IMMERSIVE SOUND DESIGN FOR EXHIBIT DESIGNERS · MODULE 1 OF 3

Environment-Building With Sound

Turning a space into a place.

Billy Mark, Maro Kariya, and Ethan Marshall Cohen

BEFORE YOU START

What you will need, and where you’re going

What you will need

- Your phone and headphones: to listen, map what you hear, and play the examples
- A pencil
- The two-page field sheet, for the assignment (no printer? copy it onto any paper)

Prefer paper? Print Fig. 1, the listening map (up to three copies).

Everything to print is under **Downloads and links** on the module page.

1.1 Listen first · Hear your space the way a visitor does. 6 min

1.2 Why spatial sound? · Same content, different placement. 6 min

1.3 Imagine the sound environment · Name your sounds, then shape them. 6 min

1.4 Storyboard the visit · Put your sounds on a map. 6 min

1.5 Add the technical overlay · Mark what the system has to do. 4 min

1.6 Learn from built examples · Read real exhibits with your new vocabulary. 2 min

You’ll leave with a storyboard of your own space, with a technical overlay, ready to build in Module 2.

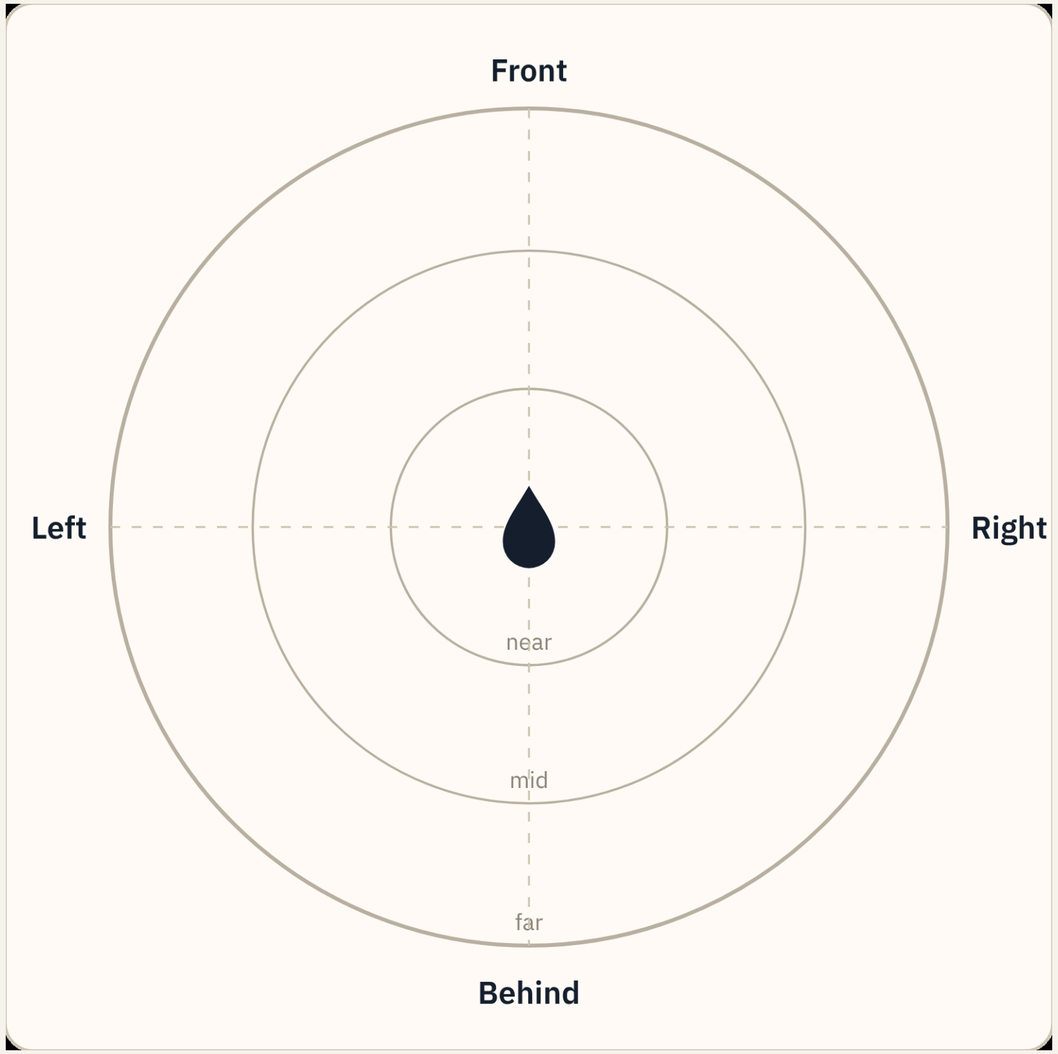


FIG. 1

Your listening map

You are the shape in the middle, facing front. The rings are near, mid and far.

Use the listening map on your phone, or print three copies, or draw three of your own. You'll use one in part 1.1 and two more in the assignment.

PART 1.1 · ABOUT 6 MINUTES

Listen first

Hearing is already spatial.

PART 1.1 · THREE FAMILIES OF SOUND

Every sound belongs to a family

Before you listen, meet the three families you'll use to sort what you hear.

G · Geophony

Sounds of the earth

Wind, thunder, rain, waterfalls, volcanoes

B · Biophony

Sounds of living things

Birdsong, dogs barking, crickets and other animals

A · Anthrophony

Sounds of people and machines

Laughter, shouts, dialogue, traffic, planes, HVAC and appliances

These categories come from the pioneering acoustic ecologist Bernie Krause.



PART 1.1 · YOUR LISTENING MAP

How to map a sound

For each sound you hear, mark Fig. 1:

- **Position** shows where the sound is
- **Dot size** shows how loud it is
- **Letter** shows its family: G, B or A
- Write **above** or **below** for overhead or underfoot

Left: one listener’s map, filled in.

PART 1.1 · YOUR TURN

Now, pause and listen

Find a spot, close your eyes for one minute, and notice the sounds around you:

- What is in front of you or behind, off to a side, above or below?
- What is near or far, quiet or loud?
- Is each sound constant, or does it come and go?
- Does it stay put, or move through the space?

Then map each one: position, dot size and family letter. Use the guided recording and map on your phone, or a paper copy of Fig. 1.

Tip. If you’re somewhere very quiet, try this in a place that interests you and has more going on: a lobby, a park, a café.

PART 1.1

What did you notice?

1

Did sounds come from only one direction?

2

Which sounds give this place its **acoustic signature**? Which only appeared once you listened closely?

3

Which sounds would you make louder or quieter, if you could?

Assignment · Repeat this exercise on your own in two other spaces that differ in how much sound they have. Use a fresh copy of Fig. 1 each time.