

Neurodiversity-Friendly Design Principles

Simple, practical design rules that make digital experiences calmer, clearer, and easier for more people to use.

How this guide was built

Developed by analyzing and synthesizing more than 20 resources, including seminars, articles, and community conversations on Reddit and other platforms.

NotebookLM Pro supported the synthesis, while Claude supported early code and design exploration.

01 Keep it clean and simple

02 Stay consistent and organized

03 Optimize readability and typography

04 Design for sensory sensitivity

05 Communicate clearly and directly

06 Simplify and clarify navigation

07 Offer personalization and flexibility

08 Emphasize empathy and inclusion

01

Reduce cognitive load

Keep it clean and simple

- Use short, familiar words.
- Keep each screen focused on one clear purpose.
- Make the primary action obvious and specific.
- Remove anything that does not help someone move forward.

Design check: Could anything be removed without making the task harder?

02

Build predictable patterns

Stay consistent and organized

- Put similar information in similar places.
- Use size and weight to show what matters most.
- Create clear patterns, then apply them consistently.
- Give every element a logical, expected place.

Design check: Would someone recognize the pattern on the next screen?

03

Support comfortable reading

Optimize readability and typography

- Choose highly readable sans-serif typefaces.
- Avoid all caps and long passages of italic text.
- Use comfortable type sizes, line heights, and spacing.
- Maintain strong contrast and a clear text hierarchy.

Design check: Does the hierarchy remain clear when the page is zoomed?

04

Lower sensory noise

Design with sensory sensitivity in mind

- Use a calm, considered color palette.
- Avoid flashing, sudden motion, and neon backgrounds.
- Keep sound off by default and provide clear controls.
- Reduce competing visual and audio signals.

Design check: Can motion, sound, and optional visual content be paused?

05

Remove ambiguity

Communicate clearly and directly

- Prefer literal language over metaphors or sarcasm.
- Give each message one clear meaning.
- Label controls with specific actions, such as “Send message.”
- Avoid jokes or wordplay where clarity is essential.

Design check: Could the message be interpreted in more than one way?

06

Help people keep their bearings

Simplify and clarify navigation

- Keep navigation compact, visible, and predictable.
- Label every page and destination clearly.
- Show progress during multi-step tasks.
- Make the current location and route back easy to find.

Design check: Can someone tell where they are and what happens next?

07

Give people control

Offer personalization and flexibility

- Let people adjust text size and color schemes.
- Offer calm and vivid display options where useful.
- Allow optional content, motion, or sound to be hidden or paused.
- Remember and respect each person's preferences.

Design check: Are useful preferences easy to find and remembered?

08

Design with, not just for

Emphasize empathy and inclusive practices

- Learn how neurodivergent people experience your product.
- Include neurodivergent participants in research and testing.
- Involve diverse people throughout the design process.
- Treat inclusion as a product requirement, not a final check.

Design check: Who shaped the decision, and whose experience is missing?

Better by default. Designing for neurodiversity does not only remove barriers. It creates calmer, more understandable products that work better for everyone.