successfully or the user will be left doubting if their message was really sent. If we can't confirm it's been sent straight away we need to show the user that the system is working on it, otherwise they will carry on pressing the button and wondering what's happening. So just as in real life when your boss asks you to do something you reply with, 'Sure, I'm on it now. It'll probably take a few minutes.' Then you let them know when you've finished. Feedback is about being as human as possible.

### **Audio feedback**

Traditionally sounds helped reinforce what was happening in the interface but now with voice commands becoming ever more popular audio feedback is increasingly important. For example when you ask Siri a question it might reply; 'I'm searching for that on the web', then 'Here's what I found'. It lets you know what's happening and rarely leaves you wondering if the system has broken.



# Digestibility



## 03. Digestibility

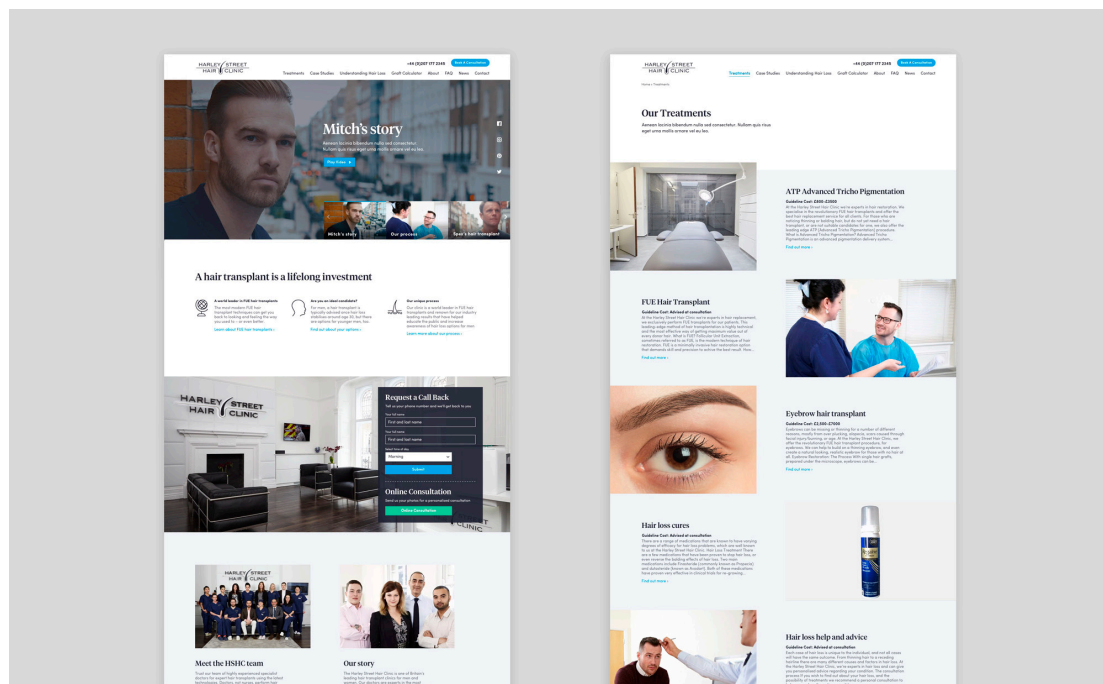
Just like food, good design should be easy to digest. Can you imagine being faced with 5kg of porridge to eat at breakfast? That's the equivalent of coming to a web page and being hit by a wall of text to read or a really long form with lots of input fields.

Your brain shouldn't have to waste loads of energy figuring out what the hell it's looking at. Our brains are bombarded more than ever with notifications and other distractions so when it comes to designing an interface it will be more successful if it's easy to understand. The brain has a limited amount of cognitive resources during the day — using them up with complicated interfaces is just bad manners.

So what does this mean for our interfaces? It means we should break the content up into chunks. I hear you say; How many chunks can your brain digest? George Miller, a Princeton Professor and psychologist, stated that the number of objects an average person can hold in working memory is about seven plus or minus two.

### A designs should be scannable

If you've ever observed how users interact with a web page they spend very little time actually reading it can usually just scan down the page. A good



resource is [Hotjar](#), with this tool you can see screen recordings of people musing your website. It's an amazing tool that give you powerful insights into how real people use your site. Your design should be able to be understood by scanning over it quickly. Then if it looks interesting to the user they will spend more time investigating it.

### **Tips on making interfaces scannable**

If you do have a lot of text break it up with sub-headers, icons or images. Take a look at some good articles on Media and you'll find out that they are broken up into digestible chunks with sub-headers, pull quotes and images.

Give your designs a hierarchy. This will help orientate the user and guide them through the design. Group similar items of content together. You can group items by style, size, proximity or adding the with a marked border.

Forms can be particularly daunting if they are long. You can break them up into steps so they don't seem so long. You can show the user the amount of steps before and also their progress in the task.

## Clarity



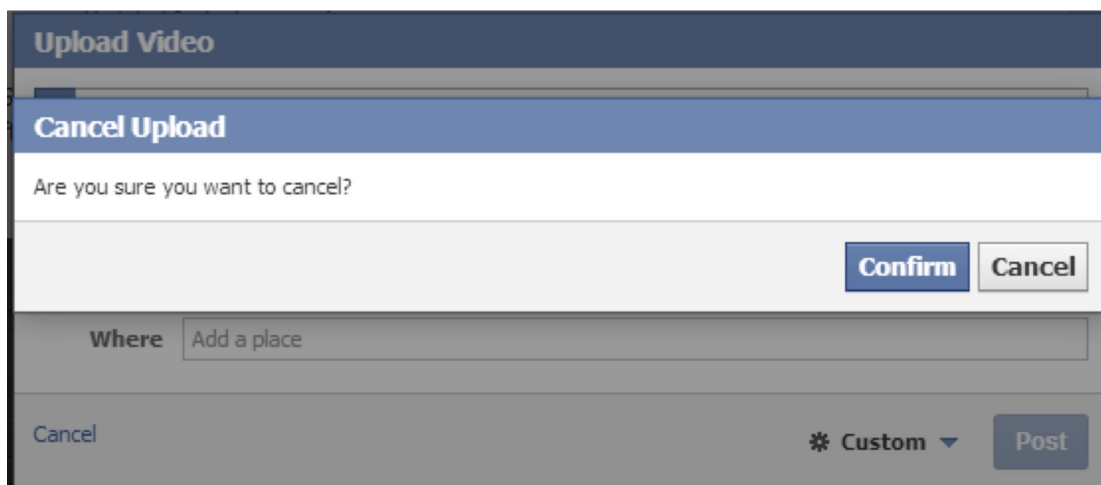
## 04. Clarity

Good design is honest and clarity helps to build trust in a design. The user needs to know what will happen when a certain action is taken.

You need to be clear about what the value of your product is and why the user needs it. This goes for pricing too. If it's not clear what the cost is or there is any uncertainty around how a free trial ends the user is unlikely to click the magic 'buy now' button. Why do you need to give your credit card details if it's a free trial? This can feel like a trick if it's not explained properly.

Use clear language to explain what is happening when you interact with a product.

Avoid double negatives when cancelling actions. A few years ago Facebook had a pop-up window that asked if the user wanted to cancel an upload and gave them the choice of two buttons, Cancel or Confirm. Does the Cancel button cancel the upload or does it cancel the 'Cancel Upload' command? Who knows...



Make it clear what you want the user to do and what will happen when that task is completed.

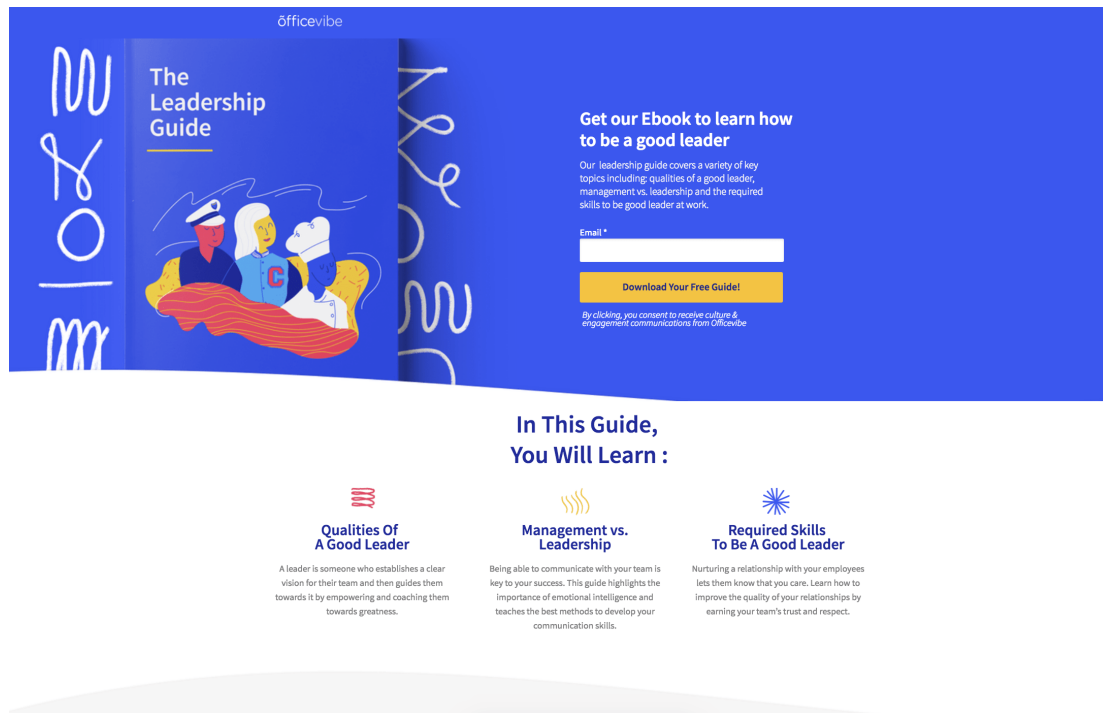
Landing pages do a great job of making it clear what they want you to do. They generally have one purpose and that is to get you to sign up or buy something.

This examples is very clear in what it wants you to do. The only thing it falls

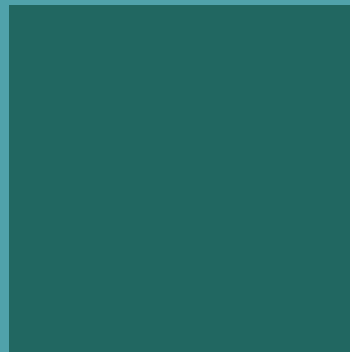
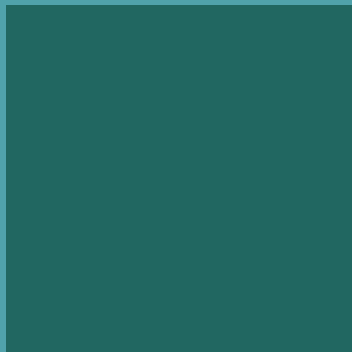
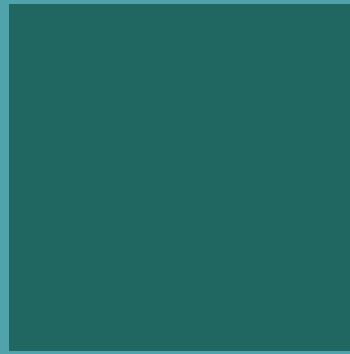
down on is there is no way to opt out of the 'receive culture & engagement communications'.

They've put it below the main call to action button so it doesn't distract but you might not read it before clicking.

This is where business and UX sometimes disagree.



# Familiarity





## 05. Familiarity

It's great to see cool new ways of doing something on Dribbble but if your design doesn't work it's all meaningless. It's better to be good than original.

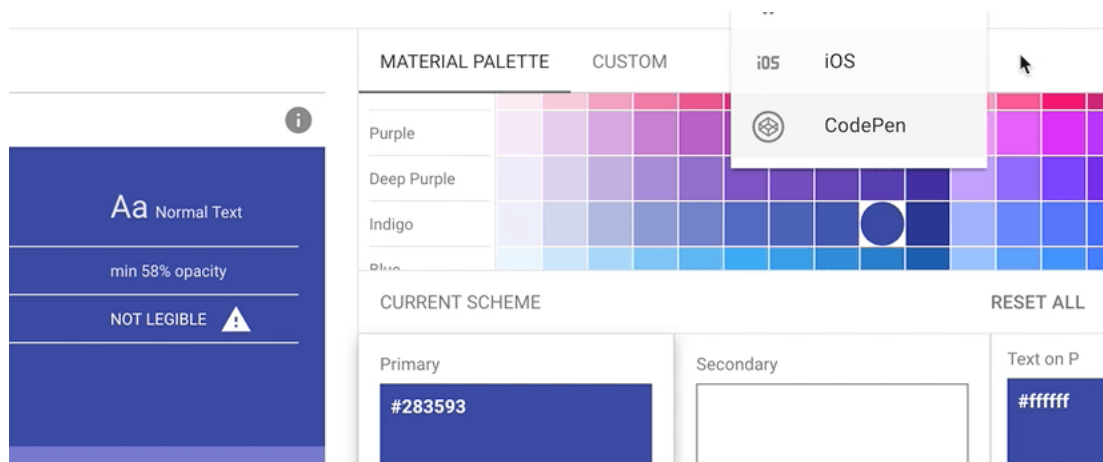
There's no point reinventing the wheel every time we produce a new interface.

The more familiar we are with an interface the less time we spend thinking about it and the more efficient it's going to be. Think of your brain as a processor and every new interface it sees it has to dedicate more power to figuring it out. We want to reduce friction and make the task as easy as possible.

Companies like Google and Apple have dedicated lots of resources to creating a consistent design language. Referencing Google's Material Design can be a big help when starting a new project. Want to know how dropdown buttons work on the web and mobile, just check it out on Material design then you can adjust it to your design.

Keeping design familiar doesn't mean new designs are frozen in one moment. It means that there are a standard way of doing things and designs evolve over time rather than being totally crazy and creative all the time.

Keeping your design consistent within an interface is also key to making it more intuitive and reducing the cognitive load on the user. Imagine the confusion it would cause if you had 10 different styles of buttons or the typographic styling changed halfway through.



# Delight



## 6. Delight

Delight, grove really is in the heart... Yeah ok, there is a reason I'm a designer not a comedian. Insert cricket sounds here. You probably didn't even get my strange reference to a 90s pop dance song either.

Think of delight as the icing on the cake that takes the design to the next level.

No one wants a cake that's all icing unless your me when I was 5 years old.

The icing we want to add to our interfaces are things that make us smile and think, 'hey they've gone that extra mile to make this design really cool'. It helps build a connection with our audience.

### Some examples of how to add delight

- A. Witty micro copy
- B. Simple animation
- C. Illustration or photography
- D. An interface that is fantastically easy to use.

### Witty micro copy

When adding humour to an interface only do it if its right for the brand or product. Never try too hard. Simply talking to your user as a person is a great way to add a little delight. Nothing should sacrifice clarity. If you have to stop for a moment to figure out what's going on your design has failed.

If you have a unicorn in the forest, you don't need a hula hooping monkey too

Google V&T  
Humor in your microcopy | By Kinneret Yifrah



### **Simple animation**

Like the rules for using witty micro copy, animations should never go over the top to try and impress. Dribbble is full of these examples. Make sure the animation is there for a reason and helps to either tell a story about your product or improves the functionality. Over the top animation can slow down a product and make it frustrating to use. Take a look at some of the most popular websites and applications and note down the amount of times they use animation.

### **Illustration or photography**

Images help us tell a story and connect with our users. Think about what you can do to make these images stand out in a non distracting manner. Can you choose a really well crafted illustration or photo that cuts through all the generic stock images on the web?

When adding extra touches of personality make sure that it never impedes the functionality of the design. Just like lipstick, you should apply it sparingly, unless you want to look like the joker.