What is an interface?
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1. Description
In developing interactive systems, a designer is tasked with helping to define an experience. Before beginning, there are important questions to explore: Who are the target users? What needs do they have? How does one encourage exploration, learning, and accessibility for users through interfaces? Are there guidelines we, as designers, should be following? What experiences have target audiences had before?

This course explores these issues in relation to different expressions of interface design. It also devotes a good deal of time to exploring usability principles and concepts on which the class can base its expressions. The first class, *What is an interface?*, is intended to give an overview of the concepts that will be covered in class.

2. Objectives
- Introduce the concept of interface design. Give brief overview on course.
- Define the concept of "interface" based on prior knowledge.
- Different expressions of interface design – software interfaces, web interfaces, physical products, and concepts of pervasive computing – to gauge the class's familiarity with the topic.
- Interfaces as communication channels.

3. Activities

Interface redesign exercise
The redesign exercise should promote critical thinking about the specific design of the interface. Students should come away from the exercise noting areas of opportunity for redesign. It should challenge them to think as designers, and introduce them to making suggestions; not seeing interfaces simply as a static design.

Write down three design improvements they would make to the interface based on the target audience and purpose stated earlier in the class. Ask them to sketch out (using pencil and paper) a proposed improvement.

4. Homework

Everyday Interfaces
You interact with interfaces each day. Whether they reveal themselves as ATM machines, cell phones, Palm Pilots, elevator buttons, or countless other devices, these interfaces help us do the things we do.

Task: Identify three interfaces you use in your everyday activities. In thinking about which interfaces to choose, consider: Are it easy to use? Is it important to you? Would you change it if you could? Provide a brief description of each, including its purpose, intended audience, and a summary of how you use this interface. For each interface, describe how easy it is for you to use and if there is anything you would change.

Format: Write one paragraph for each interface. Print out the assignment and bring to class. Bring one of the interfaces you choose to class with you for discussion.