

**EXPERIENCE DIMENSION 4: DURATION**  
Initiation, Immersion, Conclusion, Continuation

**EXPERIENCE DIMENSION 5: TRIGGERS**  
Senses: Taste, Sight, Sound, Smell, Touch  
Cognitive: Concepts, Symbols

**Experiences are the foundation for all life events and form the core of what interactive media have to offer.** One of the most important ways to define an experience is to search its boundaries. While many experiences are ongoing, sometimes even indefinitely, most have edges that define their start, middle, and end. Much like a story (a special and important type of experience), these boundaries help us differentiate meaning, pacing, and completion. Whether it is due to attention span, energy, or emotion, most people cannot continue an experience indefinitely, or they will grow tired, confused, or distracted if an experience—however consistent—doesn't conclude.

**Experiences have 6 key dimensions: Breadth, Intensity, Duration, Triggers, Interaction, and Significance (this is described in detail in *Experience Design 2*).** One of the most important is Duration, since we live our lives in a stream of unfolding time (see Time and Motion on pages 290-292).

At the very least, think of an experience as requiring an **attraction**, an engagement, and a conclusion. The attraction is necessary to initiate the experience. It can be cognitive, visual, auditory, or a signal to any of our senses. The attraction can be intentional on the part of the experience, not just the experience creator. For example, the attraction for filling-out your taxes is based on a need, and not a flashy introduction. However, there still needs to be cues as to where and how to begin the experience.

**The engagement is the experience itself.** It needs to be sufficiently different than the surrounding environment of the experience to hold the attention of the audience or user as well as cognitively important (or relevant) enough for them to continue the experience.

The **conclusion** can come in many ways, but it must provide some sort of resolution, whether through meaning, story or context, or activity to make an otherwise enjoyable experience satisfactory. Often, an experience that is engaging has no real end. This leaves participants dissatisfied or even confused about the experience, the ideas, or

**EXPERIENCE DIMENSION 6: INTERACTION**  
Static, Passive, Active, Interactive

**EXPERIENCE DIMENSION 1: SIGNIFICANCE**  
Meaning, Status, Emotion, Price, Function

## Experiences

“It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience. Everything depends on the quality of the experience which is had....

Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives or dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence, the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences.”—John Dewey, *Experience and Education*

The quality and content of a person's life is the sum total of what they've paid attention to over time.  
—Henry James

**EXPERIENCE DIMENSION 3:  
INTENSITY**  
Reflex, Habit, Engagement

the emotions they just felt. An experience creator that does not spend enough (or any) attention on the conclusion—whether through inattention to detail, boredom, or speed—has just wasted his or her effort and the audience's time.

It is possible, and appropriate, for an experience to have an **extension**, which can merely prolong the experience, revive it, or form a bridge to another experience. In this sense, a larger conclusion with greater meaning can be alluded so that experiences can be elicited. Each experience still needs a satisfactory conclusion on its own level in order to justify more time for further experiences. Lack of resolution will more likely disappoint your audience than keep their attention for more experiences. Just like serial narratives (such as episodes of television or comic books), all experiences must reward attention at their end.

Experiences are crucial to our lives and our understanding of the world, as well as to our ability to function within it. Indeed, to be creative at all requires a wealth of experience from which to draw. As turn-of-the-Century educator John Dewey described in his book *Experience and Education*, there are three natural mental resources: “a store of experiences and facts from which suggestions proceed; promptness, flexibility, and fertility of suggestions; and orderliness, consecutiveness, and appropriateness of what is suggested.”

Finally, it is critical to remember that **while all experiences aren't created equally, all must compete for the attention of the audience and participants.**

This means that websites don't just compete with websites, or parties with parties or environments with environments. People searching for experiences—especially if those experiences inform—will choose from various media to meet their needs. One misconception in the digital world had been that CD-ROMs and websites, in particular, somehow don't need to be as interesting, compelling, or useful as traditional experiences in the same genre—that novelty alone was enough to be successful. What most developers have found is that successful digital media are those that offer experiences unique to their medium and compete with traditional media in usefulness and satisfaction.

**EXPERIENCE DIMENSION 2: BREADTH**  
Product, Services, Brand, Nomenclature, Channel/Environment, Promotion, Price

## Experiences