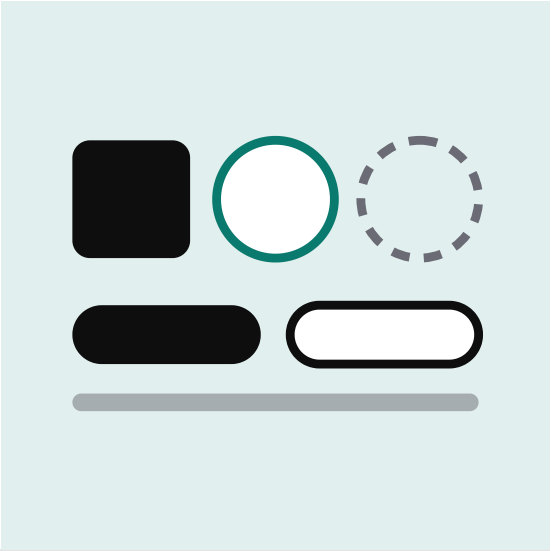
Artifact

Design system

A set of reusable components, rules, and criteria that a team shares to design and build consistent interfaces.



In Spanish

Sistema de diseño

Origin

Widespread practice that grew out of style guides and pattern libraries; atomic design, Frost (2016)

What it's for

It keeps each screen from reinventing buttons and styles, and the product from ending up inconsistent and expensive to maintain.

Key elements

Components

The reusable pieces, from the smallest to the largest, for example with atomic design.

Tokens

Colors, typography and spacing stored as data.

Rules and documentation

When and how each piece is used.

Owners

Who maintains it and decides on changes.

How it's done

1

Take inventory of what already exists in the product.

2

Define the pieces and their rules, from smallest to largest.

3

Keep it alive: document it, use it, and update it.

Applications in design

When to use it

When several teams or products repeat the same pieces and start to look different.

Avoid

Creating a system no one uses because it does not meet the team's needs.

Don't fall for it

Start with the pieces that repeat most, and remember that a design system is a product: it needs owners and maintenance.

Connections

Builds on

- Responsive design
- Jakob's law

Used by

- DesignOps
- Mobile app design
- UI design
- Brand identity design

Related to

- Agile UX
- Mockup
- Design principles

Authors and works

2016	**Brad Frost**	Proposed building interfaces as a system of pieces, from atoms to pages.
2017	**Alla Kholmatova**	Described a design system as patterns (the repeatable pieces of the interface) and practices (how the team creates, shares and uses them); a component library is only one part.
2025	**Design Tokens Community Group**	Published the first stable version of a common format for design tokens: colors, typography and spacing stored as data shared by design and code. It is a W3C community group, not an official standard.

Sources

Original sources

- Frost, B. (2016). Atomic design. Self-published. View source (https://atomicdesign.bradfrost.com/)
- Kholmatova, A. (2017). Design systems: A practical guide to creating design languages for digital products. Smashing Media. View source (https://www.smashingmagazine.com/design-systems-book/)

- Design Tokens Community Group (2025, October 28). Design tokens specification reaches first stable version. W3C Community Groups. View source (https://www.w3.org/community/design-tokens/2025/10/28/design-tokens-specification-reaches-first-stable-version/)

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