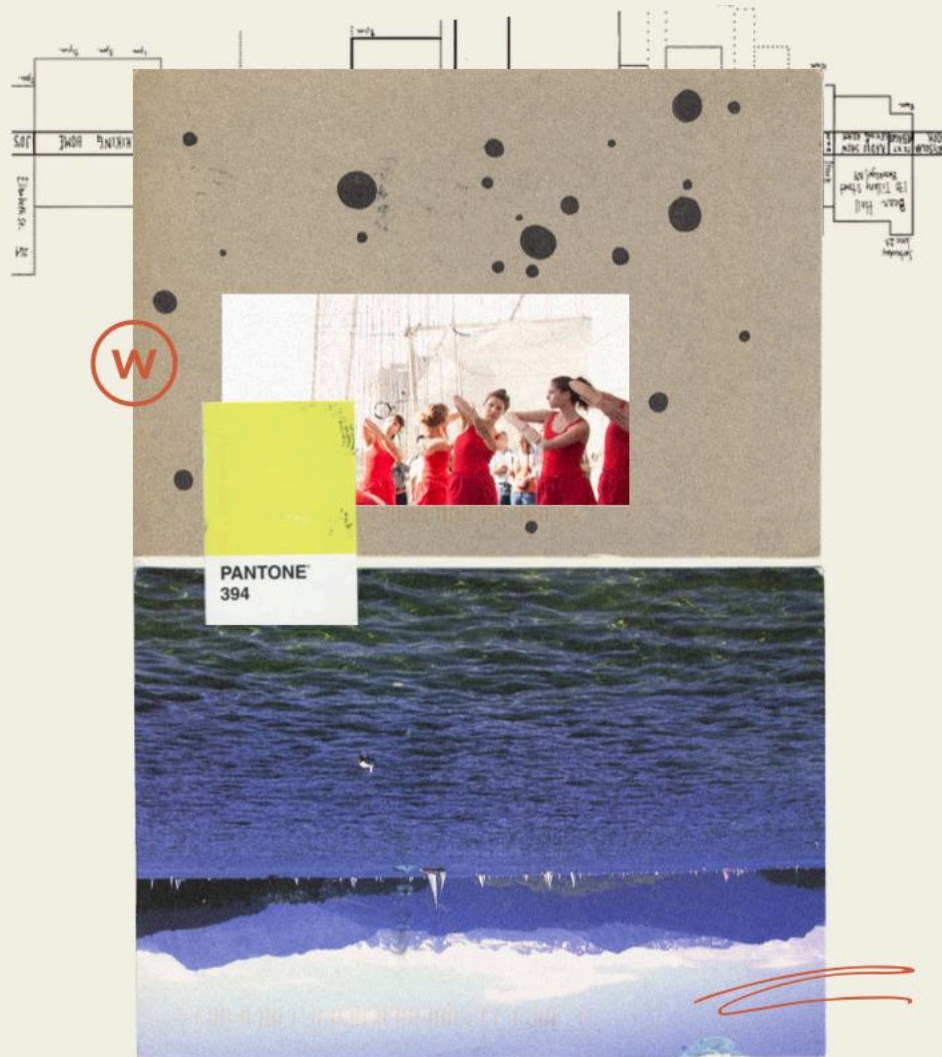


A QUICK START GUIDE

**DESIGNING EXPERIENCES
INSTEAD OF THINGS**



**ODYSSEY
WORKS**

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No matter what project you are working on — be it an immersive experience, an organizational structure, a piece of software, or Thanksgiving dinner — the principles of experience design apply equally.

The four steps in the guide below can be used at the beginning of any project to transform your design into an experience design. At the end of the guide, you will find worksheets that you can use to respond to prompts.



Step 1

Determine Your Experiential Aim.

This is your “Phase Zero”. Forget about what thing you’re making and ask what experience you want the person on the other end to have with that thing. Are you thinking of making a chair? The experiential aim may be comfort or elegance. Are you thinking of making a ritual for someone who has passed? The experiential aim may be mental clarity, mourning in community, or even levity in the face of the terrifying.

Take five minutes to write down your experiential aim in as few words as possible. You may use the worksheets provided or just a pencil and paper.



Step 2

Make an inventory of your assets and their experiential affordances.

It is essential when designing experiences to learn to view everything you work with through the lens of experience. An **experiential affordance** is the experience the thing you're designing makes possible.

The experiential affordance of a seat in a theater may be sitting, but depending on its proximity to other chairs, it also could be whispering to the person next to you.

The experiential affordance of an app may be helping you find an apartment to rent on vacation, but it may also include a sense of relief that you have a plan for your house hunt.

The experiential affordance of a song may be the joy of listening and also an invitation to reminisce about where you were the first time you heard the song.

Make a list of ten activities of things you might involve in your design. In as few words as possible, list the experiential affordances of those things, focusing on the ones most relevant to your design.



Step 3

Narrate the potential user or audience experience.

Write, in a stream of consciousness, an encounter with your design from the point of view of the user or audience. Use “I” rather than “they”. Describe what the person sees, touches, thinks.

Set a timer for five minutes. Write until the timer goes off.



Step 4

Create a User Journey Diagram or Timeline.

Read over what you’ve just written and create a step-by-step timeline of the typical user’s or audience’s passage through the experience. Consider the various “touch points” when the person interacts with something you’ve designed. You can draw this as a timeline, or as a storyboard, or in some other way that feels right.

Spend five minutes sketching this out. Then share with any collaborators who need to know what the experience you’re creating should be.

Experience Design Worksheet



What is your experiential aim?



Inventory

Affordances



Narrate the potential user or audience experience.



Create a User Journey Diagram or Timeline.

GO DEEPER

Interested in going deeper?

Our free newsletter offers tips, insights, and resources for experience designers. Sign up and we'll keep you posted about our publications, workshops, and the Experience Design Certificate Program.

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