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Figma 101
A Beginners Guide

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PART 1

Who Is Our Audience?

This deck is intended for
design-focused users
who have
experience with drawing tools
and are looking to
transition to Figma.

This deck provides an **overview of Figma's features** and has gathered **recommended resources** for users to further explore and expand their knowledge.

PART 2

Why Use Figma?

Figma introduces new **collaborative working styles** within teams and is **bridging the gap between the design and development** processes.

Why Figma?

Multiplayer
Multiple users are able to collaborate and share feedback in real-time within project files

Always Available
Figma is a web based app and can be used via a browser or through the desktop app

Design Systems
Create a consistent and cohesive experience with shared libraries and reusable assets

Prototyping
Bring your designs to life with no-code interactions within your same design file

Dev Mode
Share a source of truth across design and development in one place

PART 3

Vocabulary & Terms

Clearly structure Figma files to **maintain an efficient workflow** within teams and bring **clarity and focus** to your designs.

File Organization

Pages

A structural organizing layer within a Figma design file

Sections

Organizing containers that can hold groups, frames or other sections

Frames

A foundational top-level container that contains content and objects

Group

Top-level layer used to combine similar items together

Pages

An extra organizing layer within your design file. A page is a collection of layers that contains the canvas; the primary working space of a design file.

Multiple pages can be added to a Figma file giving users structural flexibility and space to explore. Organize your pages in a concise way that is intuitive to others on your team (i.e. order pages based on some level of hierarchy)

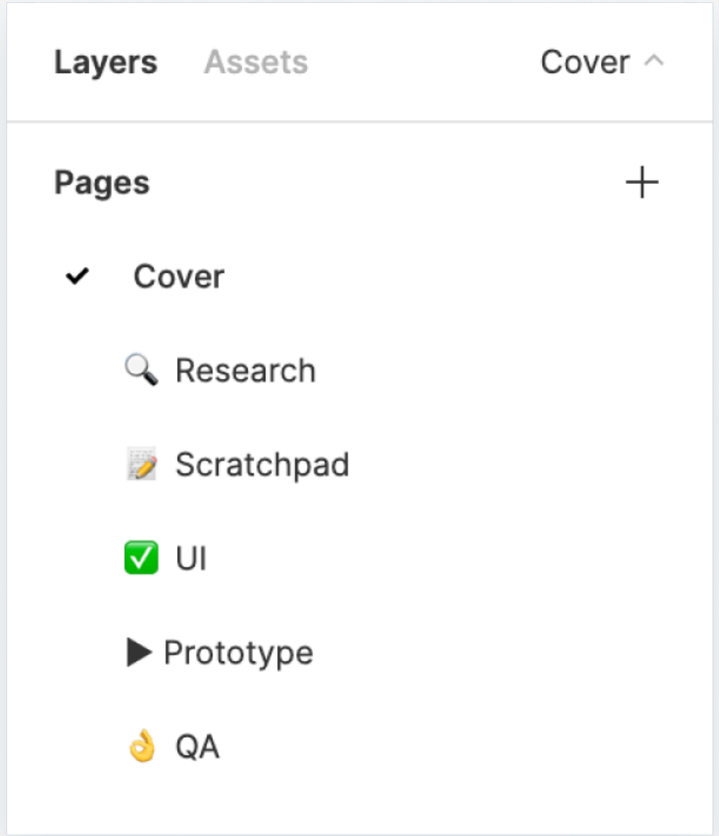
Note:
Pages (or the canvas) have a finite size of -65,000 to +65,000 pixels on each axis.

Related terms:

Structure

Resources:

→ Create and Manage Pages



Sections

A top-level organizing element on the canvas used to group related ideas together.

Sections can contain all layer types, including other sections, but cannot be contained within frames or groups.

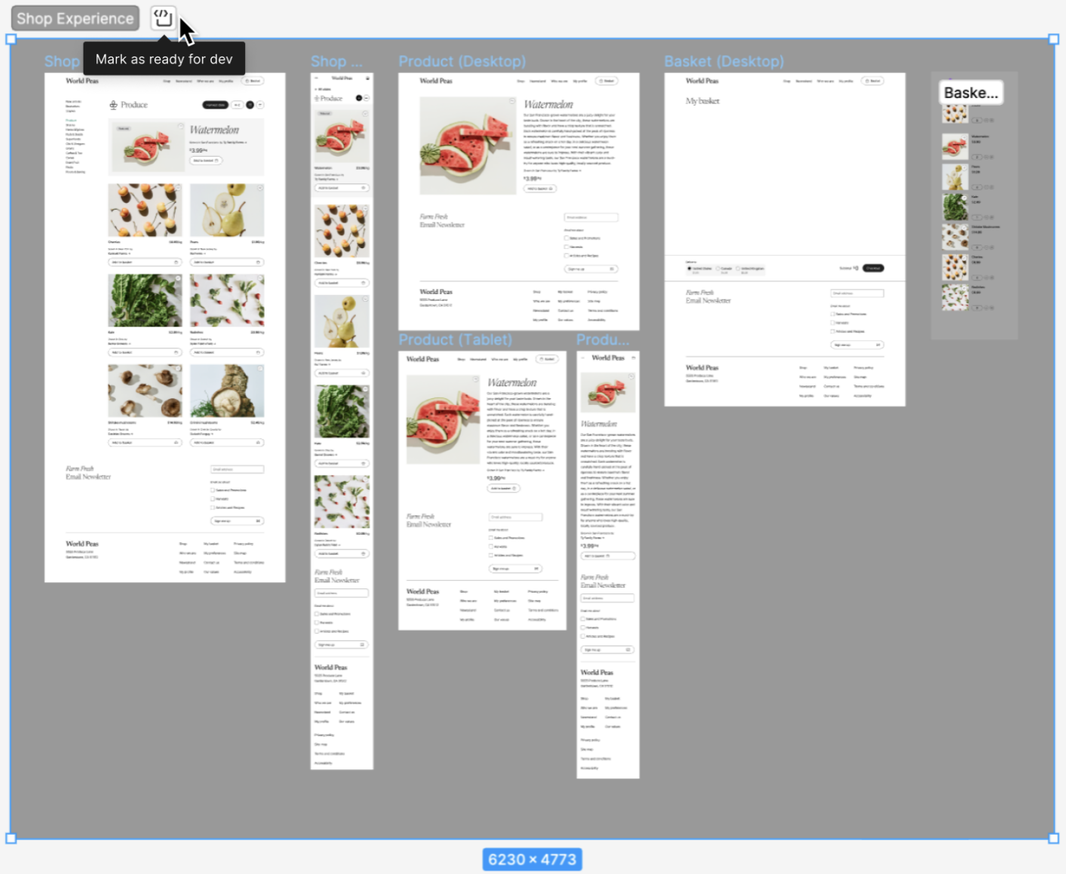
Note:
Sections can be marked as ready for development once the content inside is finalized. This flags the ready section in your design file for developers using Dev Mode.

Related terms:

Prototyping Dev Mode

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Organize Your Canvas with Sections



Frames

A foundational element for designs that acts as a top-level container; a parent object that contains content.

Frames have default constraints and can be nested within each other. Figma also has frame presets for popular device sizes and assets templates. (i.e. iPhone, Tablet, Desktop, Presentation, etc.)

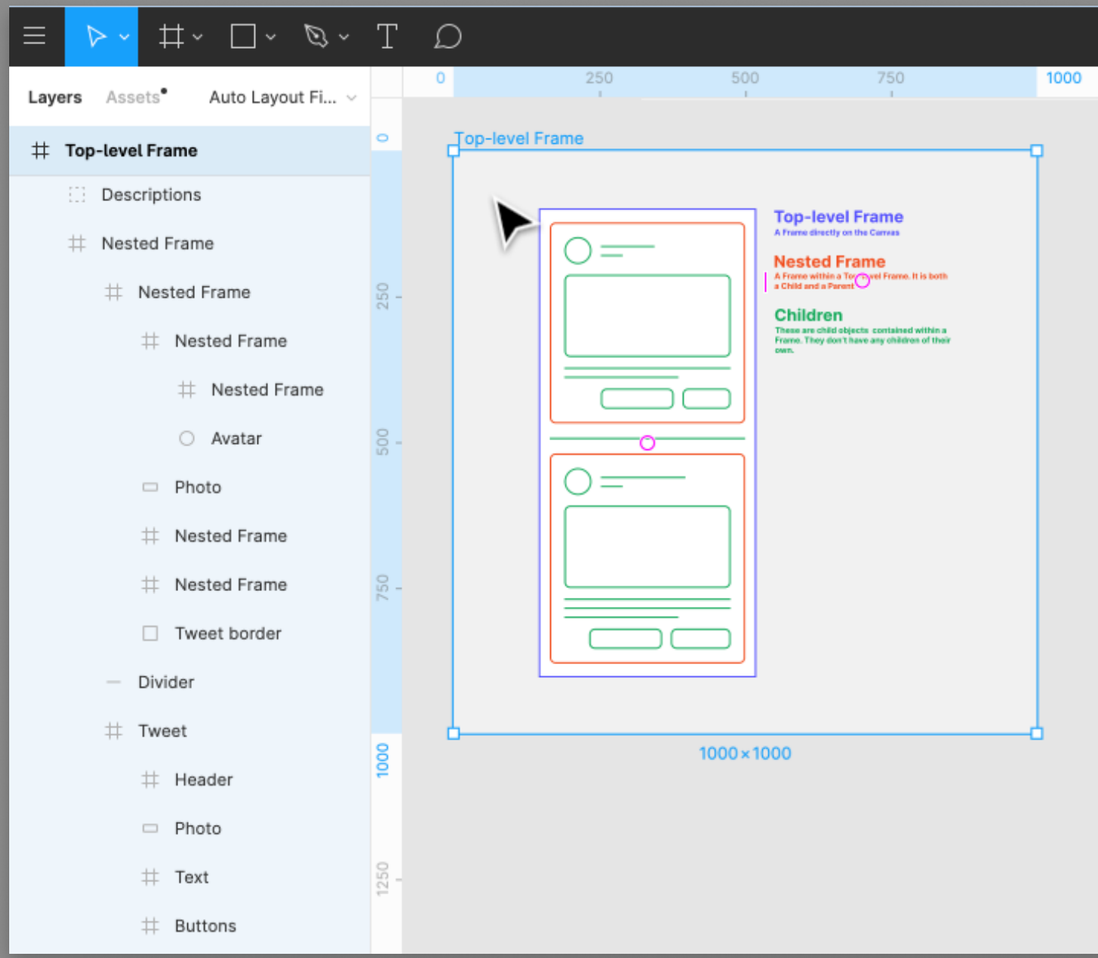
Note:
The bounds of your frame are independent of the content inside.

Related terms:

Auto Layout | Prototyping | Constraints | Responsiveness | Artboard | Frame Presets

Resources:

- → Frames in Figma
- → Frames vs. Groups
- → When to Use Groups vs. Frames



Groups

A single top-level layer that allows for multiple elements to be combined together.

Use groups to combine similar items together and manage fewer layers within your design.

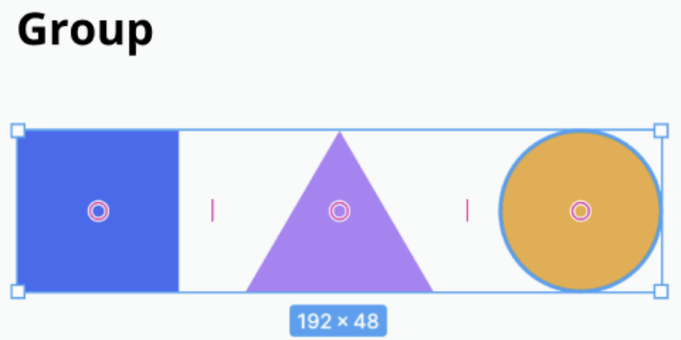
Note:
Groups take on the combined dimensions of their children; groups are defined by their content.

Related terms:

Frames

Resources:

→ Frames vs. Groups
→ When to Use Groups vs. Frames



Tools are the
object-oriented basics
that experienced users are expecting to be present within the application.

The Tools

Move

Select and reorder layers in the layer panel or move objects around on the canvas

Scale

Proportionally resize entire objects or layers

Shape Tools

Basic shapes that can be drawn as building blocks in design files

Creation Tools

Build complex vector networks or freehand vector drawings

Text

Add copy to a design file and apply custom properties to a text layer

Hand Tool

Navigate around a design file without affecting objects on the canvas

The Tools

Comment

Give feedback and exchange ideas with your team directly within a design file

Edit Object

Modify existing shapes and text layers

Mask

An action to show specific areas of objects while concealing and hiding the rest

Boolean Groups

Combine any set of shape layers through one of four boolean formulas

Flatten Selection

Combine multiple layers into one vector path and layer

Create Link

Insert a link to an entire text layer or a selection of text within a layer

The Tools

Bend

Activates Bézier curves and handles of a shape to further customize

Paint Bucket

Enable or disable the color fill of a shape

Crop Image

Trim or adjust an image to improve its framing and composition

Move

Keyboard Shortcut: (V)

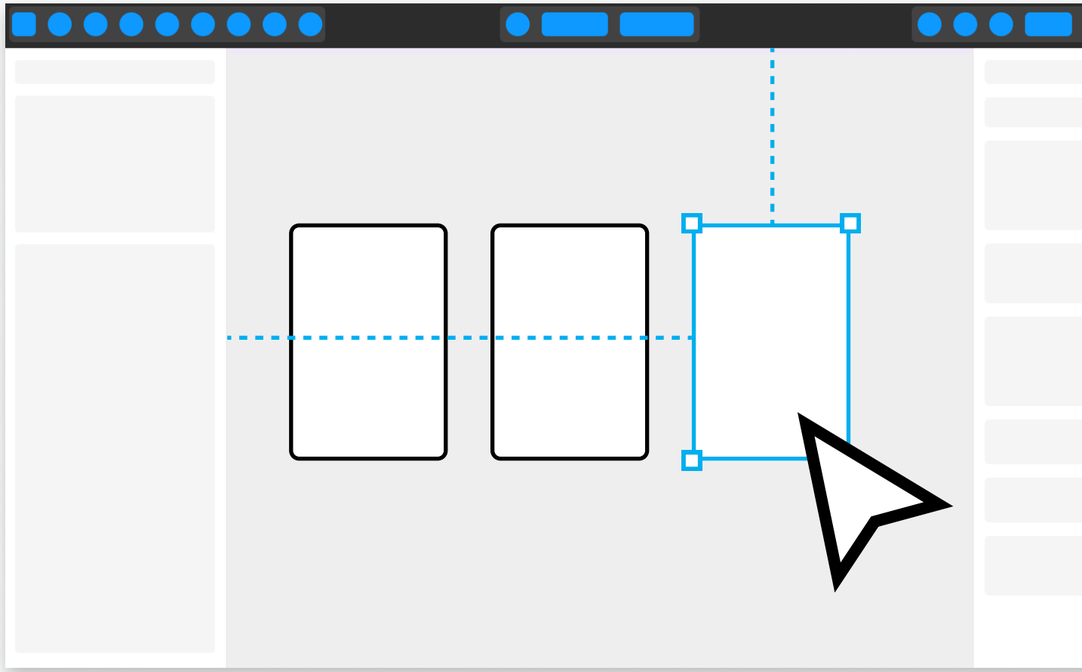
Select, move, and resize objects on the canvas or select and reorder layers within the Layers Panel.

Note:
The move tool is enabled by default when opening up a design file.

Press the (+) button to zoom in on content and (-) button to zoom out. Use the trackpad by pinching or stretching two fingers.

Related terms:

Scale | Hand Tool | Zoom

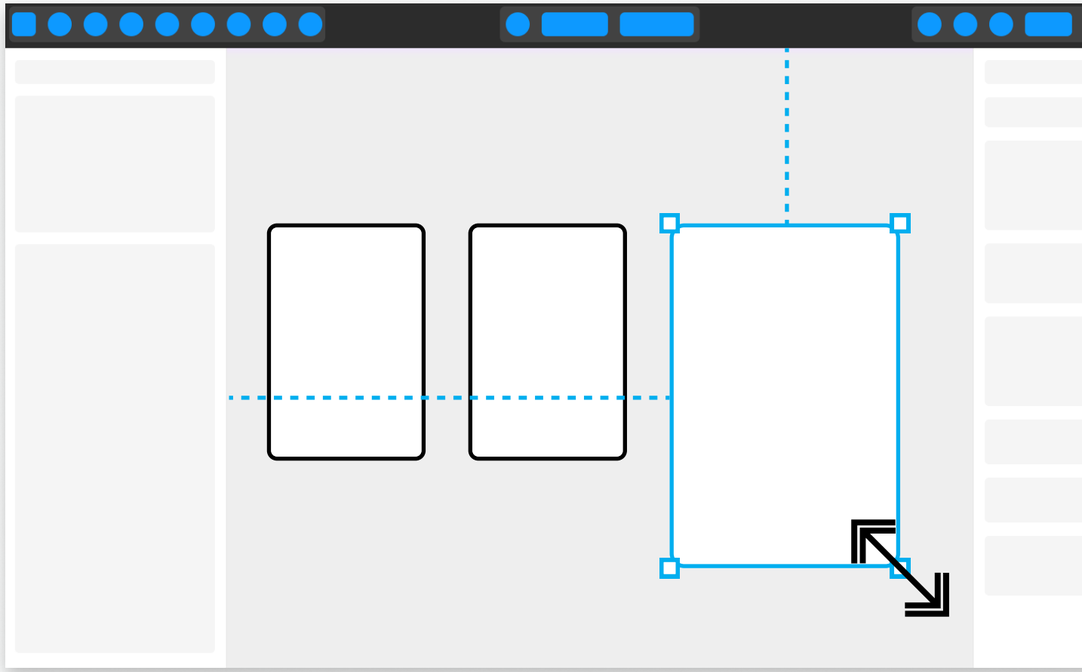


Scale

Keyboard Shortcut: (K)

Ways to scale an object:

- Click and drag: Hover over the object's bounding box then click-and-drag to resize.
- Scale multiplier: In the Scale panel of the right sidebar, open the dropdown to select a multiplier, or type a specific multiplier in the text field.
- Dimensions fields: Use either the width or height fields, in the Scale panel of the right sidebar. Type a number in either field and press Enter / Return to apply. The other dimension field will automatically update.



Related terms:

Move

Resources:

→ Resize Layers with the Scale Tool

Shape Tools

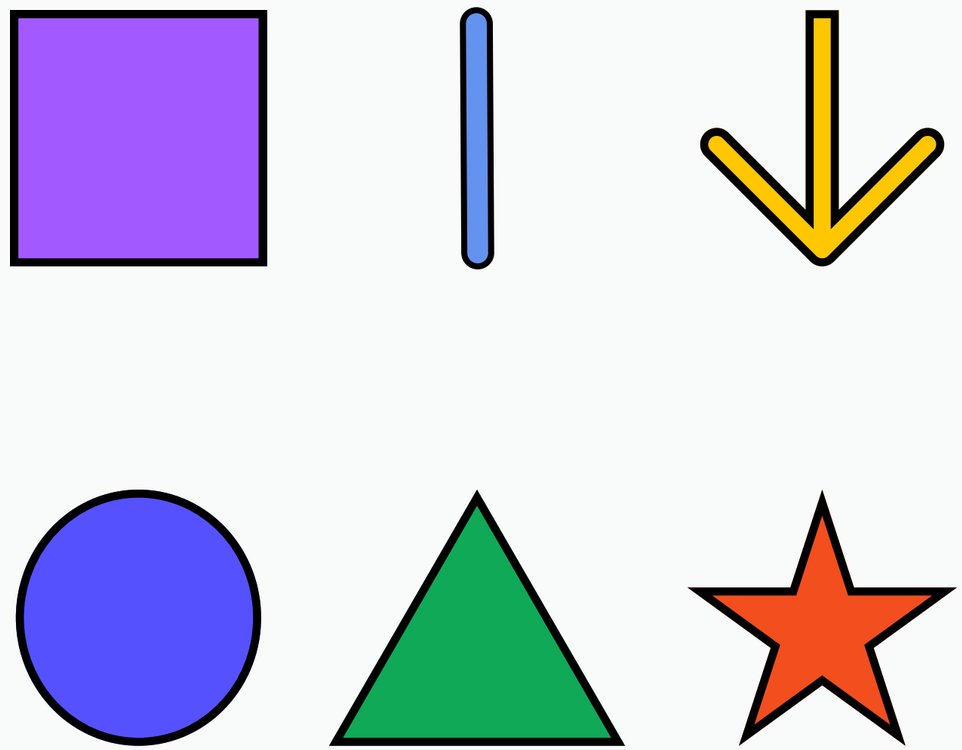
Aside from drawing your own shapes using the pen tool, Figma has default shapes to select from.

Types of shapes:

- Rectangle
- Line
- Arrow
- Ellipse
- Polygon
- Star
- Image/Video

Resources:

→ Basic Shape Tools in Figma Design



Creation Tools

Keyboard Shortcut: (P)

Types of creation tools:

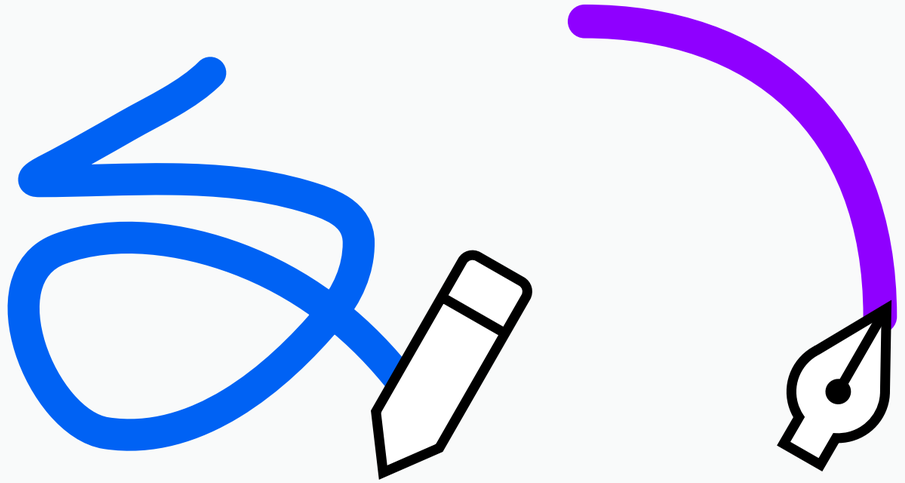
- Pen
- Pencil

Use the pen tool for plotting anchor points on a line for custom shapes. Build complex vector networks for lines and curves that connect two or more points using vector paths, anchor points, and Bézier curves.

Use the pencil tool for freehand vector drawings or annotations.

Resources:

→ Vector Networks



Text

Keyboard Shortcut: (T)

Add a new text layer by:

- Clicking once in the canvas to grow horizontally
- Clicking and dragging to create a fixed size

Types of resizing properties settings:

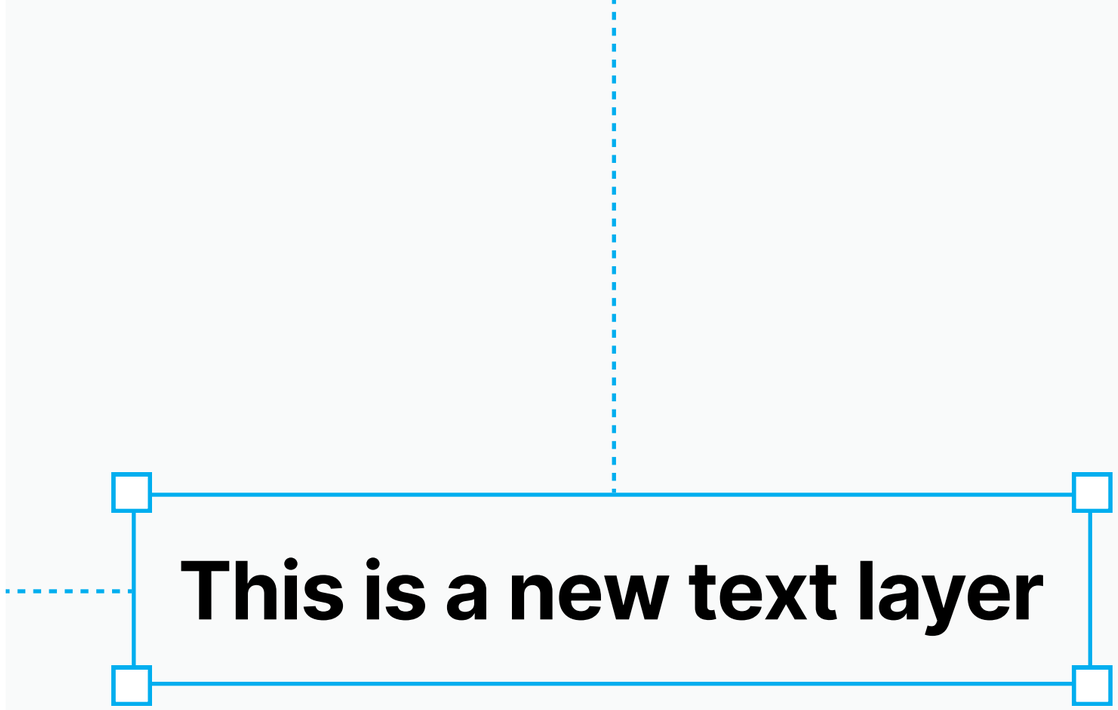
↔ Auto width

Auto height

□ Fixed size

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Guide to Text



Hand Tool

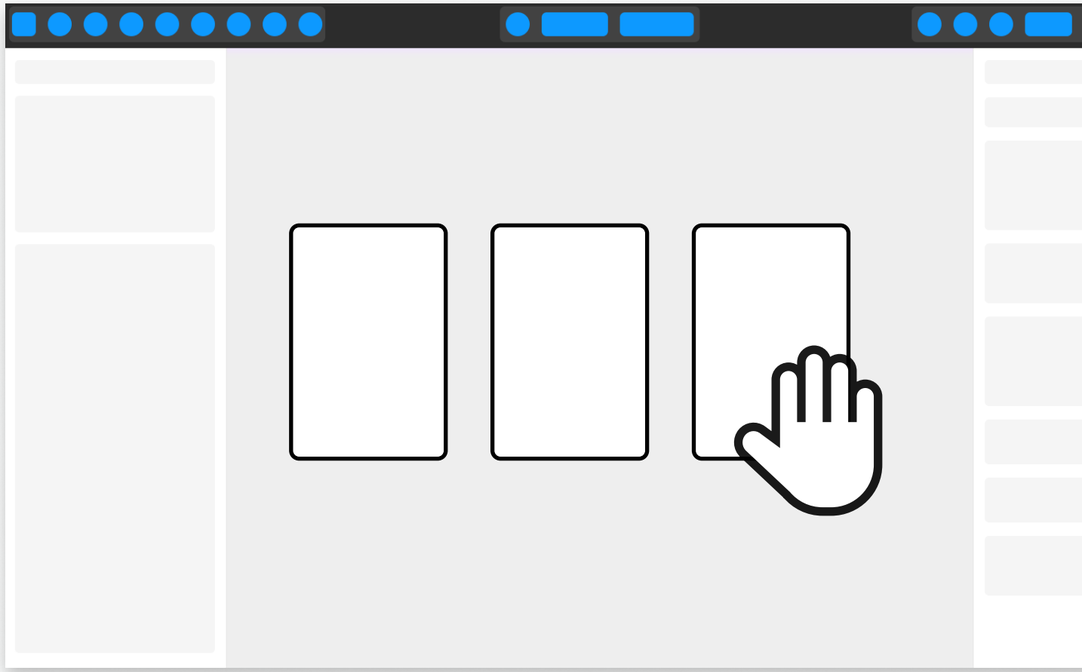
Keyboard Shortcut: (H) or Hold Space bar

Click and navigate around a design file without accidentally activating hover outlines, making selections, or moving objects on the canvas.

Note:
Press and hold down the space bar to activate the hand tool.

Related terms:

Move



Comment

Keyboard Shortcut: (C)

Quickly exchange ideas with collaborators and comment directly on specific pieces of a design file. The comment tool allows for responses to feedback within the same thread. Resolve the comments directly within the design file once the feedback has been addressed or a resolution has been reached.

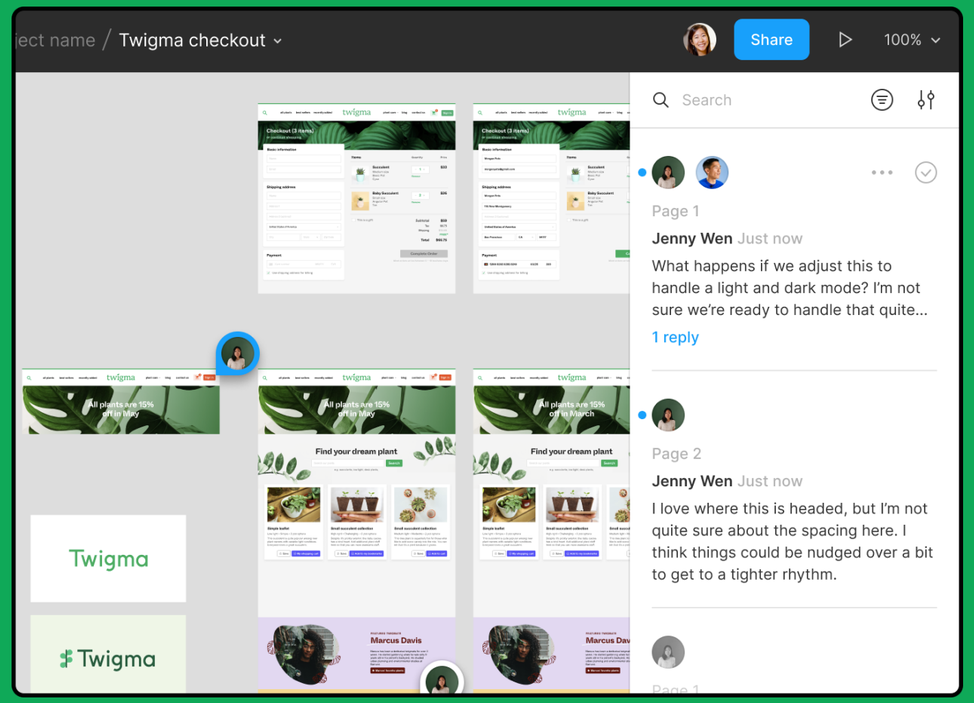
Note:
Comments are accessible to anyone with view or edit permissions to the file.

Related terms:

Multi-player Feedback

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Comments



Edit Object

Modify existing shapes and text layers. Add, remove, or adjust the individual anchor points within a vector path.

Activate mode by selecting the edit object tool from the main nav, double-clicking within an object or press enter to view vector edit mode.

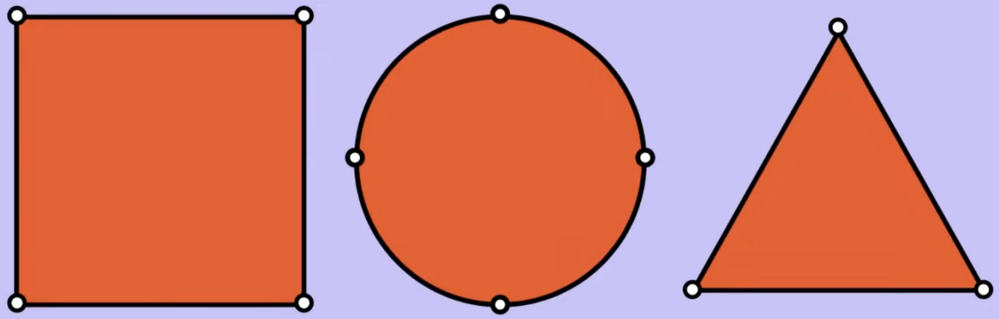
Note:
Activating vector editing mode brings up different tools and actions you can take on that object.

Related terms:

Shapes Text Vectors

Resources:

→ Edit Object



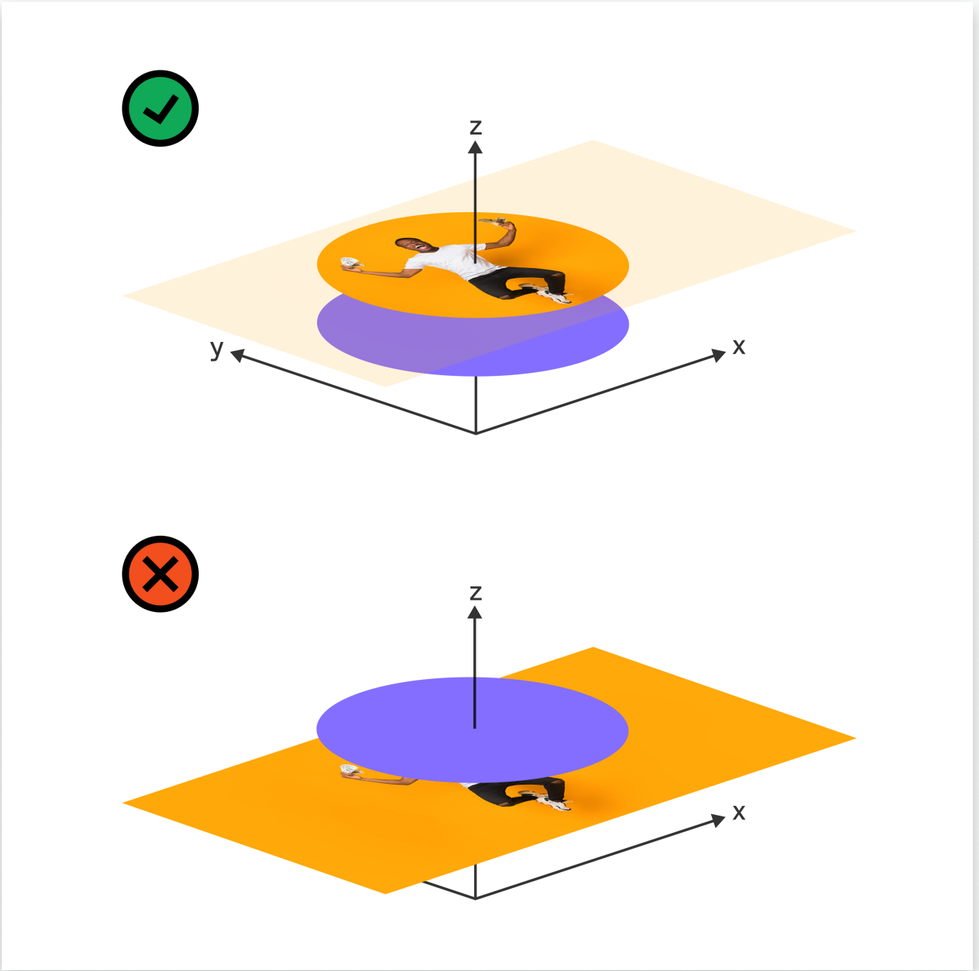
Mask

A non-destructive action to show specific areas of objects while concealing the rest.

When you use a layer as a mask, a mask object is created; this includes the mask and any layers it is masking. The order and position of the mask and any layers being masked is important. Masks are positioned below masked layers on the z-axis.

Types of masks:

- Alpha
- Vector
- Luminance



Resources:

→ Masks

Boolean Groups

A single shape layer that shares fill and stroke properties. Multiple layers can be combined with other boolean groups through any of the four boolean formulas.

Types of boolean operations:

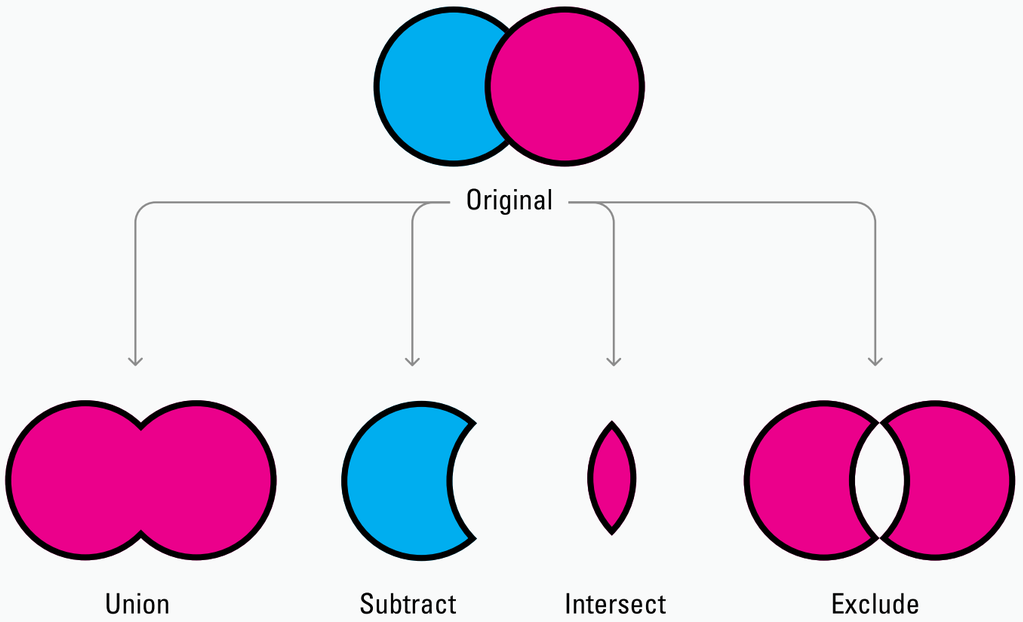
- Union
- Subtract
- Intersect
- Exclude

Related terms:

Shapes Layers

Resources:

→ Boolean Operations



Flatten Selection

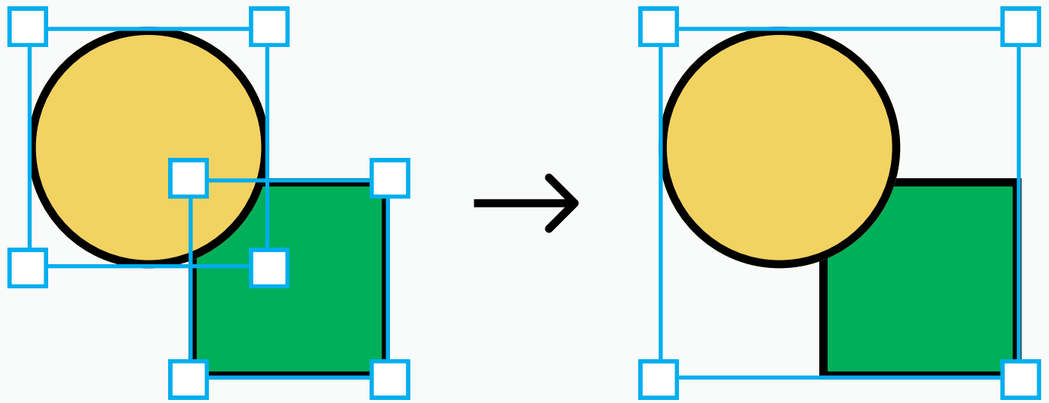
Combine multiple layers into one vector path and layer.

Flattening multiple layers is a destructive action; original objects are no longer editable and the object layers are combined.

Note:
Union is the non-destructive action; original objects are fully editable and kept in their separate layers.

Related terms:

Union Group



Separate Objects

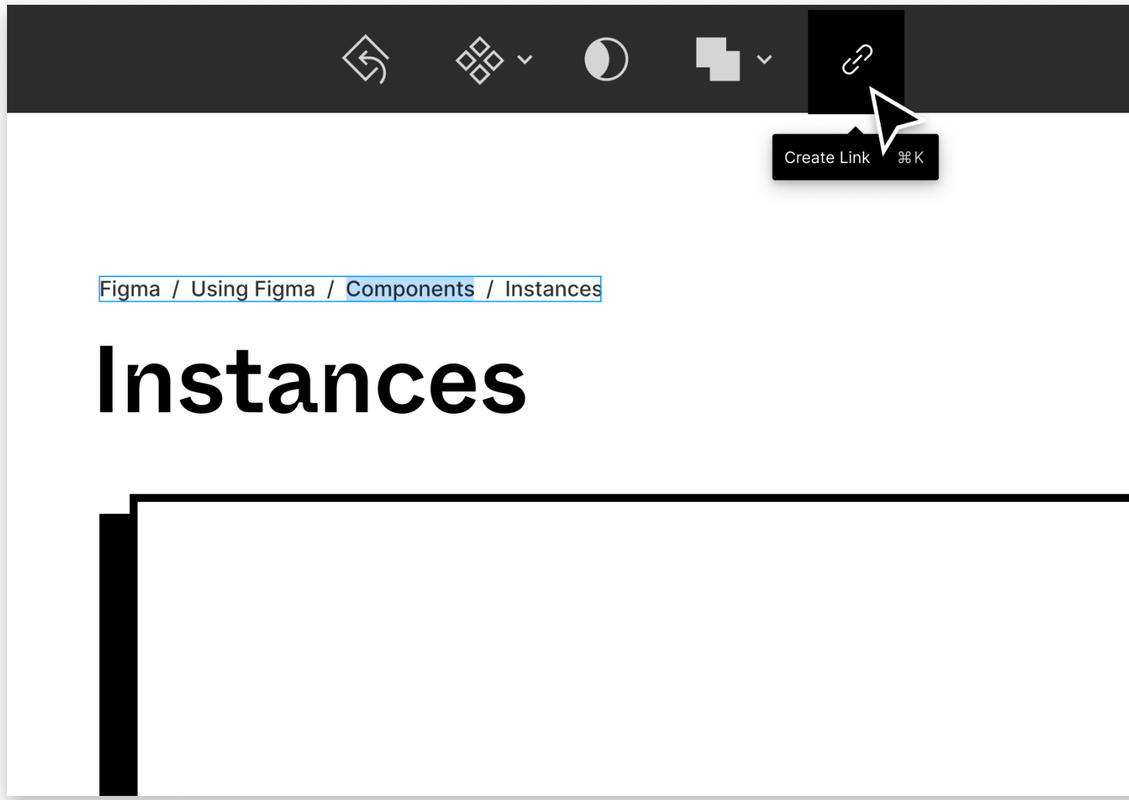
Flattened Selection

Create Link

Add a hyperlink to an entire text layer, or to a specific selection of text within a layer.

Note:
This action can only be applied to text objects.

Resources:
→ Add Links to Text



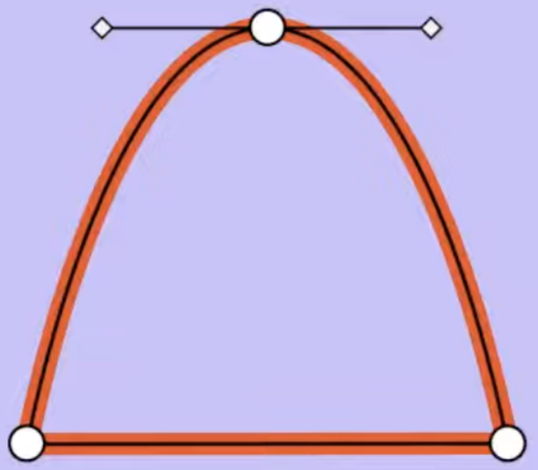
Bend

Activate a shapes Bézier curves and handles to create custom vector shapes.

Note:
This action can only be applied to shapes.

Related terms:

Curves Vector



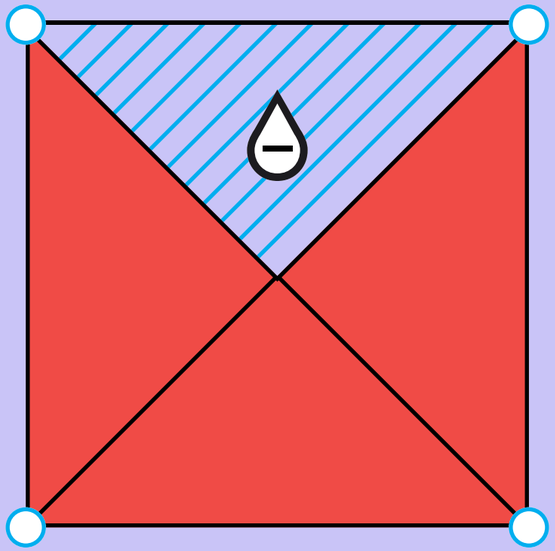
Paint Bucket

Quickly enable or disable a shapes color fill with one click.

Note:
This action can only be applied to shapes.

Related terms:

Paints Fill



Crop Image

Trim or adjust the outside edges of an image to improve the framing and composition.

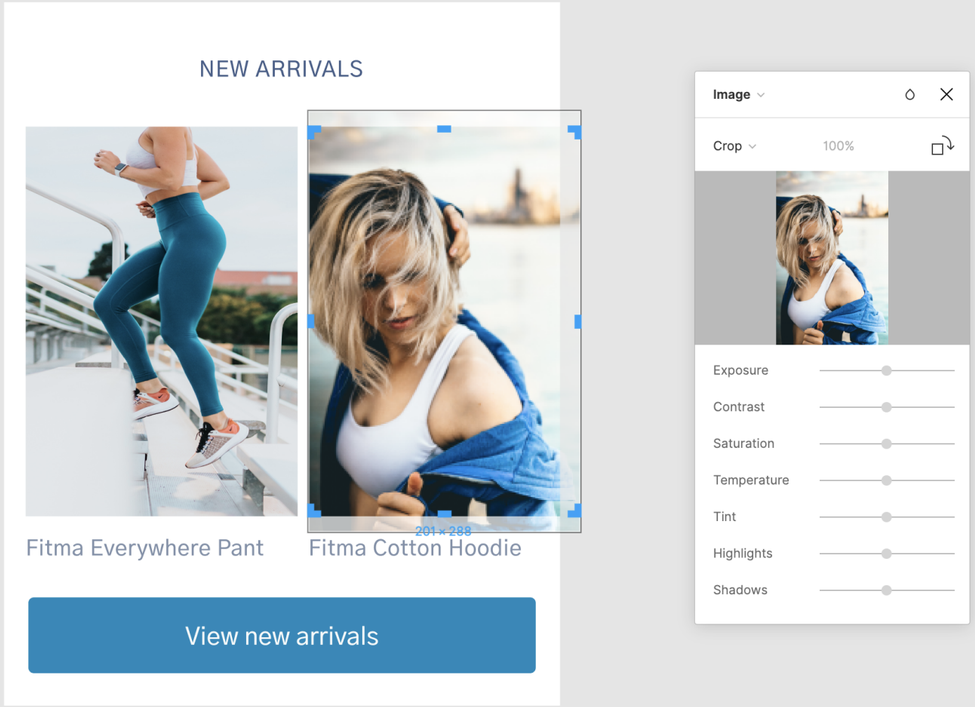
Note:
This action can only be applied to images.

Related terms:

Fill

Resources:

→ Crop an Image



The Figma basics are the **fundamental building blocks** and features.

The Basics

Components

Reusable UI elements that help maintain consistency and efficiency

Instance

A connected copy of a main component

Variants

Combinations of a single component that are grouped in a component set

Styles

Defined properties applied and reused on elements in your designs

Library

Published components and styles available for your team to reuse

Version History

Timeline of events that occur in a design file

The Basics

Prototyping

Interactive flows of a Figma design files

FigJam

Inclusive digital whiteboard area for collaboration and brainstorming

Figma Community

Exploratory space where files, plugins, and widgets can be shared with other Figma users

Components

Reusable UI elements that help maintain consistency and efficiency across design projects by allowing users to quickly apply changes to different files and projects.

Properties defined in the main component:

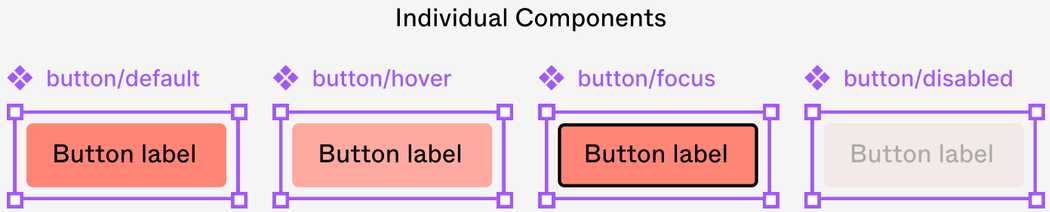
- constraints
- layers
- text
- fill
- stroke
- effects

Related terms:

Instance Variants

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Components



Instance

A connected copy of the main component;
any updates to the main component will cascade down into all the instances.

Properties you can override:

- text
- fill
- stroke
- effects
- swap nested instances (i.e. icons)

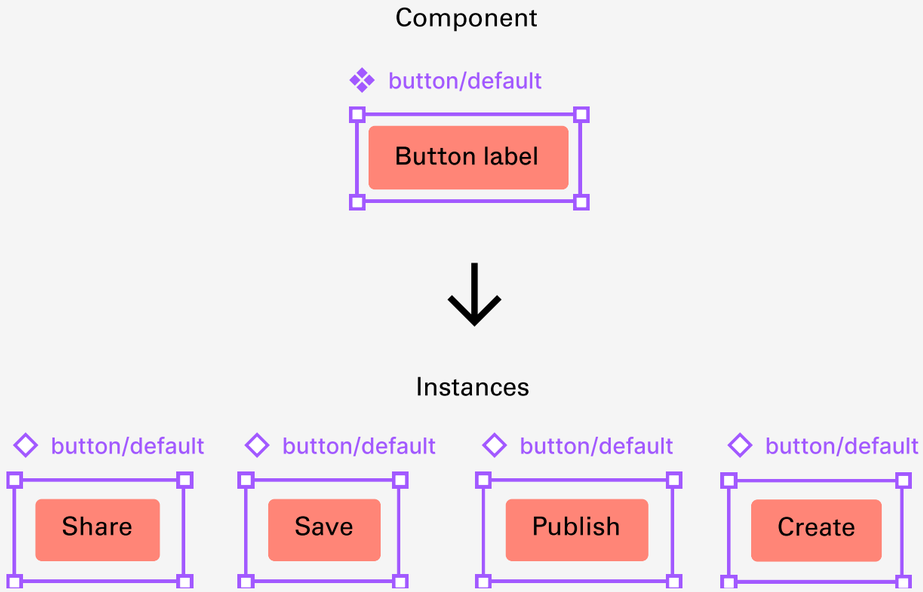
You can NOT change the structure of an instance;
z-index / stack order or positioning of layers.

Related terms:

Components | Instance Swap | Nested Instances

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Create and Insert Component Instances



Variants

Combinations of a single component that are grouped into a component set with custom properties and values.

Variants enable different variations of a single component to be grouped together.

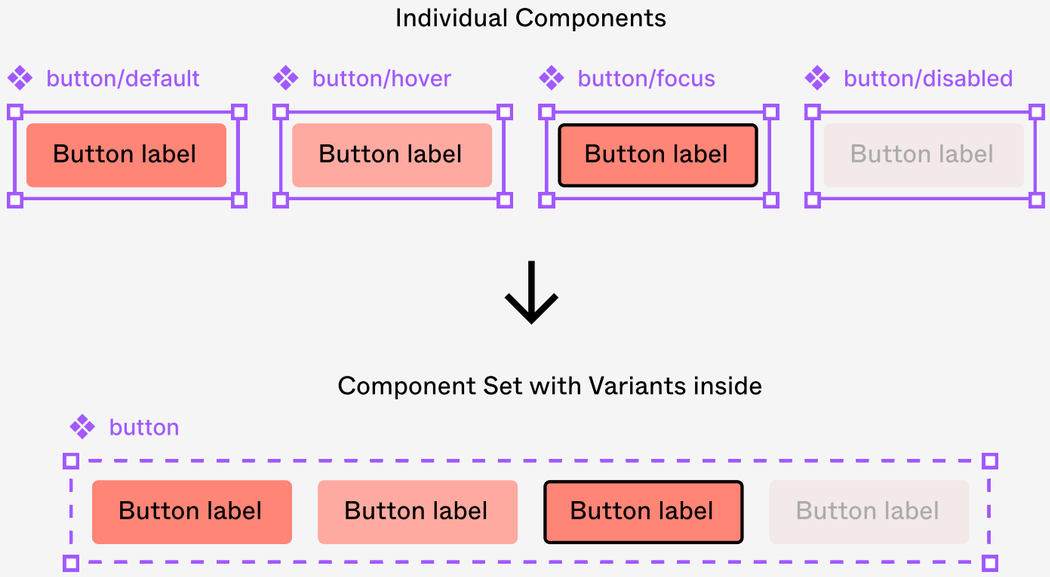
Note:
Variants can help better align your designs with your code base.

Related terms:

Components | Component Set

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Create and Use Variants
→ Variants Playground



Styles

Defined properties that can be applied and reused on elements in your designs.

Types of styles:

- text
- color
- effects
- grids

Components = reusable objects
Styles = attributes applied to objects

Related terms:

Library

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Styles
→ Figma Tutorial: Creating Styles

Text styles

- font family
- size
- line height
- spacing

Color styles

- fill
- stroke
- image
- gradient

Effects styles

- drop shadow
- inner shadow
- layer blur
- background blur

Grid styles

- row
- column
- grid

🕮 Library

Published components and styles are available to your team to reuse across other design files.

Libraries allow for:

- instances of the components to be used in other files; updates to the main component will be pushed out to all instances

Related terms:

Library Swap | Styles | Components

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Libraries
→ Guide to Libraries
→ Publish a Library

Version History

A timeline of events that occur in a design file dating back to the file's creation.

Version history allows you to:

- Restore previous versions
- Duplicate versions
- Share a link to a specific version with others

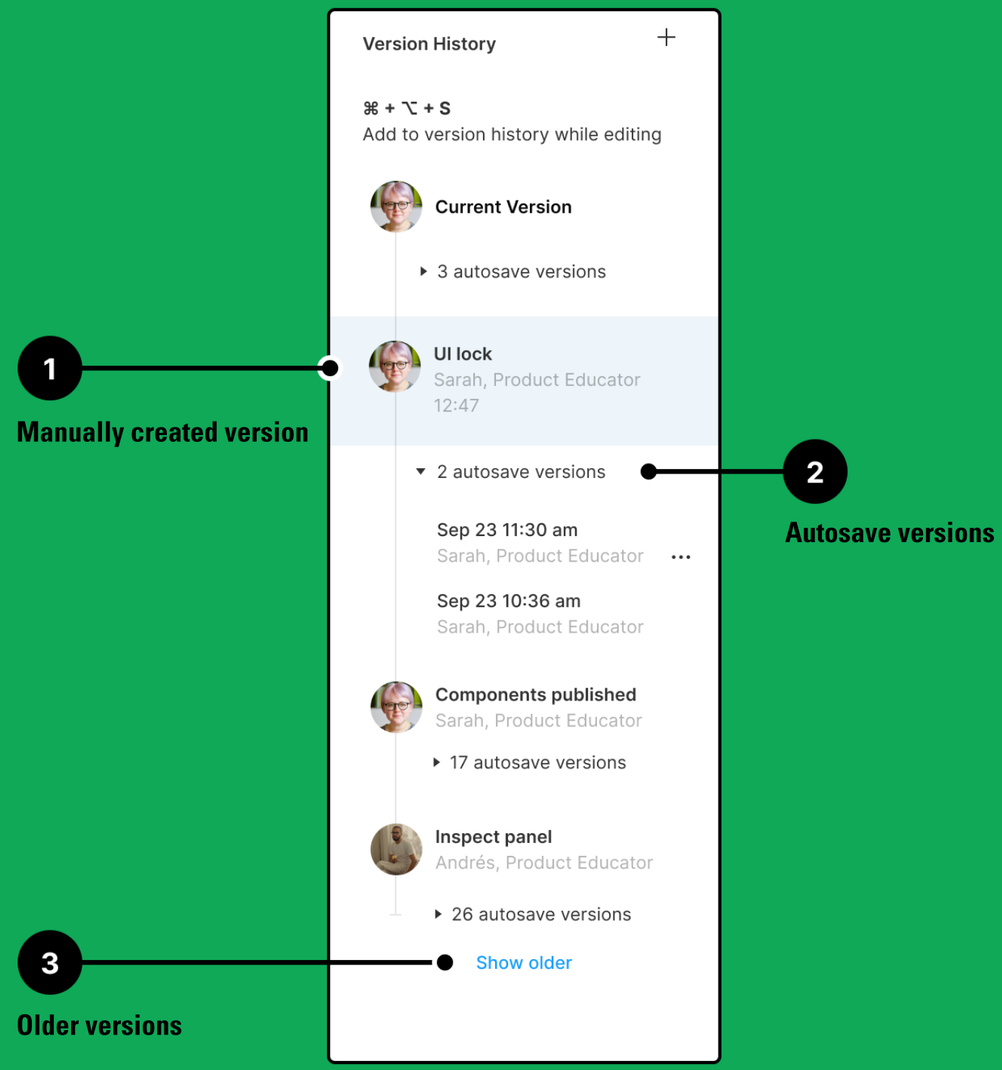
Note:
Figma automatically saves your work by adding checkpoints to the file's version history after 30 minutes of inactivity in the file. Users can also manually save a version of the file for record.

Related terms:

Version Control Branching

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – View a File's Version History



▷ Prototyping

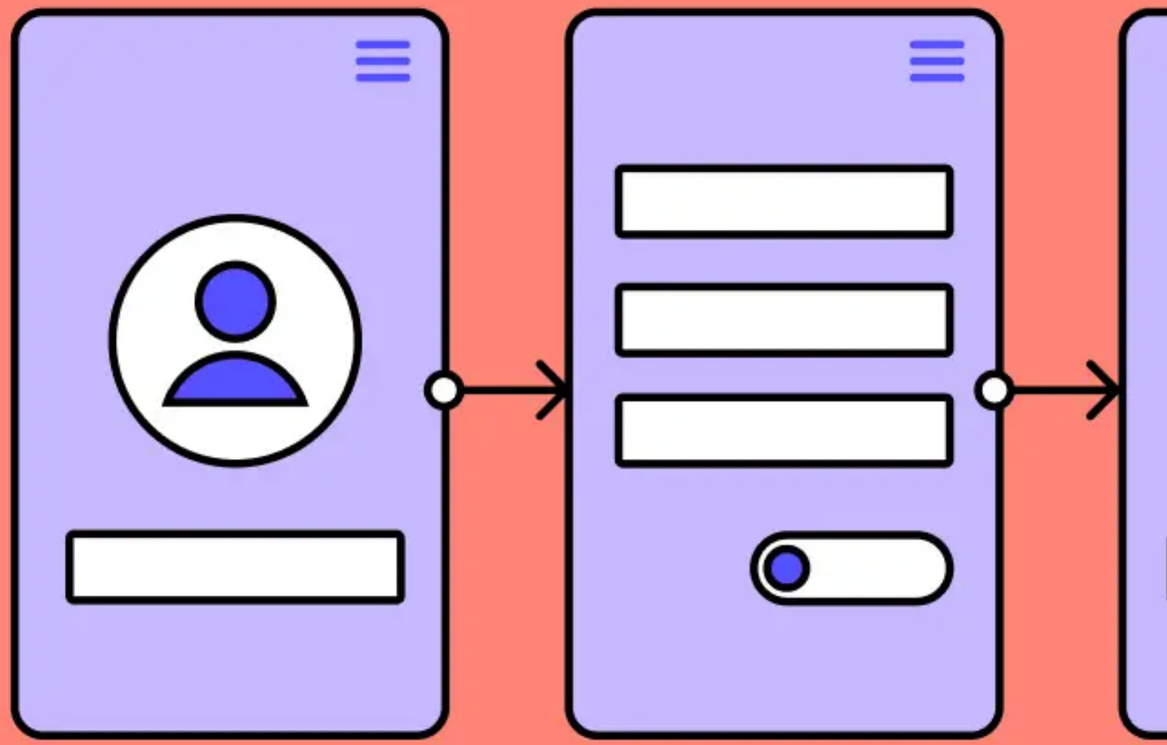
Interactive flows that mimic how a user might experience and interact with your designs.

Related terms:

Interactive Components | Interactions | Animations | Smart Animate

Resources:

- → Figma Learn – Prototypes
- → Guide to Prototyping
- → Prototyping with Figma 101
- → Advanced Prototyping



FigJam

An online collaboration tool for brainstorming, developing, and organizing your teams ideas. FigJam files are lightweight with the intention that users do not need a prior knowledge of design tools or come from a design background.

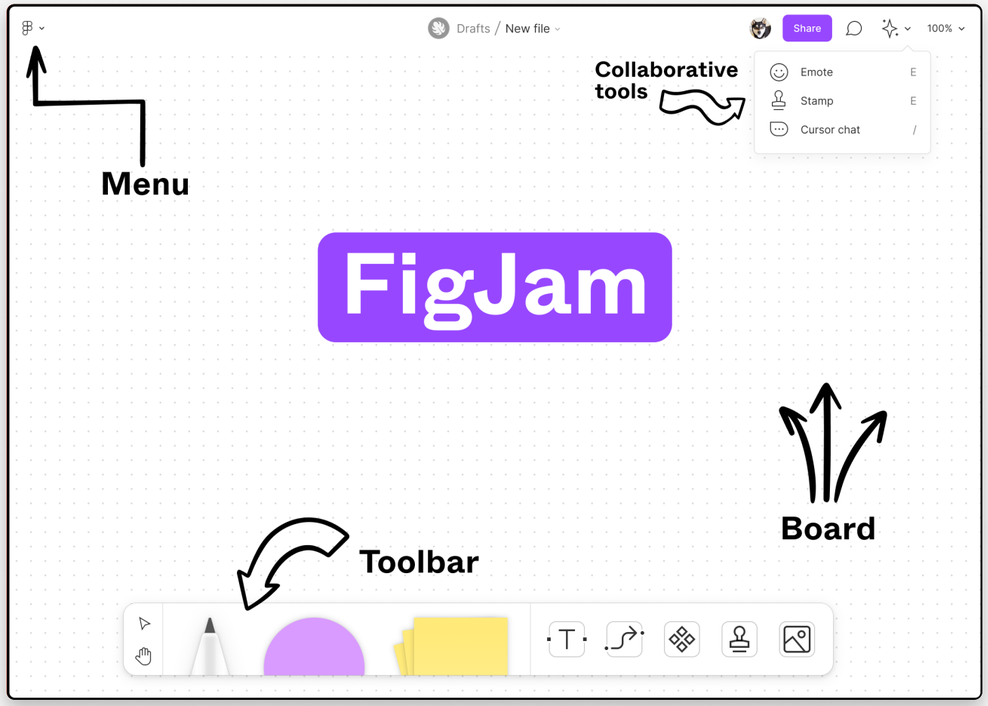
FigJam files are great for:

- Meetings
- Workshops
- Brainstorming
- Diagramming
- Research

Resources:

→ Figma vs. FigJam

→ FigJam Tips



Figma Community

A space where people, teams, and organizations can publish/share files, plugins, and widgets to other Figma users.

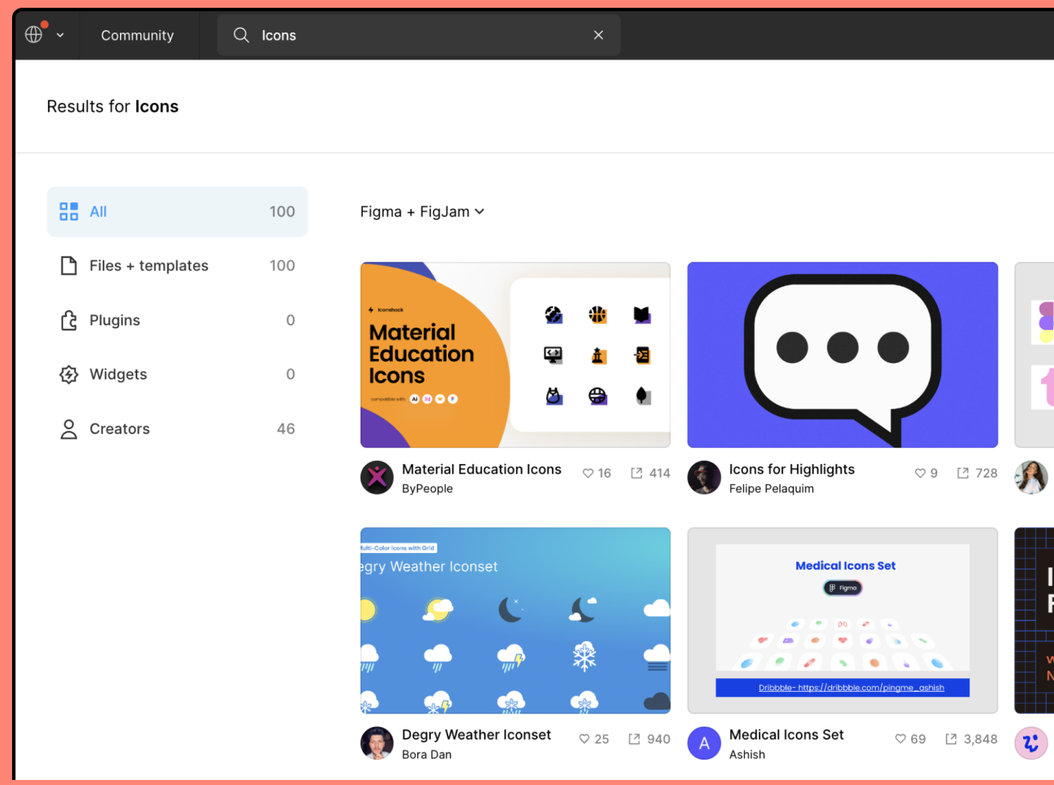
The vision of this space is to make design accessible to all by building an inclusive space where people from around the world can share and discover creative work.

Related terms:

Community Files | Templates | Plugins | Widgets

Resources:

- → Welcome to Figma Community
- → Figma Learn – Community



The advanced features are **extra magic for master users.**

The Advanced Features

Auto Layout
Flexible property feature that allows responsive behavior on frames or components

Component Properties
Customizable elements of a component to reduce the number of possible variants

Instance Swap
A type of component property that allows for swapping components

Nested Instances
Components within components used to generate different permutations

Library Swap
A feature that allows styles and components in one library to be replaced with another library's assets

Branch
Exploratory spaces off of a main design file for new ideas and file updates to be made

The Advanced Features

Interactive Components

A feature that allows for interactions between variants in a component set

Variables

Store reusable values for design properties and prototyping actions

Plugins

Third-party scripts or applications used to extend Figma’s functionality

Auto Layout

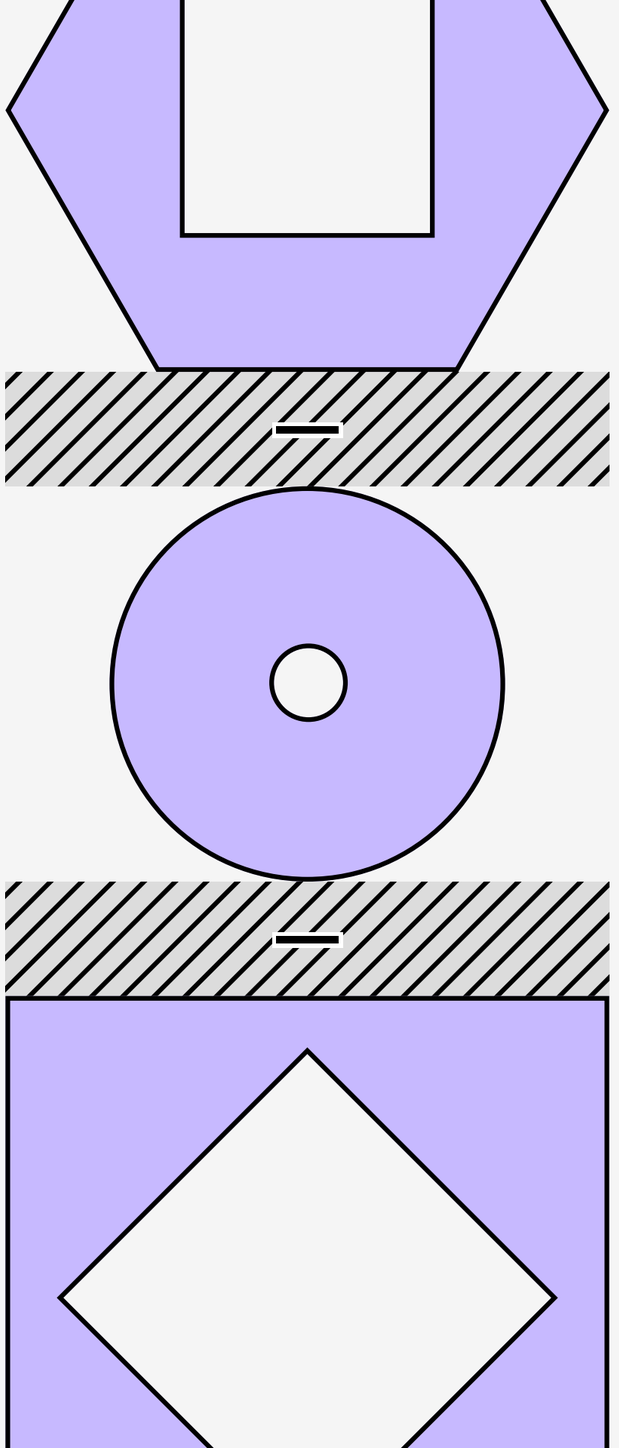
A property that can be added to frames and components to make them responsive based off the content within the element.

Related terms:

Component Frames Responsiveness Flexible

Resources:

→ Explore Auto Layout Properties
→ Auto Layout Playground



Component Properties

Changeable aspects of a component.

Types of component properties:

- Variant
- Boolean – toggle layer visibility
- Text – override text from design panel
- Instance swap – change instances

Benefits:

- Reduces number of variants to control
- Eliminates drilling down into component layers
- Better alignment to code

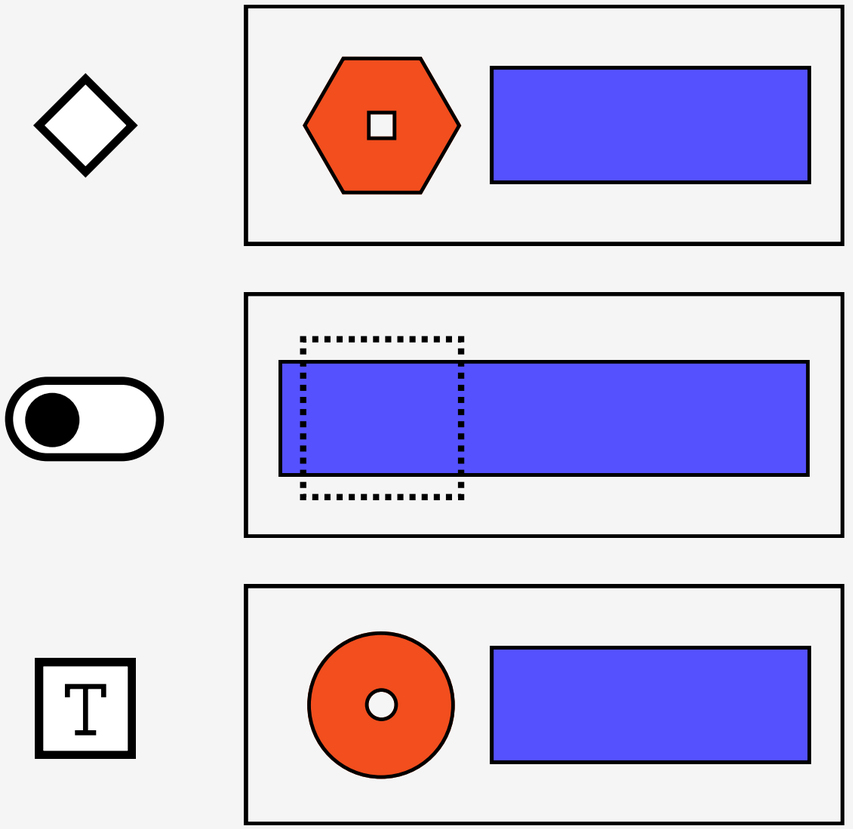
Related terms:

Component | Variant | Instance | Nested Instance

Resources:

→ Explore Component Properties

→ Component Properties Playground



Instance Swap

A type of component property that allows for swapping a component directly from the property panel.

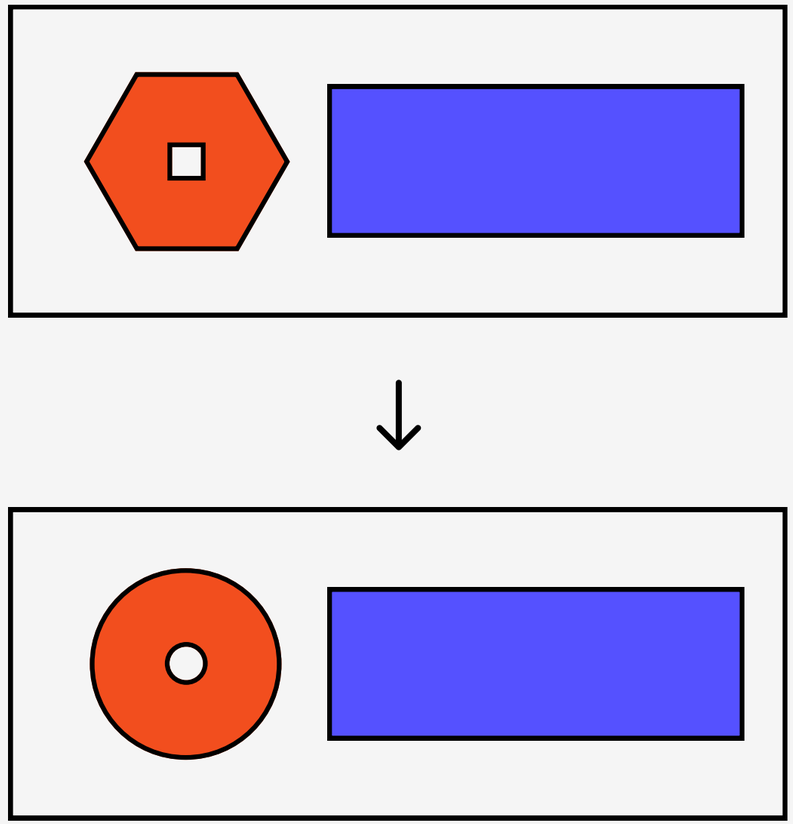
Note:
Users can define preferred values for an instance. Preferred values allow you to define a set of components to select from when swapping instances to reduce guesswork.

Related terms:

Component Properties | Instance

Resources:

→ Component Properties Playground



Nested Instances

Components placed within other instances of components; components within components.

Nested instances give the flexibility to generate different permutations of a component without having to draw everything as a separate variant of its own.

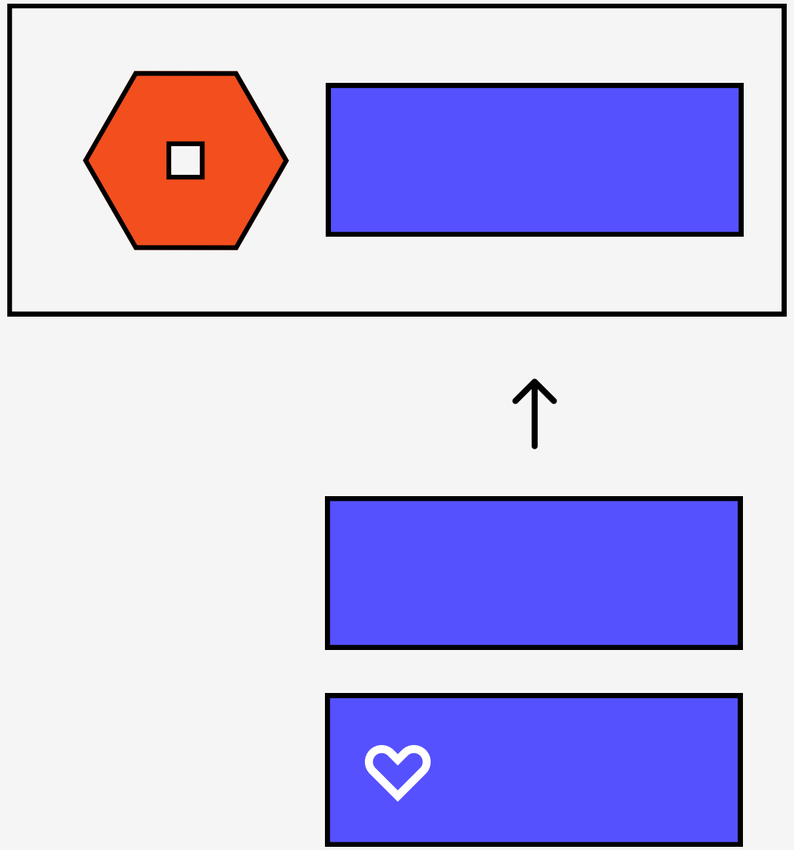
Note:
Expose nested instances to reveal their component properties in the top-level instance. This helps discover and display nested instances and their component properties.

Related terms:

Instance Components

Resources:

→ Explore Component Properties



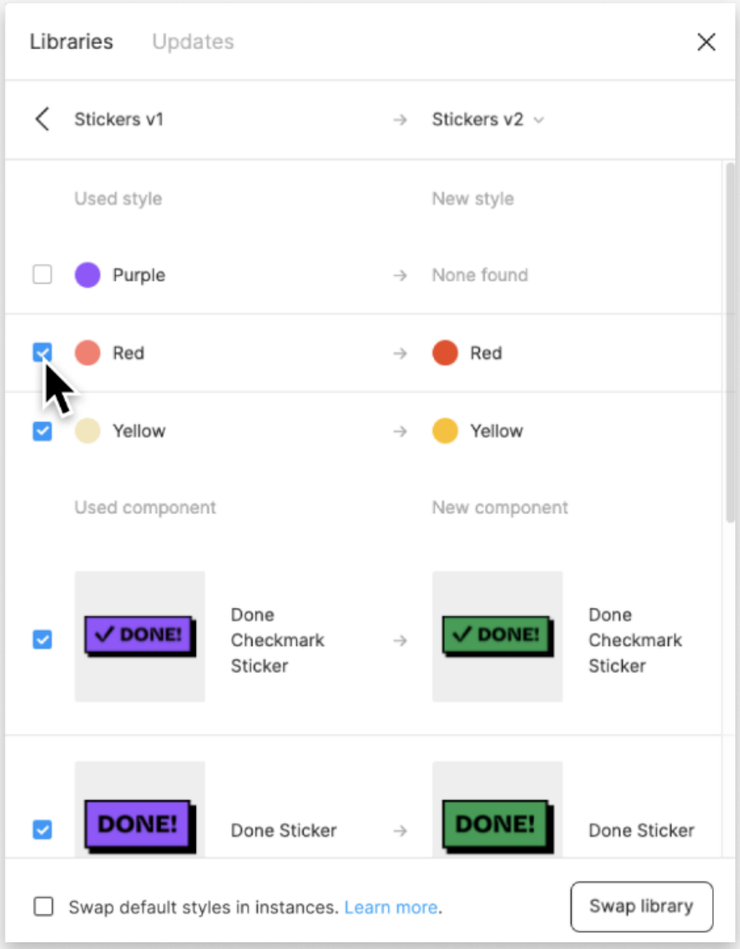
🕮 Library Swap

Replace styles and components used in the current file with instances from a different published library.

Note:
Figma swaps any matching styles and components based off of their names
(i.e. assets need to follow the same naming scheme in order for library swapping to work correctly)

Related terms:

Library Styles Components



Branch

Exploratory spaces that allow for new ideas and changes to be made without disrupting the main design file.

Potential actions to take within a branch:

- Request a branch review
- Review and approve branch review
- Merge branch into main file

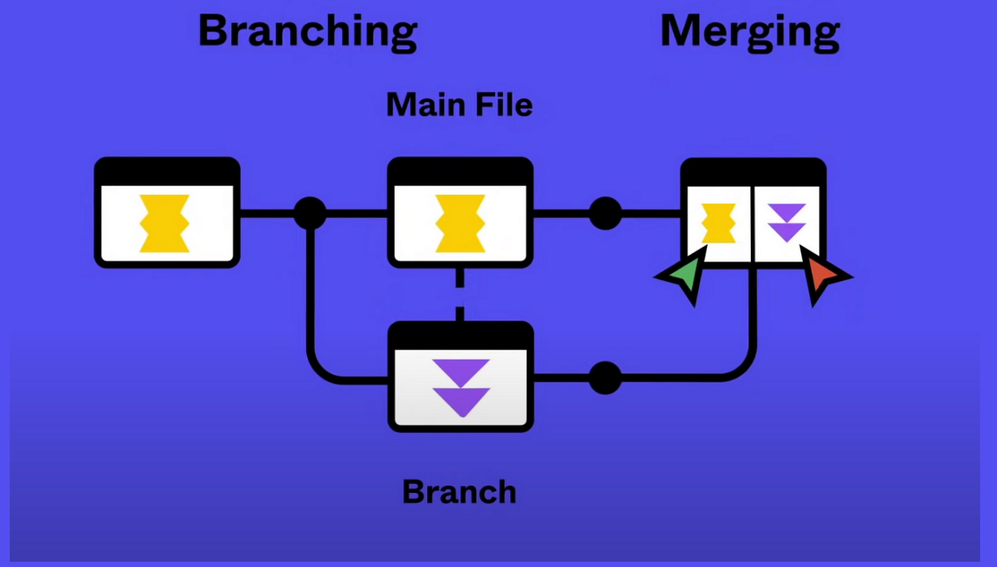
Note:
All changes are shown in version history; branch created, updated from main file, and branch merged.

Related terms:

Version Control | Version History

Resources:

→ Best Practices – Branching
→ Guide to Branching



Interactive Components

Interactive components allow you to create prototype interactions between variants in a component set.

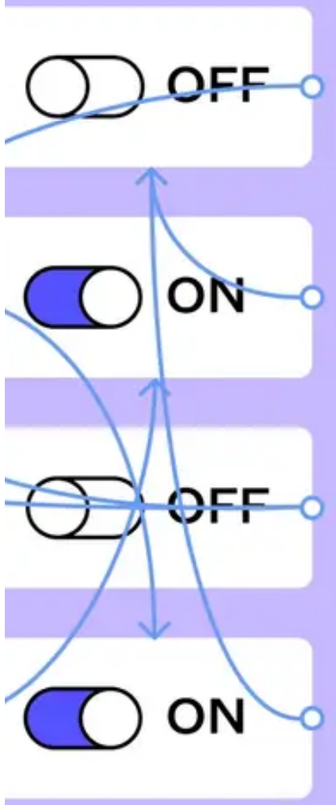
Note:
Interactive components can only be created using variants from the same component set.

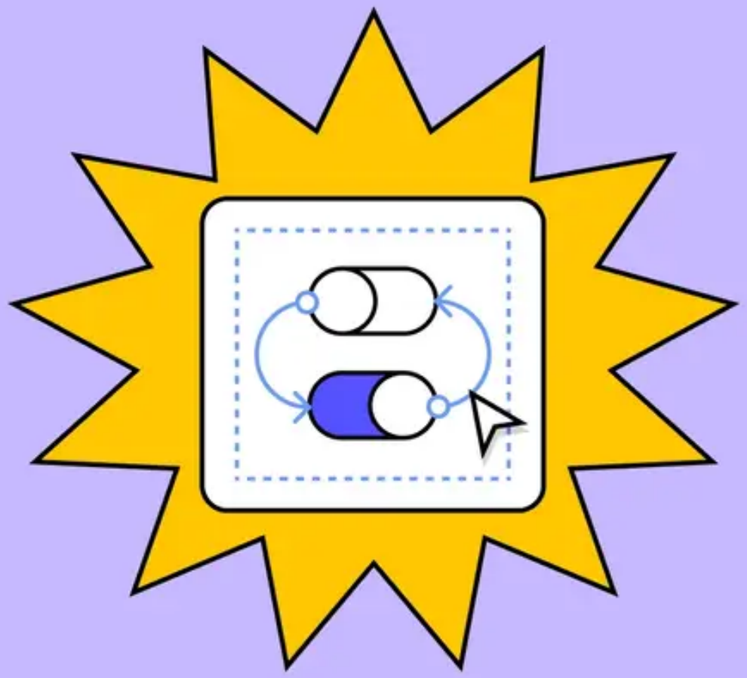
Related terms:

Prototyping Variants Components

Resources:

→ Create Interactive Components
→ Interactive Components





Variables

Store reusable values that can be applied to different design properties and prototyping actions.

Types of variables:

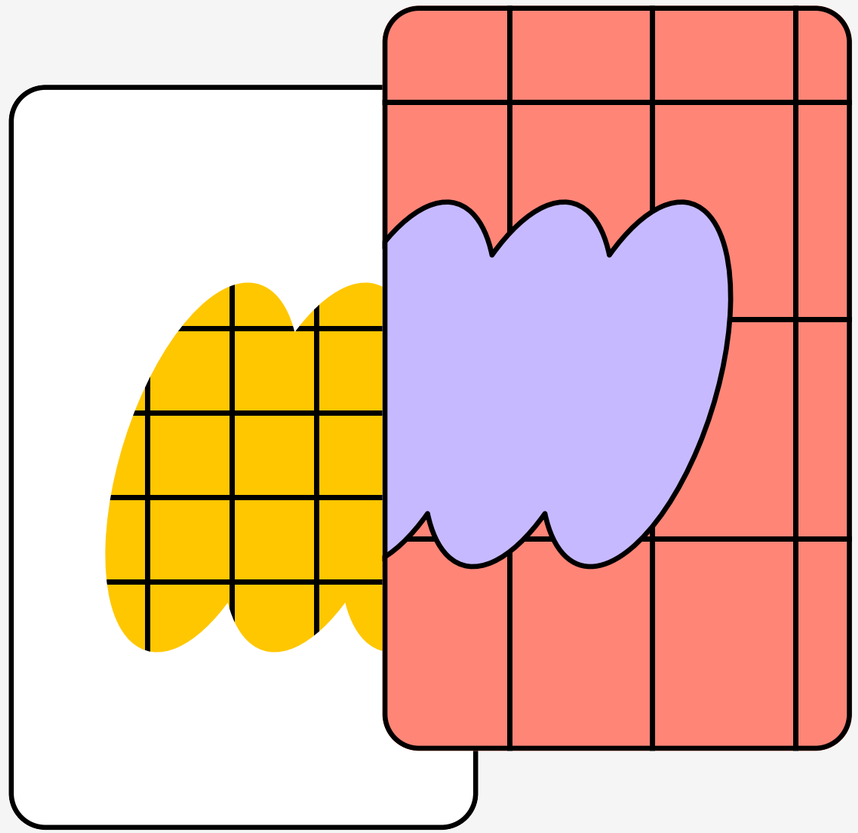
- Color
- Number
- String
- Boolean

Related terms:

Styles | Design Tokens | Alias

Resources:

→ Figma Learn – Variables
→ Variables Playground
→ Variables in Prototypes

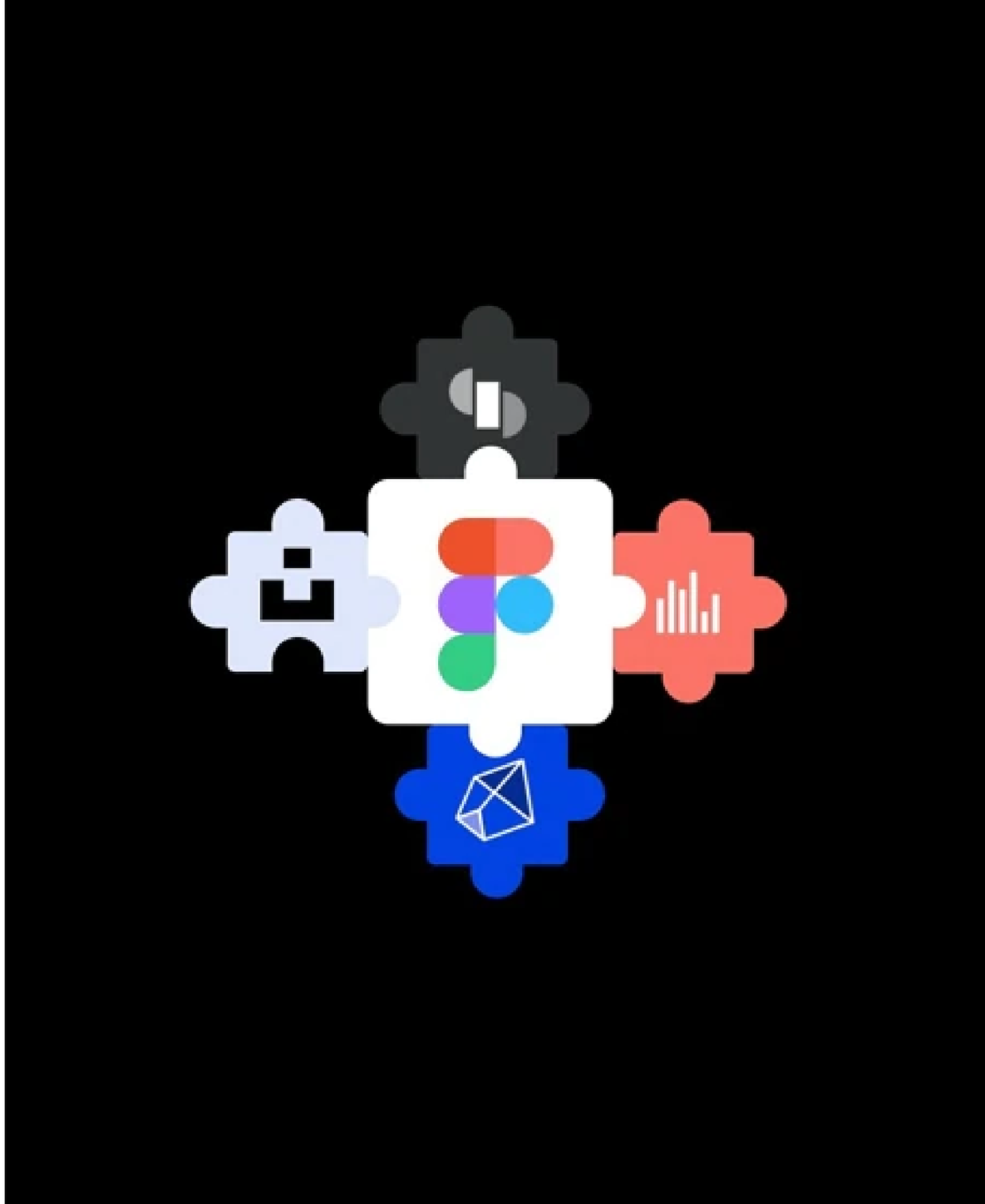


Plugins

Third-party programs or applications powered by web technologies that extend the functionality of Figma for editors.

Note:

- Plugins are only visible to the user who ran it and cannot be interacted with by other users of the same file
- Plugins must be manually run
- Only one plugin can run at a time
- Plugins cannot perform actions in the background
- There are both free and paid plugins available in Figma Community

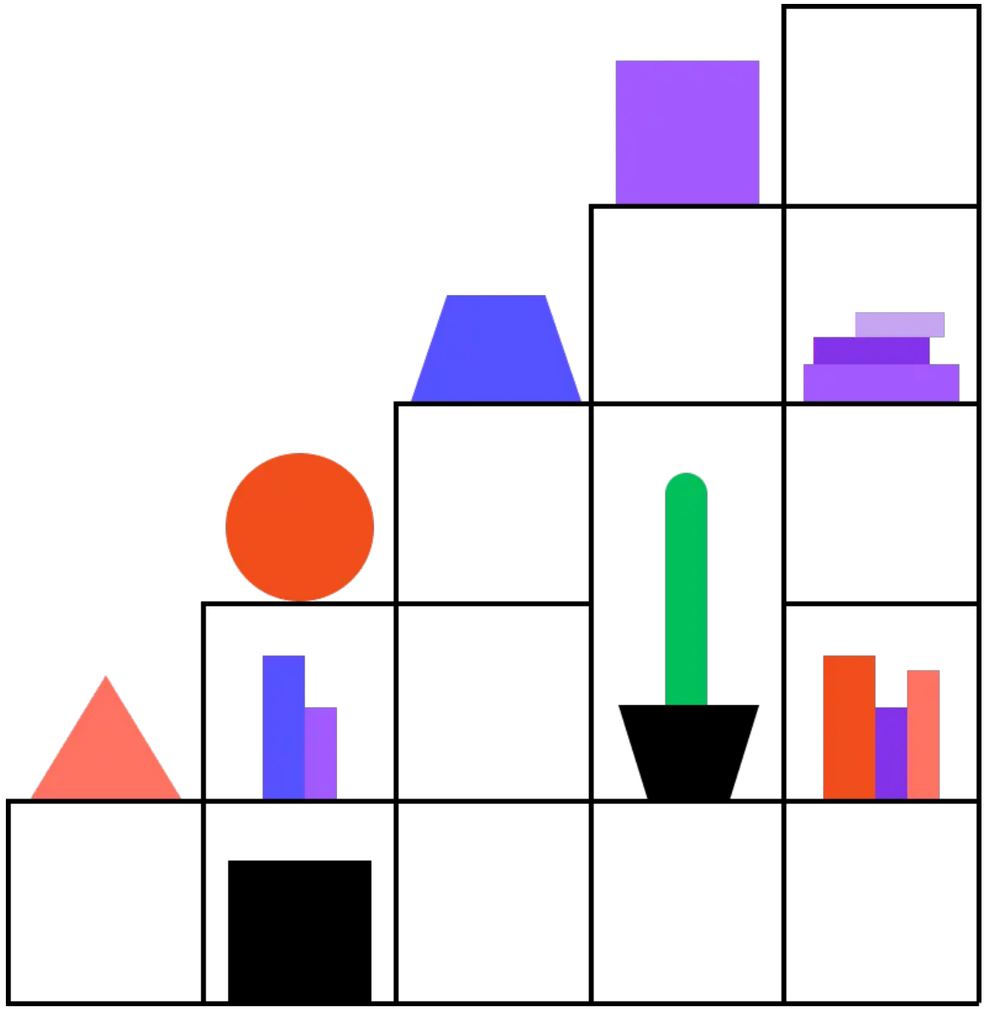


Figma Best Practices

Figma Best Practices

→ View page

A collection of extensive practice guides and tips-and-tricks articles to help you make the most of Figma's features.



Figma Resource Library

Figma Resource Library

→ View page

A library of articles and how-to content to improve your product development journey in Figma.

Youtube Videos

Learning Figma as a product person

→ View videos

⏰ <15-20 min per video

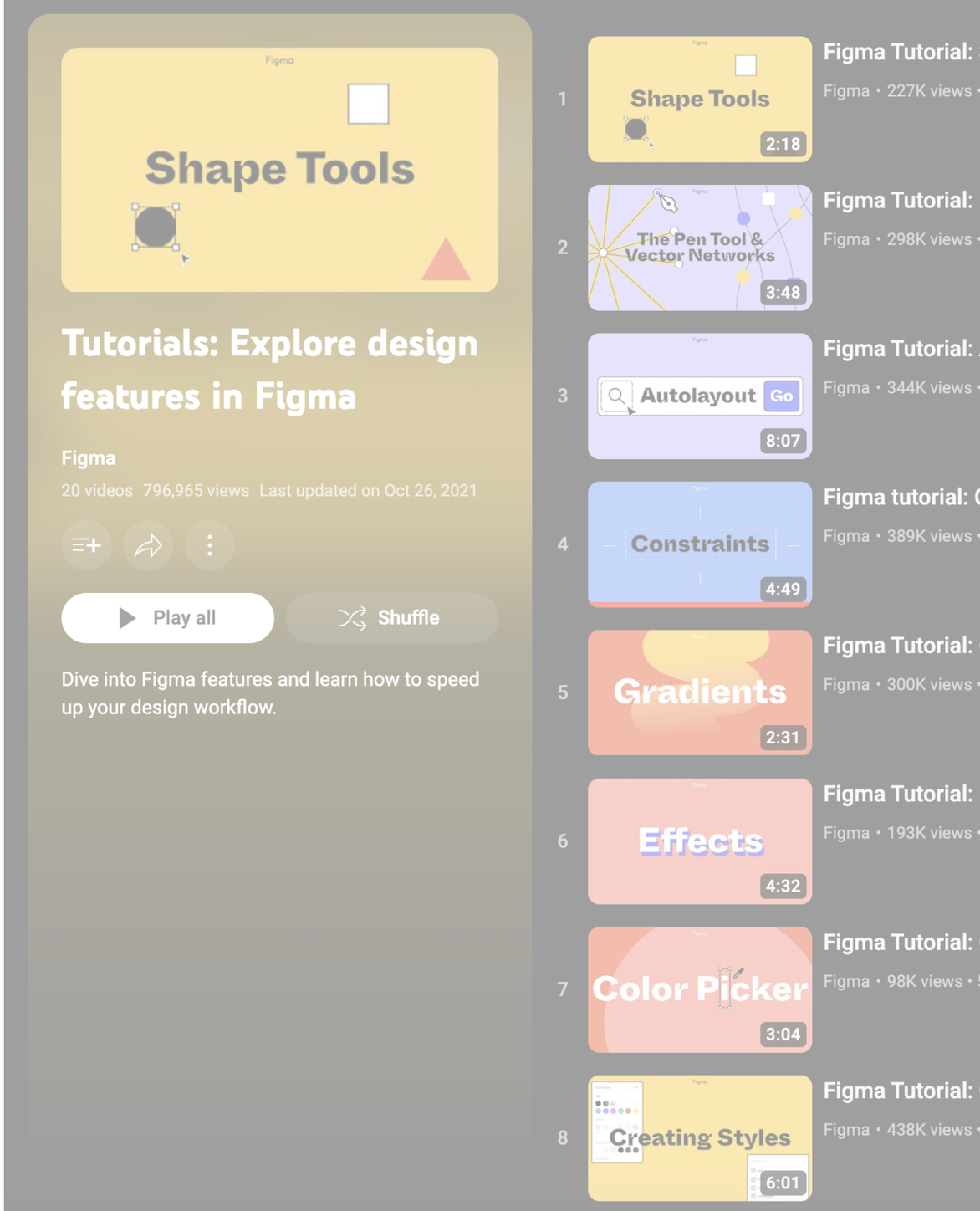
- 15 video learning series on how to use Figma as a product person. Learn how to create a lightweight prototype that you can use to get feedback and buy-in from your stakeholders and better communicate ideas within your team
- → Link to FigJam Board

Tutorials:
Explore design features in Figma

→ View videos

⏰ <10 min per video

- 20 videos
  - Constraints
  - Creating styles
  - Boolean Operations
  - Images
  - Alignment & distribution
  - Variants
  - Interactive components
  - Branching & merging
    & many more...

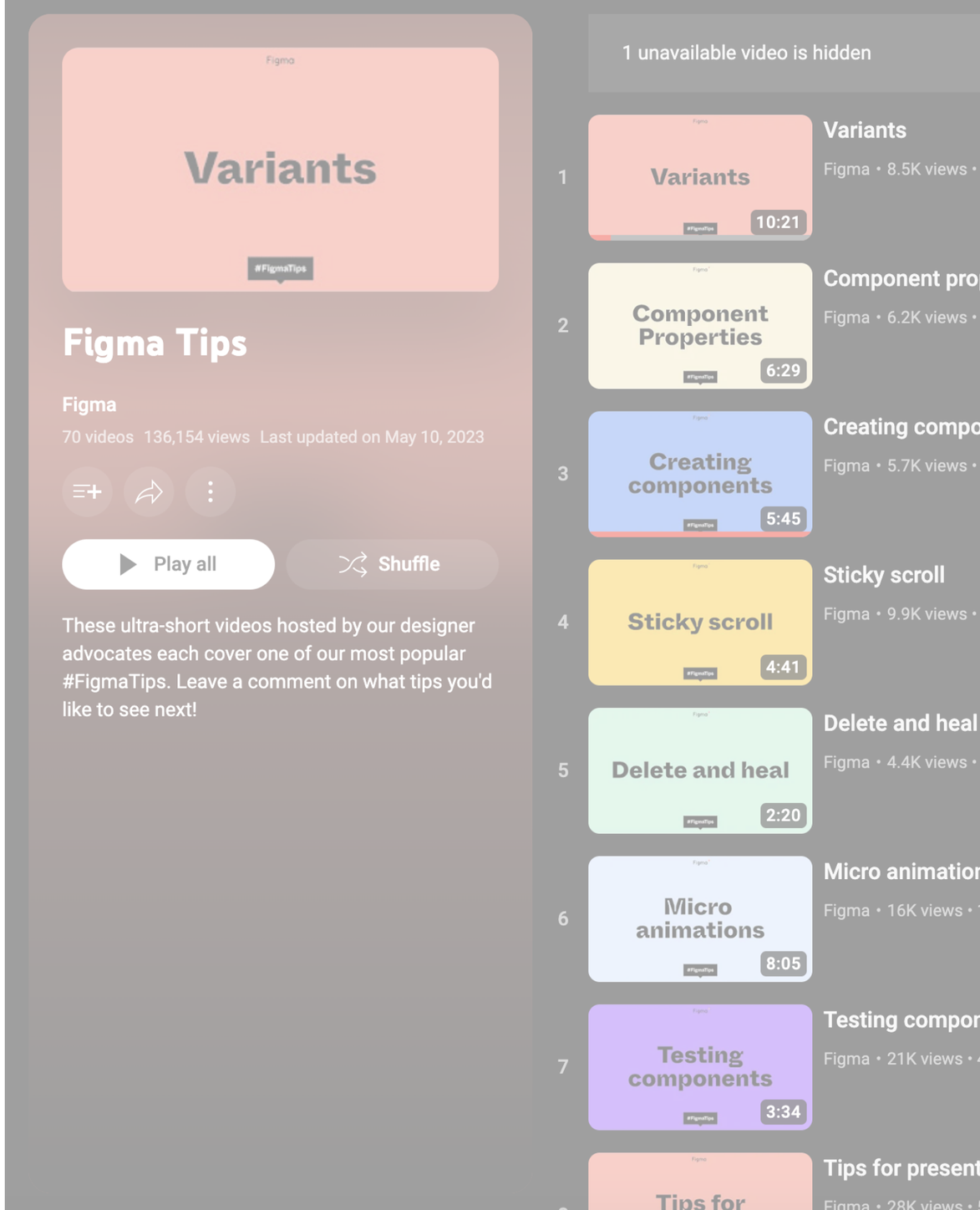


Figma Tips

→ View videos

⏰ <10 min per video

- 70 videos
  - Variants
  - Component properties
  - Creating components
  - Moving main components
  - Swap style and component libraries
  - Resizing frames
  - Flexible components using “slots”
  - Nested component instances
    & many more...

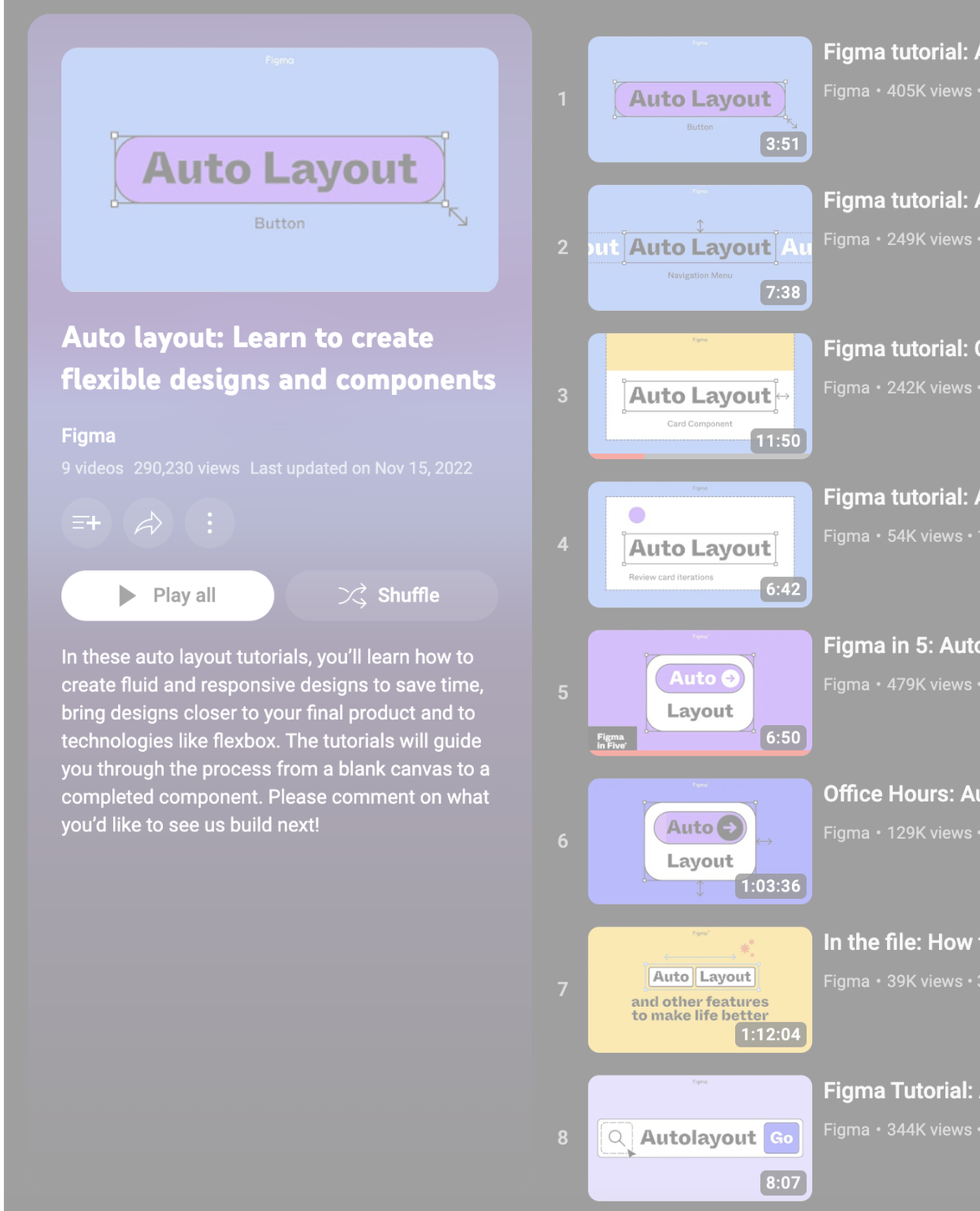


Auto Layout

→ View videos

⏰ ~180 min

- 9 videos
  - Button
  - Navigation menu
  - Card component
  - Review card iterations
  - Figma in 5
  - Office Hours
  - Auto Layout (older version)
  - What's new #Config2022

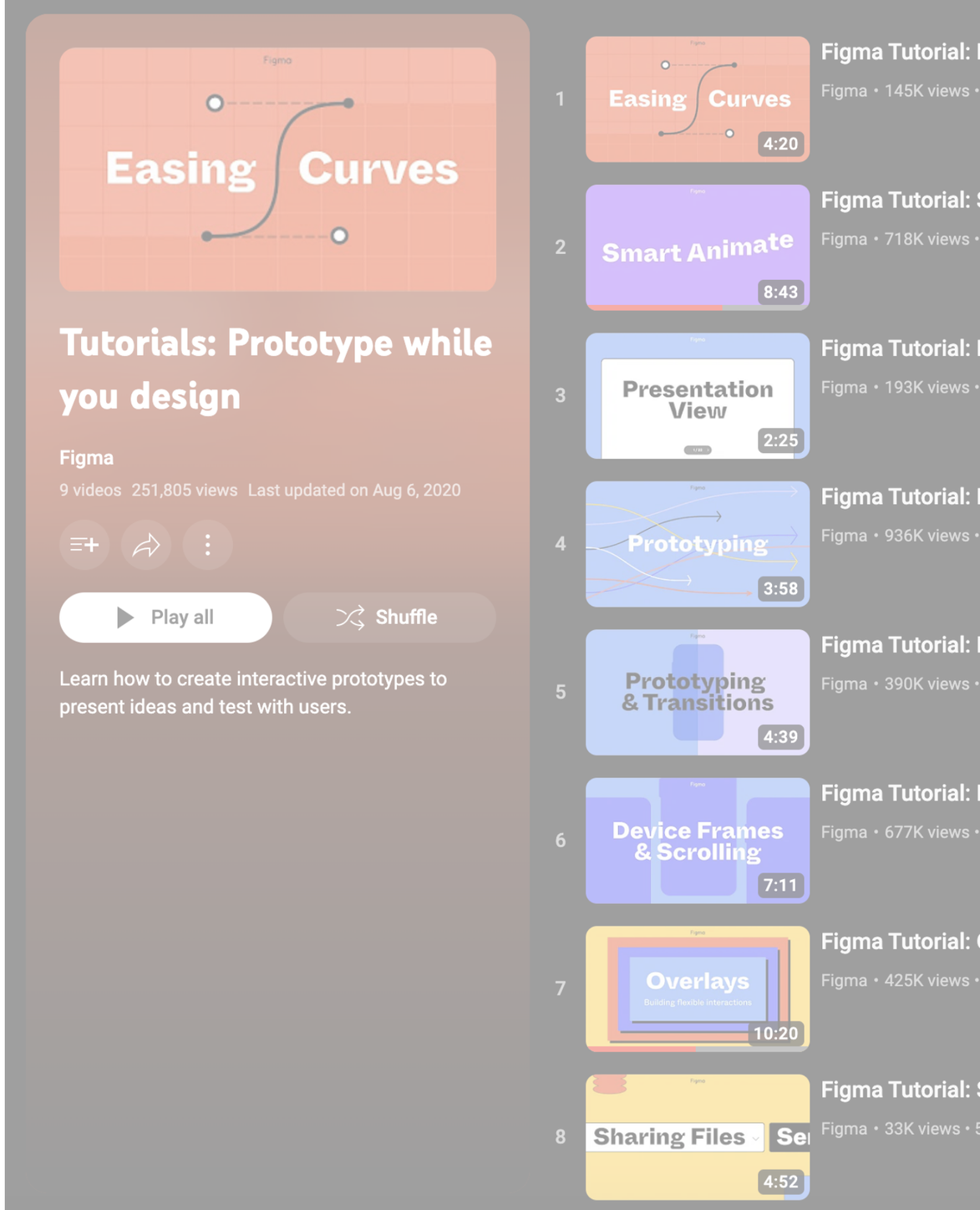


Tutorials: Prototype while you design

→ View videos

⏰ <10 min per video

- 9 videos
  - Easing curves
  - Smart animate & drag triggers
  - Presentation view
  - Prototyping
  - Prototyping & transitions
  - Device frames & scrolling
  - Overlays
  - Sharing files
  - Embeds

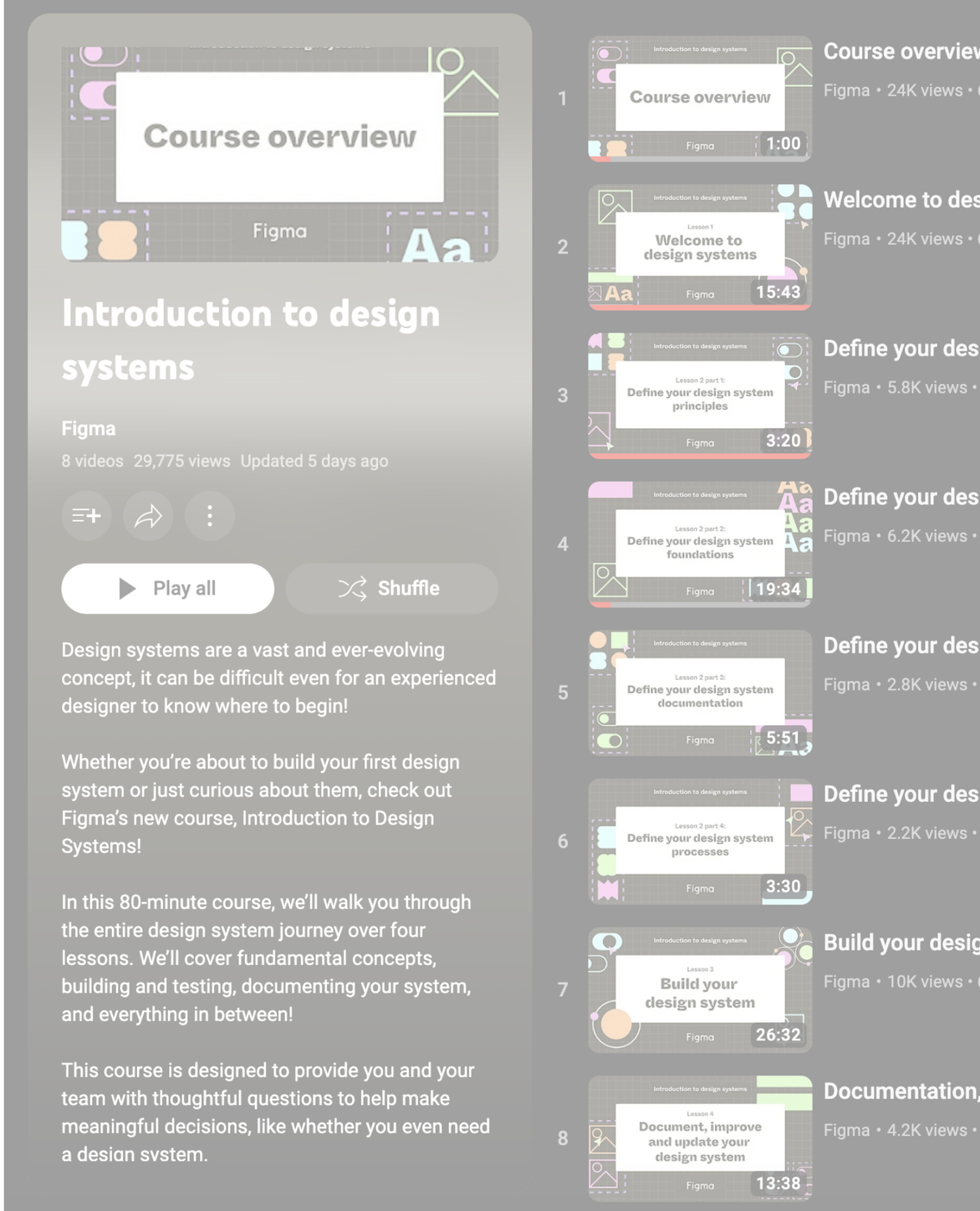


Introduction to Design Systems

→ View videos

⏰ 80 min

- 8 videos
  - Welcome
  - Principles
  - Foundations
  - Documentation
  - Processes
  - Build
  - Document, improve and update

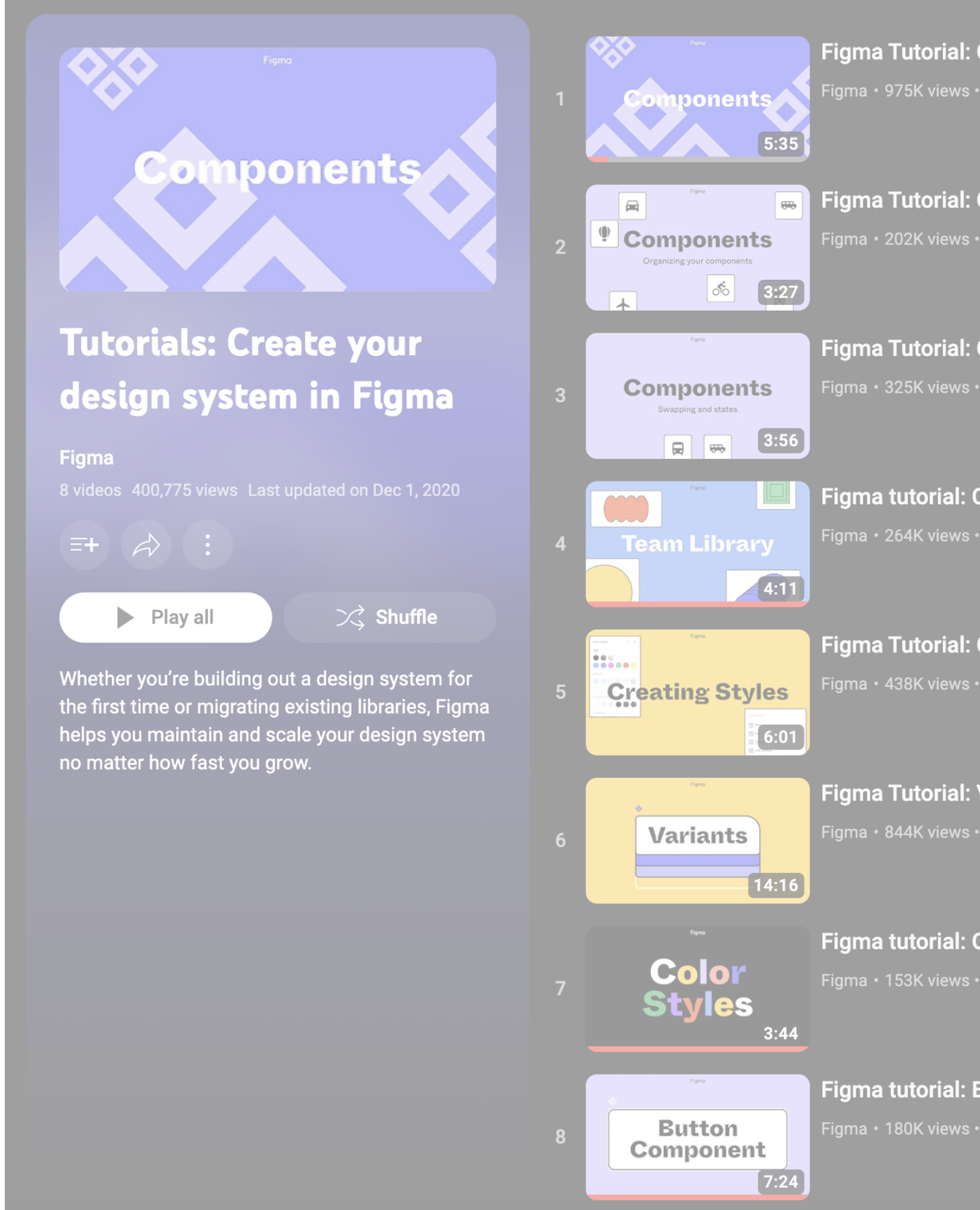


Tutorials:
Create your design system in Figma

→ View videos

⏰ <10 min per video

- 8 videos
  - Components - The basics
  - Components - Organize your components
  - Components - Swapping & states
  - Create a shareable team library
  - Creating styles
  - Variants
  - Create reusable color styles
  - Build reusable components

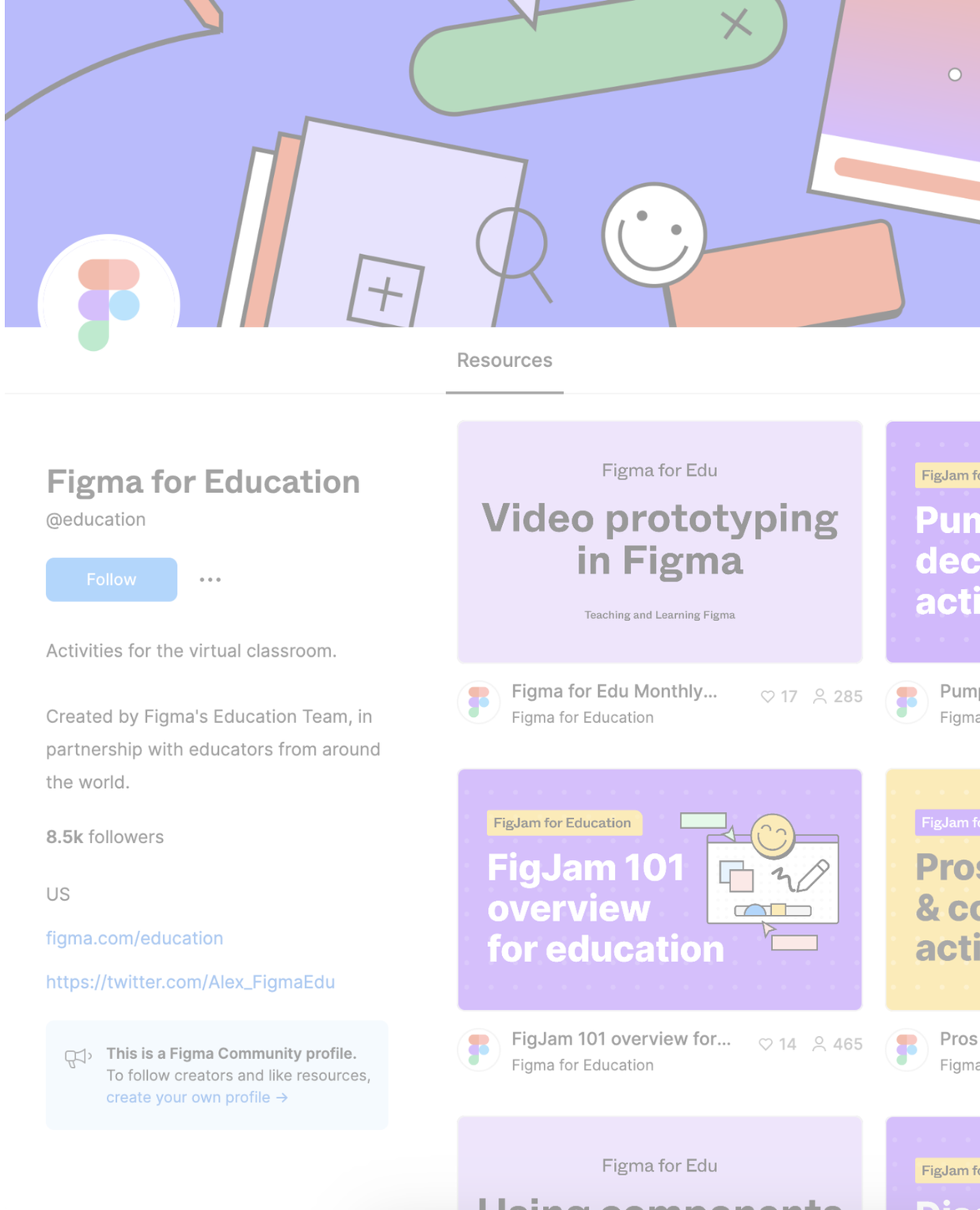


Figma for Education

→ View Community Profile

A collection of published community files created by Figma's Education Team, in partnership with educators from around the world.

These resources provide potential activities that can be implemented into your virtual classroom with Figma.



Figma Design Systems

UI2: Figma’s Design System

by Figma

Official community file that contains the Figma design language and system; styles, components, and variants used by Figma’s design team

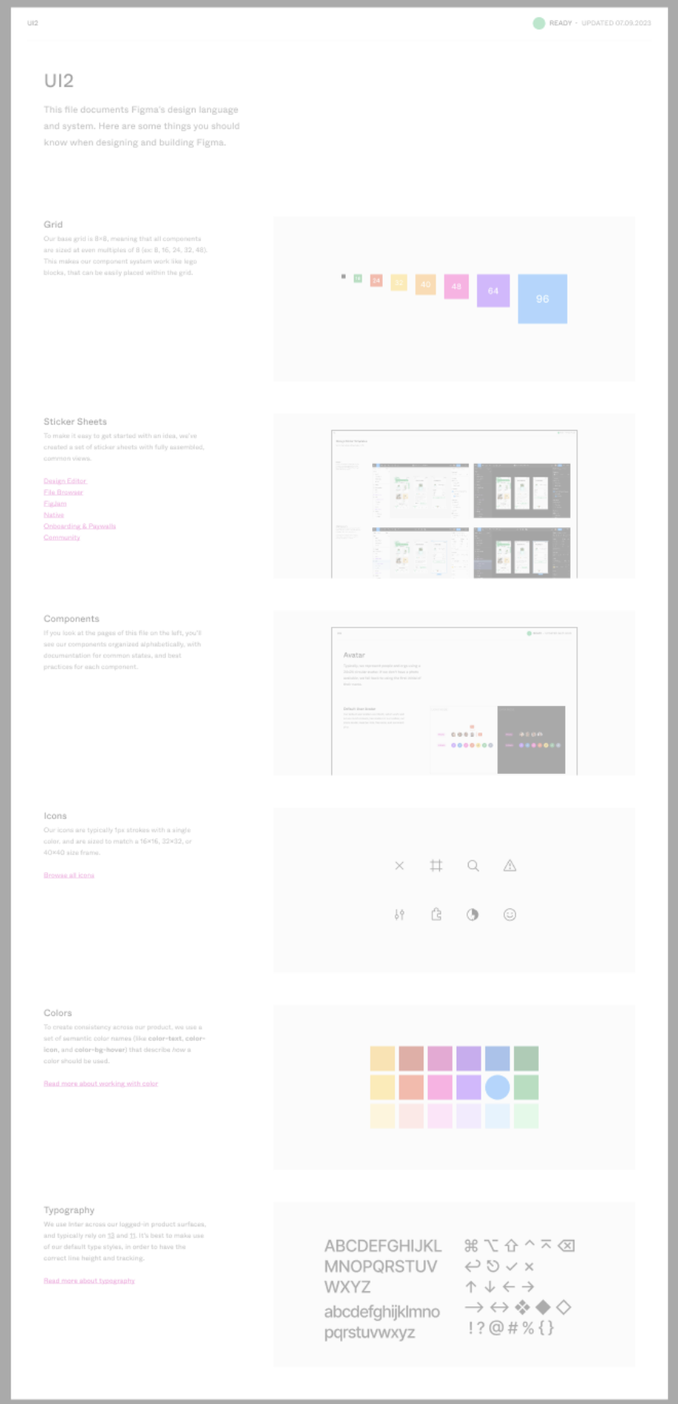
→ View file

UI2: Figma’s Design System

by Luis Ouriach

Unofficial republish of Figma’s design system file; includes most of the latest features introduced to Figma since its last update in 2019.

→ View file



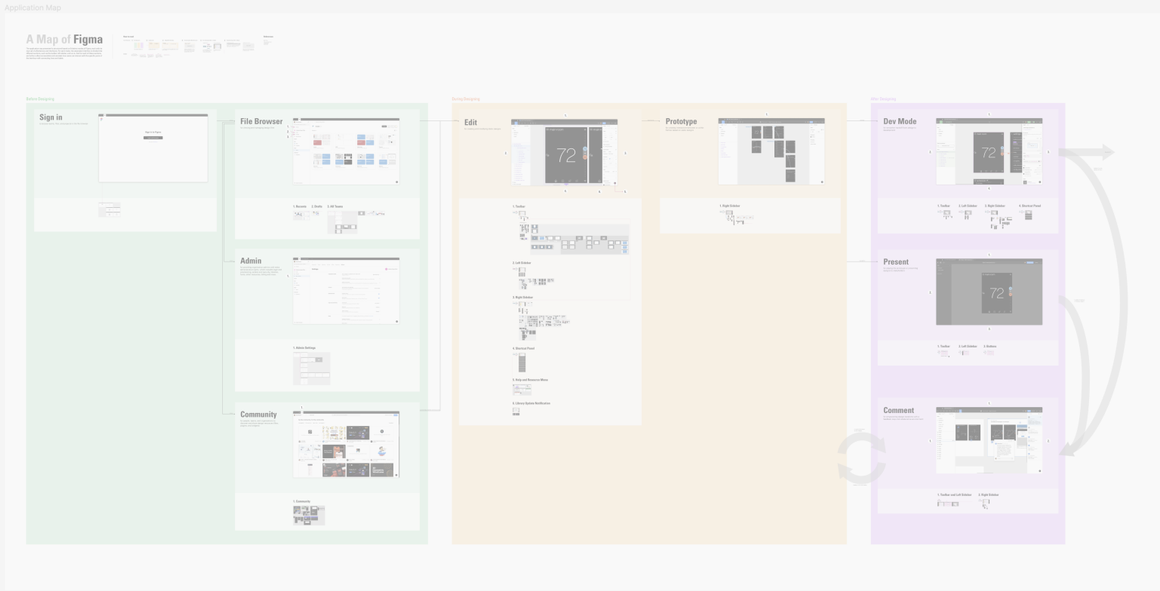
Appendix

Figma Application Map

by Muxing Chen

A visual documentation of Figma’s complex user interface and how its screens are connected.

→ View Application Map



Special thanks to
Muxing Chen
Jeffrey Lubow

Presentation posted at
presentations.dubberly.com/Figma_101.pdf