

Midterm Tips from your 147 CAs

These tips are not comprehensive for what will be tested on the midterm



The midterm has 2 parts:

- **In-class (90 minutes, hand written):** short answer questions about the design process, including needfinding, POVs, HMWs, visual design, heuristic eval, and factual questions based on readings, videos, lectures, and homework assignments. Please bring writing implements (e.g., pen, pencil, etc.)
- **Take-home (2 hours, available Wed 3:30pm - Thurs 3:30pm via Gradescope):** Design problem questions, including experience prototypes, tasks + task flows, and paper sketching (you will have to upload images). You may use paper and pencil or a tablet to draw your sketches.

As your studio CA has probably said, **we believe that you are well prepared for the midterm** if you've been engaging with the weekly projects, listening to feedback from the teaching team, doing the readings, and attending lecture. We want to see how you navigate the design process we've learned, which you've been doing *all quarter*– the biggest difference during the midterm is the time constraint! **You got this!** 😊

Below are tips on general best practices on writing answers and carrying out design process steps, as we've sent on slack and said in studio.

Please check the course calendar for Professor Landay's midterm review slides on Monday, 11/11.

Last year's midterm review slides are [here](#), but please note that not everything overlaps with this year's course content.

? What makes a good answer? (based on Prof. Landay's review)

We want to understand your intention and rationale for every answer. To help us do that, please write answers that are:

- ↳ **Easy to understand**– legible, annotated, clear explanations, full sentences, clear structure
- ↳ **Grounded in prior work**, like feedback from your CA
- ↳ **Novel**– push for answers that aren't too straightforward and are found through insightful + reasonable inference
- ↳ **Backed by evidence**, from principles we've learned about design, human abilities, and heuristics
- ↳ **User-centered**– at the end of the day, the user is most important. Keep their experiences in mind! Consider diverse identities and realistic use cases.
- ↳ **Covers everything we ask for** :) pretty please!

👁️ POV Tips

OVERALL:

- ↳ **Keep every step focused on the person.** Use their name if it helps! Nothing should be generalized to insights about people in general, or even groups/identities of the person. The farther you stray away from the person, the less surprising your POV may become.
- ↳ **Keep it concise.** To keep your POV focused and powerful, try to highlight only one specific aspect of the user, their lived experiences, and challenges.

Remember these [sanity checks](#) we linked in **Assignment 2!**

Here are some tips for each sentence of the POV to make yours stronger:

- ↳ **We met...**
 - **Only include information about the person relevant to what you share** in the rest of the POV– there is such a thing as too much context!
- ↳ **We were surprised...**
 - **Hone in on what really *surprised* you from this person.** What did you learn from them that you couldn't have inferred/guessed before talking to them? There is power in **specificity**, whether around their **emotions, experiences, tensions, or contradictions!**
- ↳ **We wonder...**
 - **This should be an inference that provides a “why” for the surprise.** Again, focus on the person, not something that can be generalized about others/groups!
- ↳ **It would be game-changing to:**
 - **This should be broad enough to ideate/brainstorm!** At this stage you aren't thinking of the exact solution. Your game-changer should be a **feeling** or **experience** you want to create without saying how you'll create it!
 - **Keep this focused (again) on what you heard.** Don't brainstorm around “what if” scenarios that change the future or the past. Focus on what could concretely benefit their experience *now*.

Strong POV example:

- ↳ **We met** Elvira who is a casual, but passionate, cook who uses her food to connect with others.
- ↳ **We were surprised** to realize that she was open to teaching people how to cook despite not having enough time to cook for herself.
- ↳ **We wonder** if this means that the time she spends making connections through cooking is more valuable to her than the time she spends cooking for herself.
- ↳ **It would be game changing to** help her make connections with others through food while making time to cook for herself

Lo-Fi Sketching Tips [[solution from Studio 6 \(22wi\)](#)]

Overall, we are looking for key design elements that make your task flows **understandable** and **usable**. We expect you to make assumptions about user needs and respond to them through crafting your design.

You can do wonderfully on the lo-fi sketches no matter your drawing abilities so long as you use key design principles (heuristics, alignment, Gestalt grouping, text hierarchy, etc). Remember to think about the specific use case of the task flow—how would someone realistically interact with it?

Some more tips:

- ↳ **Before sketching, make an outline of subtasks, UI elements, or screens you want to include**, since going back and adding ideas can take time. An outline for the midterm activity during studio could have looked like:
 - ↳ **Task 1:** View and access photos
 - ↳ Access photos through identification (email, group number, sorting photos by time)
 - ↳ View a single photo with more details (time, location, cost)
 - very realistic detail: watermark photos
 - ↳ Save/favorite multiple photos
 - ↳ Filter photos
 - ↳ **Task 2:** Purchase and download photos
 - ↳ Add photos to cart (quantity, delivery method)
 - ↳ Checkout (confirm details)
 - ↳ Payment (input card info, set up printing/pickup time)
- ↳ **Communication is key. Annotate properly!** We see a lot of task flows without proper annotation, and for grading that means we don't have context for your rationale overall or specifically in-between screens. Again, try to ground your design decisions related to specific UI in assumptions about your user or principles from class, and explain design elements wherever that rationale might not be immediately clear

- ↳ **Put yourselves into the shoes of the user!** What features/UI elements would make your experience better?

Heuristic Eval Tips

Based on past grading of A7 and A9, here are some best practices to keep in mind:

- ↳ **Choose the heuristic intentionally.** Once you find a violation, assign it to a heuristic by backing it up with a principle taught in class. Make sure you can justify the link between the violation and heuristic!
- ↳ **Be clear about where the error is found (description from A7/A9) and what it is impacting for the user experience (rationale from A7/A9).** Is it from a particular screen? A UI component? How does the violation negatively impact the user experience and what concrete UI change would address it?

Experience Prototype Tips

- ↳ **Test an assumption that you can't make conclusions about without talking to people.** For example, the assumption that "People like games" is something we know is pretty true for most. On the other hand, "People would be comfortable playing games around mental health" is something we can't be sure about.
- ↳ Design a test that allows you to **observe behaviors and decisions.** Comparing two experiences or reactions is especially useful to get relative feedback!

Task Tips

- ↳ **Tasks should be what the user wants to achieve, not how they will achieve them.** This is the difference between a strong high-level task like "Discovering new music and artists" and a too narrowly-scoped task like "Listening to suggested playlists" on Spotify.
- ↳ When making tasks, **self-check by asking whether the ones you've listed say "how"** a higher level goal would be accomplished– if the answer is yes, then it might be a subtask!