

Personas Cheat Sheet

OVERVIEW

A persona is a narrative that describes the person your product will be used by. It can be a valuable tool, one where the act of creating it has as much value as the artifact you will creating. A good persona will include information like:

- behavior patterns
- goals
- needs
- attitudes
- beliefs
- workflow
- skills
- environment

Each persona should have three or four important needs or goals. Choosing the right needs is an important design decision. They're closely related to the value proposition for your company, and ideally form the rational basis of your product development. Most persona needs should focus on what the person could get out of using a well-designed product or service.

- Personas represent behavior patterns, not job descriptions or demographic profiles.
- Personas must be specific to the design problem.
- Personas must be context-specific.
- Personas should be focused on the behaviors and goals related to the specific domain of a product.

Once your personas are written, review them to ensure they have remained realistic. Check that you have a manageable number of personas, and if two personas seem close in behaviors and goals, see if you can merge them into one persona.

STEP BY STEP

1. First, describe the basics: age, job, family, hobbies and interests. Where do they live? What's it like?
 2. Give them a name and a picture.
 3. Describe their typical day. (Focus on behavior patterns relevant to your value proposition/product.)
 4. List common questions, tasks, or frustrations they have.
 5. Who do they interact with most when completing tasks?
 6. Describe their attitudes and beliefs.
 7. Add a few details, such as working environment, frustrations, relationships with others, skill level.
 8. List out four or five needs that this person has.
-

WHAT PERSONAS ARE GREAT FOR

- Documenting the assumptions (hypotheses) about the user. (So that you can validate them through research.)
- Shifting your mindset away from "business models" and software, and into user-centered thinking.
- Getting everyone aligned around a single vision of who you're making the product for.
- Making design decisions less abstract and more human.
- Developing clear need statements before planning the product development (iteration planning, roadmap, story mapping, feature prioritization, etc.)

WHAT PERSONAS ARE -NOT- GREAT FOR

- Personas won't design your product.
- Personas won't validate your hypotheses. Only real people can do that.
- Personas won't replace research and testing.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- DO limit it to a single page
- DO give it a name and a picture
- DO describe a typical day
- DO focus on 4 or 5 Goals.
- DO print it in color, tape it to the wall, put it in your conference room, and give it to everyone on the team.
- DO use it as a touchstone—you're making products for a market or "users", you're making a product for Stephanie or Todd.
- DO keep the persona focused on things that will help you make decisions about how the product will be.
-
- DON'T go overboard with adding too many unrelated personal details.
- DON'T make it overly idealized. Real people are messy and your product will need to take that into account.

REFERENCES

This cheat sheet was compiled from probably a dozen resources, published over the past decade by [Jared Spool](#), [Kim Goodwin](#), [Patrick Kennedy](#), [Laura Klein](#), [Elizabeth Bacon](#), [Todd Warfel](#), [Tina Calabria](#), and I'm sure there were others that made it into my notes. If you see your words or original thoughts here and I haven't credited you, please let me know and I'll update with due reference.