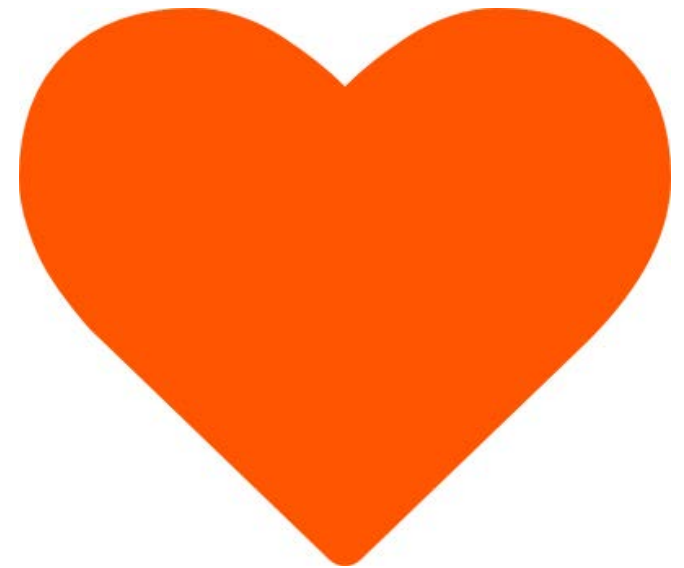


# A Beginner's Guide to User Experience

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# About this guide

Hello, we're Supercool. We create websites and digital strategies for arts, cultural, and heritage organisations all over the UK. Our mission is to make life easier for you – and your online visitors.

We know it can be hard to keep-up with new digital terminology, and ever-evolving tech developments, particularly when you're busy welcoming visitors.

So, we've put together this handy guide to help you get-to-grips with the basics of User Experience (UX), provide you with useful tools to measure the effectiveness of your current website – and start making decisions about what can be changed to improve the UX.

## This guide gives you:

- An understanding of what 'User Experience' means, particularly in the context of your website
- An overview of terminology, so you feel confident in discussions with colleagues – and your web agency
- Tools for reviewing User Experience on your organisation's website
- Straightforward ways to improve User Experience

# What is User Experience (UX)?

User Experience, commonly shortened to 'UX', covers lots of different areas and applications: from product design to architecture; town planning to your website.

In terms of your website, UX can cover a mix of things including brand messaging, visual design, accessibility, and behavioural psychology.

UX considerations can be highly practical – for example, getting people from A to B as easily as possible. But we're dealing with human interactions, so there are also emotional responses to consider – "This is awful!" or, preferably, "This is great!" – in terms of the impact on your brand and reputation in the eyes of your users.

Regardless of area, application, or context, UX can be split into three basic principles:

- **Identify your users – who they are, and what their goals are**
- **Put yourself in your users' shoes – be creative ... but not too creative!**
- **Use common sense – UX is largely about making things easy for people**

Read an in-depth definition of 'User Experience' on Wikipedia:

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/User\\_experience](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_experience)

# Identify your organisational goals

Although we're looking to improve the user's experience of your website, we also need to understand – and bear in mind – your goals as an organisation.

So, before reviewing UX on your website, you need to decide what your organisational goals are.

These can be anything that's important to your business – selling tickets, raising funds, getting more people signed-up to the mailing list, or sharing an exciting news story.

People often find it useful to segment goals into distinct areas, for example:

## Commercial goals

Buy a ticket or pass

Become a member

Make a donation

Buy merchandise

## Measurable goals

Mailing list sign-up

Download content

Fill-in an application form

## Softer goals

Find the postcode

Find the phone number

Follow on Social Media

Once you've identified what you want to achieve from your website, it's time to look at it from your users' point of view ...

How to:

# Create User Personas and User Stories

User Personas and User Stories are dual-purpose tools – used to help design great user experiences, and to review user experiences to find room for improvement.

**User Persona** – A fictional character, created to represent a person who might use a website, brand, product etc. The most useful personas tend to be based on real data.

**User Story** – An informal description of features and/or processes from the perspective of an end user – written in Plain English.

Be as creative as you like – give people names, use images, and add as much or little detail as you find useful. There's no right or wrong, it's about creating a tool that helps you better understand your customers.

There are lots of free resources available online to help you build User Personas and User Stories, but the basic principles are:

- **Create a fictional character who is typical of one of your users**
- **Note their demographics, devices they have access to, and their location**
- **Identify their goal**
- **Write all of the above – in Plain English**

The following worksheets (p6-9) will help you to create your own User Personas and User Stories, by offering useful prompts and examples.

# Worksheet 1: Create a User Persona

## Who is this person?

How old are they? What is their home situation? Do they have children? If so, what age? Do they have a partner? Where do they live? What types of media do they engage with?

Are they a new customer, an infrequent buyer, or a loyal member? Are they on your mailing list?

If you're able to interrogate your data, use this to help build your User Persona. Personas based on real data are likely to present the most accurate picture.

**TIP:** It can help to give the person a name. And you may find using a profile photo to add a visual element, and/or including more detail about their life can be useful, to make the persona more realistic.

**Example User Persona:** *Jane is 24 years old, single, with no kids, and lives in a house-share in Manchester. She spends a lot of her time on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. She's visited once before, several years ago. She isn't on our mailing list.*

Create a User Persona, based on the prompts provided:

## Worksheet 2: Create a User Story

Where are they, and what device are they on?



Are they at a desk or on-the-go? Outdoors, or in a quiet Exhibition gallery? And are they using a mobile, tablet, desktop, or laptop?

**Example:** Jane is visiting our website from a laptop, at home.

What drew them to your website?



Do they have a specific end-goal? If yes, what? E.g. find exhibition dates, your address, opening hours. If not, are they browsing the site out of curiosity? Responding to a new marketing campaign?

**Example:** She is planning a visit on Saturday, and wants to know that the building will be open when she arrives. So, she is looking for weekend opening hours.

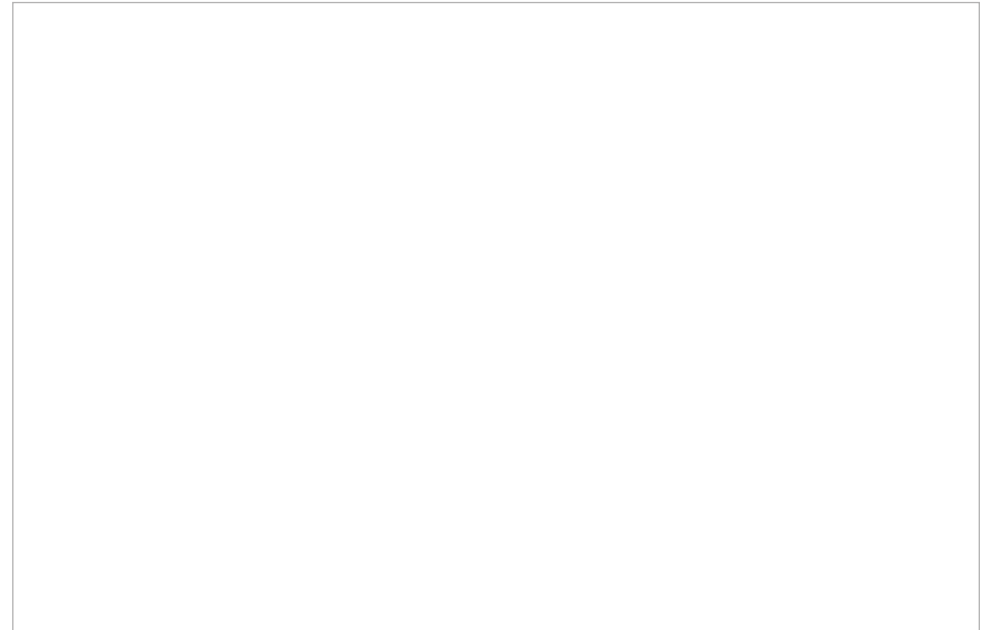
## How do they arrive at your website?



Have they found you via a search engine, such as [www.ecosia.org](http://www.ecosia.org) or Google? From a link in your email newsletter? Via social media?

**Example:** She types 'museum opening hours Manchester' into search engine, Ecosia.

## Where do they arrive?



What's the first page the user lands on? This will be determined by how they found you. A general search might direct them to your homepage. Following a link via email or social media might direct them to another page on your website.

**Example:** Jane clicks the first result, which takes her to the homepage.



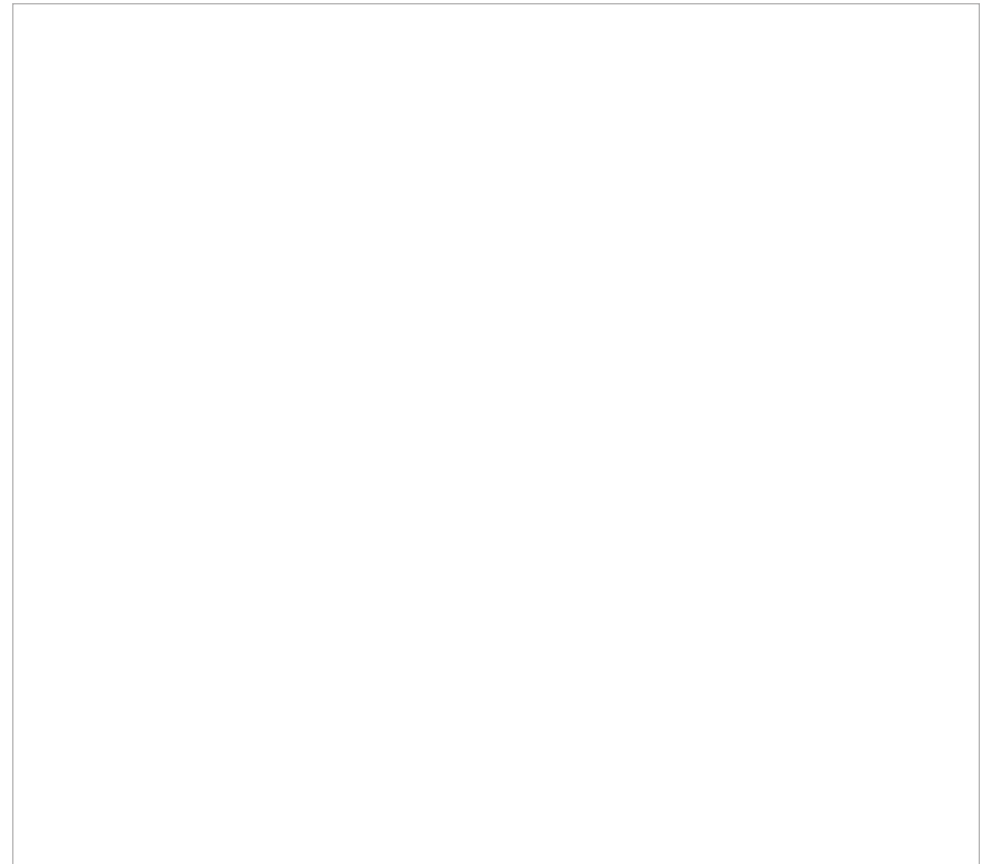
## What do they know about you so far?



Do they know what you do? Or are they totally new to your organisation? Understanding this informs what you need to tell them.

**Example:** *Jane knows about us from visiting once before, and through word-of-mouth. But she doesn't know much about what we do, or what to expect from her visit.*

## Combine your answers to create a User Story:



**Example:** *Jane is visiting our website from a laptop, at home. She is planning a visit on Saturday, and wants to know that the building will be open when she arrives. So, she is looking for weekend opening hours. **[This is the kind of information a lot of our visitors will want to find easily.]***

*She types 'museum opening hours Manchester' into search engine, Ecosia. Jane clicks the first result, which takes her to the homepage. Jane knows about us from visiting once before, and through word-of-mouth. But she doesn't know much about what we do, or what to expect from her visit.*

## How to: Review your website

Now that you have your User Persona, and a User Story, putting yourself in their shoes by recreating their experience is a great way to review your website.

In the case of our example User Persona, Jane, you could use a laptop to search for 'museum opening hours Manchester' using [www.ecosia.org](http://www.ecosia.org), and see what page you're directed to.

Or you could go straight to the homepage on your website, and see how easy it is to find your opening hours from there.

The steps in Worksheet 3 (p11) will help you to review your website.

**TIP:** 'Jane' doesn't know your website as well as you do. So, when recreating her experience of using the website, you may find the opening hours really easily (because you know where they are), when a customer could struggle.

A useful way to test this is to ask a friend, family member, or colleague who's less familiar with your website to go through the steps outlined in Worksheet 3, on the following page.

If you can, watch them as they navigate your website so you can see where they get stuck, or seem unsure.

## Worksheet 3: Review your website

Take the User Story you created with the help of Worksheet 2 (p7-9), and recreate the user's journey on your website - while doing the following:

### 1. Start timing your journey - now!

### 2. Count your clicks

### 3. Keep a note of any points that you get stuck

Were there any moments you hesitated, or weren't sure what to do next? Did you hit a dead-end? Or find yourself unable to get back to a previous page? What page were you on at the time?

### 4. Keep a note of any 'surprises'

Were you surprised by the outcome of any actions? (For example, clicking something took you to a page you weren't expecting.) Or confused by the position of content? (For example, on a page called 'Opening Times', opening times are right at the very bottom.)

Were you able to achieve the goal? If yes, how long did it take? And how many clicks?

## How to:

# Interpret your results

It can be tempting to try and fix every glitch or sticking-point you find while reviewing the website, but that's probably not practical.

This is the point to **revisit the organisational goals you identified** (p4). Finding the common ground between these goals and your user's goals will help you to decide where to best invest your time and energy.

Reviewing your website several times – by different people, but using the same User Persona and User Story – is a good way to check that your results are accurate. Don't rely on doing this just once for each Persona/Story.

When you've been through the process once, it will be easier to create new User Personas, and new User Stories, in order to review and improve other areas of the website.

**TIP: Remember to concentrate on one issue at a time!**

## How to: Help a user achieve their goal

Your User Story will enable you to work out the best way to help a user achieve their goal.

In the example, Jane wants to know weekend opening hours, and has landed on the homepage.

How could we help her find opening hours from there?

- Include a 'Visit' link as part of your main menu – it's a logical place to find opening hours
- Include the opening hours in the website footer, as it's the kind of information that's useful to lots of people
- Consider having an 'Opening hours' page on the website, so that if Jane searches 'museum opening hours Manchester', a search engine can direct her to that page (rather than the homepage)
- A clear call-to-action on the homepage, directing Jane to the page that houses your opening hours

Tools to help a user achieve their goal include:

### Search

This could be your site search, or search engines.

Making sure you have relevant content on every pages helps search engines to direct users to the relevant place.

### Navigation

This is your main menu but could also include drop-downs, or sub-menu navigation for more granular information.

### Calls-to-action

These are stand-out components on your website that signpost users towards specific content.

# General tips for improving UX

## Page design

Every page on your website should be carefully planned. Many users will land somewhere other than your homepage. Consider the content and page design, and how you can best help you users:

- Use landing pages to provide top-level information, with clear links through to other pages, which contain more detail
- On key pages, keep content focused on achieving one, specific goal
- Keep your copy clear, and short – the average reading age of adults in the UK is 9 years old
- Make use of headings, sub-headings, bullet points, and paragraph breaks to split long text into manageable chunks

## Menus

Menus are great, but you shouldn't rely too heavily on them. Data analysis shows that only certain menu items get significant clicks – usually *Visit* and *What's On*.

To get the best engagement, stick to the following rules of thumb:

- Keep menus short – be ruthless!
- Keep them consistent across your website
- Use clear naming of sections, and avoid internal jargon

## Calls-to-action

Calls-to-action are useful to point users to specific content – grabbing their attention, and helping you share your mission. To ensure your calls-to-action get noticed:

- Use compelling messaging and images; this is the place to be bold and creative!
- Use simple language – preferably using the words your customers use
- Keep them relevant. For example: on a community engagement page, direct users towards how they can donate to your community work
- Use positive, 'active' language – such as Read More, Sign Up, Find Out More

# About Supercool

An approachable, experienced, and straight-talking team of problem-solvers, we combine design, tech, and data to make life easier for arts, culture, and heritage organisations – and your visitors.

Since 2004 we've been collaborating with ambitious, forward-thinking clients (from big music venues to intimate theatres, national touring companies to international festivals) on **websites, digital strategy, and consultancy.**

Together, we craft smart, beautiful and efficient solutions that **improve clients' long-term resilience** – helping them increase revenue and get closer to visitors.

Our in-house experience and know-how includes: digital brand development; user-centred, inclusive design; responsive web development; technical integration; ticketing and fundraising; data analysis; and strategic consultancy.

A belief that **art, culture and heritage are for everyone** runs through all that we do – from the big picture to the finest detail.

We care about people and the environment too. Find out more in our [Manifesto On Inclusivity](#), and [Sustainability Pledge](#). (We plant trees for every website we launch, so our projects are carbon negative.)

## Any questions? Talk to us

If you have any questions about improving the user experience of your current website, we'd love to hear from you.

We can also help with running audits – e.g. user journey, accessibility – on your current website, and are happy to chat if you're planning a new website project from scratch.

**Kate Mroczkowski**  
Strategy Director  
0121 233 2837  
[kate@supercooldesign.co.uk](mailto:kate@supercooldesign.co.uk)

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