



# Participating in collaborative and successful design reviews:

Design review expectations, norms and best practices

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- 1. What is a design review**
2. Why your participation is important
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# What is a UX design review

# Purpose of UX design reviews

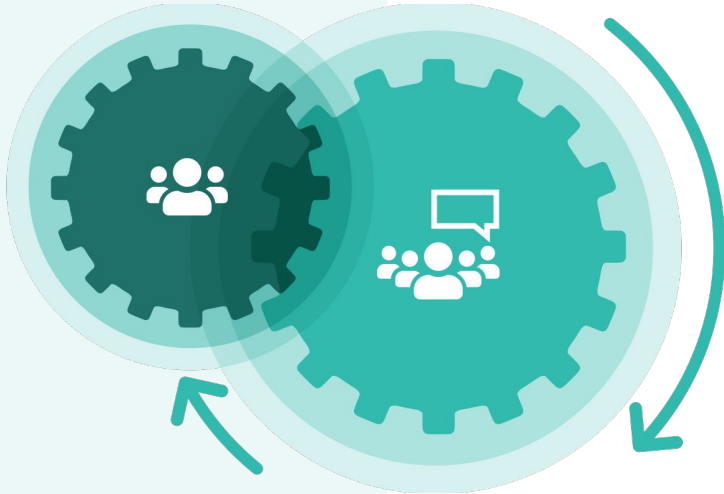


Design reviews are collaborative meetings or workshops where the goal is to gather meaningful feedback on designs from stakeholders, team members and decision makers with relevant knowledge.

Meaningful feedback is focused on aligning designs with project **requirements** and **goals**, especially those related to **users experience**, from which the design team can iterate.

**In other words, the goal of design reviews is to aid in producing the best possible user experience while supporting the designers and design timeline.**

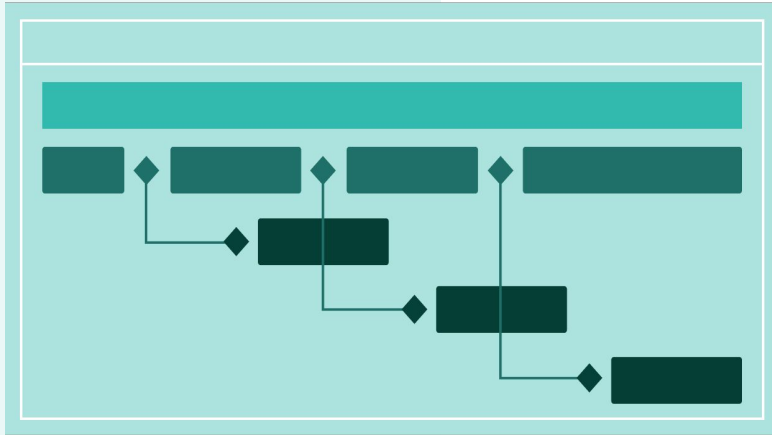
# Order of UX design reviews



Design reviews take place throughout the UX design process. When design work begins, so do the reviews.

- First, the **design team** (which includes design and technical representation) conducts an internal review ahead of the design stakeholder review with time to update designs based on internal feedback.
- Second, the **design stakeholder review** review takes place which include other stakeholders and decision-makers

# Cadence of UX design reviews

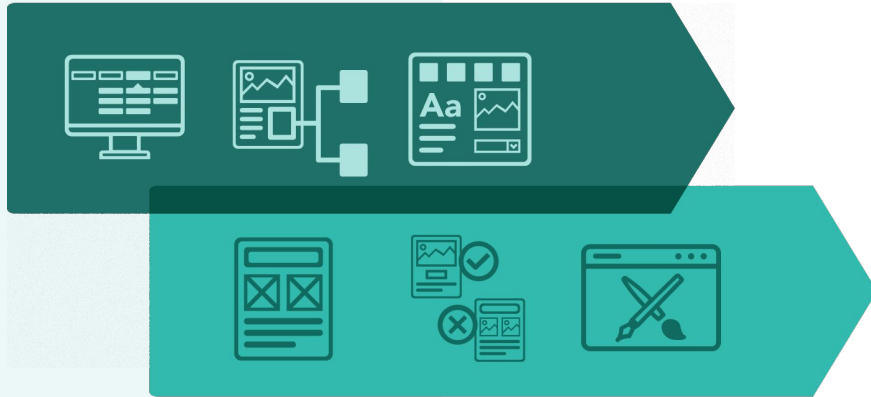


The cadence of design reviews and the stakeholder reviews can vary based on the size of the project, the size of the teams, and timelines

For this work, there will be [one] design team and [one] design stakeholder review [each week] and the reviews will take [1-2 hours] per session

- Each presented design deliverable will get two rounds of review, the first round is when the largest amount of feedback should be provided. The second is for fine tuning and/or approval
- Design stakeholder review participants have two business days to provide additional feedback via [Figma comments]

# Items reviewed in UX design reviews



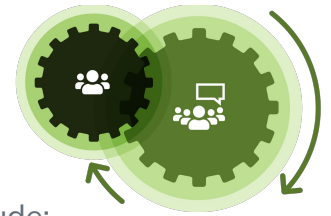
Depending on the current design phase and the work in progress, we will look at:

- Information architecture (IA) diagrams (e.g., site maps, etc.)
- Interaction models
- Mood boards or style tiles
- Navigation designs
- Task or workflow diagrams
- Wireframes
- Concept/direction setting mockups
- High fidelity mockups
- Prototypes

# Why your participation is needed for UX design reviews



# Make-up of a good UX design review



It is important that the right people take part in each of the reviews.

**Design team** reviews come first and include representation from the project's design and technical teams. These roles include:

- Designers
- Design lead (or role performing lead duties)
- Technical lead
- Front-end development representative

Once feedback and updates from the design review are incorporated, it's time to review with the design stakeholders.

UX expertise is not needed to take part in the design stakeholder review, but knowledge and expertise of the project or product space is.

The **design stakeholder** review roles include:

- Quorum
  - All participants from the design team review
  - Relevant Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
  - Property or project leadership (decision-makers)
- Additional key stakeholders (optional and as needed)
  - A design system representative
  - Others with relevant business or technical expertise
  - Design representatives from other related digital properties at the organization

Additional key stakeholders are not part of the decision-making quorum and should only be asked to attend where their relevant expertise is required.

# Your review responsibilities by role



## All roles:

- Ask questions, provide feedback and approvals of design deliverables in a timely manner.
- Demonstrate proper design review etiquette

## Product or project leadership and key stakeholders:

- Share subject matter expertise, advocate for the needs of the property and the team supporting it (e.g., known gaps, pain points, relevant insights, past user feedback, etc.)
- Consult with other stakeholders across the organization as needed
- Encourage SMEs to provide feedback
- Make final decisions

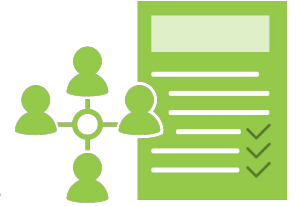
## Subject matter experts (SMEs):

- Share subject matter expertise and advocate for the needs of the property, the team supporting it (e.g., known gaps, pain points, relevant insights, past user feedback, etc.)
- Making decisions as part of the quorum

## Technical lead and developers:

- Provide insights about the technical complexity or implementation impacts on the designs as presented (e.g., our CMS does not have a module that can support that out-of-the-box, but a custom module could and would need to be part of release X)
- Add ideas or solutions based on expertise (e.g., we have the ability to drive this section of the design dynamically if we were to..., etc.)
- Making decisions as part of the quorum

# Review responsibilities by optional roles



## All optional roles:

- Demonstrate proper design review etiquette

## Optional DesignOps design system representative:

- Look for components or design solutions within the work presented that are good candidates to add to the design system
- Ensure that the design system library and guidance is being followed
- Encourage non-UXers in reviews to provide feedback

## Others with relevant business or technical expertise:

- Share subject matter expertise

## Design representatives from other related digital properties at the organization:

- Look for common patterns, challenges and solutions between the design being reviewed and the digital property you work on in order to discuss opportunities for alignment

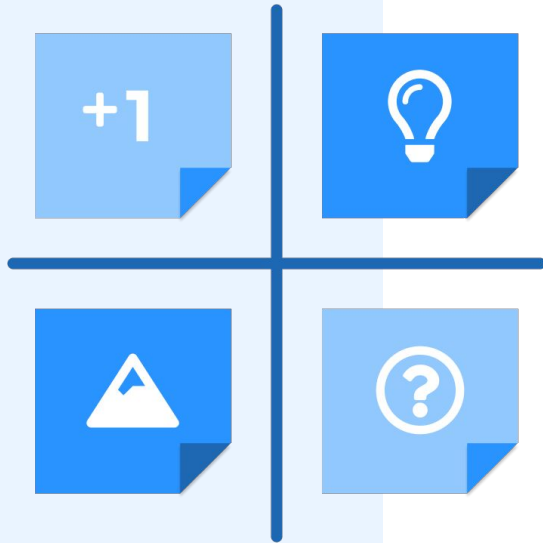
# Overview of review responsibilities by roles

RESPONSIBILITIES	Design lead	Designers	Product/project leadership and key stakeholders	Subject matter experts (SMEs)	Technical lead and developers	Design system representative*	Those with relevant business or technical expertise*	Design reps from related properties*
Design team review	●	●			●			
Design stakeholder review	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ask questions, provide feedback and approvals of design deliverables in a timely manner	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Demonstrate proper design review etiquette	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Share subject matter expertise, advocate for the needs of the property and the team supporting it	●	●	●	●	●			
Add ideas or solutions based on expertise	●	●	●	●	●		●	
Consult with other stakeholders across the organization as needed			●					
Encourage SMEs to provide feedback	●	●	●		●			
Make final decisions	●		●					
Making decisions as part of the quorum	●	●	●	●	●			

\* = optional role to include, as needed

# How to provide feedback

# UX design review feedback framework (matrix)

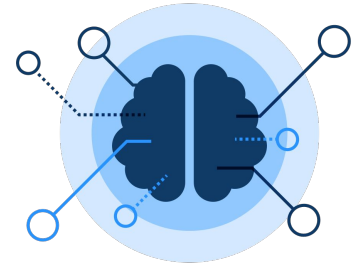


A feedback framework provides structure so that feedback is given in a consistent, meaningful way

Feedback should be given as one of the following:

- **An endorsement:** elements of the design that a reviewer sees as working well to satisfy a requirement or goal. Don't forget to celebrate what is working well
- **An idea:** anything that may improve the solution
- **A challenge:** problems or requirements that are not completely solved or met yet and require more thinking or a new approach
- **A question:** Aspects about the design that unclear, or need more context so that reviewers fully understand the problem or solution
- Challenges can also be framed as questions (e.g., "Why did we change the position of the submit button" rather than "the button doesn't work as well on the left") which can be more conducive to collaboration

# What to keep in mind



Important things to keep in mind as you provide feedback:

- The **requirements and goals** relevant to the design item
- That designs are part of a sustainable, extensible system, so **decisions need to account for systemic and technical implications** (e.g., decisions affect more than one screen or component, they will cascade to multiple instances)
- To focus on visual clarity and information organization from the users' perspective, at the same time understanding that "you are not your user". **User research and testing is still needed.**
- Designs and decisions need to be built on **best practices or user data.**
- Feedback should be timely, **once a design is approved it should not be reopened** for additional feedback later unless a new and substantial issue arises
- **Personal preference and subjective absolutes like "I love the color blue" should be avoided** as they do not typically align with user needs, requirements or project goals.

# Proper feedback etiquette



Like any professional meeting or interaction, proper etiquette is expected. This is especially true for design reviews as their purpose and value is based on strong and open collaboration.

In service of this, it is important that participants know and agree to these review expectations before any reviews take place:

- Everyone's feedback is valuable, not just feedback from those who are UX practitioners or have design knowledge
- Collaboration between a diversity of perspectives improves solutions while personal ego and insecurities hinder the process. Be mindful of this.
- Keep feedback to a couple of minutes, be concise and have reasoning and/or examples on hand so that everyone has time to participate
- Help move the conversation back on track if others go down a rabbit hole that does not serve the goals of the review
- Always give feedback in a manner and tone that is supportive and respectful



# Provide an environment conducive to success



Too often “feedback” or “critique” is misinterpreted as criticism. Criticism is negatively criticising someone or something, while critique is carefully expression an evaluation of both good and bad qualities of something, often in a more formal setting. Critique is a valuable collaboration tool while criticism does not provide business or professional value and can hurt collaboration.

## **Did you know that as stress levels rise, IQ drops, substantially?**

The part of our nervous system that tells us to swerve when a car almost hits us reacts similarly to other forms of stress. Receiving and providing feedback can be very stressful which can trigger an automatic nervous system response that drops IQ and essentially blocks any chance of a successful, collaborative review.

Remember that designers work hard on creating strong designs that meet requirements. And reviewers may be nervous to provide feedback when participating in the process is new to them. That is why it is important to follow the guidance laid out in this presentation.

To learn more about safe work cultures, check out [A Culture of Safety](#) by Alla Weinberg.



**thank you and  
happy reviewing**