Input Fields

Best Practice: How to Implement Input Fields

Input fields are an essential user interface design element, providing users with the means to enter non-standardized responses. They are used in many different situations, but most people will have come across them when entering personal details and delivery addresses on e-commerce web forms, or sending online queries.

1 | **Establish the different inputs you will require from the user.** For example, should the user enter his/her name, address, institution, search keyword, or description of a complaint?

2 | For each individual input, **establish how much information will be entered**. For example, is it an open-ended response to a complex question? In this case, the field should be larger than short responses on contact details.

3 | **Choose an appropriate color for the input field**, according to the color of your background display, so as to make it stand out as an editable field. Also, place a border around each input field, which again conforms to the general color considerations and the color of your display. This will help the user identify the editable regions of the user interface from the non-editable area.

4 | **Assign appropriate labels to each of the input fields**, such as 'Your First Name', 'First Line of Address', and 'Message', and place the labels close to their corresponding input fields. Leave a small amount of white space between each input field to ensure the user knows which field to enter data into for each label.

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5 | For a useful piece of informative feedback, when the user has clicked in a particular input field, you can **use an intermittently visible vertical black line**, the same as the cursor you see when typing a Word document. This way, you'll provide the user with an instantly perceptible clue as to where he/she last entered data or where the text will appear when he/she begins typing.