INDEPENDENT PRODUCT DESIGN CONCEPT

LINKUP

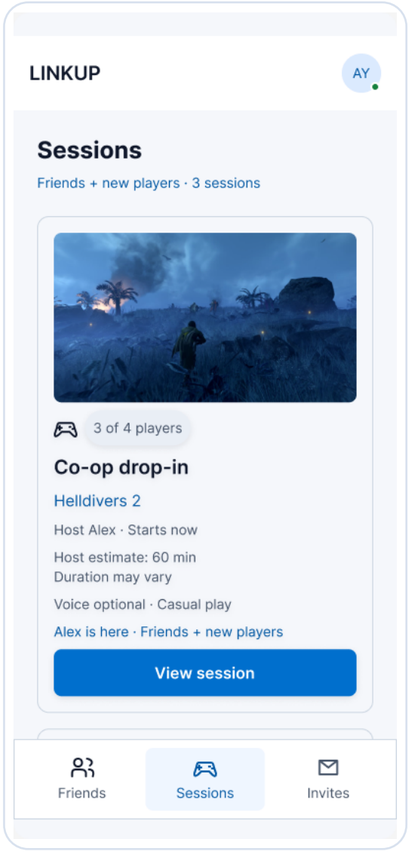
A clearer path from wanting to play to playing together.

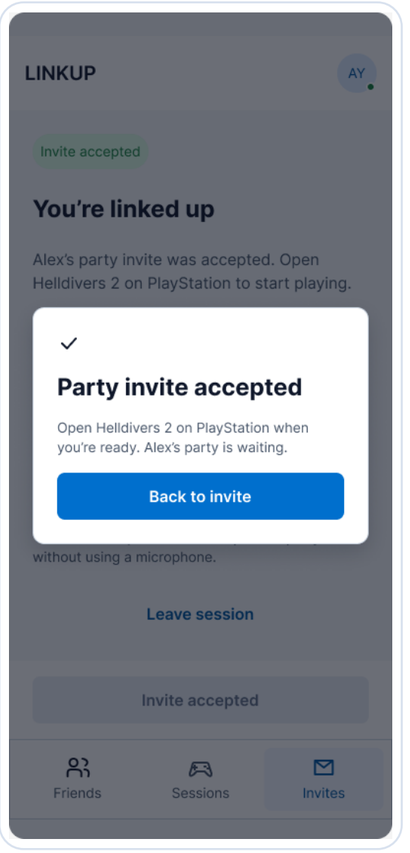
Play with purpose.

Find the right game and people for the time, mood, and social experience you have right now.

RESEARCH / INTERACTION / VISUAL DESIGN

An end-to-end UX case study tailored to Sony Interactive Entertainment and the PlayStation ecosystem.





THE PLAYERS / PROBLEM AND NEED

Three situations. One need to start playing.

Illustrative composite personas show why choosing a game and a group can take more effort than playing.

FICTIONAL PERSONAS / AI-generated scenario illustrations. These are not research participants.



Marcus

A short window to play

PROBLEM

Coordination is consuming his available play time.

NEED

See who is ready and judge session length quickly.



Danielle

Friends are offline tonight

PROBLEM

A new group feels uncertain when its expectations are unclear.

NEED

Understand play style and the group before joining.



Chris

Co-op without a microphone

PROBLEM

Voice expectations make joining feel uncomfortable.

NEED

Know voice is optional and that quiet play is welcome.

01 / THE TASK

Make starting a session feel easy.

The problem is the effort between “I want to play” and a session that actually fits.

How might we help players quickly find the right game and the right people for the amount of time, mood, and social experience they want right now?

Contribution shown

Problem framing, persona development, simulated research synthesis, wireframes, UI foundations, interaction design, and evaluation planning.

Project scope

Independent app concept.

Covers discovery, fit, joining, party invitations, console handoff, and recovery.

Final output: a clickable high-fidelity prototype, with tablet and desktop explorations.

02 / THE DESIGN PROCESS

A traceable path from question to product.

Each stage connects a player need to a design decision and a visible artifact.

01 Frame

Task, constraints, assumptions

PAGES 05-07

02 Explore

Synthetic interviews and themes

PAGES 08-09

03 Structure

Journey, flow, sketches

PAGES 10-11

04 Iterate

Wireframes and simulated studies

PAGES 12-14

05 Design

UI system and final interactions

PAGES 15-21

06 Evaluate

High-fidelity simulation and next steps

PAGES 22-26

03 / RESEARCH PLAN

Start with coordination, not feature demand.

Research question: what prevents players from starting the session they actually want?

Working assumptions

Coordination consumes short play windows.

Mood changes the experience people want.

Availability does not guarantee compatibility.

Trust and safety can limit openness to new people.

Exploration plan

Compare current behavior across friends, solo play, and new groups.

Probe game choice, time available, voice expectations, and workarounds.

Use synthetic interviews to develop hypotheses for later real research.

What could disprove it?

Existing friends, Discord, and in-game matchmaking may already solve the problem well.

A new tool must reduce effort rather than duplicate those habits.

The concept does not establish unmet demand.

04 / INITIAL PROTO-PERSONAS

Three starting hypotheses.

Behavioral profiles guide questions; they are not demographic segments validated by research.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

Time-Boxed Player

Goal: play within a 20-60 minute window.

Friction: too many choices, unavailable friends, and setup time.

Design need: quick entry and clear session expectations.

Risk: overestimating coordination friction.

Social Regular

Goal: play with a known group.

Friction: scheduling, game consensus, and fragmented tools.

Design need: know who is ready and agree on a game.

Risk: assuming interest in strangers.

Open Explorer

Goal: join a compatible new group.

Friction: toxicity, skill mismatch, and unclear voice norms.

Design need: understand the room before joining.

Risk: prioritizing discovery over safety.

05 / PERSONA REFINEMENT

Time is a context, not a fixed identity.

The synthetic synthesis changed the model before the interface was finalized.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

CONTEXT OVERLAY

Time available + mood + friends available + voice preference

Social Regular

Familiar people first. A player may wait for friends on a weekend, then choose a quick solo or open session on a weeknight.

Open Explorer

New people when expectations fit. Clear play style and optional voice support a situational choice, rather than a permanent player label.

DESIGN CONSEQUENCE **Ask for intent now; avoid locking people into a persona.**

06 / SYNTHETIC INTERVIEW DATA

Eight scenarios made the assumptions concrete.

The records below are invented interview summaries used to explore possible patterns.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

ID / hypothesis	Imagined behavior or friction	Design implication
I01 / time-limited	Library + group chat, then solo fallback	Reduce coordination overhead
I02 / time-limited	Invites then matchmaking; microphone off	Show who is ready; clarify voice
I03 / social regular	Group exists; game agreement is difficult	Separate people from game choice
I04 / social regular	Would rather play solo than meet strangers	Preserve friends-first control
I05 / open explorer	LFG groups have unclear tone	Show social expectations
I06 / open explorer	Competition and voice can mismatch	Expose play style before joining
I07 / social regular	Weekend waiting differs from weeknights	Treat available time as context
I08 / open explorer	Weak reasons for recommendations	Explain why a session fits

07 / SYNTHESIS

Make compatibility visible before commitment.

Themes are hypotheses derived from the synthetic records, not observed customer findings.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

Coordination costs time

I01, I02, I03, I07

Intent first; familiar hosts; clear start and capacity.

Social comfort changes the choice

I04, I05, I06

Friends-only paths; voice optional; casual play labels.

Players need reasons to trust fit

I05, I06, I08

Game, duration, play style, and expectations together.

The next step needs to be explicit

Later usability simulations

Separate joining, reservation, invitation, and console play.

08 / JOURNEY AND INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

Design the whole path, including uncertainty.

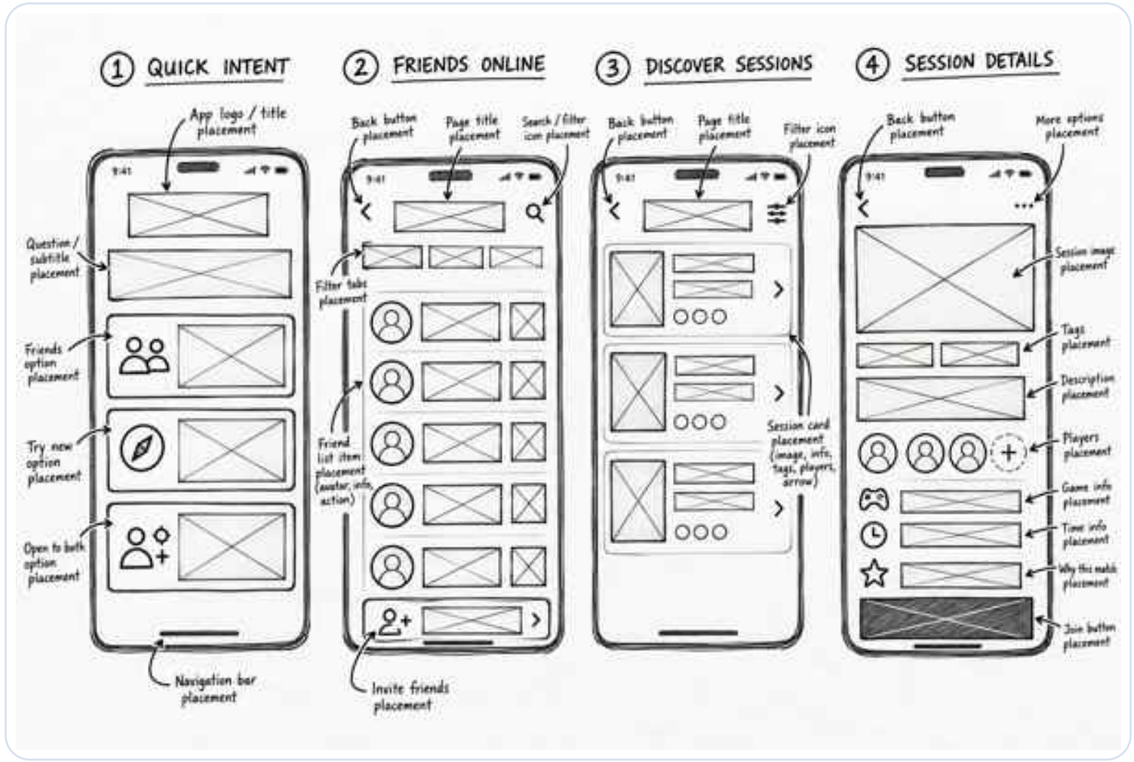
The flow distinguishes a reserved spot, a party invitation, and the action needed on console.

Player step	Question to answer	Interface responsibility
Choose intent	Friends, new players, or both?	Simple intent choices
Discover and evaluate	Does this game and group fit?	Game, capacity, host, duration, voice
Join a session	Is my spot confirmed?	Reservation status + clear feedback
Wait and accept	What is the host doing next?	Waiting, received, expired, accepted states
Continue on console	Am I already in the game?	Explicit PlayStation handoff instruction
Recover or leave	What changed, and can I exit?	Status-aware retry; confirmed leave

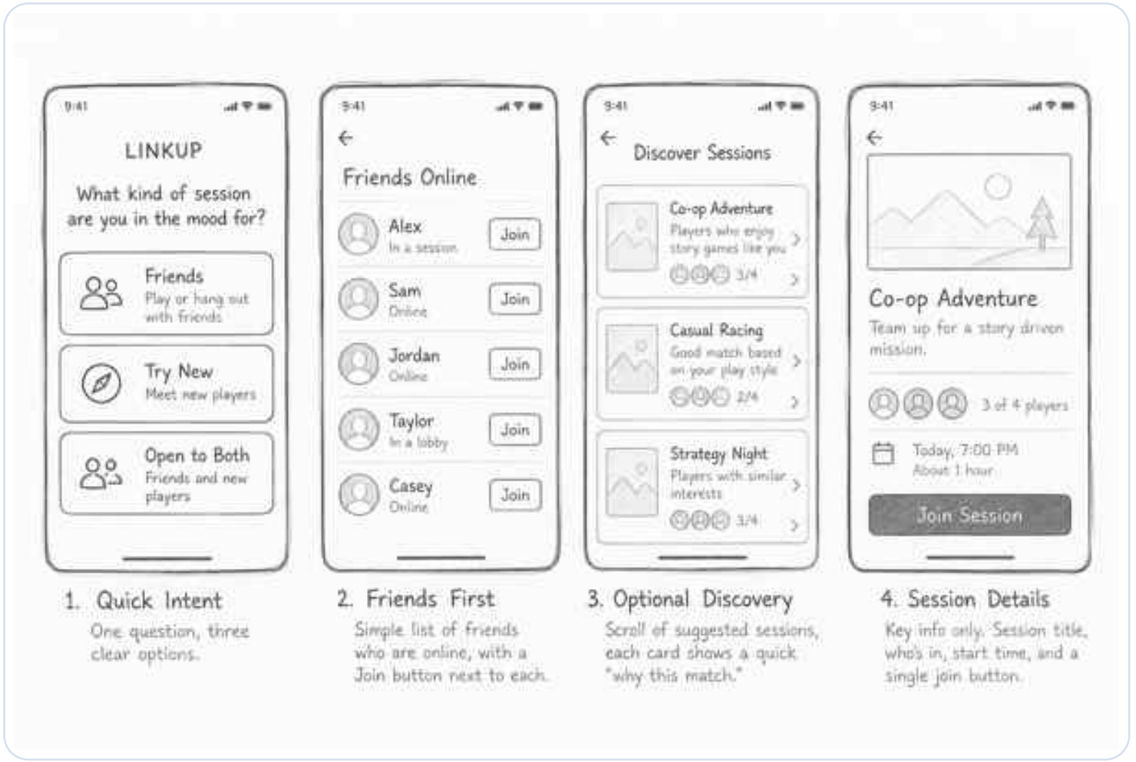
09 / EARLY EXPLORATION

Sketch the decisions before polishing the UI.

The annotation pass identifies the decisions; the pencil sketch presents the flow with fewer annotations.



01 Annotation pass: clarify hierarchy and movement.

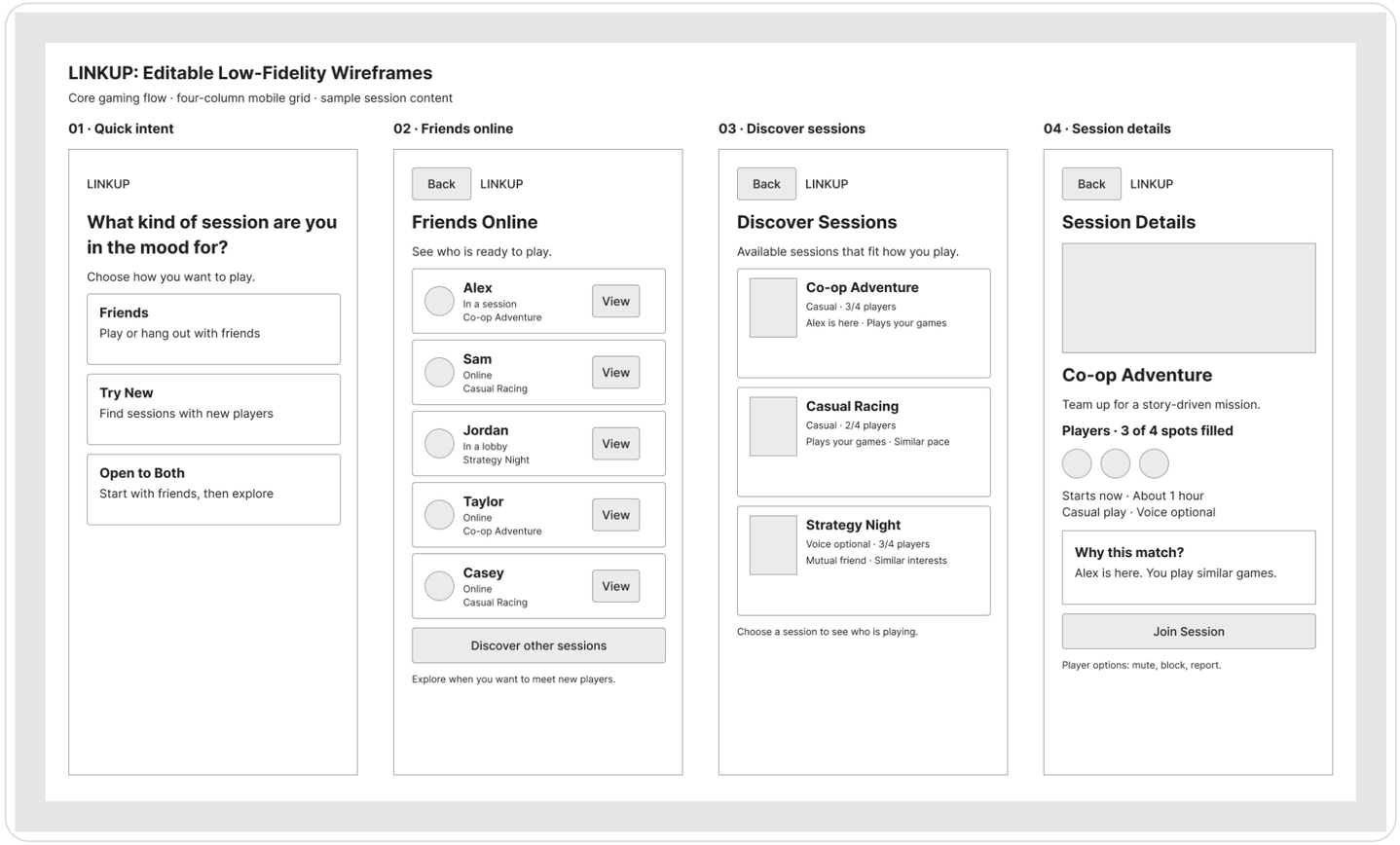


02 Pencil sketch: a cleaner view of the four-screen flow.

10 / DIGITAL WIREFRAMES

Turn the rough flow into a testable sequence.

Low-fidelity iterations focused on navigation, session fit, and the point of commitment.



WHAT WAS TESTED

Intent labels.

Friends versus new players.

Session fit.

The joining action.

Editable screens made these decisions reviewable before final styling.

11 / EARLIER USABILITY SIMULATION

The first round exposed clarity problems.

Five fictional profiles completed five assigned tasks. All results and timings were invented.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

Task	Unaided	Assisted	Assigned median
Find a friend	4 / 5	1 / 5	36 seconds
Explore new players	3 / 5	2 / 5	42 seconds
Evaluate session fit	2 / 5	3 / 5	76 seconds
Return to sessions	4 / 5	1 / 5	15 seconds
Join a session	3 / 5	2 / 5	28 seconds

16 of 25 attempts were assigned unaided completion. Session fit was the main design hypothesis to address; these numbers do not measure product usability.

12 / ITERATION DECISIONS

Replace ambiguity with visible expectations.

Changes connect the earlier simulation to the later wireframes and high-fidelity design.

Earlier ambiguity	Design response	Reason
“Try New” / “Open Both”	Find new players / Friends + new players	Explain the social choice
Unclear fit before joining	Duration, voice, capacity, host context	Support a decision before commitment
Game and session titles overlap	Separate game identity and session naming	Reduce interpretation effort
Viewing could imply joining	View session, then Join session	Make commitment explicit
Joined means “already playing”	Reserved, invited, accepted, console next	Clarify each status
Failure could duplicate a request	Check status before retrying	Handle an unconfirmed join honestly

A later low-fidelity simulation assigned 22/25 unaided attempts. This was a revised scenario assumption, not validated improvement.

13 / VISUAL AND BRAND DIRECTION

A PlayStation-oriented presentation of LINKUP.

Sony and PlayStation identity frames the case study; LINKUP remains an independent product concept.

LINKUP

Cool neutrals, clear blue actions, and restrained surfaces keep game imagery and session information in focus.

Brand marks retain their original proportions. The prototype uses game artwork to support recognition; it does not imply a Sony partnership or licensed product.



Deep navy | Action blue | Soft surface | Quiet boundary

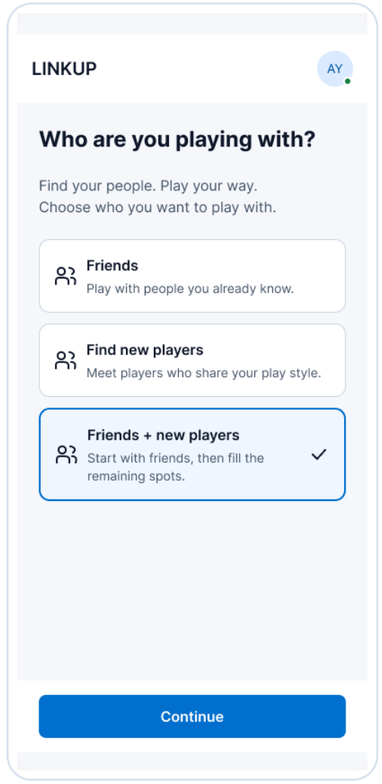
Interaction foundations

Inter in the source design. Main controls: 48 px. Back, close, and navigation targets: 44 x 44 px. Focus stroke: 2 px. Corners: 8 px controls / 12 px cards. Shared light and dark foundations.

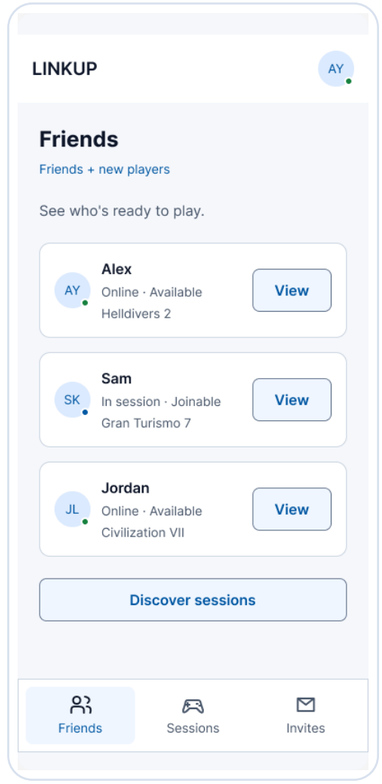
14 / FINAL MOBILE EXPERIENCE

Intent first. Session fit next.

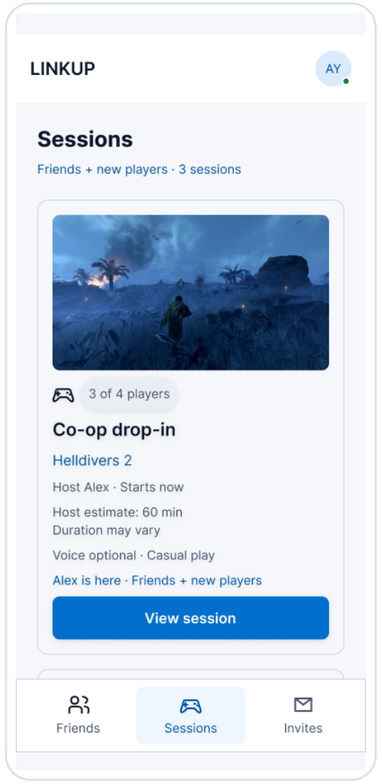
The core mobile journey moves from social preference to a concrete session decision.



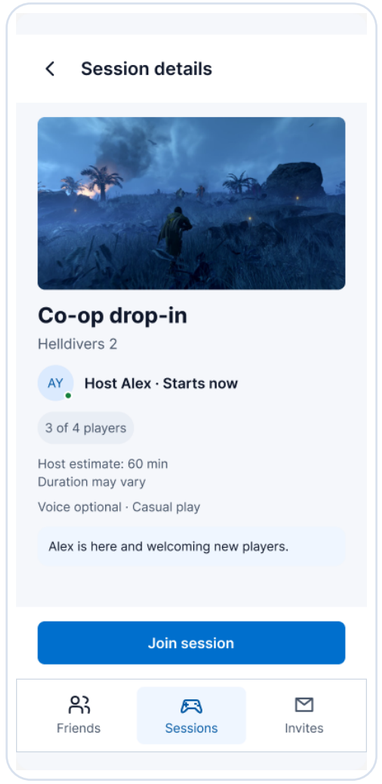
01 Choose who to play with



02 See familiar players



03 Compare available sessions

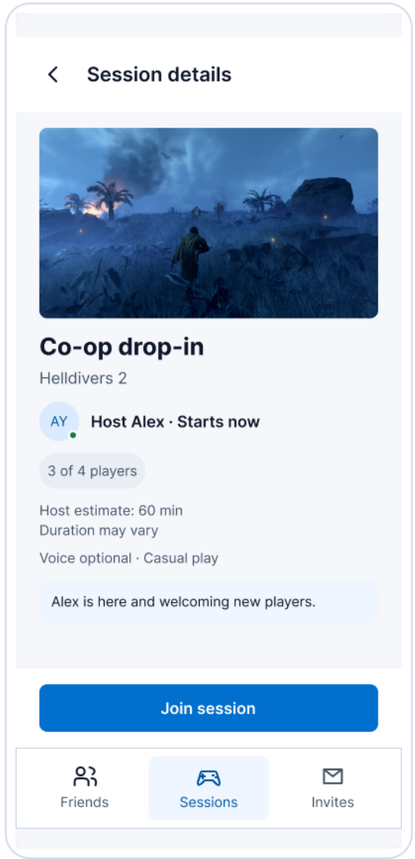


04 Review before joining

15 / SESSION EVALUATION

Give players a reason to say yes.

The session details surface information that helps players judge compatibility before joining.



Recognize the game

Game identity and artwork anchor the session, alongside the host and current player count.

Set realistic expectations

“Host estimate 60 min” and “Duration may vary” avoid presenting an estimate as a guarantee.

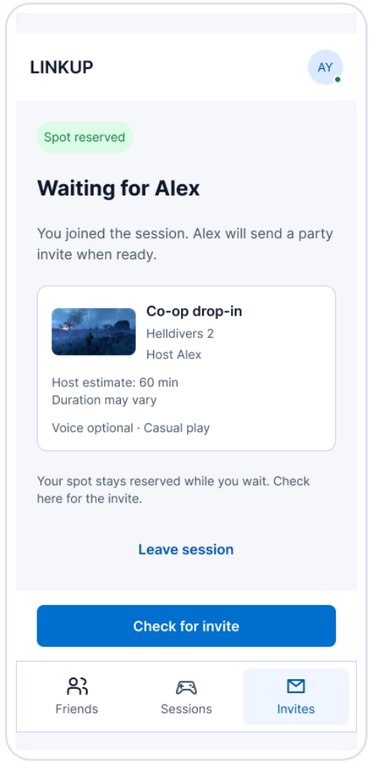
Keep social comfort visible

“Voice optional” and “Casual play” help players judge the group before the Join session action.

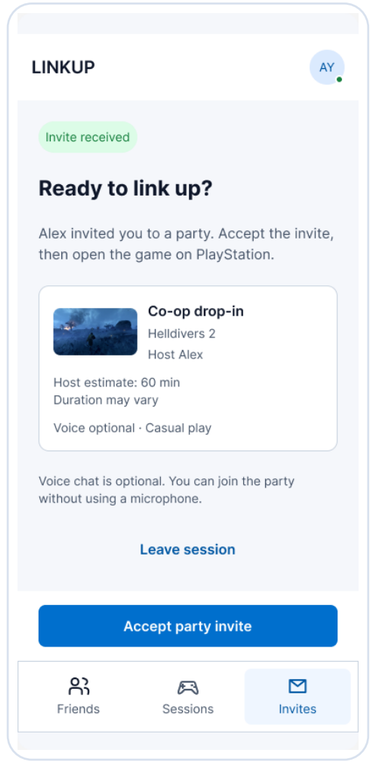
16 / INVITATIONS AND HANDOFF

Joining the session is one step toward playing.

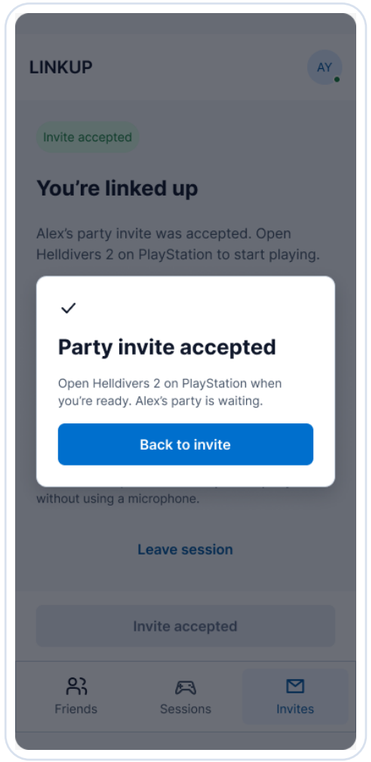
The prototype separates reservation, party invitation, acceptance, and opening the game on PlayStation.



Spot reserved / waiting for host



Party invitation received



Invitation accepted

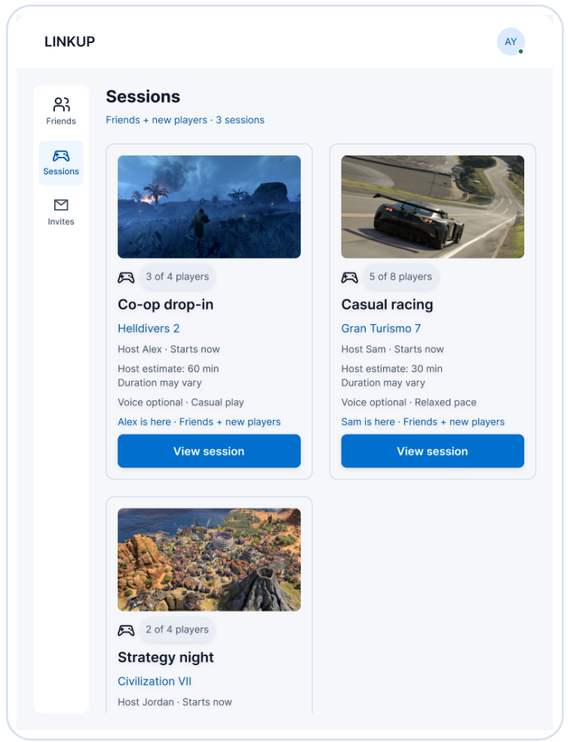
The accepted state explicitly asks the player to open the game on PlayStation.

No automatic console launch or live Sony account integration is implemented in this concept.

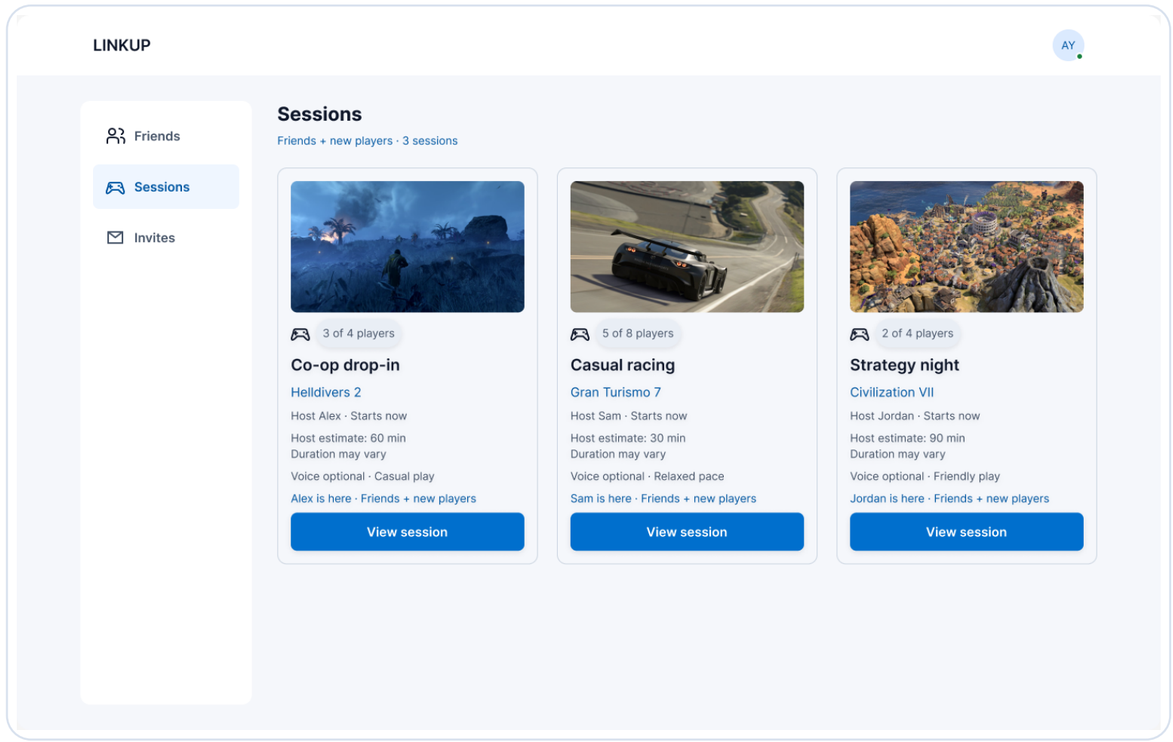
17 / RESPONSIVE DESIGN

Keep the same decision hierarchy across sizes.

Mobile is the primary journey. Tablet and desktop explore wider information layouts.



Tablet 768 x 1024
80 px rail; two card columns.

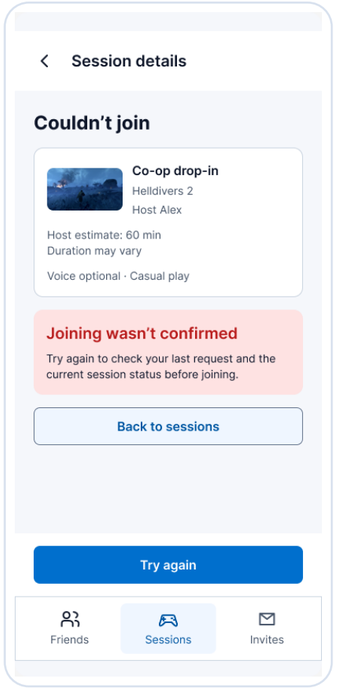


Desktop 1440 x 900
1280 px workspace; 216 px sidebar; three card columns.

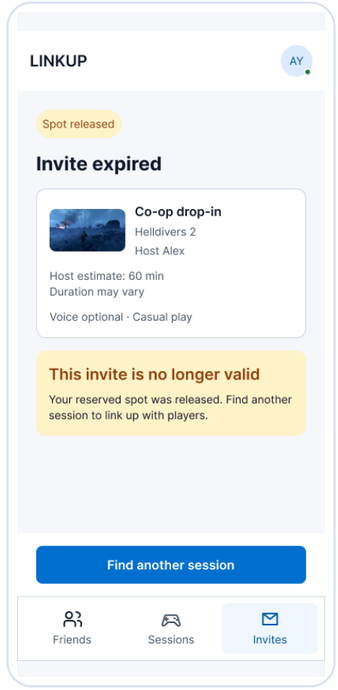
18 / RECOVERY AND EXIT

Keep the status truthful when things go wrong.

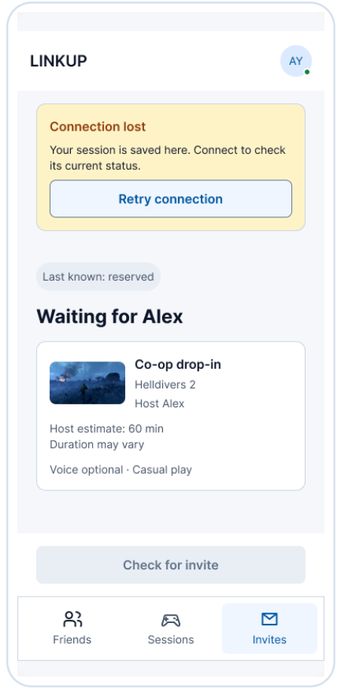
Failures need to explain what is known, what is uncertain, and what the player can do next.



Unconfirmed join: retry checks the request and session status.



Expired invitation: explain why acceptance is unavailable.



Lost connection: reconnect and refresh the current status.

Exit is a real action

Stay preserves the spot. A confirmed leave releases it and returns to Sessions.

Dismissing pending UI is not treated as proof that a request was cancelled.

19 / ACCESSIBILITY INTENT

Make interaction states understandable and operable.

These are design requirements and stress scenarios, not verified accessibility conformance.

Perception

Essential text targets 4.5:1 contrast; meaningful icons and focus boundaries target 3:1.

Use words as well as color for status.

Check 320 px width, 200% text, long names, and image fallbacks.

Operation

44 x 44 px targets for icon navigation; 48 px primary controls.

Visible 2 px focus indicator.

Modal focus trap, restored trigger focus, and Escape for unsubmitted actions.

Verification still needed

Keyboard and screen-reader behavior in an implemented app.

Real text scaling and device testing.

Reduced motion and announcement timing.

Contrast measurements on final assets.

20 / HIGH-FIDELITY EVALUATION

Six fictional profiles. Seven complete tasks.

The latest simulation covers comprehension from discovery through recovery and confirmed exit.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

Profiles

P1 Experienced co-op player / mobile

P2 Time-limited casual player / mobile

P3 Competitive console regular / desktop

P4 Multiplayer newcomer / mobile

P5 Player without a microphone / mobile

P6 Larger-text preference / tablet

Tasks

T1 Choose intent and evaluate a session

T2 Join and understand the reserved spot

T3 Handle a delayed party invitation

T4 Accept and continue on PlayStation

T5 Recover an unconfirmed join

T6 Recover a lost connection

T7 Cancel or confirm leaving

21 / SIMULATION DATA

The waiting and handoff states need the most attention.

Assigned outcomes: U = unaided, no hesitation; H = unaided, hesitation; P = hypothetical prompt.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

Task	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
T1	U	U	U	H	U	H
T2	U	H	H	H	U	H
T3	H	P	H	P	H	H
T4	U	H	U	P	H	H
T5	U	U	U	H	U	H
T6	U	H	U	U	U	H
T7	U	U	U	U	U	U

22 U / 17 H / 3 P

42 fictional task attempts. Counts are assigned for critique; they are not measured success rates.

Separate engineering QA

The handoff reports 84/84 saved-route checks. This indicates route checking, not user comprehension; the original log was not reviewed.

22 / WHAT TO IMPROVE NEXT

Make “what happens next” unmistakable.

Recommendations from the latest simulation remain proposals; they are not shown as completed fixes.

SIMULATED RESEARCH / Fictional participants and assigned outcomes. No real study data.

Priority / signal	Proposed revision	Validation question
P1 / T2-T3 hesitation	Elevate spot reserved + host next action	Can players explain the wait unaided?
P1 / T4 handoff prompt	Party invite accepted, then console next step	Do players know they must open the game?
P2 / T1 scan hesitation	Keep game first; test larger text hierarchy	Can players identify fit while scanning?
P2 / T5-T6 recovery hesitation	Preserve status-check wording and leave path	Can players distinguish uncertain vs reserved?

Explore automatic invite updates with a manual fallback. Avoid invented wait times or an “Open PlayStation” button without a supported integration.

23 / FINAL PRODUCT AND REFLECTION

A coherent prototype with an honest next step.

The delivered design demonstrates product reasoning and interaction craft; market and usability validation remain open.

What the portfolio demonstrates

A behavioral persona model.
Research-to-design traceability.
Explicit commitment and handoff states.
Responsive layouts and recovery paths.
A shared visual and interaction system.

Why it is relevant to SIE

The concept focuses on starting play, social choice, recognizable games, and continuity with console use.

It demonstrates attention to player trust and accessibility expectations without claiming an official integration.

Next: real player evidence

Recruit actual PlayStation players across the behavioral modes. Test fit, reservation, handoff, recovery, and leaving without prompts. Then confirm demand, implementation feasibility, and accessibility on real devices.

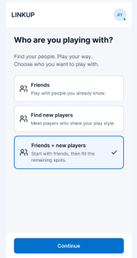
24 / EXPLORE THE WORK

Open the prototype and inspect the evidence.

Source artifacts keep the design journey reviewable beyond this portfolio.

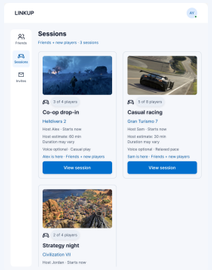
Open Mobile prototype

390 x 844 / primary journey



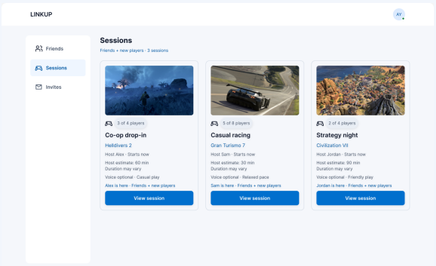
Open Tablet prototype

768 x 1024 / wider layout



Open Desktop prototype

1440 x 900 / workspace



Design foundations

UI foundations in the current file

FigJam: consolidated study

Scenario synthesis and task coverage

FigJam: portfolio assembly

Case-study narrative and supporting research

FigJam: latest simulation

Six profiles, seven tasks, and next revisions

25 / PROVENANCE AND SCOPE

Independent concept. Transparent evidence.

The case study uses Sony and PlayStation identity as its intended audience and ecosystem context.

All personas, interview summaries, usability profiles, quotations, timings, and task outcomes are synthetic. They support design exploration and do not establish real user behavior, product demand, or validated improvement.

Current screens are captured from the LINKUP Figma prototype. The latest simulation recommendations are kept separate from the current prototype states. The 84/84 route-check statement comes from the project handoff, without its original log.

REFERENCE LINKS

PlayStation App / ecosystem context

PlayStation hiring process / portfolio context

PlayStation accessibility

Sony Interactive Entertainment trademarks

Sony / PlayStation original logo files

Sony and PlayStation names and marks belong to their respective owners. Game imagery appears in the concept prototype for identification. This portfolio is not endorsed by or affiliated with Sony Interactive Entertainment.

Sony wordmark source