

Netflix: Product Requirements Document

Feature: Mood Meter | Mood-First Content Discovery

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Executive Summary

Primary Problem: Netflix subscribers, oftentimes, get stuck on deciding what to watch. Genre browsing and percentage match scores are content-first tools that help the user choose what to watch, but they are missing a key component: asking the user how they feel. By building upon this context, existing content tools can be utilized more effectively.

Proposed Solution: The Mood Meter is a mood-first content discovery feature that addresses passive browsing with a more structured and expressive start to any session. Users are able to "pick their vibe" from the home screen, selecting how they feel, tune preferences, and receive a personalized results page included with a top recommendation. This flow is able to be completed within 90 seconds.

1. Description

The Mood Meter is a Netflix homepage feature that invites Netflix subscribers to describe their mood prior to selecting the content. Users are able to choose from eight distinct mood tiles (Chill, Hyped, Laugh, Emotional, Scared, Romantic, Mind-Bending, Action), in addition to being able to tune sliders for watch length and content familiarity, ending with choosing the viewing context (Solo, with others, family). After taking in the preferences, a results page will surface with a featured recommendation with a brief explanation connecting the recommendation to the selected mood. This is accompanied by two additionally curated rows. Entry to feature is via the consistent presence on the homepage (through banner), requiring no additional setup time for account information.

2. Problem

Within the United States alone, Netflix's library exceeds 7,500 titles, creating difficulty in choosing what to watch, leading to decision fatigue and session abandonment. In 2024, Netflix retired its "Play Something" shuffling feature, creating a gap in passive discovery for subscribers. As it stands, recommendation algorithms are reactive, and surface content based on viewing history rather than present emotional state. Netflix currently does not offer a recommendation tool prior to the session start.

3. Why: Evidence & Strategic Rationale

- Decision fatigue is measurable and growing. U.S. streaming viewers now spend an average of 12 minutes per session searching for content, up from 10.5 minutes in mid-2023 (TV Technology, 2024). Globally, viewers spend 110 hours per year deciding what to watch.
- Session abandonment is a direct revenue risk. 19% of viewers abandon a viewing session when content search is unsuccessful, rising to 29% among 18-24 year olds. 49% of subscribers report willingness to cancel a service based on difficulty finding content (Stream TV Insider; UserTesting, 2023).
- Netflix's own shuffle experiment confirms that random discovery is not the answer. Netflix retired its "Play Something" / "Surprise Me" feature in January 2023 due to low usage. The failure of passive randomization validates that users need structured, intention-aware discovery.
- Netflix's OpenAI partnership (April 2025) confirms internal investment in mood and interest-based discovery. The partnership enables natural language queries such as "I want something scary, but not too scary." Mood Meter is differentiated by its visual, structured interface — lowering the cognitive load of open-ended text prompts and making discovery accessible to a broader audience (CNBC; MacRumors, 2025).
- Morning Consult (2023) found that half of all streaming subscribers report regularly being unable to decide what to watch, directly sizing the addressable user base for a feature like Mood Meter.

4. Goals & Success Metrics

Metric	SMART Target	Measurement & Timeframe
Mood Meter Entry Rate	20% of homepage sessions enter Mood Meter within 90 days of launch	Homepage funnel analytics: Month 3
Playback Conversion Rate	65% of Mood Meter sessions result in title playback	Session event log: Month 2
Watch Time Uplift	+12% avg watch time for Mood Meter users vs. control group	A/B cohort comparison: Month 4
Return Usage Rate	40% of first-time Mood Meter users return to the feature within 14 days	Retention cohort analysis: Month 3

5. Target Audience

Primary: Netflix subscribers aged 18-45 in multi-person households and casual evening viewers who open Netflix without a clear intent. These users are most vulnerable to decision fatigue and most likely to benefit from a structured, mood-first start.

Secondary: Family subscribers on shared profiles who need contextual filtering. Mood Meter's viewing context toggle (Family mode) surfaces age-appropriate content without manual profile switching, reducing friction for household viewing sessions.

6. Solution Summary

The Mood Meter consists of three core screens, with the first presenting eight distinct mood tiles, paired alongside optional preference sliders (for watch length and familiarity) as well as viewing context (solo, with others, family). The Results Page presents a featured recommendation with a two to three sentence description tied to the user's mood inputs, in addition to two secondary rows displaying thematically similar options with direct play actions. Each item on the Results Page includes a Watchlist toggle, allowing users to save titles for later with a single tap and a color-coded confirmation toast. The Home Entry Point is a constant banner displayed above the first content row within the homepage, directly accessible on all devices without navigation.

7. Product Details & Design

Component	Description
Mood Picker (8 tiles)	Chill, Hyped, Laugh, Emotional, Scared, Romantic, Mind-Bending, Action. One tile selectable at a time. Each has a distinct color and icon.
Preference Sliders	Watch Length (Short / Medium / Long). Familiarity (New Discovery / Old Favorite). Both optional.
Viewing Context Toggle	Solo / With Others / Family. Family mode filters by maturity rating. No account changes required.
Results Page	Featured pick with AI reasoning (2-3 sentences referencing mood and preferences). Two curated secondary rows with Play and Watchlist actions. Watchlist toggle on featured card and all row items: toggles between '+ Watchlist' and '✓ Saved' with a color-coded toast confirmation (green on add, red on remove).
Homepage Entry Point	Persistent banner above first content row. Prompt: "What's your mood tonight?" Visible on mobile, tablet, and desktop.

8. Experiment Plan

- Phase 1 — Observe (Weeks 1-8): Deploy Mood Meter to 5% of US subscribers. Track entry rate, session completion, and playback rate with no A/B split. Establish baseline metrics.
- Phase 2 - A/B Test (Weeks 9-20): Mood Meter cohort vs. standard homepage control. Primary metrics: playback conversion and average watch time. Secondary: return usage rate. Test two entry point variants → banner above hero vs. below hero.
- Phase 3 — Iterate (Weeks 21-28): Structured interviews with 20 participants across mood segments. Identify underperforming mood tiles and reasoning quality issues. Iterate before full rollout.

9. Timeline & Milestones

Phase	Timeline	Key Activities
Sprint 1: Core Build	Weeks 1-2	Mood picker, preference sliders, results page, homepage entry point
Sprint 2: Instrumentation	Weeks 3-4	Session analytics, mood-to-completion tracking, session memory
Phase 1: Soft Launch	Weeks 5-12	5% rollout to US subscribers. Baseline metric collection.
Phase 2: A/B Test	Weeks 13-24	Full A/B test. Iterate on mood tiles, reasoning quality, entry point placement.
Full Rollout	Week 25+	Pending: 65% playback conversion and +12% watch time uplift thresholds met.

10. Future Expansions

- Mood History: Allow users to view their mood patterns over time, generating personalized collections such as "Your Friday Night Mood" or "Your Chill Picks" based on historical selections.
- Social Mood Match: For households with multiple active profiles, surface a shared mood recommendation based on overlapping preferences across two users.
- Mood-Aware Percentage Match: Integrate session mood context into Netflix's existing percentage match scoring to produce a dynamic "Mood Match" score alongside the standard fit score.

Sources.

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4. Reflection on AI Use

AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic) was used throughout the development of this PRD. The product concept, feature name, problem framing, and strategic positioning were developed by the student in class. AI contributed the document structure, section prose, table formatting, SMART metric framing, and experiment plan language.