



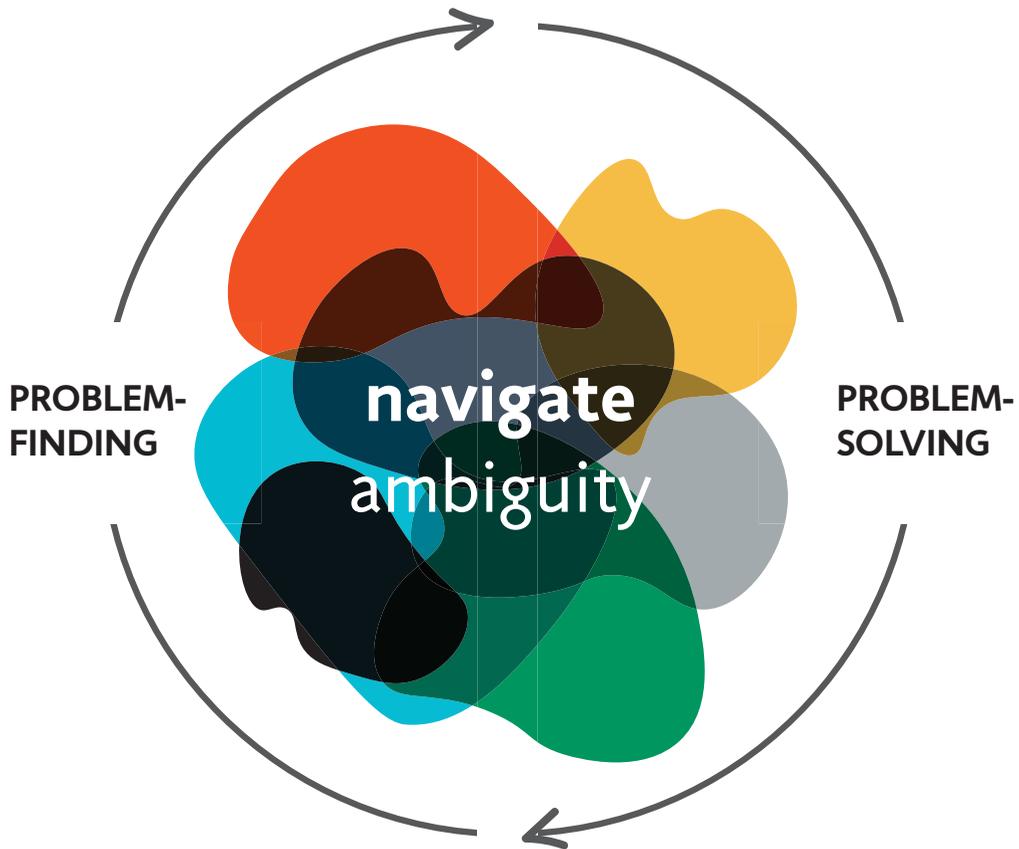
# design dipa project abilities

How do I practice **design work**?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DESIGN THINKING STUDIO  
WINTER 2019

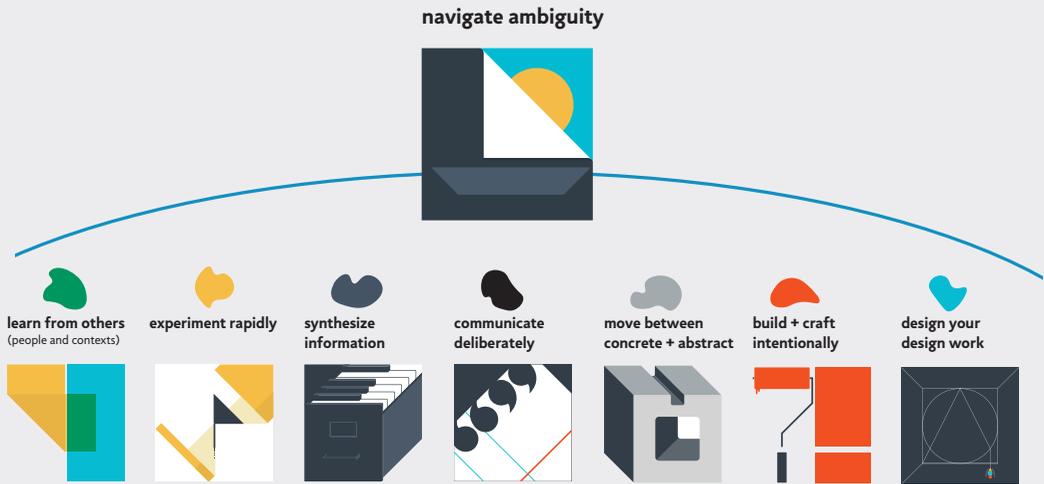
You navigated **a lot** of ambiguity this quarter.



This workbook will help you notice and reflect on the essential skills and abilities you exercised in this class on your journey of navigating ambiguity. In the next few days, you'll synthesize this journey, and use our simple 1-page template to storytell it in a succinct and powerful way.

In a class with a lot of intensive team-based work, this project is your opportunity as an individual to recognize and capture the specific skills and abilities you'll take with you going forward. We hope you keep and use this workbook in the future!

# What **abilities** did you flex along the way?



+ other abilities?

On each of the following pages, you'll find a refresher on these core design abilities, along with a mad-lib style fill-in-the-blank story starter. Start to map out your experiences flexing these abilities using the story starters. You don't have to go in order, and you don't have to fill in every one.

At the end, you'll also find 2 blank "**wild card**" story starters for abilities you might have tapped into that were instrumental in your ability to navigate ambiguity, but aren't represented above.



# Learn from Others

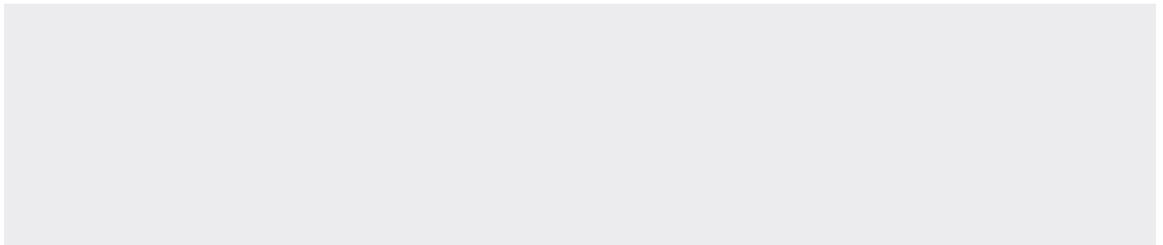
(people and contexts)

This core ability includes the skills of empathizing with different people, testing new ideas with them, embracing diverse viewpoints, and observing and noticing in different places and contexts.

Designers cultivate an insatiable sense of curiosity and a desire to understand. Recognizing the opportunity to learn from others, and then acting upon it, is something that happens throughout a design project. Designers learn from both end users as well as other stakeholders and team members. There is a sensitivity to others that develops with this ability, and an instinct to look “out,” not “in,” for inspiration.

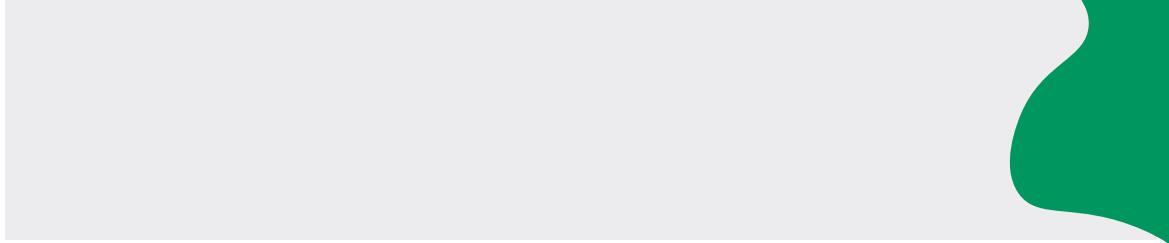
## **You’re exercising this ability when you...**

- listen and watch more than you talk
- interview someone you don’t know to get a new perspective
- can empathize with and be moved by another person’s experience
- sit quietly and observe people’s behavior
- notice an unmet human need or spot work-arounds
- use your notebook regularly to capture observations, quotes, sketches, and ideas
- seek feedback on an idea with the intent to learn (not validate)
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...



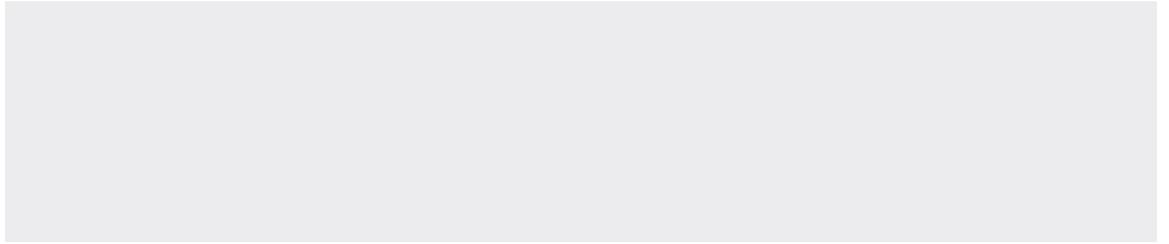
## During our design project, I/we struggled with...

*(What were you trying to do? Where were you? When? With whom? Why did it matter?)*



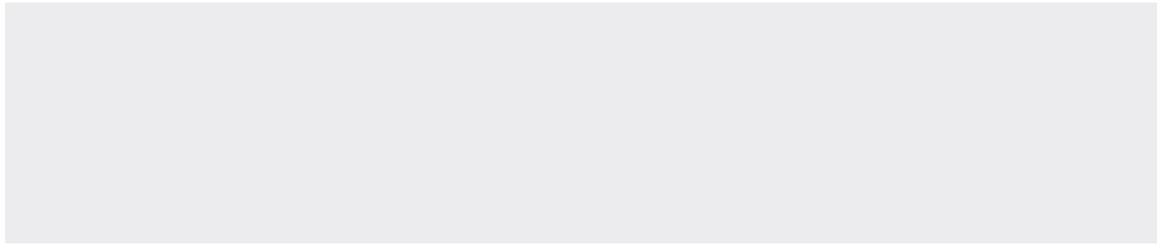
## I decided to do/try....

*(How specifically did you flex this ability?)*



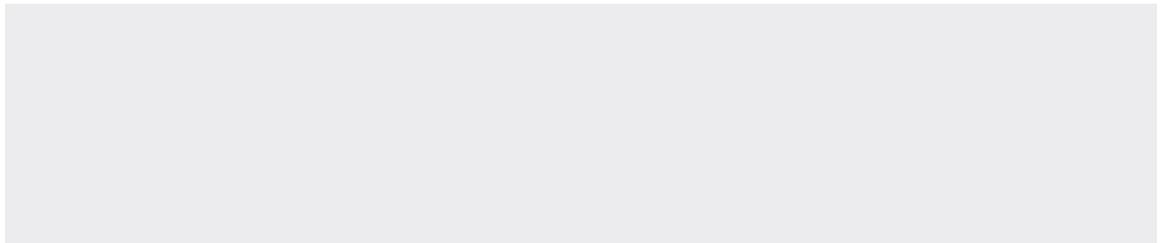
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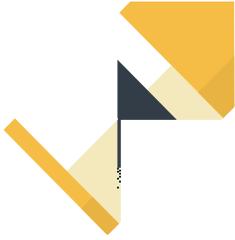
*(What happened? For better or for worse?)*



## And now, moving forward, I will try...

*(What did you learn for next time?)*





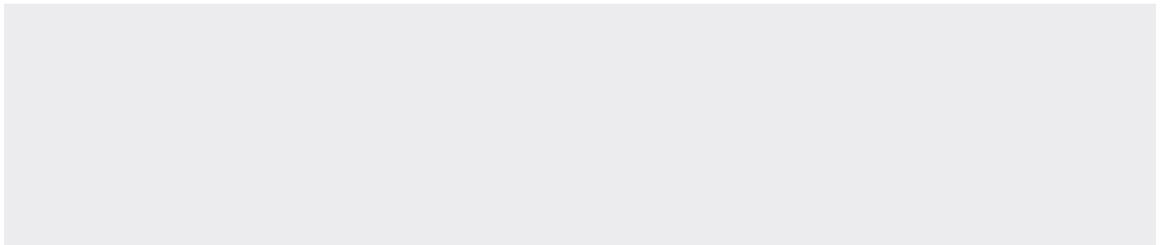
# Experiment Rapidly

This ability involves being able to quickly generate ideas, whether written, drawn, or built.

Designers cultivate an itch to express something; an eager willingness to try something out. In order to experiment rapidly, they learn to relax their minds into a mode of acceptance and generation, and eliminate the natural tendency to block ideas that don't seem on point or feasible. Brainstorming and prototyping are important skills within this ability. It's about letting the doing lead your thinking, and leading with your hands.

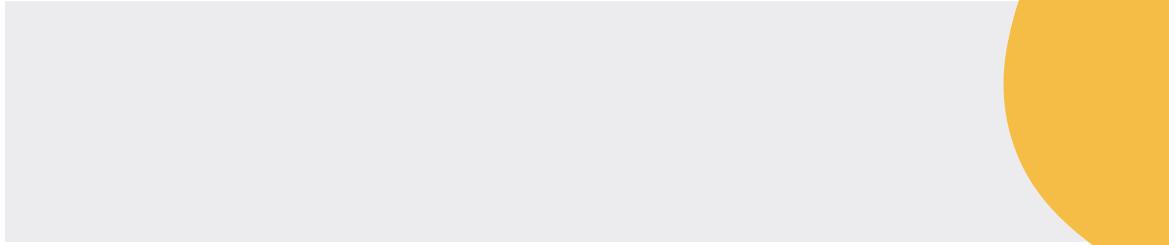
## **You're exercising this ability when you...**

- lead a brainstorm and include several other people
- try an idea that you didn't think would work
- refrain from filtering/judging your own ideas
- sketch an idea rather than trying to explain it verbally
- make a prototype in under 5 minutes
- come up with a new idea by drawing or building it, rather than thinking about it
- build on someone else's idea
- push yourself generate a large number of ideas before acting on one of them
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...



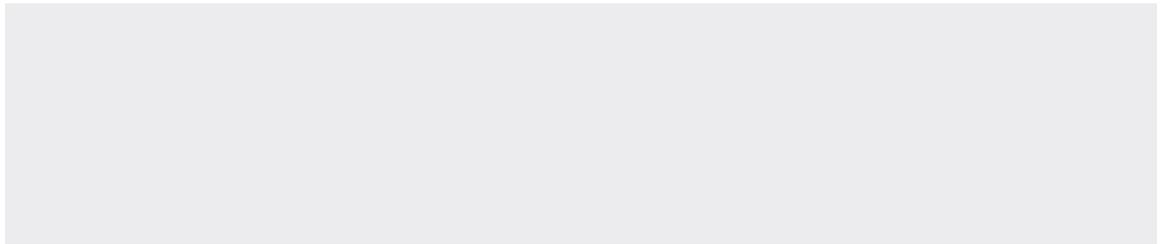
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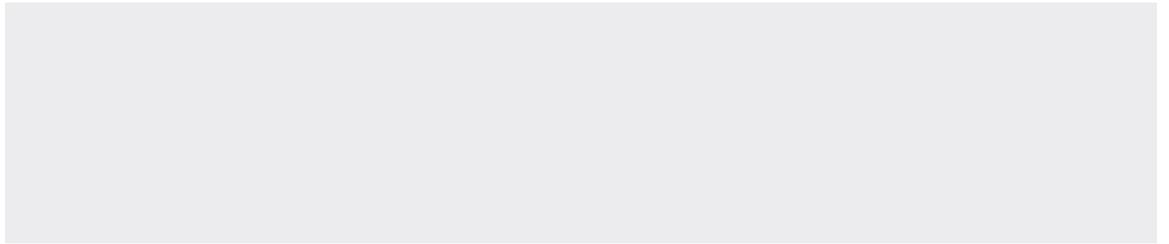
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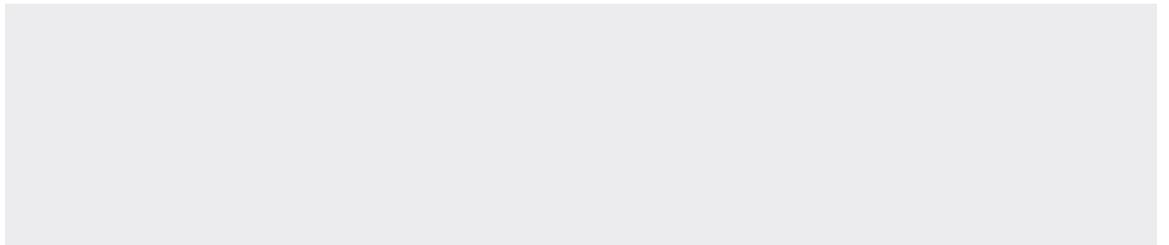
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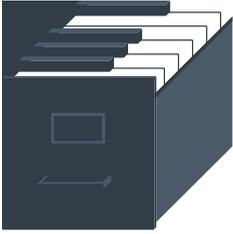
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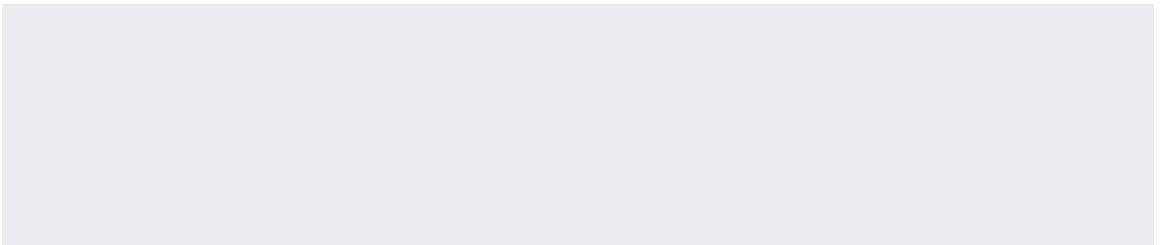
# Synthesize Information

This is the ability to make sense of many disparate pieces information and find insight and opportunity within.

Designers cultivate a desire to interpret and synthesize information to make meaning and illuminate possibility. Data comes from multiple places and has many different forms, both qualitative and quantitative. This ability requires skills in making frameworks, maps and abductive thinking. This ability is very hard, and generally requires intentional moments of focus to exercise it well.

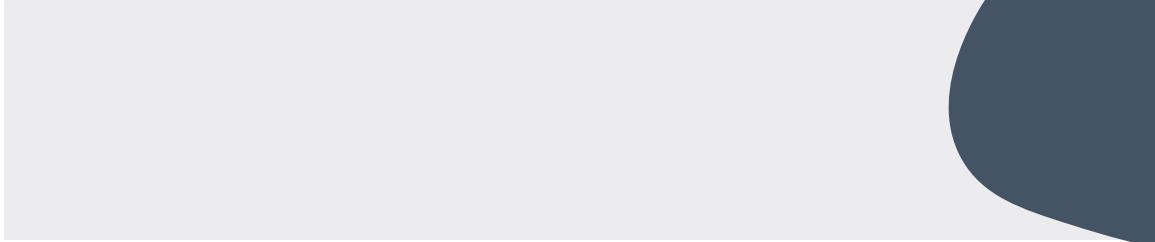
## You're exercising this ability when you...

- use pattern-finding to surface a non-obvious need
- leap from an observation(s) to make an abductive inference ("leap") as to the meaning behind that observation
- generate insights that feel actionable, inspiring, and point to a new opportunity
- visualize or map a set of information in a way that reveals insight
- identify and elevate a specific audience for your work
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...



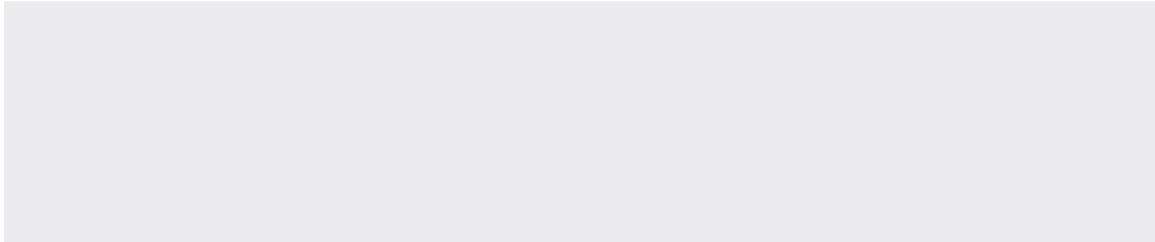
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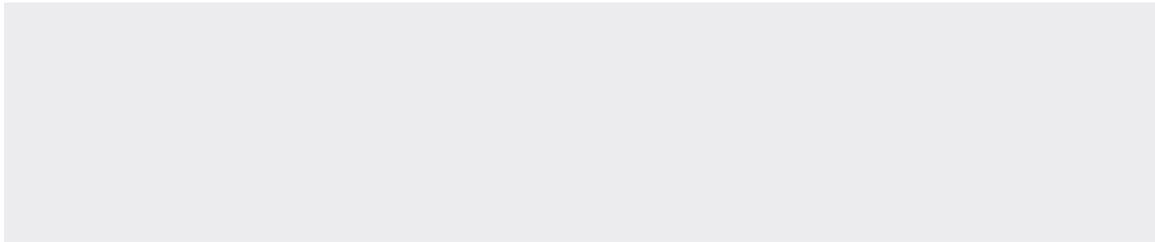
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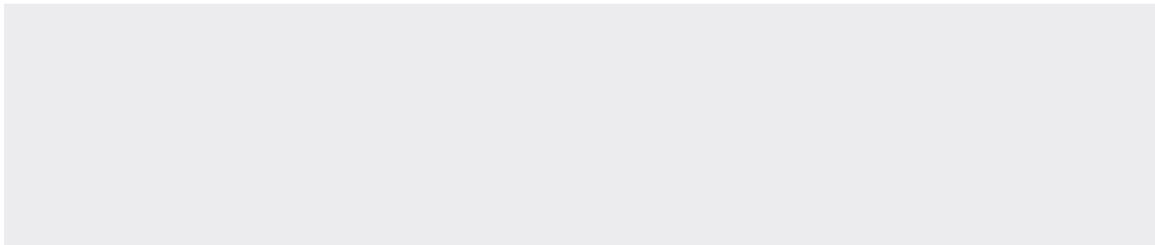
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# Communicate Deliberately

This is the ability to form, capture, and communicate stories, ideas, concepts, reflections, and learnings to the appropriate audiences.

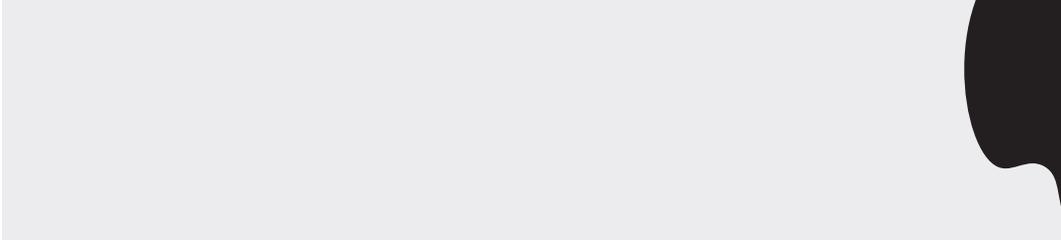
Designers are just as thoughtful about how they communicate, as well as what they communicate. Communication happens in a variety of contexts. It could include reflecting on your performance to a project team or crafting a video to show your product to a potential investor. In an intensely collaborative field, focused squarely on addressing human needs, communication and storytelling are paramount.

## You're exercising this ability when you...

- imagine the storytelling experience in parallel with the evolution of an idea/concept (and not the night before)
- iterate on your story (and actually test it)
- ask yourself "what's the most important thing we want viewers to remember?"
- design a way for your stakeholders to really experience your idea
- share ideas with a fellow teammate, a novice, or user throughout the project
- deliberately choose the most appropriate media/medium to convey your ideas
- learn a new communication medium to better communicate your idea
- create a team culture where clear and honest communication is valued
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...

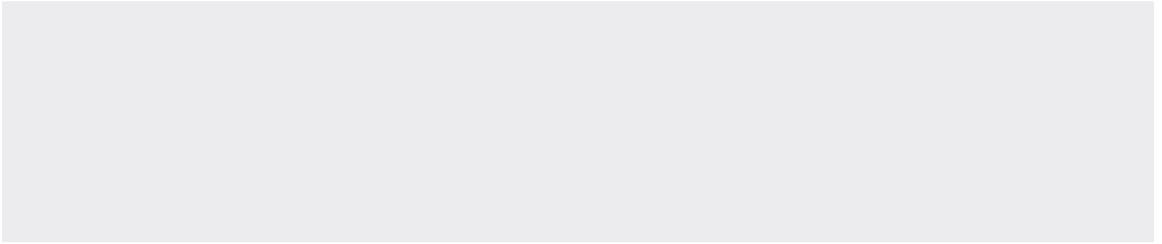
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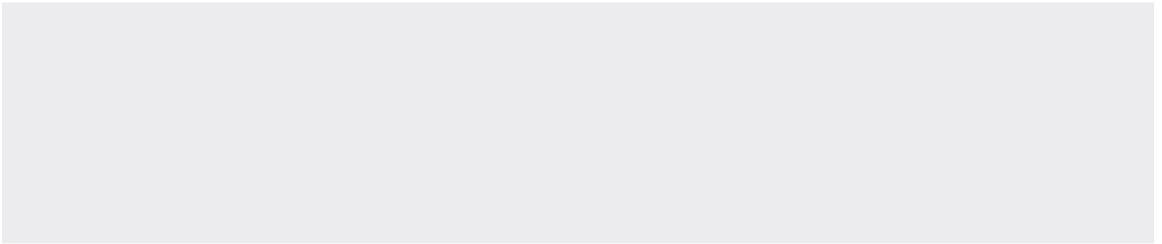
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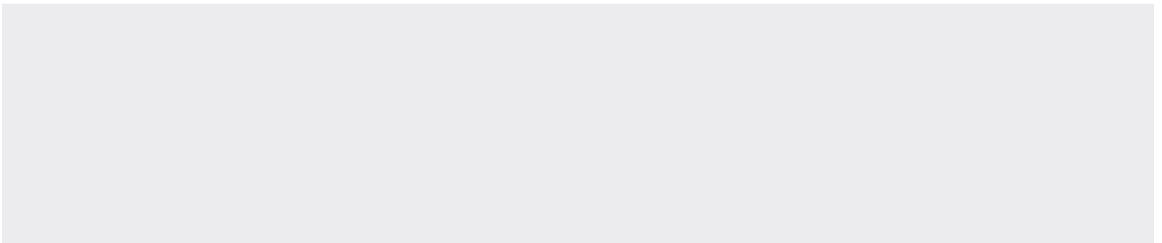
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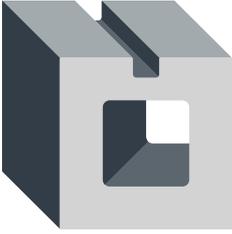
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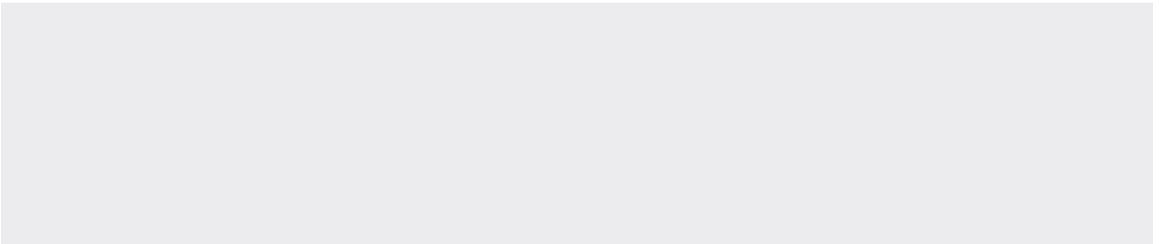
# Move between Concrete and Abstract

This ability contains a variety of skills, including fluidly working across multiple scales, as well as simultaneously shifting between the equally important worlds of tangible and intangible.

Designers recognize, and are energized by, the reality that everything is connected. When building out a new concept, whether a product, service, or experience, they need to be able to situate it within the larger ecosystem that relates to it and consider diverse stakeholders. We have Ray and Charles Eames to thank for showing us the power of zooming in and out of a particular context, looking at both the high-level view, as well as granular details like specific features. Designers also continuously and fluidly move between the realms of tangible information/artifacts and abstracted meaning as they cycle between understanding and creating.

## **You're exercising this ability when you...**

- make journey maps at various time scales
- populate a stakeholder map or a system diagram
- consider multiple users and stakeholders in your work
- infer insights from stories and observations from user research (concrete to abstract) then use those insights to generate ideas and testable prototypes (abstract to concrete)
- form abstracted design principles or frameworks from specific data, which can guide and inspire the creation of specific design solutions
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...



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**I decided to do/try....**

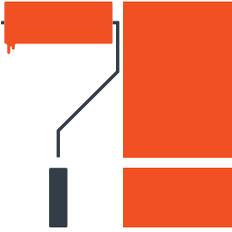
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**And because of that...**

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# Build and Craft Intentionally

This ability is about thoughtful construction and showing work at the most appropriate level of resolution for the audience and feedback desired.

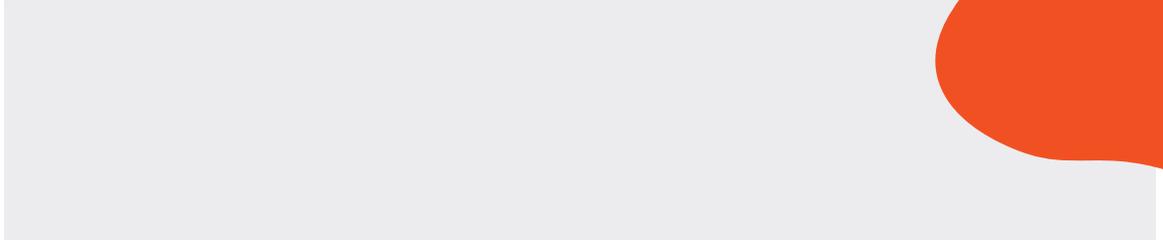
Designers know that details matter when you're bringing an idea to life, no matter if the medium is cardboard, pixels or text. Furthermore, there are many sub-disciplines of design, each with their own set of tools and techniques. UX designers have a set of tools specific to creating human-centered digital interfaces. Architects have an arsenal of techniques to bring new structures into the world. Every other discipline (immunology, macroeconomics, K12 education, etc.) has its own methods as well. This ability requires a sensitivity to the tools needed to create beautiful work in the domain that you are working in.

## You're exercising this ability when you...

- decide to make something more polished or resolved ("high res") in order to answer a question, get feedback, or present your idea
- learn a new skill, ability, or craft (ie. InDesign) to help you better communicate, represent, or display your idea in the most appropriate way
- bring on new talent to your team to help realize a concept at a certain level
- decide purposefully to leave something more rough ("low res") than might feel comfortable to get more honest feedback (and save time where it's non-critical)
- execute a piece of work at a level you are really proud of
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...

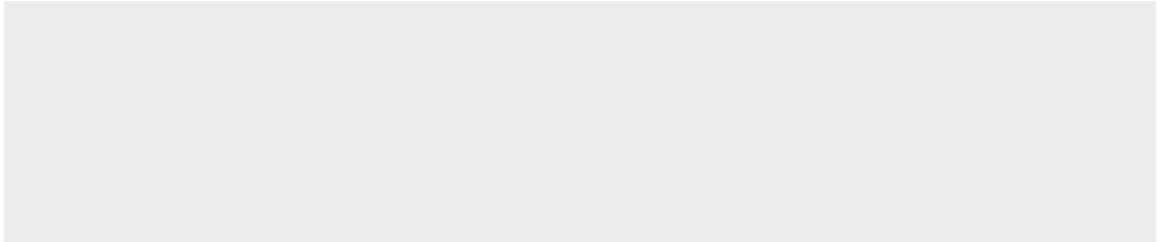
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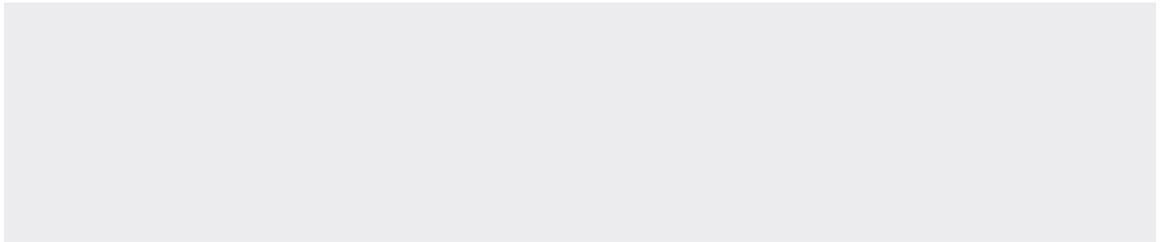
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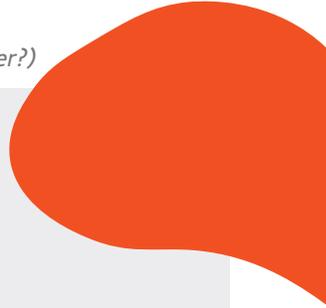
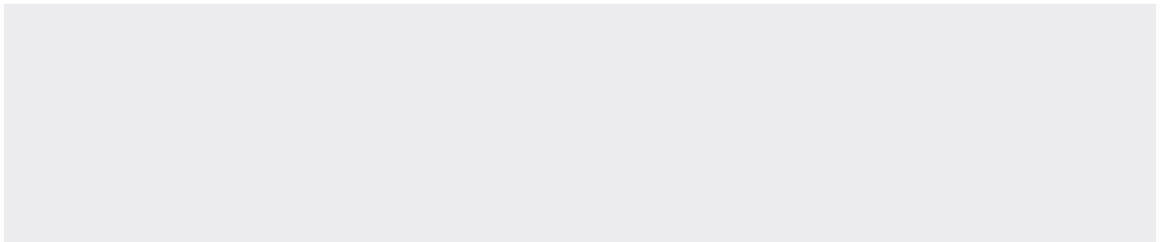
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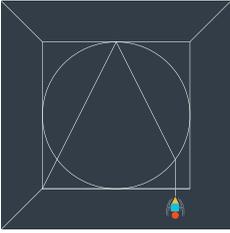
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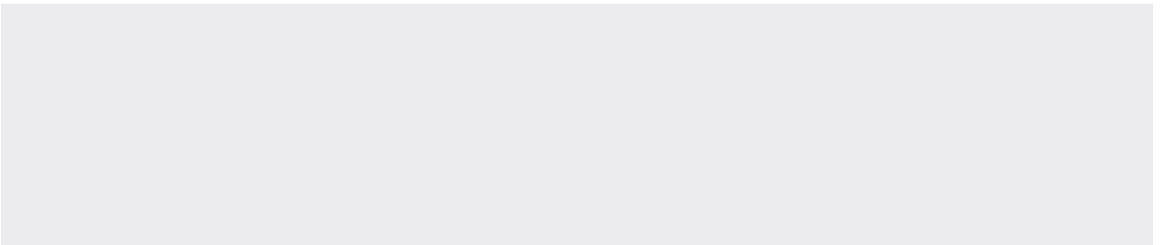
# Design Your Design Work

This meta ability is about recognizing a project phase or the project at large as a design problem and then deciding on the people, tools, techniques, and processes to use to tackle it.

Designers develop this ability with time and practice. There is an increased level of intuition and self-awareness that emerges with experience. It requires relying on your instincts, mashing up tools, and developing new techniques for the challenge at hand.

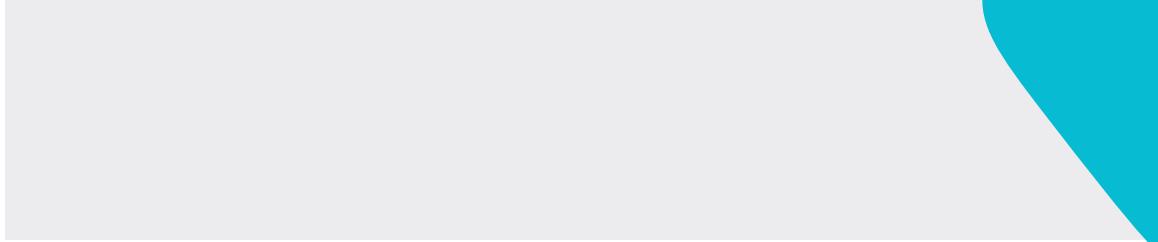
## **You're exercising this ability when you...**

- recognize that you could begin a project at any number of starting points, and have the confidence to choose one
- bring an additional mentor or expert into your team if needed at certain junctures
- let different team members lead different phases or activities based on skills/abilities/experience
- modify or revisit a tool you've learned to suit your needs
- ask yourself routinely "what does our project need right NOW?"
- what else? Fill in more ideas below...



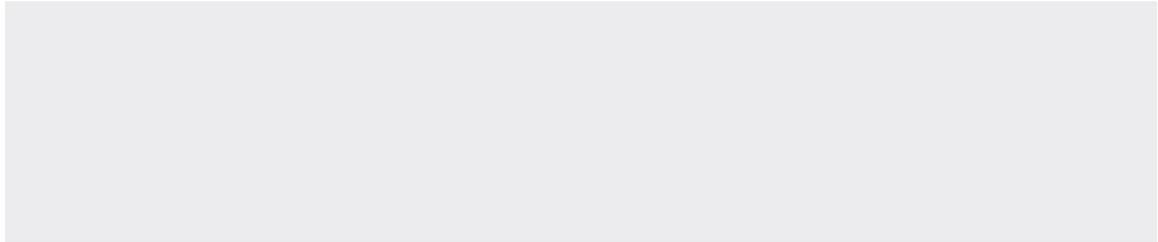
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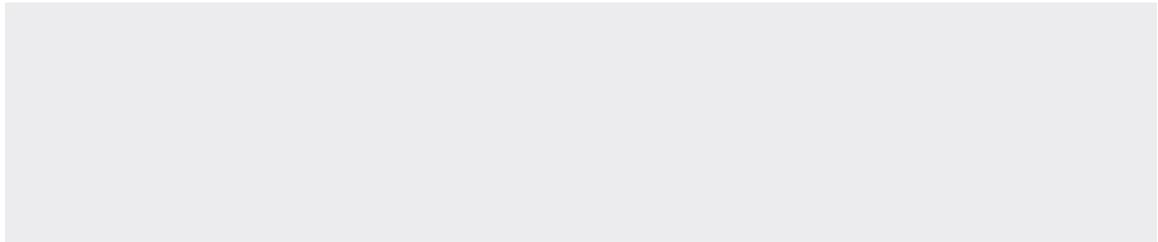
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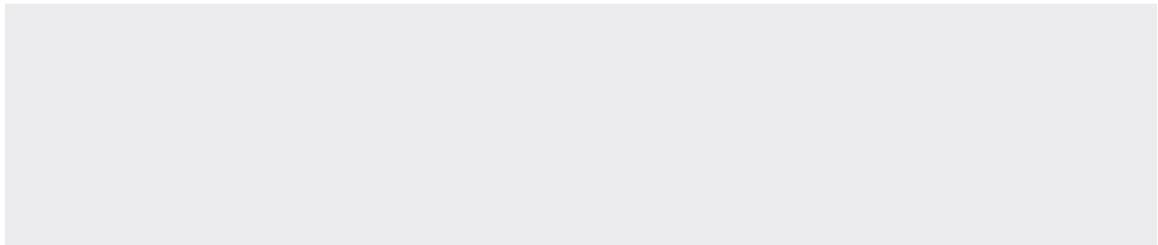
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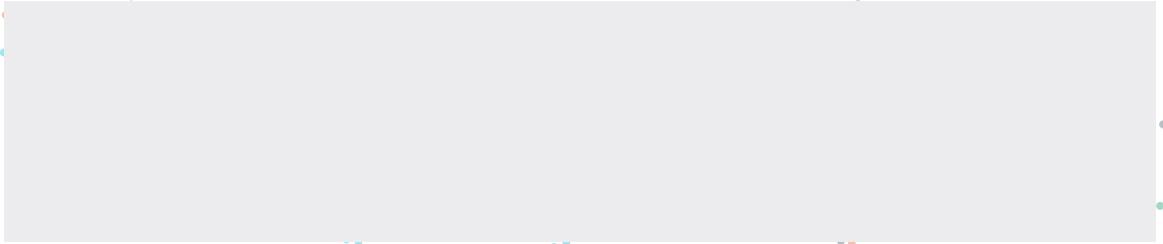
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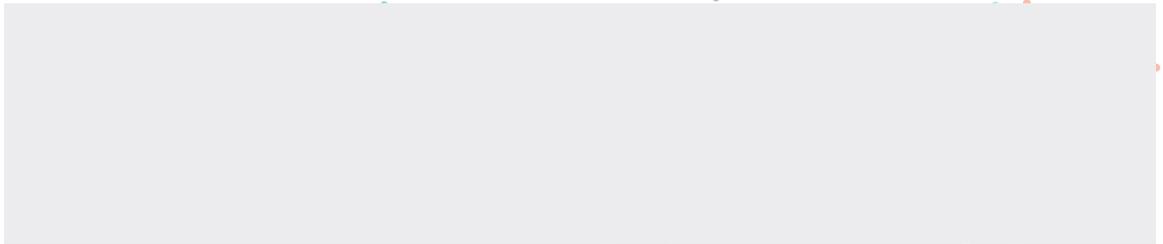
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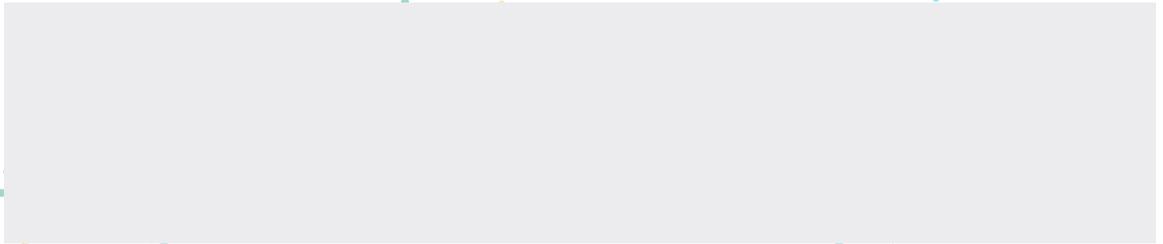
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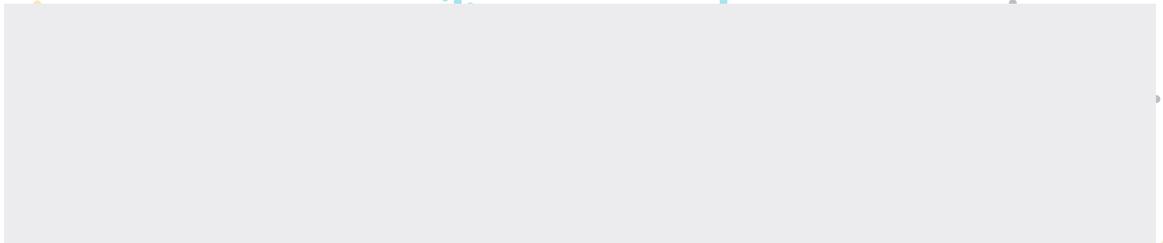
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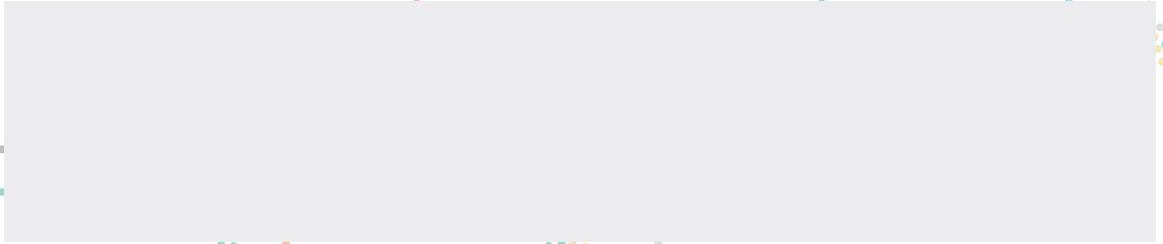
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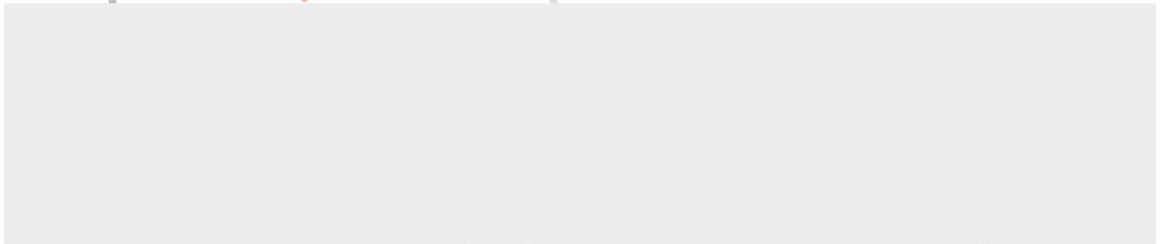
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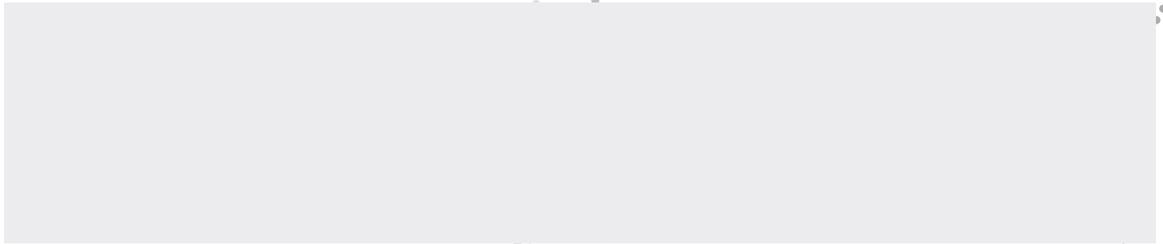
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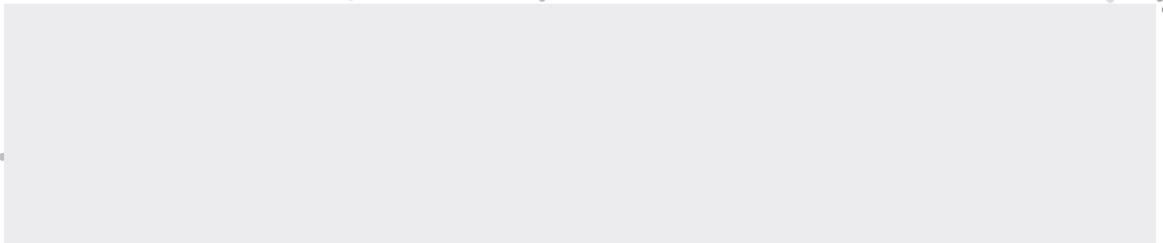
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