Sketches, Wireframes, Mockups and Prototypes
Dyson and his 5,127 prototypes
Sketches
What are sketches good for?

- Exploring initial ideas and quickly iterating these
- Playing around with basic components
- Creating together as part of a design team
Things to consider with sketches

- Will typically be paper based – but could be done on a whiteboard visible to a whole team; rarely done digitally from the start.
- Having a specific set of user goals and tasks in mind is very helpful – even in this very early stage of design.
- They do not need to be “beautiful”!
- You will discard many ideas, but that is the point.
Wireframes
What are wireframes good for?

- Here you start to create the first real draft of the app across a number of screens.
- Explore, test out and iterate ideas with more refinement – focused more on the basic layout and key functionality
- Sharing as part of a design team, but also with clients and with users to get early feedback (e.g., The Human Computer).
- Gathering feedback that’s focused on structure and overall concepts – not aesthetic detail – good to get feedback on scope of the design.
- Starts to get you to consider the placement of buttons, tabs, icons and other key elements
They can be paper-based or digital – good to use templates or graph/layout paper to help make neater designs if paper based.

Keep them greyscale – focusing on layout and structure and the arrangement of key elements, not on aesthetic detail.

Best used when you have an idea of the goals and needs of users, and when you know in broad terms the type of information/content is on your site or app.

Use a wireframe to help establish what is of primary and secondary importance to the person who will use the design.
Mockups

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3BmHGNAGhM&t=1259s

Credit: Build Amazing Things
What are mockups good for?

- A mockup is a static representation of a final product
- Good for performing certain types of usability evaluation on – heuristic, cognitive walkthrough, think aloud (somewhat).
- Making decisions about font choice, colour scheme etc.
- The mockup is where you bring in all your knowledge about users in terms of affordance, metaphors, gestalt principles, layout design etc.
Things to consider with mockups

- Still create multiple mockups, exploring different font types, different sizes of text and buttons, different colour schemes etc.
- Think about the “design system” – the consistent use of symbols and components used throughout the mockup.
- Think about the common visual theme throughout.
- Lots of tools out there to help with mockup creation – find one that works for you, but also make sure it allows you to share designs with others (team mates, clients, users).
Prototypes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sAAa-CCOcg&t=60s

Credit: Figma
What are prototypes good for?

- Then enable you to explore user journeys and user flows – how people move from one part of application to the next and then to the next.
- They show results to people based on actions they take
- They provide opportunities for more detailed feedback on usability – can be especially useful for Think Aloud
Things to consider with prototypes

• Make sure you have settled on the final overall visual design before prototyping – otherwise can be very time consuming.
• To begin with, avoid making all buttons, switches etc. simulate their functionality – focus on a specific user flow of actions.
• Knowing the sequence of changing the flow of pages … good to do this “off screen” first!
Making with pens, on paper

- Use graph or layout paper
- Use different thickness pens and rulers
- Use templates:
  - Search “wireframe template” on Google – 100s if not 1000s of examples!
- Use different colours to connect frames together (e.g., arrow lines from button press to next frame).
- Working collectively around a whiteboard
Making digitally

- PowerPoint - Wireframes
- Balsamiq - https://balsamiq.com/ - Wireframes + Mockups
- Moqups - https://moqups.com/ - Mockups
- Mockplus - https://www.mockplus.com - Mockups
- Figma - https://www.figma.com/ - Mockups + Prototypes
- Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign
  - Adobe XD – Mocups + Prototypes
Summary

• The value of prototyping – lots, fast, different degrees of fidelity
• Talked through different stages of prototyping:
  • Sketches
  • Wireframes
  • Mockups
  • Prototypes
• Examples of tools that can be used for different stages
Sketches, Wireframes, Mockups and Prototypes