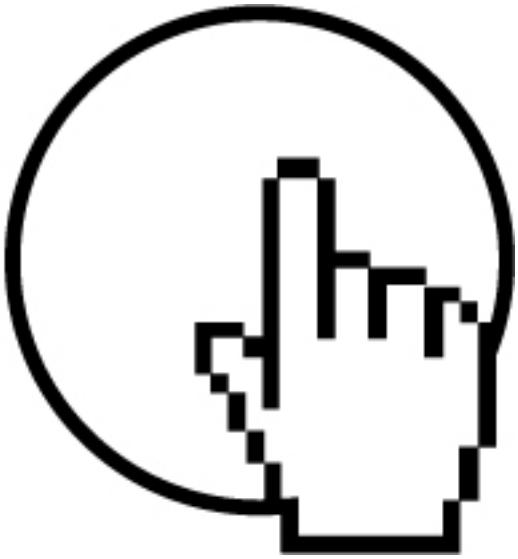

Website Design

Week 2 M - Practice for Free

■ Create a Blog
■ Learn the basics of uploading content and updating pages using a CMS

Week 2 T - Interface Foundation

■ Develop the information architecture
■ Color! Color! Color!
■ Evaluate Concept Collage and Creative Context
■ Focus on Interface design usability

Develop the information architecture and User Interface

Information architecture is the term used to describe the structure of a system commonly associated with websites and intranets. It is the way information (content) is grouped and the navigation method to facilitate people to move logically through a system.

Make a layout that you and others can understand.

You have created this and it is your guide to your visual user interface. Each parent page is a link / button to a section of your website. Try not to have more than 7 parent pages, and odd numbers appear better than even.

Depending on how you build your site, either with a template that is basic or an elaborate graphic design, you may have visual clues as to which section you are in. Some sites are color-coded or have special graphics for each section. Regardless, it is most important to be clear. Sites that do not have a clear user interface are sometimes are called “mystery meat”.

You may have limitations to how your buttons appear, but you have control over the navigation through your site. Even a simple text link works.

Often navigational elements are shown three times on a page.

Tips For Designing Footer Sitemap

Categorize - organize your links in categories.

Use Headings - use headings or titles for each category.

Be Consistent - the order of the links should be consistent.

User Interface – looking good and making it easy on the viewer

Typography

The whole point of creating a website is to communicate. If your user can’t read your writing, why bother?

Your font choice is vital – stick to your branding schemes. Pick a font that is appropriate for your content and can be view by most browsers. There are serif and sans-serif fonts, your style may dictate your choice. Serif (a cool Matrix character too) is better for print as it leads your eye across the pages, sans-serif looks better onscreen.

Standard fonts are Pick your color wisely because you need enough contrast between the text and the background.

One of the worst color choices is a black background with white text.

Alignment – Left and Jusitfy are the easiest to read.

Bold – only use it if you really need to get our attention and don't over use.

ALL CAPS – this is yelling and is rude.

Be consistent with fonts! Stick to <u>one</u>!

Breadcrumbs

Leave a trail of link "breadcrumbs" for your viewer to guild them back home or so they know how they ended up on that page. Sometimes the software does this for you; sometimes you have to make them yourself.

Home > Gallery > Photos > Sunsets

Being extremely clever can trip people up

Try to use basic user interface design for navigation and use your creativity and cleverness for the content.

Color! Color! Color!

The fastest means to create an impression, with the emphasis on personal motivation, is with color.

What colors will you use?

Web Safe Colors

Web Safe, or Browser Safe Color Palettes consist of 216 colors that display solid, non-dithered, and consistent on any computer monitor, or web browser, capable of displaying at least 8-bit color. Use these colors for backgrounds and text.

There are several sites that list these colors, just do a search for web safe colors and find a site you like.

I tend to make a file that has the colors I am using for a site and include the 6-digit code with them for easy reference.

Color Schemes

A harmonious set of colors, will make or break your website. The best choices are analogous, complimentary, and monochromatic. I use split complimentary with a wide analogous often.

Analogous colors are those that are adjacent to each other on the color wheel.

Complementary color schemes consist of colors that are located opposite each other on the color wheel. They have a high contrast.

Monochromatic means one color and its tints (add white) and shades (add black). Tones can work as well; tones are complementary colors mixed together in different percentages.

Creative Context

What visuals will you use to express your website mission?

What is your theme?

What is your dream site look like?

Your Header – the most important Graphic you make

You only have 5 to 20 seconds to get and keep a user's attention. Your header or banner, which is at the top of your website, is the main way to keep them interested. Make it awesome and clear!

Your banner / header graphic also should be a link to your home or index page. It helps people when they get lost.

File Types, Resolution, and Color Modes

JPEG and GIF are currently the primary file types for graphics on the Internet. PNG is coming in strong.

A computer screen is only 72 to 92 pixels per inch (ppi) compared to printed work is 300 to 1200 dots per inch (dpi). To reduce load times, there is no reason your web graphics should have a resolution over 72 ppi. If you want to give the viewers something that is print quality, give them a PDF instead of having huge files to wait to download.

Work in RGB Color Mode. That is what your screen is. GIF will save as Index Color Mode, but you will start in RGB.

Image Enhancement and Editing Software and Shareware

I use Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to create all my images for websites. They are not the cheapest applications, but the industry standard. You can start with software that isn't that intensive, but still powerful.

Photoshop Elements
Adobe.com

Photoshop Express
Photoshop.com

Picasa
picasa.google.com

GNU Image Manipulation Program
gimp.org

Optimizing for the Web

Several programs will have a Save for Web feature. Use it! You want to create images that download quickly. Optimization can drop colors and information that is not needed. Choosing a GIF or JPEG makes a different in download time as well.

Be Exact

If you know what size your table or cell is, make the file size exactly that. You don't want to have your amazing graphics resized; they don't always come out right.

It is a good idea to change your preferences in your graphics program to measure pixels instead of inches. Use your rules, guilds and grids – they are a big help!

Basic Website Design Terms

Anti-alias - the process of smoothing the edges of an object or text to blend with the background.

CMYK model (subtractive colors) - The CMYK model is based on the light-absorbing quality of ink printed on paper.

As white light strikes translucent inks, part of the spectrum is absorbed and part is reflected back to your eyes.

Desaturate command - converts a color image to a grayscale image in the same color mode.

Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) - a file format that uses 8-bit color and efficiently compresses solid areas of color while preserving sharp detail, such as that in line art, logos, or illustrations with type.

HSB model - describes three fundamental characteristics of color: **H**ue, **S**aturation and **B**rightness.

Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG) - a file format that supports 24-bit color and preserves the broad range and subtle variations in brightness and hue found in photographs and other continuous-toned images.

Lossless compression - the techniques compress image data without removing detail.

Metadata - Electronic information about electronic information. (data about data) It is used to facilitate the understanding, characteristics, purpose, and management usage of data.

Optimization - process of fine-tuning the display quality and file size of an image for use on the Web or other online media.

Portable Document Format (PDF) - a flexible, cross-platform, cross-application file format. Based on the PostScript imaging model, PDF files accurately display and preserve fonts, page layouts, and both vector and bitmap graphics.

PNG (Portable Network Graphics) Used for lossless compression and for displaying images on the web. Unlike GIF, PNG supports 24-bit images and produces background transparency without jagged edges; however, some web browsers do not support PNG images. PNG preserves transparency in grayscale and RGB images.

Raster images (bitmap) - use a grid of colors known as pixels to represent images. Each pixel is assigned a specific location and color value.

RGB model (additive colors) - A large percentage of the visible spectrum can be represented by mixing red, green, and blue (RGB) colored light in various proportions and intensities. Where the colors overlap, they create cyan, magenta, yellow, and white.

Tag - an appropriate keyword or term associated with or designated to a piece of information, like a picture, to describe the item and facilitating keyword-based classification and searching.

Vector graphics - Vectors describe an image according to its geometric characteristics. They are made up of lines and curves defined by mathematical objects called vectors.

Wabi-sabi - a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. It is a beauty of things modest and humble. It is a beauty of things unconventional.