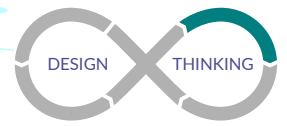


PROTOTYPE

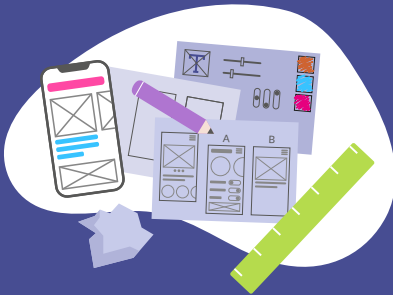


Build representations of potential solutions.

Why prototype?

In order to test and iterate your design ideas, you need a way to clearly communicate the idea to users, in the context of a particular experience. However, rather than developing a fully functional product or service when still in the early stages of development, you need something else to bring the idea to life. This is where prototyping comes in, as it allows you to:

- test assumptions, obtain feedback and identify problems in the design quickly, so that it can evolve with each iteration, or the direction can be changed where necessary
- optimise use of time, money, and resources by only building what is necessary to communicate and test the area(s) of interest
- convey potential solutions to stakeholders as well as users, so that they understand and are motivated to buy into the design.



Steps to success

1

Keep the user in mind.

Cross check ideas with user insights by referring back to the problem statement and previously created artefacts. Despite the need to prototype quickly, continue to seek answers to any unknowns by engaging with users as soon as is feasible.

2

Plan the scope of testing.

Don't be too ambitious by trying to answer all of your questions with a single round of testing. Instead, begin with wider questions and narrow the focus as the design develops. Set clear goals of what you are aiming to test before you build each prototype, considering the user audience, scenario and use case.

3

Take action and fail fast.

Use prototyping as a way to progress ideas (at any point in the Design Thinking process) by creating something tangible, which forces you to think and make decisions about how the solution will work. Be open to the fact that some ideas will fail and aim to detect problems early, by starting with low-fidelity prototypes and graduating to higher detail.

4

Choose the right tools and fidelity.

Consider where you are in the design process to inform the tools, time and resource that should be committed to a prototype. In the early stages, when exploring multiple solutions, aim for low-fidelity prototypes or storyboards. However, once users have bought into a solution, consider an interactive prototype that offers a realistic user experience to uncover accurate behaviours, and provide confidence around the final design.

5

Record questions for testing.

When building a prototype, it is inevitable that several questions will arise that need to be answered to shape the user experience. For example, the designers may want to know which icon best fits users' mental models for a certain feature. A dedicated area should be created to record these questions, so they can be integrated into testing.

Top tips

Consider accessibility needs.

Inclusive testing with prototypes doesn't have to mean extra work when considered in advance. Simple considerations like colour contrast, the positioning of components and the size of fonts used in prototypes will help to make them more accessible (while also making them more useable). In addition to this, consider quick reviews against accessibility best practice guidelines (e.g. the WCAG v2.1 guidelines) as and when appropriate.

Consider the RITE method.

The Rapid Iterative Testing and Evaluation (RITE) methodology aims to resolve usability problems as soon as they are encountered by one or two participants. This means making quick updates to the prototype, before continuing to test with more users to get feedback on the evolving design. Advantages of this approach include it being time and cost-effective. Our article also explains [how RITE works well within an agile approach.](#)

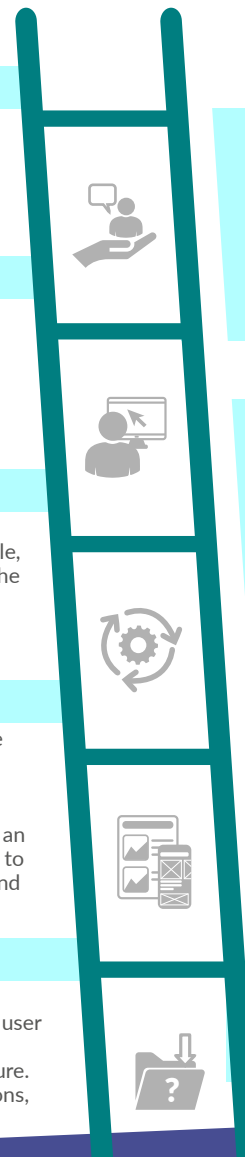
Use robust tools.

To create digital experiences, consider using some of the following prototyping tools:

InVision: The fastest way to create click-through prototypes using static designs created in other software. It supports multiple selection options and branching.

Sketch: An industry-standard digital design application with good prototyping features.

Axure: An advanced level prototyping tool with javascript-like programming capability. It's good for simple wireframe prototypes through to high-fidelity simulations of real-life applications.



If you need support with prototyping, please reach out to our UX team via:

✉ enquiries@system-concepts.com

☎ + 44 (0)20 7240 3388

See how we used prototyping during our development of a [mobile e-learning app.](#)