

How to become a UX designer?

Zuzanna Cwiakala

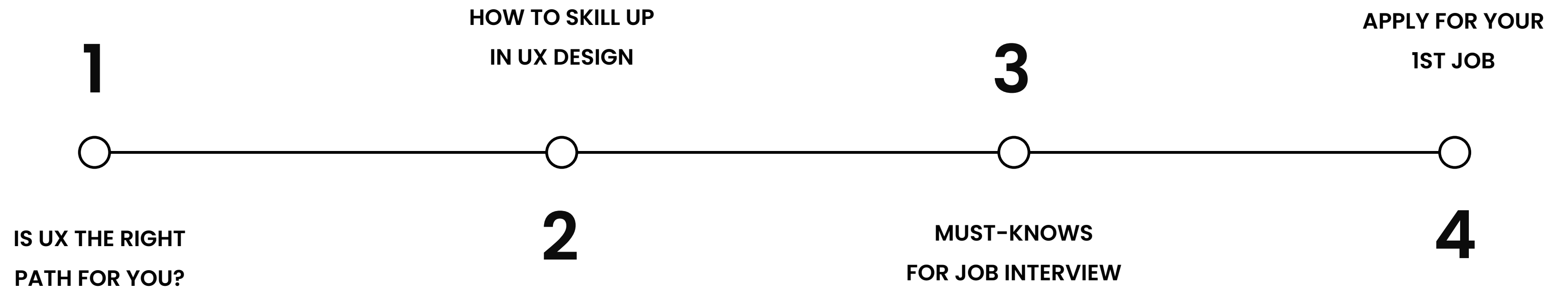
Hi, my name is Zuzanna, and I am currently working as Senior UX Designer at Lufthansa Systems.

What you will learn from this e-book, is all that I have learned, throughout my journey of becoming a UX designer.

So this e-book is to everyone that is thinking about becoming UX - designers, but still are unsure if its the right path for them, and also for those who doesn't really know where and how to start.

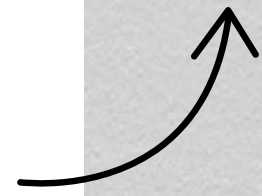
me





Are you sure it's UX?

damn
important
question!



Find out if UX is your thing!

The first really important questions, to ask yourself, is - **are you sure it is UX you want to work with?**

It might be a huge cliché, but I strongly believe that you can't be good at something that you don't like.

And that leads us to another question, which is, what is your motivation and drive for change of your career? Because you definitely need a good motivation for that. For me it all started, because I was annoyed by my boyfriend, for being so damn happy about his work.

Just a couple of years ago he switched his career into programming, from chemistry and energetics, and he was so excited about his daily work. Please Don't ask me what is so exciting about programming, because I have no idea, but the point is made.

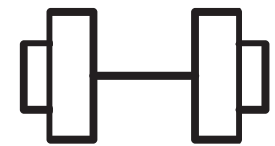
Anyway, during that time, I was at a point in my life, where I didn't like my job at all. I was waking up every morning thinking about... oohh not again... So I just envy my boyfriend, and thought god damn it, I also want to wake up every morning with a smile and excitement for work.

So that was my engine towards a successful career switch. I often see people just jumping straight into these expensive courses, or university degrees, without putting enough time and effort to answer this question.

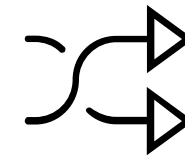
Find out if UX is your thing!



**RIGHT
UX MINDSET**



**HANDS ON
WORK**



CONNECT WITH PEOPLE



**RESEARCH JOB
OFFERS**

Find out if UX is your thing!

So I would actually advice you, to find out if UX is the Thing for you... sort of to run **a proof of concept** for your idea of becoming a UX designer.

You can do it in multiple ways, first way would be to **check if you have the right UX mindset**. As you probably already know, **UX does to apply only to digital products**, but also to everyday objects and services – like using your coffee machine, using your computer mouse or ordering at your favorite restaurant.

I would recommend you to challenge yourself in actually thinking user centricity and customer experience in those situation, thinking of what annoys you – because that's often a starting point for improvement of user experience. Think also why it annoys you and what could be improved. And that leads us to a next way to check it, and that is to do some UX hands on work. So taking a step further and besides thinking only about what and why should be improved, for example on a webpage, you could think more solution-based. So what could be done to make the user experience better?

On that stage, it doesn't need to be any huge project, because that's not the point. It's more about focusing on the UX mindset and challenging yourself in different situations.

The next way to check it, is to connect with other UX designers. That is to see how their daily work look like, and that could of course also be done through meetups and conferences.

So you get the real idea about working as UX designer, because its not all about creating pixel perfect mockups, it's about focusing talking to people, sparring on different ideas and articulating your design decisions, putting the user in focus, and trying to find out what is important for the user, and not what you think it's the best solution.

Last but not least, search for job offers. That will give you a hint, on what is required of a junior UX designer, maybe you already have some of the skills that are needed? And all that should take you a step closer to a answer, about UX being your dream profession.

How & where to skill up?

Ok, so let's dive into some concrete stuff. If you already have answered previous question, and you think that UX is the right path to go... you should now focus, on making a best plan for learning UX.

And what is worth mentioning is that **you should choose the learning way according to your personality. Some of us, need more theoretical information and learning, and some of us – like me, learns best while doing and trying out.**

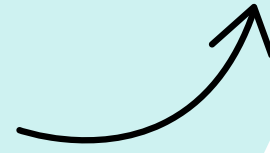
So on the next slides, I will shortly walk you through different ways of learning UX.



University degrees. Postgraduate



Poland
specific



SWPS

USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN
/PRODUCT DESIGN

Sopot, Warszawa, Wrocław, Poznań

AGH

USER EXPERIENCE
& PRODUCT DESIGN

Kraków

WSB

USER EXPERIENCE – DESIGNING
APPLICATIONS, PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Gdańsk

The first, and the most obvious path, is University degrees. There are often postgraduate ones, and takes about 1-2 years. They usually costs a lot but they will give you a solid ground when it comes to UX process and the methodologies. It is a good way to approach learning UX, if you need this theoretical background and more academic way of learning. An advantage here is that you will actually get a lot of direct feedback, during you studies, from your teachers and instructors.

Complete UX/UI courses

- **NORMAN NIELSEN GROUP**

UX Certification courses.

- **CAREER FOUNDRY**

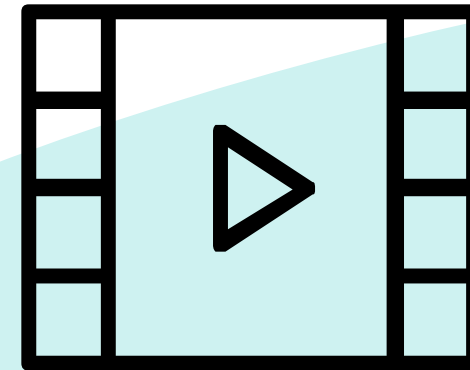
Paid, school-like courses with instructor.

- **UX FOR FREELANCERS**

@anfesign

- **COURSERA, eDX AND MORE**

Paid, self-paced courses.



The next way, is to sign up for complete UX courses – and what I mean with complete, is that in similarity to University degrees, they should lead you through the whole UX process, learn you about different methodologies. They should in theory prepare for what is needed of a junior UX designer. Most of them are not for free, and some of them are really expensive like the Norman Nielsen group, but I think everyone can find something that suits them best regarding the budget and time frames.

What is good with choosing a more school-like courses, like careerfoundry in Berlin, is is that you actually have a closer contact with your teacher, that can provide you with needed feedback on your progression and work. I know that there are similar schools in Poland as well.

And for the two last ones, that are more self-paced, you will probably need some mentor to provide you with a feedback and put you back on the right track, if so needed.

Complementary UX/UI courses

○ INTERACTION DESIGN FOUNDATION

UX-related, specific courses:

data presentation, user testing, UX strategy.

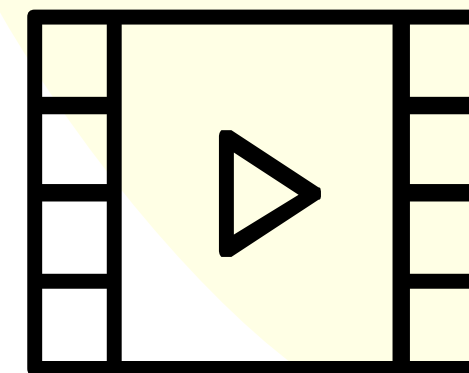
○ UDEMY

Low-cost quick courses.

Learning different software (Figma, Adobe XD).

There are also a lot of complementary courses that focused on specific areas of UX design. And here I would really recommend interaction design foundation. I am even now taking some courses about data presentation and UX maturity in bigger companies, and the content is top notch.

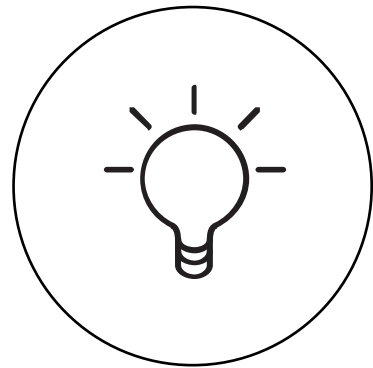
Then finally, we have all the websites like udemy and skillshare, but I would consider them as a addon to a more complex UX course. What is good about them, that they can easily learn you how to work with different software.



Mentorship



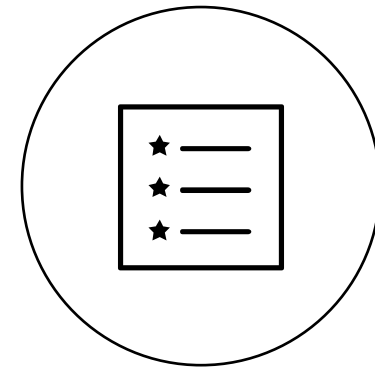
FIND A GOOD MATCH



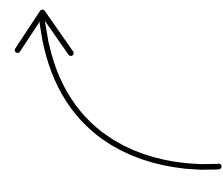
BE PROACTIVE



MENTOR IS NOT A TEACHER



**SPECIFIC PROBLEM/
QUESTIONS**

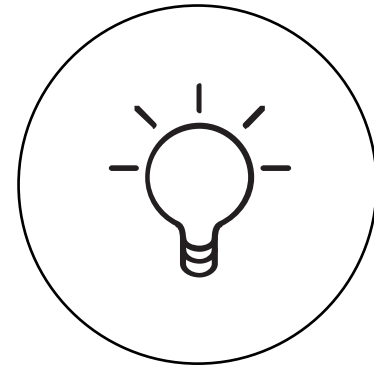


Tips on next slide!

Mentorship



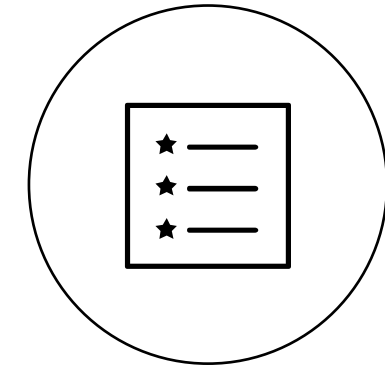
FIND A GOOD MATCH



BE PROACTIVE



MENTOR IS NOT A TEACHER

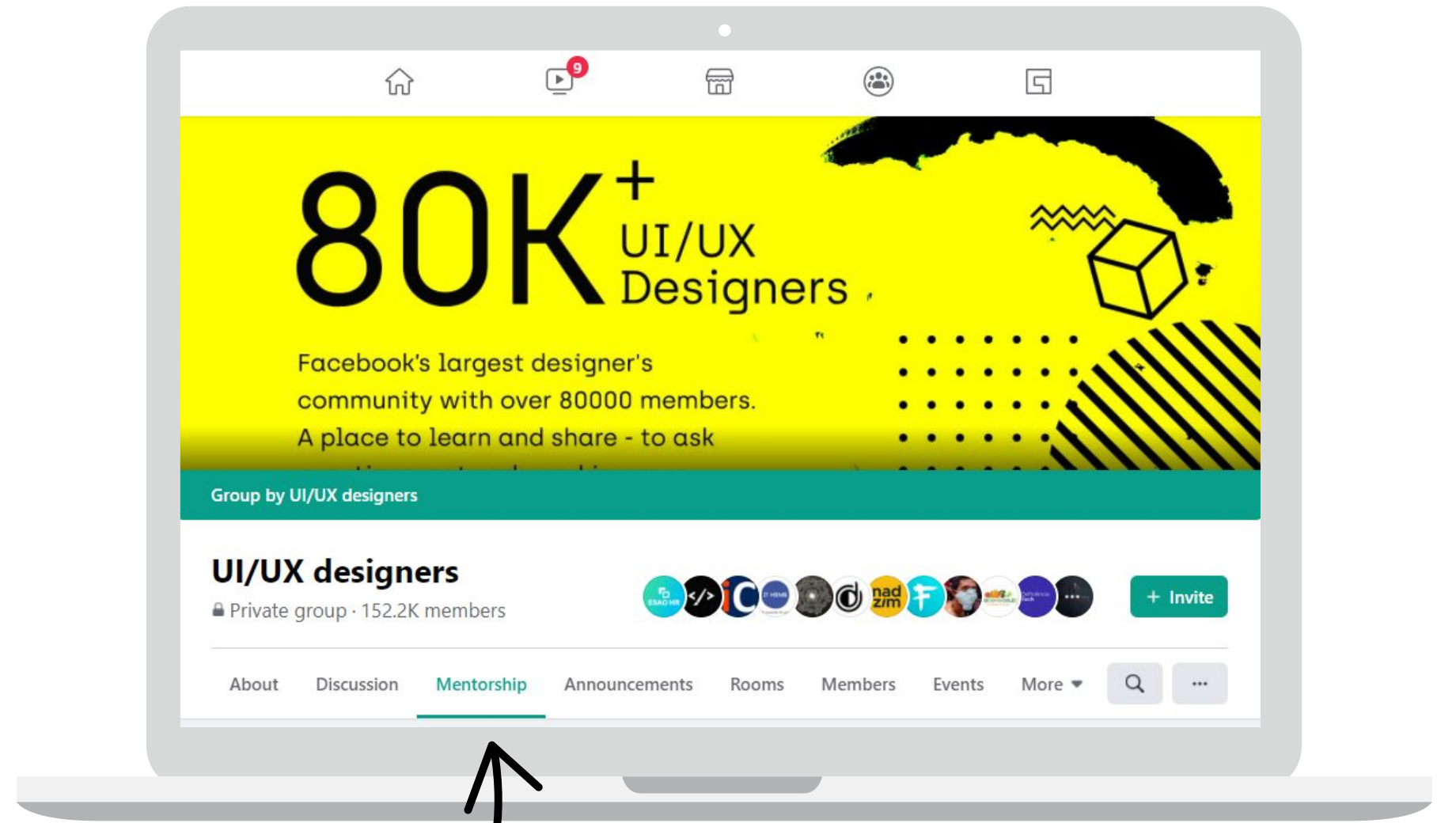


SPECIFIC PROBLEM/ QUESTIONS

Like I mentioned earlier, it is extremely important to have someone on your journey, that will provide you with feedback and will give you guidance and confirmation, about your progression and development. That will speed up the whole process of learning UX.

There are a lot of ways of finding a good mentor, and I will show you one of them on the next slide, but sometimes it's just as easy as reaching out to someone on linkedin. What is worth remembering, is that you should be really pro-active during your collaboration with your mentor, YOU should be the one driving the agenda forward, calling in for meetings and asking specific questions.

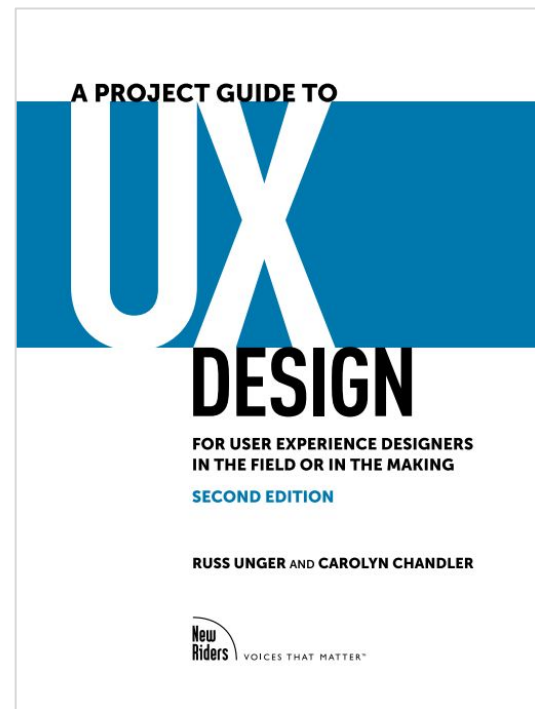
And remember, that a mentor is not a teacher, his task is to give you feedback, guide you in the right direction of your development, but he/she will not teach you how to conduct a user testing. And to make the most out of the time, that you will spend with your mentor, I would suggest to come to him or her, with specific questions or problems, that you can discuss. Maybe it would be a good idea to make a development plan together with your mentor, that you both can follow.



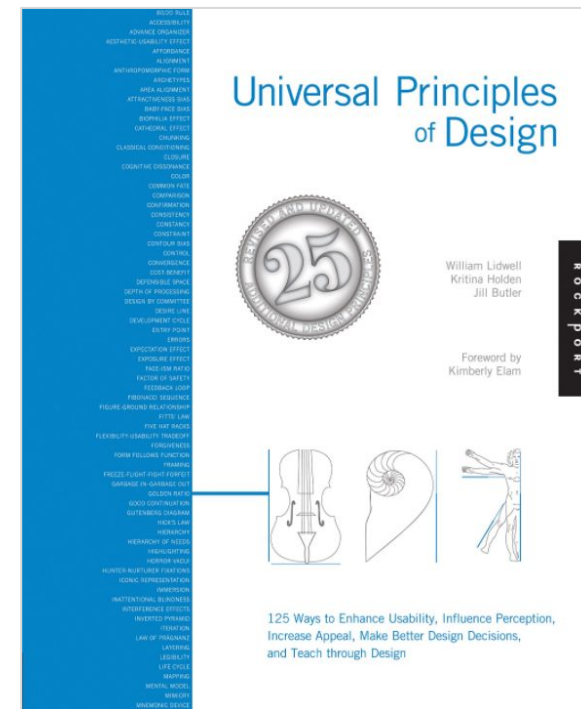
Mentorship!

And if you have completely no clue, where to look for a mentor, on some facebook groups, there are those Mentorship tabs – where you will find this whole list of different UX designers, that are offering help and mentorship for younger designers. You could easily find someone with a skillset that you are looking after.

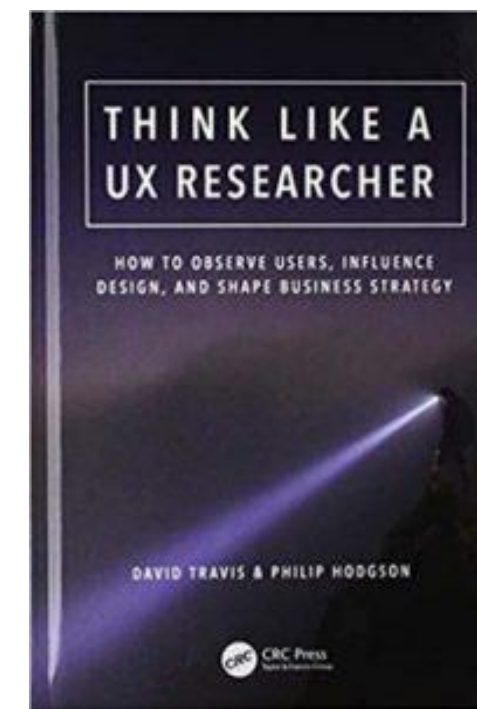
Books. UX Basics



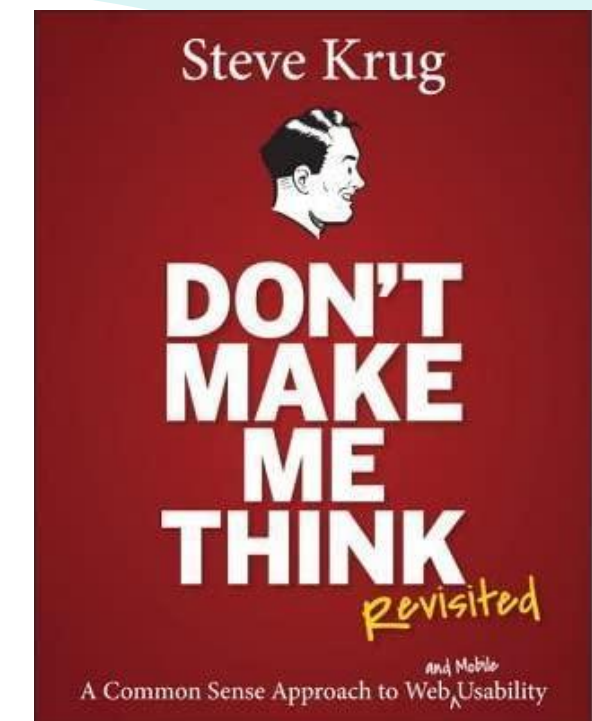
A project guide to UX design



Universal principles of designs



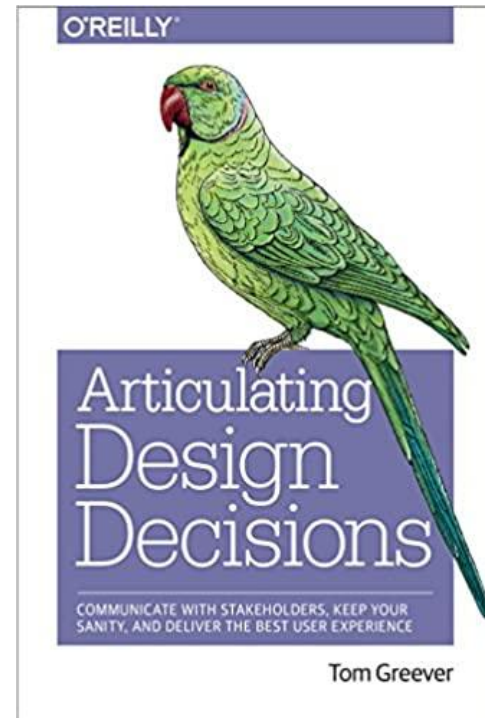
Think like a UX researcher



Don't make Me think

Maybe I am really oldschool now, but besides the courses, which I think are a must in becoming a UX designer, there are also some must reads. And that is a list of books that I have started my journey with, and that I would recommend for you as well.

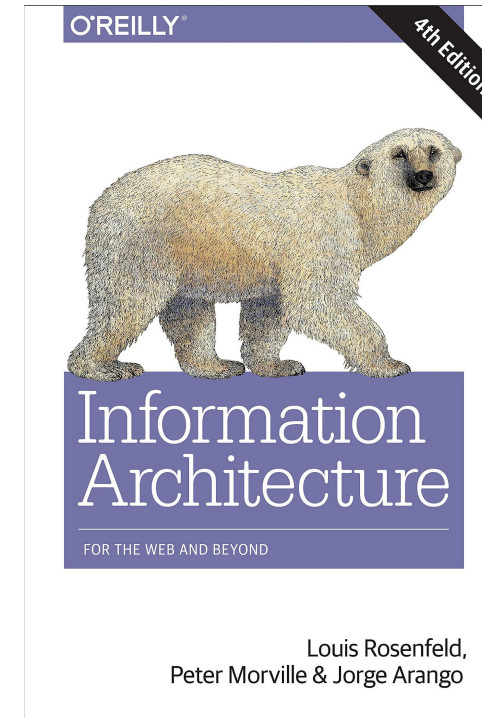
Books. UX Masterclass



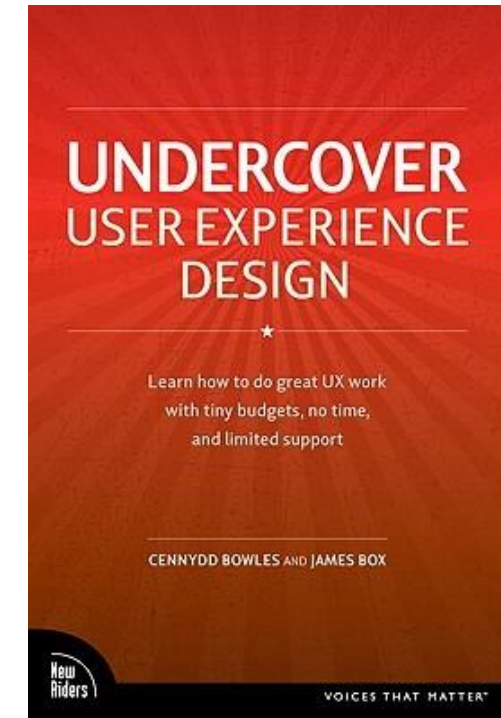
Articulating design decisions



UX Strategy



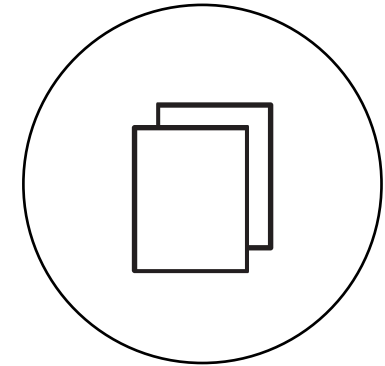
Information architecture



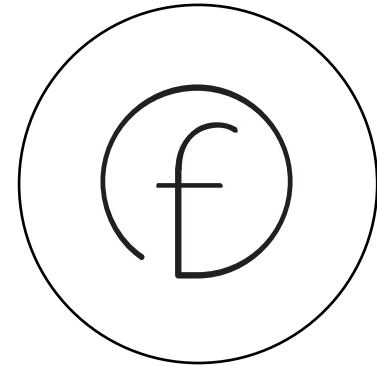
Undercover User Experience design

And if you want to skill up even more, here is the list of more advanced books. And you don't need to read them from cover to cover, but it is good to have them on your bookshelf, so you can browse for some information that you need at the moment, for example information architecture.

Hands-on work

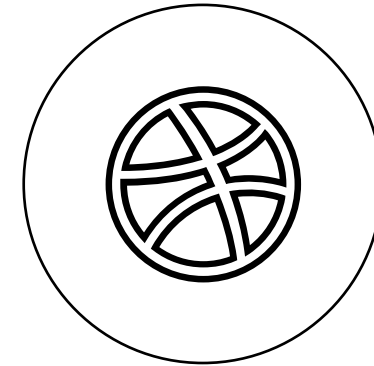
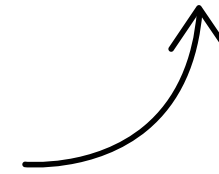


**CREATE
PORTFOLIO
CASES**

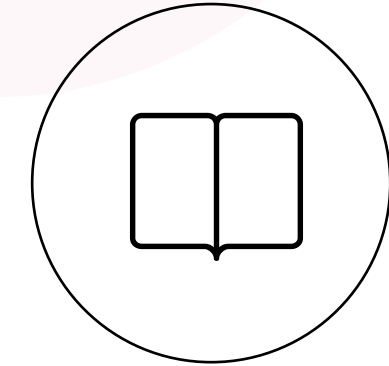


**DESIGN
FOR YOUR
FRIENDS**

Track to
get tangible
results!



**1-1 COPY OF
DRIBBBLE SHOTS**



**LOOK THROUGH
DIFFERENT CASE
STUDIES**

And last but definitely not least, its the actual hands on work.

Obviously all the theory, courses and books are important to give you first grasp of what UX is. But without the hands on, practical work you will not progress. And while doing it you should always have in mind, what you could present in your portfolio, and what will stand out in your job application. A good approach here, is to actually create some portfolio cases by designing or redesigning a website or application for your friends or family members. A cool hint here, from my colleague that hires UX designers, is to actually connect some tracking solution to that-e.g. google analytics. Just think about it - if you will be able to present traffic data or conversion rate, before and after your UX changes, that will really rock your portfolio.

Another cool tip here, that I've learned from my other colleague, is to actually start with making a exact copy of a dribbble design, because that will teach you how to work with fonts, font sizes, colours and spacings. That can be compared to when you learn how to draw - you first draw looking at a model, or an other drawing, learn to actually observe, and after that you start to draw completely out of mind.

And talking about UI designs, a lot of recruiters actually look at your UI skills, and some of my UX friends believes that an easier way to come into the UX world, is actually through UI design.

And lastly, besides doing these huge UX cases, you can look through different portfolios and case studies from other designers.


⚡ Case Studies

Growth & UX case studies in a comic book format. Improve your product skills with real-world examples.

And for that you can visit this cool webpage, that actually includes case studies presented in a comic book format. They are really easy to follow, and that could be a good starting point, for understating how you should think as a UX designers.



★ NEW



User Onboarding: Is HEY Email Worth It?



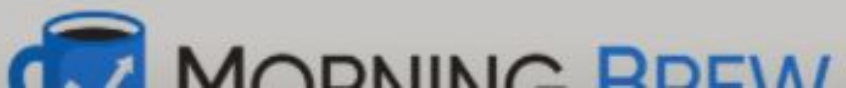
7 Product Team Pitfalls You Should Avoid

🔥 POPULAR



How Tinder Converts 8% Of Singles Into Customers In Less Than 15min.


🔥 POPULAR



🔥 POPULAR



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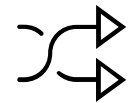


Prepare for job application

So, let's imagine that you already have some knowledge about UX, have done some cases and you are ready to search for a full time job.



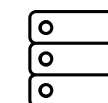
Must-knows before applying



**All stages in
UX iterative process**



**User testing, personas,
user journeys**



**Nielsens
heuristics**



**Typography & colour
basics**



Business value of UX

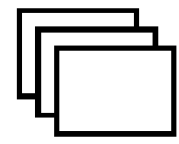


**Wireframes,
mockups, prototypes**

And before you will do that, I would recommend you to go through this quick checklist of must knows before applying for your first UX position.

So, quickly about that. You should know all the stages in UX process, knowing when and how to conduct a user testing, how to work with personas and user journeys, knowing what's the fuzz about Nielsen's heuristics. You should of course know the basics about typography and how to work with colours. You should know the business value of UX – because this will be a huge topic in your designers work, and of course be able to create simple wireframes, mockups and prototypes to share to visualize your ideas.

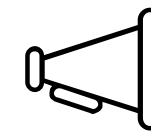
Good to have before applying



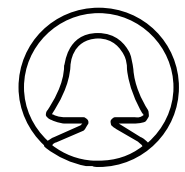
**Real cases for
Your portfolio
rocks!**



**Something that makes
you stand out**



**Let the world know that
you are into
UX design**



**Connect with recruiters
and HR
specialists**

Besides the must-haves before applying, there are also some good to have. And I mentioned it a couple of times already, but having real cases in your portfolio will do the job.

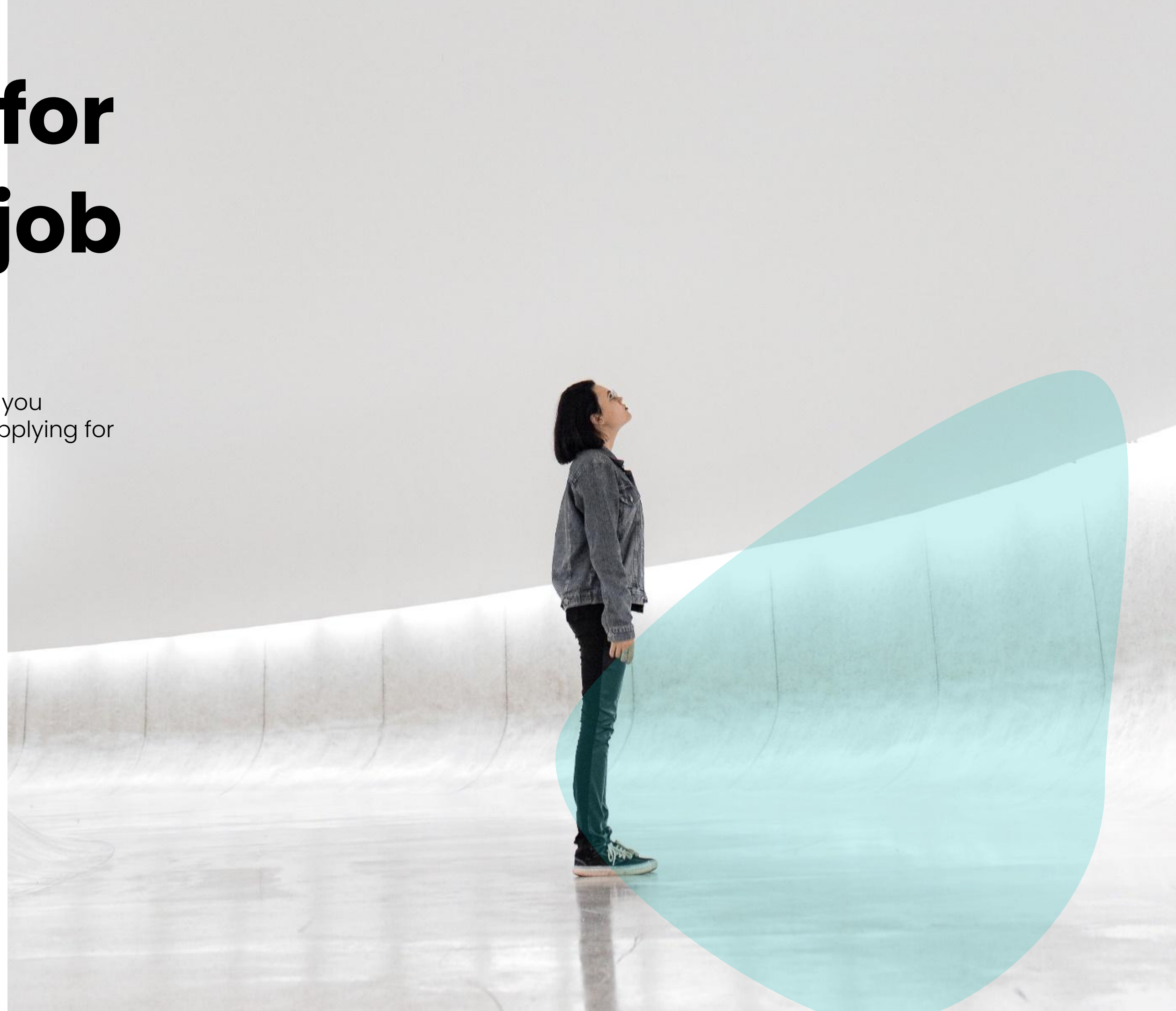
Besides that, you should try to find something that makes you stand out from other candidates – it could be previous experience or skills, like communication, marketing, architecture – just work with what you have! And like my boyfriend says – Differentiate or die.

And for me that was language skills that was needed on my position and previous experience with stakeholder management. Another tip is that you should leave some footprint on social media, especially linkedin, that you are developing your UX related skills – share articles, go yourself in conferences and so on, and so forth.

And lastly – if you want to rock your job interview, connect with recruiters and just ask them for the questions during a job interview. And you know, sometimes the easiest solutions work the best.

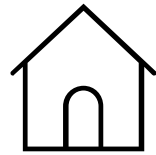
Looking for your 1st job

And just to wrap it up, I will walk you through the whole process of applying for a job in UX field.



Prepare your CV & portfolio

Present your knowledge and experience (not products).
Focus on limitations, requirements and solved problems.
Real-life examples and data will rock your portfolio!
Avoid templates.



Follow job offers In your city

Types of companies?
Design agency, big companies,
start-ups
Types of UX-roles? Intern positions?
Requirements?



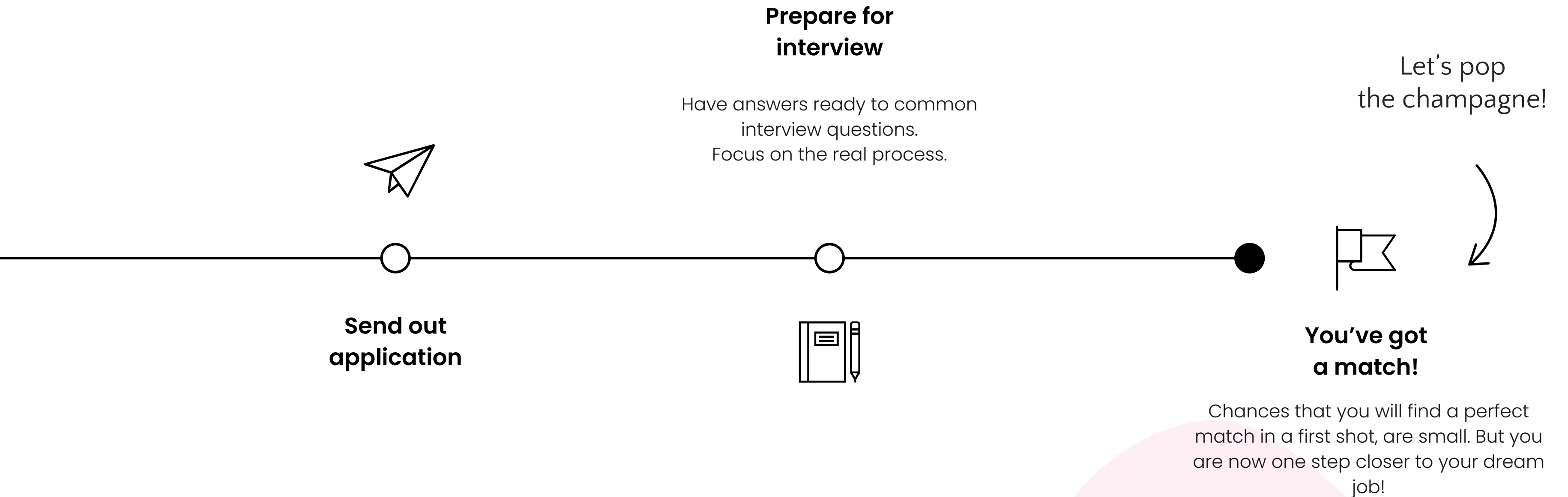
Review your CV & portfolio

Ask your UX-buddies or mentor
to review your CV and portfolio.

You should definitely start to look through different job offers – follow them for a couple of weeks or even months. Consider what types of companies, would be the best option for you? If you want to work in a bigger design team in a big company, or a startup? Think if you also consider intern positions. Thinking about those questions already on that stage, will help you focus on the job offers that will suit your expectations best.

And on this stage, you will have your portfolio ready, but you need to prepare for presenting it. And Krzysiek Sowa will talk more about it later on today. But just a few words from me on that topic – try to present your knowledge and experience and not the product or application that you worked on. Focus on limitations, requirements and what problems did you faced. During my portfolio presentation I've got a lot of questions about what I would do differently, and what I've learned during those cases. They don't expect you to run a full UX process as a one-man-army. So just keep it real and simple.

If you have real-life examples of case studies- put focus on them, even if they are not that complex. And if you have some hard data to support that, it will make you stand out for sure. The next step – is to proofread your cv and portfolio, and ask others to do that as well. It might seem obvious, but believe me, there are still a lot of typos in CV's that are sent out. Don't be that person!

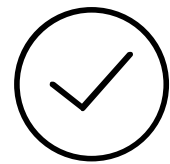


And then – the big day!!! Sending out applications. I am the kind of person, that just send them out, as quickly as I had my portfolio ready. And I would recommend it for you too. Just again, consider what company would suit you best in the beginning of your journey.

And then – prepare for your interview – so besides just having a portfolio presentation, you will probably have a more technical job interview. Try to prepare some answers to common questions. You can find a lot of those online, or you can ask HR specialists on linkedin – like I proposed before.

And yet another big day! Actually getting a job offer after your career switch. And that is priceless. Just one note to that, don't worry if you don't end up in a perfect place for you in the beginning. Consider it, as a great first step on your journey. And believe me, that's priceless!

Key take-aways



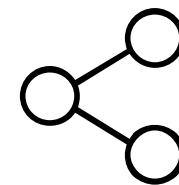
**RUN A UX DESIGNER
PROOF OF CONCEPT**



**REAL CASE STUDIES ARE TO DIE
FOR!**



**FIND YOUR BEST
WAY OF LEARNING**



**DIFFERENTIATE
OR "DIE"**

So just a quick summary and key takeaways. Try to as quickly as possible, run a proof of concept of your idea of being a UX designer. It can save you a lot of time and money.

Try to work with some real UX cases – even if they will not be as complex as a made up ones. Learn UX in a way that suits you best – don't think of others, and how others do it. And like I said before – try to stand out on your portfolio, CV and job interview. Work with the skills that you already have. And just a last word from me – GO AND BE AWESOME IN WHAT YOU LOVE TO DO, AND MAKE OTHERS PAY YOU FOR IT.

Thanks & let's stay in touch!

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Cool entertainment
between presentations

<https://userinyerface.com/>

