Design Thinking: Creating and Utilizing Personas

AUTHOR	ASU Work+
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RESOURCE	Guide

A persona represents different users in design thinking. Within the Work+ Collective, our user may be a working learner, a working learner supervisor, a member of leadership, a student, etc. This persona is used to define who you are designing for. When creating a persona, you are creating a visual representation of your users and including pertinent details such as their motivations, skills, interests, pain points, goals, and personality. Personas don't describe real people, but are created based on actual data collected from multiple individuals and represent typical or outlying users.

Why use a persona?

Personas can be a helpful way to better understand your user's needs, behaviors, experiences, and goals throughout your design thinking process. Personas guide your ideation and empathy mapping process and can help designers to maintain a human-centered approach. They help you ask the right questions and best answer those questions through the perspective of the user.

These personas can be created and utilized in different ways. The two most common ways for you to use personas within Work+ will likely be:

Engaging Personas

- Creating personas from user research and based on a synthesis of what was learned about 'real' users during empathy interviews
- Considers themes or common characteristics observed that may be common across an entire user group or subgroup
- Makes attempt to avoid assumptions or fall into user stereotypes and provides opportunity for designers to relate

Fictional Personas

- Creates personas from the experience of the design thinkers and/or core team members
- Requires design thinkers to make assumptions based on past interactions with their user base and products or services
- Delivers a picture of a 'typical user'
- Can be used to support in the initial design process but should not be used as the sole guide for ideation, development, and product testing

How do you create a persona?

Research and analysis

- Looking into who your users are is critical to creating accurate and beneficial personas
- Utilizing institutional data, analytics, or current qualitative and/or quantitative data available to you through your department or institutions can be a perfect foundation
- This can also be done through the stories learned during empathy interviews when considering use of an engaging persona

Personal descriptions

There is not an exhaustive list of what to include or not include within a persona's description. Rather, consider what you most need to have as full a picture of your user as possible. This will likely include personas of different user types such as supervisors and working learners. Be sure to give your persona a name and give them as realistic a description as possible, influenced by your research and analysis.

Some details to include may be:

- Education
  – Class standing
  – Major
- Campus/Experiential engagement
- Lifestyle
- Motivations
- Interests
- Values
- Goals
- Needs
- Desires
- Attitudes
- Actions
- Responsibilities
- Stress or pain points
- Skills

Problem analysis

- Now that you've created your persona, you get to test their validity by considering different situations.
  – Based on their personal descriptions, can you answer how they would respond or react?
- If you feel you can answer situational questions through the lens of your persona, you likely have enough information to start
- If you cannot answer situational questions through the lens of your persona, you likely need more details. Consider adding in more information in their description to support you to see from their perspective and experience best.

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Additional considerations:

Consider what would be most valuable to your design sprint and think about creating personas of:
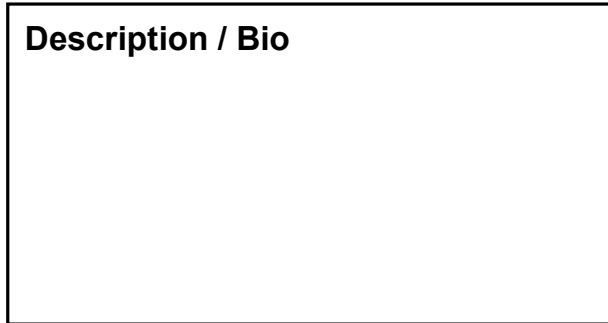
- Students who work on campus

- Students who work off campus

- Students with multiple jobs

- Graduate student employees/Graduate Assistants

- Federal Work Study student employees

- Supervisors of large student teams

- Supervisors with a lot of supervision experience

- Supervisors with no formal supervision training and little experience

- Undocumented students

- International students

- Transfer students

- Students who act as sole providers for their family

- First generation students

- Returning students

- Students of different race, gender, belief, sexual orientation, etc.

- Supervisors of different race, gender, belief, sexual orientation, etc.

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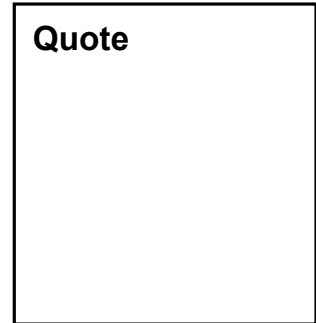# Design Thinking Persona Template

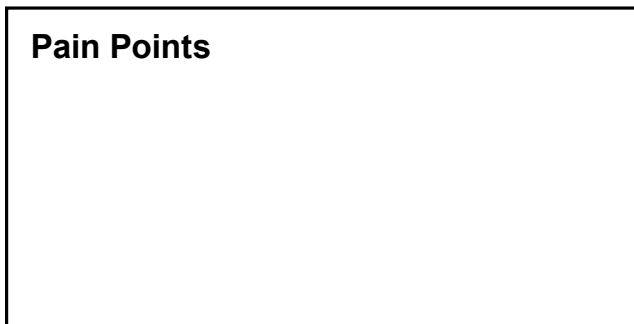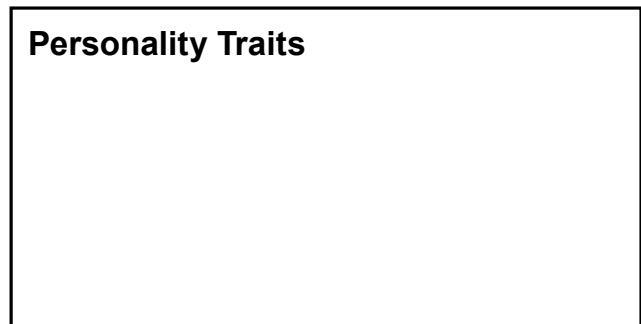| Image	Description / Bio	Quote

Goals

Needs

Pain Points

Personality Traits

Make:Iterate

Persona

Picture
Draw or paste a picture of the persona.

Name & Description
Talk about your persona and what makes them special. This can include demographic information.

Goals
What does this persona want to accomplish?

Challenges
What challenges do they face accomplishing their goal?

Habits
What are their shopping habits, internet habits, reading habits, or other important habits?

Resources:

Personas – A Simple Introduction

How to Create Personas for Design Thinking

20 User Persona Templates to Create Your Own

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