The hexagons represent one example of what a design process might look like, but it is not the only way. If we look more closely at the actual abilities (the “music notes”) that form this song, you see that woven into this song are 8 Core Design Abilities:

- **Empathize**
- **Define**
- **Prototype**
- **Test**
- **Ideate**
- **Learn from Others**
- **Navigate Ambiguity**
- **Move Between Concrete and Abstract**

Notice also that some abilities don’t fit neatly with a process step — they might be more like the percussion or base rhythm. These abilities are a little more intangible.

So what do you gain by learning the “notes,” beyond learning how to play existing “songs”? You might have heard this popular “song” before as you’ve been exposed to design thinking:

1. **The power of ‘Do Re Mi!’**
   From a common set of foundational abilities come an unlimited number of possibilities for ways to design and reach solutions.

   Even though there are a fixed number of notes on the musical spectrum, there are an infinite number of songs, sounds, and other musical compositions that have been created throughout history.

2. **The sensibility of a jazz musician.**
   Learning the foundational elements allows you to improvise your way through your work, adapting to what is needed in the moment.

   Beginning musicians start by learning to play other people’s music. Eventually, after years of practice, masters gain the ability to improvise — they have an intuition for what a piece needs, and expertly experiment their way forward.

3. **The richness of layering.**
   Abilities can be used in parallel to give depth and nuance to your design work, both individually, and especially as a team.

   As musicians mature, they learn how to make more interesting, beautiful, and layered sounds by collaborating with others. Other musicians bring different instruments, and even ways of making a different sound for the same note.
Do a quick ‘sound check’ to get a sense for where you are with your work and to identify where you might ‘balance’ a mix of abilities to amplify your impact on the challenge you’re tackling.

**Time to Shift**

**Jam Zone**

**Jump In!**

### Design Abilities

- **Tangible**
  - Move between concrete and abstract
  - Communicate deliberately
  - Navigate ambiguity
  - Design your design work

- **Intangible**
  - Design your abilities
  - Experiment rapidly
  - Build and craft intentionally
  - Communicate
  - Navigate ambiguity
  - Design your design work

### Jam Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>looks like...</th>
<th>sounds like...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photos, notes and active listening</td>
<td>I noticed...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest reflection, clustering of data points, insights, ideas</td>
<td>I wonder if this means...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating lots of early options, having scrappy conversations with fresh ideas</td>
<td>What if...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making, building in multiple dimensions and in varying levels of resolution</td>
<td>How to...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping and translating between the big picture and the details</td>
<td>I see a connection...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyboarding and visualizing communication flows</td>
<td>Who cares...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering a mix of potential outcomes in parallel</td>
<td>Let’s explore in parallel...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A map of your project showing question(s), experiments, people involved, tools being used</td>
<td>What the work needs now...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Jump In!

- List out the people, places and experiences that could help you learn about your challenge AND help you think about your challenge in new ways.
- Spread out your learnings – make them visual and start clustering and finding patterns.
- Create lots of ideas and options, using varied materials and formats.
- Take your experimental idea to a more resolved level, considering your medium and audience.
- List out your specific solutions, informing insights and bigger themes.
- Reflect with team and share out with stakeholders (users, managers, project champions, dissenters, etc.).
- Name the opposing tensions and potential outcomes for your work.
- List out the (1) challenge/question your work is tackling, (2) people you might want to get help from, (3) ways you might work together.

### I noticed...

- Soaking in learnings without wondering “what does this mean?” Is your curiosity dwindling?
- Focusing on getting to the “truth?” Afraid of inferring the wrong thing? Seeming patterns but no a-ha’s?
- Lots of ideas, but not enough early testing and learning? Have you fallen in love with your idea?
- Building for someone else besides your user or audience. (Hint: you?)
- Bouncing between solutions and implications to refine the “model,” without testing anything with users.
- It’s been awhile since you’ve communicated your idea to a colleague, mentor or user.
- Going in circles without willingness to commit to pursue a small set of meaningful directions.
- The project plan is perfect but you haven’t begun the actual work.

### Eesign abilities

- Learn from others (people and contexts)
- Synthesize information
- Experiment rapidly
- Build and craft intentionally