



EMPATHIC DESIGN CHALLENGE

Formulating a design goal based upon a story about users.

 **Participants**
Group

 **Design skill**
Develop empathy

 **Prior design experience**
Average

 **Duration**
15 minutes

 **Design step**
Formulating the problem

Description

The participants listen to a story where some characters experience a problem within their daily lives. The story focuses on detail and emotions, to stimulate the participants' empathy. Based on the situation described, with the help of a worksheet, the design teams then think of a desired situation. They develop an appropriate design question and define the requirements and wishes that the solution to the problem must meet.

Worksheet empathic design challenges

www.tudeft.nl/codeignkids

Very important criteria:

Important criteria:

They come up with the desired situation by completing the sentence 'In an ideal world ...'. Completing the sentence 'Design something that ...' guides them in formulating their vision for the solution of the problem.



They consider and refine the design goal by reflecting on the wishes of the person experiencing the problem and formulating requirements and wishes for the design. The participants constantly refer to the story extracting information and actively processing it.

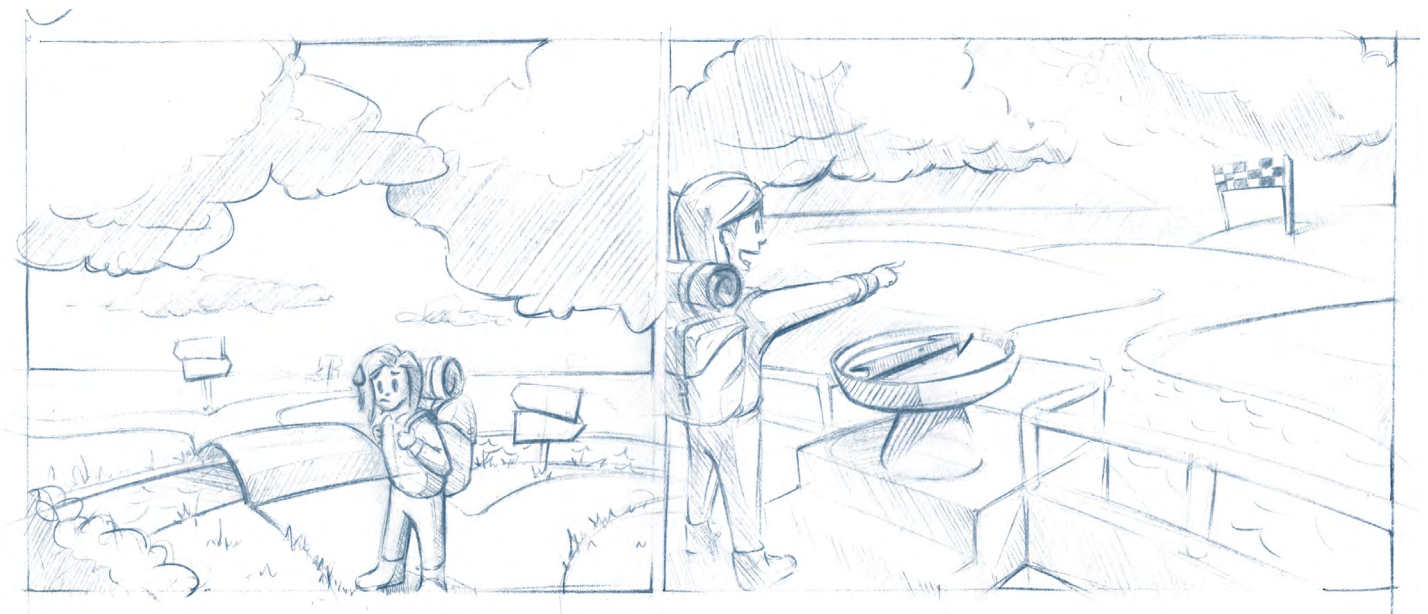
Effect

A story ensures that the participants empathise with real world users. By actively processing the story, the participants think about what they want to achieve with their design for the users. Through this they feel involved in the problem and responsible for the result.

The group also determines which direction they want to come up with ideas and what criteria their design must ultimately meet before thinking about solutions. This aligns the visions of the participants.

Without the Empathic design challenge

With the Empathic design challenge



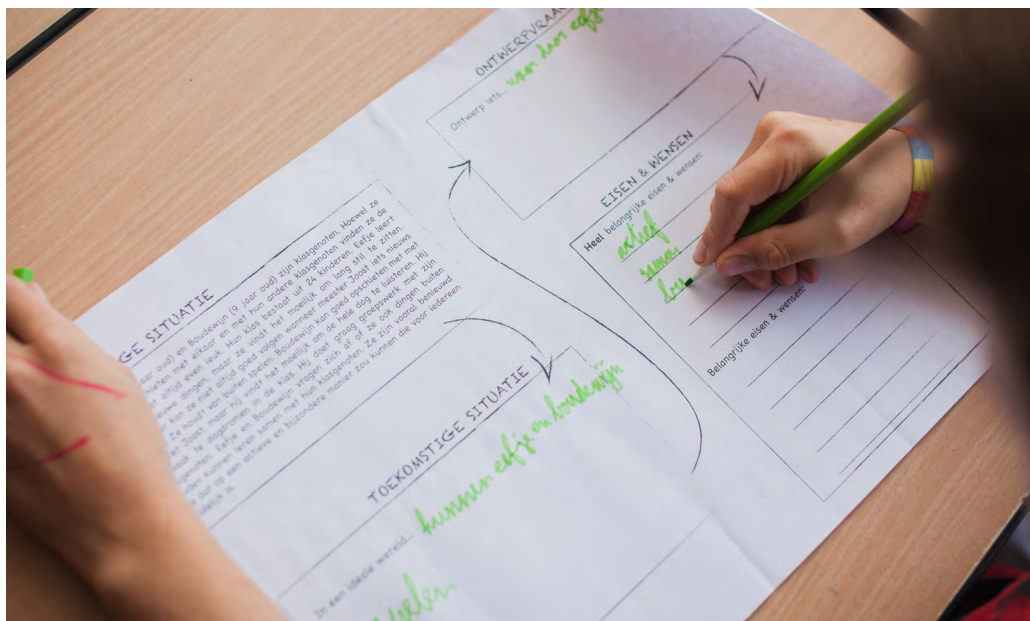
Example

Mr Williams wants the participants to think about the design problem themselves. To achieve this, he comes up with a short story about Ben who enjoys going to school by bike, but not when it rains. Mr Williams describes in great detail how Ben is affected by the rain. He tells them that he shivers all day from being wet and cold.

After hearing the story, the participants want to do something to help Ben. First they think about the future situation. Josephine's group formulates the definition: 'In an ideal world you can cycle to school through the rain and stay dry'. The design question they come up with are: 'Design something so that the raindrops don't get Ben's clothes wet when he cycles.' Later in the project, Josephine's group came up with an idea for a handlebar mounted fan that blows raindrops past Ben! This will allow Ben to cycle through the rain comfortably in the future.

Step by step

- 1 Think up a short story about the design problem, include details about the problem and emotions of the characters.
- 2 Place (a summary of) the story in the worksheet. Add photos or illustrations that enrich the story and make it recognizable.



- 3 Tell them the story. Get the participants retell the story in their own words. Explain to them that in the story a character has a problem, ask the participants to start thinking about a world where this problem doesn't exist or is experienced as something positive.

- 4 Give the participants the worksheet and let them fill in the future situation.
- 5 Tell the participants that a design question states what the design should be able to achieve and who it is for. It should not describe a concrete solution or design idea. Let them come up with a design question.
- 6 Let them formulate the criteria (requirements and wishes).
- 7 Discuss the future situation, the design question, the design requirements and check with each group whether they have a clear picture of their design challenge.

Tips

- ▶ Perform this method with a class where the participants have little design experience, or practice with the example in the worksheet of Ben cycling through the rain.
- ▶ Encourage teams to formulate design questions that differ from other groups. This is helpful! A personal point of view helps participants to take ownership of the problem.
- ▶ Do not limit the problem of the characters so only a few solutions are possible. Do not make the problem too broad either. This will cause the participants to no longer have a hold over the problem.

Make your story compelling

How do you make a story about a design problem compelling?

- ▶ Choose one or more characters in your story and write the story from their point of view.
- ▶ Consider the problem the protagonist has to deal with and what he or she would desire.
- ▶ Create a situation and action: where does the problem occur and what does the main character do? What do the other people do?
- ▶ Add solutions that the character has already tried and explain why they don't work.
- ▶ Add details that stimulate their imagination and make the story lifelike. That's how listeners develop empathy.

Materials

- ▶ Worksheet ‘Empathic design challenge’, adapted to your design theme
- ▶ Optionally: example worksheet about Ben cycling through the rain, to practice with
- ▶ Drawing and writing material

References


van Boeijen, A., Daalhuizen, J., van der Schoor, R., & Zijlstra, J. (2014). Delft Design Guide: Design Strategies and Methods. BIS Publishers. p100-101



CURRENT SITUATION

FUTURE SITUATION

In an ideal world...



DESIGN QUESTION

Design something...

CRITERIA

Very important criteria:

Important criteria:

