

# Official Interface Guidelines by David Catmull

User interface documentation  
published by Apple and Microsoft

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## Basic Principles

(everybody agrees on these)

- ▶ See-and-point
- ▶ Metaphors
  - Files and folders
- ▶ Direct manipulation
- ▶ User control
  - Actions initiated by the user, not the computer
  - Modelessness
  - Interactive and responsive

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## Basic Principles

- ▶ Feedback and communication
- ▶ Consistency
  - Internal and external
  - Consistent with the guidelines
- ▶ WYSIWYG
- ▶ Forgiveness
- ▶ Perceived stability
- ▶ Aesthetic integrity
  - Good visual design
- ▶ Simplicity
  - Simple, not simplistic

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## Basic Principles

- ▶ Good first experience
  - Clear and simple installer
  - Convenient default settings
- ▶ Follow the platform's own guidelines
  - Ignoring them reduces their usefulness for all other applications

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## Platform-Specific Details

- ▶ Appearance, layout and usage of interface elements
- ▶ Keyboard shortcuts and other actions
  - Navigation
  - Modifier keys (shift, control, etc.)
- ▶ Mouse cursors and meanings of buttons
- ▶ File organization on disk

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## Dealing With Differences

- ▶ Pet peeve: porting an application without adapting to the new platform's standards
- ▶ What do these keys do when editing text:
  - Home
  - End
  - Page up/down

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## Beyond the Guidelines

- ▶ There are cases when you have to create new interface elements
- ▶ Make sure they appear integrated
  - Give them an appearance consistent with everything else
  - Make the different behavior obvious
    - ▶ Don't just use a standard element and make it do something else

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## Microsoft's Guidelines



- ▶ This is what you get when you download Microsoft's guidelines for Windows XP

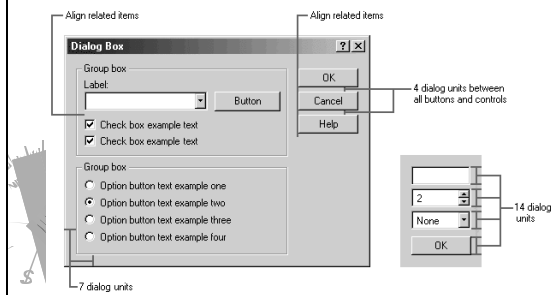
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## Push Buttons

- ▶ You click it, and something happens
- ▶ Choose the title text carefully
  - Apple:
    - ▶ "Button names should be verbs that describe the action performed"
  - Microsoft:
    - ▶ "Aim for the shortest possible label; one word is best."
    - ▶ "If possible, use label text that makes sense when read out of context — for example, when a user reads or hears only the label of the current control."

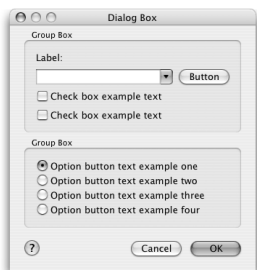
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## Layout



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## Layout



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## Icons

- ▶ Icons get used for lots of different things
  - Representing objects
    - ▶ Files
    - ▶ Tools
  - Representing commands
    - ▶ Open
    - ▶ Undo
    - ▶ ...often shortcuts to menu commands that have no icon

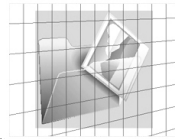
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## Icons

- ▶ There are guidelines for these too
  - Apple:
    - ▶ Design and composition should indicate purpose
    - ▶ Perspective should agree with real-life interactions
    - ▶ Differentiate them from other UI elements
  - Microsoft:
    - ▶ Colors that complement the XP design
    - ▶ Perspective is either at a certain angle, or straight-on
    - ▶ Everyday objects should look modern

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## Microsoft Icon Composition



- ▶ Exceptions:
  - Document icons
  - Symbols such as warning
  - Single objects
  - Objects not recognizable at an angle

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## Apple Icon Composition

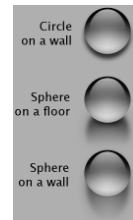


- ▶ Icon "genres"
  - Application: media (paper) and tool (pen)
  - Utility: straight perspective, subdued colors
  - also document, plug-in, toolbar

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## Pet Peeve: Shadows

- ▶ Shadows help add dimension to the image
- ▶ The shadow can do as much as the object itself in defining its shape
- ▶ Careless use can flatten the object



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## Summary

- ▶ Concrete examples of the principles we've been discussing
- ▶ There are professionals who actually believe in what we've been discussing
- ▶ You don't have to design every single element of your application
  - ..in fact you shouldn't
  - ..most of the time

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## Sources

- ▶ Apple's User Experience page
  - <http://developer.apple.com/ue>
- ▶ Microsoft's User Interface Design and Development page
  - <http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/nhp/default.asp?contentid=28000443>

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