

UI / UX

Section 1:

Fundamentals

Attila “Gabriel” Branyiczky



BLUISH-GREEN PRODUCTIONS

MAKE GAMES | PLAY GAMES

What is the
difference between
UI and UX?





UX

UI





UX



UI



UX: The Foundation

- UX is the raw **structure** of your program
- How do users **interact** with it?
- What **options** do they have?
- What **order** are the options presented in?



UI: The Aesthetics

- UI represents the **visual** polish of that core structure
- Everything that makes the framework **beautiful**
- Involves **graphic design**, **typography**, and **animation**



Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open
apple-blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan, the
branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds,
over all the coursing sun

form ever follows
function

and this is the law

~Louis Sullivan



Form Ever Follows Function

- UI must follow UX
- If you have an interface which is **easy to use**, but **looks terrible**, that's *bad UI*
- If you have an interface which is **hard to use** but **looks great**, that's *bad UX*



Looks Fancy, Terrible to Use



The UX Mindset



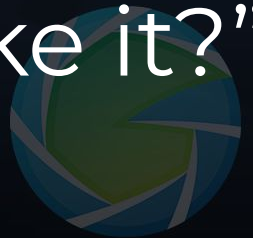
The UX Mindset

- Think *analytically*
 - Anticipate the *needs* of your users
- Think about *optimization*
 - How can users get to their desired option in the *fewest clicks*?
- Developers; You have a good mind-set for UX!



“What **options** do our users **want / need**?”

“If this action is the one users take the **most often**, how can we make it **easy** for them to take it?”



Art Reinforcing Structure

- Artists should use their knowledge of **aesthetics** to reinforce the structure.
- How can **contrast** and **spacing** draw the user's attention to vital functions?

Just because UI is rendered on a *canvas* doesn't give you the excuse to paint *anything* you like



Consistency is King

- The more the UI has a **consistent** styling, the **easier** it will be for users to **navigate**
 - Less difficult to parse
- If the majority of your UI follows a uniform styling, it helps users distinguish **outliers**:
 - Disabled Buttons
 - Warning Notifications



Breaking Conventions

- A break from convention should signify something important (like a **permanent** change)
 - Potential to erase data
 - Using a once-in-a-game item
- Distinguished with a color palette, pattern, or graphic which looks **unlike any other**

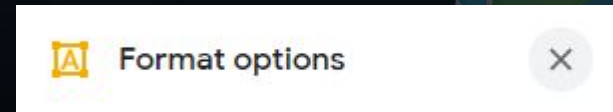
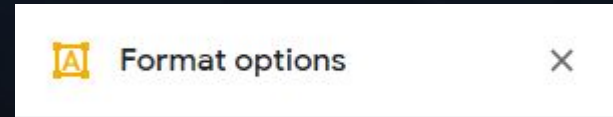


How can aesthetics
complement
function?



What You See Is What You Get

- Every element needs **space**
- Not every button needs its own **box**, but if there is an icon floating in space, intuition would dictate you have to click pretty close to the icon
- Depending on how easy the action should be to perform, this could be **intentionally** easy or difficult

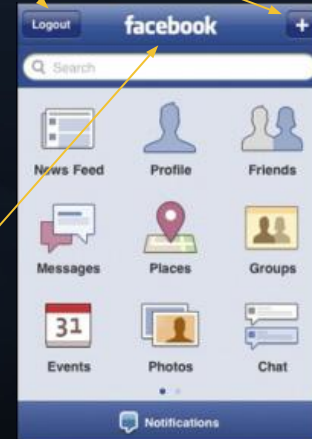


Simple Example; Buttons

- If it's a button, it should look and behave like a button
- If it isn't a button, it shouldn't look or behave like one

Yes, these are buttons!

This may be a button?



Button States

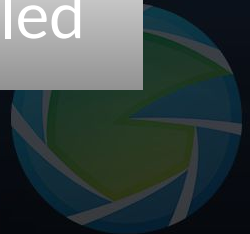
- **Neutral** (“Idle”)
- **Highlight** (“Focus” or “Hover”)
- **Selected** (“Clicked” or “Pressed”)
- Disabled
- *At no point in the 3 **Primary** states does the button resemble the *disabled* state*

Neutral

Hover

Clicked

Disabled



Disabled Functions

Questions for “currently unavailable” options;

- Should it be **displayed**?
- If it is displayed, how can you communicate **why** it isn't available?
- Are *unavailable options* included in the cursor **navigation** (or does it skip over them)?



Less = Better



Less is More

- A picture is worth **1000 Words**
- When you use text, put it **where** players will read it



A Bad Place for Text



Dead Center

Blizzard's **Overwatch** features circular bars, “hit confirms”, and ammo-counters **dead-center**



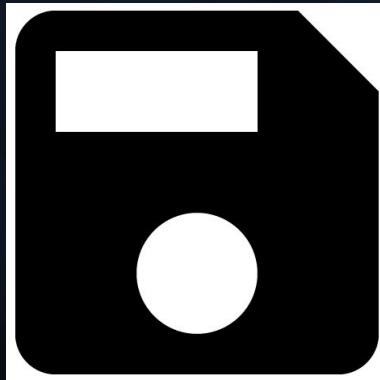
Icon Considerations

Use **well known** icons rather than making your own

The “Save” Icon:



VS



VS



Sources: <https://thenounproject.com/term/save/9016/>, Google Material Design,
<https://blog.prototypr.io/a-better-save-icon-4d7a0436176>



Making your own Icon

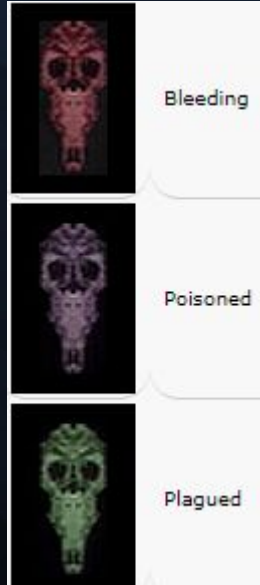
If you need to make your own icon;

- Make sure it looks **unique**
- Make it a **simplified** graphic of what it represents
- Icons are frequently rendered to a small size, make sure it's **legible**!



Not very helpful icons

Souls Required	40386
 Vitality	22
 Intelligence	12
 Endurance	39
 Strength	30
 Dexterity	23
 Magic	6
 Faith	16
 Luck	14



Demon's Souls had difficulty to understand icons

Stat icons are too **abstract** (maybe based on Kanji?)

Status icons are NO GOOD for the **Color-blind**



Creating an Effective UX



The importance of good UX

- UX is the **foundation**; it must be done **before** UI Designers can finish their work (ideally before they start!)
- The less the UX **changes**, the less the UI needs to change (the less work that needs **re-doing**!)
- A good UX is vital to **user retention**



A deep understanding

- To create an effective UX, you must have a “deep understanding” of;
 - Your software
 - Your users



Understanding your Software

- What is the **purpose** of the software?
 - For games, what is the ***Essential Experience***?
 - For applications, what is the ***Value Proposition***?
- As you develop your software, you will develop a feel for which options should be “**top level**”



Understanding your Users



Understanding your Users

- Anticipate what users *want to do*, how do they *think it works*; in other words; **psychology**
- **Feedback**: Listening to user feedback is a **vital** part of creating a fluid UX

It DOESN'T MATTER how nicely it works *in your head*;

If your users don't understand it,
the design **MUST** change



Layout based on *use*

Lay only **grass**, then, *a year later*, put down **concrete** paths where the grass has been **worn away**



Improving existing UX

- It's easy to spot **problems**, it isn't always easy to come up with **solutions**, but it can be a useful exercise to try
- Can you think of some games where the UX might have been improved if the developers had better **anticipated** the needs of their users?



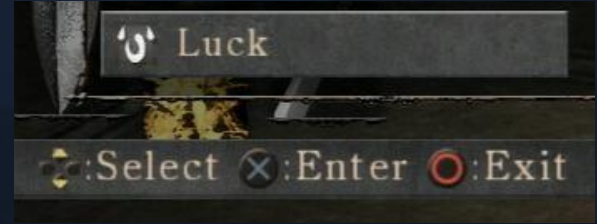
The Spectrum of Users

- A good UX bridges the gap between;
- **Casual Users**: People interacting with a system for the first time, or those who interact with it rarely
- **Hardcore Users**: People who interact with the system daily; they want efficiency!



Casual users

- Display inputs **on-screen**
- **Replicate** functionality in **multiple** places
- Cut down on **Jargon** (or at least provide parentheses)
- **Search** through menus with **multiple tags**
- Easy access to **help** resources



An option users don't know they have is just as bad as not having the option



Hardcore Users

- Interface **customization**; the ability to tailor something to their work-flow
- **Hotkeys** for everything, and the ability to **re-map** hotkeys
- **Quick** transitions
- Could be industry veterans used to similar software





Bridging the Gap



Friendly UI

- *Design* the interface for the Casual User
- *Make provisions* for the Hardcore User
- *Customizability*; Allow users to tailor the interface to align with their workflow
- Don't think of big buttons as "Childish" and small buttons as "Refined"



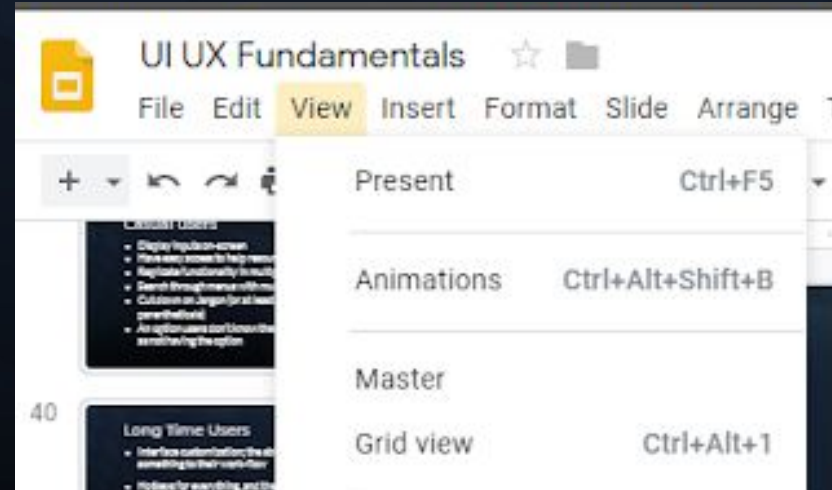
Menu Transitions

- Fancy transitions are a great way to make your interface present well in trailers
 - Not that you really want to focus on the menus during trailers...
- In practice, these quickly get cumbersome
- Include options to disable or speed up transitions



Hotkeys

- Hotkeys and the ability to re-map them **does not interfere** with the Casual User experience
- Using Hotkeys should not be *more difficult than navigating the drop-down menu*



Make Accessibility a Priority

- Games which place an emphasis on **Accessibility** find **new audiences**
 - Monster Hunter World
 - Fire Emblem Awakening
- To **innovate** and introduce new mechanics, you must **educate** your players



Input UX



Conventions and Consensus

- Users **expect** certain functionality from your software based on their **previous experience**
- We are **pattern driven** creatures; anything that differs from “the norm” creates **mental load**
- Look outward at the industry, what functionality do users expect from **similar** software?



The 2 Button issue

If you are in a situation featuring two buttons without distinct **highlight states**, the user will be unable to tell which one they have selected.



Cursor travel

If your cursor skips over a **large area** of the screen, you may wish to include a **trail** the user can visually follow to **guide** their sight to the new button

Continue



Save and Quit



A most
fundamental Skill



The most important skill of all

Communication

- UX is about “listening” to the needs of your users
- UI is about “speaking” to your users through visuals
- When you *communicate*, seek to instill an understanding in your audience



3D Communication

- Speak AND Listen in every *direction*
- **Lateral**: Arrive at a consensus with other designers
- **Vertical**: Up and down the *production pipeline*
- **Outward**:
 - What are others doing?
 - Perform testing with end users to get feedback



Closing Thoughts

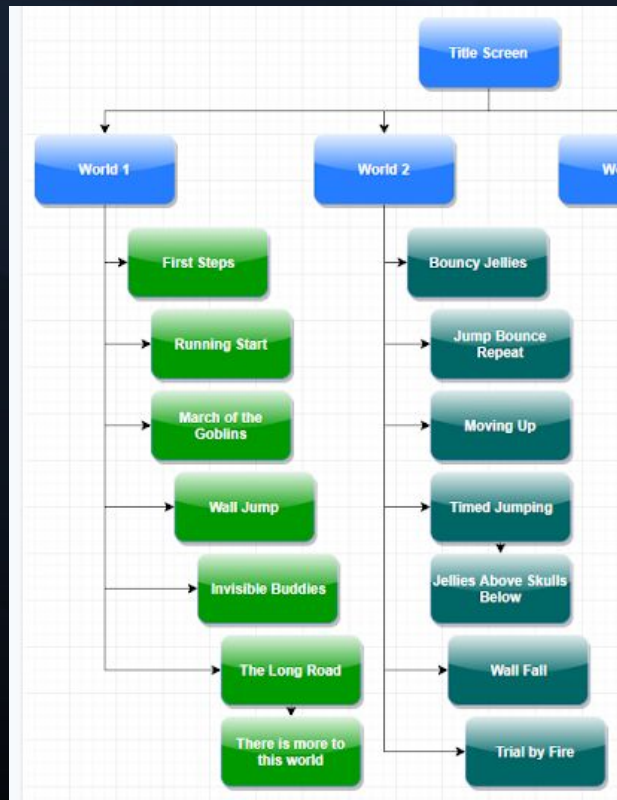


Make the UI “screen safe”



Planning your UX / UI

- **UX** Planning:
 - Google Docs
 - Draw.io
- **UI** Planning:
 - Pencil and paper



Leaving it to Intuition

- Do your research!
 - Learn from other success stories and failures
 - Don't copy things wholesale without understanding why it worked
- Your worldview is finite in scope
 - Get outside perspectives on the UX / UI



In Summary

UX Designers

- Reinforce the purpose of the software
- A Deep Understanding
 - Of the Software
 - Of Casual and Hardcore Users
- Utilize conventions

UI Designers

- Use visuals to reinforce UX
- Give buttons “the 3 States”
- Consistency is King
- Create simple, unique, and meaningful icons
- Place visual elements where players will see them



And Remember;
Communication is key.
Speak AND Listen.





BLUISH-GREEN PRODUCTIONS

MAKE GAMES | PLAY GAMES

THANK YOU

@BluishGreenPro

BluishGreenProductions.com

