BelTech Edu 2024 - How to storyboard effectively

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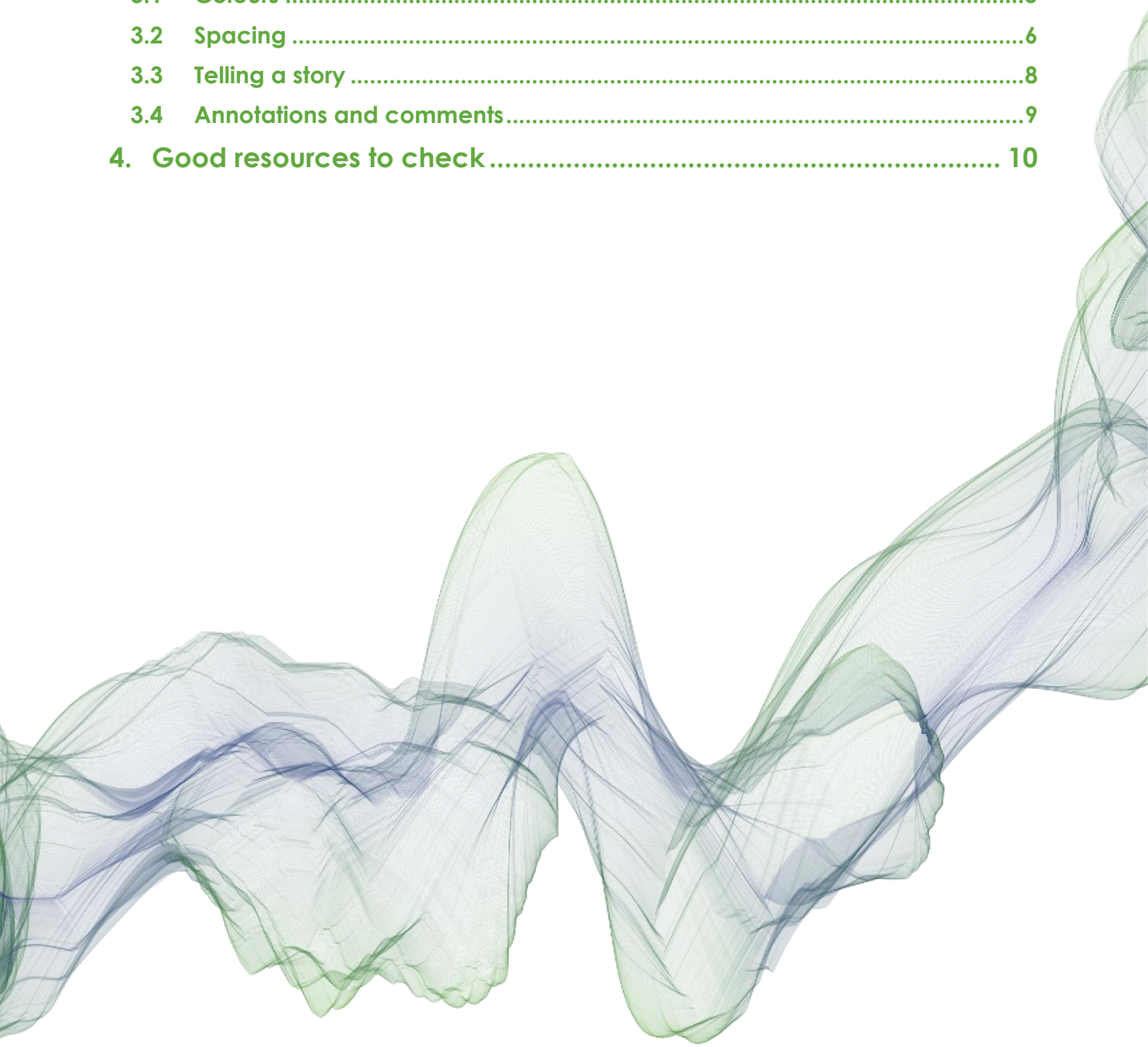


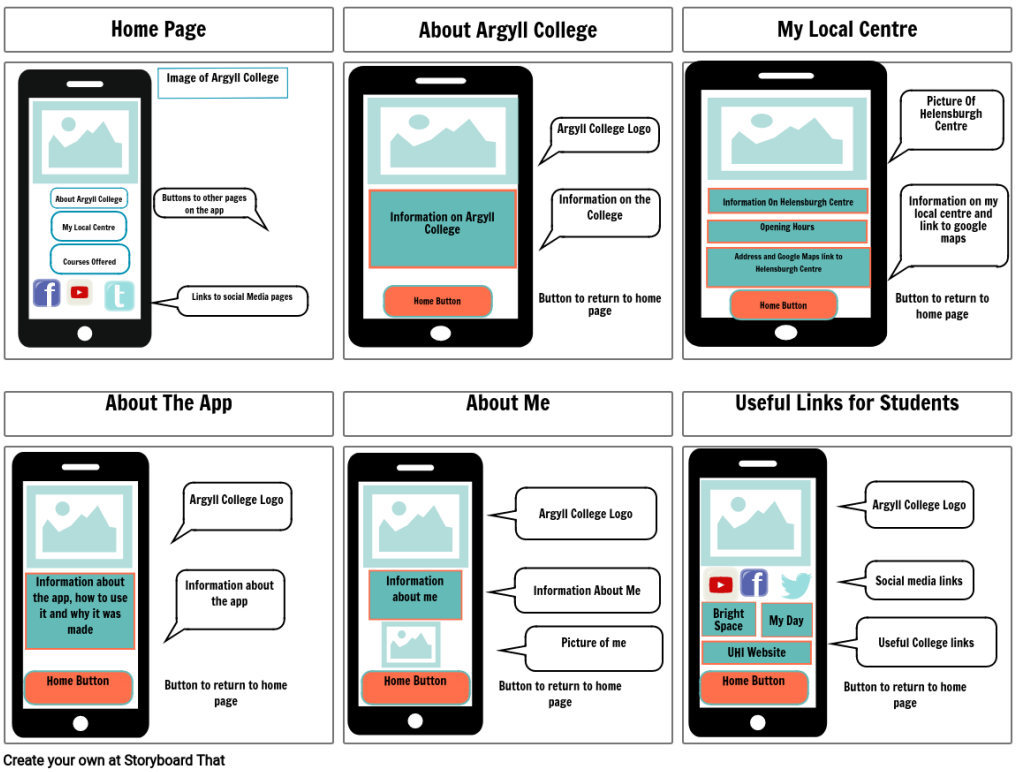
1. What is a storyboard?

Simply put, a storyboard is a graphical way of telling a story.

In our case, the *story* is how a *user* will use our *app*, and as a result how the *app idea* will solve the user's problem.

We use storyboards because they are very easy to understand, they don't feature a lot of text and don't require a large amount of technical knowledge to figure out, meaning the vast majority of people could very quickly look at a storyboard and understand what it is trying to convey.

A very basic storyboard can look something like this:



It has:

- A title saying what each page is
- A graphic showing what the screen would look like to the user
- A small amount of text showing what information the user would be displayed or explaining what is happening in the app.

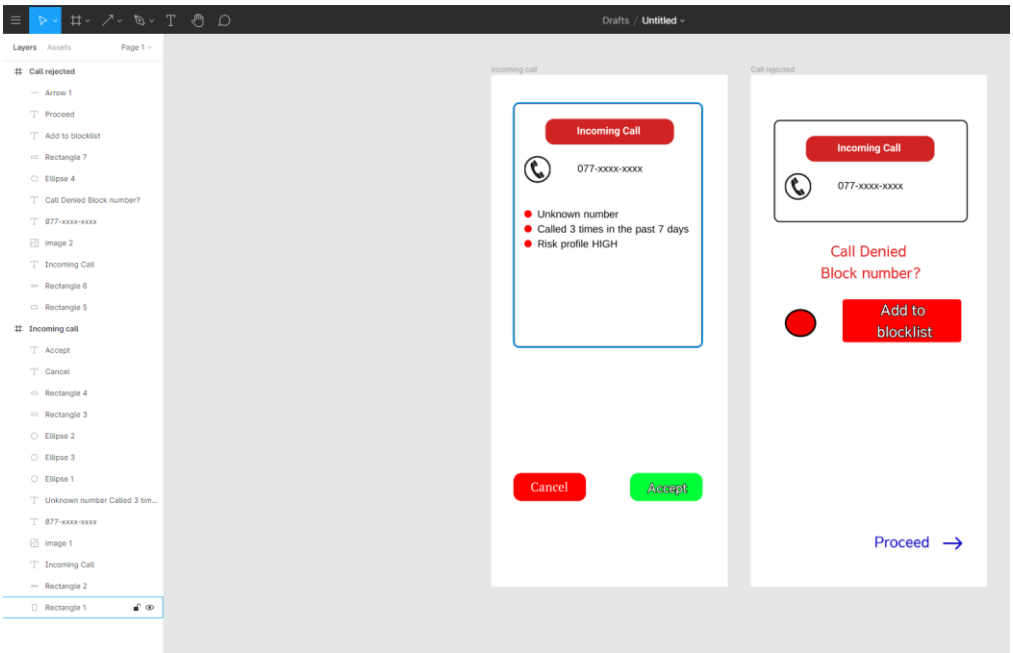
A very important aspect of a storyboard is how *accessible* it is, meaning could the majority of people understand what your storyboard is trying to say without you having to explain it to them?

2. What software can I use to make a storyboard?

For BelTech Edu 2024, you can use any storyboarding or design software you wish to create your storyboard, however if you haven't used any before, we have a few that we would like to recommend and have created tutorial documents for.

These are:

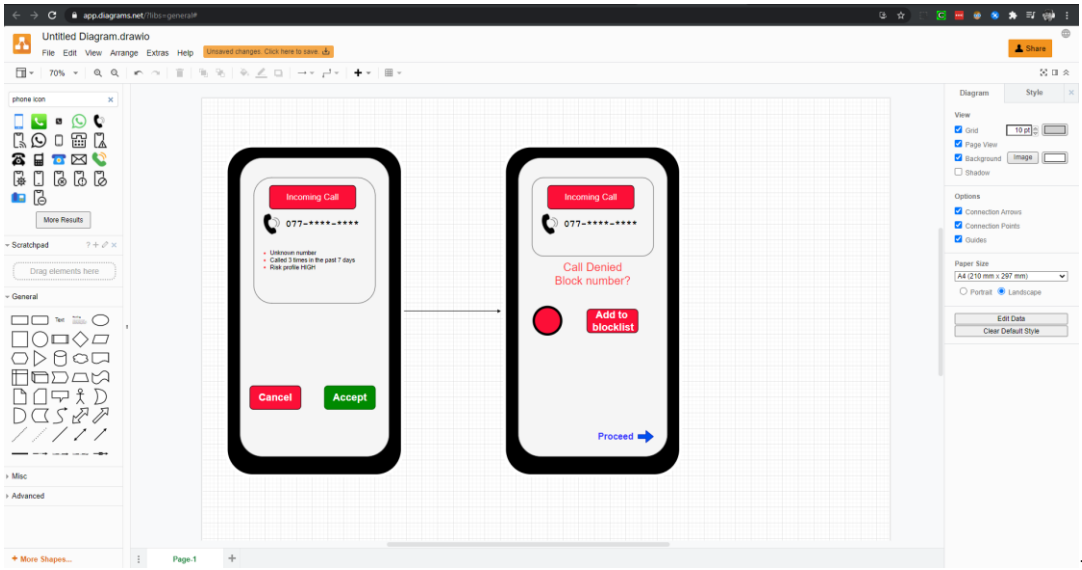
- Figma (At https://www.figma.com/)



-Figma

- Wide feature set
- Easy to get setup, keyboard shortcuts make development very quick and simple
- Allows multiple people to collaborate on the same document at the same time
- Very simple cloud storage
- 'Play' mode that allows you to see how your screen would display full sized
- Also allows for 'Interactions' meaning you can program buttons as if they were working on the phone to show navigation between screens
- Comes with pre-sized screen templates
- Completely free
- One of the best editors if you either work in a team, or want a very realistic demo for your idea

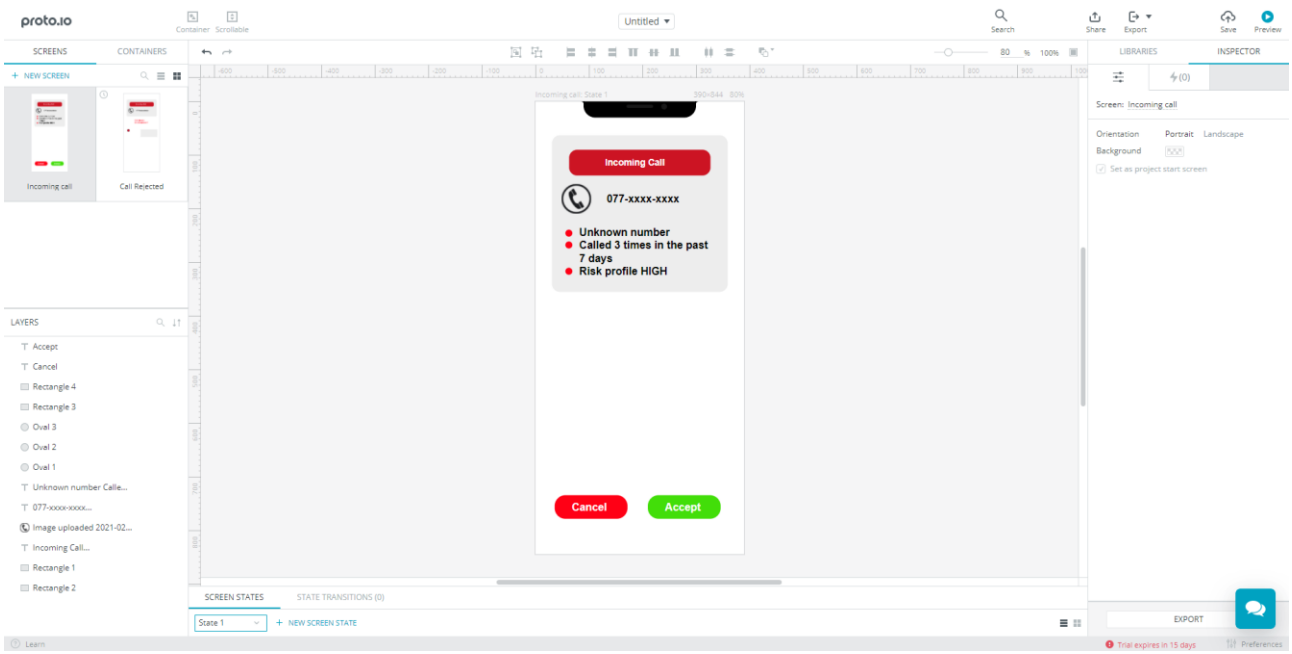
- Draw-io (At https://app.diagrams.net/)



- Draw.io

  - Fully free with no sign-up
  - Rich Icon set
  - Unfortunately does not have pre-set phone screen templates so you will have to make these yourself, as it is not an app-focused program
  - Easy to use and learn
  - Most basic out of the three, but also allows for the most flexibility
  - Unfortunately does not allow for demo or interaction with buttons as the other two recommended platforms do

- Proto-Io (At https://proto.io/)



  - 15 day free trial which may limit features and access to your work after this expires, so please be wary of it
    - If you decide to purchase to extend your trail, check to see if you are eligible for the 50% student discount
  - Lagrest and most interactive, app-centric feature set
  - Multiple pre-set features for most major phone types and UI styles
  - Essentially an "app in a box" designer
  - Comes with multiple templates you can take advantage of!
  - Most intuitive and gives the best results in my opinion, however you may find a different application suits your needs better

Make sure to check out all of these to find the one that you think will serve you best during the competition,

Importantly, all of these services are free, can be accessed from any web browser and offer some form of cloud storage, meaning you can access your files from any computer, anytime.

We have tutorial documents on our website showing how best to use all three of these tools, however, if you have a different tool that you would prefer to use then please feel free to use it!

3. Best practices to follow

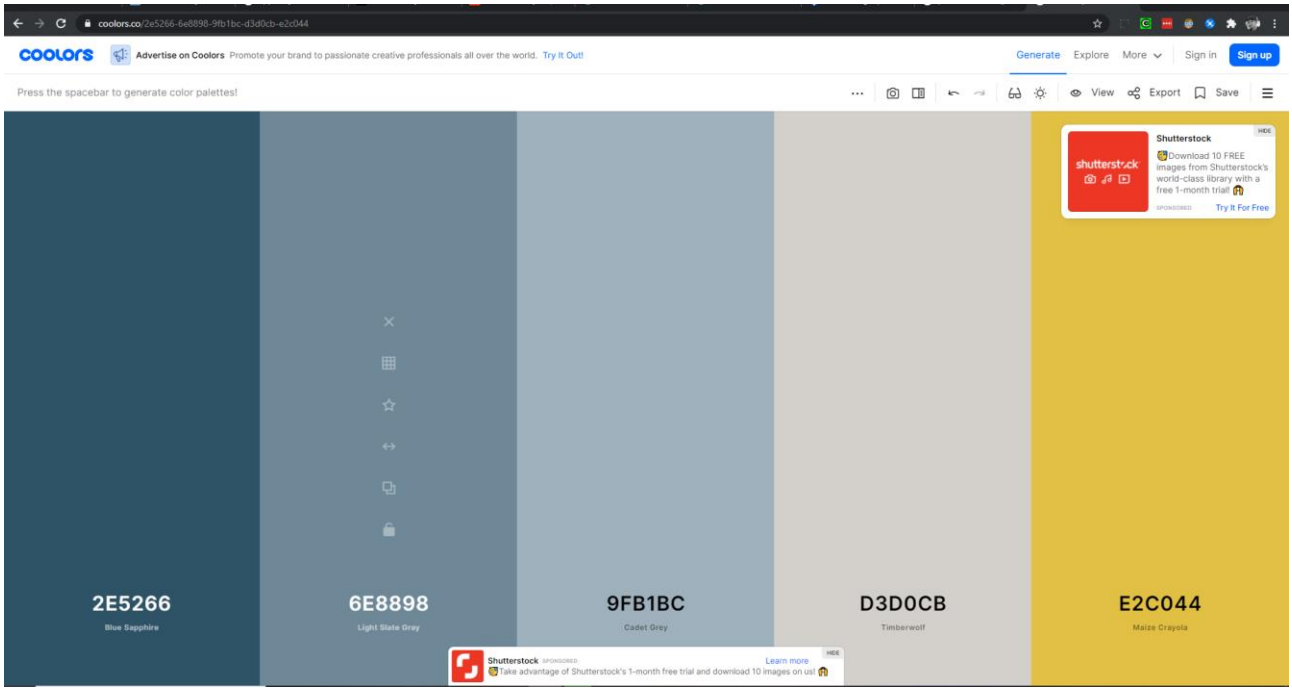
For your App idea storyboard, try to have a *consistent* layout and design between screens, this means that you should decide upon a style from the beginning, and try to stick to it for each screen that you design. This applies to things like colours, fonts and other styles, you should try to make these the same for each screen you add to your storyboard.

3.1 Colours

Try to decide upon a nice colour scheme early on in your app and stick to it unless you need to specifically colour code something.

A brilliant site to use for picking a colour pallete is https://coolors.co/

It allows you to generate a colour pallete by mixing colours that you like with compatible shades.



Simply press the spacebar until you see shades that you like, if you particularly like a certain colour or colours, you can 'lock' these so that they won't change the next time you press space, by hovering over the shade with you mouse and clicking the padlock icon.

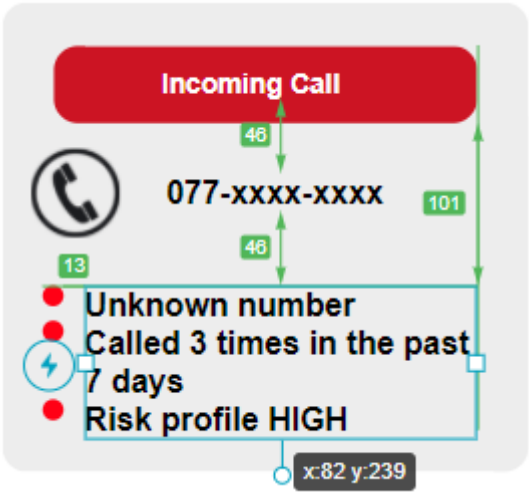
Once you're happy with your colours, make sure to save the hex codes (the numbers and letters at the bottom of each colour) by either jotting them down, or using the 'export' button at the top.

Then, when you go to make your app design storyboard, you can re-use these colours exactly by typing in the same hex-code as before.

3.2 Spacing

Depending on what tool you decide to use for storyboarding, you may see 'alignment guidelines' when moving pieces around the screen, this means that those two pieces are aligned in some way, either edge-to-edge or centre-to-centre.

When you see these, it likely means the element is in more or less the right place and will be visually appealing to the user



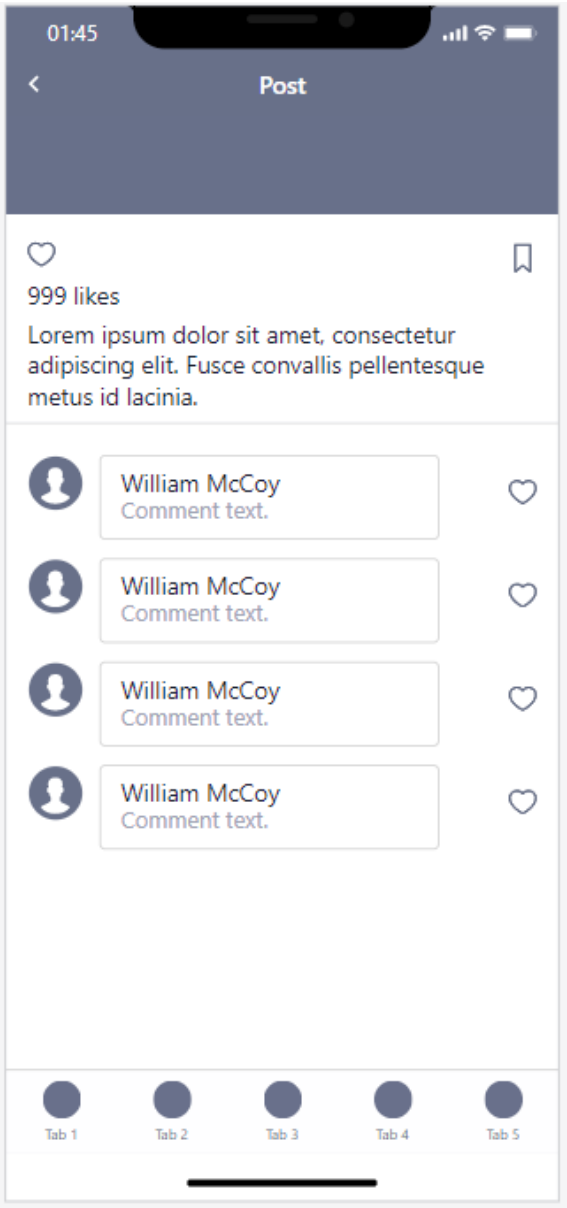
(Here the guidelines are shown in green, with the numbers showing the spaces between the different elements)

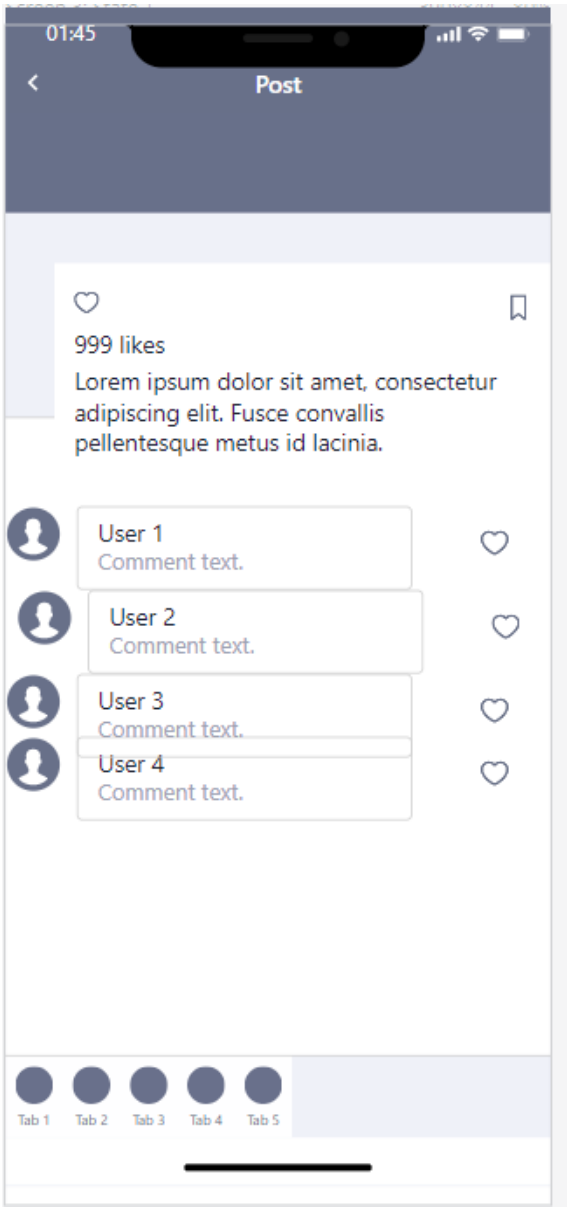
A well designed interface should be

- Mostly symmetrical
- Spaced out appropriately (so text or other things aren't overlapping eachother)
- Even spacing both horizontally and vertically
- Not leave large gaps being unused on the screen

If a screen is **too crowded** it can be difficult for a user to figure out what to do, likewise, if a user **does something** and can't easily see the **result** of their action, it can make your app difficult to use.

Compare these two layouts, and decide which is more visually appealing





First of all, out of alignment features jump right out at a user! So make sure to avoid this by using the **guidelines** when you move elements about. (look at user 2 on the second screen)

Worse than out of alignment elements are **overlapping** elements, this can make text difficult or even impossible to read and features impossible to interact with!

You also want to make sure that your design effectively uses the right amount of space, look at the tabs at the bottom, even though they take the full width of the screen at the bottom, they aren't **overwhelming** the user and use the space **effectively**

Finally, look at the impact the well spaced out comments have in the first and then the second screen, they make reading the individual comments much easier and make the app infinitely easier to use.

Therefore, making an app storyboard with a clean and organised layout can really help your app idea be amazing to the user, and therefore, easier to present to the judges!

3.3 Telling a story

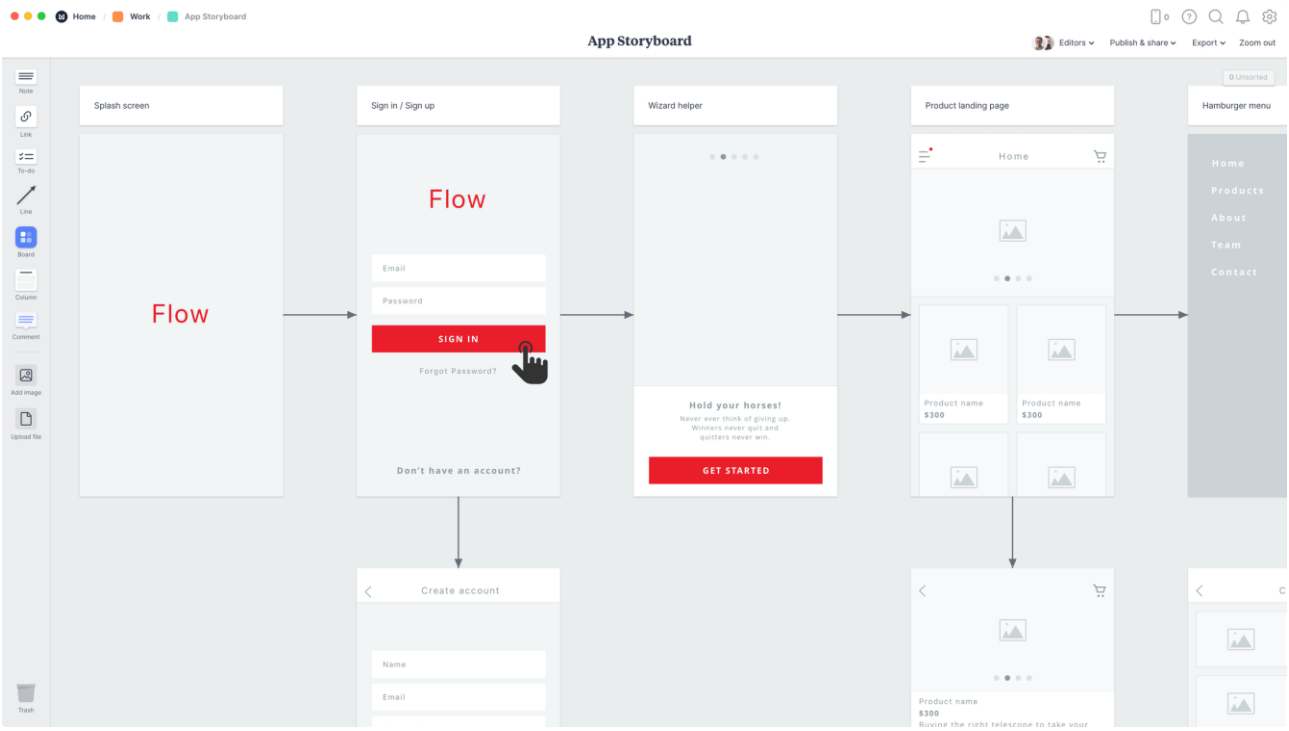
A storyboard is exactly what it says on the tin, **a story.**

So when designing your storyboard, **make sure it flows like a story.**

- It should begin with showing the first screens the user will see when they first open your app
- Then it should show the intermediary screens, telling the story of a user's journey through your app, including details like what the user enters or does on your app to make it work
- Finally, it should show the **result** of your app idea, after the user has used it and followed through their journey

If a storyboard has a good beginning, middle and end, it will likely be very accessible and understandable to anyone who views it.

To really convey how a user makes a journey through your app, make sure to **draw arrows** between the different screens on your storyboard to show anyone who is reading your storyboard how a user pressing a button, then causes the next screen to appear.



Sometimes apps can have **multiple journeys** depending on if a user presses 'yes' or 'no', makes a choice or otherwise some condition is met or not met. This means we may have to show more than one path through our storyboard.

In this case, make sure to draw multiple arrows to each relevant screen, and comment what decides which screen is moved to.

3.4 Annotations and comments

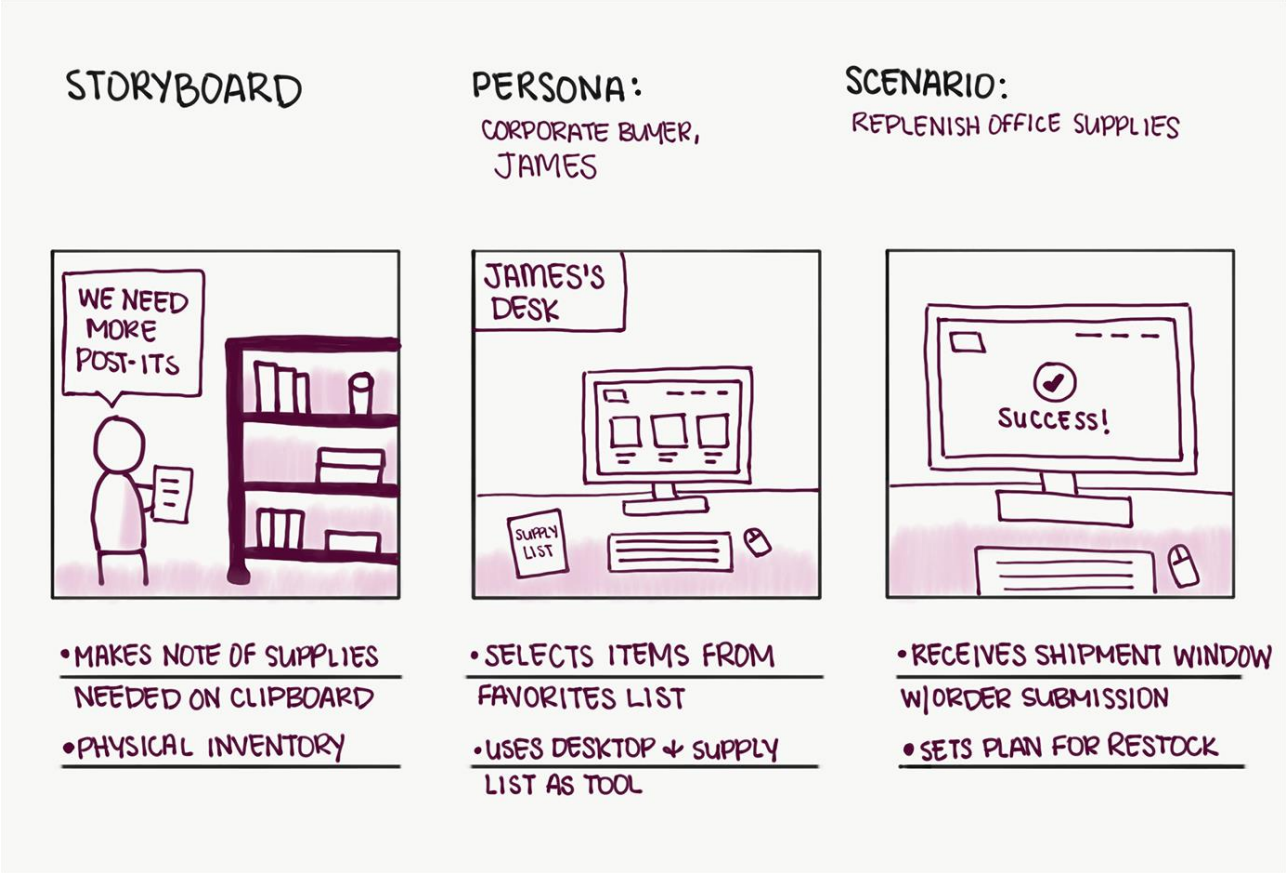
To really enhance a storyboard, make sure to add a couple of comments at the side of each screen.

Make sure that…

- Who the target user is
- What the user should do in the app
- What effect this would have on the app
- What information is on screen

Isn't left for the viewer to try and guess

But in the same vein, try not to over-crowd the storyboard with text, your visuals should explain 80% of your idea, with the text comments to cover the last 20%, just in case.



Small lines of comments at the bottom of each screen, sometimes even with arrows to point to certain elements, can really make an impact and sell your idea!

4. Good resources to check

https://www.storyboardthat.com/blog/e/what-is-a-storyboard

https://medium.com/@jjman505/how-to-storyboard-an-app-ede5ce249ea5

https://www.fastcompany.com/1672917/the-8-steps-to-creating-a-great-storyboard

https://www.nngroup.com/articles/storyboards-visualize-ideas/

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