

U*CD

How we design for uniqueness

Because users' social and cultural identities - and their shifting contexts, needs, and abilities - shape how they experience your designs.

Unique Centered Design (U*CD) helps create solutions that consider users' identities, contexts, needs, and abilities.



Different perspectives help avoid "groupthink" and broaden the range of possible solutions, inspiring more creative, robust, and universal designs.

Identity & Contexts

Social identity, socioeconomic status, education, language, religion, technology, surroundings, and constraints like physical environment...

To ensure solutions are relevant and inclusive.

Situational Aspects

Immediate circumstances such as multitasking, time pressure, limited resources, changes in health or economic conditions...

To design solutions that are dynamic and adapt to shifting user needs.

Functional Capabilities

Permanent and temporary variations in physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional, communicative abilities, including those resulting from injuries and fatigue...

To foster inclusive, adaptable and user-friendly designs.

Designing across **dimensions** anticipates **challenges** and enables transformative solutions



On-the-go directions

I use a screen reader to get directions. If the interface isn't properly structured, I can't use it



In a busy space

There's so much noise around me that I can't hear my son's audio message...



Onboarding

I need to register online to vote, but I can't figure out what to do



Broken arm

I have to work on my report, but I can't use the keyboard



Traveling with a phone

I struggle when sites don't adapt and block me from what I need to do



Consider visual preferences

- Support assistive technologies (screen readers, zoom tools...)
- Allow flexible visual customization, layout scaling and font resizing
- High contrast, light/dark modes, and customizable settings
- Clear, distinguishable, and consistent icons and graphics
- Persistent visual focus indicator to highlight the active elements



Account for hearing differences

- Captions, subtitles, synchronized transcripts
- Visual cues complementing audio or text alerts
- Independent volume control (music, effects, voice)
- Customizable sound alerts
- Ability to turn off sounds
- Haptic or visual feedback for audio events



Make it clear and relatable

- Use clear language and structure with a logical hierarchy
- Familiar and consistent navigation; provide context and feedback
- Multiple ways of understanding, personalizing, and simplification
- Reinforce meaning through visuals and audio
- Reflect social and cultural diversities in your content and narratives



Provide multiple interaction options

- Multiple navigation paths
- Screen reader and voice control compatibility, assistive technologies, and human support
- Multiple output modalities: visual, audio, haptic...
- Adjustable display and interaction settings, including keyboard access for all functions
- Options for privacy, anonymity, or reduced exposure in social spaces



Ensure it works for all devices

- Responsive design and full compatibility across systems and browsers
- Optimization for older and low-performance devices
- Use fewer heavy graphics without compromising the experience
- Offline usage options
- Optimized images and media

Designs should reflect the wide diversity of people, identities, and cultures around the world

Learn more in the [U*CD Design Guide](#)