A guide to persuasive affordances

Derived from: B.J. Fogg, Gregory Cuellar, and David Danielson. "Motivating, Influencing, and Persuading Users." In The Human-Computer Interaction Handbook: Fundamentals, Evolving Technologies, and Emerging Applications, edited by Julie A. Jacko and Andrew Sears, pp 133-47. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003.

'Persuasive affordances' are a set of design patterns that can be used to construct persuasive technologies. Most persuasive technologies draw on some combination of these affordances in order to 'nudge' people to do the behavior the technology is designed to support. This guide walks through some common persuasive affordances, which you can draw on in your persuasive design. In each case, we define the affordance, and give an example of how it works. Keep this guide at hand as you do persuasive design to help jumpstart your design process.

Persuasive Affordance	Definition	Example
Reduce barriers (time, effort, cost)	Make it easy for people to do what you want them to do	One-click shopping on Amazon makes it effortless to buy something.
Increase self-efficacy	Help people to feel more effective in reaching the goals you want to support, for example by providing them with feedback that shows some success at achieving the goal.	A calorie tracker can give people a sense that they are actually doing something when they diet and exercise
Provide information for better decision-making	Give people information that will lead them to make the decision you feel is better for them (without misleading).	Carbon footprint calculators can show people the effect of their activities is.
Change mental models	Change how people think about a situation so that they will act differently.	People have different mental models of how thermostats work - some think of turning up the temperature as increasing the flow of heat, while others think of it as changing the temperature at which the furnace switches on or off. The latter model tends to lead to less energy use. Thermostats could be designed to more

		clearly evoke a "switch" model to reduce energy usage.
Provide first-hand learning, insight, visualization, resolve	Give people a personal experience of the issue you care about so they will think about it differently	Provide people with pollution information tailored to their own city block to motivate them to take action
Promote understanding of cause-effect relationships	Represent the non-immediate consequences of people's actions	An electrical monitor that represents energy use by showing its effects on polar bears or sea level.
Motivate through experience, sensation	Give people bodily sensations (for example, through compelling visualizations) that change their behavior	Provide a virtual reality environment on an exercise bike that stimulates people to exercise harder.=
Establish social norms	Help people calibrate what behavior is reasonable or desirable by establishing a social standard	A water use meter that reports one's own usage compared to everyone else on the street.
Invoke social rules and dynamics	Use computers as social actors that follow social rules (e.g. if I do you a favor you should do me one)	Tell the user the app is proud of them when they do what you believe they should do.
Provide social support or sanction	Leverage people's desire to please and connect with their friends and/or to not be ashamed in front of them	Post writing goals on Facebook and update every day about whether one achieved them