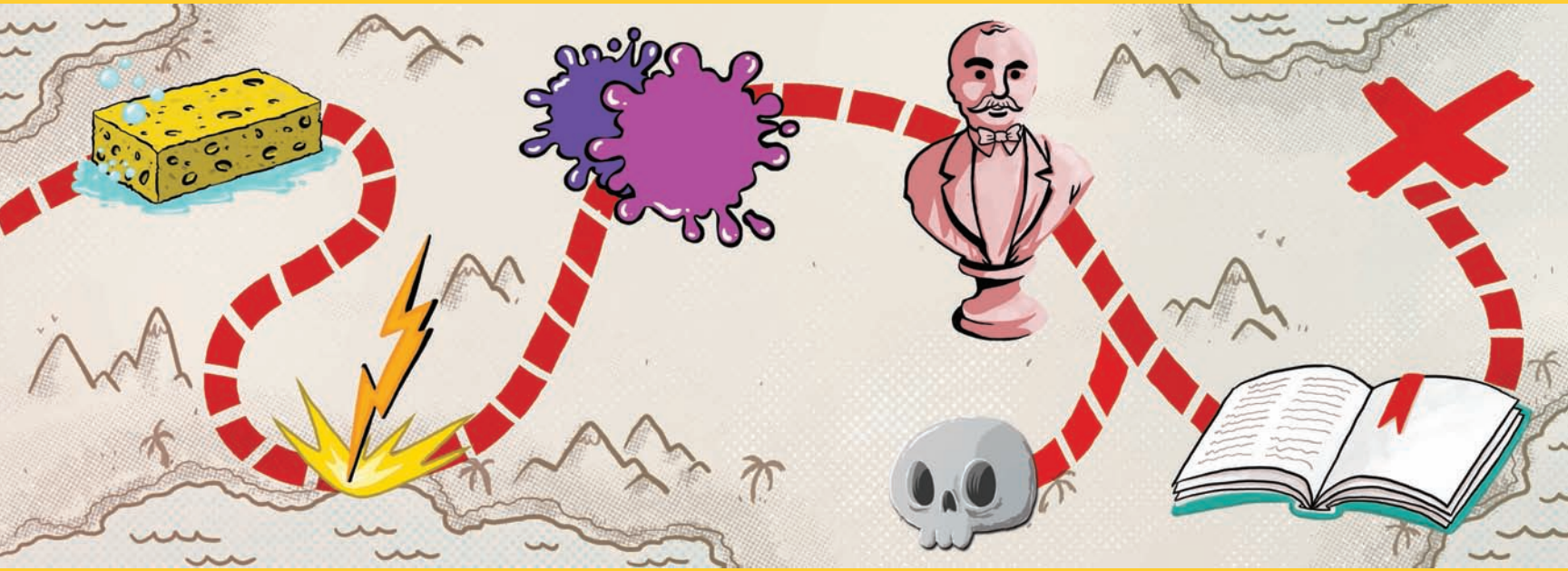
ADVENTURES *in* EXPERIENCE DESIGN



Activities for Beginners

CAROLYN CHANDLER • ANNA VAN SLEE

Adventures in Experience Design

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BY CAROLYN CHANDLER AND ANNA VAN SLEE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SEAN K. DOVE

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Carolyn Chandler and **Anna van Slee**

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Acclaim for Adventures

What a fun ride! *Adventures in Experience Design* cruises through the essentials, never slowing down for a lengthy explanation. Instead, you get memorable challenges, friendly, instructional feedback, and examples we can all relate to… or laugh at! Seriously, what other design book talks of "fat vs skinny questions" or narwhal enthusiasts?! Hands down the most playful, jargon-free way to jump into the vibrant world of user experience design.

- Stephen Anderson, author of *Seductive Interaction Design* **and** *Mental Notes*

Identifying needs and solving them creatively will make you an invaluable designer. *Adventures in Experience Design* is an accessible and fun way to learn these powerful skills and apply them. The lessons in this book will advance your abilities as a designer and help you stand out like a pro.

- Jason Eastman, Strategic Partner Development, Hasbro

Useful, practical, accessible and fun!

- Dave Gray, author of *Gamestorming* **and** *The Connected Company*

Whether you are a dabbler or diver, a student or a teacher, a learner earning a degree or a DIY-er, there are plenty of ideas to pursue and exercises to attempt. I'm an educator, and when I read I cannot help but think of how to turn ideas into curriculum - which questions to pose, which activities to catalyze, which collaborations to encourage - and Carolyn and Anna have already done that. I feel as if I'm cheating on a test because the work has already been completed, and yet I'll still earn credit for offering my students an inspiring, purpose-driven, and relevant course!

- Eric Davis, Founder/Director of the Global Citizenship Experience & GCE High School

Anna and Carolyn have done a brilliant job of breaking down the design processes in a fun and interactive way. A thoroughly enjoyable and inspiring read!

- Betsy Fore, CEO & Founder of www.Wondermento.com

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This book would not have been possible without the creative genius of Sean K. Dove. His whimsical illustrations and patiently crafted visual designs breathed life into our words.

Personal note from Carolyn:

A heart-warmed thank you to Anna, Rhett, my family, and my dear friends. You gave me the courage and heart to continue with an effort that took much of both to complete.

Personal note from Anna:

A million twinkling kisses to my Patrick for his infinite support. A huge bowl of cherry dumpling gratitude for my mom and dad for their wise advice. And a perpetual windmill of high fives with Carolyn - my professor, muse, and partner in crime.

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Introduction
by Carolyn Chandler

"Too much talking, not enough doing." That was the feedback that woke me up. It was my third quarter giving a class in User Experience Design at The Starter League in Chicago, and I realized that my lecture-heavy lessons were weighing down the beginners in the class.

Design is notoriously hard to teach in shorter blocks of time. So much of design happens in the mind, where nobody can see it. It's not just about skills and sketches, but about gaining a deep and empathetic understanding of others, about taking in the context of problems, about knowing when to fight for an idea, and when to give it up. How do you explain *that*?

I began to tinker with running activities meant to create those connections in the brain, and came to realize something important.

One activity is worth a thousand words of lecture.

An activity on its own can feel like work – not that work is bad. Good work is one of the most fulfilling parts of our lives. But studies have shown that people tend to be more creative when relaxed, after laughing. And of course, a key part of design is thinking creatively. I needed to include activities that were FUN!

The missing piece fell into place when Jim Jacoby, co-founder of ADMCi (American Design and Master-Craft Initiative), connected me with Anna van Slee. Anna has an amazing understanding of the power of play. She's developed toys and games with companies such as Hasbro, and directs the playCHIC fashion show. For this book, Anna designed the games that take these design lessons home! Her creativity makes this book fresh, even for seasoned pros.

Before you dive into the book, here are some of the questions you may be asking yourself...

What's with the funny chapter names?
Experienced readers may notice a similarity between some of our process–Sponge, Spark, Splatter, Sculpt, and Storytell, and the software development life cycle–Discover, Define, Design, Develop, Deploy.

We wanted to focus on the first three steps, which are essential to Experience Design. We also wanted to bring out the playfulness of design with artistic, multi-sensory words that enhance the meaning of each stage. And we wanted the journey through the design process to sound as fun and challenging to beginners as it is for professionals.

Who is this written for?

We wrote this for anyone who is exploring Experience Design, whether they are high school or college students, book club members looking for group games, or individuals who enjoy their learning accompanied by a family-sized portion of play. Seasoned professionals may also enjoy playing these games with other team members.

If I complete this, does that mean I can say I'm a professional designer?

These adventures are meant to get your feet wet, to get you thinking like a designer, and to help you see ways that design can solve problems or address needs. There's a lot more to Experience Design than these pages can hold. We hope this book will launch your learning or help you determine if you want to pursue Experience Design as a career. If that's your passion, we think you should! (We're a bit biased.)

Can I skip around?

The book is designed to guide you through a typical design process from beginning to end. Chapters provide "building block" concepts that are brought together with a final challenge at the end of each chapter. If you're a real beginner, we recommend you go through the lessons in sequence; but those with some experience may get more out of the book by jumping to the activities that they want to practice.

Do I need a bunch of people to go through this with me?

There's plenty here for an individual to learn! However, Experience Designers work with people, and some of the games require other players to join in for the lesson to make its point. If you're reading this alone, don't be shy about inviting friends, family, co-workers, or book club members to join you in a game.

For those using this book to run activities in groups or in the classroom, we've provided The Facilitator's Guide, which is available on the book's website at:

http://adventuresxd.com

You'll also find extra design challenges there, so you can continue sharpening the skills you'll develop.

Now get ready. Open your mind. Sharpen your pencils.

And most of all, have fun!

Carolyn and Anna

Fail Forward!

It's the mantra and the rallying cry of the designer.
Failure means you tried a solution, and it didn't work.
But knowing that solution didn't work is an advantage.
It's wisdom. It's insight. It's experience you can build upon.

Fail Fearlessly!

It takes a lot of courage to try, and to fail.
But you'll never reach a brilliant solution unless you try,
and fail, and try and fail, and try and fail...
And keep trying and failing, until you get it just right.

Fail for FUN!

Be silly! Be dramatic! Be stoic! Be secretive!
Enjoy exploring unlikely answers and misfit possibilities.
They just might take you down an unexpected path to the perfect solution.
In the Adventures of Experience Design, there are no dead ends.

Starting the Adventure

A Definition:

Experience design (XD) is the practice of designing products, processes, services, events, and environments with a focus placed on the quality of the user experience and culturally relevant solutions.

The New Everyday View on Ambient Intelligence
by Marzano and Aarts
(Uitgeverij 010 Publishers, 2003)

What Is Experience Design?

Experience Design is a term most often used by those who are creating a product, such as a mobile app. It's true that most of the jobs classified as "User Experience Design" or "User Experience Research" fall in the technology field, and this book often uses digital examples for that reason. But the Experience Design perspective is much broader than a single product. It involves an immersion into the lives of the people you're designing for, and building your empathy for and understanding of them. It involves a focus on what those people are trying to do, what they'll enjoy, and their day-to-day context. A single product, like the cake at a wedding, is only one element of a person's experience.

A chef plans the menu for an upcoming wedding. He talks to the bride and groom about their family, food preferences, and location. He finds out that most of the family is Italian, and he decides to plan a menu that includes different approaches to classic Italian dishes. There will be about ten vegetarians in attendance, so one dinner option will be eggplant lasagna. The bride has a gluten allergy, so the cake will need to be gluten-free.

Across town, the florist for the wedding is designing the centerpieces for the tables. The event space has high ceilings, so she wants something tall to complement. But, she also wants guests to be able to talk to each other without having flowers in the way. She chooses a tall, thin vase with an explosion of flowers above it.

At home, the bride and groom are trying to figure out how to best move the guests from the wedding location to the cocktail area, and finally to the main reception hall. Who should help direct people? What kind of timing is necessary? Aunt Jane is in a wheelchair. Will there be an elevator or ramp for her in each location? They're also looking at table seating for dinner. How can they seat people in a way that makes everyone feel included?

All of the people described here are applying elements of Experience Design. The chef is designing a culinary experience, considering the preferences and needs of those eating. The florist is designing a product that is both pleasing and well-fitted to the environment of the reception hall. The bride and groom are designing a process to move their guests from one area to another in a way that's clear and natural.

If you've planned a party, and made decisions that you thought would enhance the experience of your guests, you've done some of this already, too! In this book, you'll learn about the techniques that professional designers use when creating a great experience for others. Maybe you'll use them to create a new process or digital app.

But first, let's find out a little more about YOU.

Why are you here?

Maybe you're here to get your feet wet, trying design techniques to figure out if you want to dive deeper into a career as an Experience Designer.

Maybe you have a particular project or product in mind, and want to take it through some of the steps that designers use to envision and refine solution ideas creatively and collaboratively.

Maybe you just like your learning with a large helping of play!

Whatever the reason, you'll be glad you're here. There's power in understanding the needs of others, and creating something that really engages or empowers them. And what's fantastic is you don't have to consider yourself a professional designer to solve problems using Experience Design.

Going through the building blocks, challenges, and activities in this book will give you a designer's-eye view of the world. You'll try your hand at different techniques for gaining empathy for others, come up with great solution ideas, brainstorm multiple concepts, refine the best of them, and spread the word about your creation.

So you want to travel the path of design? There are riches and dangers ahead. Your feet are on the trail now. Stretch out and get ready with a warm-up activity that will open your mind and set your sights!

About THIS Experience

This is an activity-driven book that will take you through the kind of process professional designers use to create memorable experiences.

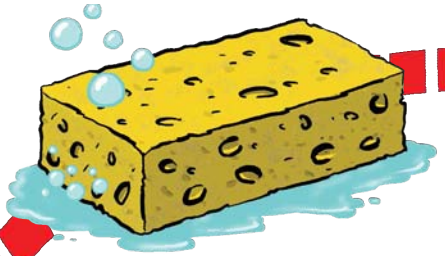
Each chapter introduces a stage in the design process. You'll find concise descriptions of key concepts for that stage, along with activities to practice important related skills.

Play the games to make the lessons come to life in a fun, often social way!

Concepts explored throughout each chapter are brought together in a final challenge, in which you work on a design solution of your own.

The Path Ahead

Here's the treasure map that will guide your way...



SPONGE!

What activity do you want to improve? For whom? What problems do they face now? Try these techniques to gain insights about the people you're designing for.

You'll Explore:

- Working with assumptions
- Asking research questions
- Basic body language
- Research in the field

SPARK!

Use insights to define your audience and the problems they face. Generate Solution Ideas by trying Spark questions that challenge and inspire.

You'll Explore:

- Finding a problem's root cause
- Quantitative vs. qualitative data
- Different solution types
- Questions that help you generate ideas
- Defining your idea