

## 4.4 Design exercise: how to improve interface design through symmetry

### Objective

This exercise aims to analyze the interface of an ordinary everyday device or object and identify opportunities for its improvement through the use of the symmetry strategy. It is important to remember that symmetry and lack of symmetry can be helpful but it can also serve different purposes. Symmetry typically introduces balance, equilibrium, and efficiency, while lack of symmetry adds emphasis, accent, and loudness. For these reasons, users may appreciate both, depending on the need and whether they prefer order or some level of surprise. A typical mismatch is when users expect some symmetry, and they cannot find it, or when they need some emphasis and instead what they are looking for is buried in a very symmetric interface.

This exercise involves selecting an interface and analyzing it in terms of symmetry or lack thereof. The next step is to understand if the level of symmetry in the interface is appropriate. The third and last step is figuring out ways to add or remove symmetry to make the interface more pleasant and usable.

### Instructions

1. Select a web page or app.
2. Identify symmetries and symmetries violations.
3. Perform a few tasks with the interface (even better if you can ask a partner to do this) and observe whether symmetry favours the correct and quick execution of the task (or not). Remember that symmetry also applies to the analysis of user behaviour and interaction.
4. What would you change/improve?
5. Sketch the new design by taking a picture of the actual interface and superimpose your changes with a graphic editing tool of your choice.
6. Summarize the result of your analysis in a final report addressing the above questions and including your sketch.