

Exercise 1: Make a Toy

Using everyday materials, create a toy in under 60 minutes that can be brought to class for others to safely play with. Your toy can be simple or not, sensible or not, for children or not. Your toy will likely be an object or objects. Avoid instructions, which I guess means create a toy and not a game (what is this difference)? In any case, players will play with your toy without instructions. It's okay to buy materials, but don't buy a toy: make one.

Read Norman's "Design of Everyday Things" for concepts and tools for studying and creating experiences and interactions. McKenzie's "Sociopoetics" will later lay out the broad UX (user experience) frame we'll use throughout the term to analyze and design things and situations. For now, Norman's text zooms in and provides a toolkit for engaging the primary element of UX: experience design.

Key concepts from "Design of Everyday Things"

affordance

constraint

visibility

feedback

causality

natural feedback

designer model / system image / user model

You'll use these concepts to analyze and describe the user experience of playing with toys.

We will break into two groups, alternating with one group playing and the other observing, and in-between building our design skills by using concepts to see and hone practices, as well as to develop a language for describing our observations and design decisions to others.

This project has several goals. The first is simply to create something that's fun and engaging for others. The second is to renew and deepen our everyday practices of experience design, the eliciting and shaping of interactions, emotions, and ideas through materials, objects, and symbols. The third is to learn valuable tools and terms used in design industries and beyond.