

## ■ CAREER ■

# Pursuing a career in UI AND UX

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User interface (UI) and user experience (UX) are integral parts of the everyday applications and websites used globally, as they translate the core concept of a product into a functioning user-intuitive experience. Essentially, UI/UX designers are responsible for creating the look and feel of a website or application. As such, these designers are in expansive demand in the tech industry.

Though often interchangeably used, UI and UX are two different specialisations in the design process. Amit Mojumder, a product designer at Optimizely, described the differences saying, "While UI focuses on the visual and interactive elements of a product, UX encompasses the entire user journey, including emotions, thoughts, and perceptions. UI is a crucial component of UX, but it's just one piece of the puzzle. Companies often tend to use these terms together because they expect a single person will wear multiple hats as both a UI designer and a UX designer. It's a misconception that a designer has to be a UI/UX designer. You can only be a UI designer, whose job is to collaborate with the UX designer about the interaction decisions and create a simple, minimalist, and easy-to-understand interface that serves the business purpose. On the other hand, UX designers decide on how the presented screen will interact with another screen. For example, on a signup page, you see a button called "sign-up". What should happen if you click on sign-up is a UX decision. UX designers make that decision by researching, design validating with the user, and so on."

**Besides UX writing and research, content strategy, information architecture, and interaction design are other aspects of the field which people can consider specialising in.**

Working in a large team or project could allow you to specialise in either UI or UX, but small-scale projects might require aptitude in both.

While UI/UX is an indispensable step in the web or app development process, it is not necessarily required to have a background in Computer Science or coding knowledge to become a designer.

"I graduated with a degree in Architecture and later shifted to UI/UX. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I got into graphics designing and 3D modelling. However, after a certain point, I felt the need for my designs to be interactive. Then, I started looking into UI and UX design. I started to make interactive presentations that catered to my architectural thoughts at the beginning using UI/UX tools and later shifted to designing websites and apps. I was very fortunate to land a project as a freelancer in the local market within four months of my UI/UX learning journey. This project involved a lot of complexity, which, at that point in my learning, was pretty difficult for me. But I decided to take that as a challenge and it added a lot of value to my learning



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curve through the process," said Fayek Al Rafi, a partner, co-founder, and UI/UX team lead at WARC Ltd.

Amit gave his own account saying, "I was a university dropout back in 2005 and unfortunately, I don't have any academic background in design. I got a job as a project manager in a small interior firm where I got the opportunity to collaborate with several architects from BUET. I used to ask a lot of questions about why they made certain design decisions. That was the main inspiration for me to dive into design. After that, I was able to learn visual design on my own from different online resources. From 2007 to 2015 I worked in the freelance industry with numerous clients across the globe. Within that period, I started UI design in Photoshop. I found a very good course on Coursera called Human-Computer Interaction Specialisation offered by the University of San Diego. This course was not for beginners and I had a hard time finishing it. But, after I had finished the course, I realised it was worth it as it laid a good foundation for my UX journey."

Designers are required to learn the quintessential tools, like Figma or Adobe XD, for designing, as well as other tools like Photoshop, Illustrator, or Sketch. While a key part of the job is to have a grasp on all of the various tools to create dynamic and responsive designs and prototypes, being able to ideate using pen and paper is even more important as it enhances the creative flow.

Besides the creative abilities and tool aptitude, UI/UX designers require analytical skills and good communication skills. Designers often need to work in teams, so it is crucial to exchange ideas with

fellow designers and web developers to ensure the smoothness and efficiency of the project. Furthermore, understanding client needs and selling your design ideas to them is crucial. Also, according to Fayek, it is important to look at what other people are designing and how they are dealing with different design decisions.

Outside of designing, there are many other aspects to UI/UX, each with the potential of being its own job position. Amit says, "If you are from a Statistics, Anthropology, or Psychology background, you have a very good potential to be a UX researcher. If you have good writing skills, you can definitely consider starting a career in UX or technical writing. You don't necessarily have to be a designer to be a UX professional."

Besides UX writing and research, content strategy, information architecture, and interaction design are other aspects of the field which people can consider specialising in.

Regardless of what degree you are pursuing (or have graduated from), UI/UX is a lucrative field which anyone can enter as long as they can cultivate a good grasp of design principles and are adept with various design tools. Many universities abroad provide degrees in UI/UX should you choose to pursue it for higher studies. While a course certification would definitely help in the long run, the most important thing to land a job as a UI/UX designer is to have a really good portfolio containing detailed case studies, designs and prototypes.

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