UNIT 9: DESIGN CRITIQUE

Review Guide

KEY DEFINITIONS

File Compression: Compression of files, particularly image files, is the process of reducing the overall file size (bytes) without degrading the quality of the image.

Lossy: A form of "destructive" image compression, where data from the source file is lost when the file is compressed.

Lossless: A "non-destructive" form of image compression, where data from the source file is retained when the image is compressed.

DPI: Dots per inch of the file. This is a common measure of resolution for print content.

PPI: Pixels per inch of the file. This is the equivalent of DPI for screen-based content.

COMMON FILE TYPES

GIF
(pronounced two ways, ideally with a soft "g" as in "jiffy," but also acceptable with a hard "g" as in "girl," designer/coder will see .gif file extension)

» Pros
- Universal support across browsers
- Supports transparency
- Efficient compression (lossless) generally results in smaller file sizes without significant image degradation
- Supports animation

» Cons
- Does not support as many colors as the other two file types (may not be suitable to photographs)

» Best Uses:
- Images with large amounts of continuous color, e.g., logos, illustrations
- Page elements such as buttons

JPEG
(pronounced "jay-peg," designer/coder will see .jpg or .jpeg file extension)

» Pros
- Universal support across browsers
- Designer/coder can adjust degree of compression

» Cons
- Efficient compression resulting in smaller files; however, data is lost in the process (lossy).
- Creating jpegs from jpegs will therefore result in image degradation with each generation.

» Best Uses:
- Photographs

PNG
(pronounced "ping," designer/coder will see .png file extension)

» Pros
- Supported across almost all browsers
- Supports transparency
- Compression (lossless) generally results in smaller file sizes without significant image degradation, but not always as efficient as .gif or .jpeg.

» Cons
- Widespread browser support but not universal
- .png transparency not universally supported

» Best Uses:
- Images with large amounts of continuous color, e.g., logos, illustrations
- Page elements such as buttons

IMAGE CONSIDERATIONS

Stock Photography: Often sold through stock sites that aggregate audio/visual assets. These sites typically include photography from a number of creative professionals.

Royalty-Free License: A license that allows for unlimited use for a one-time fee.

Creative Commons Licenses: A variety of image

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licenses that allow for individual licensing of work, ranging from highly restrictive to limited restrictions on use and attribution.

RULE OF THIRDS

Imagine a 3x3 grid created by two vertical lines and two horizontal line.

The "rule" states the following: By placing the focal point at one of the four points created by the intersection of the vertical and horizontal lines, you can create an aesthetically pleasing balance. Additionally, the horizontal and vertical lines can be used as guides to place other in-frame elements.

GOLDEN MEAN

For a number of artists and scientists, beauty—and more specifically, beautiful proportions—can be mathematically defined by the Golden Mean. The Golden Mean, also referred to as Φ, is a ratio of 1:1.618.

Translation: Elements that make up a beautiful visual experience are related to one another by a factor of 1.618. While this may sound like an arbitrary value, objects found in nature, e.g., seashells, flower petals, and pinecones, exhibit this value in their construction. Artists have historically recognized this proportion as a "divine ratio," further reinforcing its importance by using it as a visual underpinning for historically significant works of art such as the Parthenon and the Mona Lisa.

DESIGN CRITIQUE GUIDELINES: PRESENTING YOUR WORK

1. **The critique is built upon a community of trust—everyone participates.** The discussion is about your work- not about you as an individual.
2. **Set the context at the outset.** Help your audience understand the problem you were trying to solve.
3. **Invite specific feedback.** Ask questions that elicit focused guidance, rather than generalized feedback.
4. **Listen openly.** Not every piece of feedback requires a response.
5. **Take notes and respond strategically.** During a critique, consider new ideas, admit when you're wrong, and kill your darlings when needed.

DESIGN CRITIQUE GUIDELINES: PROVIDING FEEDBACK

1. **Understand the problem that the designer is attempting to address.** Clarifying questions will help both you and the designer understand the work!
2. **Provide objective feedback.** Base your critique in specific design language (i.e. "The height and weight of the subhead type is too similar to the body type.")
3. **Support positive feedback with meaningful guidance.** Don't give compliments for the sake of being nice, try to really hone in on what the designer has done well.
4. **Provide actionable insights.** Give the designer specific directions for next steps to take following the critique.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MENTOR

1. Why do I need to worry about copyright?
2. How can I look beyond personal preference and see imagery more objectively?
3. What makes one image aesthetically preferable to another?
4. Are there standard photographic conventions I should adhere to?
5. Are there any established systems I can use to define the structure of my pages?
6. Even though I'm new to design and/or code, how can I best critique the work of others?