

Web Design Criteria

Here are some ideas and guidelines that should help you design a snappy website. Enjoy!

Community

As a web designer, you are part of a design community.

- Look at other websites for design ideas.
- Show your website to others and ask for constructive criticism.
- Share your knowledge.
- Digging deeper: Save code from sites you like. Read up on web design.

Appropriate Design

The look, information architecture, and technology used must be a good fit.

Your client likes it. (Ask them to show you some sites they like before you start to design)

- The audience likes it. (Are they after information or cool graphics? Is the design appropriate to the subject matter?)
- It is accessible. (Are there any visually disabled users? Macintosh users? Older computers? Is the audience web savvy?)

Consistent

Try to create a sense of place where users can easily move around.

- Similar look and feel on every page.
- Same elements: contact information, navigation.
- Same fonts and heading styles.
- Tools that can help you to achieve this are: templates, style sheet

Efficient

The idea here is to separate content from layout so that you can easily change your page design without editing every page in your site.

- Use Dreamweaver templates or another efficient design technique (e.g. data-driven).

Organized

Be really tidy! A disorganized website can be overwhelming and confusing, leading to errors.

- Put images in a folder called images
- Put raw files in a folder called raw files
- Name your files meaningfully and consistently

Layout

Think of the space at the top of your Webpage as very expensive real estate. This part of the page is often called "above the fold" (a newspaper term).

- Navigation, the page title, and some sense of what's on the page visible without having to scroll.
- Keep images and text reasonably small to maximize use of real estate.
- Design for a certain monitor size (usually 800 x 600)

Images

To minimize download time, always resize and optimize your images in a graphics editor such as Fireworks or Photoshop.

- Consider using "thumbnails" for showing larger images.
- Never resize images in Dreamweaver. (They will print and download at their original size).

Fonts

Dreamweaver always specifies more than one font. Why? If your user does not have the first font specified, the page will be displayed as the second one, etc.

- Use only Dreamweaver's font combinations, e.g., "Verdana, Arial, Helvetica ..."
- If you use other fonts, e.g., Lucida Bright, they may not display on your user's computers.

Colors

Color varies on different computers and operating systems. Only 216 colors display consistently well.

- Use only the "websafe" colors in the Dreamweaver color palette.
- (Or, you can use a non web-safe color that you have seen used on an expensive website!)

Frames

Frames are generally avoided. They should be used with great caution. Why?

- They do not allow bookmarking (you can only direct users to the main page in the site, not subpages).
- They sometimes have printing problems.
- When viewed on the wrong size monitor, ugly scroll bars appear. Ewww!

Layers

Layers are also problematic. They create cool effects and make design easy but they display differently in different browsers.

- Use them for positioning only when exactness is not a priority.
- If you design using layers, consider converting to tables when you are done.

Resources

Online version of this handout available at <http://faculty.lagcc.cuny.edu/ctl/abby/design>

Webmonkey <http://www.webmonkey.com>

Builder <http://builder.cnet.com>

Yale Style Guide <http://www.med.yale.edu/caim/manual>

Cool Home Pages <http://www.coolhomepages.com>