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Flat Design: In-Depth

Flat Design or Flat UI has been one of the most talked about trends in web and user interface design this year. It has frequently been compared with skeuomorphic design, because of its completely opposite principles and style.

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Flat design examples

Flat design can be used to create really beautiful, simple interfaces, but it's not necessarily appropriate for every project. Be mindful of what you're trying to achieve visually and what you want to communicate.



What is Flat Design?

As the name indicates, flat design is defined by flatness of style: simplifying an interface by removing extra elements such as shadows, bevels, textures and gradients that create a 3D look.



Buttons

When creating a button, using a border, gradient and drop-shadow will make the element stand out against the background and content. This makes it easily identifiable as a clickable element.



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Evolution of Flat Design

Historically, in design as in fashion, trends tend to shift continually between the complex and the simple. This is becoming more obvious in the visual design field, especially in web and multimedia, where designs are more ephemeral and don't last as long as in traditional print supports.

Flat Design and Microsoft

The biggest player in Flat Design, and the first to bring this style to the forefront, was Microsoft. In 2006, Microsoft launched the Zune music player. It was expensive, applied DRM to your music files and was a commercial flop. But even though Zune wasn't commercially successful, it was a first step in defining the rest of Microsoft's design for years to come. Zune's interface was minimalistic, with a focus on light and big typography, and an interface free of surplus details and elements.

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