Design Best Practices

Digital Scholarship Incubator 2019

What is bad design? Let's take a look.

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[Get it together, Yale.](#)

[I let these people walk my dog.](#)

[Even popular websites can have bad design.](#)

Qualities of Good Design

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- Has a clear [Clear purpose](#)!
- Communicates well!
- Is responsive!
- It's mood matches the intent!
- Is cohesive!
- Has [simplified it's navigation options](#).

Information Architecture

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"Information architecture focuses on organizing, structuring, and labeling content in an effective and sustainable way. The goal is to help users find information and complete tasks. To do this, you need to understand how the pieces fit together to create the larger picture, how items relate to each other within the system."

usability.gov

Wireframes

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Here is a wireframe for a recent project. Let's compare the two stages.
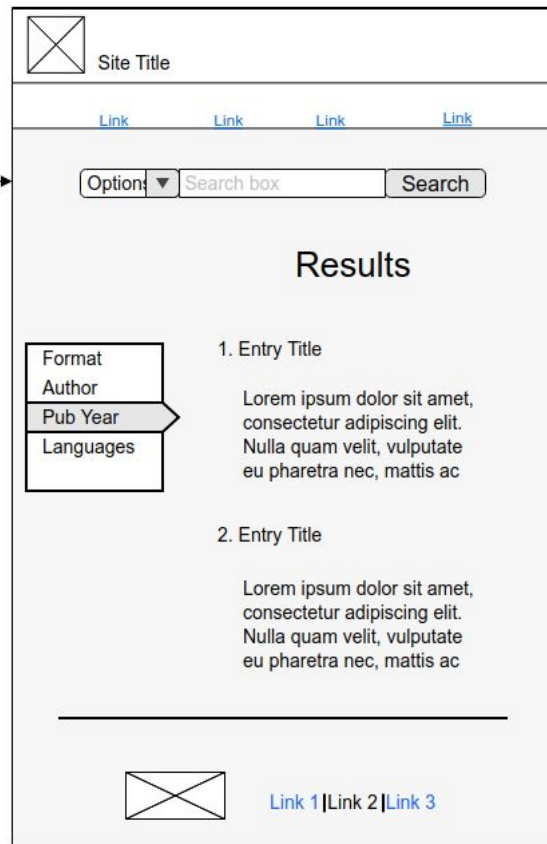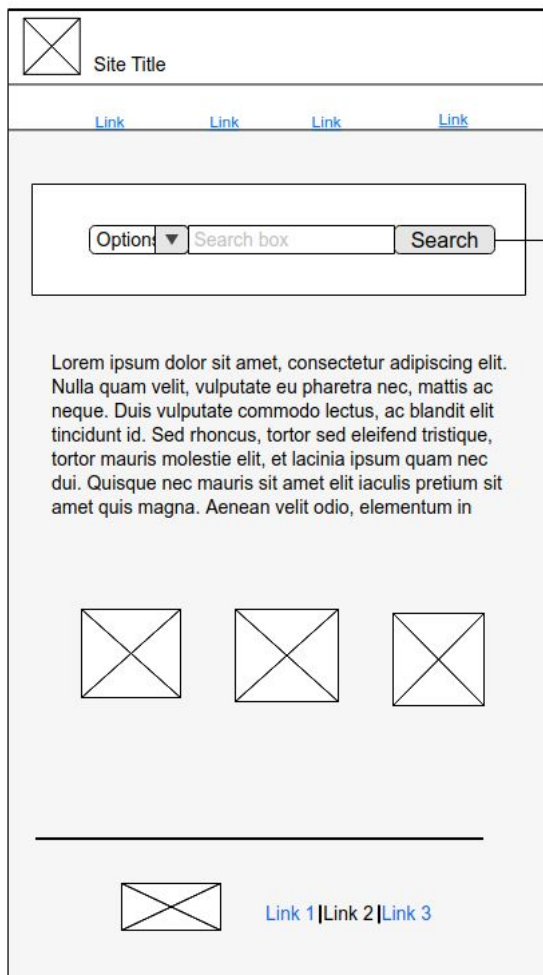
Activity 1: Make a Wireframe!

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https://projects.invisionapp.com/freehand/document/PpBvlKOWe

Things to consider including:

Logos/image placeholders

Search bars/ Navigation menus

Header/footer
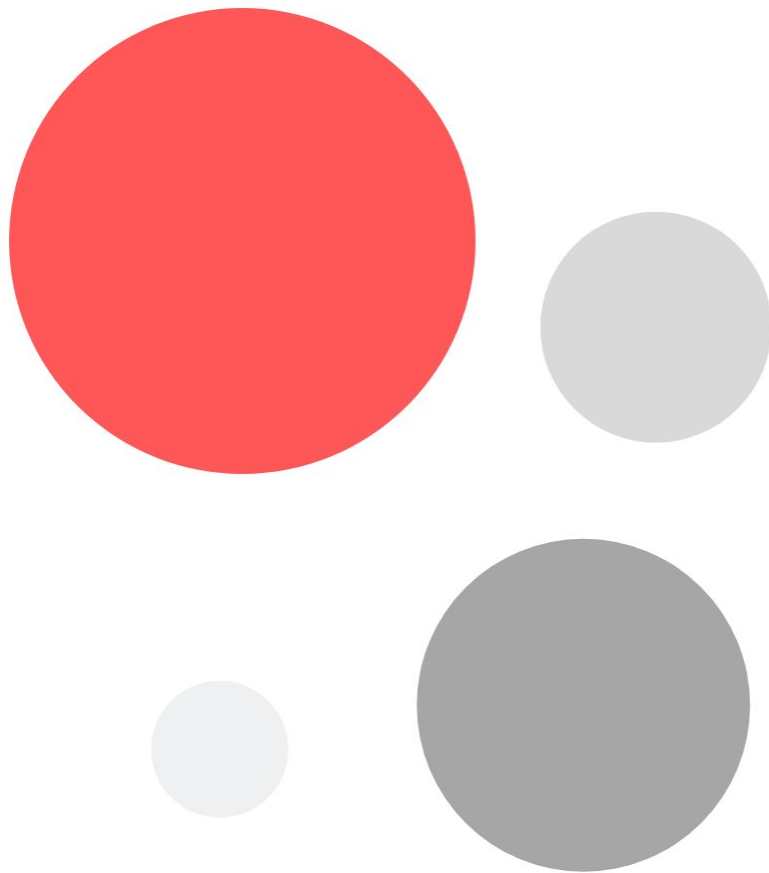
Don't forget to include how the pages connect!

Layout

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Purpose: What is the most important feature of the site/project? How can you make that purpose obvious to the user?

Communication: Emphasize important items with size, color etc.

Simplicity: Take away as much as you can without losing functionality.

Visual Hierarchy

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Grids

[Hick's Law](#) (paraphrased!)

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The more choices (LINKS) available to a person (USER), the longer the decision process takes.

Consider: If you had to limit each page to 3 links, what would they be? Do the same links need to be repeated on each page? Do you have multiple menus?

[Example](#)

[Occam's Razor](#) (paraphrased!)

Simpler solutions are more like to be correct than complex ones.

[Example](#)

Activity 2: Revise your wireframes!

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Goals:

-Limit your site to 3 pages.

-Limit each page to 5 links (or less!).

-Start marking up your hierarchy on each page- your headings, your subheadings, and content.

-Use the highlighter to identify the most important elements that you want to emphasize in your design.

Visual Design

Color, type, and images.

Consider:

-What mood are you trying to convey?

-How do your style choices relate to your topic/message?

Color Theory in a nutshell:

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Color harmonies:

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Monochromatic

Complementary

Triadic

Analogous

Split-complementary

Tetradic

Psychology of color

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Users have emotional connections to colors.

When picking colors for your site, try and think of some of the emotions you want users to associate with your site.

Contrast and Discord

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Communication is key- even with color. Make sure your color selections don't make your site unusable.

Low-contrast text is a problem both for design and accessibility!

Contrast Tool

Good contrast

Color discord

Font Styles

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The font you choose should be legible and make sense with your content and design. When in doubt, try a simple, sans-serif font.

"Display fonts" should be used sparingly, and never for body/content text!

Meet the cast:

ABCD EFGHIJK LMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ

Now see the movie:

Helvetica

A documentary film by Gary Hustwit

Font Styles Continued

Display Font

Serif

Sans-Serif

Spacing and Alignment

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Make sure your line spaces and letter spaces are consistent and not ridiculous.

For languages like English read from left to right, right-aligned text is more difficult to read. Use it only when necessary!

Good kerning

B ad ke rning

Font Size

Remember your visual hierarchy! But don't overdo it. Try to limit the font-size changes in your page.

Never mislabel your headings for the sake of size. You can always adjust a font size, but your headings 1,2,3 etc must be identified correctly for accessibility.

Images and Graphics

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Will your project include a visualization or central image?
All of these design principles apply to that too!

Example

Color, font, mood, and layout will all be important to
remember when putting together a visualization.

Images and Layouts

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Grids and white space are very important when designing a project that has image-heavy content.

Don't make your content compete with your design.

Example

Accessibility

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[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)- WCAG

Design with accessibility in mind:

-Add alternate text to all of your images.

-Use headings appropriately.

-Provide closed captioning for all video content.

-Use appropriate contrast in your colors and text.

Responsiveness

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A web project will have a farther reach if it is usable on a multitude of devices.

Wherever possible, make sure that your designs translate well to other sizes and dimensions. Choose responsive themes, or try your hand at writing your own CSS.

Grid-based layouts lend themselves to responsiveness, because they can easily be reordered!

Resources for learning more about CSS

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-[W3Schools](...)

-[Free Code Camp](...)

-[CodeAcademy](...)

-[Coursera](...)

Activity 3: Critique

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Group 1: ArchNet

Group 2: Geography of the Post

Group 3: Slave Voyages

Ask me anything!

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