

the design principles.

inherit the rigor, not the costume.

A field guide translating Apple's design discipline into our own doctrine.
We keep the rigor. We refuse the imitation and the founder myth.

PUBLIC RECORD / V1.0

● LIVE



HOW TO READ THIS

rigor is inherited. the costume is not.

twelve principles, each with its correction.

Two books gave us the discipline: Walter Isaacson, Steve Jobs, chapter 26, and Leander Kahney, Jony Ive. We took the method and left the look. Each page names the inherited insight, then the correction that makes it honest, accessible, and safe for the person on the other side.

READING KEY

INHERITED is the insight we carry forward. CORRECTION is where we depart. Isaacson pages are the 2011 Simon and Schuster hardcover, chapter 26. Kahney pages are edition-dependent.

PRINCIPLE / 01

essence before veneer.

design is the soul, not the surface.

Design is not what a product looks like on the surface. It reflects the product's essence, expressed in successive outer layers. Appearance is an output of understanding function, never the input.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 342: design is the fundamental soul of a made thing, not veneer.

CORRECTION

State the essence in one sentence before any polish. No visual sign-off without a functional reason for every prominent element.

PRINCIPLE / 02

simplicity is conquered complexity.

go deep enough to know what is inessential.

True simplicity comes from understanding a system deeply enough to remove what is not essential. It is not the absence of clutter and not minimalism for its own sake. Superficial reduction can make a thing more convoluted, not less.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 342: to be truly simple you have to go really deep.

CORRECTION

skimmable, not sparse. Legible information density beats blankness. Track where removed complexity went; never dump it on the user.

PRINCIPLE / 03

design leads, physics vetoes.

lead the engineering, respect the hard constraint.

Design should dictate engineering rather than decorate whatever the engineers hand over. But design supremacy without limits caused real failure, the iPhone 4 antenna. Lead by default; let a hard constraint stop you.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, pp. 343 to 344: design once again dictated the engineering; and p. 344 records the antenna backfire.

CORRECTION

A named safety and accessibility gate can hard-block. Physics, access, and safety hold veto power over taste.

feeling before feature.

start from how the person should feel.

Begin with the person and the intended feeling, not the spec sheet. Ask how someone should feel at first contact and what part of their life this should occupy. Define the design story before the feature list.

INHERITED

Kahney, Jony Ive, iMac chapter (page edition-dependent): the work started with how people should feel, not chip speed.

CORRECTION

Feeling opens the work; behavioral evidence closes it. A design story is a brief, not a license to skip validation.

PRINCIPLE / 05

own the whole experience.

integrate for coherence, never for lock-in.

Own every stage across surfaces so the experience coheres. Tight integration produced Apple's reliability. It also produced closed ecosystems. Coherence is the goal; capture is not.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 342 and the whole-widget idea: hardware and software tightly linked, designed end to end.

CORRECTION

integration without lock-in. Data stays open and exportable. Nothing breaks if the user decides to leave.

prototype to feel.

a model, not a deck.

A model beats a drawing. Making something usable, however crude, brings form to a nebulous idea and shifts the whole conversation. Renderings that looked great turn out to be wrong once you can hold them.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 346: he wants to see and feel a model; iterate every day, no heavy gate reviews. Kahney, prototyping chapter (page edition-dependent): a crude 3-D model galvanizes focus.

CORRECTION

one true seam at a time. Change the smallest correct seam, render it, measure it, keep the learning. Iterate daily and still ship on cadence.

PRINCIPLE / 07

subtract with a substitute.

removal is a first-class move, with a door left open.

Ask of every part whether it is needed and whether one element can do the work of several. Removal can sharpen a product. It can also strand people, as the first button-less players confused early users.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 343: do we need that part; can one part do the work of four. Kahney, iPod chapter (page edition-dependent): the omitted power button.

CORRECTION

never remove an affordance without a discoverable substitute. If removal harms accessibility, do not remove it.

craft the hidden surfaces.

the hidden state is still the product.

Carry the quality all the way through, even where no one looks, the way a cabinetmaker finishes the back of a drawer. Error states, empty states, logs, and recovery are outer layers of the same essence.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 346: the satisfying click; and the carried-through craft Jobs learned from his father. Kahney, jewelry-detail chapter (page edition-dependent): fanatical care beyond the obvious.

CORRECTION

craft the hidden surfaces only after the core task works. Polished micro-interactions never excuse a broken primary flow.

PRINCIPLE / 09

first contact is special.

the first moment is the whole promise, compressed.

The first thing a person sees and touches sets the relationship. I've obsessed over the Newton lid because it was the first interaction. Onboarding is the digital unboxing: a trust ritual, brief and honest.

INHERITED

Kahney, Newton chapter (page edition-dependent): the lid was the first thing you interact with, so make that moment special. Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 347: packaging as a ritual that imputes quality.

CORRECTION

keep first contact skimmable and honest. Ceremony that adds friction without value is theater, not a welcome.

content is the infinity pool.

the interface defers to the task.

The design should get out of the way so the content and the task hold attention. Nothing should detract from the screen. Within ten minutes the person should forget the design and simply do the work.

INHERITED

Kahney, iPhone chapter (page edition-dependent): nothing should detract from the screen, likened to an infinity pool; the unbranded device let the experience stand for itself. Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 38, p. 490: everything defers to the screen.

CORRECTION

content deference plus skimmability. Getting out of the way must not mean hiding the information the person needs.

PRINCIPLE / 11

honesty is the material.

the surface must tell the same truth as the code.

Reject the hidden glue that ruins the essence. Honest architecture means no fake seams and no misrepresented internals. In software that hardens into a rule: no fabricated metrics, progress, testimonials, or system state.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26, p. 343: the glued knife rejected because it detracts from the essence.

CORRECTION

truth mode. No fake state or metrics. When uncertain, behave deterministically and truthfully rather than performing confidence.

honesty and agency, always.

the person stays in the driver's seat.

Apple studied the best of a rival and then rejected it once it could name something truer. We inherit that willingness to depart. The person keeps control: their data, their pace, their consent.

INHERITED

Isaacson, Steve Jobs, Ch. 26 context and Ch. 12 (Sony studied, then superseded): study the best, then choose what is truer to function.

CORRECTION

no focus-stealing. No destructive automation without explicit sanction. Accessible by default. Private by default. Exportable by default.

THE CORRECTIONS

what we refuse to copy.

the rigor comes with a conscience.

Apple's doctrine carried risks: opacity, taste over evidence, closed lock-in, premium theater, and founder mythology. We keep the discipline and replace the risks.

OUR CORRECTIONS

skimmable not sparse. truth mode: no fake state or metrics. no focus-stealing. no destructive automation without sanction. accessible by default. private by default. integration without lock-in.

01 skimmable not sparse



02 truth mode: no fake state or metrics



03 no focus-stealing



04 no destructive automation without sanction



05 accessible by default



06 private by default



07 integration without lock-in



THE DECISION ORDER

when they conflict, this wins.

a tie-breaker you can hold to.

When two goods collide, resolve in this order. This inverts the engineer-and-cost-first order Apple rejected, and it places honesty and access above the design supremacy that once backfired.

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

1 safety and honesty. 2 accessibility and correctness. 3 the person's actual outcome. 4 simplicity of their experience. 5 coherence across surfaces. 6 aesthetic refinement. 7 internal convenience and cost.

SOURCE DISCIPLINE

inherit the rigor.

never the costume.

We do not imitate Apple and we do not build a founder cult. We carry one inversion: make the experience great, then let implementation and transaction serve that center.

THE ONE LINE

the smallest honest container, one true seam at a time, and a surface that tells the same truth as the code.

SOURCES / ENDNOTES

where this came from.

verified pages only. edition caveats named.

Isaacson page numbers are the first Simon and Schuster hardcover, New York, 2011, chapter 26, pages 340 to 347. Kahney page numbers are edition-dependent and are given by chapter or topic only. Quotations are kept short; ideas are paraphrased.

ISAACSON, CH. 26 FULL-TEXT EXCERPT

Primary source for the chapter 26 quotations and page anchors, pp. 340 to 347.

<http://edu.szmdata.com/Novels/Steve%20Jobs/xhtml/ch26.html>

ISAACSON, CH. 12 FULL-TEXT

Sony studied then superseded, intuitive design.

<http://edu.szmdata.com/Novels/Steve%20Jobs/xhtml/ch12.html>

ISAACSON, BOOK TEXT, WHOLE-WIDGET AND TOC

Whole-widget integration and edition pagination basis.

<https://virajdeshpande.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/isaacson2011stevejobs-1.pdf-1.pdf>

ISAACSON, CH. 38, DOJ EXHIBIT REPRODUCING BOOK TEXT

Everything defers to the screen, p. 490.

<https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/atr/legacy/2013/12/16/px-0514.pdf>

KAHNEY, PAGE-TAGGED READER NOTES

Design story, feeling-first, jewelry detail, Newton lid, iPod; pages edition-dependent.

<https://alvinalexander.com/apple/notes-book-jony-ive-genius-behind-apple-leander-kahney/>

KAHNEY, CHAPTER-4 AND METHODS NOTES

Brunner studio model, 3-D model galvanizes focus, 10/90; pages edition-dependent.

<https://petafloptimism.com/2014/02/06/hes-not-there/>

KAHNEY, BOOK REVIEW

Omitted power button, nothing detracts from the screen, unbranded device, 10/90.

<https://www.pendo.io/pendo-blog/jony-ive-book-review/>

KAHNEY, APPLE BOOKS PREVIEW

Design gets out of the way, friction of removal, and no focus groups.

<https://books.apple.com/ca/book/jony-ive/id630828116>

APPLEINSIDER

Ive's first Apple product and the Newton lid as first interaction.

<https://appleinsider.com/articles/19/06/28/how-jony-ives-design-passion-made-apple-what-it-is-today>

FAST COMPANY

The six pillars, carried-through craft, focus, intuitive design.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/1665375/the-6-pillars-of-steve-jobs-design-philosophy>

SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE

Simplicity as conquered complexity, and Bauhaus over Sony.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/how-steve-jobs-love-of-simplicity-fueled-a-design-revolution-2386887/>

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Designers as the primary engineers, the R&D factory inside Apple.

<https://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-new-book-jony-ive-apple-20131112-story.html>

Isaacson pages are the first Simon and Schuster hardcover, New York, 2011, ISBN 9781451648539, chapter 26, pages 340 to 347. Kahney page numbers are edition-dependent and are cited by chapter or topic only.