

WRITTEN SCENARIO

When can the method be used?

Similar to Storyboards, Written Scenarios can be used in an early stage of the design process to develop user criteria for interaction with a product/service, and in a later stage to generate ideas. You can also employ Written Scenarios to reflect on a developed concept, to present and communicate ideas and concepts to your stakeholders, and for concept evaluations and usability testing. Furthermore, you can use them to envision future scenarios, describing a desired and imagined new context with new interactions. With your story or narrative you bring your design and intended users to life in a specific context. For example, you can write a scenario about all the possible interactions a mother has with your physical exercise design or some other object, between the moment she wakes up until the moment she leaves her house. You may want to describe a realistic, state-of-the-art scenario, but you can also depict a new, more futuristic and desired one.

How to use the method?

First you need to have input for your scenario. The details you need to know in advance depend on the purpose of your scenario. Before you start, you need to have a basic understanding of your intended user(s) and the interactions within a specific and imagined/intended or real context of use. Scenarios can be derived from data gathered during contextual enquiry activities. You then describe, in simple language, the interaction that needs to take place. Stakeholders can review your

A Written Scenario tells a story about your intended users in a specific situation. Depending on your aim, the story depicts either existing product-user interactions or possible interactions in a future situation.

scenario to ensure that it accurately represents the real world or that they agree on the intended world you propose in your scenario. Use Written Scenarios when designing in order to ensure that all participants understand and agree on the design parameters, and to specify exactly what interactions the system must support.

Possible procedure

STEP 1

Determine the aim of your scenario and the required number of scenarios and length.

STEP 2

Determine the actors, your intended users and the goals the main actor(s) have to complete. The actor has an active role in the scenario. If you have several actors, you should set up more scenarios.

STEP 3

Think about the style of your scenario, for example a neutral sequence of steps or a moving and epic narrative.

STEP 4

Give your scenario an inspiring title and make use of dialogue, spoken by the actors, to bring your story to life.

STEP 5

Define the starting points of the scenario: a trigger or an event.

STEP 6

Start writing. Focus on the most promising or successful scenario.

Limitations of the method

- A scenario is your story. It might be hard to get it across to other people in (your) words only.
- A scenario cannot cover all possible realities.

Tips & Concerns

- Books, comics, movies and commercials are means to tell a story. They can be great sources of inspiration for your Written Scenario.
- The process of writing a scenario is similar to designing a product; it is an iterative process where you need to rewrite your scenario several times and you need to analyse and synthesise, harnessing your creativity.
- It is nice to add variation to your scenario, but do not strive to include everything in the narrative – otherwise your message will get lost.

Jacques Tati was a French screenwriter, film director and actor. In his movies, Tati's characters are often in conflict with infrastructure, modern architecture, products and modernity in general. In 'Jour de Fête', postman François is inspired by a movie about mail delivery by airplane in America. Teased by his fellow villagers, he tries to achieve the same speed of delivery on his bicycle, but of course everything does not go as planned. In his films, Tati shows how people lose track of the changing world around them due to so-called improvements that are often driven by a combination of commerce, overconfidence in technology and wrong assumptions. (Photo by Robert Doisneau, 1949)