

Think like a designer: Learn more about different design frameworks

Most UX designers follow a specific framework or process when approaching their work, from the first idea all the way through to the final launch of a product. As a reminder, a **framework** creates the basic structure that focuses and supports the problem you're trying to solve, kind of like an outline for a project. Every designer and every team is different, so it's helpful to have a solid understanding of each framework before you start designing.

User-centered design process

Each phase of the user-centered design process focuses on users and their needs. It's an iterative process, which means that designers go back to certain phases, again and again, to refine their designs and create the best possible product for their intended users.

Here are the key steps in the user-centered design process:

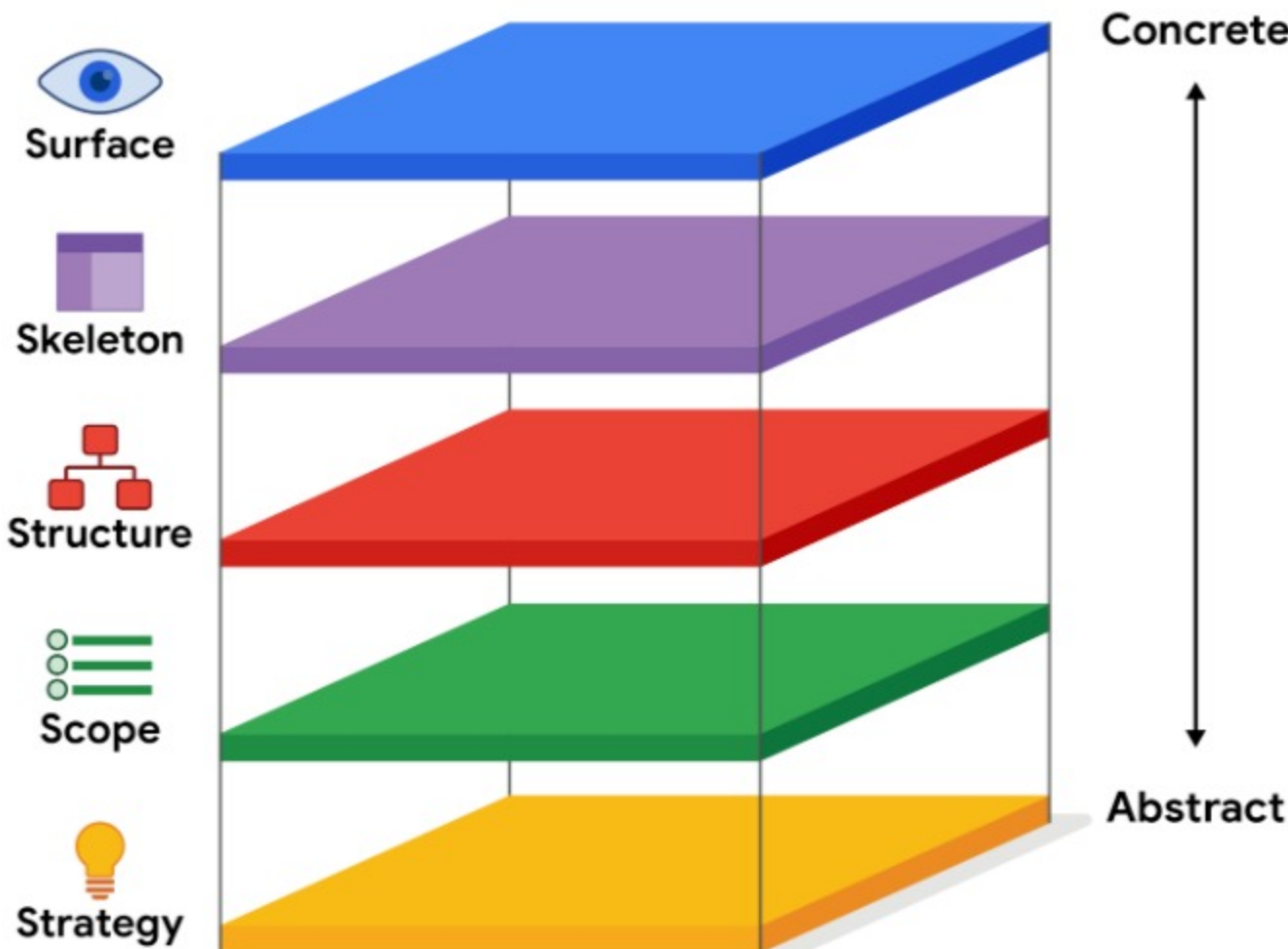
- **Understand how the user experiences the product or similar products.** You want to know how users will engage with your design, as well as the environment or context in which they'll experience the product. Understanding this requires a lot of research, like observing users in action and conducting interviews, which we'll explore more later.
- **Specify the user's needs.** Based on your research, figure out which user problems are the most important to solve.
- **Design solutions to those user problems.** Come up with lots of ideas for designs that can address the user problems you've identified. Then, start to actually design those ideas!
- **Evaluate the solutions you designed against the user's needs.** Ask yourself, "Does the design I created solve the user's problem?" To answer this question, you should test the product you designed with real people and collect feedback.



Notice how the arrows in the diagram indicate circular movement. This illustrates the iterative quality of the user-centered design process. Designers go back to earlier phases of the process to refine and make corrections to their designs. With the user-centered design process, you're always working to improve the user's experience and address the problems that users are facing!

The five elements of UX design

The five elements of UX design is a framework of steps that UX designers take to turn an idea into a working product. The five elements are, from bottom to top: strategy, scope, structure, skeleton, and surface. Think of these as a set of five layers, where each layer is dependent on the one below it.

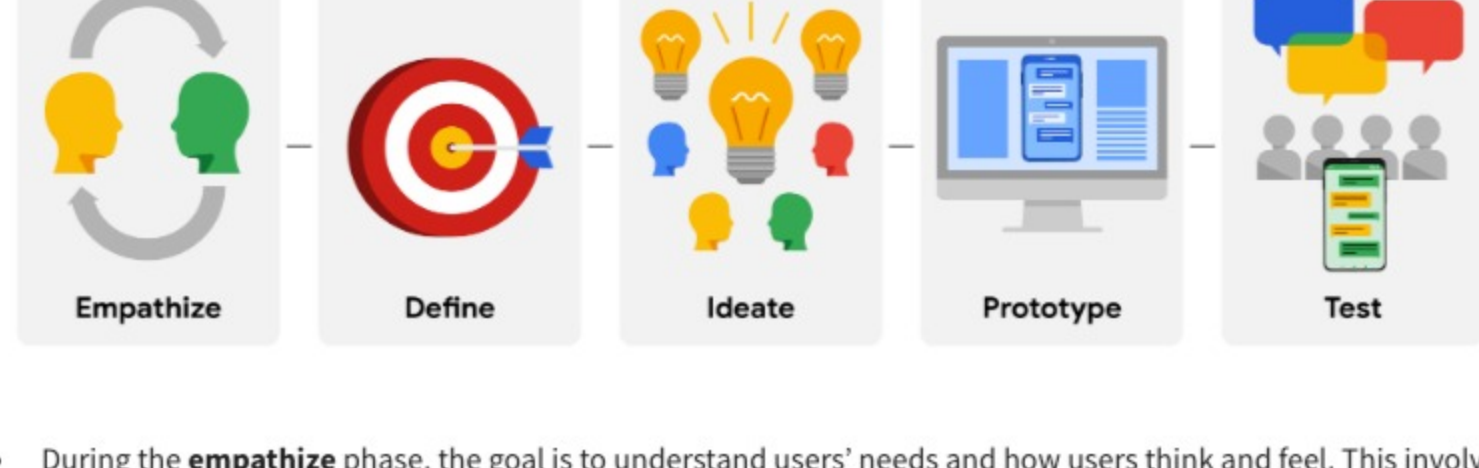


- **Strategy:** The bottom layer is strategy, where you lay a foundation of your design goals. These goals are based on user needs and the business objectives for the product.
- **Scope:** The next layer is scope, where you determine the type of product you're building. At this point, you will consider the kind of features and content you want to include in the product.
- **Structure:** The middle layer is structure. Here, you'll figure out how to organize your design and how you want users to interact with the product.
- **Skeleton:** The skeleton is the layout of the product. Just like the layout of our bones shapes our skin, the skeleton layer details how your design works – and like a skeleton, users won't directly see its inner-workings.
- **Surface:** The top layer, surface, represents how the product looks to the user. The surface represents the interface that users view and interact with. Think of the surface like the clothes or makeup you wear that are visible to the outside world.

Want to learn more? Check out this article about [the five elements of user experience](#), which was originally developed by Jesse James Garrett. Or for a deep dive into the five elements, [Garrett's book](#) is also an option to explore.

Design thinking process

Design thinking is a user-centered approach to problem-solving. It helps designers create solutions that address a real user problem and are functional and affordable. There are five phases in the design process: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test.



- During the **empathize** phase, the goal is to understand users' needs and how users think and feel. This involves a lot of user research, such as conducting surveys, interviews, and observation sessions, so you can get a clear picture of who your users are and the challenges they are facing.
- In the **define** phase, you'll create a clear problem statement, or a description of the user's need that your designs will address, based on your research findings. This will drive your team toward a clear goal for the design of the product.
- Once you land on a user problem and establish why it's an important one to solve, it's time for the **ideate** phase. The goal of ideation is to come up with as many design solutions as possible.
- Once you have an idea of how to solve the problem, you're ready to enter the **prototype** phase. A prototype is an early model of a product that demonstrates its functionality.
- During the **test** phase, users provide feedback about your designs, before the product is built by engineers and launched to the public. You can use this feedback to make changes and improvements to your designs, as many times as you need.

Depending on the feedback from your testing phase, you might need to go back to the beginning of the design process, come up with new ideas for solutions, or develop new prototypes. Eventually, the goal of the design thinking process, like any design framework, is to implement your design, which means building it and sharing it with the world. For more details about the five phases in the design process, check out the guide [UX Design Process: Everything You Need to Know](#) from Adobe XD Ideas.

Think like a designer: Lean UX and Double Diamond

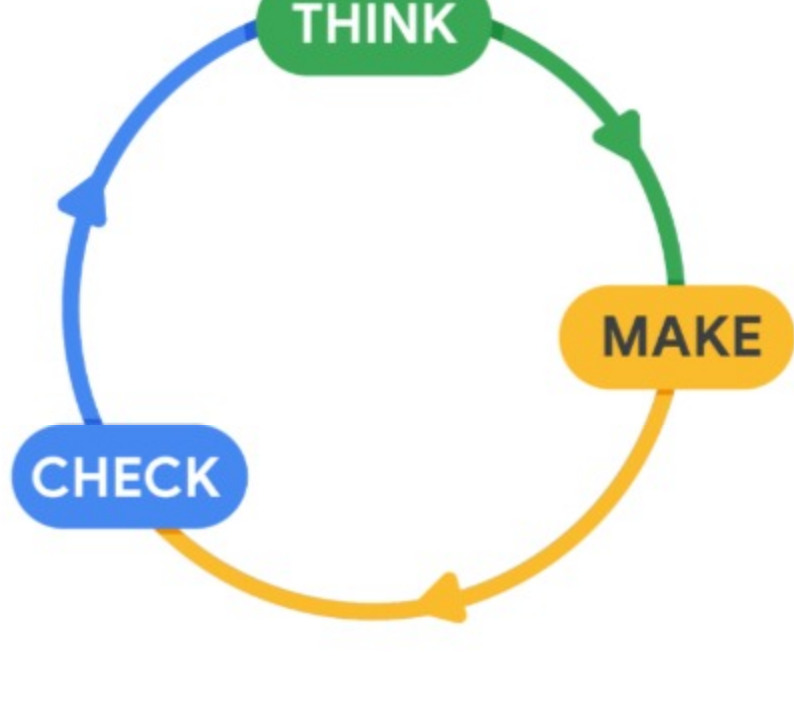
Now that you know about three popular frameworks used by UX designers, it's time to explore two more: **Lean UX** and **Double Diamond**. You might find that you're drawn to one particular framework, or your team might end up using a different approach depending on the project. Every designer and team is different, but it's important to have a strong foundation in lots of different approaches before you start to design. Here we go!

Lean UX

The Lean UX process focuses on reducing wasted time and resources, and producing a workable product as soon as possible. The process is iterative, meaning the team continues to update and make revisions to the product as they gather user research and stakeholder feedback.

The Lean UX process is broken into three steps:

- **Think.** Explore the problems that users are experiencing and consider how you could solve them with your design. This step is all about gathering research, so you can form a clear idea of who the product is for and how it will help them.
- **Make.** Start designing the product by creating sketches, wireframes, and prototypes. You'll also create a minimum viable product, or MVP for short, which is a simple prototype of your designs that you can test with the target audience. Be prepared to go back and update your prototype as you gather feedback!
- **Check.** Find out how users respond to your design and gather feedback from project stakeholders. Make adjustments to your designs accordingly, and repeat the three steps again, if necessary.



These steps are meant to be repeated as many times as needed, until your team reaches the desired final product. The Lean UX process encourages productivity and collaboration. Lean UX teams are typically cross-functional, which means you'll be working alongside team members like engineers and UX researchers.

There are six principles you should keep in mind when using the Lean UX process:

1. **Move forward.** Focus only on design elements and features that move the design process toward a particular goal. Don't get distracted by "nice-to-haves."
2. **Stay curious.** Lean UX is about user feedback from users and stakeholders to revise and improve your designs. Continuously seek feedback to understand why specific design choices work or don't work.
3. **Test ideas in the real world.** Lean UX encourages designers to test their ideas - using prototypes, for example - outside of the conference room and with potential users.
4. **Externalize your ideas.** Instead of internally debating and analyzing whether or not an idea is going to work, turn your ideas into something physical, viewable, and testable, while they're still fresh in your mind. This way, you'll get feedback on your designs in the early stages, when diverse perspectives and feedback are most helpful.
5. **Reframe deliverables as outcomes.** Focus on creating usable, enjoyable products that users actually want and need. Always keep in mind that you're designing for your users first-and-foremost, not for the project stakeholders.
6. **Embrace radical transparency.** Feel comfortable being honest with everyone on the team (and expect the same in return), since you will depend on each other's insights. This way, everyone can make informed decisions about how to move forward and avoid wasting time and energy.

The Lean UX process is all about staying open to constant feedback and revisions through collaboration.

Double Diamond

Double Diamond is a more traditional UX process, which breaks down UX design into two main phases (or "diamonds"): research and design. Each phase has two steps. When combined, these are the four steps:

1. **Discover the problem.** Gather information about potential issues users are facing.
2. **Define the problem.** Filter through the data, and focus on the main issue your product aims to solve.
3. **Develop solutions for the problem.** Begin designing your product as a work in progress. This is where wireframes and prototypes come into play.
4. **Deliver the product.** Review and test your product to prepare it for release.



Like a lot of the design frameworks we've discussed, Double Diamond is iterative, not linear. Each sprint leads the team to new insights that are used to improve the product's design. Then, the process starts over again with a new iteration.

Double Diamond also encourages teamwork across the organization, so the design team doesn't focus solely on design. To be successful, the entire team must know how to incorporate design principles, design methods, user engagement strategies, and leadership principles. Be prepared to take on multiple roles and responsibilities, as needed.

There are four principles that inform the Double Diamond process:

1. **Focus on the user.** As is always the case in UX design, the user is the top priority.
2. **Communicate.** Communicate visually, through imagery and design choices that supplement the text. You should also be sure that the communication of your design is equitable and accessible, which you'll learn more about in this part of the program.
3. **Collaborate.** One of the unique features of the Double Diamond process is that it encourages creative collaboration and co-creation with your fellow team members.
4. **Iterate.** Accept that designing is a work in progress and isn't going to be complete right away. The magic is in the revision. With every iteration, you give the user a new experience.

Both the Lean UX and Double Diamond frameworks are useful for entry-level UX designers to understand. Even if your team doesn't follow one of these processes, understanding how each one works and why it is used is invaluable.

Keep in mind that the Google UX Design Certificate was built with Design Thinking in mind. Each course follows the progression of these steps: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. Keep up the great work!

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