PRE-RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST

INFORMED CONSENT

- **Clear Explanation of Research Purpose:** Participants understand the goals of the research (e.g., to improve a digital product, gather feedback on user interface, etc).

- **Voluntary Participation**: Participation is voluntary, and users are informed they can withdraw at any time without consequences.

- **Specific Consent for Recording:** If screen recordings, interactions, or video recordings are being used, participants give explicit consent for these actions.

- **User Rights:** Users are informed of their rights to access, modify, or delete any data provided during the research process.

- **Informed Consent Form:** A clear, easy-to-understand consent form is provided, either digitally or in person, detailing the study's purpose, procedures, and any potential risks.

DATA PRIVACY & SECURITY

- **Data Collection Methods:** Users are aware of what data will be collected during the research (e.g., clickstream data, usage behavior, survey responses, etc.).

- **Secure Data Storage**: All collected data is stored securely, with encryption where necessary, and is only accessible by authorized personnel.

- **Anonymization of Data:** Any personal identifiers (e.g., names, email addresses) are anonymized to protect user privacy

- **Data Retention Policy:** Users are informed about how long their data will be retained, and clear instructions are given about how data will be deleted when no longer needed.

- **Data Sharing:** Users are informed if their data will be shared with third parties (e.g., product partners or external research firms) and the purpose of sharing.

- **Sensitive Data Handling:** Special care is taken if any sensitive data (e.g. payment information, personal health data) is being collected during research. Users are notified about how it will be protected

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- **Compliance with Data Protection Laws:** The research follows applicable laws and regulations (e.g., GDPR, CCPA) to protect user data and privacy throughout the study.

- **Conflict of Interest Disclosure**: Any conflicts of interest (e.g., funding sources, personal relationships with participants) are disclosed to ensure transparency.

PARTICIPANT WELL-BEING

- **Minimizing Discomfort:** The research is designed to avoid any psychological or emotional discomfort. If the research includes usability testing or task completion, tasks are designed to be clear and manageable.

- **Time Commitment Transparency**: Participants are informed of the expected time commitment for each session, with clear scheduling and flexible options if needed.

- **User Feedback Mechanism:** A method for users to provide feedback or express concerns during the research is provided, and responses to this feedback are handled in a timely manner.

- **User Support Access:** If the research involves interaction with digital products or platforms, users know where to turn for support if technical difficulties or confusion arise during the study.

- **De-briefing:** After usability tests or interviews, participants are given an opportunity to discuss their experience and any frustrations or difficulties they encountered.

ETHICAL DESIGN & RESPECTFUL RESEARCH PRACTICES

- **Ethical Design of Research Tasks:** Research are focused on true user needs and concerns. Tasks are designed to be empowering and non-exploitative and efforts are made to avoid "dark patterns" or manipulative design. The tasks should reflect real-world experiences and not pressure participants.

- **Balanced Business Goals and Ethical Integrity:** Business objectives should never override respect for participants. The research process is transparent, and decisions are made with the users' well-being in mind, avoiding any exploitation or harmful practices for business gain.

BIAS REDUCTION

- **Selection Bias:** The participant sample is representative of the target user base, considering factors such as demographics, behaviors, and usage patterns, to avoid skewing the results.

- **Avoiding Leading Questions**: In surveys, interviews, and usability tests, questions are framed neutrally to avoid influencing users' responses or behavior.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Research design and digital interfaces are tested and adapted to be culturally inclusive, ensuring that users from diverse backgrounds feel represented and respected.

- **Equity in Accessibility:** User research is inclusive of people with disabilities, ensuring that digital products are accessible and that their experiences are fully considered during research.

- **Research Influence:** Efforts are made to minimize the researcher's influence on participant's behaviors, ensuring that observations and feedback are objective and not skewed by the researcher's presence.