mavocado

MADE FOR PEOPLE. / A PRACTICAL GUIDE

The Startup UX Playbook.

From an early idea to a clearer first product.

For founders and small teams planning their first digital product.

Leave with a focused problem statement, one core journey and a testable first release.

8 PAGES / 5 CHAPTERS / A WORKSHEET TO USE

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01 / THE PRACTICE

Choose a problem worth understanding

A useful product starts with a situation, not a screen.

Describe a specific person trying to do a specific thing. What triggers the task? What happens today? Where does the work become difficult? Keep your first problem statement narrow enough that someone can tell you whether it matches their experience. A broad audience such as everyone who runs a business rarely helps a small team decide what to build first.

Ask people to walk through a recent example. Listen for the steps, workarounds and consequences. Separate what they actually did from what they think they might do. Record the evidence without turning every comment into a feature request. Look for repeated patterns, but keep important differences visible.

AN EXAMPLE

A team proposes an app for local food donations. Instead of starting with a dashboard, it studies how an NGO coordinator confirms a pickup today: a phone call, a location message, a quantity check and a volunteer assignment. The design question becomes how to make the pickup status clear to the people doing that work.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- [ ] Name one primary user and the task they need to complete.
- [ ] Write down the current workaround and the difficult step.
- [ ] Mark each statement as observed, reported or assumed.

Try this: Complete this sentence: When [situation], [person] needs to [task], but [obstacle] makes it difficult.

02 / THE PRACTICE

Map the shortest useful journey

Make the next step clear before adding more features.

Choose the task that best expresses the product's purpose. Map its trigger, starting information, key decisions and useful end state. Include the work before and after the screen: a confirmation call, a physical delivery or a team handoff may be part of the real experience.

Draw the smallest journey that reaches a meaningful outcome. At each step, ask what the user needs to know, what the system needs and what could go wrong. Keep alternative paths visible rather than forcing every person through the same sequence. This map becomes a shared conversation tool for design, engineering and operations.

AN EXAMPLE

For a food pickup, the useful outcome is a confirmed collection with clear ownership. The first journey might be: add donation details, check suitability, assign a volunteer and confirm collection. A social feed can wait if it does not help that journey work.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- [ ] Define a completed task in plain language.
- [ ] List the information needed before each decision.
- [ ] Include cancellation, missing information and handoff paths.

Try this: Sketch five boxes: trigger, start, decision, action, outcome. Explain each box without naming a screen.

03 / THE PRACTICE

Give the first release one clear job

An MVP is a learning decision as much as a feature decision.

Use your problem statement and journey to define the first release. Choose the smallest coherent experience that helps a real person complete the priority task. Small does not mean confusing or unreliable. Basic feedback, recovery and clarity belong in the release if the core task depends on them.

Sort ideas into essential for the journey, important soon and useful later. Write down the reason for each choice. Consider delivery constraints, operational effort and unanswered questions alongside visual design. A feature that looks simple on a screen may require a complex service behind it.

AN EXAMPLE

A volunteer assignment flow needs available roles, a clear status and a way to recover when nobody accepts. A sophisticated matching animation is less urgent. The release becomes more manageable when the team names the operational dependency instead of hiding it behind a polished prototype.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- [ ] Choose one primary task for the first release.
- [ ] Keep states and recovery steps in the scope.
- [ ] Record what is excluded and what would change that decision.

Try this: Write a release promise in one sentence. Then list three things this release will intentionally leave for later.

04 / THE PRACTICE

Test the journey before polishing it

Use a prototype to answer a question.

Create enough of the experience to test the risky part of the journey. A rough clickable prototype can reveal whether the sequence and language make sense. High visual detail is useful when it affects the question, but it should not prevent you from changing the structure.

Give a realistic task to someone who resembles the intended user. Ask them to work through it without explaining the interface in advance. Observe where they pause, misread, go back or ask for help. After the task, ask what they expected and why. Keep observed behaviour separate from your interpretation.

AN EXAMPLE

Ask a coordinator to find an unassigned pickup and arrange collection. Do not say which menu to open. If the coordinator looks in an unexpected place, note the expectation behind that choice. The finding may concern terminology or information structure rather than button colour.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- [ ] State the decision the test should inform.
- [ ] Use a task that does not reveal the intended path.
- [ ] Record the issue, evidence and next design question.

Try this: Write one test task and three things you will observe. Avoid asking whether someone likes the design.

05 / THE PRACTICE

Learn from the release

Choose signals that connect to the product's job.

Define a small set of signals before launch. Consider whether people can begin the task, reach the useful outcome and recover from common problems. Look at support questions and operational feedback alongside product events. A total signup count rarely explains why a task breaks down.

Review what the evidence can and cannot tell you. A change in a number does not automatically explain its cause. Combine quantitative patterns with conversations and observed examples. Keep a simple decision log so the next iteration builds on what the team learned rather than restarting the same debate.

AN EXAMPLE

A pickup product might review requests created, assignments accepted and collections confirmed. If assignments stop midway, inspect the status, notification and availability assumptions. The next step could be a service change, clearer content or an interface improvement.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- [ ] Connect each signal to a user task or business decision.
- [ ] Record the event definition and any limits in the data.
- [ ] Agree when and how the team will review the findings.

Try this: Choose one completion signal, one friction signal and one qualitative question for your first review.

MAKE IT YOURS

Turn the ideas into a working plan.

Use this page in a team conversation. Keep answers concrete, note the evidence and leave uncertain points open for review.

01 / The person and situation

Who is the first release for? What triggers their task?

02 / Evidence and assumptions

What have you observed? What still needs checking?

03 / The core journey

What is the smallest meaningful outcome? Which steps reach it?

04 / Release boundary

What must work now? What can wait?

05 / Test and learning plan

Who will try the prototype? What evidence will guide the next decision?

A fresh perspective.
A practical next step.

Start with the problem statement and one journey. Bring the team together around those two artefacts before expanding the feature list.

Mavocado designs websites, mobile apps and SaaS products around the people who use them and the businesses behind them. If you need help applying the ideas in this guide, start with the problem you want to make clearer.

TALK TO MAVOCADO

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About this guide

Original educational material by Mavocado Design. The examples are illustrative. Use the prompts as a starting point and check decisions with your users, product context and implementation team.

Further reading: W3C Web Accessibility Initiative - Forms Tutorial. Practical guidance on labels, instructions, validation and user feedback.
www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/forms/