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Event Calendars

Best Practice: How to Implement Event Calendars

Event calendars are generally used in conjunction with input fields and always with the purpose of allowing users to select a particular date, either in the future (e.g., for booking tickets or arranging a delivery) or in the past (e.g., when refining search results), depending on the users' goals. A few steps are ever-present in the implementation of event calendars; they are as follows:

- 1** | The event calendar is typically hidden from view at first, but accessed either by clicking in the associated input field or on an icon at the end of this field. If you are using the latter approach, **make sure you employ a clear and unambiguous icon** that leaves the user in no doubt that a calendar will appear when clicked.
- 2** | When the event calendar is displayed, **ensure that an appropriate date range appears**. For example, if the users are booking flight tickets, they should only be shown the dates *available*. Therefore, there should be no way of choosing dates in the past or selecting a day on which there are no tickets available. To prevent users from viewing certain dates as available when they are not, use a different and less eye-catching color (e.g., light grey) for these days, and make sure they are inactive (i.e., unclickable).
- 3** | **Provide the user with shortcuts**, such as switching between whole months and years, jumping to today's date (especially when this is not the default), and closing the calendar.

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- 4 | When the user selects a date, that action should **automatically fill the input field**, with *no* delay in between the selection and the date appearing; otherwise, the user might think the choice has not been logged and he/she needs to do something else.
- 5 | If users are entering a date range, you must **make sure they cannot enter the end date as the start date**. Therefore, you must design the system so that the date furthest in the future is *automatically* set as the end date.
- 6 | Within the event calendar, **ensure that whole weeks are shown**, even when they span over two different months. Obscure or grey out the dates that appear from other months, but allow the user to select them still.
- 7 | While you do not want the event calendar to span a large area of the user interface—as the process of identifying and selecting a particular date would take longer—the dates **should be large enough for the user to click on them with ease** and without accidentally selecting an unintended date.

