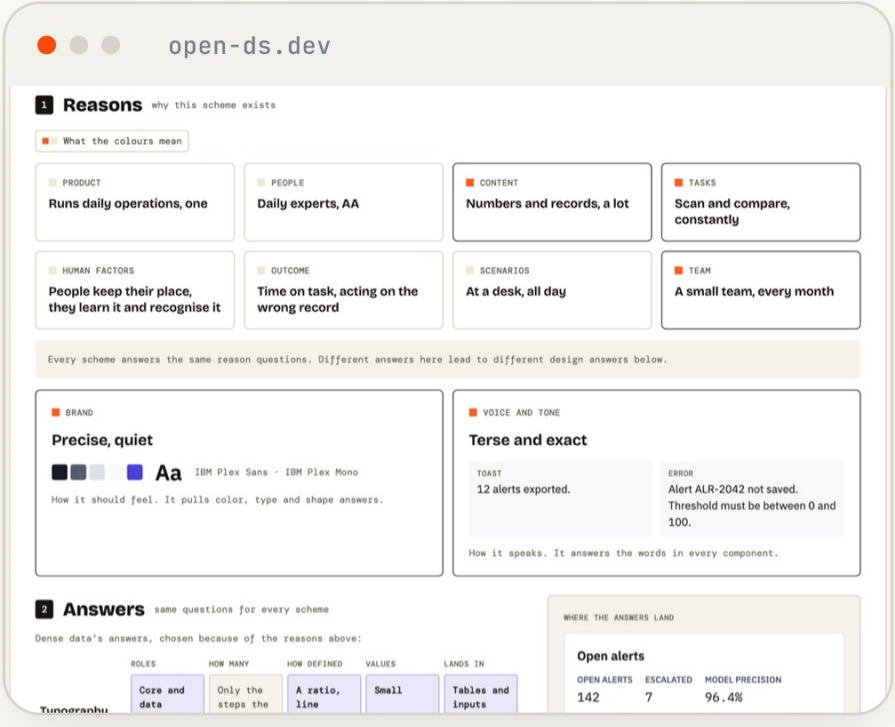
CASE STUDY · PRODUCT OWNER AND BUILDER

A complete design system, with the reason for every decision.

Open DS delivers a whole system as code you own. Every value in it can say why it is the way it is.



WHAT IT IS

A design system is a set of answers.

A fixed set of questions, answered on purpose. One full set of answers is a scheme, and it renders the works: Storybook, docs, Style Dictionary tokens, fully working components, a CLI and an MCP server.

open-ds.dev · github.com/3dyonic/Open-DS

ROLE

Product owner and builder

STATUS

Live, in beta

USED BY

Makers, product teams and their AI

— 01 / THE OPPORTUNITY

Design systems keep the values. They lose the reasons.

Teams copy a system made for someone else's product. The decisions don't come along. When the product changes, nobody knows what to change.

Tokens are everywhere.

Figma variables, token tools and docs. But a token is only shorthand for a decision, and nobody shows which question it answers, or why.

The decision can't be recovered.

You can write the shorthand from the decision, but not the other way round. The opportunity is to keep the decisions.

THE BET

Ship the reasons as data, with the system.

> If the reasons ship with the system, people and agents can both change it without guessing.

Why now

Agents write a lot of UI. Without the reasons, an agent guesses: a new grey here, a second primary button there.

The questions are finite

Products differ, but the questions repeat. That makes any two systems comparable.

Distribution is solved

shadcn showed that people want UI as code they own. A whole system can arrive the same way.

03 / HOW IT WORKS

From a reason to a design system, one decision at a time.

Reasons come first and decisions follow. Tokens are the shorthand that carries those decisions through the whole design system.

01

REASONS

Who is it for?

Daily experts, scanning records.

02

DECISIONS

What follows?

Line heights stay on the grid.

03

TOKENS

Shorthand for decisions

Each token maps back to its decision.

04

DESIGN SYSTEM

Code you own

Storybook, docs, Style Dictionary, working components, CLI, MCP: the works.

12 MCP TOOLS, INCLUDING

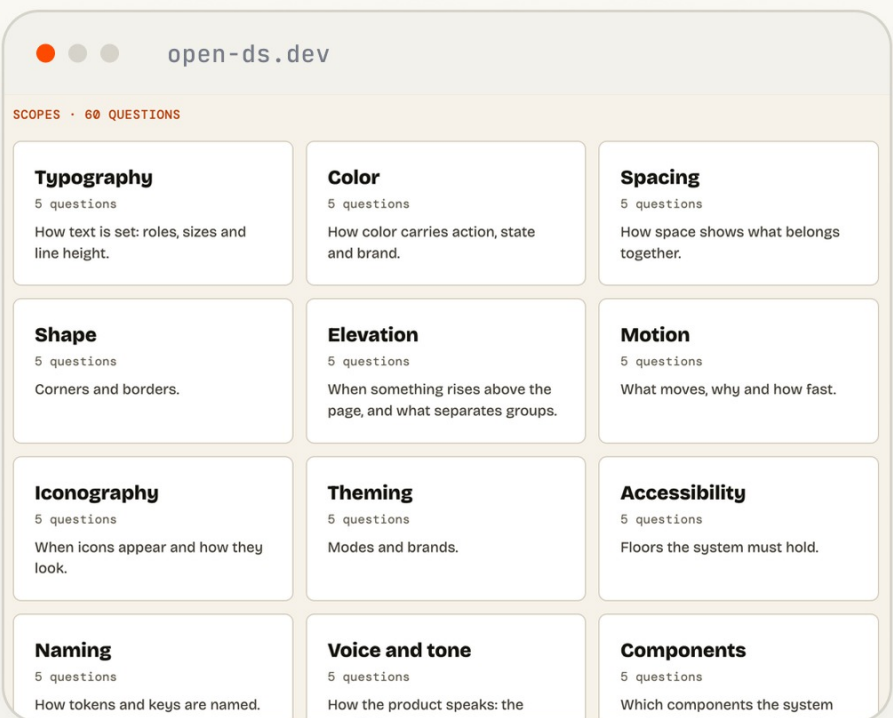
`get_answer` `why` `when_to_use` `compare_schemes` `what_moves` `plan_init`

Decisions lead. A token is the shorthand for one: it carries the answer, and the decision carries the why.

02 / THE GRAMMAR 1 OF 4

Ask about the decision, never about a component.

A table isn’t a decision. How text is set in it is. Each area of the system answers the same five questions, and components receive the answers.



TRADE-OFF

A team can’t answer a question about one component directly. Component keys cover this, so its look still traces back to a decision.

PAYOFF

The grammar stays finite. Dense data and Content first answer the same 78 questions and differ on 49.

02 / THE PRODUCT 2 OF 4

Make the decisions the product.

An early Button page opened with a big table of keys and values. Now every screen leads with the question, the answer and the because. Tokens come last, as the shorthand for what was decided.

```
NPX OPEN-DS WHY DENSE-DATA

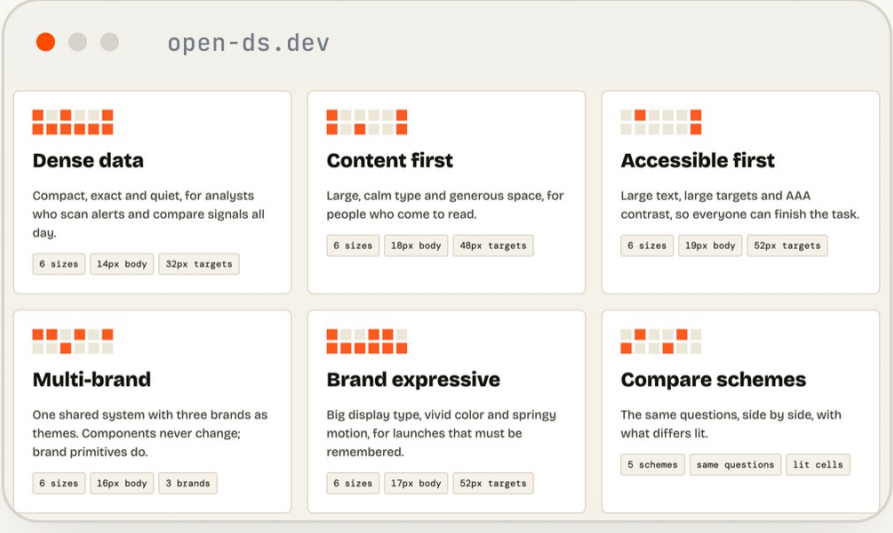
typography.definition
A ratio, line heights on the grid.
  because: Scan and compare.
    because: Numbers and records.
      because: Daily operations.
```

TRADE-OFF	Someone who only wants a value takes an extra step. Tokens stay one click away, linked to their decision.
PAYOFF	**Every value can be followed to a decision, and every decision to a reason.**

02 / THE JOURNEY 3 OF 4

Start from a ready-made scheme.

The obvious choice was to start by answering questions. I think the reverse order has priority: pick a scheme close to your product and deploy it, then change what differs.



TRADE-OFF

Some answers will be wrong for you. Each scheme says when to use it, and What moves shows what a change would touch.

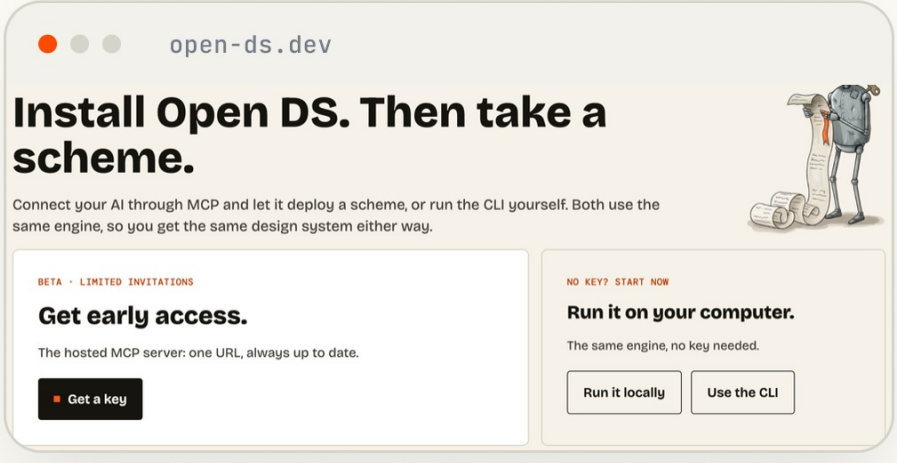
PAYOFF

A working system in one command. You only spend time on the decisions that make your product different.

02 / DELIVERY 4 OF 4

One engine, two ways in.

The CLI, the MCP server and the site share one engine. When an AI deploys a scheme, it runs the same command a person would. Designers get a Figma kit from the same data.



TRADE-OFF

The MCP server never writes to your disk. Its plan tools return commands for the agent to run, which adds a step.

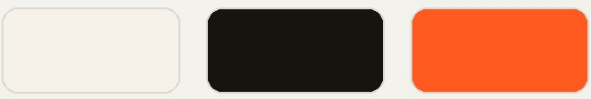
PAYOFF

Both paths give you the same design system, and the kit carries the same answers.

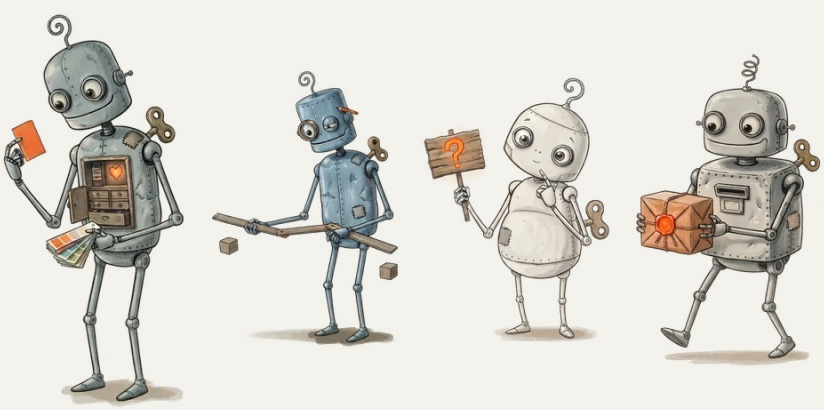
— 04 / DESIGN & INTERFACE

A design system that has to show its own thinking.

The product’s one action is to pick one, so the brand is one lit cell: cream, ink and one orange, with Bricolage Grotesque and DM Mono.



BRAND PALETTE · ONE LIT CELL



ROBOTS · ONE PER PAGE

01 **Grammar**

Reasons first, then the decisions that follow. Every question has a stable id.

02 **Mind map**

I curated the questions and answers in FigJam, with each scheme’s choices side by side.

03 **One scheme, end to end**

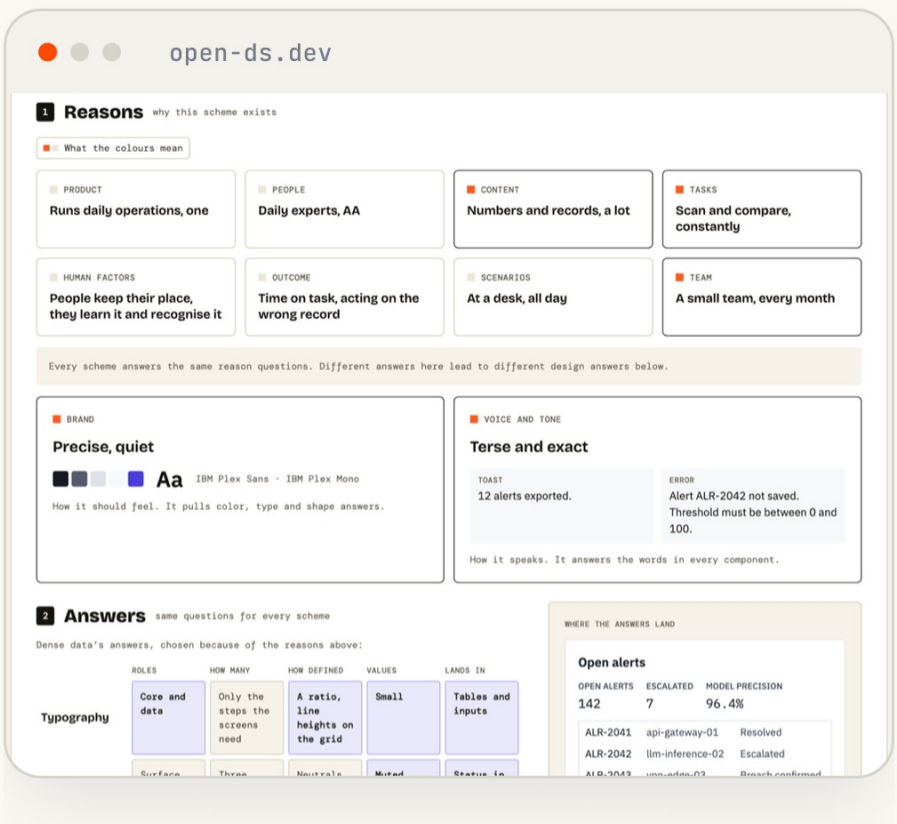
Dense data in Figma first: every decision, components, light and dark.

04 **The flow**

Home, schemes, compare, what moves, install and contribute, questions first on each.

— THE PRODUCT

Every screen makes one design decision.



HOMEPAGE CARD

Put the reasons above the answers.

The answers read as results. Orange marks the reasons that weigh most, and each scheme uses its own data.

COMPARE

Show only what differs.

49 differences, and the rest is a count. The answers carry the weight, with the why quieter underneath.

WHAT MOVES

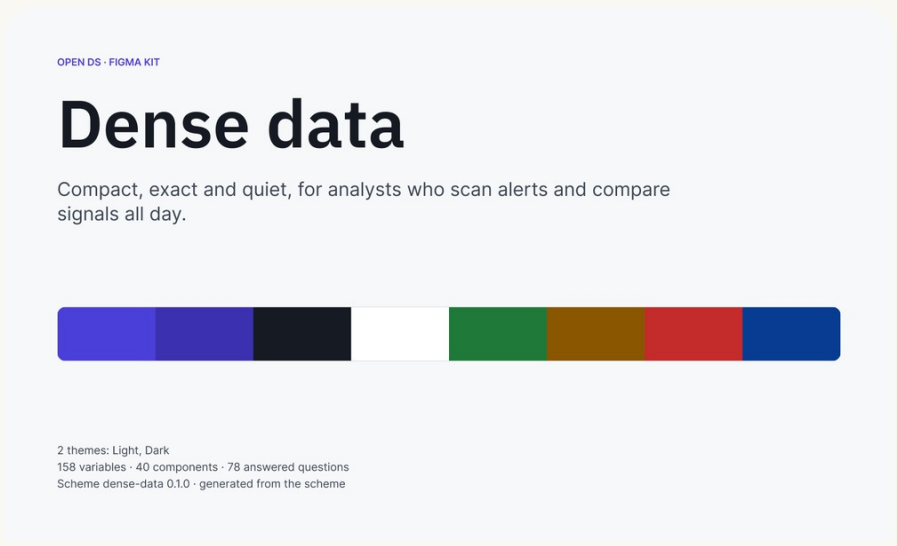
Show the change on real components.

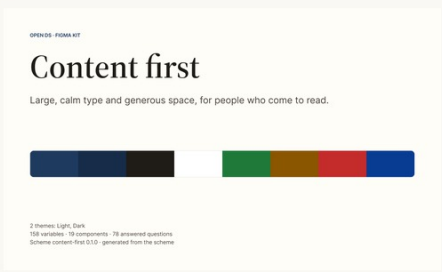
People judge a change by looking at it. The after comes from the closest real scheme, and the page says so.

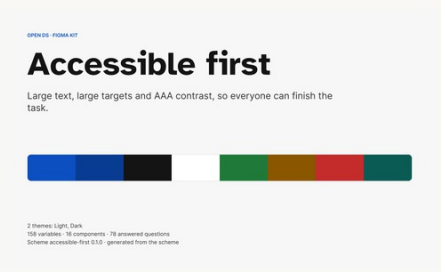
— 04 / DESIGN · FIGMA KITS

The same decisions, in the tool designers already use.

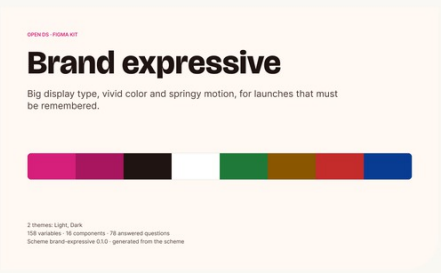
Every scheme also ships as a Figma kit, generated from the scheme itself. Five kits, each with 158 variables and all 78 answered questions.











FIVE KITS · ONE PER SCHEME

01 **The answers**

A page with every question and answer, so the reasons travel with the file.

02 **Variables**

The shorthand for each decision, in every theme.

03 **Styles**

Text and effect styles, with the foundations laid out.

04 **Components**

Dense data has 40, Multi-brand 31, Content first 19, Accessible first and Brand expressive 16.

— 05 / WHERE IT STANDS

Designed, built and published Open DS.

A live site, a published npm package, an MCP server and Figma kits. The next step is seeing how real teams use and change them.

5 schemes

Dense data, Content first, Accessible first, Multi-brand and Brand expressive.

78

Questions every scheme answers, 18 about reasons and 60 about scopes.

5 kits

A Figma kit for every scheme, alongside the npm package and the MCP server.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Composing schemes from their parts, so a decision flows through to its shorthand, and a clear way to edit a scheme.

Yonatan Lev Ari

UX/UI, product decisions and AI-assisted building.

Talk about your design decisions