18F - Wireframing

3 hours

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Your team sketches the screens of a product or service as rough blueprints, then tests them against real user scenarios and checks with developers what's feasible. You leave with low-fidelity wireframes the team agrees on, while changes are still cheap.

H HOW TO RUN

1 Set the scenario — 15 min

Name the user scenario and persona the wireframes have to serve, and list the screens they need. Say: "We're drawing boxes, not designing. No colors, no fonts: if someone can't finish their task on a sketch, no polish will fix it."

2 Sketch the blueprints — 45 min

Split into pairs or threes and give each group some of the screens. Sketch on paper or grid templates, showing structure, placement and hierarchy only. Keep it rough: simple sketches are easier to change.

3 List the patterns — 20 min

Post the sketches side by side. List the UX/UI patterns they use, such as forms, tables and navigation, and agree which ones to reuse across screens.

4 Build the wireframes — 45 min

Redraw the screens in the wireframing tool at low fidelity, using the agreed patterns. Tools like Balsamiq or OmniGraffle keep wireframes looking like rough sketches. Annotate anything a sketch can't show, such as what happens on a click.

5 Walk through the scenarios — 35 min

Have one person read the user scenario a step at a time while another points through the wireframes as the persona. Ask at each step: can the user finish the task from here? Mark every place they get stuck and fix it.

6 Check feasibility — 20 min

Show the wireframes to the developers in the team and ask what's hard to build and what's missing. Note each change on the wireframe it affects.

KEY TIP

Wireframes don't need to be perfect: showing the mess often sparks better conversations.

O OBJECTIVES

- Prioritize content and relationships over aesthetics
- Give designers a chance to ask developers about feasibility early

M MATERIALS

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Wireframing software (Figma, Sketch)
- ☐ User flow diagrams
- ☐ Grid templates

P PARTICIPANTS

3 to 6 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- The common failure is the review turning into a debate about looks, because someone added a logo or a brand color.
- Ask one question first: can the user finish the task? Park visual comments on a separate list.
- Remotely, give each pair its own page in one shared design file, sketch in breakout rooms, and have people photograph paper sketches and drop them on the page.
- Government considerations: no PRA implications, as no information is collected from members of the public.