

Model

Good services principles

A list of fifteen principles that describe how a good service behaves for the person using it, from finding it to getting help from a human.

In Spanish

Principios de un buen servicio

Origin

Lou Downe (2020)



What problem it addresses

Gives the team a shared, concrete standard to judge a whole service, not just a screen or a channel, and to spot where it breaks.

Components

Easy to find

People who need it can reach it without knowing in advance what it is called.

Explains its purpose

Makes clear from the start what it does and how it works.

Sets expectations

States what is required, what it costs, how long it takes and who can use it.

Lets people reach their goal

People finish what they came to do, from start to end, without breaks.

Works in familiar ways

Follows the useful conventions people already expect.

Needs no prior knowledge

Uses words that a first-time user understands.

Independent of internal structure

People do not have to know or navigate the organisation's departments.

Asks for the fewest steps

Asks for just enough and anticipates what will be needed.

Consistent throughout

Looks, feels and speaks the same across every channel.

No dead ends

Leads everyone to a clear outcome, including those who are not eligible.

Equally usable by everyone

Works whatever each person's abilities or circumstances.

Encourages the right behaviours

Nudges users and staff to act well and does not reward poor service.

Responds quickly to change

When someone's situation changes, it reflects it promptly across all channels.

Explains its decisions

Says why something was decided and how to challenge it.

Makes it easy to reach a person

Offers a simple route to human help when it is needed.

How it works

1



Review the service walked through from end to end, principle by principle.

2



Failures the points where people get lost, stuck or give up.

3



Improvements prioritised changes to what harms the people using the service most.

Applications in design

✓ Use it like this

Go through the fifteen principles to assess an existing service or to set the criteria for a new one with the whole team.

✗ Avoid

Using them only to review the digital part; they apply to the whole service, with its channels and its staff.

👁 Don't fall for it

It is a model born from practice, without empirical validation: use it to review and talk, not to measure.

Connections

Used in

■ Journey map

■ Service blueprint

Related to

■ User experience honeycomb

■ Touchpoint

Authors and works

2020	Lou Downe	Gathered the fifteen principles in a book, drawing on their work as head of design at the UK Government Digital Service (GDS).
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Sources

Original sources

- Downe, L. (2020). Good services: How to design services that work. BIS Publishers.

Last reviewed: October 26, 2026

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