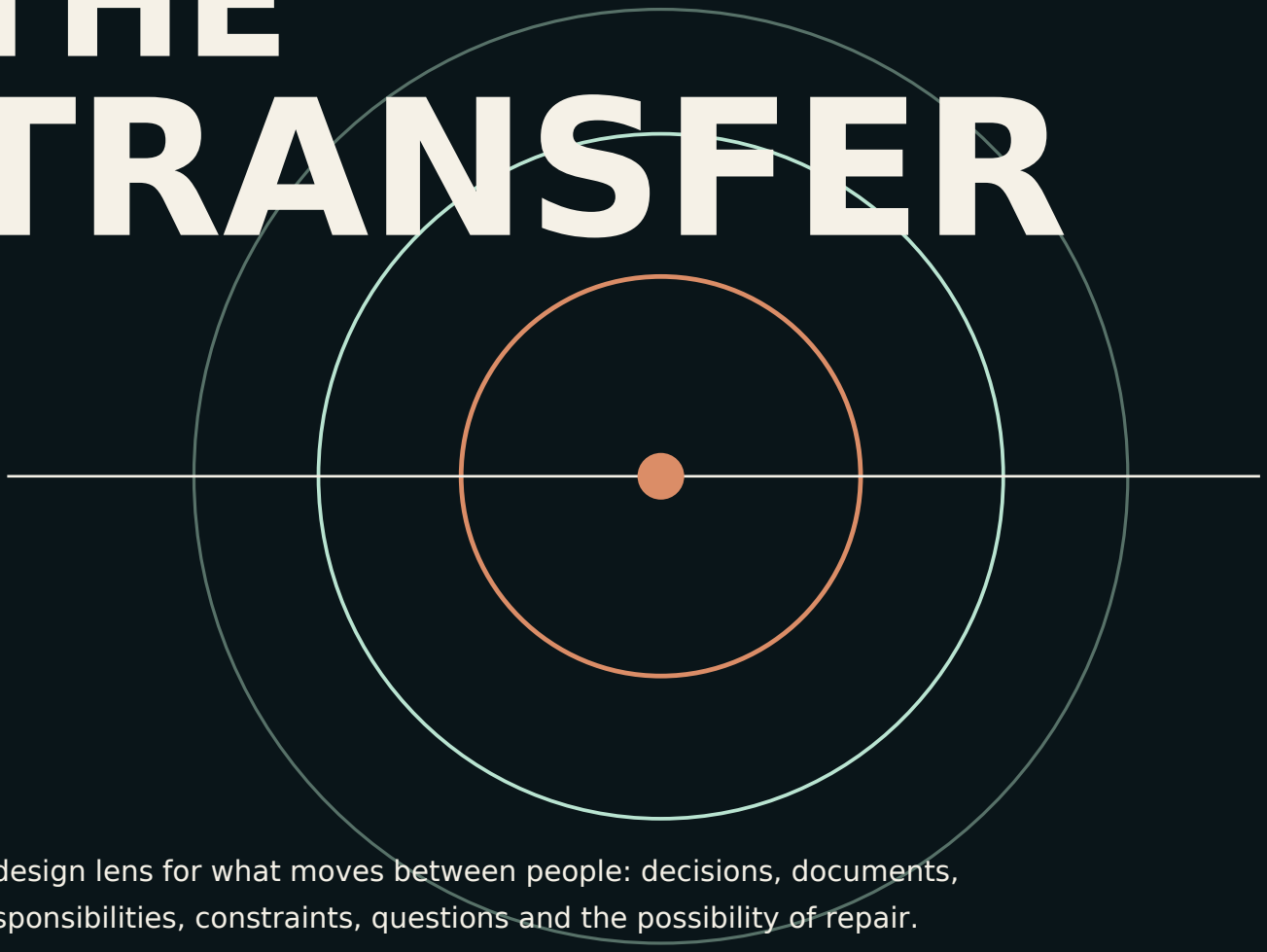
A FIELD GUIDE TO THE IN-BETWEEN

THE TRANSFER



A design lens for what moves between people: decisions, documents, responsibilities, constraints, questions and the possibility of repair.

INSIDE

02 The five conditions

03 Three boundary tests

04 Field exercises

05 Limits, sources and reuse

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The handoff is an interface.

A handoff is the moment one person depends on what another person supplies. These five questions are **an original editorial checklist**, not a validated scale or a requirement for every conversation.

I OWNERSHIP

Who has the next move?

Name the person responsible for acting, and distinguish the actor from the person who approves.

“Aisha will draft the page; Arun will review the final wording.”

II DEFINITION OF DONE

What does complete mean here?

Describe what someone could observe or inspect when the work is ready.

“Done means links tested, mobile layout reviewed, and text approved.”

III TIMING

When is the work needed?

Specify a review point or time boundary. Include the value of a warning before a deadline.

“Send a reviewable version by Thursday; flag delays by Wednesday.”

IV CONTEXT

Which constraints must travel?

Include the background that could change decisions, not every detail you know.

“Preserve citations, keep the page accessible, and do not alter claims.”

V RECOVERY

How can the work be repaired?

Make uncertainty discussable: where should questions go, and what happens if assumptions fail?

“If a claim does not fit the layout, ask before shortening it.”

Three ordinary crossings.

The following scenarios are invented. The purpose is to practice asking about dependencies without assigning blame or assuming that a formal handoff is always desirable.

01 / EDITORIAL RELAY

ORIGINAL *“Could you take this forward?”*

WHAT IS MISSING Is the next move design, editing, publication, or approval? What remains non-negotiable?

POSSIBLE REWRITE “Please turn this approved draft into an accessible page by Thursday. Preserve the sources; send questions before changing the argument.”

02 / SHARED EVENT

ORIGINAL *“Can you sort out the venue?”*

WHAT IS MISSING Can the volunteer book it? Is access important? What happens if choices are unavailable?

POSSIBLE REWRITE “Could you shortlist two step-free venues by Tuesday? I will approve the booking. Please note costs and trade-offs.”

03 / EVERYDAY LOGISTICS

ORIGINAL *“You can take care of Tuesday, right?”*

WHAT IS MISSING What part of Tuesday? Who holds documents, travel and the recovery plan?

POSSIBLE REWRITE “I will prepare the documents. Could you arrange travel? Let us check both on Monday evening and call if anything changes.”

Use the boundary as a lens.

These prompts work privately or in a group. Use a low-stakes example first. The aim is better questions, not compliance with a universal template.

EXERCISE A / TRACE

Map the crossing

Pick one recurring task that moves between people.

What exactly leaves one person’s hands?

Which information does the receiver have to reconstruct?

EXERCISE B / REVERSE

Write the receiving question

Imagine you have no access to the sender’s assumptions.

What is the first polite question you would need to ask?

What changes when you answer it?

EXERCISE C / REPAIR

Rehearse a recovery

Choose one plausible interruption: delay, ambiguity, conflicting requirements.

Who notices first?

What is the least costly path to correction?

A SMALL EXPERIMENT FOR TOMORROW

Replace one vague sentence with one ownership statement and one invitation to ask questions. Observe the response, without treating a single experience as proof.

Keep the claims in view.

FACT / RESEARCH CONTEXT

Research on coordination examines how people manage dependencies among activities. Research on grounding examines the collaborative work required to establish understanding. These strands motivate the questions in this guide; they do not validate its five-part checklist.

ARGUMENT / DESIGN CHOICE

We propose that five questions - ownership, done, timing, context and recovery - provide a useful way to inspect the receiving edge of a task. The categories and wording are original editorial devices.

LIMITS / UNCERTAINTY

More detail can burden a simple exchange. Too little can increase rework. Trust, stakes, relationship, culture and the medium all matter. The instrument is not a clinical measure, management audit, scientific experiment or predictor of outcomes.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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