

Design Process

MMA 100

Steps in the design process

Here we will review the phases of the design process.

1. Define a problem (with client or creative lead)
 - a. The Creative Brief typically defines a business problem that exists and needs a solution (ie: we need an app, or: our customers don't know we sell_____)
2. Research and generate ideas to solve problem
 - a. Identify criteria and specify constraints
 - b. Explore possibilities
3. Brainstorm (with any team members or solo)
4. Make a model or prototype with sketches and mockups
5. Build - select an approach to create (with client or creative lead)
6. Revise your build (with client or creative lead)
7. Final Production
8. Presentation (to client or creative lead)

Creative brief

A design document that is developed by the client and designer to specify the goals of the project. It would answer questions such as:

- What is the goal of the project?
- How will it achieve that goal?
- Who is the audience?
- What means are being used to reach that audience?
- How and where will it be used?

Sometimes a client has done much of this in advance, and that is called an RFP (or Request for Proposal)

Research

Gathering information about the topic addressed by the design project. Also, looking at how others have handled this topic before visually. The designer must know in detail what similar solutions look like in the market.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an activity to come up with multiple ideas for a design. It may involve language (free associating words and phrases) or images and diagrams. Sometimes it helps to think of connections with the concept- either literal connections, or contradictory connections.

Remember that you are telling a story, or narrative, of some kind: what means can you use to tell it?

Sketches and mock-ups

This phase involves drawing simple, often thumbnail versions of your idea, then creating a rough version, perhaps in software.

Build out design

Creating the design in software at the correct resolution and size.

Work in non-destructive methods whenever possible at this stage. Use high quality images, vector when logical/available, and take advantage of the built in helpers in your software, such as smart objects in Adobe Photoshop. Or stay very organized and keep a folder called “originals”. Label your folders and files very consistently - make a convention you stick to.

Revise

All designs can be improved by revision. Sometimes it is as simple as moving a few pixels, sometimes a complete revision of color and placement of shapes and text. Revisions are often done in response to critique.

Final production

This will vary depending on the type of project.

It may involve working with a printer, working with a web development team, possibly even with an architect.

Avoid cliché

Some elements or concepts have been used so often that they stop conveying the message you intend. Try to identify the cliché's associated with an idea and avoid them.

If it was your very first idea, it was likely the very first idea of everyone else - so it is worth checking.

Critique and analysis: tips

Be positive and specific: identify what you like.

Consider the goals of the project: does it meet them?

Consider the audience: is this approach appropriate?

Is the message (visual hierarchy) clear?

Presenting work

At different phases of the design process, you will have different approaches.

In the early phase, sketches are appropriate. Printouts of work in progress and final projects.

Always consider which work you want to include in your portfolio and how you want to present your portfolio. Currently, most designers will at least have a website.