Design 101

If you want to learn more about visual design, this 4-week crash course could be the one for you. You'll learn fundamental concepts and best practices in areas such as color theory, typography, visual alignment, and hierarchy. You'll develop an understanding of how to recognize good design from bad, and work to conceptualize and design components for web pages and app screens.

OVER FOUR WEEKS, WE WILL COVER

Unit 1: Learning to See Design

Design is about problem solving. It is often closely associated with art, but in actuality aesthetics are just part of what makes a well designed product. Before you begin learning the theory and foundations of design, it is helpful to have a solid understanding of "why". This unit is intended to help you begin thinking of design as a thought process, and how to start observing what makes something well designed.

Projects: Why Do You Want to Learn Design?, Evaluate Design

Unit 2: Ideating & Sketching

Creativity often involves the process of being willing to generate as many divergent ideas as possible, and then moving forward with ideating the most promising ones. We'll take a closer look at why ideation is important, how designers come up with their best ideas, and what techniques they use.
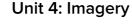
Projects: Generate Ideas, Sketch Your Design, Sketch Your Logo

Unit 3: Color & Typography

Designers consider color and typography both a science and an art. Although the principles of these two areas can consume a lifetime of study, don't worry! We'll go through the fundamentals so you'll make solid color and typography decisions every time!

Projects: Practice Creating Color Palettes, Practice Selecting Type, Create Your Provisional Style Tile

Unit 4: Imagery

Have you ever wondered how designers select imagery and icons that are memorable, visually integrated, and perfect for a particular brand? In this unit, we'll cover the ins and outs of selecting imagery and designing icons, as well as share practical tips for how to help train your eye so you select images that make a long-lasting impact and connect with your desired audience.

Projects: Set Up a Photographic Library, Gather Your Icons, Vectorize Your Logo, Final Style Tile

Unit 5: Layout & Composition

A layout is more than finding room for all your content on a given page. It's about visual harmony, guiding the user's attention, and creating an enjoyable, efficient reading experience. In this unit, we'll learn the foundations of building great layouts and composition, resulting in cohesive designs every time.

Projects: Deconstructing Grids

Unit 6: Designing the Details

Frictionless interaction design is based on common design patterns, which appear everywhere—from set heights on staircases in architecture, to brand names on digital interfaces that behave like buttons and return us to the homepage of a product.

Projects: Find the Right Patterns, Practice Visual Hierarchy, Create and Explore Your Sections

Unit 7: Going Hi-Fi

There's a popular belief among designers that polishing is 20% of the work, but it takes 80% of the time! Since high-fidelity designs are usually the final deliverable before handing things over to developers, you'll focus most of your time on polishing your final design in this unit. Every detail counts!

Projects: 2 High Fidelity Versions of Your Design, Final Version, Present Your Work

Unit 8: Design Teams & Handoff

In this final unit, we'll talk about design teams, roles, and collaboration across an organization, including how to hand off your designs to the development team so it can go from concept to reality!

Projects: Using a Handoff Tool

You can complete all of Design 101's projects using any design tool of your choice—but we recommend the following:

Figma
Figma Inc.

Sketch
Bohemian Coding

Adobe XD
Adobe

Feel free to get a head start on learning these tools through our free tutorial courses linked above. Once you've mastered the basics, your mentor will be able to teach you more tips and tricks moving forward.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

✓ Learn to recognize good design from bad

✓ Concept and create components for apps

✓ Gain a basic understanding of typography, color theory, visual hierarchy, layout, and how to pick and choose your own imagery and assets

✓ Learn how to effectively communicate your ideas with clients, teammates, and others through your newfound understanding of visual design

✓ Gain insightful feedback on your coursework from an expert mentor – Four hours of 1-on-1 dedicated call time to help you grow your skills

✓ Come away with some pieces of project work that you can use to showcase your newfound design skills

"I've started a new job at Microsoft as a Design Developer, three weeks ago. The design principles I learned during the Designlab course helped me during the interview process! Thank you so much."

Frederic was a freelance developer living in Paris, looking for ways to improve his design skills. He had tried other online tutorials and courses before, but nothing really helped boost his abilities—so he signed up for Design 101 and was matched with his mentor Daina.

As a senior designer who'd worked at companies like Dropbox and Hootsuite, Daina was able to help Frederic take his design skills to the next level. Shortly after completing the course, Frederic was able to move into a new role at Microsoft as a design focused Front-End Developer.

Here are some past examples
of real student work.