



the incubator hub by Healthy Teen Network

## How Might We Statements

### Background

How Might We statements, which we often write as HMW for short, are open-ended questions designed to frame opportunities for problem-solving and ideation. How Might We statements are structured questions that start with "How might we..." and aim to address specific challenges or areas for improvement.

Developing How Might We statements is an essential component of using human-centered design (HCD) or a design-thinking approach. How Might We statements are intentionally ambiguous because their job is to open a range of possibilities.

How Might We statements get revised multiple times in the design process to account for new information your team is gathering. How Might We statements can be challenging at first and require practice to create, but with time and repetition, it becomes much easier and more intuitive to craft these statements.

### What is the purpose of How Might We Statements?

- To inspire and focus ideation sessions
- To encourage open-ended solutions, avoiding overly narrow or specific ideas
- To create alignment within a team on what challenge needs solving

### Why use How Might We Statements?

- **How:** Suggests that we don't yet have the answer and implies that there are many possible ways to solve it.
- **Might:** Emphasizes that our responses are possible solutions, not the only solution. It also creates a safe space in which we know that a potential idea might work, and it might not.
- **We:** Reminds us that we solve problems as a team, and the optimal solutions will be the result of collective and collaborative teamwork.

## Guidance for Developing How Might We Statements

Creating a strong How Might We Statement involves understanding the problem deeply, pinpointing the area of focus, and framing it in a way that invites exploration.

1. **Identify the Challenge:** Start by clearly defining the challenge or opportunity you want to address and focus on the desired outcome.
  - a. **Poor:** How might we stop users from calling us?
  - b. **Good:** How might we make users feel confident that they have all the information they need?
2. **Keep it Open-Ended:** A well-framed How Might We statement invites creative thinking without suggesting a particular solution. Avoid including a solution in the statement, so you can explore a wide range of ideas.
  - c. **Poor:** How might we tell users which form to complete to file their taxes?
  - d. **Good:** How might we make users feel confident that they are filing their taxes correctly?
3. **Find the Right Scope:** Make sure the How Might We Statement is broad enough to inspire a wide range of solutions but narrow enough to create specific solutions for them.
  - a. **Good:** How might we make it quick and easy for users to check their work for mistakes?
  - b. **Better:** How might we support users to efficiently draft submissions that they're happy with?
4. **Center on the User's Perspective:** Always frame the How Might We statement around the needs and experiences of the people who will benefit from the solution. How Might We statements are focused on the human end users, not systems issues, organizational constraints, technology, monetary returns, or product specifications.
  - a. **Poor:** How might we create a system that maximizes organizational efficiency in the allocation of childcare funding?
  - b. **Good:** How might we make it easier for new parents to access reliable, affordable childcare resources in their community?
5. **Inspire and Energize:** A strong How Might We statement is motivational and reveals a clear need that should be met. It should inspire rather than intimidate, sparking interest and engagement in finding solutions.
  - a. **Poor:** How might we make the return process less difficult?
  - b. **Good:** How might we make the return process quick and intuitive?



To support you in crafting effective HMWs, here are two tables: one outlining the structure and another with suggested verbs to inspire action-oriented statements.

HOW MIGHT WE	FOR WHOM	SO THAT
Intended action you want to achieve	The people to be influenced or affected by your solution (i.e., the end user)	Opportunity or intended outcome you want to achieve
Verb	Noun	

VERBS				
KNOW	UNDERSTAND	APPLY	EVALUATE	CREATE
Define	Predict	Solve	Frame	Develop
Identify	Reflect	Apply for	Compare	Change
Describe	Demonstrate	Construct	Experiment	Paraphrase
Match	Differentiate	Choose	Ask	Develop
Recognize	Discover	Prepare	Check	Imagine
Select	Research	Produce	Correlate	Negotiate
Investigate	Transform	Show	Separate	Design
Tell	Describe	Judge	Analyze	Structure
Visualize	Compare	Transfer	Reduce	Amplify

When crafting How Might We statements, keep the following elements in mind:

- **Specificity:** Make it specific enough to provide direction but broad enough to allow diverse solutions. Keep the question broad enough for multiple ideas, but not so broad that it lacks direction.
- **Positivity:** Frame it in a way that encourages constructive ideas, rather than highlighting limitations. Frame challenges as opportunities to improve, not limitations to overcome.
- **User Centered:** The statement should be empathetic to the user's perspective, addressing their challenges or desires.
- **Actionable Language:** Use action-oriented verbs to keep it solution-focused and inspiring.
- **Avoid Leading Language:** Don't imply a solution within the question. The goal is to open up possibilities, not predefine them.
- **Encourage Innovation:** Phrase your statement in a way that prompts thinking outside of conventional solutions.



## Examples of Strong and Weak How Might We Statements

Here is a list of examples to illustrate the difference between well-crafted and poorly constructed How Might We statements.

Weak How Might We Statements	Strong How Might We Statements
How might we get teens to stop using social media for health information?	How might we provide reliable health information to teens in a way that resonates with their online habits?
How might we get young people to quit smoking?	How might we support young people in making healthier lifestyle choices, including quitting smoking?
How might we control misinformation about vaccines among adolescents?	How might we empower adolescents to critically evaluate health information and share accurate vaccine information?
How might we get young adults to attend STI screenings?	How might we create a supportive environment that encourages young adults to prioritize STI screenings?
How might we reduce the number of teen pregnancies?	How might we provide comprehensive sexual health education that empowers teens to make informed choices?
How might we get teens to use contraception every time?	How might we empower teens to make informed choices about contraception?
How might we stop teens from sexting?	How might we encourage teens to communicate safely and responsibly in digital spaces?



## Examples of How Might We Statements

1. How might we help people living with chronic pain and those around them navigate the daily uncertainty of their condition?
2. How might we make the TSA wait the most exciting part of the trip?
3. How might we make the STI clinic visit experience like a spa?
4. How might we make the dentist's office a place that kids want to go?
5. How might we reinforce a culture of generosity by creating charitable giving solutions that are more accessible, inclusive, and effective?
6. How might we use technology to create networks of people that support decision-making that, in turn, supports reproductive health?
7. How might we use technology to expand and rethink school settings and improve customer experience?
8. How might we help educators, parents, and students adapt to remote learning while also using this moment to radically reimagine what we need our education system to be?
9. How might we ensure more people pay their taxes before the deadline?
10. How might we help employees stay productive and healthy when working from home?
11. How might we make customers feel that their information is safe and secure when creating an online bank account?
12. How might we encourage more purposeful collaboration in the workplace?
13. How might we make trip planning more collaborative?
14. How might we best equip sex educators so that young people have healthy, pleasurable sex in the cyborg era?
15. How might we improve the commuting experience for people on public transportation in your area?
16. How might we provide new products and services for the modern 70-year-old?
17. How might we inspire households to adopt healthier eating habits?
18. How might we encourage children to read more?
19. How might we harness current media preferences to engage young men in sexual health?
20. How might we redesign the contraceptive buying experience for teen girls to make it less stigmatizing?
21. How might we empower caregivers to seek and fully utilize immunization services in their communities?

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