

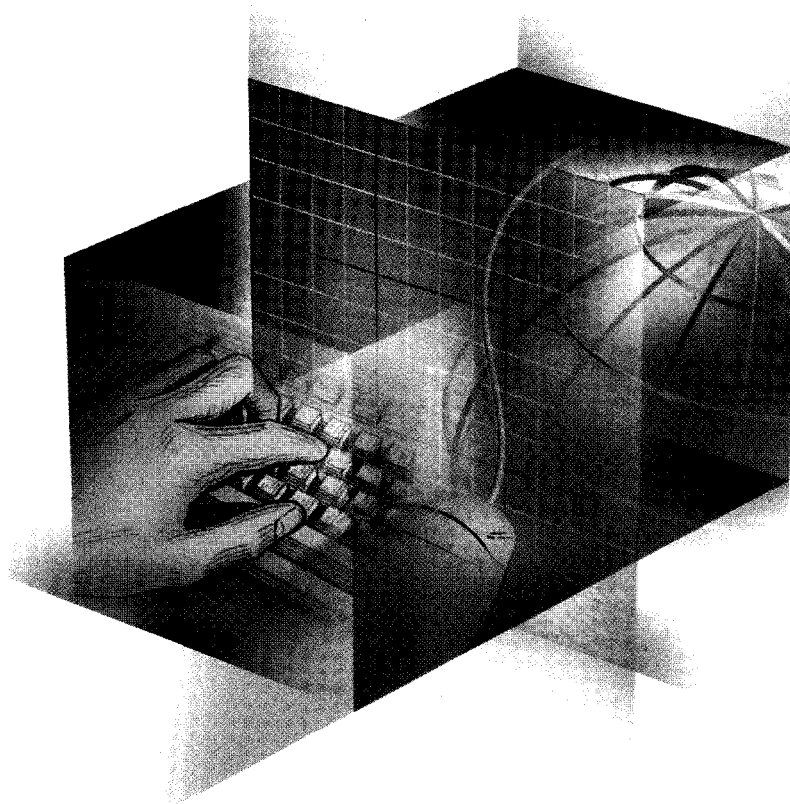
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Official Guidelines for User Interface Developers and Designers



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User Experience

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Part 4

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For information and guidelines related to the aesthetics of your interface, see Chapter 14, “Visual Design.” This chapter covers everything from individual element design to font use and window layout.

Simplicity

An interface should be simple (not simplistic), easy to learn, and easy to use. It must also provide access to all functionality of an application. Maximizing functionality and maintaining simplicity work against each other in the interface. An effective design balances these objectives.

One way to support simplicity is to reduce the presentation of information to the minimum required to communicate adequately. For example, avoid wordy descriptions for command names or messages. Irrelevant or verbose phrases clutter your design, making it difficult for users to extract essential information easily. Another way to design a simple but useful interface is to use natural mappings and semantics. The arrangement and presentation of elements affects their meaning and association.

Simplicity also correlates with familiarity; things that are familiar often seem simpler. Whenever possible, try to build connections that draw on your users’ existing knowledge and experiences.

You can also help users manage complexity by using progressive disclosure. *Progressive disclosure* involves careful organization of information so that it is shown only at the appropriate time. By hiding information presented to the user, you reduce the amount of information the user must process. For example, you can use menus to display lists of actions or choices, and you can use dialog boxes to display sets of options.

Progressive disclosure does not imply using unconventional techniques for revealing information, such as requiring a modifier key as the only way to access basic functions or forcing the user through a longer sequence of hierarchical interaction. This can make an interface more complex and cumbersome.

point (v.) To position the pointer over a particular object and location. (n.) A unit of measurement for type (1 point equals approximately 1/72 inch).

pointer A graphical image displayed on the screen that indicates the location of a pointing device (also referred to as a cursor).

pop-up menu *See* shortcut menu.

pop-up window A secondary window with no title bar that is displayed next to an object; it provides contextual information about that object.

portrait An orientation where the long dimension of a rectangular area (for example, screen or paper) is vertical.

press To press and release a keyboard key.
See also click.

pressed appearance The visual display for an object, such as a control, when it is being "pressed."

primary window The window in which the main interaction with an object takes place. *See also* secondary window and window.

procedural Help Information about the steps involved in carrying out a particular task. *Compare* context-sensitive Help, reference Help, and task-oriented Help.

progress indicator Any form of feedback that provides the user with information about the state of a process.

progress indicator control A standard Windows control that displays the percentage of completion of a particular process as a graphical bar.

progressive disclosure A technique for hiding the complexity of an interface by presenting the user with the primary or common options or choices at the topmost level, and then revealing more advanced or complex options through another means, such as explicit user action or navigation.

project A window or task management technique that consists of a container holding a set of objects, such that when the container is opened, the windows of the contained objects are restored to their former positions.

properties Attributes or characteristics of an object that define its state, appearance, or value.

property inspector A dynamic properties viewer that displays the properties of the current selection, usually of a particular type of object. *Compare* property sheet.

property page A grouping of properties on a tabbed page of a property sheet. *See also* property sheet.

property sheet A secondary window that displays the properties of an object when a user chooses its Properties command. *Compare* dialog box and property inspector. *See also* property page.

property sheet control A standard Windows control used to create property sheet interfaces.

push button *See* command button.

R

radio button *See* option button.

range selection *See* contiguous selection.

recognition The interpretation of strokes or gestures as characters or operations.

Recycle Bin The icon that represents the

reference Help Conceptual and context-sensitive Help oriented Help.

region selection Dragging out a marquee to d

relationship The relationship between its environment

rich-text box A control similar to a text box that supports individual properties.

room The ability to have different components of the experience on

S

scope The domain of selection is local to the selections. For example, windows are the scope of each other.

scrap An icon that represents selection from

scroll To move information in and out of view.

scroll arrow button A button that allows the user to move increments within the arrow indicator information s