**Book Review**

# Laws of UX: Using Psychology to Design Better Products & Services
(By Jon Yablonski)

A Review by
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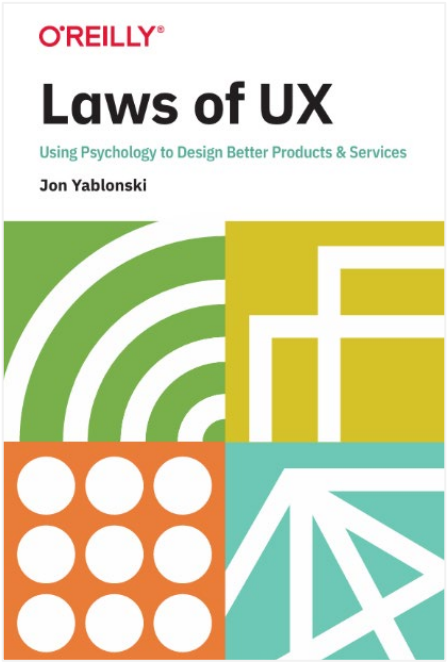


**Title:** Laws of UX: Using Psychology to Design Better Products & Services
**Author:** Jon Yablonski
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## Introduction

The design of information and communication technologies has traditionally placed strong emphasis on usability evaluation, employing both objective and subjective methods. Over time, several usability assessment instruments have been developed and extensively applied in empirical research, including the System Usability Scale (SUS) (Brooke, 1996; Harrati et al., 2016) and the Software Usability Measurement Inventory (SUMI) (Angskun et al., 2020; Kirakowski & Corbett, 1993). However, as digital technologies have become deeply embedded in everyday life, work, and communication, the quality of user experience with systems, products, and services has increasingly been recognised as a key factor in product and service success (Mortazavi et al., 2024). Users' expectations have risen to the point where usability alone is no longer sufficient. Consequently, research and design practices have shifted their focus toward user experience (UX) design that goes beyond usability or visual appeal, requiring a deeper understanding of human behaviour, perception, decision-making, and emotional responses. *Laws of UX: Using Psychology to Design Better Products & Services* by Jon Yablonski presents an important conceptual framework that systematically connects psychology with UX design. Drawing on well-established psychological principles, the book explains and interprets these concepts in ways that align with contemporary digital products and services.

Rather than offering fixed formulas or rigid technical solutions, the book serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical design work. The author consistently argues that high-quality design should be grounded in an understanding of human nature, rather

than relying solely on personal intuition, individual experience, or visual and technological trends.

**Structure and Core Concepts of the Book**

The book is organised into twelve chapters, consisting of ten psychological laws and two additional supporting chapters. Each chapter introduces a psychological principle rooted in both classic and contemporary research, followed by an explanation of its relevance to design and its application in real-world situations. This structure allows readers to understand the relationship between human behaviour and UX design in a coherent and integrated manner, rather than as isolated concepts.

In addition, the book places strong emphasis on ethical considerations and the responsibility of designers when applying psychological knowledge. As a result, *Laws of UX* is not only a practical guide for designers but also an academic reference that meaningfully connects psychological theory with UX design practice.

**Familiarity, Interaction, and User Decision-Making**

The chapter on **Jakob's Law** clearly explains that familiarity is a key component of user experience. The author points out that users tend to bring expectations from previously used websites or products when interacting with new systems. Designs that align with users' mental models reduce cognitive load and support users in achieving their goals more efficiently. Importantly, the book presents Jakob's Law in a balanced way, emphasising that it does not reject innovation but instead questions how innovation can be introduced without sacrificing clarity and ease of use.

Similarly, **Fitts's Law** and **Hick's Law** help explain the fundamental mechanisms behind user interaction and decision-making. Fitts's Law demonstrates the relationship between time, accuracy, size, and distance in selecting targets, while Hick's Law highlights how the number and complexity of choices directly affect decision time. Together, these chapters reinforce the idea that good design should minimise errors, reduce cognitive effort, and support efficient decision-making.

**Memory, Information Grouping, and System Complexity**

The chapter on **Miller's Law** addresses common misunderstandings surrounding the so-called "magic number seven." The author explains that the key issue is not limiting interface elements to a specific number, but rather recognising the limits of human working memory and the role of information grouping, or chunking, in supporting comprehension and recall. This perspective highlights that effective design should structure information according to how people think, rather than adhering to numerical rules.

At the same time, **Tesler's Law** emphasises that complexity is unavoidable in any system. The critical difference lies in whether that complexity is handled by the system or pushed onto the user. This chapter encourages designers to take responsibility for managing complexity at the system level in order to create clearer and less confusing user experiences.

**Emotion, Memory, and Aesthetic Perception**

The book gives considerable attention to emotional and memory-related aspects of UX through the **Peak–End Rule**, **Aesthetic–Usability Effect**, and **von Restorff Effect**. These principles explain that users do not remember experiences evenly across time, but tend to judge them based on the most intense moments and the final interaction. This insight encourages designers to focus on key moments within the user journey.

Furthermore, the Aesthetic–Usability Effect demonstrates that visual appeal influences how users perceive usability, often increasing tolerance and trust. Empirical studies provide

evidence that user satisfaction can diverge from objective performance outcomes (Kamollimsakul, Petrie, & Power, 2014). Meanwhile, the von Restorff Effect highlights the power of difference in attracting attention and forming memory. Together, these chapters expand the scope of UX beyond functional problem-solving toward the design of emotion, feeling, and long-term user memory.

**Speed, Flexibility, and System Robustness**

The book also discusses **Postel's Law** and the **Doherty Threshold** to demonstrate that high-quality user experience depends on both flexibility and responsiveness. Postel's Law emphasises designing systems that are strict in the results they produce while remaining flexible in how input is accepted. This approach recognises user diversity and human error across various contexts, thereby strengthening system robustness and reliability in diverse situations.

The Doherty Threshold indicates that response times under 400 milliseconds enhance efficiency and satisfaction, positioning speed as a core element of the user experience. The discussion also introduces the idea of "perceived performance," which enables designers to shape user experience in meaningful ways even when technical limitations cannot be fully eliminated.

**Ethics, Designer Responsibility, and Practical Application**

The chapter **With Power Comes Responsibility** extends the discussion into the ethical dimension of user experience design. It argues that psychological knowledge used to influence human behaviour represents both power and responsibility. Designers must therefore remain aware of the psychological and social impacts of technology and treat ethics as an integral part of the design process from the very beginning, rather than as a final consideration.

In addition, the final chapter, **Applying Psychological Principles in Design**, presents practical approaches for applying psychological principles at both team and organisational levels. It focuses on building shared awareness, establishing clear design principles, and linking design decisions to psychological evidence in a systematic way. This approach ensures that psychological principles do not remain abstract ideas but are consistently and sustainably applied within real-world design practice.

**Conclusion**

First published in 2020, this book has gained wide international recognition and has been translated into several languages, including Polish (2021), Spanish (2022), and Thai (2024). Although the technological context of 2020 differs to some extent from that of today, the psychological principles presented remain highly relevant and continue to serve as a solid foundation for UX design. As technologies such as Large Language Models (LLMs), AI-powered image generation tools, spatial computing, and smartphones have become more prominent, the second edition (2024) retains the core content while strengthening the connections between these principles and the contemporary technological landscape. Notably, the repositioning of *With Power Comes Responsibility* as the final chapter reinforces the importance of responsibility toward both users and society.

Overall, *Laws of UX* by Jon Yablonski (2020) remains a valuable resource in both academic and professional contexts. Its strength lies in the systematic explanation of psychological principles within UX design using accessible language. The book elevates UX design from technical problem-solving to a discipline grounded in reason, ethics, and respect for human experience, making it well-suited for research, teaching, and professional development in User Experience (UX), Human–Centred Design (HCD), and Human–Computer Interaction (HCI).

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