Dare Drop

Everyday creativity, delivered as a dare

Playful prompts that turn ordinary moments into creative ones

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Project Name & Value Proposition

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DareDrop

Value Proposition
Everyday creativity, delivered as a dare: playful prompts to turn ordinary moments into creative ones

Team Members

Adi B.	Aanika A.	Nhu P.	Emma W.
Engineering/Design	Engineering/Design	Engineering/Design	Engineering/Design

Problem/Solution Overview

Problem

After graduation, young adults lose the structured communities, routines, and creative outlets that once supported exploration. Without school clubs, studio classes, or shared schedules, everyday life becomes repetitive, and it becomes harder to explore new interests or feel connected to others or themselves.

Solution

DareDrop is a playful mobile app that helps new graduates rediscover creativity through small, everyday dares. Each dare sparks curiosity, delight, and self-expression with no special skills required. Users complete dares on their own or with friends, building creativity into their daily lives while lowering the pressure that typically surrounds "creative hobbies."

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Needfinding

Our needfinding focused on understanding how new graduates relate to creativity in post-college life. We conducted six semi-structured interviews with participants across a spectrum of creative identity, from people who rarely engage in creative activities to extreme users who engage constantly.

4a. Participant Recruitment & Interaction
We recruited participants through mutual connections and in-person outreach at local cafés. Interviews took place both in-person and over Zoom. Participants were compensated through ongoing involvement in later phases of the project. Our interviews covered identity, routines, creative confidence, discovery practices, and the social dynamics surrounding hobbies.

Participants included:
- Extreme Hobbyist — recruited in-person at a café
- Post-Grad Life Sucks (PLS) — recruited through mutual friends
- Consultant — recruited through mutual connections
- Finance Bro — in-person recruitment
- MCAT Maverick — mutual connection
- Everything Creator — extreme user, recruited via mutal connections

Across these interviews, we sought to understand the tension between motivation, identity, habit, and social dynamics in sustaining creativity after graduation.

4b. Synthesis: What We Learned

After conducting six interviews with recent graduates and young adults navigating creative identity post-college, our team synthesized our findings using a combination of affinity mapping, theme clustering, and "insight → implication" analysis. Across participants with very different lifestyles, finance, consulting, pre-med, creative freelancing, and hobby communities, we found surprisingly consistent emotional patterns surrounding creativity, pressure, and routine.
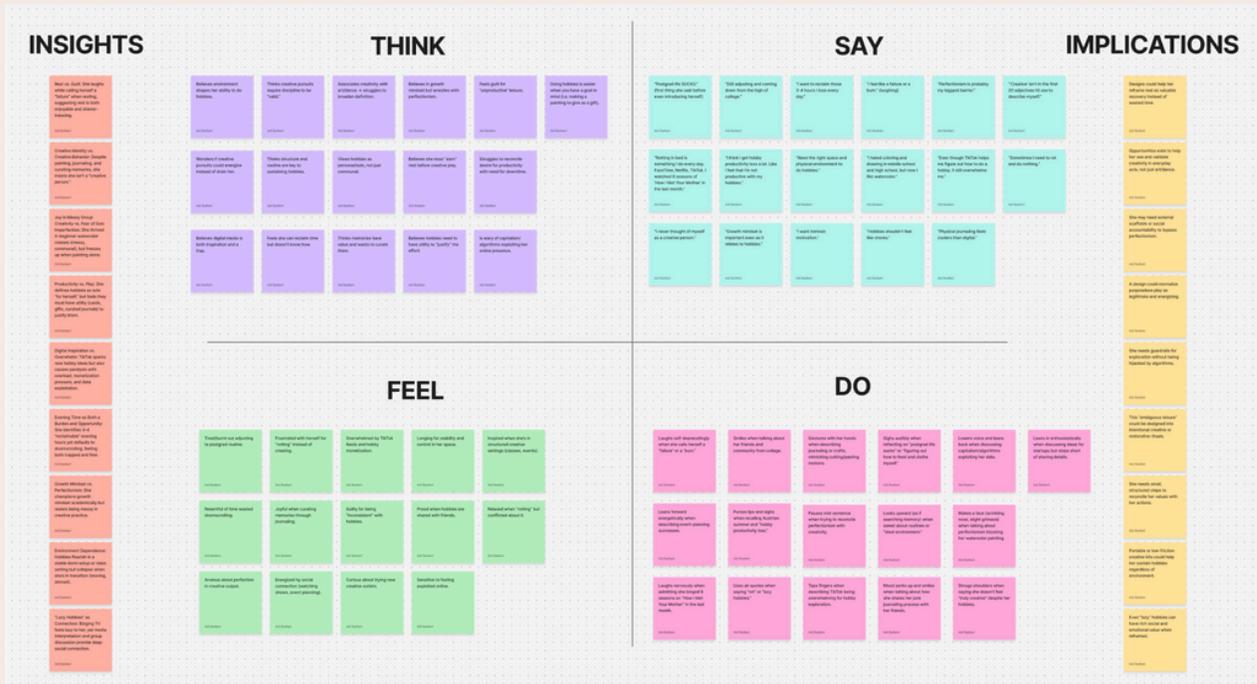
PLS's Empathy Map

Finance Bro's Empathy Map

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Across these interviews, we found a few common themes:

Theme 1: Perfectionism creates invisible barriers to starting anything

Participants frequently described wanting to create more but feeling held back by a fear of "not being good enough." Even when they had time to engage in hobbies, many reported stopping themselves before they even began. Creativity felt "high stakes," requiring mastery rather than exploration.

Implication:
 Our solution must lower the psychological barrier to engaging in creativity by reframing it as playful, imperfect, and low-pressure.

Theme 2: People hold a narrow, limiting definition of what counts as "creativity"
Even participants who regularly engaged in creative behaviors (journaling, sending voice memos, cooking without recipes) rarely labeled themselves as "creative." Creativity was associated with finished products, specialized talents, or traditional arts.

Implication:
 DareDrop must expand the definition of creativity, celebrating micro-moments, messy sketches, spontaneous thoughts, and quick, everyday acts rather than polished outputs.

Theme 3: Community makes creativity easier and more joyful
Nearly every participant emphasized that creativity feels more enjoyable—and more doable—when shared with others. However, they didn't want another competitive or performative social platform. They wanted small, lightweight moments of connection.

Implication:
Our solution should enable social creativity without pressure, simple, playful exchanges that spark connection without turning creativity into performance.

Theme 4: New grads crave spontaneity in a life that has become structured and routine

Participants described feeling trapped in repetitive schedules after graduation: work, the gym, studying, winding down. Creativity no longer "happened naturally" the way it did in college clubs, classes, or shared living environments.

Implication:

Our design should introduce playful interruptions that offer a moment of energy, curiosity, or reflection amid routine.

Theme 5: People have time for creativity, what they lack are ideas

Participants consistently expressed wanting to be more creative but not knowing what to do. Creativity required too much cognitive load: generating ideas, planning, setting up, thinking of next steps.
Implication:
DareDrop can reduce friction by providing the spark, a single, concise prompt that removes decision fatigue and gets users started.

Theme 6: Authenticity is tied to spontaneity

Participants valued creativity that felt natural, playful, or emotionally real. Overly formalized tools made creativity feel performative or burdensome.

Implication:
DareDrop must lean into spontaneity, lightness, and emotional resonance—not productivity or perfection.

Synthesis Summary Insight

Across all participants, we identified a unifying insight:

"New graduates need tools that make creativity feel low-pressure, spontaneous, and socially connected, helping them rediscover everyday creativity without perfectionism, performance, or planning."

This synthesis became the foundation for our POV statements, experience prototypes, and ultimately the DareDrop product direction.

POVs & Experience Prototypes

With key themes and tensions emerging from our needfinding, we transformed our interview insights into distinct Point-of-View (POV) statements to guide ideation. We selected three participants, our MCAT Maverick, Finance Bro, and P.L.S., because they represented the most compelling mix of creative motivation, emotional blockers, and post-grad lifestyle diversity.

To explore the problem from multiple angles, we translated each interview into a POV worksheet ("We met…", "We were surprised that…", "We wonder if this means…", "It would be game-changing if…"). These statements helped us articulate deeper user needs beneath surface behaviors.

Using these POVs, we conducted rapid brainstorming, generating over 30 How Might We (HMW) statements per person. We intentionally aimed for quantity over feasibility, encouraging divergent thinking before narrowing down to the 2–3 strongest opportunities for each user. These HMWs led directly into our first round of solution concepts and became the basis for the three experience prototypes we built and tested: DareToCreate, Two-Minute Burst, and AI Brain Dump. Together, these prototypes helped us validate assumptions about spontaneity, time constraints, creative confidence, and play.

	MCAT Maverick	Finance Bro	P.L.S.
We met…	someone who loves hiking, fostering pets, and "romanticizing" her post-grad life.	a recent grad working long hours in investment banking.	a recent grad who paints and journals but often stops before starting if she fears the outcome won't be perfect.
We were surprised that…	she prefers doing activities with friends but is deliberately practicing doing them alone.	although he downplays creativity, he misses cooking family recipes and the spontaneity of music.	although she believes in a growth mindset, her self-criticism still prevents her from creative experimentation.
We wonder if this means…	she is trying to build confidence in solo creativity as a way to feel less dependent on others for fulfillment.	he craves small creative outlets as a way to reconnect with himself and others beyond work.	she defines creativity too narrowly as "artistic mastery" rather than as play.
It would be game changing if…	she could access creative outlets that help her feel both independent and socially connected when she chooses.	he had low-barrier ways to fit creativity into his rigid, exhausting schedule.	she had tools or environments that made it safe, even celebrated, to create badly as part of the process.

POV statements

POV Statements

POV: MCAT Maverick
We met...
someone who loves hiking, fostering pets, and "romanticizing" her post-grad life.
We were surprised that...
she prefers doing activities with friends but is deliberately practicing them alone.
We wonder if this means...
she is trying to build confidence in solo creativity as a way to feel less dependent on others for fulfillment.
It would be game-changing if...
she could access creative outlets that help her feel both independent and socially connected when she chooses.

POV: Finance Bro
We met...
 a recent grad working long hours in investment banking.
We were surprised that...
although he downplays creativity, he misses cooking family recipes and the spontaneity of music.
We wonder if this means...
he craves small creative outlets as a way to reconnect with himself and others beyond work.
It would be game-changing if...
he had low-barrier ways to fit creativity into his rigid, exhausting schedule.

POV: P.L.S.
We met...
 a recent grad who paints and journals but often stops before starting if she fears the outcome won't be perfect.
We were surprised that...
 although she believes in a growth mindset, her self-criticism still prevents her from creative experimentation.
We wonder if this means...
 she defines creativity too narrowly as "artistic mastery" rather than as play.
It would be game-changing if...
 she had tools or environments that made it safe, even celebrated, to create badly as part of the process.

HMW statements:

HMW Brainstorm

Individual Interview Analysis

HMW statements:

Finance bro:
How might we curate spontaneity in mundane, everyday things?
Help him rediscover creativity in a way that feels natural, not forced, within his corporate lifestyle?
Help him reconnect with the joy and spontaneity of music and cooking without needing the long amounts of free time?
Curate small "micro" creative moments that fit seamlessly into Josh's long and unpredictable work schedule?
Lower the psych. barrier that makes creative hobbies feel "too time-consuming" or "not serious enough"?
Help him curate spontaneity in mundane everyday things?
Use small and digital and portable tools to let Finance Bro express himself creatively without setup or cleanup?
Turn everyday activities into smaller acts of creativity?

PLS
How might we quiet someone's inner critic when they begin creating?
How might we normalize and showcase unfinished/messy work as part of the creative journey?
Shift peoples' definition of creativity away from mastery and towards experimentation?
Make "creating" things easy and effortless?
Help people easily become "masters" of a craft?
Create social environments that hold her accountable with her hobbies/creative goals?
Widen the definition of creativity beyond artistic pursuits?
Build practices/communities where imperfect progress or failing is celebrated?
Help her notice/reframe self-criticisms before they block her from taking creative action?

MCAT Maverick
Create casual communities of hobbyists?
Enable her to feel accomplished from the little creative things in her life?
Help her feel equally fulfilled creating alone as she does creating with others?
Utilize creativity as a facilitator for social connection?
Use creativity to deepen friendships?
Inspire creative experiences for alone time and group hangouts?
Make people more comfortable engaging in creative activities alone?
Give her opportunities to be inspired by others' creativity even when she's not with them in person?
Use creativity to romanticize the mundane realities of post-grad life?
Design platforms that allow asynchronous creativity?

# Top 3 Concept Directions

DareToCreate

Spontaneous and random creative challenges

Mobile app that has pop-up prompts that add excitement and creativity to mundane moments, happens at random times throughout the day

Experience Prototype:

- Give people with slips of paper containing creative prompts, have them pick at random
- Examples: write a haiku and send it to a friend, give a creative compliment, take a photo of something beautiful, brainstorm a dinner idea
- Goal: Test how people react to spontaneous creativity injected into mundane moments
- Critical Assumption: 2 minutes is enough time for users to experience a small spark of creativity or satisfaction
- Results/Implications:
  - Framing activities as 'social dares' makes them more engaging
  - People appreciated spontaneous/short creative bursts that fit naturally into their day
  - Participants had fun connecting with others and their friends through prompts

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Top 3 Concept Directions
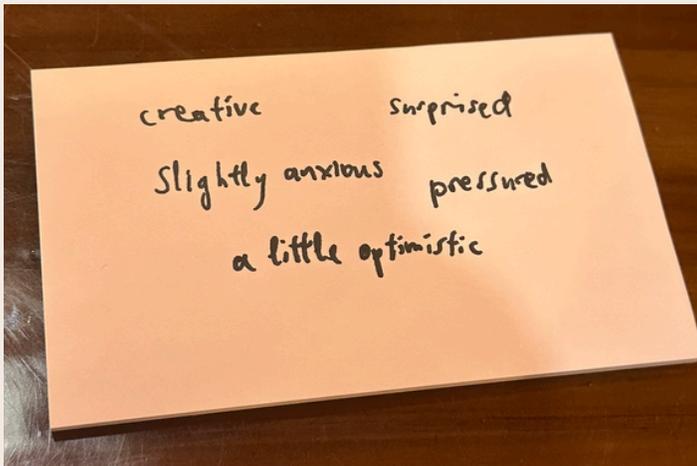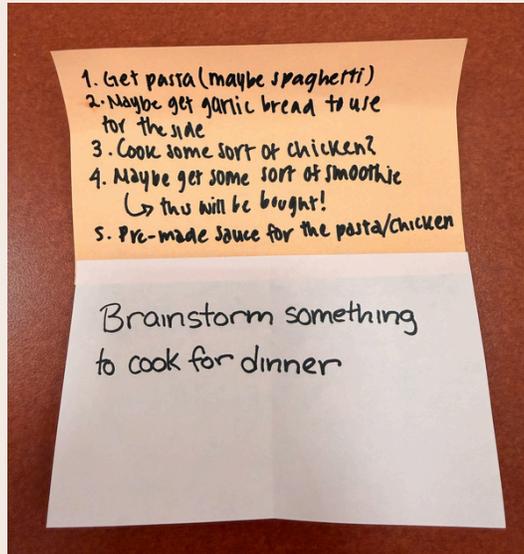
2 Minute Burst

Two-Minute Timer To Spark Creativity

Mobile app that gives you random creative prompts and a two-minute timer, draw something beautiful, make a word cloud of feeling. Encourages play without pressure

Experience Prototype:

- Give participants a strict 2-minute timer to complete a quick creative task that they pick at random
- Prompts include: draw something beautiful, make a word cloud of feelings, invent a stranger's backstory.
- Goal: Test whether time constraints fuel or hinder spontaneous creativity and whether or not people enjoy creative task at random
- Critical Assumption: people actually want spontaneous creativity in their everyday routines, and prompts/challenges will be seen as fun, not disruptive
- Results/Implications:
  - Short, playful interventions are welcomed, but design matters
  - Simplicity and immediacy drive excitement

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AI Brain Dump

Turns everyday clutter into structured creativity.

A platform where you can freely jot down messy thoughts, tasks, or notes in one place. The system then automatically reorganizes everything into clean, structured formats, tailored to your personal style or aesthetic

Experience Prototype:

- Ask participants to write messy to-do lists/notes for 5 minutes
- Take a photo and feed it into ChatGPT with a designed system prompt
- Output: reorganized notes into cleaner, structured form according to style/aesthetic
- Goal: Test if AI-supported reframing makes messy ideas feel more useful and approachable
- Critical Assumption: AI or algorithms are able to effectively re-organize people's' thoughts
- Results/Implications:
  - AI reorganization tool felt too text-heavy
  - Participants wished for more visuals and playful outputs

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Design Evolution

Our design evolved significantly over the course of the quarter as we moved from broad conceptual exploration to a refined, high-fidelity prototype grounded in user needs. Each iteration was informed by structured feedback from think-aloud testing, heuristic evaluations, peer critiques, and insights from our experience prototypes. Early concepts explored multiple directions for sparking creativity, but through continuous synthesis, we converged on a solution centered on low-pressure, spontaneous prompts delivered as "dares."
A
s we transitioned from low-fi sketches to interactive med-fi wireframes and finally to our high-fi mobile prototype, we refined the product's core tasks, visual system, and interaction patterns. We simplified flows, removed unnecessary friction, and strengthened the emotional tone of the interface to make creativity feel playful, safe, and lightweight. This section traces how our interface, task flows, and design decisions matured over time, and how each iteration responded directly to user feedback, value tensions, and usability findings.

Final Solution Overview

Description

DareDrop delivers one spontaneous dare each day—small creative prompts that invite play, curiosity, and connection. Users can complete dares, view others' responses, and explore a personal gallery of their creative moments.

Rationale

DareDrop was chosen because it directly addressed all core user needs:
- Low pressure — tasks require minimal time and no skill.
- Spontaneity — breaks routine without demanding commitment.
- Social optionality — dares can be done alone or shared.
- Reframing creativity — from "mastery" to "play."
- Compared to our other concepts, DareDrop most effectively linked user motivation to behavior.

Tasks

We defined three core tasks to reflect the primary ways users interact with DareDrop. These tasks were developed to support increasing levels of engagement, starting with lightweight daily interaction and extending toward deeper reflection and community inspiration.

Task 1 — Simple

User gets a dare inspiration

Description:
The user opens DareDrop and sees the daily dare, a single, spontaneous creative prompt delivered to spark a moment of play. They read the dare, interpret it however they choose, and begin crafting their response.

Why it matters:
This is the most fundamental interaction with DareDrop. It embodies the app's promise: creativity delivered in small, doable moments. This task lowers the barrier to entry, making creativity feel approachable and bite-sized for busy new graduates.
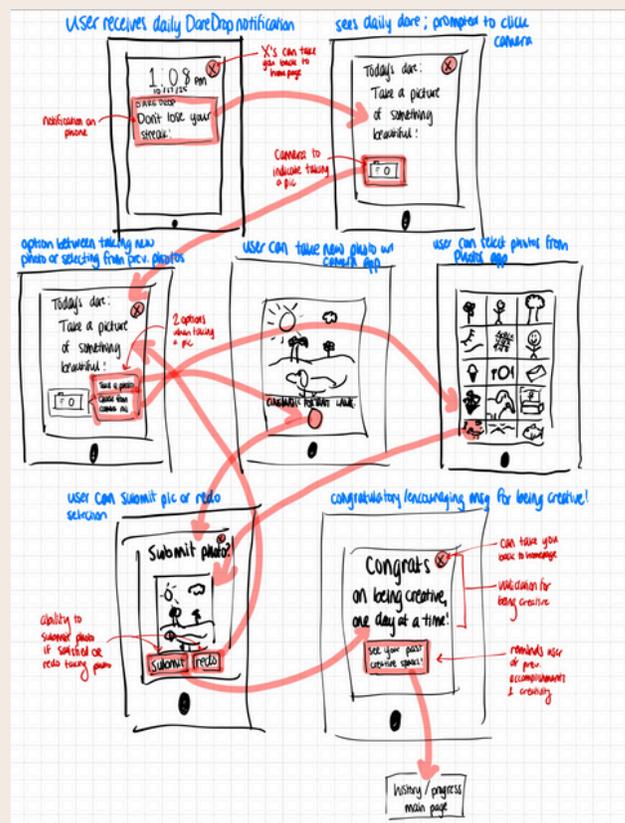
Original Figma Low-Fi Simple Task Flow Sketch

Task 2 — Moderate Task

User reviews their past dares

Description:

Users explore their creative history by viewing previously completed dares, tracking streaks or progress, and opening individual past responses. The "Your Progress" and "Your Past Dares" screens help users reflect on how their creativity has evolved over time.

Why it matters:

Needfinding revealed that new grads appreciate meaning: making and self-reflection. Reviewing past dares helps users see themselves as more creative, celebrate small wins, and reframe creativity as a growing, evolving practice rather than a single polished output.
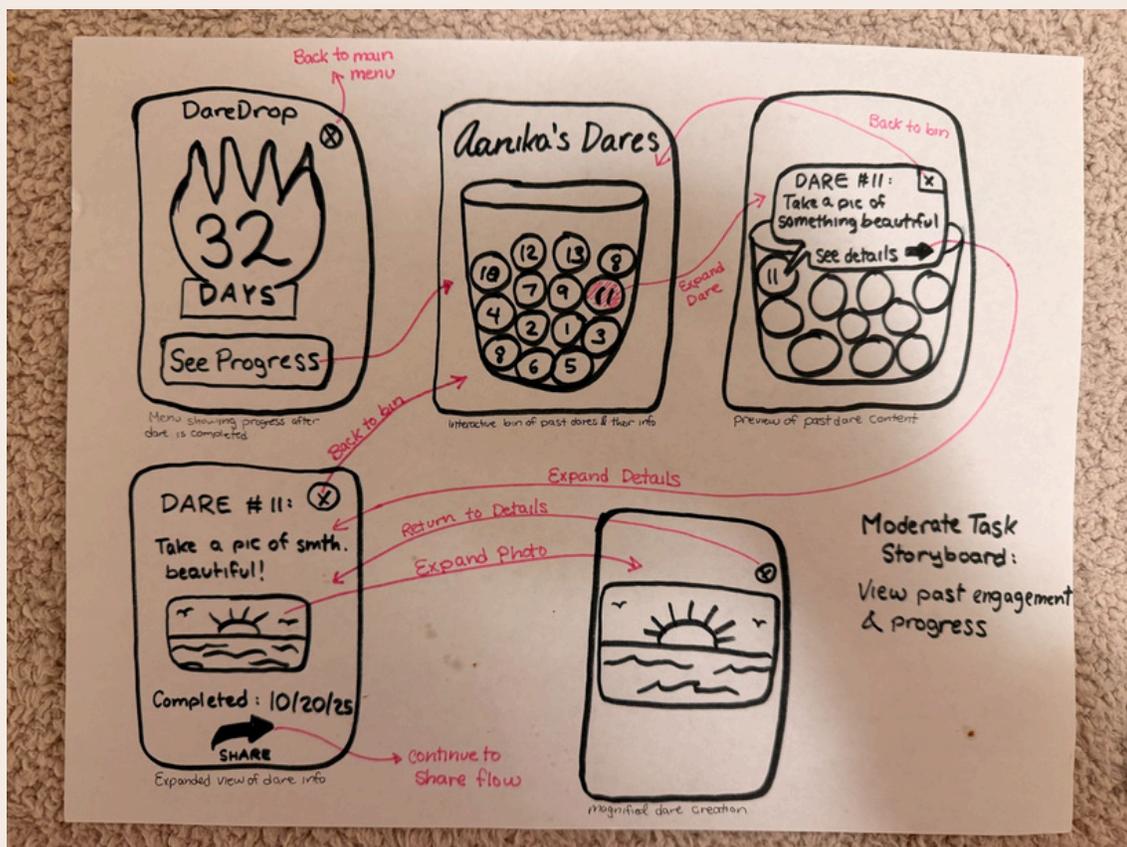
Original Figma Low-Fi Medium Task Flow Sketch

Task 3 — Complex Task

Users share creative engagement & pass on dares

Description:

After completing a dare, users can share it with others with external apps like Messages. They can "pass on" the same dare to friends, creating lightweight social engagement without the pressures of traditional social media.

Why it matters:

Across interviews, participants emphasized that creativity is often more fulfilling when shared socially, but not competitively. This task enables connection and inspiration without likes, scores, or comparison. It also distributes creativity into users' social circles, amplifying delight.
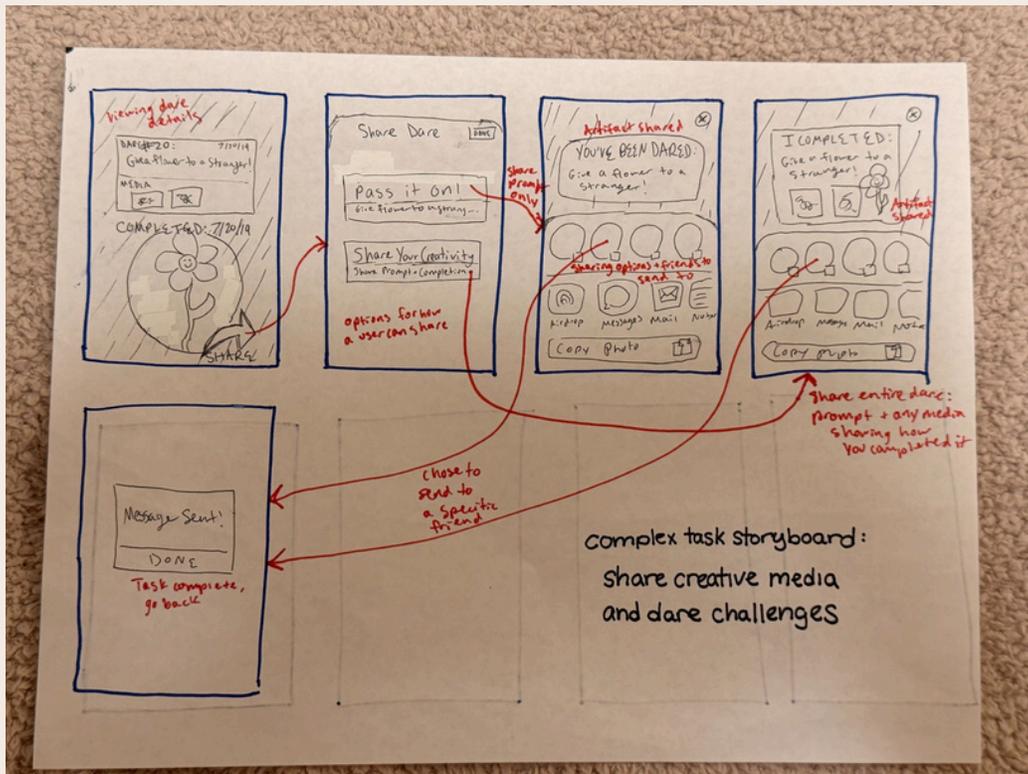


Original Figma Low-Fi Complex Task Flow Sketch

Design Evolution Visualizations & Rationale

Low-Fidelity Prototype & Early Sketches

Our earliest design explorations were intentionally broad, spanning different modalities, interaction metaphors, and creative engagement styles. The goal at this stage was to question what "everyday creativity" could look like, ranging from spontaneous dares embedded in the physical world to lightweight, mobile-first prompts delivered in-app. Across dozens of initial sketches, we explored how different interface structures could support quick inspiration, reduce activation energy, and allow users to capture and share moments of creativity.

Exploration 1: AR-Driven Creative Prompts

Several sketches envisioned DareDrop as an augmented reality experience where dares appeared as markers overlaid onto the physical world. Users would walk around and "discover" challenges in their environment, an idea that supported spatial exploration and embodied creativity (e.g., AR cones, location-based markers, and physical-world scavenger moments). These sketches emphasized mindfulness and presence, encouraging users to look more closely at their surroundings and engage with creativity through movement. However, this direction came with constraints: high activation energy, safety/access concerns, and reliance on camera + GPS technologies
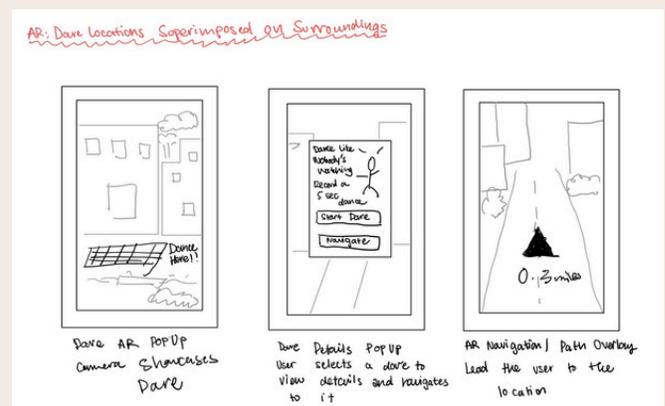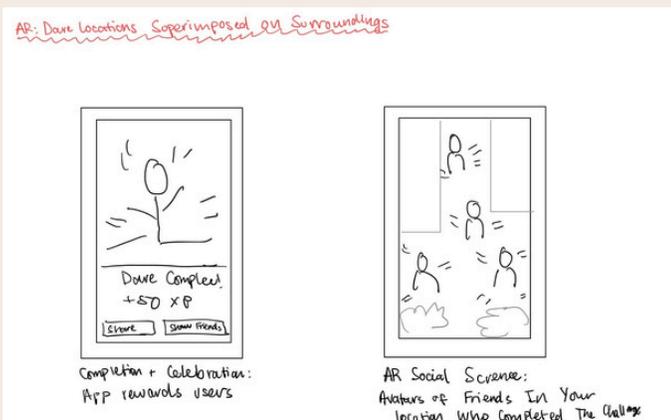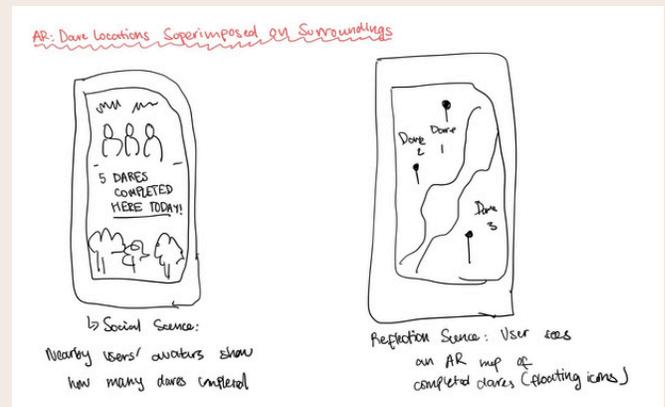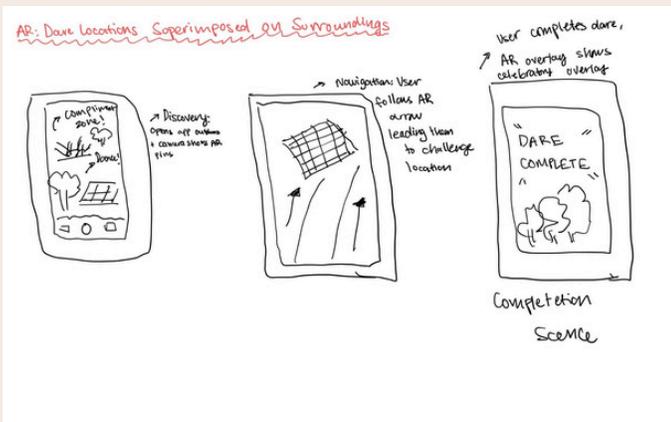
Exploration 2: Mobile Application

Our mobile exploration focused on delivering dares as lightweight, low-friction interactions directly on the phone. This version emphasized simplicity: a daily dare card, quick capture tools, a history page for past creativity, and optional social sharing. Participants gravitated toward this direction because it matched existing behaviors (checking phones throughout the day) and required no setup, environment scanning, or additional devices. The mobile direction also supported our core tasks, receiving inspiration, reflecting on past dares, and sharing creative moments.
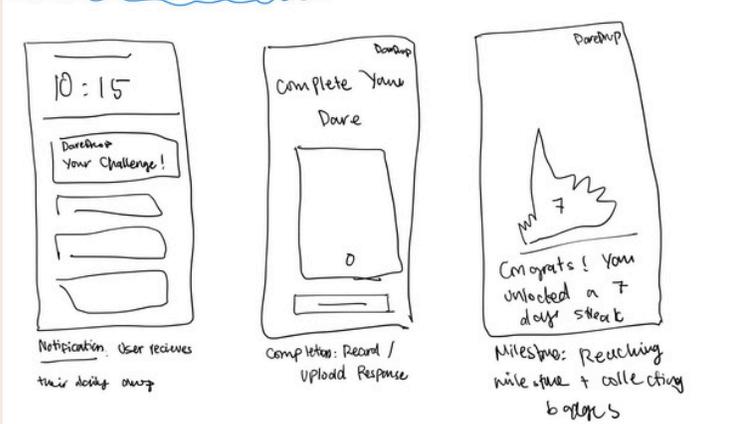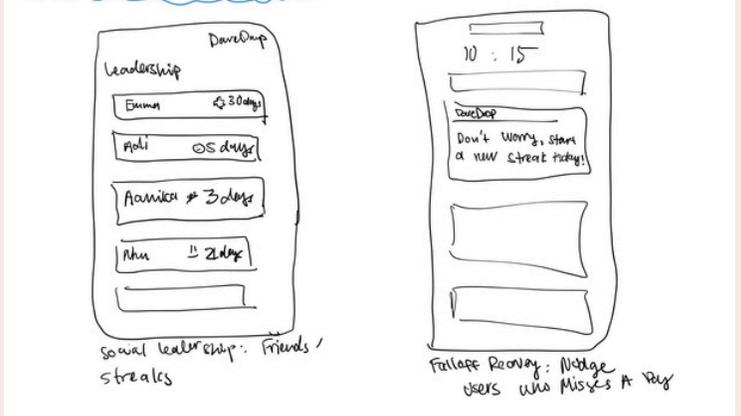

Exploration 3: Voice-Based Interaction

Our voice concept imagined DareDrop as an audio-driven experience, something users might access while commuting, cooking, or walking. Dares could be delivered by a voice assistant ("Your dare today is..."), and users could respond hands-free through short audio clips. This approach supported spontaneous, private creativity and aligned with users who enjoy reflective, journal-like moments. However, voice alone lacked the visual expressiveness many users valued, and it limited opportunities for photographic or text-based creative output.
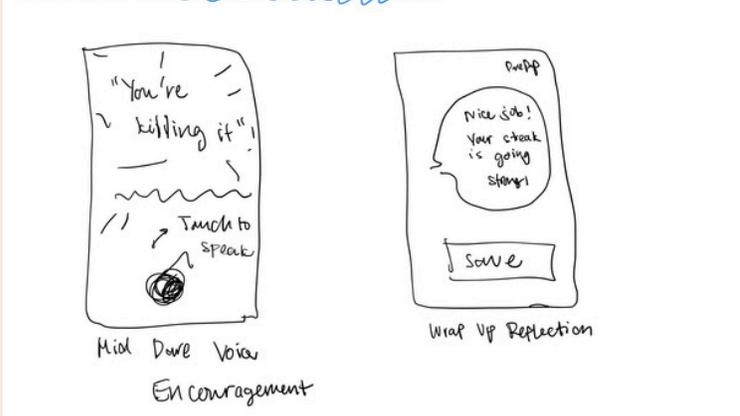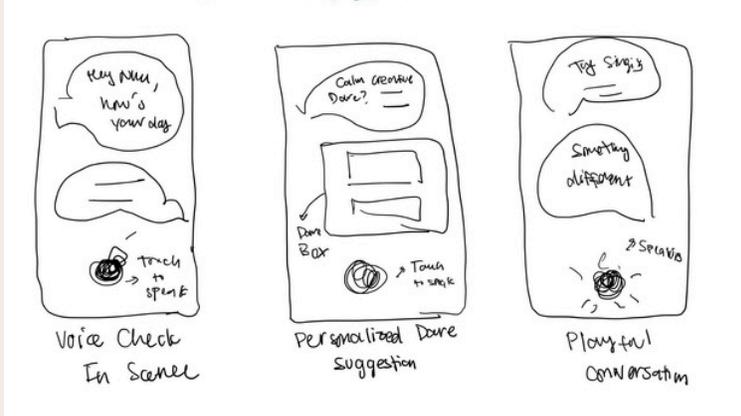
Why We Chose Mobile

After evaluating feasibility, desirability, and alignment with user needs, we selected the mobile app direction as our primary path forward. Mobile offered the right balance of spontaneity, visual expression, and low-pressure engagement. It also allowed us to support our key interactions while remaining technically feasible within the scope of the course.

Low-Fidelity Testing & Early Evaluation

After developing our early sketches, we moved into low-fidelity testing to evaluate whether our concept, interaction logic, and task flows resonated with real users. The goal of this phase was not visual refinement, but to surface misunderstandings, friction points, and opportunities to improve clarity and delight before investing in higher fidelity designs.

Environment & Procedure
To mirror how DareDrop might naturally appear in the everyday lives of recent grads, we conducted our user tests in cafés and public spaces across Palo Alto. These familiar, social environments helped participants feel relaxed and allowed us to observe interactions that mirrored real-world usage patterns.

Apparatus:
A full paper prototype simulating the phone screen
Loose paper components representing dynamic elements (prompts, buttons, photos)
Sticky notes and pens for rapid iteration
A timer for task metrics
Team phones for capturing quotes and observations
We constructed the prototype to mimic the feel of a phone UI. Notably, we introduced a "polaroid photo" interaction to simulate the act of taking and submitting a photo for a dare, helping users connect the physical mock-up with the intended experience.

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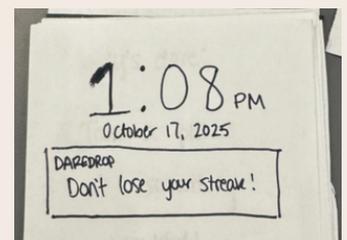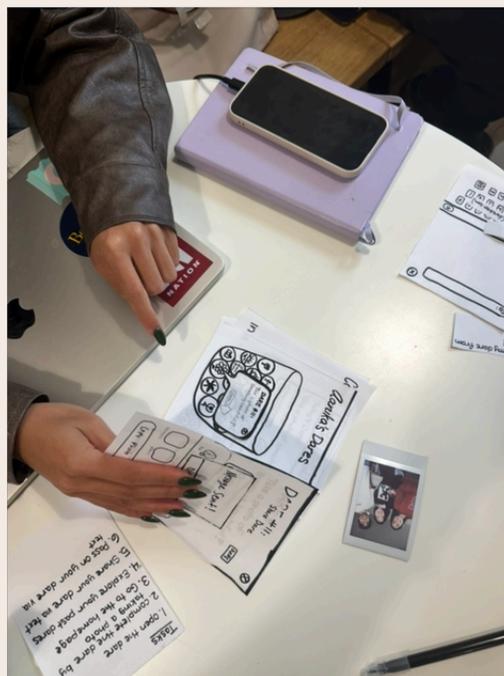
Usability Goals & Measurements

Before testing, we established two formal usability goals: Learnability and Efficiency & Satisfaction.

Goal 1 — Learnability
Objective: Users should quickly understand how to receive, complete, and review dares without help.
Key Measurements:
Time to complete first dare (target ≤ 60s)
% tasks completed unaided (goal ≥ 80%)
Number of clarification questions
Observed confusion points ("Bin," "Past Dares," navigation labels)

Why it matters:
Our experience relies on micro-creativity—so initial comprehension must be effortless. If the concept feels confusing upfront, users will abandon it.

Goal 2 — Efficiency & Satisfaction
Objective: Users should be able to navigate, complete, and share dares smoothly, and find the experience enjoyable.

Key Measurements:
Number of navigation errors or backtracks (goal ≤ 2 per session)
Time to share a dare (target ≤ 90s)
Positive sentiment count ("cool," "fun," "clear")

Why it matters:
Efficiency indicates whether the flow feels natural once users understand the idea. Enjoyment is critical for a product rooted in creativity and play.

Key Observations

1. Learnability Curve

Users began cautiously but grew noticeably more confident after their first task. The concept clicked quickly.

2. Language & Labeling Confusion

Wording had a disproportionate impact on comprehension:
"Bin" vs "Your Dares"
"Past Dares" vs "Dare Journal"

3. Users Projected Social Meaning

Participants organically connected DareDrop to apps like BeReal and Locket, interpreting dares as moments to capture and share with friends. This validated our assumption that creativity + social accountability could be powerful.

Implications of Findings

- Users quickly understood DareDrop's concept once introduced.
- Early confusion showed that clarity of terminology would be essential for usability.
- Participants felt intrinsically motivated to complete playful, low-pressure prompts.
- Task completion felt energizing rather than stressful—consistent with our value of creativity without perfectionism.

What Testing Didn't Reveal
- Due to the nature of paper prototyping, some elements remained untested:
- Long-term engagement patterns (e.g., streak fatigue)
- Reactions to visual design, motion, and animations
- Authentic social behaviors (sharing dares with real friends)
- Edge cases like notification overload
- These became targets for future iterations.

Design Changes Informed by Testing
- Onboarding:
  - Add a first-time guided overlay ("Tap to reveal your dare")
  - Use progressive onboarding to prevent overwhelming new users
- Past Dares / Reflection:
  - Rename confusing labels
  - Merge "Past Dares" and "Bin"
  - Add a streak or timeline layout to visualize creative progress
- Sharing:
  - Clarify ownership ("Share your dare" vs "View shared dares")
 - Add visual confirmation (checkmark or mini "Shared!" pop-up)

Together, these changes shaped our transition from low-fi to mid-fi.

After incorporating insights from our low-fidelity paper testing, we moved into the mid-fidelity phase to refine our core task flows:
1. Simple Task — Get a dare inspiration
2. Moderate Task — Review past dares
3. Complex Task — Share engagement & pass on a dare

Our goal for this phase was to validate interaction patterns, confirm navigation clarity, and assess whether wording, layout, and structure better supported learnability.
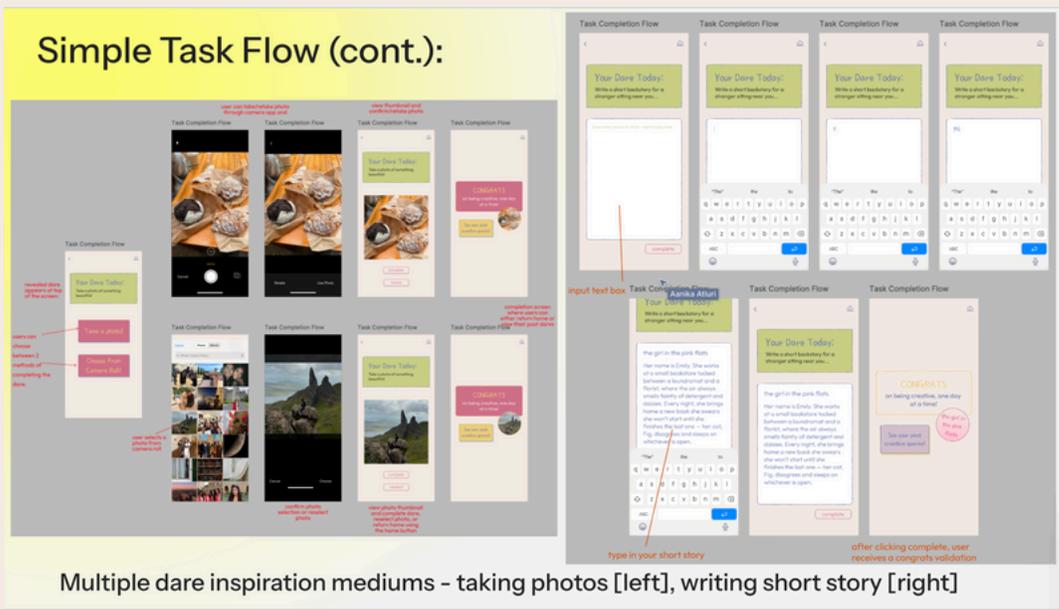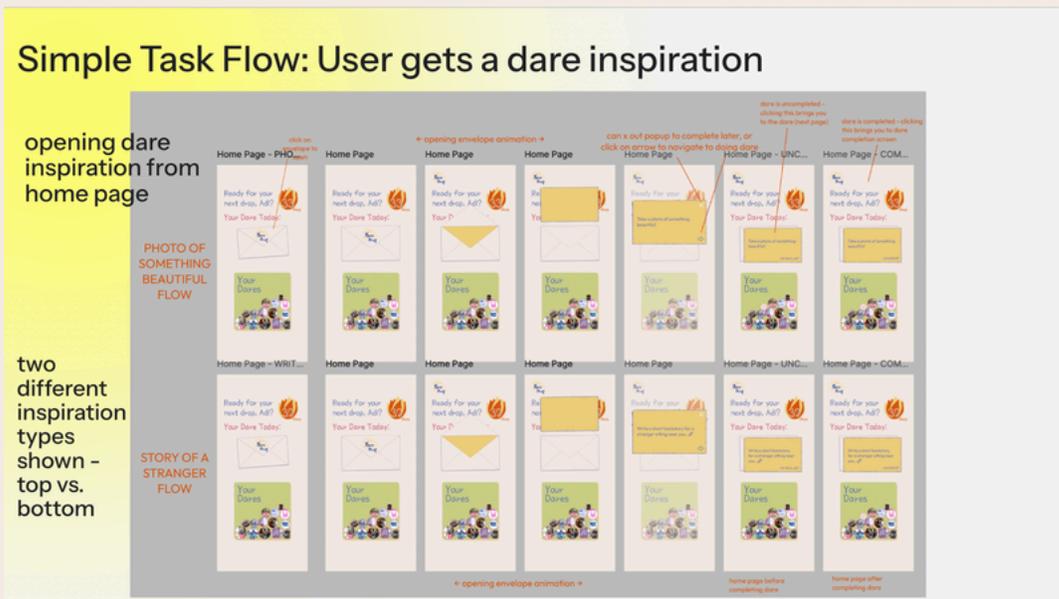
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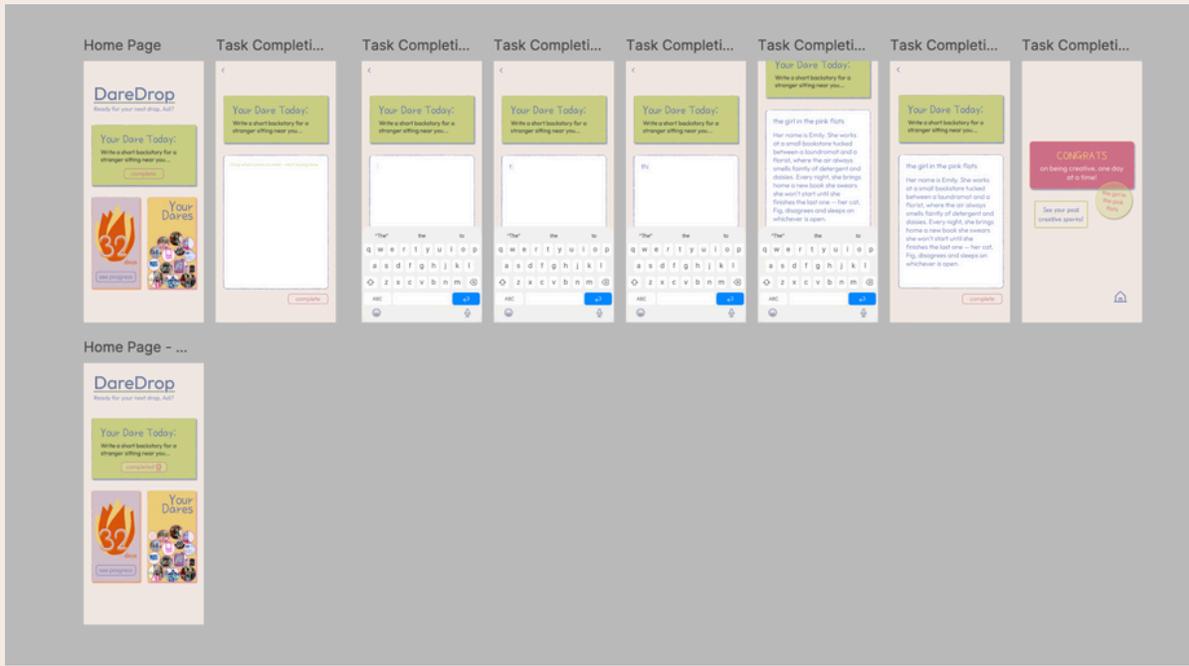
Med-Fi Simple Task Key Screens

Med-Fi Moderate Task Flow

med task 1

med task 2

med task 3

med task 5

med task 6
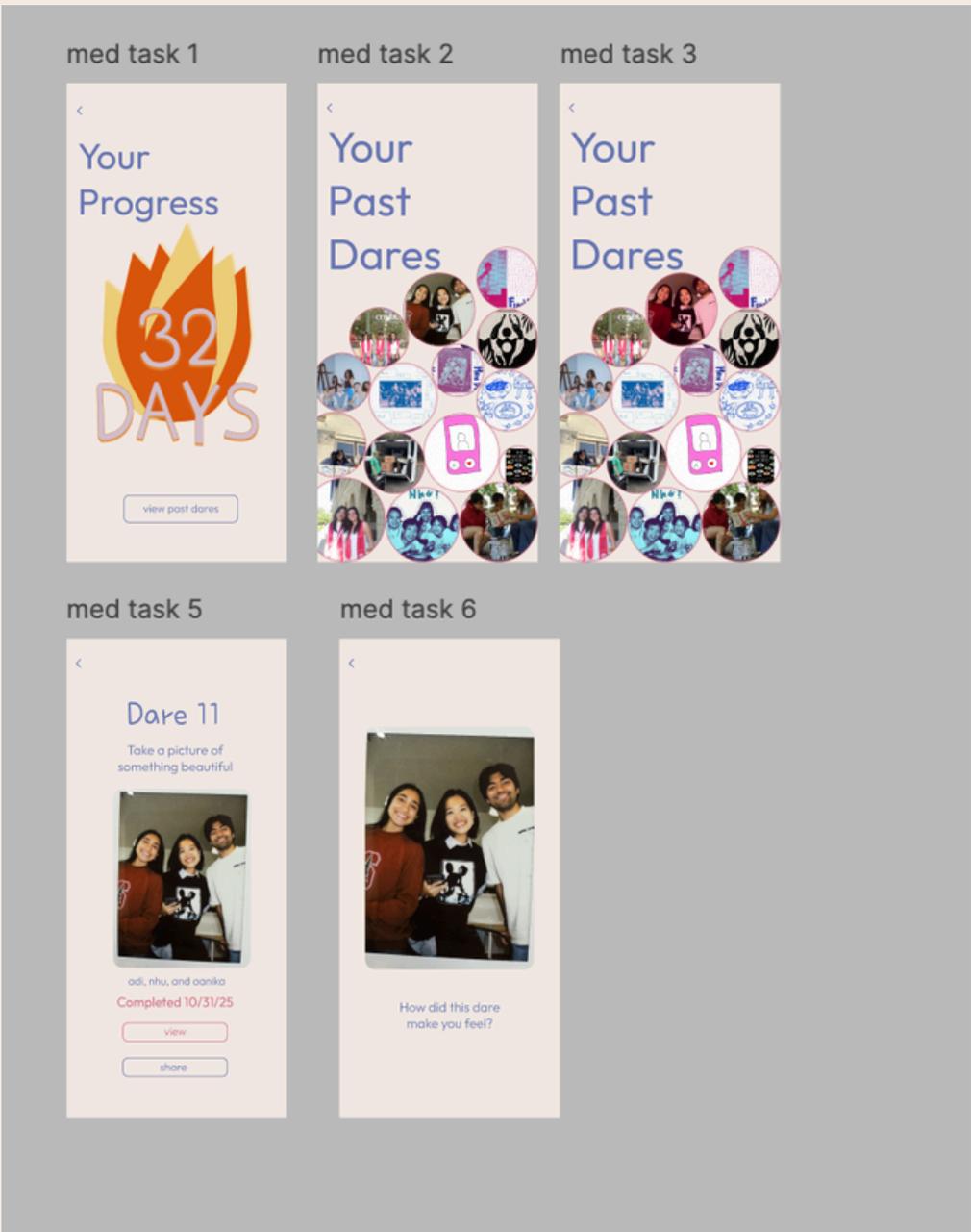
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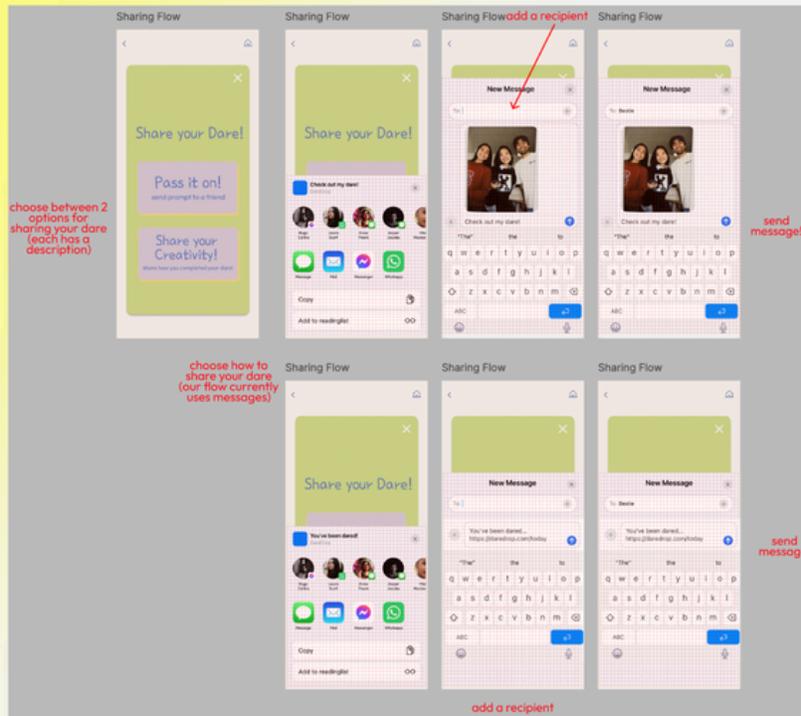
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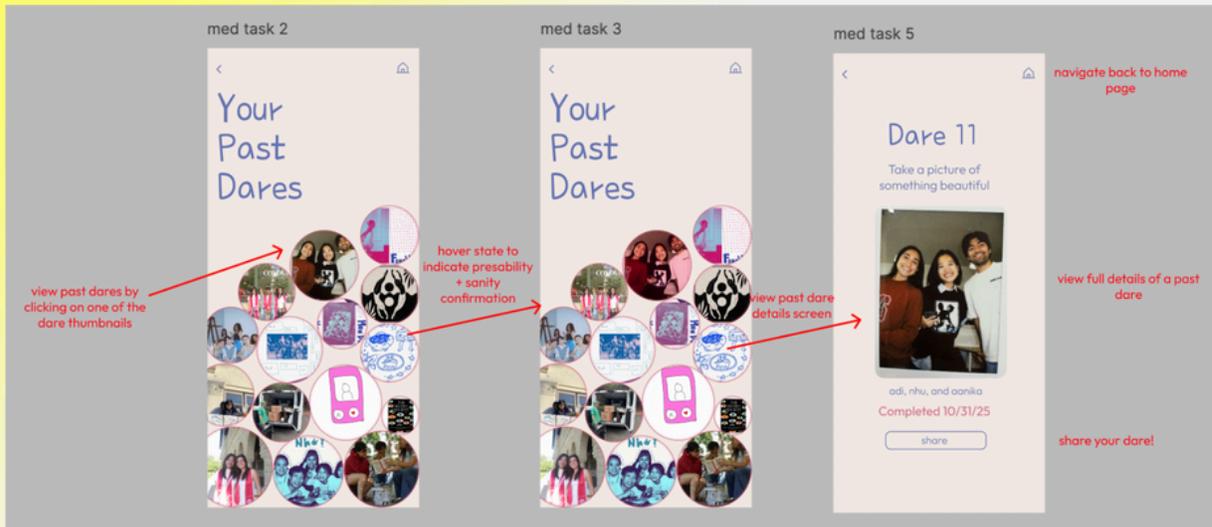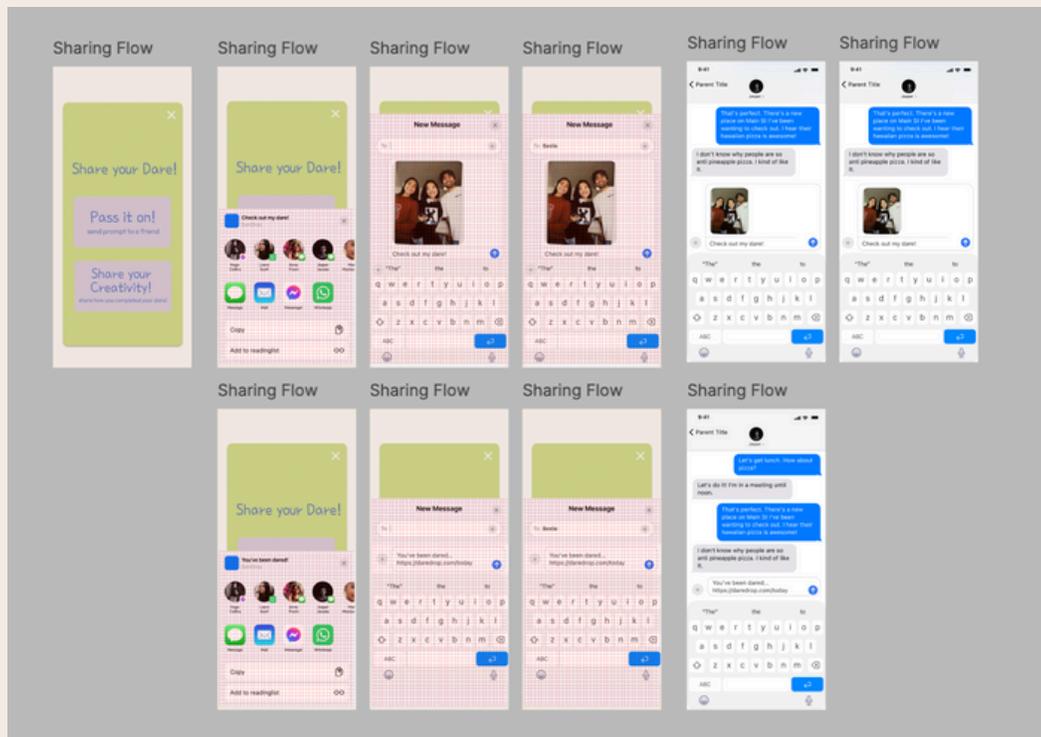

Med-Fi Complex Task Key Screens

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After refining our mid-fidelity prototype, we conducted a formal heuristic evaluation to identify usability issues before committing to visual polish. Our studio peers evaluated DareDrop using Nielsen's heuristics along with CS147-specific additions (value alignment, accessible design). They walked through all three task flows: receiving a dare, reviewing past dares, and sharing/passing on a dare, while flagging any violations of consistency, clarity, hierarchy, or value alignment.

Key Heuristic Findings

After finalizing our mid-fidelity prototype, we conducted a comprehensive heuristic evaluation to identify usability issues before investing in high-fidelity visual design. Four evaluators from our CS147 studio independently walked through all three core task flows—receiving a dare, reviewing past dares, and sharing/passing on a dare—while applying Nielsen's heuristics and CS147-specific values heuristics (H11 accessibility, H12 value alignment). Across all evaluators, we collected 69 total heuristic violations, with 37% (25) rated at severity 3–4, indicating issues that significantly hinder task completion or violate fundamental usability expectations. These findings became the foundation for our high-fidelity overhaul.

High-Level Summary of Findings

Severe (3–4): 25 (37%)
Most common heuristics violated:
- H7 – Efficiency / Workflow shortcuts
- H4 – Consistency & Standards
- H8 – Aesthetic & Minimalist Design
- H1 – Visibility of System Status

These themes reflected systemic UX issues—navigation wasn't reliable, layouts shifted between screens, key buttons moved, and users struggled to understand whether actions succeeded. Value heuristics (H12) also surfaced issues around prompts that could be uncomfortable or socially risky.

Major High-Severity Problems (Severity 3–4)

1. Navigation Inefficiency
Users were unable to reliably access the three main sections (Today's Dare, Your Dares, Create).
- Tabs moved or disappeared
- Visual hierarchy didn't guide attention
- Back buttons were inconsistent

2. Inconsistent Layouts
Logo, streaks icon, and primary buttons shifted between screens, creating cognitive friction and violating H4.

3. Weak System Status Visibility
Users couldn't tell when a dare was completed, shared, or saved.
 Missing: confirmation states, progress indicators, timer visibility.

4. Ambiguous Icons
Pencil, streak flame, and share icon lacked clarity. Users repeatedly misinterpreted their meaning and purpose.

5. Low Contrast & Accessibility Issues
Text layering, icon placement, and color contrast failed basic accessibility guidelines.

6. Risky or Uncomfortable Prompts
Some prompts felt socially risky, uncomfortable, or too ambiguous.
 This violated our value of creative safety and required revision.

7. Missing Safeguards
Text inputs had no save protection or error prevention.
 Users could lose progress when navigating away unintentionally.

What This Meant for Our Design

Using severity scoring, we identified which revisions were required for high-fi:
- 25 required major revisions (severity 3+4)
- 8 additional revisions for severity 1–2 issues that disrupted core flows
- Total planned UI revisions: 33

These revisions guided our redesign priorities.

High-Level Insights
- Frequent H7/H4/H1 violations would mean prioritize navigation, layout stability, and state visibility
- Abundant H8/H11 issues would mean strengthen hierarchy, accessibility, and readability
- Multiple H12 (value alignment) issues woule mean revise prompts to feel safer, more inclusive, less socially risky

This evaluation phase became the structural backbone for our eventual high-fi redesign. Where the mid-fi validated interaction flows, the heuristic evaluation revealed how those flows needed to mature to be usable, learnable, and emotionally safe.

Transition to High-Fidelity Prototype

The evaluation findings directly informed the high-fi redesign.
 Our goals included:
- Establishing a consistent layout system
- Clarifying navigation and tab structure
- Strengthening system status visibility through checkmarks, celebration states, and feedback
- Improving accessibility and visual clarity
- Refining prompt language to align with values of playful, low-pressure creativity
- Enhancing efficiency (fewer taps to submit, share, or browse)

Key High-Fidelity Prototype Changes

Flexibility + Efficiency of Use

After creating dare, need to navigate all the way to past dares to share → Add share option directly on dare completion page
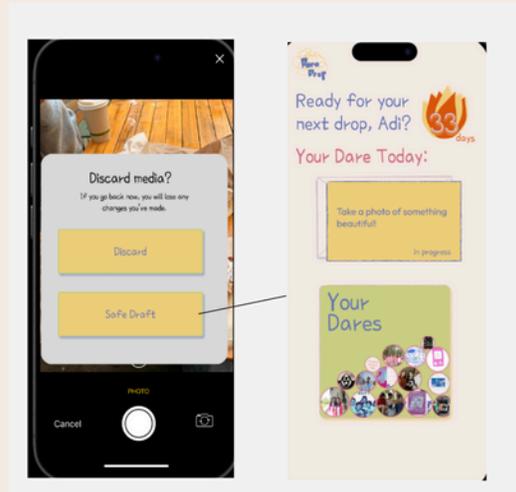
Error Prevention

Include a pop-up upon the user exiting to let them know that their progress has not been submitted.

Visibility of System Status

User cannot spot new dare → Newly created dare is briefly highlighted to indicate where it is stored.
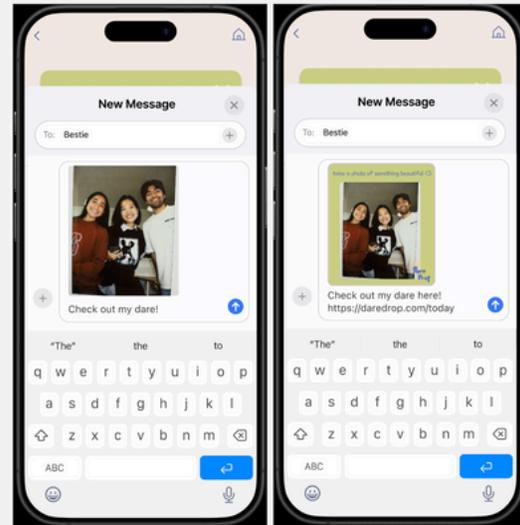
Consistency & Standards

Previously there was no context for receiver of a shared dare → Add link that redirects to app and poster-like detail
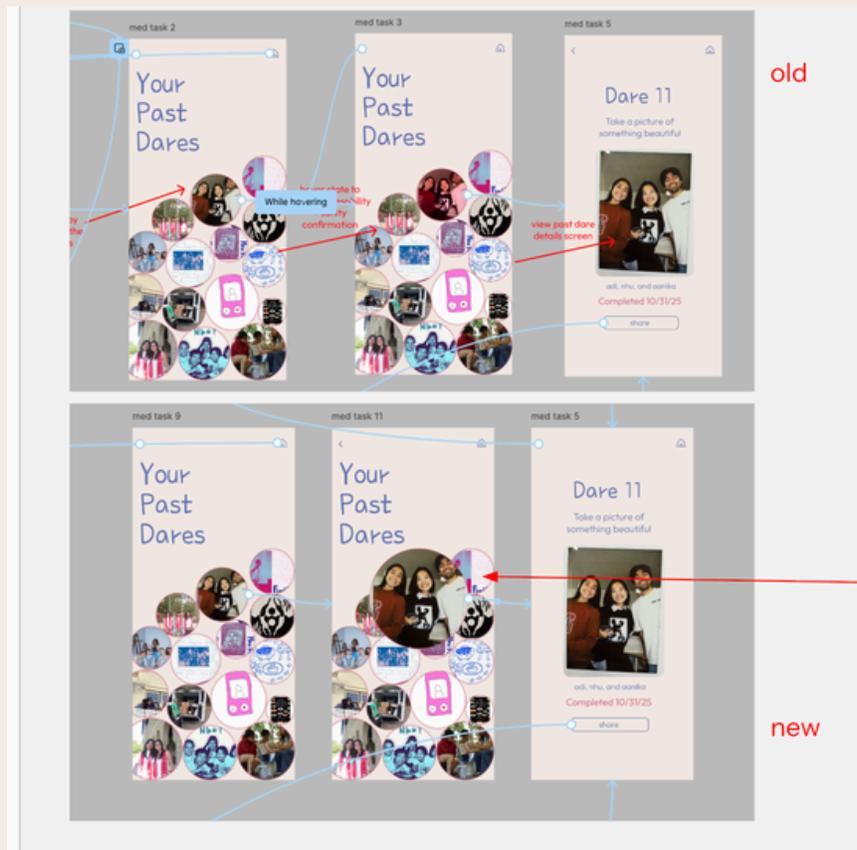
Accessible Design

Having a soft hover feature where users can scrub through to enlarge the image to make it easier for the users to actually view the images in full size.

Values In Design

Core Values Identified

Across testing, critique sessions, and ongoing synthesis, our team identified Playful Creativity as the central value guiding DareDrop's design. Supporting values embedded within this core included:

- User Freedom – empowering users to choose how they engage
- Intuitiveness & Low Barrier to Entry – minimizing friction at every step
- Consistent & Aesthetic Design – preserving delight without sacrificing clarity
- Fun & Lightness – reinforcing casual, pressure-free creativity

Collectively, these values shaped how the interface looked, felt, and behaved at every fidelity stage.

How These Values Were Embedded in the Design

1. User Freedom
- Users decide how they want to engage, what they share, and how they express themselves.
- Embedded through:
- Optional sharing — users can keep dares private or share with friends
- Media modality freedom — photo, video, writing, doodles, audio
- Choose-your-own engagement level — complete one quick dare or explore more in the Past Dares archive
- Clear undo/redo actions to remove pressure around creative "performance"

2. Intuitiveness
- Progressive disclosure (showing only the essential action at each step)
- Guided first-time overlays
- Consistent screen hierarchy introduced in med-fi
- Persistent Today / Dares tabs that reduce navigation errors

3. Consistent & Aesthetic Design
- Standardized color palette & typography introduced in mid-fi
- Reduced icon ambiguity after heuristic evaluation
- Improved contrast & accessibility
- Unified card patterns for Today's Dare, Past Dares, and Create screens

4. Fun & Lightness
- Playful copywriting ("Your next drop, Adi!")
- Friendly illustrations and textures
- Celebratory moments like streaks and completion animations
- Light, colorful visuals that reduce the seriousness of creative tasks

Value Tensions & How We Addressed Them

Several tensions between our desired values and practical usability constraints. Leveraging insights from testing and market research , we identified these major conflicts:

1. Playful Creativity vs. Intuitiveness

Issue: The unconventional UI and loose layouts sometimes confused first-time users.

Resolution:
- Introduced guided onboarding overlays
- Reorganized med-fi → high-fi layouts into a clearer hierarchy
- Added more descriptive labels and simplified terminology (e.g., "Past Dares" instead of "Bin")

Tension 2: Hand-Drawn Aesthetic vs. Consistency

Issue: The early hand-drawn look felt delightful but visually inconsistent across screens.

Resolution:
- Developed a unified visual system with consistent typography and color
- Retained organic textures selectively (card edges, stickers), not globally
- Adopted a modular design pattern for cards, buttons, and containers

Tension 3: Creative Freedom vs. Cognitive Overload
Issue: Too many media options or creative paths risked overwhelming users.

Resolution:
- Implemented progressive disclosure to show only one creative option at a time
- Simplified the Create flow
- Added micro-cues (small icons, short labels) that indicate optional choices
This let the app stay freeform without burdening the user with too many decisions.

Tension 4: Sharing & Social Fun vs. Psychological Pressure
Issue: Social features could pressure users into sharing or performing.

Resolution:
- Made all sharing opt-in
- Provided gentle visual confirmation instead of attention-seeking banners
This aligned with our commitment to intrinsic creativity, not social comparison.

Final Prototype Implementation

Tools Used & Pros and Cons

Our high-fidelity prototype for DareDrop was built as a functional mobile app using a modern cross-platform toolchain designed to balance rapid iteration with production-level fidelity.

1. React Native + Expo (TypeScript)

We used React Native with Expo as our core development framework, written in TypeScript for type-safety and reliability.

Pros:
- Fast local development with hot reload
- Easy device testing through Expo Go
- Large UI ecosystem and familiar mobile interaction patterns
- Cross-platform future compatibility (iOS + Android)

Cons:
- Limited access to certain native modules without ejecting
- Performance constraints for animation-heavy interactions
- Reliance on Expo build infrastructure

2. Supabase (Auth + Backend + Realtime)

We integrated Supabase for authentication, database services, and real-time reads/writes. Although the current build does not store persistent user data, the structure is set up for future dynamic dares, streak tracking, and shared moments.

Pros:
- Scalable, Postgres-backed
- asy setup for auth + storage
- Built-in real-time functionality for collaborative dares

Cons:
- Costs scale with active usage
- Requires additional optimization to reduce latency for real-time creative interactions

3. Cursor + Xcode Simulator + Expo Go

- Cursor: Accelerated coding by generating boilerplate components and handling routine React Native patterns.|
- Xcode Simulator: Allowed layout checks and iteration on iOS UI elements.
- Expo Go: Enabled rapid device testing on our personal phones—crucial for testing camera interactions and streak animations.

Wizard-of-Oz Techniques Used

To simulate the intended experience of AI-generated creativity, the prototype presents the dare icons as though they were uniquely generated by an AI model. In reality, these icons are manually selected and displayed instantly when a user creates or receives a dare. This allows users to experience the sense of novelty and personalization that the final AI-driven system will provide.

Hard-Coded Techniques Used

We have hard-coded all prompts, dare content, and dare icons used throughout the app. While the interface displays these elements dynamically, each is drawn from a predefined set rather than being created algorithmically or sourced from a real backend. No personalized data is stored, and user-specific content, such as completed dares or past creative moments, is also based on hard-coded placeholders rather than persistent database entries.

AI Tools Used + Justification

We used Cursor, an AI-assisted code editor, to help generate basic structure of app, navigation scaffolding, and TypeScript interfaces. We used it to speed up repetitive implementation work so we could spend more time on interaction design, visual polish, and testing rather than hand-writing routine code.

Reflection & Next Steps

Key Learnings of Design Thinking Process

Working through the full arc of the design thinking process this quarter reshaped the way we understand what it means to design intentionally and empathetically. Needfinding, for instance, continually reminded us that users rarely articulate their needs directly. Much of our most meaningful insight emerged not from what participants said, but from what they did, felt, or struggled to express, mirroring the "Say/Think/Feel/Do" framework we learned in class. Being in person for many of our interviews further grounded these insights; subtle physical cues, hesitation, or even the state of someone's creative workspace often revealed tensions we otherwise would have missed. This demonstrated to us that design is fundamentally an interpretive act that requires attentiveness, humility, and a willingness to see beyond surface-level statements.

As we moved into prototyping, the iterative rhythm of the process became equally instructive. Starting with quick, low-fidelity sketches allowed us to test ideas without premature attachment to them. Low-fi prototypes gave us the freedom to be wrong, to make mistakes and fail quickly, and to consider multiple design directions without the emotional weight of polished screens. As we iterated toward medium and high fidelity, we learned firsthand how fidelity shapes the feedback you receive: low-fi artifacts spark conceptual conversations while high-fi ones draw attention to details like spacing and hierarchy. Through leveling up from low to high-fidelity prototype, we now understand the danger of jumping too quickly into hi-fi prototypes, as we were able to smooth out the fundamentals of our app before developing the complete platform.

Another central learning was the role of feedback from many voices. Throughout working on DareDrop, we heard contradictory opinions from peers, CAs, and users. Instead of being paralyzing, this diversity of perspectives pushed us to evaluate not which feedback was "right," but which aligned with our design's core goals. This strengthened our decision-making discipline and helped us recognize patterns across critiques rather than over-indexing on any single comment.

Finally, the process affirmed how essential teamwork is in creating successful interactive systems. Our group brought together different strengths, which enabled us to divide and conquer while also enriching the collective product. Open communication and the willingness to support one another when parts of the project became challenging were what made the process not only effective but genuinely joyful.

Key Learnings of Studio Theme

Our studio theme was "Intelligent Creative Tools". Early in the quarter, we came in thinking of creative tools as something made explicitly for "creative people." But our needfinding quickly complicated that assumption. People who we perceived as deeply artistic often rejected the identity of being "creative," and others who insisted they "weren't creative at all" described surprisingly elaborate creative rituals in their daily lives. It became clear that creativity is not a fixed trait but a fluid, deeply personal relationship people have with self-expression, experimentation, and play.

This pushed us to design with much more humility and an open-mind. Instead of building a tool that presumes to "make someone creative," we had to ask: How can a tool amplify the creativity that already exists within someone's everyday world? And importantly, creativity doesn't look the same for everyone. For some, it's making art; for others, it's improvising small moments of joy, capturing serendipity, or simply noticing beauty in mundane spaces. Designing an intelligent creative tool meant honoring that range rather than narrowing it.

Another critical lesson from the studio was the importance of choosing a clear, meaningful audience. Our early ideas risked becoming overly broad because creativity is such an expansive domain, and we wanted to design for everyone we spoke to. We realized designing "for everyone" quickly made our concept unfocused and diluted. Through fieldwork and synthesis, we realized that our most compelling opportunities emerged from people in their early post-grad years, with those navigating routine, loneliness, or the loss of spontaneous creative outlets. Therefore, narrowing our audience with the help of the "How might we?" and "POV" processes sharpened our design decisions in every stage that followed, echoing a recurring theme from class: specificity enables impact.

Key Learnings of DareDrop

We learned that the success of DareDrop relies on its ability to blend playful yet valuable creativity with efficient ease of use, values that are often pulled in different directions. Our earliest prototypes were intentionally whimsical: organic layouts, nontraditional navigation, and unexpected interface patterns. We wanted DareDrop to feel different from mainstream productivity or social apps, but as we tested these ideas through our medium-fidelity prototype, it became clear that delight cannot come at the expense of comprehension. We realized from the heuristic evaluation that users became confused by overly artistic flows, reminding us that creative tools still require intuitive affordances. This was a powerful lesson in experience design: even the most imaginative systems must support the "simple tasks" seamlessly before anything else.

Iteration was again essential here. The DareDrop that exists now looks very little like our first low-fi sketches and not even much like our initial high-fi screens. Each round of testing revealed mismatches in our assumptions, features that seemed fun to us but distracting to others, or screens that were aesthetically appealing but failed to communicate hierarchy or flow. We had to let go of many ideas we were attached to. This shift with learning to detach from your favorite concepts was one of the most challenging but transformative parts of building DareDrop. It taught us that good design is not just the accumulation of ideas but the careful, sometimes painful refinement of them.

We also learned that successful creative tools must strike the right balance between prompting creativity and not overwhelming users. DareDrop's dares had to be playful yet achievable; its interface had to be expressive yet navigable. We wanted users to feel invited into small, joyful acts but not pressured or burdened. In order to do this, we had to repeatedly ask, Does this make the user's day easier, lighter, or more inspired? If not, it didn't belong.

Ultimately, DareDrop allowed us to internalize and apply every stage of the design process in a rich, meaningful way: from synthesizing ambiguous emotional insights into concrete needs, to exploring a wide design space, to giving form to an intelligent creative tool that tries, *gently,* to make everyday life feel more magical. The project taught us not only how to design for creativity but also how to embrace creativity within the design process itself.

Next Steps

If we had more time to develop DareDrop, our focus would center on strengthening the creative intelligence of the system, smoothing the experience end-to-end, and expanding the types of value users can get from the app. Throughout the project, we discovered that the prompt generation and the emotional tone of the challenges were core drivers of engagement. Therefore, our first priority would be enhancing the quality and breadth of the dares themselves. We would invest time into curating prompts that maximize creative exploration while still feeling low-effort and approachable: tasks that spark imagination but remain doable within minutes. To avoid repetitive experiences and to help users try different mediums or forms of expression, we would explore integrating AI to generate an ever-growing library of fresh, personalized challenge ideas. The goal would not be to automate creativity, but to scaffold it thoughtfully.

Building on this, we would aim to have more personalization on the app – as patterns emerge in a user's behavior – whether they prefer visual dares, audio dares, writing-based dares, or location-based adventures – the system could begin tailoring challenges to match these tendencies. A lightweight onboarding questionnaire or optional "creative preferences" quiz could accelerate this personalization while still allowing the app to adapt over time as the user's interests evolve. This connects with the broader theme of intelligent creative tools: augmenting human creativity without constraining it.

In addition to personalized content, we would also explore dynamically designed dare tokens. With AI assistance, visual themes could become more cohesive and aesthetically compelling while still reflecting the personality of the specific challenge. For example, a text-based dare could generate a photo embodying what was written for the challenge.

During the expo, we also received a lot of curiosity into the social features of DareDrop. We had intentionally reduced social connection through entities like "followers", as we wanted the motivation to be creative to be intrinsic, but feedback showed us that many users expressed desire to complete dares with friends or see each other's progress through DareDrop. From this, we would aim to add more meaningful social features on an opt-in basis, supplemented with user testing as we iterate.

Lastly, we would concentrate on smoothing friction points throughout the experience. For instance, we would aim to reduce the time it takes for media to load when being uploaded or re-opened. We would also refine the user onboarding process to be more intuitive, with tooltips to help first-time users get an immediate understanding of DareDrop's capabilities, and the ability for users to update their information and preferences to make the app seem more user-controlled.

Altogether, these next steps would move DareDrop toward becoming a truly intelligent creative companion, one that evolves with the user, inspires new forms of expression, connects people in meaningful ways, and removes barriers that might otherwise prevent everyday creativity from flourishing.