

Artifact

Design principles

A short set of rules, drawn from research and the project's values, that guide design decisions so they are consistent.

In Spanish

Principios de diseño

Origin

Widespread practice; a much-cited example: GOV.UK (2012)



What it's for

It helps many people make consistent decisions without having to check everything.

Key elements

Few

A short set the team can remember.

Grounded in research

They come from the project's insights and values.

Useful for choosing

Each one helps decide between two real options.

An example

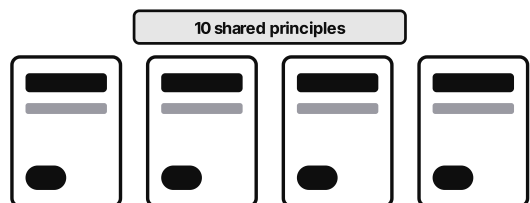
A large team redesigns a government's digital services.

Without principles



Each team decides in its own way: different tones, steps and priorities. **Inconsistent.**

With principles



Ten shared rules, starting with "Start with user needs". **Consistent.**

The UK Government Digital Service published ten design principles in 2012 that still guide GOV.UK.

How it's done

1



They are **drawn from insights** and from the project's values.

2



Write **only a few**, clear and easy to apply.

3



They are used to **decide** and to review the work.

Applications in design

✓ When to use it

When several teams make decisions about the same product and those decisions start not to fit together.

✗ Avoid

Writing principles so general that anyone would agree ("be easy to use").

👁 Don't fall for it

Test each principle against a real project decision: if it doesn't help you choose, rewrite it. And review them when you learn something new.

Connections

Builds on

■ Insight

■ Design synthesis

Related to

■ Design system

Authors and works

2012

Government Digital Service

Published the UK Government's ten design principles.

Sources

Original sources

- Government Digital Service (2012). Government design principles. GOV.UK. [View source \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-design-principles\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-design-principles)

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026

