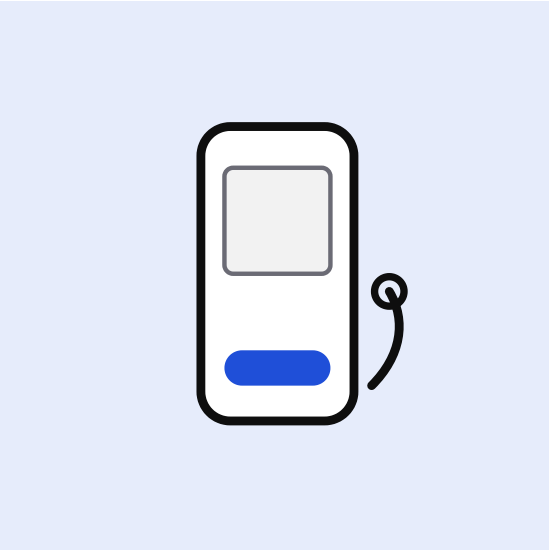
Specialty

Mobile app design

Designs apps for phones and tablets: small screens, finger input and use anywhere, often in a hurry.



In Spanish

Diseño de apps móviles

Origin

There were phone apps before, but the specialty took shape with touch screens and app stores (Apple released the kit for building iPhone apps in 2008); it has no single founder. Hoober and Berkman (2011) and Wroblewski (2011) gathered its first guidelines

What problem it addresses

An app is used on a small screen, with fingers (often the thumb of a single hand) and in short bursts, between other tasks and on the move. It also has to respect the conventions of iOS or Android, and ask for permissions and send notifications without abusing the trust of the people who use it.

Principles

Within thumb reach

Frequent actions go in the middle and lower part of the screen, where the thumb reaches, and at a size the finger can hit without effort.

Essentials first

Not everything fits on a small screen: each screen focuses on the main task and leaves the secondary one tap away.

Use in short bursts

People open the app for a minute, jump to another and come back; they should find it where they left it, without losing what they had typed.

Permissions at the right moment

Ask for access to location, the camera or contacts when the person uses the feature that needs it, and explain why in one clear sentence.

Each platform's conventions

On iOS and Android people expect different gestures, navigation and controls; follow them unless there is a good reason not to.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Put frequent actions in the part of the screen the thumb can reach.

Avoid

Cramming everything from the desktop version into the phone.

Don't fall for it

Test the app on the street, in a hurry and with one hand, not just at your desk.

Connections

Builds on

- Responsive design
- Fitts's law

Uses these methods

- Design system

Related to

- Accessible design
- Interaction design

Authors and works

2011	**Steven Hoober and Eric Berkman**	Collected 76 interaction patterns for mobile interfaces.
2011	**Luke Wroblewski**	Proposed starting design with the phone screen to force yourself to decide what is essential.
2013	**Steven Hoober**	Made 1,333 observations of people using their phones on the street, in cafés and on public transport: of the 780 touching the screen, 49% did so with one hand.
	Apple	Its interface guidelines describe the controls, gestures and patterns of its systems; for example, asking for a permission only when the person uses the feature that needs it.
	Google	Material Design, its design system, gathers components, guidelines and reusable code; it is the reference for Android apps.

Sources

Original sources

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