

Look, Learn, Ask, Try

INFO 360 A

User-Centered Design

Understanding users, their activities, the contexts in which their tasks are carried out, and their experiences and attitudes is crucial to designing good products and technologies. However, there is no one single way to understand users. Each situation is different, each user group is different, and each project is different. In addition, resources such as time and budget may also play a role in determining which methods to use for understanding users.

Typically, designers use a variety of methods to understand users, and almost always use more than one method for any given project. Using multiple methods to help understand users is called triangulation. The designers at IDEO have come up with a set of 51 different methods across four different areas that they use to understand users. These areas are:

- **Ask** them how to help
- **Look** at what they do
- **Learn** from the facts you gather
- **Try** it yourself

To help designers remember all of these ideas, they created a set of Method Cards, modeled after a deck of playing cards (with the four method areas each being a “suit”). Thus, users can scan through the deck of cards for ideas on which methods might be useful in any given situation.

What to do?

Familiarize yourself with IDEO’s 51 method cards that we went over in class. Each card lists what to do, why to do it, and an example of when it was useful for IDEO in a real design project. Think about how the 51 methods could be applied to a design problem. Thinking hypothetically, choose **1 method from each** of the four categories that would be appropriate for **each** the following design questions.

- How can a new system support communication for emergency room nurses?
- How can a mobile system help long-distance bicyclists to find restaurants and amenities?
- How can a video game help educate kids in Grades 1-5 on healthy eating?
- How can Mint.com be made more accessible to seniors in planning their retirement?

For each of the above design scenarios, list the four methods you would choose to help understand the potential users and the design problem. For each method you list, write a short paragraph about why you think that given method would work in this situation. Write an additional paragraph stating any methods from the 51 Method Cards would **not** work for each design question.

Your assignment should be approximately 1 page of text for each of the 4 design scenarios above, for a total of 4 pages in Times New Roman 12 pt, single spacing, 1” margins. Please use proper headings to make it clear which methods are for which scenarios and print on both sides of the page (save trees). Turn in your assignment at the start of class on the date it is due.

How will it be graded?

- **4.0 – Outstanding** – The assignment is complete (includes 20 total methods – 4 that would work and 1 that wouldn't work for each of the 4 scenarios) and is of superior quality. The report is well-written, professional, in-depth, and the student is reflective and insightful. The justification for each of the methods is sound and shows a clear understanding of the particular method.
- **3.5 – Great** – The assignment is complete and of high quality. The report is well-written, professional, in-depth, and the student is reflective and insightful.
- **3.0 – Good** – The assignment is complete and of good quality, but the points could be better justified, be more insightful, or more thorough. Report may contain minor problems with formatting or grammatical errors.
- **2.5 – Satisfactory** – The assignment is mostly complete and of satisfactory quality, but the points could be better articulated, be more insightful, or more thorough. Report may contain problems with formatting or grammatical errors.
- **2.0 or Lower – Unsatisfactory** – The assignment is incomplete or is of lower quality. The points are not well articulated or thorough enough. Report may contain major problems with formatting or grammatical errors.