Visual Design Style Exploration

Explore multiple visual directions before settling on a single style. Style exploration generates various aesthetic approaches. This helps determine which best serves the brand, users, and product goals. Visual decisions made in isolation can miss better options. Exploring a range of styles reveals possibilities.

2 hours
Design
Intermediate

H HOW TO RUN

1 Define Style Parameters — 20 min

(20 minutes)

Identify what you're exploring: color palettes, typography, layout density, imagery style, interaction patterns. Be specific. "Overall look" is too broad. Pick 2-3 parameters to explore deeply.

2 Create Style Tiles — 50 min

(50 minutes)

Design 3-5 distinct visual directions. These are not full mockups, but style tiles showing colors, type, basic components, and imagery. Make them genuinely different, not slight variations. For example: one formal, one playful, one minimal, one bold. Each tile should feel distinct.

3 Apply to Key Screen — 30 min

(30 minutes)

Take one representative screen and render it in each style. Use the same content, but with different visual treatments. This makes the style concrete. It shows how the style affects usability and content hierarchy.

4 Review and Assess — 20 min

(20 minutes)

Evaluate each style: Does it communicate intended brand values? Does it serve user needs? Is it feasible to implement? Is it distinctive? Get specific feedback. Avoid "I like this." Instead, aim for "this feels trustworthy" or "this makes content hard to scan."

KEY TIP

Create meaningfully different directions first. Teams often create three similar options, call it exploration, then pick one.

O OBJECTIVES

- Generate diverse visual approaches to a product interface
- Test how different styles communicate brand and values
- Make informed decisions about visual direction
- Build team alignment on aesthetic choices

M MATERIALS

- ☐ Design tools (Figma, Sketch, etc.)
- ☐ Brand guidelines (if they exist)
- ☐ Example screens to apply styles to
- ☐ Mood boards or inspiration

P PARTICIPANTS

2 to 5 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- That's a false choice. Explore the actual range, from conservative to bold, and minimal to maximal.
- Visual style isn't just decoration. It communicates values. A minimal style suggests efficiency.
- A playful style suggests approachability. A dense style suggests information richness.
- Make these communications explicit when evaluating options.
- Some styles are expensive to maintain, like custom illustrations, complex animations, and intricate patterns.
- Consider sustainable implementation. A style you can't maintain consistently is a style you shouldn't choose.
- If possible, test styles with users. Do they perceive the intended values?
- Does the style help or hinder task completion? User feedback grounds aesthetic decisions in reality.