

# Graphic Design

For Your Osteopathic Practice



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# Introduction

Like all creative endeavours, graphic design is a funny thing that you're not really sure if you can learn, or whether it's all down to natural talent. Some people think it's genius, some people think it's easy. Some people have an eye for good design, some don't care.

It's true that you can 'learn' graphic design, and the hundreds of books available on the subject testify to that. It's also true that you need some talent, and that you can learn that talent with practice. But the subject is huge, and there's no way I could even begin to tell you all of graphic design theory.

Assuming that this guide is for the osteopath who may want to create their own flyers, adverts or website and need a breakdown of some of the basic concepts to build upon, that's what I've created here. These are the 'rules' of graphic design which have most helped me in my time as a professional designer. I hope they help you too.

# Colour Theory

We all know that colours form a spectrum, from red through orange to yellow, to green, to blue and then to violet, which brings us back to red. When we place all these colours adjacently in a circle, we get the **colour wheel**.



The colour wheel helps us to find complementary and contrasting colours. Colours which are right next to each other on the wheel are generally too similar to be useful, whereas colours that are 30 degrees apart create complimentary, or harmonious colour matches. Colours which are opposite each other on the colour wheel are contrasting, so they also work together.

To create a colour scheme we will typically use 2-4 colours. We might pick two or three colours at 30 degree intervals, or two colours which are opposite each other, or three colours at 30 degrees with the opposite (complementary) colour of the central one. There are various approaches:

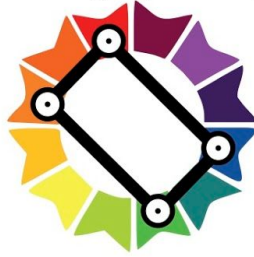
# COLOR SCHEMES

**Complementary**



**Complementary color scheme**  
Colors that are opposite each other on the colorwheel are considered to be complementary colors

**Rectangle (Tetradic)**



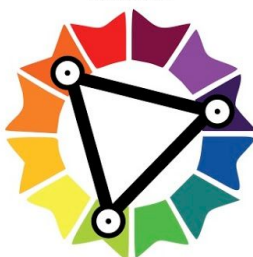
**Rectangle (tetradic) color scheme**  
The rectangle or tetradic color scheme uses four colors arranged into two complementary pairs

**Analogous**



**Analogous color scheme**  
Analogous color schemes use colors that are next to each other on the color wheel

**Triadic**



**Triadic color scheme**  
A triadic color scheme uses colors that are evenly spaced around the color wheel

**Square**



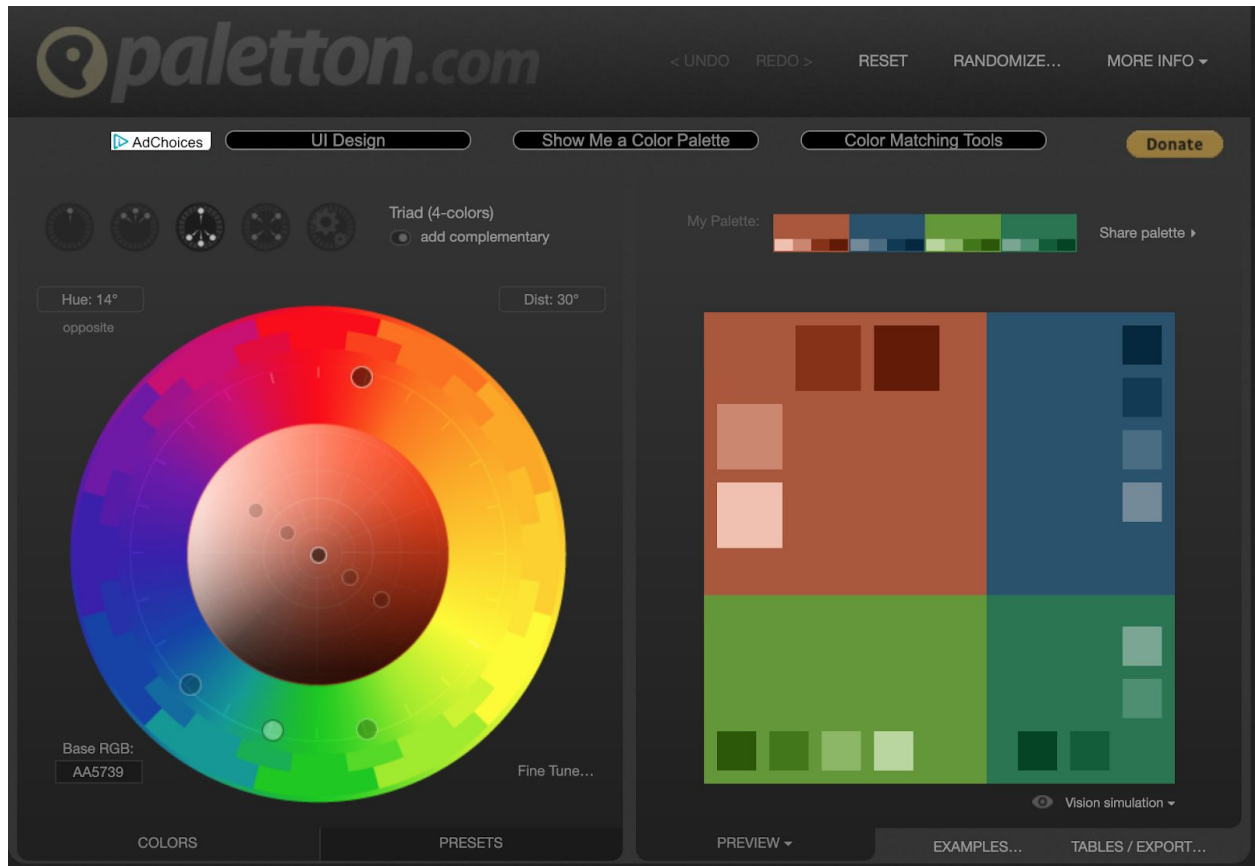
**Square color scheme**  
The square color scheme is similar to the rectangle, but with four colors spaced evenly around the color circle

**Split Complement**



**Split-Complementary color scheme**  
The split-complementary colors scheme is variation of the complementary color scheme. In addition to the base color, it uses the two colors adjacent to its complement

There are some great free tools online to allow you to play around with the colour wheel and create different colour schemes. My favourite is Paletton (<https://paletton.com>) but there are others.



*Screenshot from paletteton.com*

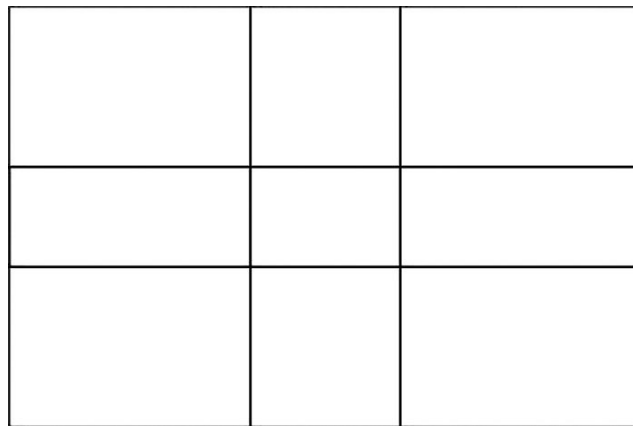
## Colour Psychology

When considering what colour to start with, we need to think about colour psychology. We associate certain colours with certain things. Green means environmentally friendly, red means danger and so on. There's no need to go overboard in the psychology of colour here, except to say that for anything medical, such as osteopathy, we associate colours such as light blue, teal and white, all of which say clean, medical and professional.

## The Golden Ratio

Everyone who's ever taken a graphic design course will have come across the golden ratio, a ratio of 1.618 which is found in nature and is the basis of many design layouts which are pleasing to the human eye.

I've also heard the golden ratio called the "rule of thirds", or as I call it, "the rule of slightly big thirds". Take your canvas, divide it horizontally or vertically into a slightly too-big third and a slightly-not-big-enough two-thirds and you have the basis for your layout. We can create a grid on this basis, which can be used to create layouts for photos, etc.



As in this photo, where the subject takes up the "big third" on the right.





To show how universal the golden ratio is in design, let's look at the same grid in two completely different contexts. Let's start with this David Hockney painting.

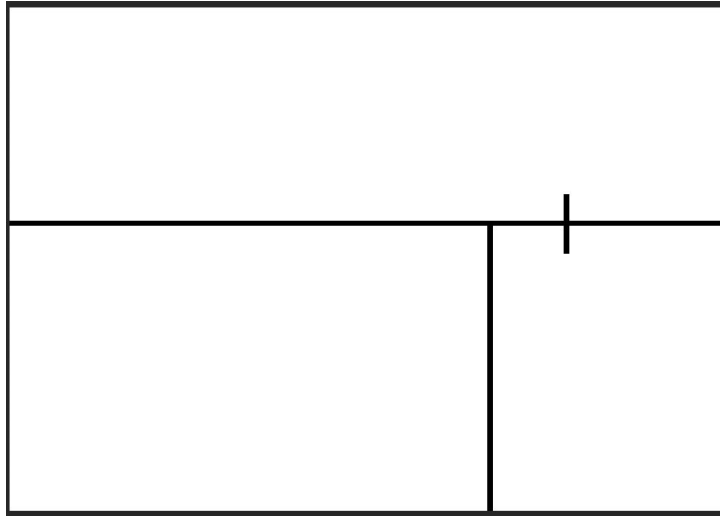


We can see the basic layout is based on (allowing for perspective) a roughly golden ratio grid. Even the standing figure cuts part of the grid at the golden ratio.




Removing the picture, we're left with the grid:





Let's say we wanted to make an advert for Beth's osteopathy practice using this same grid. Could we do it? You bet we could.



### School of Hard Knocks?

As a sportsperson, you know that pushing your body to the limit can take its toll. To stay performing at the highest level we can, it's important not to leave aches and injuries to chance.

I am a sports injury specialist and for 5 years it's been my privilege to keep the sportsmen and women of Coventry at the top of their game. Book a free telephone consultation today and be the very best you can be, for you and for the team.

**Beth Slater**  
Sports Injury Clinic

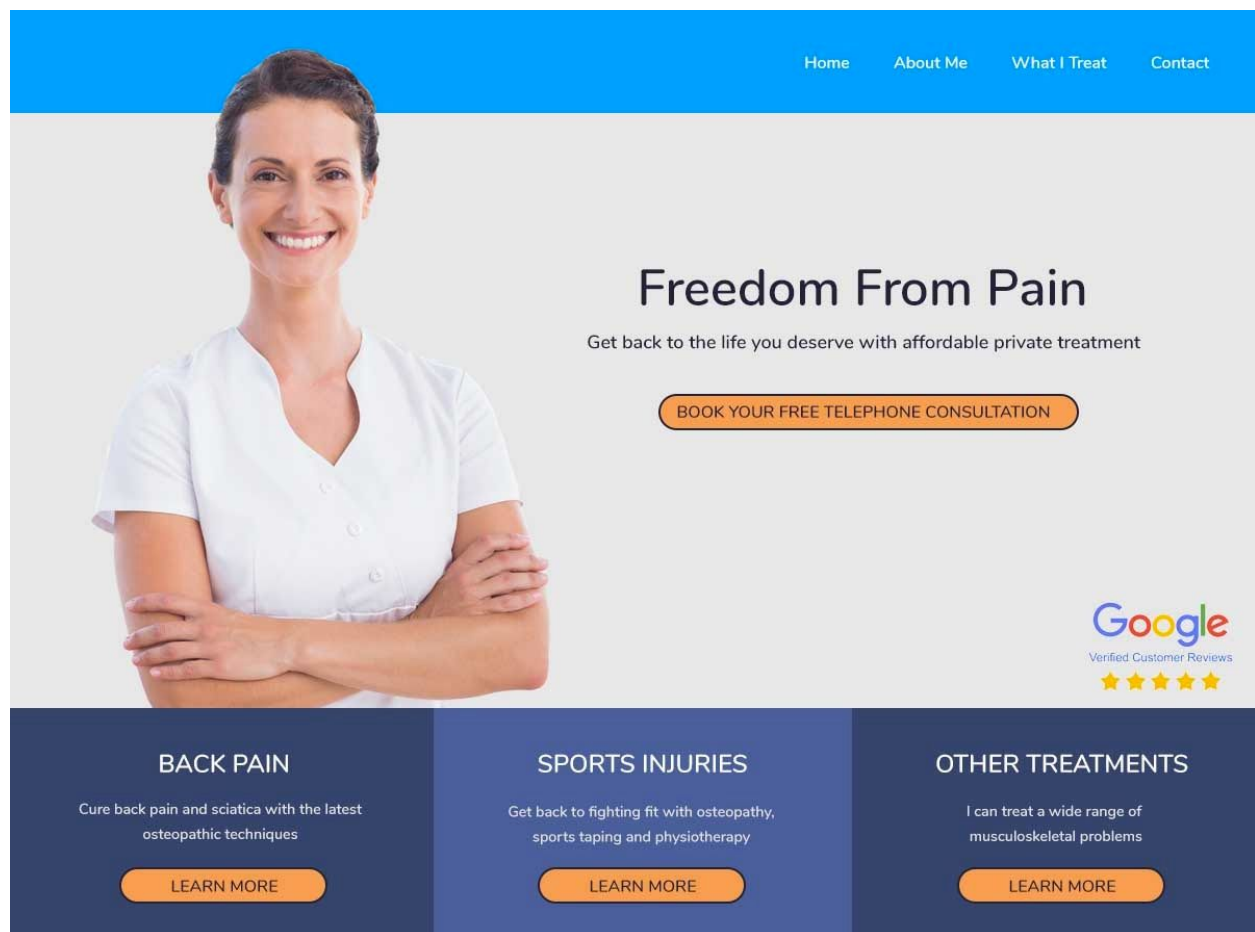
BOOK YOUR FREE TELEPHONE  
CONSULTATION TODAY

020 1234 5678  
[bethslater.com/freeconsultation](http://bethslater.com/freeconsultation)

The advert also uses colour sampling. The red on the box is the same as the red on the rugby ball. When you're using an image, picking out colours for the rest of the page from various parts of the image is a great technique and helps you achieve an overall balance.

Of course, not *every* good design is based on the golden ratio, but it's a good place to start. As with all the rules, don't feel you have to obey them if you prefer the design that breaks them. They're starting points and good general principles, but not to be slavishly obeyed at all costs. You'll notice in the ad above I already broke my own rule about colour psychology. I did try sampling the blue from the rugby ball first of all, but the red just worked better (red and green are opposite on the colour wheel).

Lastly, see how the photo of Beth in the advert and the standing figure in the Hockney picture break up the design by being split between two elements. One element encroaching on another and not staying in its 'box' is a powerful visual technique. If we were to revisit Beth's website, we could use the same technique to make her photo 'break out' of its box into the blue header:



# Images

A picture tells a thousand words and can make a breakthrough difference in your marketing. The right image can convey the Big Idea quickly and inspire trust and confidence, whereas the wrong image can destroy everything else. I've had clients insist on putting badly-taken, old and irrelevant photos on their website, destroying it quickly.

There are three ways to get images. Either take them yourself, get a professional photographer or use stock photography.

These days it's not inconceivable that you could take some good photos on your iPhone, but unless you can get as good a result as a professional it's probably not well-advised. By all means have a play around, see what results you get and think about how you could improve them rather than just snapping away and thinking it's all done.

Booking a half-day with a professional photographer at your practice is probably one of the best investments you can make. You will have a range of quality photos for all your advertising purposes and will look super professional across all platforms. Your images are very much the raw material of your advertising, and trying to create good marketing with poor images is like trying to cook with poor ingredients. It just won't come out right.

You can also use stock imagery. There are a wide range of image libraries around, my personal favourite is Shutterstock, but you can simply Google 'stock images'. There are, for sure, a hell of a lot of rubbish, cheesy photos on stock libraries, but there are also many good ones and from time to time, the perfect image. Do some searching and think outside the box.



*This stock image is supposed to convey a businessman 'jumping in feet first'.*

The balance will depend on you. Don't use stock photos simply to avoid paying for a photographer, but similarly don't avoid a stock image just because it's a stock image. Think outside the box - a picture of someone doing the garden, participating in sport or yoga might be the perfect thing for you.

## Fonts

The right fonts are essential to any design. Aside from readability, fonts, like colours, create associations in our mind. Finding the font that creates the right feel in the mind of the user is crucial.

Fonts generally fall into a few different families:

Serif

Sans Serif

**Slab Serif**

*Handwritten*

**NOVELTY / DISPLAY**

**Serif** fonts have serifs, that is, little sticky-out bits on the end of letters. These make the text easier to read so are a clear choice for books, newspapers and so on. They can also look official, or old-fashioned.

**Sans-serif** fonts don't have serifs, hence the name. They generally look a bit more modern and clean, and are probably the best choice for osteopath sites.

**Slab serif** are big, bold serif fonts meant for headlines, especially in print.

**Handwritten** fonts are as they say, fonts which appear handwritten.

**Display** fonts are special decorative fonts, for example a stencil font, creepy halloween font and so on (if you didn't get it, the one in the example above is 'Permanent Marker').

In general sans-serif fonts are going to be the best choice for osteopaths. Don't mix and match too much, stick to one font or, if you prefer, one font for headlines and subheadings and another font for the copy. You can mix and match serif and sans-serif fonts, it's quite typical with books to find a serif font for the main copy and a sans-serif for the headlines.

Avoid all decorative and novelty fonts, they will make you look ridiculous. A clear and clean sans-serif is really all you need. Handwritten fonts should generally also be avoided, unless you want to appear to have handwritten your name at the bottom of your 'about me' section, and possibly for customer testimonials.

### **Tracking and justification**

Avoid overly stretching or condensing a font (called tracking or letter-spacing), especially for copy. A lot of time has gone into making that font readable, and stretching or over-spacing it can make it awkward and unfriendly to read. Remember that most of the time you want the user to not notice the font, for it to be the most efficient possible vehicle for them to read the text and nothing else.

This paragraph of text is *justified*, meaning it comes right up to the edge on each side, rather than the *left aligned* or *ragged right* that I've used for the rest of the guide. Justification is Marmite for designers, some love it and some (like me) hate it. On the pros side, it creates clean lines which make our design look neater, on the cons side it destroys the font's natural letter spacing, which can make it harder to read and create awkward gaps in the text. But really there's no right answer (I say through gritted teeth). My favourite magazine, the *New Scientist*, uses ragged right, but *The Economist* and most newspapers use justified columns.

## **Providing Artwork for Print**

Preparing artwork for print is a rabbit hole that quickly gets deeper and more complicated than we might think. It's not necessary to be an expert, but it's worth understanding why designing for print is different to designing for screen.

The golden rule is to not be afraid to ask the printer for advice. If you're using an online service like VistaPrint you can probably just upload your file and they will deal with it, but they too may have artwork specifications and templates, and many printers charge a fee for preparing your file for print if it is supplied incorrectly. I have designed and prepared dozens of flyers and adverts for print, and now the first thing I will always do is speak to the printer about the project to ensure I deliver the artwork in a way that we will get the results I want.

### **Colour**

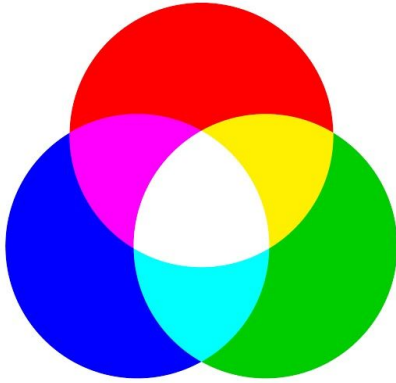
Colour is the biggest difference between print and screen, as the way colours are produced is completely different. On a screen, each pixel contains a value from 0 to 255 of each of red, blue and green, meaning it will shine more light of that colour the higher the value it has (also, incidentally, meaning there are 16,777,216 unique colours your screen can display).

RGB colour is an additive colour model, meaning if we add the maximum value of all colours, we get white, as we know from shining different coloured lights together.

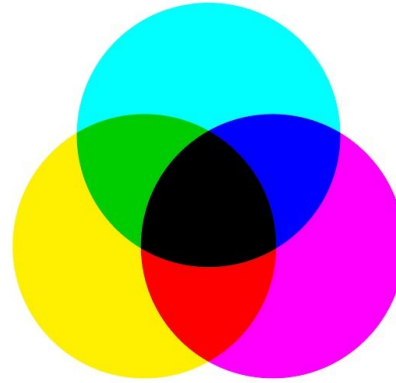
Print uses ink instead of light. Instead of red, green and blue (RGB), the colours used are cyan, magenta and yellow, plus black, known as CMYK or 4-colour printing. If we mix all the colours together, as we all know from primary school, we end up with a murky black. This is a subtractive colour model.



## RGB



## CMYK



*Additive (RGB) and subtractive (CMYK) colour models*

Because the two processes are so different, colours which look one way on a screen may look different in print. This is compounded by the fact that no two screens display colours in quite the same way, so what you see on your screen might look slightly different on my screen, might look different again in print. Also, the colour gamut, meaning the range of available colours, is different for RGB and CMYK. There are colours which exist on screen which literally cannot be printed (at least not in CMYK), and colours which exist in print which we cannot display on screen. The paper which we're printing on will also have a difference, and inks will show differently on different weights of paper and different levels of "whiteness".

The technicalities of all of this are outside of our scope (and my knowledge). All we need to understand is that colour is a slippery thing, and that for the printer to recreate exactly what we see on screen is by no means straightforward. Make sure you supply your artwork in CMYK and in a format the printer approves, but other than that be prepared to ask for advice and make sure things are right before you start a print run, not after.

If you are using a local printer they will normally be happy to print you a 'proof', a one-off copy which allows you to check the colours before going to print. If you have a colour printer and are able to supply the printer with a proof you've printed yourself which you are happy with, this is

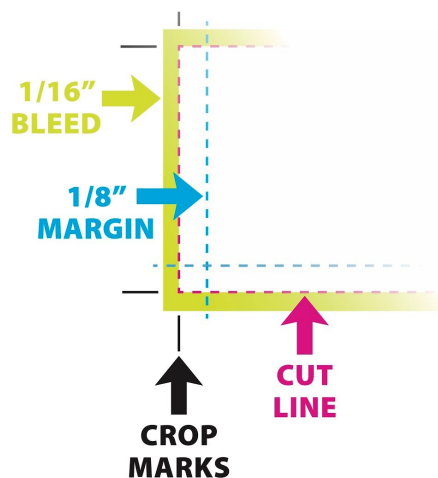
probably even better. The printer will then be able to adjust their colour settings to match your expected outcome.

## Cropping and bleeding

If you are printing anything where the ink goes (or can go) right up to the edge of the paper, things get more complicated again. Ink will not print on the very edge of the paper, so what printers do instead is to print it on a larger sheet of paper then cut off the excess, called **cropping**.

When cropping the cut will not always be absolutely perfect. If the cut were to be a little off the mark you could end up with a tiny white stripe down one side of your flyer where you didn't have quite enough cut off. To counteract this, printers use **bleed**, which means to design the artwork a few millimetres bigger in each direction than they actually need it. If the cutting machine is then half a millimetre out, it doesn't notice on the final product.

You may also have to observe a margin or **safe area** where you cannot place text, normally within a few millimetres of the edge. On the example below, the background image would go right up to the edge of the '1/16" bleed', while the text would stay within the '1/8" margin', and the print would be cut along the 'cut line', which is marked out for the printer using short parallel lines called **crop marks**.



Crop marks are used to tell the machine exactly where to make the cut, and you'll often be expected to supply the artwork with correct bleed and printers marks. If you're using a design package like inDesign or Photoshop this is very easy to do. Many printers will understand if you don't know what you're doing and will work with you to help you out, as the opportunity to explain what they want is much better than you simply presenting them with unsuitable artwork. Again, speak to your printer before starting and understand the technical requirements. Some will also provide you with a template to design in, which is really useful.

# Web Design

The biggest difference between designing for print and designing for the web is that when designing for print we know exactly what size paper we are designing for. Maybe we are designing an A6 leaflet, or an A4 brochure, a business card, and so on. With a website we simply have no idea what size screen the end user will be viewing it on. It could be a 2560-pixel wide 27" iMac, or it could be a 350-pixel wide iPhone 5 (the iPhone 5 happens to be the bane of my web developer life). We just don't know.

The way this is generally dealt with these days is with **responsive web design**, which means elements change their size and position automatically depending on the screen size of the user. Assuming you're not a coder and you're using visual design tools like Wix, you will probably have little control over this and the program will (with varying success) do it for you. If you find that something doesn't look right at a given screen size, you may have to adjust your content to make it work.

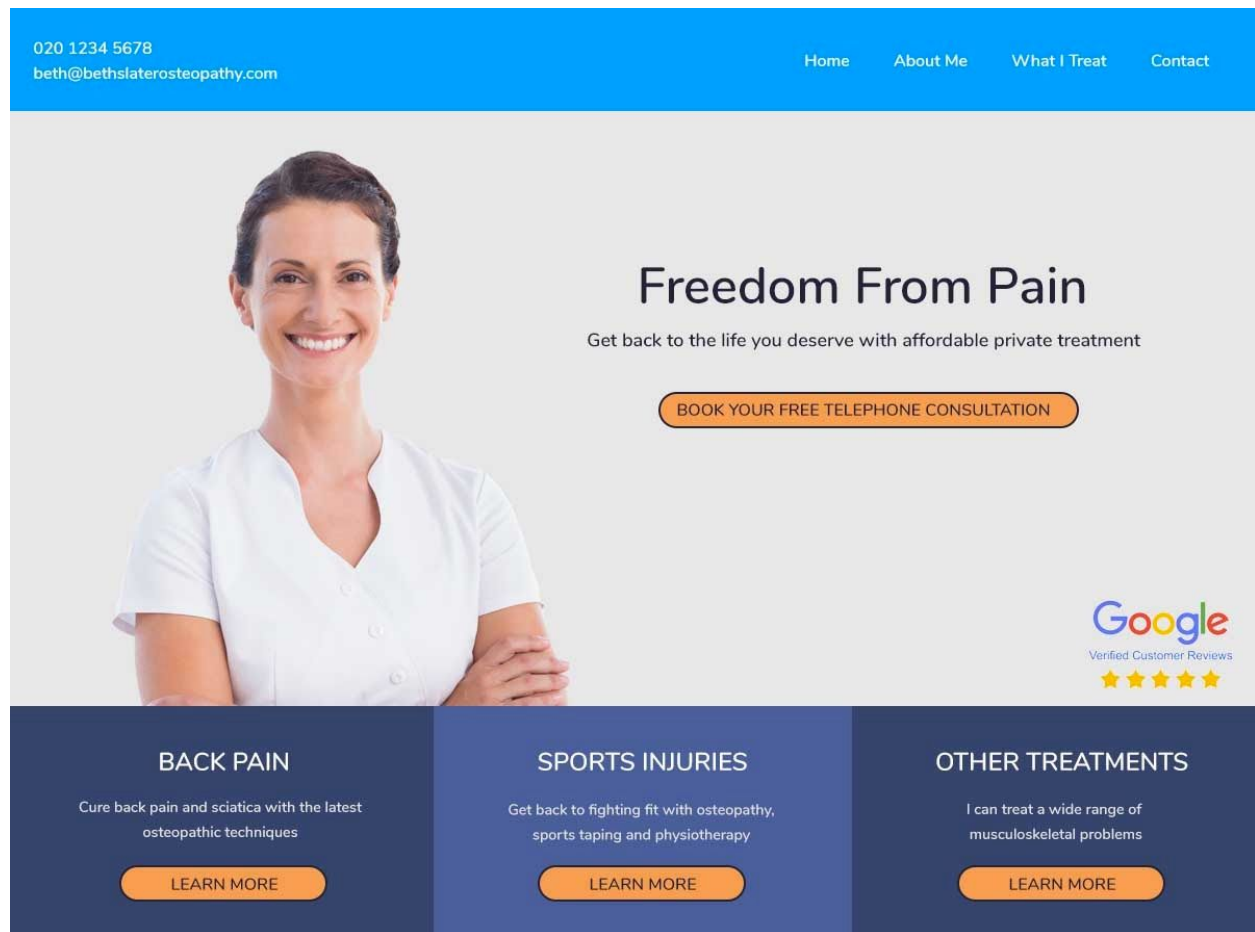
Roughly half of your users will be looking on a mobile phone and half on a laptop or desktop (and only about 5% on a tablet). You can find out for yourself in your web statistics. The key is to test your site on your phone and to experiment with resizing the browser window in your computer to see how it looks.

## Colour schemes

The other huge difference between web and print is that we can actually interact with a web page. In order to make the page as friendly as possible for the user to interact with we need to make it clear which bits are to be interacted with. If you're as old as me you may remember when the links on all web pages were blue and underlined. This allows the user to quickly see which bits of the page can be clicked on, and which bits are just for reading.

We might not want our web page to look straight out of the 90s, but a similar approach works well for web. When designing your web colour scheme, think about using one or two colours that

will sit nicely with the background, and an ‘action colour’ which stands out from the other two for buttons, links and anything else you can click on. It makes the page much easier to use. Let’s take a look at Beth’s homepage again from the website guide.



We can see the blues in the menu bar and featureboxes are all complementary colours, close on the colour wheel, and the ‘action colour’ of orange is across from blue on the colour wheel, so it stands out and shows us immediately where on the page we can click.

# **Final Thoughts**

## **Consistent styling**

Lots of disparate elements on a page, no matter how good they might be on their own, will look cluttered and messy. The function of design is to communicate clearly our ideas and for that we need consistent styling. Ideally, every heading will be in the same style, so will every subheading, all body text will be uniform, spacing will follow a set structure and colours will be consistent throughout. This way it is easy for the reader to understand what is going on, and see some logic in the design.

## **The zero-sum game**

With graphic design, as with copywriting and all the other skills we've looked at, less is more. What we are trying to do is get across the Big Idea as succinctly as possible, and the right image and 3-word slogan will do that better than dozens of images, text and other elements.

## **Nothing is really new**

It's a misconception that designers sit down and are magically struck with inspiration to create your amazing flyer or website. The 'creative process' is more a case of first scouring every single thing you can find that is similar to what you're trying to create. If you're making a flyer then Google 'flyer designs' and find some you like. Try to understand what specific elements you like about them and think about how you can use/develop/copy those elements in your own design. The more you can develop the idea, the more it will seem like your own. As Picasso said, 'good artists borrow, great artists steal'.

## **Practice, learn, enjoy**

Graphic design is an art that you can learn. There are many great books on graphic design that can help you, but there's no substitute for practice, discovering your own voice and style. Pay

attention to the design of magazines, signs, logos and works of art, and see what you can take away from them. Respect the 'rules' and received wisdom, but be bold enough to go with your own ideas when you believe in them, you will be a better designer for it in the long run.