Creating a Design: Visual Design

slide 1: Introduction

Hi guys! Welcome to [Fundamentals of User Experience Design ], a Tuts+ premium course. I’m [Sarah Kahn] and today we’re going to talk about Visual Design..

slide 2

Here’s what we’re going to cover:

* + Where to start
  + Some rules of thumb for color and fonts
  + A/B Testing
  + Getting feedback
  + Assignment

slide 3

[Where to start]

In our last lesson, we talked all about how and why you should make a wireframe before you design. Hopefully you should have a wireframe from the assignment that you can work with now. I’m going to start with an example one from a project I’m working on currently.

slide 4

[wireframe]

So this is a wireframe for a page in my application that I’m currently designing. Once you’ve arrived at this point, you’ve thought through all the information architecture, the user flows and interactions, and you’ve laid it out in a logical, familiar way that you can share with users and talk about. Congratulations! I’m going to let you in on a little secret...

slide 5

[you’ve done the hard part]

You’ve done the hard part already! This next piece is going to be so much easier for having worked through this process. So give yourself a pat on the back.

slide 6

[screenshot]

But you’re not done yet, and there are still a few things to keep in mind when you’re adding the colors, images, fonts to your design.

slide 7

[a note about color]

When was the last time you saw a purple stop sign?

slide 8

[purple stop sign]

We have cultural expectations about color. In real life, Green means go. Red means stop. In the digital world, these expectations have carried over. Studies have shown that users are more likely to understand a visual message if it’s color coded in an expected way.

slide 9

[status messaging green]

for example, this is a pretty familiar convention. you’ll see this on most websites- green means, ‘you’re good to go. everything is ok here.’ this is an example from patterntap, a website dedicated to showcasing good patterns in design.

slide 10

[red message]

conversely, red immediately indicates that you need to take a closer look, something might be wrong.

Now, this isn’t to say that you have to absolutely stick to these color conventions, but do be mindful of them! If you want to veer into unfamiliar color territory with things like status indicators and messages, be sure to check with your users.

slide 10

[contrast]

another thing to be aware of with color is the level of contrast between text and background.

slide 11

[contrast]

see the difference? I’ll flip back again to show you. For most people, this level of contrast might be fine. we don’t have any trouble reading it. But there are some who have different forms of colorblindness or don’t read very well on a computer screen due to various issues with their eyesight. This could prove a real usability problem for those people. Additionally, with certain types of colorblindness, all the colors in your design might look like shades of gray, also causing problems.

slide 12

[color checker]

I recommend using a color checker to be sure. Snook.ca is one of the better ones I’ve found, you can check the 2 colors that you want to use and tweak them until you have an acceptable ratio of contrast.

slide 13

[fonts]

I’ll only say this about fonts. They are so much fun, there are so many of them, and it’s increasingly easy to include a variety of non-standard fonts in your websites. Be careful not to get carried away though. the prettier, crazier fonts are often harder to read for folks with any sort of eyesight issue going on. Feel free to use the pretty fonts, but test them! (are you noticing a theme here?) :)

slide 14

[a/b testing]

Visual design is a great opportunity for A/B split testing. This is because you aren’t trying to solve any deep questions, you’re not trying to nail down workflow. You’re simply seeing which one users like better, and will find more appealing.

slide 15

[a/b testing tools]

there are a lot of a/b testing tools out there. you can use any of your regular usability testing tools, or a smaller more lightweight tool thats optimized for a/b testing, like loopfuse and optimizely.

And of course, you can always just use a pencil and paper- print out 2 versions of your design, and ask users to point with a pencil where they would click. It’s that simple! And it will really help you figure out whether you should use the pattern background or the solid.

slide 16

[get feedback]

visual design is a place where it can really help to get a reality check or a friendly critique by other professionals.

slide 17

[lurking]

these are some of the places where i post my designs to get feedback. if there’s a usability problem with the shade of blue i’ve chosen, someone here might spot it more quickly than a colleague or even a user.

slide 18

[forrst]

this is a screenshot i posted awhile back for a new theme i was designing. my colleagues were quick to point out a few problems with it, which resulted in a more refined and usable design for my users!

slide 19

[assignment]

* + Make a visual design!
  + Based on the wireframe we made last week, create a design!
  + You can use photoshop, the Gimp, fireworks, color pencils, whatever your style is. Practice working with adding color and visual appeal to a wireframed layout. You might find its a little different than starting with a blank slate!

Next time on [Fundamentals of User Experience Design ], will be [Lesson 14: Getting Buy-in]. Because sometimes it’s hard to get management support for UX-related activities. This is [Sarah Kahn], and from all of us here at Tuts+, thanks for listening!