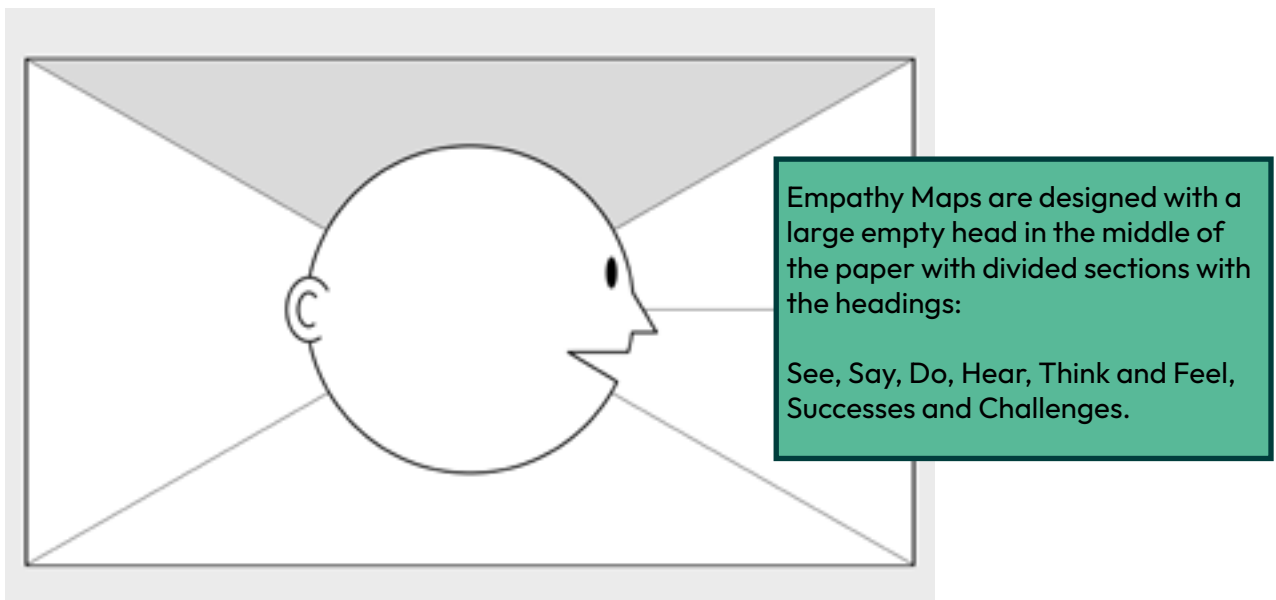# Empathy Map

Empathy maps are used to build an **understanding of 'user' needs** at the definition stage of a project. The 'users' can be students, but they also may be colleagues. The map enables us to empathise with the **feelings, behaviours, and needs** of the people whose experiences we want to improve.

An empathy map creates an **imagined user**, drawing on the experiences and expertise of the people in the room. People can then contribute without it being explicitly about them. The completed map is a **composite of experiences** and needs to 'ring true' for the users.

You may need to create more than one empathy map if a group **isn't able to agree** on a shared understanding. For example, in the process of creating an empathy map with students in one module, it may become clear that those who have been educated in the UK have a different experience on the module than those who haven't. In this case, you would then create two different maps.

Empathy Maps are designed with a large empty head in the middle of the paper with divided sections with the headings:

See, Say, Do, Hear, Think and Feel, Successes and Challenges.

Face to face workshop?

What you will need:
- Large sheets of paper (to free-hand sketch a map)
- Coloured sticky notes
- Pens/markers

Or print an Empathy Map template from this link.

We have been inspired by David Grey's 'Game Storming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers and Changemakers'.

Online workshop?

Collaborative platforms such as Miro and Mural offer different mapping templates that can be adapted to use as an empathy map.

PRE-WORKSHOP

Invitations and expectations
Consider **who** you are inviting and **how many** people will need to be there.
Decide how you are **setting out expectations** of what the workshop is and how the **outcomes** from the workshop will be used.
Create a space that is **comfortable**.

WORKSHOP DELIVERY

Who is the user you are empathising with, and what is it that you hope they will do?
Creating a character and naming them is important.
- **Who** is it that we need to understand?
- **What** is their situation?
- What is their **role** in the situation?

Complete the map together
As a group, and in no particular order, explore and describe the world of your defined character, from their point of view, in relation to the project goal. What would they: **See, Say, Do, Hear, Think and Feel**?
What do they **See**?
- What do they see in their immediate environment? What are they watching and reading?
- What do they see others saying and doing?
What do they **Say**?
- What words, phrases, terminology do they use?
What do they **Do**?
- What are their actions? What are their behaviours?
What do they **Hear**?
- What is the user hearing and how does this influence them?
What do they **Think and Feel**?
- What other thoughts and feelings might motivate their behaviour? What are their goals?
- What might your user be thinking and what does this tell you about them?

What are their Successes and What are their Challenges?
Record what the group would understand about your character's dreams and aspirations, as well as the frustrations and challenges.

Reflection and Summary
Synthesise what this person wants, their motivations and what your idea can do for them. Has this exercise **confirmed your understanding** of your user? Has it produced **new insights** that have changed or **challenged** your understanding of the user and your idea?

A sparsely populated map or a session that reveals more questions than answers indicates where **more user research** needs to be done.
Give your workshop participants space to reflect on the process.

You will need to submit the completed empathy map/s and a **short reflection** on the key learnings. For example you might want to think about questions like:

- Is there anything that **surprised you** or that was particularly powerful during the workshop?
- Were there areas of **disagreement or synergy**?
- Have you shown the map to others? What were their reflections?
- Does the map highlight particular **opportunities** or pressing **problems**?

Further reading and resources
https://www.uxbooth.com/articles/empathy-mapping-a-guide-to-getting-inside-a-users-head/
https://en.dt-toolbook.com/tools
https://medium.com/the-xplane-collection/updated-empathy-map-canvas-46df22df-3c8a