# R2: Wireframing – Student Notes

Outline

0. Sketching
1. Introduce Wireframes and why they're important
2. Introduce Figma
3. Practice Exercises
4. Figma Resources

Sketching

Before we discuss wireframing, we should talk about sketching, which you'll be doing on A2. Sketching generally takes place right after ideation in the design process and is a part of the **divergent design** process.

In this step, you want to generate **as many ideas as possible**, while focusing less on neatness and polish. It's often helpful to use pen/paper (or even marker, which is thicker and makes it easier to make sure you don't go into too much detail) to make sketches, as the impossibility of erasing makes it easier to freely generate ideas.
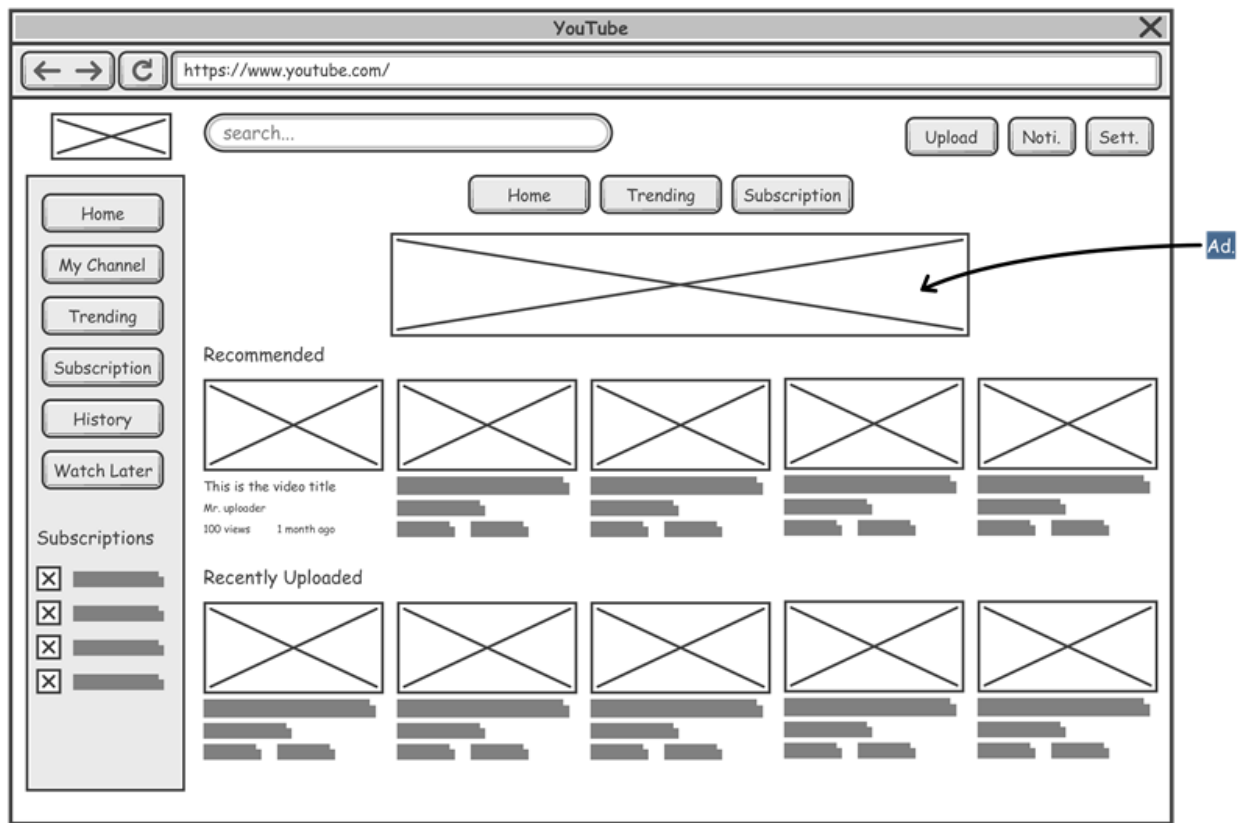
Exercise: On an ipad / writing implement and paper, sketch out what your portfolio's home page looks like right now, then as many different redesigns of your portfolio you can think of.
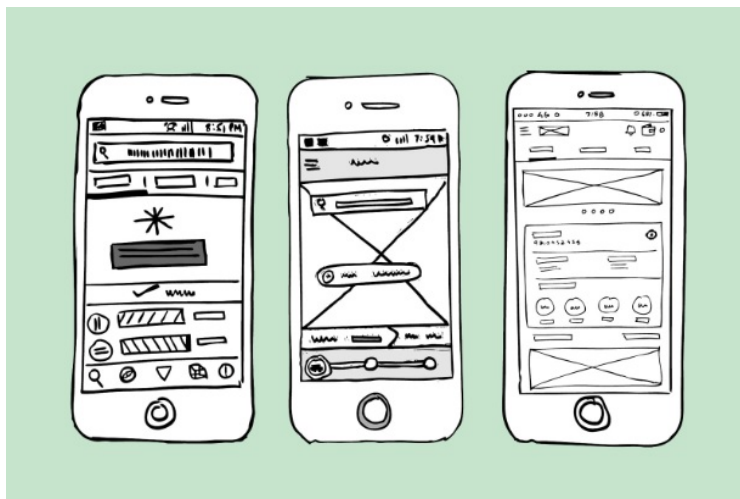
Introduction

What is a Wireframe?

Wireframes are illustrations or other visual mockups that represent the **skeletal framework** of a website / other user interface

a wireframe of YouTube's homepage

Why make them?

Some important reasons:
- Faster Interaction Prototyping and Iterative Design
  - Writing code for interfaces often takes more time than drawing what they look like
  - To this end, allows rounds of feedback to be given before anything is set in stone in code
- Better visualization of potential usage and interactions
- Potentially better consistency and more intentional use of repeated elements

Our focus <u>in this class</u> is to use wireframes to dictate **layout, functionality, and user experience**

- Color and aesthetic elements, though useful, are less important for the class
- The goal is to convey your idea and provide a **visualization and basic interactive flow** that is concrete enough for the viewer to fill in the remaining details with their imagination to understand what the webpage will eventually look like and feel like

In industry settings, wireframes can be very detailed (high-fidelity), to the point where it's essentially visually identical to the eventual webpage that the engineer is supposed to build.

But why learn wireframing if I'll just be writing software?

- Knowing how to wireframe will allow you to interface better with designers/PMs
  - Allows you to potentially contribute to ideating as well, since you might have more specific technical knowledge that can add new perspectives
- You never know when you might be put in a position where you have to wear a designer "hat"
  - E.g. sometimes it's helpful to be able to throw together a quick visualization of an idea that you want feedback for – being able to create it yourself allows you to shorten the time it takes to achieve this
  - E.g. In cases where you might not be working in big teams with specific designers (i.e. you're creating a personal portfolio website or working on some other personal project), being able to create wireframes can make it much easier to implement your vision and to separate the designing and coding steps of the project
- Wireframing is a kind of prototyping, and just like how you can test a design by building a minimum viable product (MVP) or paper prototype, you can test a design with wireframes
  - Conceptual design tends to be very abstract, and it can be hard to anticipate the problems that will arise during actual use. However, when you build a wireframe, it becomes more concrete, and you can more easily see and address these potential problems

Wireframing Tools

Figma: Industry standard and what we'll be using in class this semester

- Besides just wireframing, it can also be used for graphic design, prototyping, charts/visualizations, etc.

Other tools: Adobe XD, Whimsical, Penpot

Intro to Figma

Setup

Create a free account at https://www.figma.com/. If you use your student email to sign up, you can upgrade to an Education plan for free: https://www.figma.com/education/
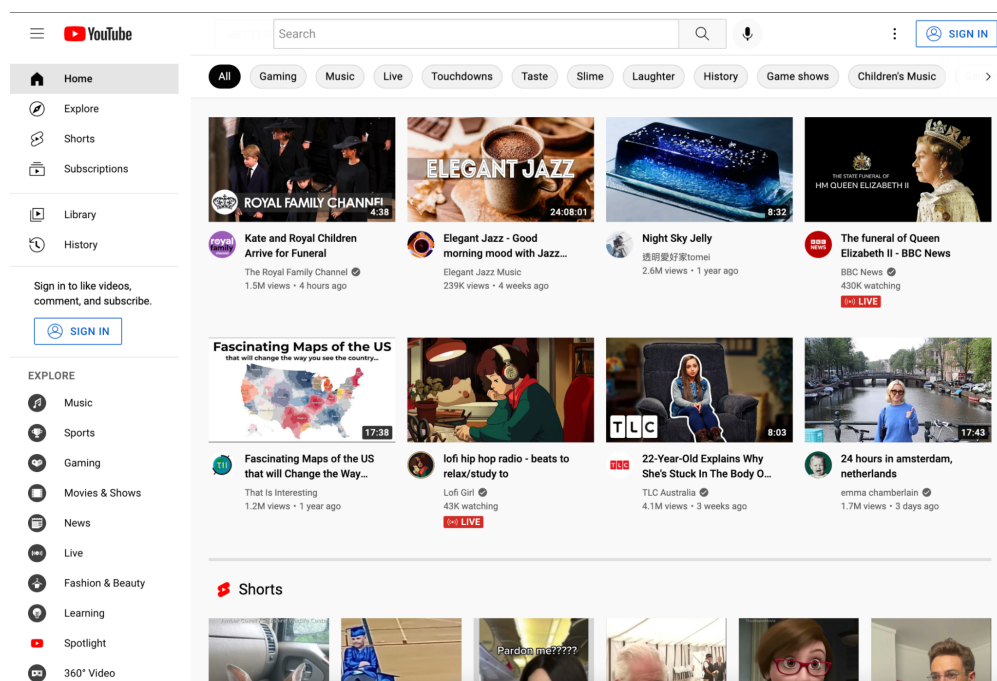- Has the same benefits as a professional plan

Figma walkthrough

During recitation, we walked through basic Figma features by creating a simplified YouTube Homepage view using Figma.
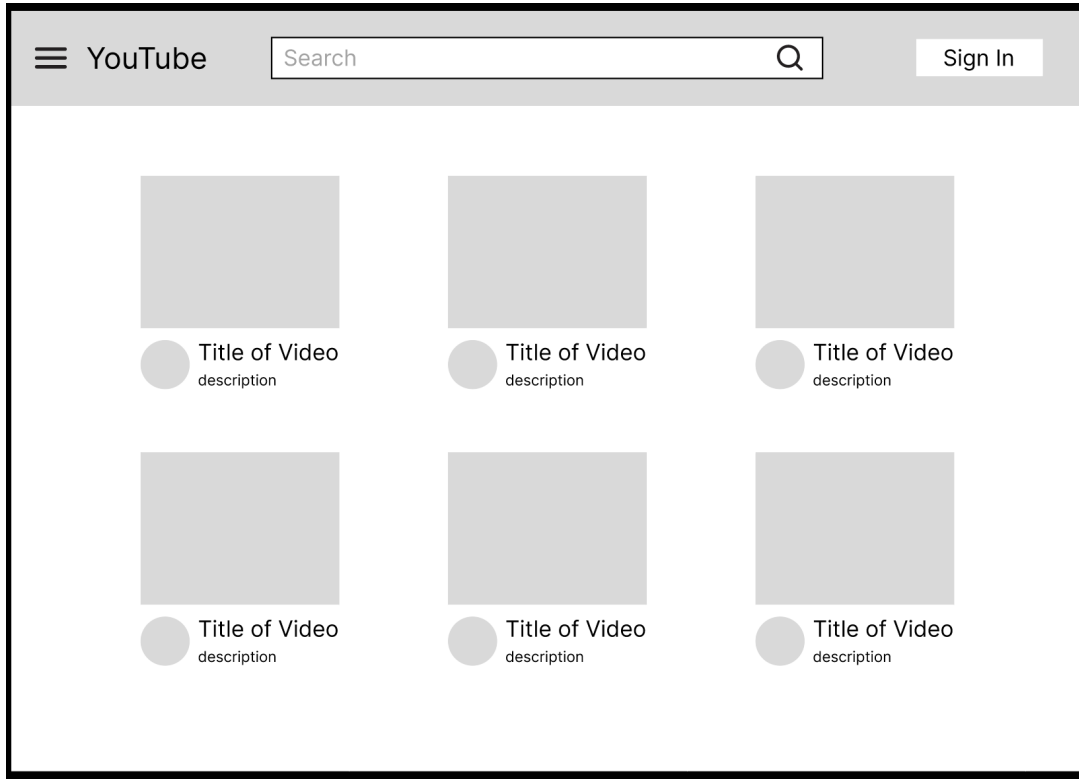
The final Figma file:
https://www.figma.com/file/zoPLZDd6j9obwZCOasta8Z/R2-Wireframing-Intro?type=design&node-id=0%3A1&mode=design&t=unKXHEE2jJVExegj-1

Our reference picture:

What we made:

Important concepts
- **Frames**: containers for designs, often used to denote pages
  - Can be contained within other frames
- Inserting and manipulating shapes and text
- **Components**
  - Main component: Defines properties of the component
  - Instances of a component: Copies of a component that you can reuse in your own designs. Changes to the main component will affect all instances of the component
- **Layers**: Each object is a layer, but these objects can be grouped into more conceptually "layer-like" things (this is confusing terminology)
- **User interactions** (Prototype > Interactions)
  - Used to dictate interactive flow, which is one of the things we want to display in wireframes for this class
  - A set of interactions creates a **user flow**
- Plugins

- ○ Community-made programs that "extend the functionality of Figma's editors"
- ○ Useful to find icon sets / other programs that can make life easier when creating wireframes

Exercises (10 minutes)

Try creating some wireframes, using your current portfolio website (or your ideal portfolio website, if you'd prefer).

See if you can add some user interactions! i.e. moving to the about page when the right button is clicked on the home page

Tips:
- Keep it simple! – as mentioned before, we want to dictate layout and functionality, so things like color and specific images are less important
- Create components where necessary (repeated elements, for example) in order to make making changes easier

Resources

- https://www.figma.com/blog/how-to-wireframe/
- https://designlab.com/figma-101-course/introduction-to-figma/
- Figma for Beginners video
- Figma Documentation
- **Components:** https://help.figma.com/hc/en-us/articles/360038662654-Guide-to-components-in-Figma
- **Prototyping, Interactions, Flows:** https://help.figma.com/hc/en-us/articles/360040314193-Guide-to-prototyping-in-Figma