# Design principles for interactive media

When designing interactive media content, consider the following principles.

## User-centered design

What you are presenting with interactive media is dictated by the user, otherwise known as the audience. You must know your audience: how large it is, who they are, where they come from, what their goals are, and what obstacles they may face when accessing your interactive media content. Some variables to consider include:

- Language and culture
- Impairments
- Interests
- Experience with technology

## Purpose

What is the main purpose of your interactive media? Is it a corporate website, a software application, an entertainment site, a game, or an instructional demonstration? Having a clearly described purpose will help you consider different technological, graphic, and usability factors.

## Technology

Be aware of the technical requirements it will take to implement, deliver, and access your presentation. Elements to consider are:

- Hosting and ISPs
- Web servers
- Browser and e-mail security
- External application needs, such as Java
- Media playback components, such as sound cards and speakers
- Display sizes (Will you be designing for more than one screen size or device?)
- Processor speeds and other characteristics of the delivery devices (computers or mobile devices, for example)

## Content

The content of your application takes into consideration all other design principles. The content should be appropriate for your audience, and it should align with the application's purpose. The content should be well organized, consistent in presentation, and technologically suited for your users. Make sure the media you include enhances your message and does not distract from it. Increase the readability of text elements by applying appropriate font types, sizes, and colors. Use graphics and photographs that are meaningful and that complement other content.

## Consistency

As you design your content, use a consistent frame theme, color scheme, and navigation system. Such consistency not only unifies the design, it helps your content be more usable, because users can recognize and use familiar elements. For example, if the interactive media being created is for a website, be sure to use the same button style and menu system for all the pages on your website.

For most applications and web content, use simple navigational objects. Use standard designs for all buttons, scroll bars, and menus.

## Control

Provide simple navigational objects for the users. Use standard designs for all buttons, scroll bars, menus, and language, and do not hide navigational elements.

Consider accessibility guidelines when designing the navigational system.