

Introduction to Design Studio

Introduction to Design Studio

Key concepts, workflow, and best practices for beginners

1. What Is a Design Studio?

Aspect	Description
Definition	A collaborative, iterative environment where designers generate, test, and refine ideas through rapid sketching, prototyping, and critique.
Goal	Transform vague problems into concrete, user-centered solutions.
Typical Participants	Designers (graphic, UI/UX, industrial), researchers, product managers, engineers, stakeholders, and sometimes end-users.
Core Activities	Ideation, sketching, low-fidelity prototyping, feedback loops, and documentation.

2. Design Studio Process Flow

1. Brief & Context

- Understand the problem statement, constraints, and success metrics.
- Gather background research (user insights, market analysis, technical limits).

2. Ideation

- **Divergent thinking:** generate many ideas quickly (e.g., 5-10 sketches per concept).
- Techniques: *Crazy 8s*, *Brainwriting*, *SCAMPER*, *Mind Mapping*.

3. Concept Development

- Select promising ideas.
- Refine sketches, add details, explore variations (color, layout, interaction).

4. Prototyping

- **Low-fidelity:** paper mockups, wireframes, cardboard models.
- **Mid-fidelity:** digital wireframes, clickable prototypes (Figma, Sketch, Adobe XD).

Introduction to Design Studio

5. Critique & Feedback

- Structured review: *What works? What doesn't? Why?*.
- Capture notes, assign action items.

6. Iteration

- Apply feedback, refine prototypes, repeat steps 3-5 until design meets criteria.

7. Documentation

- Final sketches, annotated wireframes, design rationale, and next-step recommendations.

3. Essential Tools & Materials

Category	Physical	Digital
Sketching	Sketchbooks, markers, sticky notes, whiteboards	iPad + Procreate, Microsoft Surface
Wireframing	Grid paper, index cards	Figma, Sketch, Adobe XD, Balsamiq
Prototyping	Cardboard, foam board, LEGO (for physical products)	InVision, Marvel, Axure RP
Collaboration	Post-it walls, whiteboard markers	Miro, Mural, FigJam
Documentation	Notebooks, cameras (for photo of sketches)	Google Docs, Notion, Confluence

4. Best Practices for Effective Sessions

Practice	Why It Matters	Tips
Set Clear Objectives	Keeps the team focused on solving the right problem.	Write a one-sentence goal on the wall before starting.
Time-box Activities	Prevents endless discussion and encourages rapid thinking.	Use a timer (e.g., 8-min for Crazy 8s, 15-min for critique).

Introduction to Design Studio

Practice

Why It Matters

Tips

Encourage All Voices

Diverse perspectives lead to richer solutions.

Rotate facilitation, use round-robin sharing.

Stay Visual

Sketches convey ideas faster than words.

Keep drawings simple; use symbols and annotations.

Document

Saves ideas that might otherwise be lost.

Assign a “photographer” to capture every board.

Continuously

Separate Divergence & Convergence

Allows free generation before critical evaluation.

Conduct ideation first, critique later.

Use “Yes, and...”