

2. UI Controls

User interface (UI) controls are the building blocks of any software interface. Using them intelligently can guide users through your product as you intend, by making it feel familiar and learnable even if they have never used it before.

Becoming familiar with them as a user interface designer is essential for a good user experience. Many new designers get stuck trying to decide whether to use a checkbox or a radio button on a form, for example, or how many navigation tabs on a screen is too many. That's what this section is all about.

Fortunately, best practices and guidelines for user interface controls are well established, through years (often decades) of research and practice. In the next few articles we'll introduce the *most common user interface control types*, describe *when and how to use them*, and show *examples* and *variations* that will make you feel comfortable choosing and using them in your own designs.

UI controls are like the ingredients in a recipe. Learn their unique flavors and characteristics and you can improvise, customize, and substitute to meet your needs (or those of your specific users). Get to know them well enough and you can start creating your own recipes ([design patterns \(/learn/courses/wireframing/patterns/\)](#)) from scratch.

Below is the list of UI controls that we'll be learning about. Roughly speaking, they can be grouped as follows: those that accept *input*, such as the controls you'd find on a form; *navigation* controls, which allow users to move around in your app or site; and *output* controls, which communicate information to the user.

- [2.1. Buttons \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/buttons/\)](#)
- [2.2 Text Input \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/text-input/\)](#)
- [2.3. Dropdown Menu \(Combo Box\) \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/dropdown/\)](#)
- [2.4. Radio Buttons and Checkboxes \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/radio-checkbox/\)](#)

- [2.5. Links \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/links/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/links/)
- [2.6. Tabs \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/tabs/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/tabs/)
- [2.7. Breadcrumbs \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/breadcrumbs/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/breadcrumbs/)
- [2.8. Vertical Navigation \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/verticalnavigation/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/verticalnavigation/)
- [2.9. Menu Bars \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/menubars/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/menubars/)
- [2.10. Accordions \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/accordions/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/accordions/)
- [2.11. Validation \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/validation/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/validation/)
- [2.12. Tooltips \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/tooltips/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/tooltips/)
- [2.13. Alerts \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/alerts/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/alerts/)
- [2.14. Data Tables \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/tables/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/tables/)
- [2.15. Icons \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/icons/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/icons/)



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[← 1. What is UI Design? \(/learn/courses/wireframing/intro/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/intro/)

[2.1. Buttons → \(/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/buttons/\)](/learn/courses/wireframing/controls/buttons/)