

Cheatsheet: Psychology of Design

List of Cognitive Biases & Principles That Affect Your UX



Name	One-Liner	Category
1. Hick's Law	More options leads to harder decisions	Information
2. Confirmation Bias	People look for evidence that confirms what they think	Information
3. Priming	Previous stimuli influence users' decision	Information
4. Cognitive Load	Total amount of mental effort that is required to complete a task	Information
5. Anchoring Bias	Users rely heavily on the first piece of information they see	Information
6. Nudge	Subtle hints can affect users' decisions	Information
7. Progressive Disclosure	Users are less overwhelmed if they're exposed to complex features later	Information
8. Fitt's Law	It's easier to aim the bigger the target is.	Information
9. Attentional bias	Users' thoughts filter what they pay attention to	Information
10. Empathy Gap	People underestimate how much emotions influence user behaviors	Information
11. Visual Anchors	Elements used to guide users' eyes	Information
12. Von Restorff Effect	People remember more items that stand out	Information
13. Visual Hierarchy	The order in which people perceive what they see	Information
14. Selective Attention	People filter out things from their environment when in focus	Information
15. Survivorship Bias	People neglect things that don't make it past a selection process	Information
16. Sensory Adaptation	Users tune out the stuff they get repeatedly exposed to	Information
17. Juxtaposition	Elements that are close and similar are perceived as a single unit	Information
18. Signifiers	Elements that communicate what it will do	Information
19. Contrast	Users' attention is drawn to higher visual weights	Information
20. External Trigger	When the information on what to do next is within the prompt itself	Information
21. Decoy Effect	Create a new option that's easy to discard	Information
22. Centre-Stage Effect	People tend to choose the middle option in a set of items	Information
23. Framing	The way information is presented affects how users make decisions	Information

24.	 Law of Proximity	Elements close to each other are usually considered related	Information
25.	 Tesler's Law	If you simplify too much, you'll transfer some complexity to the users	Information
26.	 Spark Effect	Users are more likely to take action when the effort is small	Information
27.	 Feedback Loop	When users take action, feedback communicates what happened	Information
28.	 Expectations Bias	People tend to be influenced by their own expectations	Information
29.	 Aesthetic-Usability Effect	People perceive designs with great aesthetics as easier to use	Information
30.	 Social Proof	Users adapt their behaviors based on what others do	Meaning
31.	 Scarcity	People value things more when they're in limited supply	Meaning
32.	 Curiosity Gap	Users have a desire to seek out missing information	Meaning
33.	 Mental Model	Users have a preconceived opinion of how things work	Meaning
34.	 Familiarity Bias	People prefer familiar experiences	Meaning
35.	 Halo Effect	People judge things (or people) based on their feelings towards one trait	Meaning
36.	 Miller's Law	Users can only keep ± 7 items in their working memory	Meaning
37.	 Unit Bias	One unit of something feels like the optimal amount	Meaning
38.	 Flow State	Being fully immersed and focused on a task	Meaning
39.	 Skeuomorphism	Users adapt more easily to things that look like real-world objects	Meaning
40.	 Reciprocity	People feel the need to reciprocate when they receive something	Meaning
41.	 Authority Bias	Users attribute more importance to the opinion of an authority figure	Meaning
42.	 Pseudo-Set Framing	Tasks that are part of a group are more tempting to complete	Meaning
43.	 Variable Reward	People enjoy rewards, especially unexpected ones	Meaning
44.	 Cheerleader Effect	Individual items seem more attractive when presented in a group	Meaning
45.	 Curse of Knowledge	Not realizing that people don't have the same level of knowledge	Meaning
46.	 Aha! moment	When new users first realize the value of your product	Meaning
47.	 Self-Initiated Triggers	Users are more likely to interact with prompts they setup for themselves	Meaning
48.	 Survey Bias	Users tend to skew survey answers towards what's socially acceptable	Meaning
49.	 Cognitive Dissonance	It's painful to hold to opposing ideas in our mind	Meaning
50.	 Goal Gradient Effect	Motivation increases as users get closer to their goal	Meaning
51.	 Feedforward	When users know what to expect before they take action	Meaning
52.	 Occam's Razor	Simple solutions are often better than the more complex ones	Meaning

53.	 Noble Edge Effect	Users tend to prefer socially responsible companies	Meaning
54.	 Hindsight Bias	People overestimate their ability to predict outcomes after the fact	Meaning
55.	 Law of Similarity	Users perceive a relationship between elements that look similar	Meaning
56.	 Law of Prägnanz	Users interpret ambiguous images in a simpler and more complete form	Meaning
57.	 Spotlight Effect	People tend to believe they are being noticed more than they really are	Meaning
58.	 Fresh Start Effect	Users are more likely to take action if there's a feeling of new beginnings	Meaning
59.	 Labor Illusion	People value things more when they see the work behind them	Time
60.	 Default Bias	Users tend not to change an established behavior	Time
61.	 Investment Loops	When users invest themselves, they're more likely to come back	Time
62.	 Loss Aversion	People prefer to avoid losses more than earning equivalent gains	Time
63.	 Commitment & Consistency	Users tend to be consistent with their previous actions	Time
64.	 Sunk Cost Effect	Users are reluctant to pull out of something they're invested in.	Time
65.	 Decision Fatigue	Making a lot of decisions lowers users' ability to make rational ones	Time
66.	 Reactance	Users are less likely to adopt a behavior when they feel threatened	Time
67.	 Observer-Expectancy Effect	When researchers' biases influence the participants of an experiment	Time
68.	 Weber's Law	Users adapt better to small incremental changes	Time
69.	 Law of the Instrument	If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail	Time
70.	 Temptation Coupling	Hard tasks are less scary when coupled with something users desire	Time
71.	 Parkinson's Law	The time required to complete a task will take as much time as allowed	Time
72.	 Dunning-Kruger Effect	People tend to overestimate their skills when they don't know much	Time
73.	 Affect Heuristic	People's current emotions cloud and influence their judgment	Time
74.	 Hyperbolic Discounting	People tend to prioritize immediate benefits over bigger future gains	Time
75.	 Cashless Effect	People spend more when they can't actually see the money	Time
76.	 Self-serving bias	People take credits for positive events and blame others if negative	Time
77.	 Pareto Principle	Roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes	Time
78.	 Discoverability	The ease with which users can discover your features	Time
79.	 Backfire Effect	When people's convictions are challenged, their beliefs get stronger	Time
80.	 False Consensus Effect	People overestimate how much other people agree with them	Time
81.	 Barnum-Forer Effect	Some people believe in astrology and fortune telling.	Time

82.	 IKEA Effect	When user partially create something, they value it way more	Time
83.	 Planning Fallacy	People tend to underestimate how much time a task will take	Time
84.	 Provide Exit Points	Invite users to leave your app at the right moment	Memory
85.	 Peak-End Rule	People judge an experience by its peak and how it ends.	Memory
86.	 Sensory Appeal	Users engage more with things appealing to multiple senses	Memory
87.	 Zeigarnik Effect	People remember incomplete tasks better than completed ones	Memory
88.	 Endowment Effect	Users value something more if they feel it's theirs	Memory
89.	 Chunking	People remember grouped information better	Memory
90.	 Picture Superiority Effect	People remember pictures better than words	Memory
91.	 Method of Loci	People remember things more when they're associated with a location	Memory
92.	 Shaping	Incrementally reinforcing actions to get closer to a target behavior	Memory
93.	 Delighters	People remember more unexpected and playful pleasures	Memory
94.	 Internal Trigger	When users are prompted to take action based on a memory	Memory
95.	 Recognition Over Recall	It's easier to recognize things than recall them from memory	Memory
96.	 Storytelling Effect	People remember stories better than facts alone	Memory
97.	 Negativity Bias	Users recall negative events more than positive ones	Memory
98.	 Availability Heuristic	Users favor recent and available information over past information	Memory
99.	 Spacing Effect	People learn more effectively when study sessions are spaced out	Memory
100.	 Serial Position Effect	It's easier for users to recall the first and last items of a list	Memory



Don't miss the new ones!

We update the list every few weeks here:
<https://growth.design/psychology/>

Don't hesitate to share the link with your friends & colleagues who might enjoy it.

—Dan Benoni & Louis-Xavier Lavallée