

A GUIDE FROM OMNISPHERE TECH · VOLUME THREE

Five days to answer the question that has been stuck for months.

The design sprint — what it is, the five days in detail, how to plan one, where a new designer fits, and the retrospective that makes the next one better.

EDITION
2026

PAGES
NINETEEN

READ TIME
ABOUT 25 MINUTES

WHAT IS IN HERE

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Part one is what a sprint is and whether you need one. Part two walks the week, one day at a time. Part three is everything around it.

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Companion volumes

Volume one covers **universal, inclusive and equity-focused design**. Volume two covers **user-centered design and assistive technology**. Ask us for either.

START HERE

A deadline with a method.

A **design sprint** is a time-bound process with five phases, typically spread over five full eight-hour days.

The goal is to solve a critical design challenge by designing, prototyping and testing ideas with users. Not to discuss the challenge, or to align on it, or to produce a deck about it — to have something a real person has tried by Friday afternoon.

Almost everything around you began as a design challenge: the shape of the table you are sitting at, the ergonomics of the chair, the device you are reading this on. A sprint is one of the ways a challenge becomes a product that actually suits the person using it.

THE USUAL WAY

Months of meetings, opinions and delay

A DESIGN SPRINT

5 days

and you have an answer users have tried

THE DECISION-MAKING, COMPRESSED

What teams use them for

- Answering a question the team keeps circling without resolving.
- Defining a product direction when several are plausible.
- Working out cross-team strategy where several groups have a stake.
- Building team culture — an underrated side effect of five days in one room.

The plain benefit

A sprint cuts the decision-making process down from several months to a single week, and it lets you fast-forward into the future to test a product and get customer reactions **before** making any expensive decisions.

BEFORE YOU BOOK THE ROOM

Is this even a sprint problem?

Sprints are useful, not universal. Before launching into one, review your design challenge and ask three questions.

1 Are there many potential solutions?

If there is one obvious answer, you do not need five days and a room full of people to find it. Sprints earn their cost where the field is genuinely open.

2 Does it need cross-functional input?

If the answer depends on engineering, marketing and product all weighing in, a sprint is a way of getting that in one week rather than six.

3 Is the scope wide enough?

A challenge too narrow to fill five days will produce a sprint that spends Wednesday looking for something to do.

Answer yes to any one of the three, and a sprint might be the right move.

You do not need all three. One is enough to justify the week.

They are versatile

A sprint can be scheduled at any point during a project — not only at the start. When a challenge arises mid-build, the sprint stays in your back pocket as an option.

THE SHAPE OF IT

Five phases, one day each.

A traditional design sprint lasts five days, with each phase taking up to one full day. The whole process is hands-on, and creative collaboration sits at the core of every phase.



- 1 Understand**
Get a clear picture of the design challenge. Learn from experts, talk across departments, agree on the problem.
- 2 Ideate**
Generate ideas and build on each other's. Everyone sketches and presents. Start recruiting test users.
- 3 Decide**
Discuss every solution and choose the one most likely to excite users. End with a blueprint for the prototype.
- 4 Prototype**
Build the first version of the solution — realistic enough to test, not finished. Finish prepping the test.
- 5 Test**
Put the prototype in front of users. Observe, interview, and learn what to change before launch.

The one rule that runs through all five

The user comes first. Everything the team does during the sprint should focus on them — which is what stops the week becoming five days of internal opinion.

DAY 1 OF FIVE

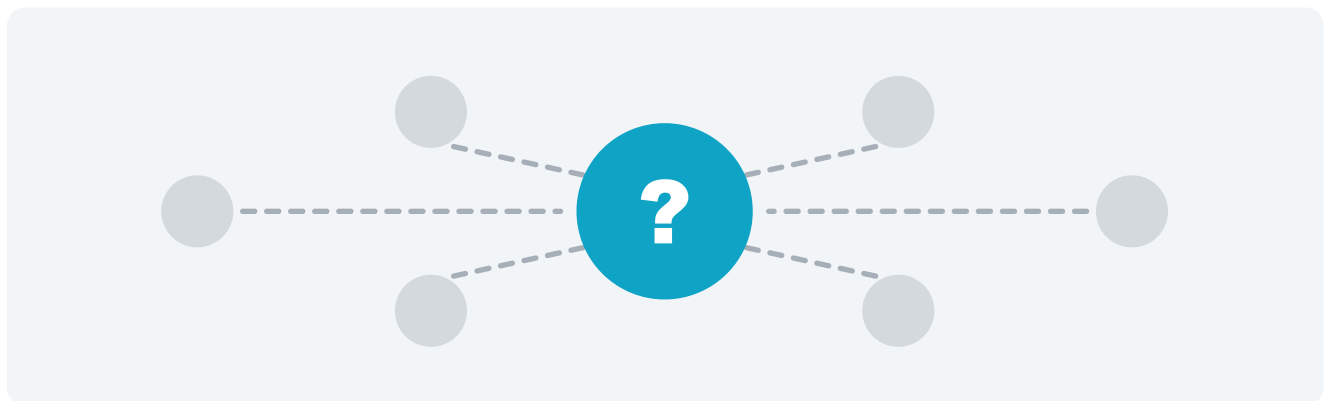
Get the challenge clear.

The understand phase sets the sprint on the right track and gives the team a clear picture of the design challenge.



The day is spent learning rather than solving. The team takes time to hear from experts and to have creative discussions with people from other departments and other industries entirely. Those conversations are what turn a vague brief into a challenge everyone can state the same way.

There will be short talks designed to inspire you. Make a note of every thought you have — the useful ones rarely announce themselves at the time, and Tuesday moves fast.



What you do today

Listen, ask, and write things down. Contribute what you notice, even if you are the most junior person in the room.

Watch out for

The urge to start solving. Nobody sketches on Monday; a team that jumps ahead spends the week defending a solution it chose before it understood the problem.

DAY 2 OF FIVE

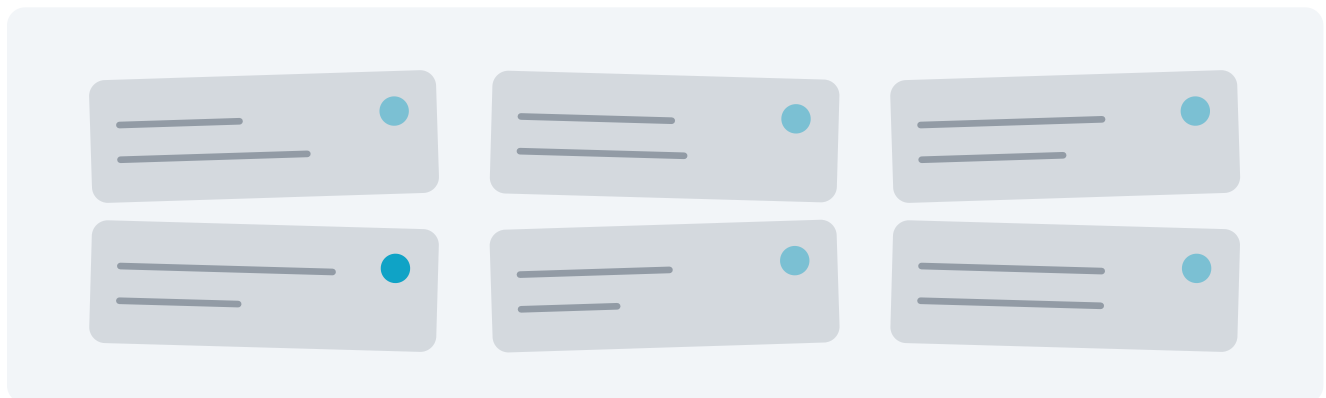
Get every idea on paper.

Come up with ideas, build on each other's, and get them out where the group can see them.



The sprint leader guides the team through brainstorming activities to spark creativity and generate as many possible solutions as the day allows. Then each participant takes time to sketch their ideas and present them to the room. Do not worry about your drawing skills — the idea is what matters.

There is a second, easily forgotten task today. Testing happens on Friday, and it needs real users who fit your target profile. Recruiting them starts now, or the sprint quietly slips its schedule on the last day.



What you do today

Generate ideas and put them out there. Sketch, present, and build on what other people have drawn.

Watch out for

Leaving user recruitment until later in the week. Friday cannot be rescheduled — the sprint ends when it ends.

DAY 3 OF FIVE

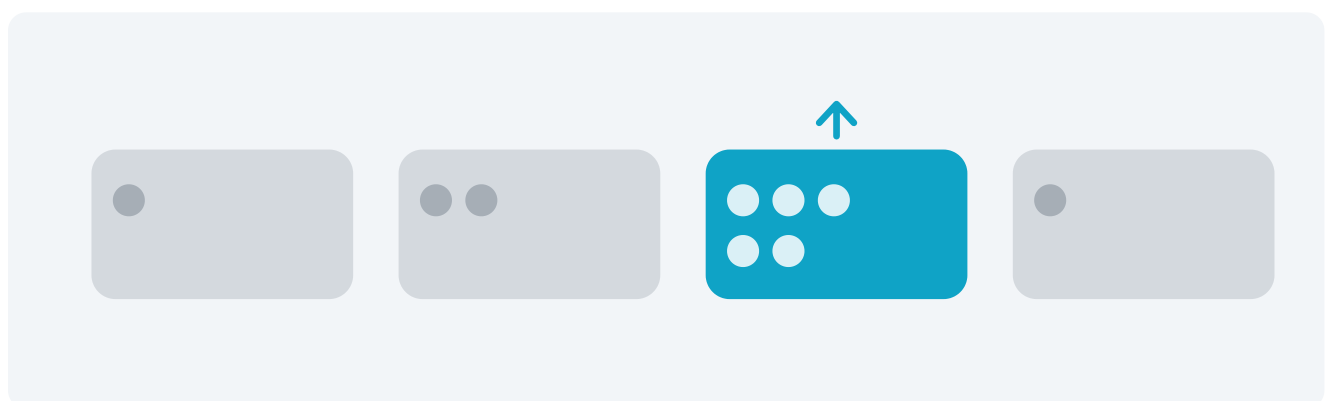
Pick one, and commit.

By phase three you have a lot of potential solutions. Now the team decides which one to build.



Together you discuss each possible solution and eventually decide on the single one most likely to excite users and move the number that matters. When potential solutions fight it out, everyone votes — including the newest person in the room. You are involved in every stage of the decision, not just informed of the outcome.

The day closes by turning that decision into a step-by-step blueprint for the prototype, so Thursday starts with building rather than with another discussion about what to build.



What you do today

Take part in the discussion and vote for the solution you think has the most potential. Help draft the blueprint.

Watch out for

Hedging. A team that keeps two solutions alive has half a prototype on Thursday and nothing convincing to test on Friday.

DAY 4 OF FIVE

Build something good enough.

You are building the first version of the solution. At the end of the day you do not need a finished product — just something realistic enough to test with users.



The trick is to focus only on what the user experiences on their screen. Nothing behind it has to be real. A prototype that looks convincing for the ninety seconds a tester spends on it is worth more than a working system nobody will see.

This is also when you finish prepping for testing: confirming the schedule, finalising the interview questions, and making sure the prototype actually runs on the device it will be shown on.



What you do today

Help build the prototype, ask questions, offer ideas, and review the finished thing. You may also confirm the test users.

Watch out for

Polishing. Every hour spent making it beautiful is an hour not spent making sure it is testable.

DAY 5 OF FIVE

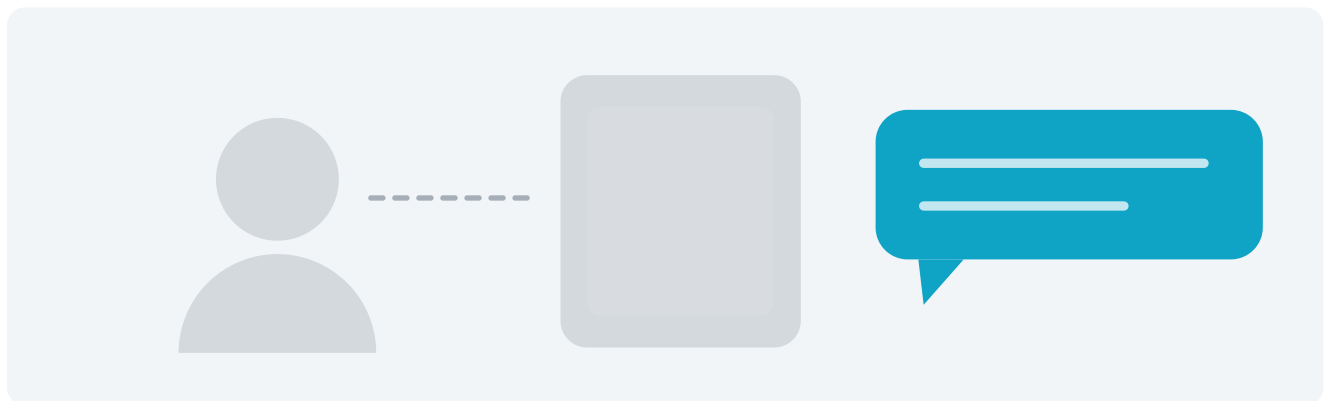
Put it in front of real people.

The final phase. Users try the prototype, you watch what happens, and then you ask them about it.



Observation comes first and interview second, because what people do tells you more than what they say they would do. Your team gains critical insight about what needs to change — while changing it is still cheap.

A successful sprint leaves you tired but energised, full of new ideas, and with a clear sense of whether the idea works. You will have had good ideas this week and bad ones. That is precisely why validating with users is built into the process rather than left to instinct.



What you do today

Collect user feedback by observing and interviewing. Note what surprised you — that is usually the valuable part.

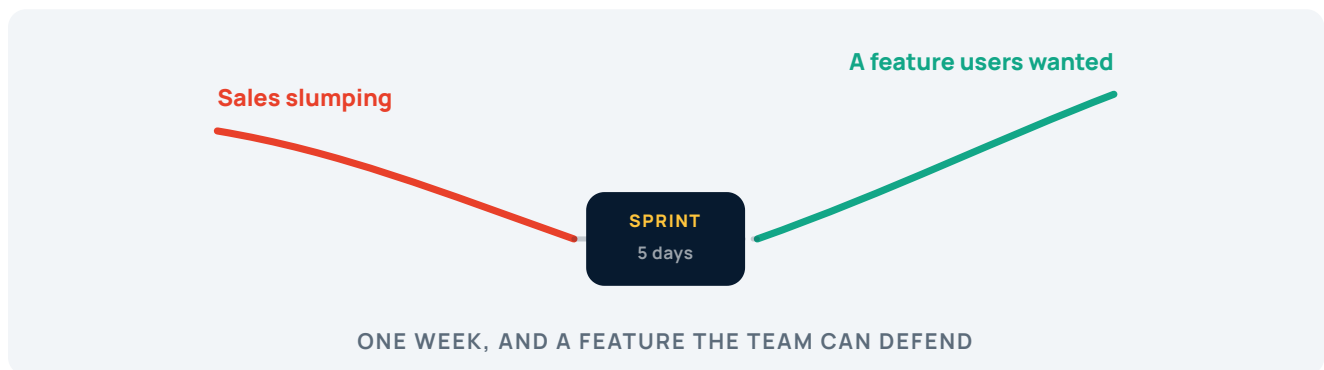
Watch out for

Defending the prototype. You are there to find out what is wrong with it, which is only possible if you let it fail.

START TO FINISH

The cycling app that stopped selling.

Imagine you are a UX designer at a company called Cycling Enthusiasts. The app lets cyclists track distance ridden and calories burned. Sales have started slumping.



Monday	Experts and other departments help the team see it clearly: sales are slumping because the app does not offer cyclists anything new.
Tuesday	Everyone sketches and presents. Recruitment for Friday's test users begins in parallel.
Wednesday	The team picks one solution — a feature that uses the cyclist's location to create customised routes matching their fitness goals.
Thursday	By focusing only on what the user sees on screen, the team builds a working prototype of the customised routes feature.
Friday	Users try it. The team observes and interviews, and finishes the week knowing exactly what to adjust before launching.

What actually happened here

A company that was guessing at the cause of a sales decline on Monday had a user-validated answer by Friday — without building the real thing first.

THE CASE FOR THE WEEK

Five days buys you five things.

From tech to finance to retail, companies in all kinds of industries use sprints to solve complex problems. Here is what experienced designers say makes them work.

- 1 It is all about the user**
Participants make sure the challenge stays focused on the user and their needs. It is users who ultimately decide whether the product succeeds.
- 2 Every person in the room is valued**
From the office intern to the senior stakeholder. Including people from many disciplines and experience levels means all angles of the problem get considered — and the best ideas rise to the top.
- 3 The team gets to actually focus**
Five work days devoted entirely to distraction-free, gadget-free creative collaboration. That is a rare thing, and it is a recipe for serious problem-solving.
- 4 It lowers the risk of a bad launch**
The team gets feedback from real users and can make critical adjustments before the product goes to market.
- 5 They are versatile**
A sprint can be scheduled at any point during a project. When a challenge arises, you always have the option.

Running a design sprint is like using a superpower.

Which raises the obvious question — if they are this good, why does not every team run them? Usually because nobody checked whether the challenge qualified.

BEFORE DAY ONE

Planning the sprint.

A sprint that starts well was arranged well. Five things need settling before anyone walks into the room.

Find the right space

Room enough to work and to display everything on the walls — and think about **acoustics**, and about accommodations for anyone who needs them. A room that some participants cannot work comfortably in has already excluded them from the sprint.

Gather supplies

In the sprint space, people should find everything they need to do the work: office supplies, water, and something to eat. Small logistics, but they decide whether the day runs.

Establish sprint rules

The sprint leader welcomes everyone and lays out the ground rules. You might be asked to give up your phone and keep your laptop closed until the end of each day — the focus is the point.

Call in the experts

Line up the people whose short talks will shape Monday, from inside and outside the company. Their job is to inform and to inspire, not to approve.

Write the sprint brief

A **sprint brief** is the document you share with all your attendees to help them prepare. Everyone should arrive knowing what the challenge is and what the week is for.

Among its sections, **key deliverables** is the one that states what the team wants to have created by the end of the sprint.

An icebreaker is not a waste of time

Once everyone is settled there is often a team icebreaker. People who have not spoken before are about to spend five days disagreeing productively — it helps if the first disagreement is not also the first conversation.

WHERE A NEW DESIGNER FITS

You are not running it. You are in all of it.

As an entry-level UX designer you will not be running the show — but you contribute to every single phase of the sprint.

Day 1 · Understand

Take in the short talks by experts. Make a note of every thought you have — you will want them tomorrow.

Day 2 · Ideate

Your main focus is coming up with ideas and putting them out there. Sketch and present alongside everyone else.

Day 3 · Decide

You are involved in every stage of the decision. When solutions fight it out, you vote. You may also start scheduling testers, writing survey or interview questions, and gathering equipment.

Day 4 · Prototype

You are actively involved in building a solid prototype for users to try. Ask questions, offer ideas, review the finished build, and confirm the test users.

Day 5 · Test

You may be asked to collect user feedback by observing and interviewing users — the feedback that tells the team what to revise before going to market.

You will have good ideas this week, and bad ones. So will everyone else.

That is the point of the format: it does not rely solely on you, and by Friday the team knows whether the idea works — before anyone has implemented it.

FROM SOMEONE WHO RUNS THEM

Sprints are about inclusivity.

An interaction designer at Google describes what a sprint is actually for — and why who is in the room matters more than the schedule.

AN INTERACTION DESIGNER, GOOGLE

“The goal is to take really complex problems and come together with other people on your team — product managers, engineers, marketing — and try to solve that problem together.”

You do it over the course of a week, running multiple design activities from wireframing through prototyping, and then test with users at the end. It is a genuinely good way to get quick feedback and test the initial hypotheses.

That is why bringing multiple perspectives together matters. You may arrive with a fresh perspective; someone else carries historical knowledge of the project; product management and marketing bring theirs. Sprints, at their core, are about inclusivity — deliberately assembling people who see the problem differently in order to surface a multitude of ideas.

The participants are your users too

There is a neat idea buried in that: designing a sprint is a condensed version of the UX job itself. It is always important to understand who your participants are and to make sure the overall experience is thoughtful. When you are designing a sprint, the participants *are* your users — so you understand their needs and put them first, exactly as you would for anyone else.

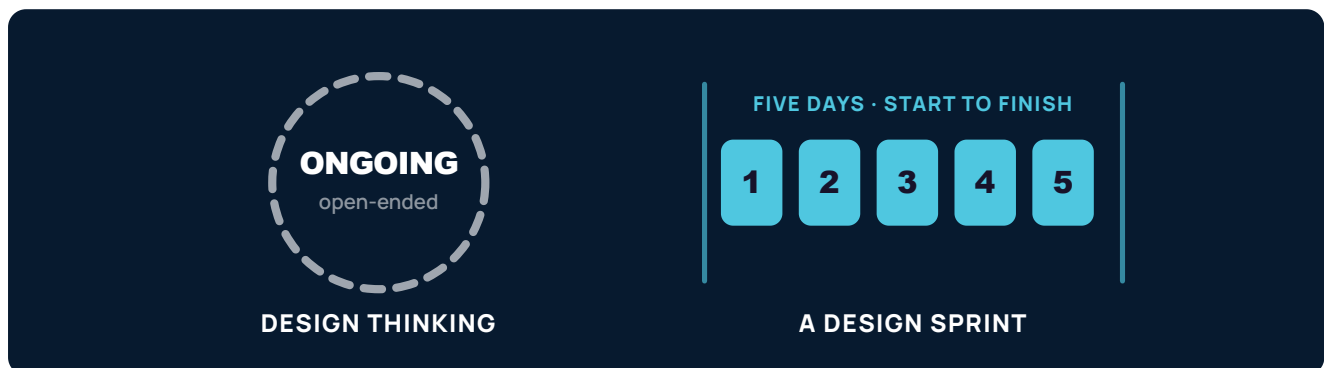
Ask on your next sprint

Who is not in this room whose perspective would change the answer — and what would it take to get them in it?

OFTEN CONFUSED

A sprint is not the framework.

Both are organised into five similar phases, and both promote collaboration, user-centered design, rapid prototyping and iterative testing. They are still distinct things.



The design thinking framework

Five phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test. An overall philosophy for approaching problem solving. Spans the entire product development process and is open-ended. Uses many different methods and tools.

A design sprint

Five phases: understand, ideate, decide, prototype, test. A specific implementation plan for one design challenge. Strictly time-bound, typically five full business days. One method, one defined process.

How sprints accelerate each phase

Empathize	Quickly research user behaviours and preferences, run interviews, and analyse feedback to find pain points and opportunities.
Define	Refine the problem statement, align stakeholders, analyse the user journey, and generate ideas aimed at the pain points found.
Ideate	Time constraints and structured activities help a team produce a large volume of ideas in a short window.
Prototype	Where sprints are strongest — translating ideas quickly into a visual or interactive prototype that can be validated.
Test	A ready-made structure for running user testing sessions and collecting feedback that feeds the next iteration.

THE DAY AFTER

Then you talk about the week.

A **retrospective** is a collaborative critique of the team's design sprint. Hold it immediately after the sprint, while everyone's thoughts are still fresh.

There is no particular agenda. The goal is to make sure everyone who took part has a chance to give feedback. The person who led the sprint guides the conversation and someone takes notes, so the feedback can actually make the next sprint better.



What went well?

Everyone answers.



What can improve?

Everyone answers.

What went well?

Start here. Analyse the team's wins and think about how they could be applied to future sprints.

Which tools saved the most time? When did I feel the most satisfaction? What helped me make my best contribution?

What can be improved?

Then shift gears. Use the five phases to structure the feedback: at what point were there missteps, and what caused them?

What went wrong that caught me off guard? Which problems came up most often? Did we over- or underestimate the work?

Empowering, not shaming

If something did not go well, this is the chance to make sure you have the resources and tools to do better next time. Everyone should feel empowered to share, and know that personal identifiers like race or gender do not stop members being honest. Letting people write improvements down **anonymously** first removes the fear of causing offence — and reduces **groupthink**, where one opinion is stated and everyone agrees rather than saying what they actually think.

EVERYTHING IN ONE PLACE

Checklist and glossary.

Before the sprint

- ✓ The challenge passes at least one of the three qualifying questions.
- ✓ The room works for everyone in it — space, acoustics, accommodations.
- ✓ Supplies, water and food are in the room, not on someone's to-do list.
- ✓ A sprint brief has gone out, and it names the key deliverables.
- ✓ Experts are booked for Monday, and cross-functional voices are invited.
- ✓ Ground rules are agreed — including what happens to phones and laptops.

During the week

- ✓ Monday ends with everyone stating the challenge the same way.
- ✓ User recruitment for Friday started on Tuesday.
- ✓ Wednesday ends with one solution and a step-by-step blueprint.
- ✓ Thursday's prototype is testable rather than polished.
- ✓ Friday observes before it asks.
- ✓ A retrospective is booked for immediately afterwards.

Glossary

Design sprint

A time-bound process with five phases, typically spread over five full 8-hour days, to answer critical questions through designing, prototyping and testing with users.

Sprint brief

A document shared with all attendees to help them prepare for the sprint.

Prototype

An early model of a product that demonstrates its functionality and can be used for testing.

Groupthink

When one person shares an opinion and everyone immediately agrees instead of offering their own.

Design thinking

A UX framework focused on the user across five phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test.

Key deliverables

The sprint brief section stating what the team wants to have created by the end of the week.

Retrospective

A collaborative critique of the team's design sprint.

Insight

An observation that helps you understand the user or their needs from a new perspective.

Where to read further

The **Google Design Sprint Kit** is an open-source resource with case studies, deck templates and activities. **Sprint**, by the format's creator Jake Knapp, is the book — the chapters "Start at the End" and "Liftoff" are the ones to read first.

WHO MADE THIS

We design and build the whole surface of a company.

Omnisphere Tech is a digital studio in Abuja. We build the website that wins the enquiry, the app that carries the work, the visualisation that sells the building, and the identity that holds it together.

Website design

Brand-led sites that load fast on a Nigerian network and turn attention into enquiries.

Mobile & web apps

Product engineering from first prototype to a release your team can maintain.

Architectural 3D

Photoreal stills, interiors and walkthroughs that sell a building before it exists.

Graphic design

Identity, reports and print artwork built as a system, not a one-off.

Got a decision that has been stuck for months?

That is exactly what a week is for. Tell us the challenge and we will come back with a scope, a fixed price and a date — and by the end of it, an answer real users have already tried.

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Written and designed by Omnisphere Tech for educational use. Volume one covers universal, inclusive and equity-focused design; volume two covers user-centered design and assistive technology.