

PREREQUISITES

- Paper, pen
- Scissors, glue, post-its

TIME

30-90 min

WHAT

Paper Prototyping is a method to create **low fidelity prototypes** based on sketches made on **paper** or a whiteboard. It should represent the screens and flow of the application in a fast, easy and fun way to get a **first impression** of your **concept**.

WHY

Many programmers have been in the situation that the designer is telling them to change the click-flow again - this is not only tiring for the programmer but also very inefficient. Low fidelity prototypes, like Paper Prototyping, could have helped beforehand. This method is very **inexpensive** in time and effort - on paper you can explore a lot of different versions without spending too much time, and if necessary also discard any idea that in the end wouldn't fit. Compared to digital prototypes paper gives you higher **flexibility** in a faster and cheaper way. You can make changes and annotations on the fly - even while testing - because there are **no technical barriers** that would distract you from the actual task. You can sketch anything on your page and you are only limited by the borders of the paper and your creativity. Prototyping on

paper also gives the chance to non-designers to participate in the process and thus facilitate **communication of ideas** and taking decisions in the team.

Another important point is the quality of the feedback that can be gathered with paper prototypes. As it is very obvious that in paper prototypes you are not asking the user whether the final product should use a different font or color scheme - feedback will concentrate on the **general usability**. And not to forget: Paper prototyping can be a lot of fun and strengthen the **team spirit**.

Of course paper prototyping is not suitable for all kinds of products, and may be not ideal for visually complex or highly interactive designs. Some say that it does not look professional enough to show it to clients or end users - this is a matter of taste and should be weighed up against the benefits of this method, especially because people tend to give more **honest feedback** on less polished prototypes.

HOW TO

A very basic Paper Prototype consists of sketches of each screen. While the name suggests to do this on paper, it is also possible to use the whiteboard with some limitations. There also exist prototyping kits and templates, which you can use to create basic UI elements quickly. Use Paper Prototypes in early testing or in brainstorming meetings and sessions.

CONTEXT Before starting quickly think where and how the app should be used. You could be designing an app for somebody running and using a smartwatch, driving and following the smartphone or sitting at desktop computer.

GET YOUR TOOLS Gather all required utensils like paper and pens before starting. Don't forget scissors, glue, post-its and any other tools that can give you more flexibility.

PREPARE THE INTERFACE Depending on the type of device you are designing for, cut or fold the paper to the right size. On bigger devices the paper should be exactly the size of the screen - on smaller devices the size can be even three to four times of the original, but keep the ratio.

FOCUS ON USABILITY Don't be tempted to prioritize graphical issues in this stage of development, rather try to find out how to make the product more usable.

START *"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."* - Walt Disney
To start it is enough to sketch roughly the user interface and cut out the parts. Depending on your use-case you can start mobile-first, as it allows you to concentrate on the important things. Be sure to have one sketch per screen.

UI ELEMENTS Help yourself to recreate common elements quickly, e.g. by using stencils or copying already sketched elements and cutting them out.

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS Use Post-it stickers to simulate elements like pop-ups, dialogs and messages.

TEST One person is playing the “computer” while the tester is “clicking” around on the prototype. Be sure not to give any usability hints or explanations while testing. Take notes by directly writing on the prototype or by using post-it notes.

ITERATE After testing, incorporate any learnings into the prototype, either by adding them on the existing prototype or recreating the necessary parts. Make sure to iterate multiple times - you can also explore multiple versions if you have different ideas.

DIGITALIZE At the end of your iterations it makes sense to take pictures of your paper prototype and use a prototyping tool to add digital interactions and create a Digital Prototype.

A side note on sketches vs. Paper Prototypes:

Sketches are only showing one screen in a static state, prototypes are meant to show an interactive flow that should resemble the interaction of the final product.

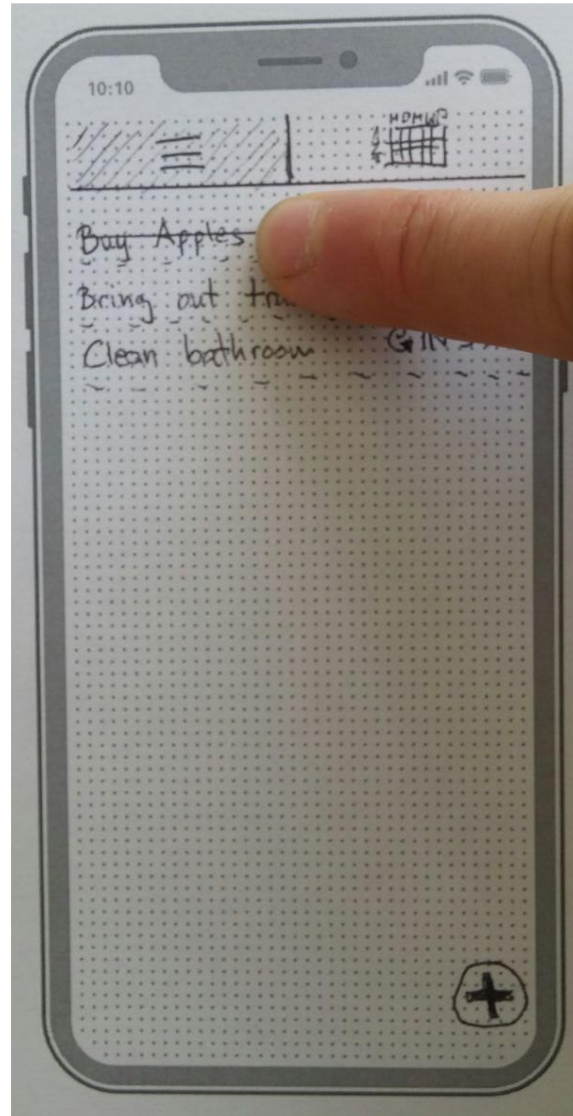
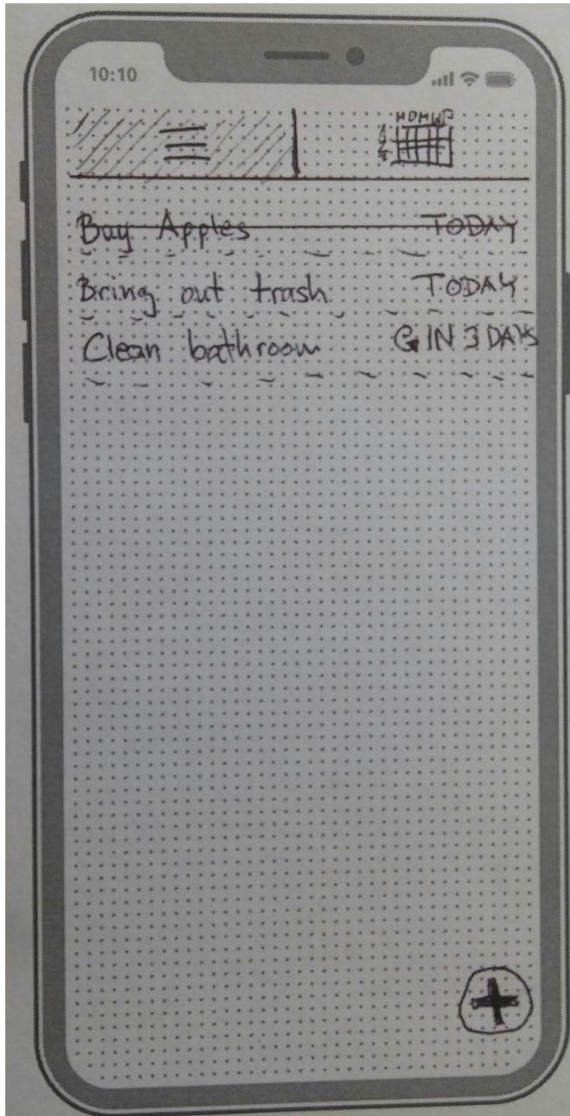
EXAMPLE

This method is mostly used for the early stages of a product or feature. Use it to test your ideas, no matter how small or big. You can also use it to test out something quickly before actually implementing it if unsure about the usability.

The next pages contain pictures of a prototype for a todo application.

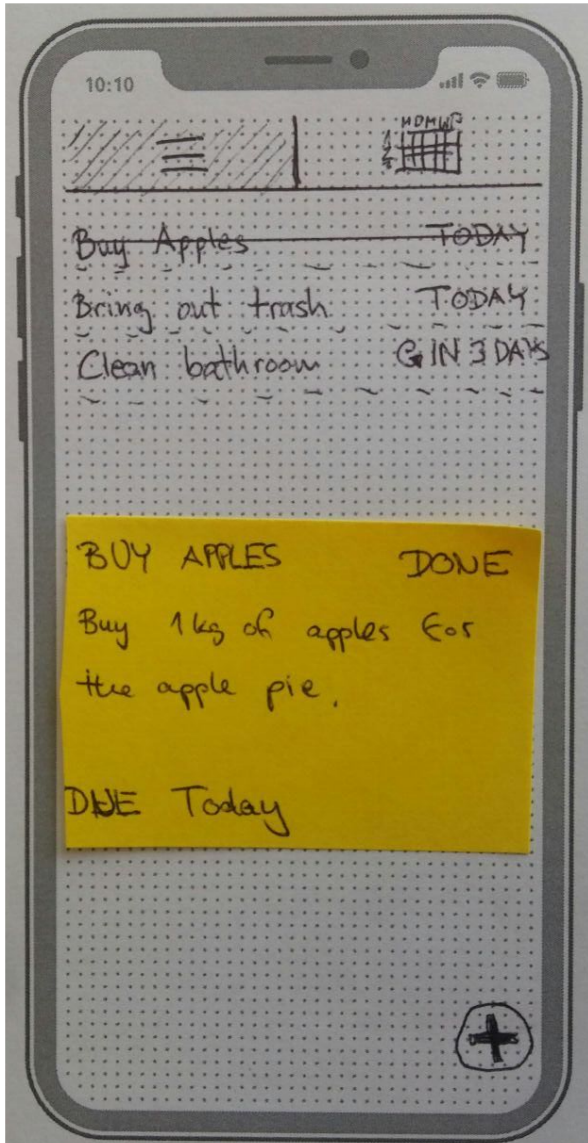
PAPER PROTOTYPE

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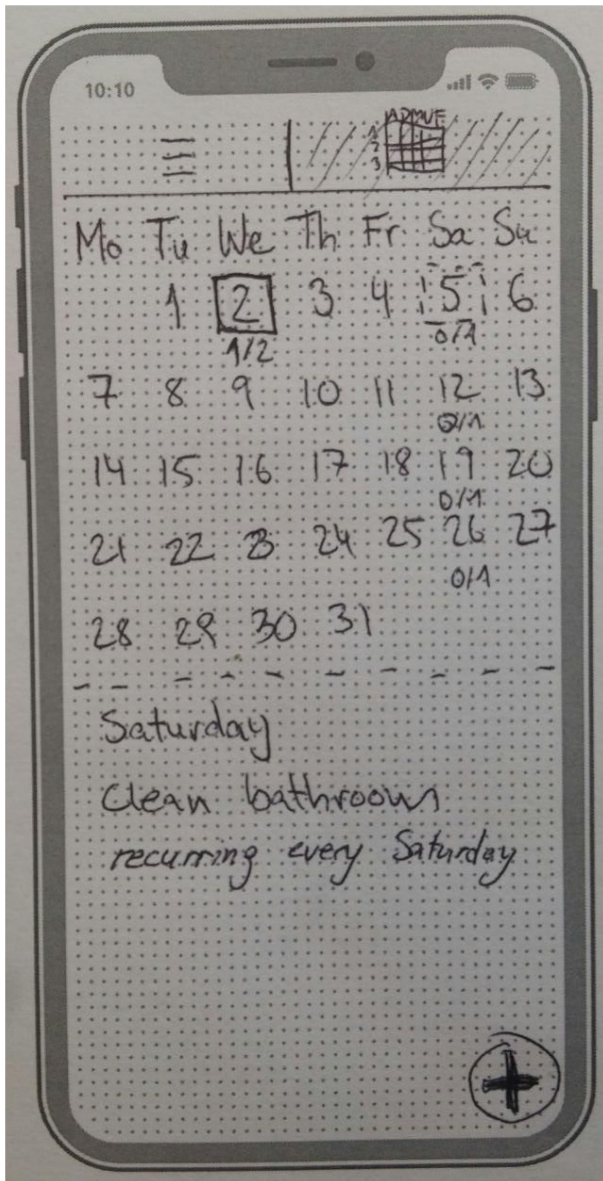
PAPER PROTOTYPE

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