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Inclusive Design Personas

Designing for real needs, not edge cases

Why Use These Personas

Design Tools, Not Stories

These personas represent common accessibility needs across visual, auditory, cognitive, and motor abilities. They help you make informed design decisions during ideation, reviews, and handoff.

Each persona highlights specific challenges users face and provides actionable design guidance you can apply immediately.

Better Design for Everyone

Designing for accessibility needs improves usability across the board. High contrast benefits users in bright sunlight. Keyboard navigation helps power users work faster. Clear layouts reduce cognitive load for all users.

These aren't edge cases—they represent real people using your product every day.

Trevor – Visual



Profile

Low vision and color blindness

Needs

- High contrast between text and background
- Text that scales up to 200% without breaking layouts
- Compatibility with screen magnification software

Design Tips

- Avoid thin font weights below 400
- Never use gray text on gray backgrounds
- Ensure minimum 4.5:1 contrast ratio for text and icons
- Test your designs with a zoom level of 200%

Ama – Auditory



Profile

Profoundly Deaf

Needs

- Captions and transcripts for all video and audio content
- Visual alternatives for audio notifications and alerts
- Clear visual feedback for all system states

Design Tips

- Never rely on sound alone for error messages or alerts
- Provide visible status indicators and confirmation messages
- Use visual cues like color, icons, or animation for notifications
- Include text alternatives for audio instructions

Sam – Cognitive



Profile

ADHD and anxiety

Needs

- Clean, uncluttered layouts with clear visual hierarchy
- Predictable, consistent navigation patterns
- Control over auto-playing media and animations
- Plain language without jargon or complex terminology

Design Tips

- Break complex forms into smaller, manageable steps
- Reduce visual noise and unnecessary distractions
- Avoid sudden layout changes or unexpected interactions
- Provide clear progress indicators and next steps

Maria – Motor



Profile

Parkinson's disease with hand tremors

Needs

- Large click targets (minimum 44x44 pixels)
- Full keyboard navigation without requiring a mouse
- Interfaces that work with assistive input devices
- Adequate spacing between interactive elements

Design Tips

- Ensure dropdown menus stay open long enough to interact with
- Avoid hover-only interactions or time-sensitive controls
- Make sure all functionality is accessible via keyboard
- Don't require precise pointer movements or gestures

Common Design Patterns

These design considerations benefit multiple personas and improve overall usability.



Flexible Typography

Use relative units for text sizing and test at 200% zoom. Benefits Trevor and improves readability for everyone on different devices.



Keyboard Support

Ensure all interactive elements are reachable and operable via keyboard. Critical for Maria, but also helps power users navigate efficiently.



Clear Hierarchy

Organize content with clear headings and logical flow. Essential for Sam, but reduces cognitive load for all users scanning content.



Multi-Modal Feedback

Provide visual, auditory, and textual confirmation for actions. Ensures Ama never misses critical information and improves clarity for everyone.



Using Personas in Your Workflow

01

During Ideation

Reference at least one persona when exploring solutions. Ask: "How would Trevor navigate this?" or "Can Maria complete this action with a keyboard?"

02

In Design Reviews

Use personas to evaluate designs before handoff. Check each design against persona needs to identify potential barriers early.

03

Before Handoff

Document accessibility considerations in design specs. Note specific persona needs that require special attention during development.

Quick Reference Guide

Keep these priorities in mind during every design decision.

Visual

Contrast, scalability, and clear visual distinction

Auditory


Visual feedback and alternatives to sound

Cognitive

Clarity, consistency, and reduced complexity

Motor

Large targets, keyboard access, and forgiving interactions

 **Remember:** Designing for accessibility needs creates better experiences for everyone. It's not extra work—it's better design practice.

Next Steps

Make Personas Part of Your Process

Accessibility decisions made early in the design process reduce rework and improve outcomes. Consider at least one persona in every design review, critique, or handoff conversation.

These personas are living tools—reference them regularly, share them with your team, and use them to guide concrete design decisions.

Resources

- Download the full Personas Deck for offline reference
- Explore Inclusive Design Principles in the Accessibility Hub
- Review accessibility checklists before design handoff

