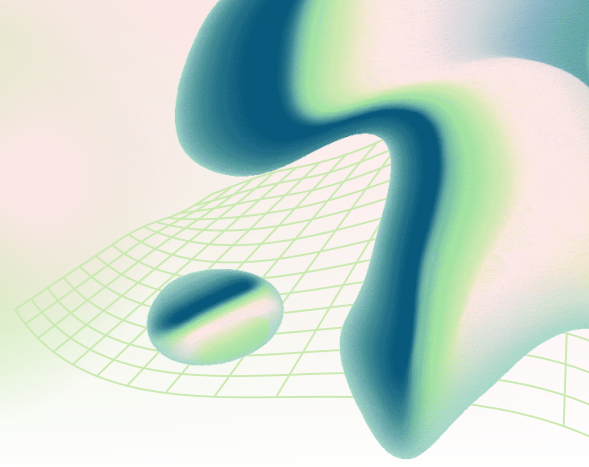


AI FATIGUE IS REAL

A designer's guide to recognising AI overload



Users are exhausted by AI. And most products are making it worse. The trust deficit is real: high trial, steep drop-off after day 3, low 30-day retention.

What AI Fatigue Actually Is

Not a rejection of tech, but a rational response to bad AI UX. 5 distinct variants:

1. Interruption Fatigue: reflexive dismissal of constant AI suggestions.

Symptom: Constant dismissal of AI suggestions.

Fix: Interrupt Budgets (max interruptions per session, focus-state detection)

2. Output Quality Fatigue: plausible-but-wrong outputs destroy trust.

Symptom: Distrust of AI outputs due to inaccuracies.

Fix: Confidence-Based Presentation (high vs low confidence outputs look different)

3. Onboarding Debt Fatigue: hidden learning curves cause early abandonment.

Symptom: Early user abandonment due to complex AI features.

Fix: Progressive Value Revelation (start with most reliable use cases, not most impressive)

4. Loss of Agency Fatigue: AI displacement of user decisions breeds resentment.

Symptom: User resentment due to AI taking over decisions.

Fix: Legible AI (show what AI did, let users undo it easily)

5. Volume Fatigue: overwhelm from AI everywhere simultaneously.

Symptom: Overwhelm due to the pervasiveness of AI.

Fix: Considered Restraint (AI as power feature, invisible when not needed)

The AI Fatigue Audit (7 diagnostic questions)

- 30-day retention rate (below 40% = fatigue signal)
- AI-initiated interruptions per session (more than 3/hour = too many)
- Can users disable AI features individually?
- Calibrated confidence presentation vs identical outputs?
- Plain-language transparency without reading docs?
- Onboarding shows most reliable first or most impressive first?
- Have you asked users: more control or less?

Scoring: 3+ "no/unsure" = measurable fatigue risk; 5+ "no" = fatigue already occurring

The Considered AI Framework (7 design principles)

Principle	Description
Earn, don't demand attention	AI suggestions should be relevant and valuable, not intrusive.
Match AI intensity to task stakes	Use AI sparingly for low-stakes tasks, more actively for high-stakes ones.
Make silence a valid AI state	AI should be invisible when not needed, allowing users to focus.
Calibrate confidence visibly	Clearly communicate the AI's confidence level in its outputs.
Design for exit (easy permanent off switch)	Users should be able to easily disable AI features permanently.
Reward learning investment	Make it clear how users benefit from engaging with AI over time.
Audit for accumulation	Avoid overwhelming users with too many competing AI features.

The AI products that will be trusted in 2027 are the ones being restrained today. The counterintuitive competitive advantage of restraint.

AI fatigue is a design problem, not a technology problem.

Summary

This design guide explored the concept of AI fatigue, its various manifestations, and provided actionable strategies for designing against it. By understanding the underlying causes of AI fatigue and implementing the principles of the Considered AI Framework, designers can create AI products that are both valuable and user-friendly.