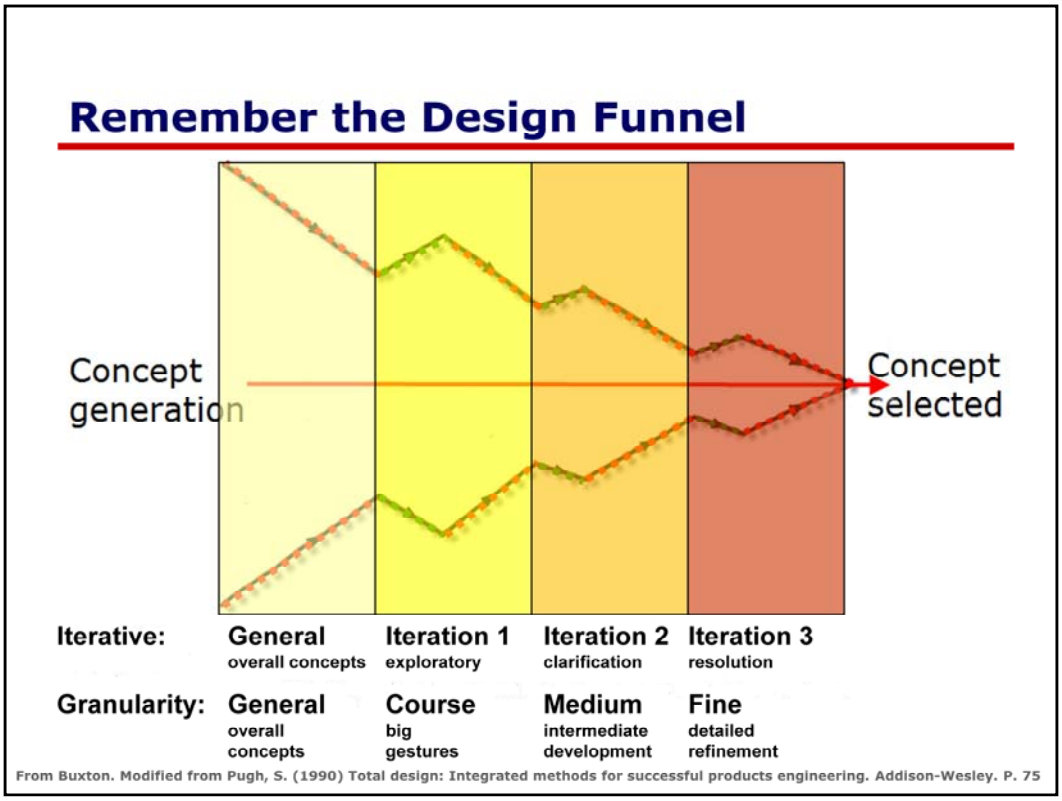
## What is a sketch?[1]

Concepts (and selected visuals) from this slide deck are based on:
-Buxton, B. (2007) Sketching User Experiences: Getting the Design Right and the Right Design. Morgan Kaufmann.

This slide deck is a very brief synopsis of Bill Buxton's description of a sketch, as found in:

Buxton, B. (2007) Sketching User Experiences: Getting the Design Right and the Right Design. Morgan Kaufmann.




To set the scene, remember the design funnel.

First, each stage is iterative, where one constantly generates and reduces ideas until resolution

Second, the granularity of exploration and development is finer as these iterations progress.

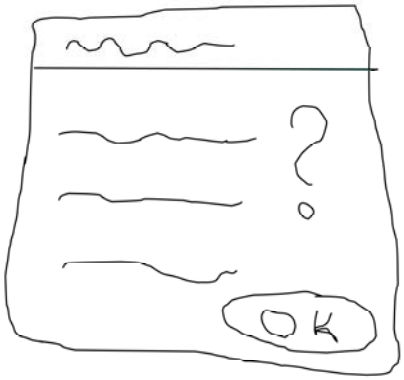
Also remember that:

- Sketching is about design.
- It is a fundamental tool that helps designers express, develop and communicate design ideas
- It is a critical part of the design funnel process: that begins with idea generation, to idea design, to design choices, to engineering

## The attributes of sketches

**Quick**

- to make




So lets review the attributes of what makes a sketch work in the design funnel, particularly in generating ideas and choosing between them.

## The attributes of sketches

**Quick**

**Timely**

- provided when needed

## The attributes of sketches

**Quick**

**Timely**

**Disposable**

- investment in the concept, not the execution

# The attributes of sketches

**Quick**

**Timely**

**Disposable**

**Plentiful**

- they make sense in a collection or series of ideas

*Form studies for a digital alarm clock*

Image source:
-Baskinger, M. (2008) Pencils before Pixels. *ACM Interactions, March+April, page 32.*

## The attributes of sketches

Quick

Timely

Disposable

Plentiful

**Clear vocabulary**

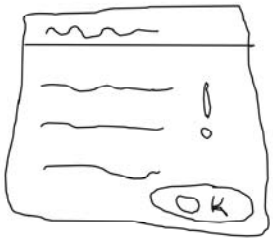
- rendering & style indicates it's a sketch, not an implementation

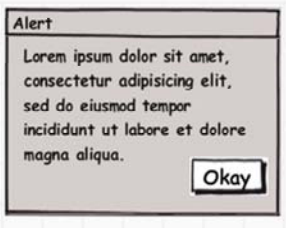
**Constrained resolution**

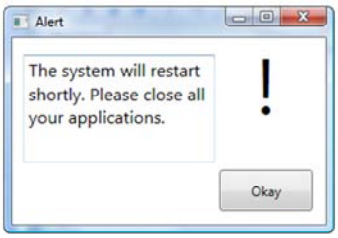
- no higher than required to capture its concept

**Consistency with state**

- refinement of rendering matches the state of concept development




The idea of the vocabulary, resolution and concept state really talks about where you are in the design funnel. Initial sketches will be very open ended, with course resolution so that the basic concept is suggested. Later refinements and variations of a chosen sketch may have a more concrete vocabulary and more resolution, but will still show its speculative nature.

## The attributes of sketches

Quick

Timely

Disposable

Plentiful

Clear vocabulary

Constrained resolution

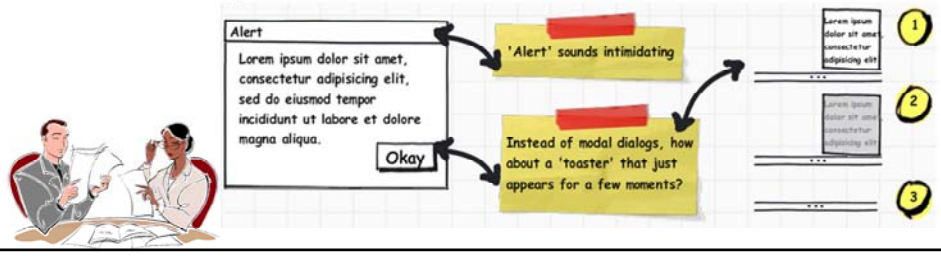
Consistency with state

**Suggest & explore *rather than* confirm**

- suggests /provokes what could be

**A catalyst**

- evokes conversations & discussion




Critically, a sketch should never close off design. Rather, it should constantly suggest what could be, and leave room for growth and variation. Indeed, that is what separates a sketch from a prototype.

## The attributes of sketches

**Quick**
- to make

**Timely**
- provided when needed

**Disposable**
- investment in the concept, not the execution

**Plentiful**
- they make sense in a collection or series of ideas

**Clear vocabulary**
- rendering & style indicates it's a sketch, not an implementation

**Constrained resolution**
- no higher than required to capture its concept

**Consistency with state**
- refinement of rendering matches the actual state of development of the concept

**Suggest & explore rather than confirm**
- value lies in suggesting and provoking what could be i.e., they are the catalyst to conversation and interaction

**A catalyst**
- evokes conversations and discussion

Concepts from Bill Buxton's Book Sketching User Experiences (2007) Morgan Kaufmann

## A Sketch is not a Prototype

Difference is

- a contrast of purpose (always)
- a contrast in form (usually, but not always)

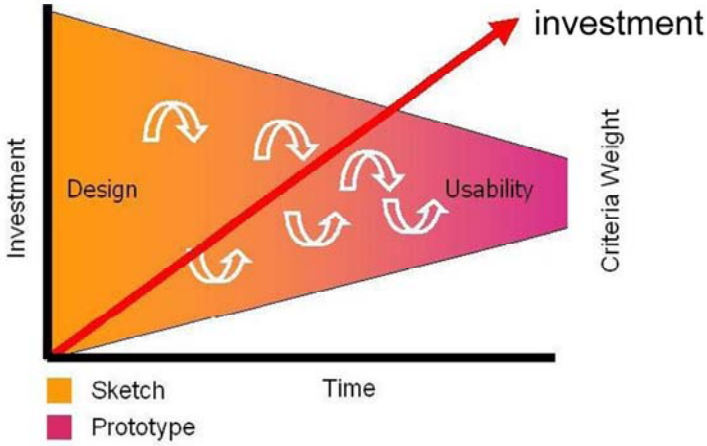
But

- it's a continuum

Software developers often use sketches and prototypes as synonyms. They are not the same.

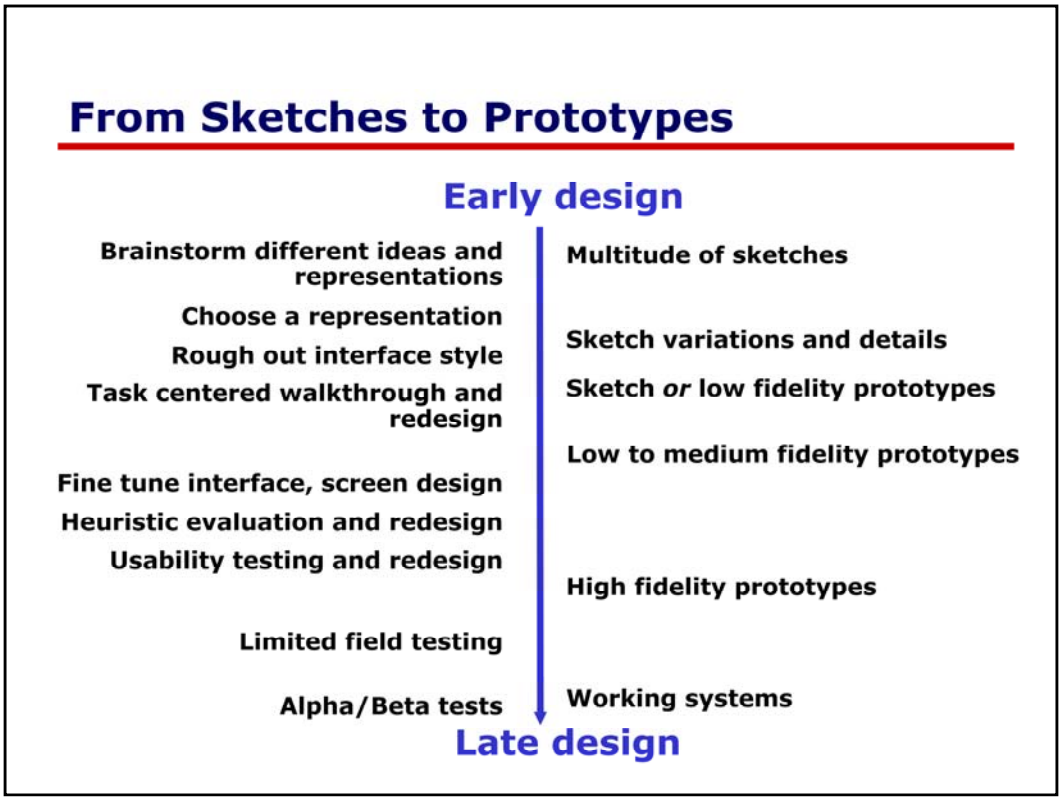
## From Sketches to Prototypes

- Sketches: early ideation stages of design
- Prototypes: capturing /detailing the actual design

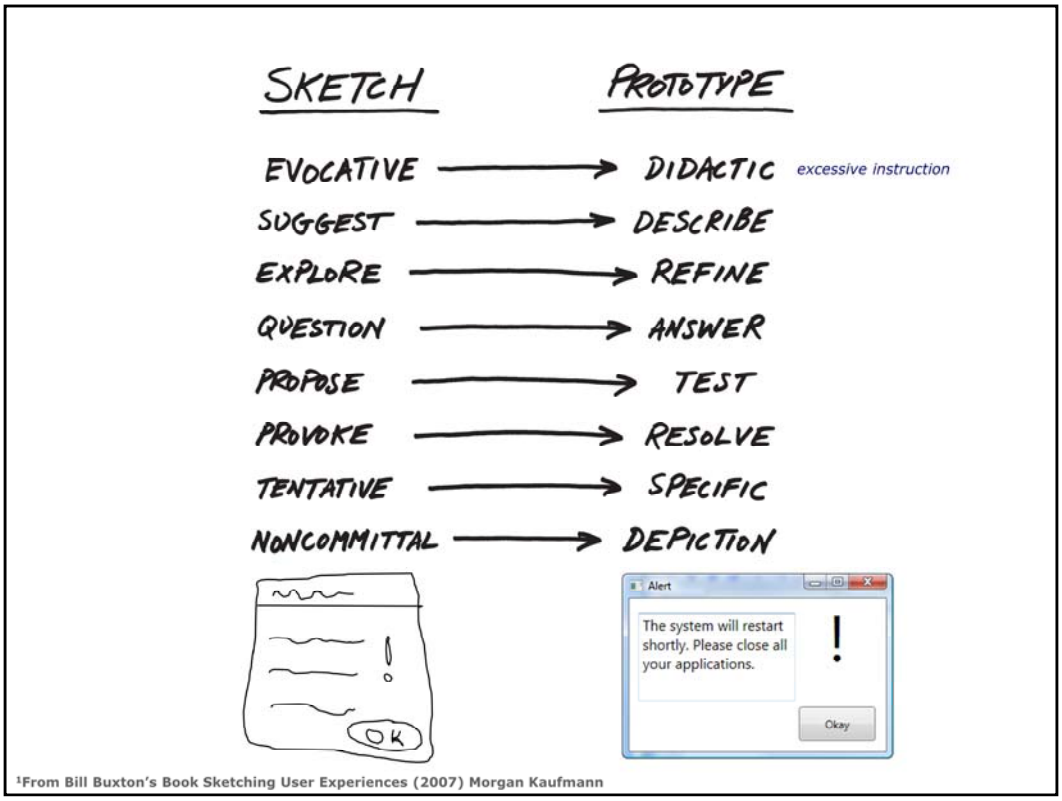



from Bill Buxton's Book Sketching User Experiences (2007) Morgan Kaufmann

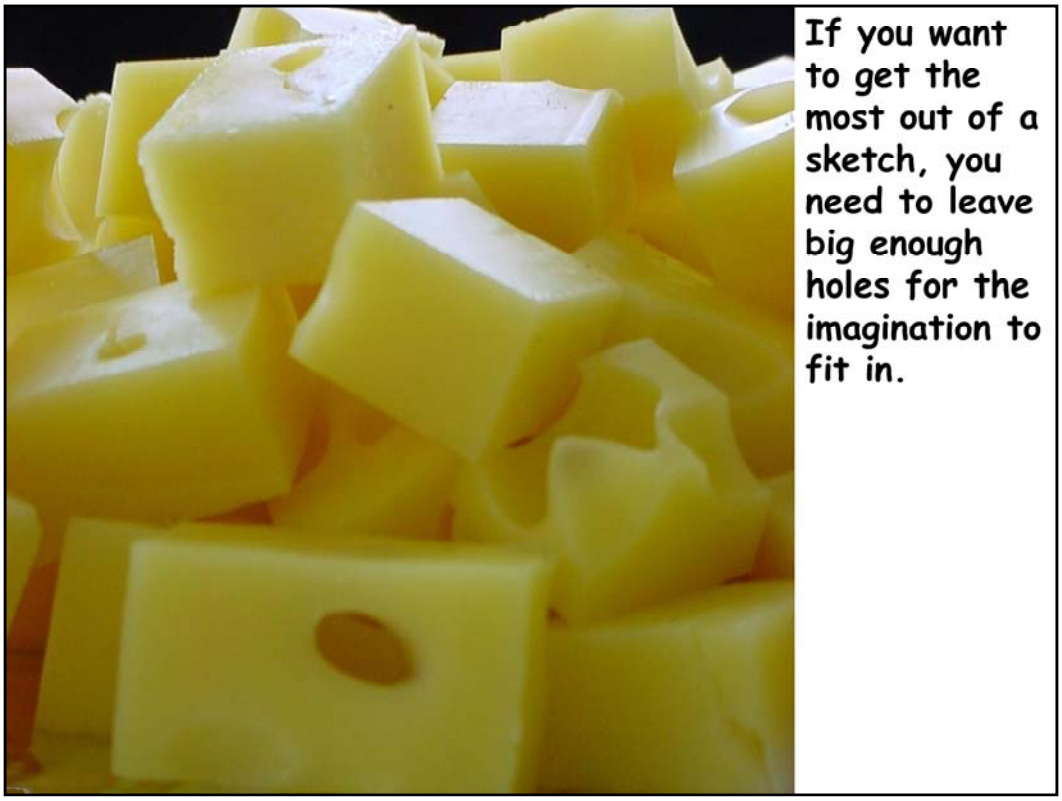
Sketches dominate the early part of the design funnel. They have to be cheap and plentiful.
Prototypes appear at the latter part (or even during engineering). They are more refined and perhaps appropriate for initial user testing. There are also fewer of them, as they are more expensive.




Sketching is also about UI design, where prototypes is about UI testing.




Given this context, lets look at the differences.




Ultimately, a sketch suggests but does not limit design. It teases the mind, where it invites ideas and expansion from all involved. A prototype limits design, where it commits to a path.

## You now know

### Attributes of a sketch

- quick , timely,  disposable, plentiful, clear vocabulary, constrained resolution, consistent with design state

### A sketch is not a prototype

- difference is a contrast of purpose (always), and form (mostly)

### Sketch properties

- evocative, suggest, explore, question, propose, provoke, t

### Prototype properties

- didactic, describe, refine, answer, test, resolve, specific, depiction