

Jalen Broxie

Dr. Rapp

CIS 275

28 April 2025

## Introduction

When making my portfolio website, I wanted to show that clear organization, being simplistic, having a good visual design, accessibility, and an emphasis on the needs of the users were all very important factors when it came to making this website. Throughout the project, I found out how important the main principles of usability are and how much better they can make your site. I used the things we learned from Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think* and the *Web Style Guide* by Patrick J. Lynch and Sarah Horton. I designed based on real user personas and feedback, logical layout, and used the CRAP and POUR principles throughout the process of making the website.

## User Personas

At the beginning of the project, I developed three user personas in order to find my target audience. The first was a prospective employer who might come across my site through a job application. This user would need fast access to my resume, academic background, and project samples without feeling overwhelmed. I also thought about a

college peer who would be more casual, maybe they would want to learn about my sports career, personal interests, or some of the projects I've worked on. I also added a professor who would want to learn more about me and the extracurricular part of my life. One of the ways that I addressed these user personas was by adding an about me page and detailing some of the things that I like. This helped the professor's user persona and allowed them to understand who I am a little better. I added my download resume button for employers who needed to know some of my skills and qualifications. I also added a projects tab that allowed the user to view certain projects that would show my peers examples of what I have worked on.

One scenario that helped me shape the homepage layout was imagining the employer having only a few minutes to evaluate my qualifications. Something that helped me make my homepage was when Krug said, "It should be self-evident. Obvious. Self-explanatory," I kept the homepage direct, with a short welcome message and links to other parts of the webpage that would give them additional information. This would make it easier for them to get to where they need to go as quickly as possible. Another situation involved a peer browsing from their phone in their dorm. To help them navigate the site a little better, I implemented a hamburger menu. I had to make sure that viewing it on a different device didn't break the layout and make it look bad. This allowed me to follow a rule that was emphasized in the *Web Style Guide*: "pages must adapt gracefully to different screen sizes."

Throughout the development of this project, I needed to make sure all of the organization of the pages made sense to me, but also for some of my user personas and

scenarios. After usability testing, I made some small changes, like enlarging buttons, making it easier to tap on a phone, different link titles, and making sure there was a disparity between what was clickable and what wasn't.

### Why I Organized it This Way

I wanted to design my site in a traditional way so that the content was in sequential order and top to bottom. This made it best for scrolling through, but not too much content so that the user is scrolling too much. In *Don't Make Me Think* and the *Web Style Guide*, it emphasizes that minimizing user effort is important for them to stay on the site and get the information they need. Krug talks about how users don't really read the web pages carefully, and they usually scan. Knowing this, I decided to use clear and simple page headings like "About Me" and "Projects," so that it was clear where everything was that they were looking for.

The navigation is consistent on every page, and it is at the top, which makes it easily reachable and findable. On desktop screens, the logo is on the left, and the nav links are lined up to the right. On mobile, it collapses into a hamburger menu, so that it is simple and avoids clutter. Every important section is broken into a box sectioned off in some way. This makes it easier to scan the content. For example, I make the resume page sectioned off into education, experience, and leadership activities. I also used flexbox to make sure the site remained balanced regardless of the content on the page. Following the *Web Style Guide*, I made sure every section had enough spacing, clear headings, and logical order.

### How I Chose the Theme

For the theme, I wanted something that would look pretty professional without losing some of the things like I like, like the colors red and black together. With this, I chose a maroon color as one of the main colors because it stands out against lighter backgrounds and creates contrast. It also doesn't overwhelm the user which is something that aligns with some of the core ideas of the *Web Style Guide* when it comes to color.

The fonts that I used are easy to read. I used the Segoe UI family because I felt that it is good for websites with multiple pages, viewing on different platforms, and looking at it on different screen sizes. I wanted to stay away from trying to be too clever. Krug says, "Clever is good, but only if the cleverness helps convey." I felt that adding too much of what wasn't needed was unnecessary, so I wanted the theme to be simple, too. I focus on skim-able layouts, with headings, subheadings, and buttons that are consistent throughout the site.

Adding a "fun" section to the About Page with some of my favorite teams and movies was a decision that I made in order to form a sense of relatability. I wanted the theme to be professional but have some accents of fun elements without it detracting from the purpose of the website. This also catered to college peers and even some recruiters who could learn about my interests. This makes the About Me page more memorable.

### CRAP and POUR principles

Thorough the site, I used a lot of the crap principles. Here are some of the examples where I used them: I used contrast when creating the dark navigation bar against the light background of the page. Repetition was used in the style of the buttons and the nav bar being consistent. Alignment of all the content is in the middle, but the other text is usually

left-aligned in those sections, creating the F shape. For proximity, everything is pretty much divided into sections, and within these sections, all of the related items are together. For example, in my projects page, all of the project names, descriptions, pictures, and buttons are grouped by that specific project and placed together.

I also followed the POUR principles to make sure the site was accessible and usable for not only my target audience, but for everyone. The site is perceivable with high contrast and alternatives for images. It is operable with large touch targets and is easy to navigate. It remains understandable because there isn't a lot of filler or extra information, and each button does what it says.

The *Web Style Guide* reinforced the importance of accessibility during my work. It states, "designers must ensure that their sites can be used by people with a variety of disabilities and under varying technical conditions." Krug's reminder to prioritize ease of use over design flashiness also kept me from overcomplicating things.

### How I Made Use of User Feedback

User feedback was really important when designing this website. During the usability testing, one of my peers who was acting as a recruiter noted that the Projects page needed better labeling, so they could quickly understand what each project was and its significance. I adjusted the headings and made the project descriptions shorter and easier to understand.

Another peer reviewer pointed out that in the mobile view, the original section layout for my favorite movies was crammed. You couldn't see the whole movie posters. I fixed this

by adjusting the flex direction to vertical and on smaller screens, resizing the section widths. Accessibility testers also mentioned early on that the fonts weren't super readable, so I changed them to what they are now. Krug's principle that "testing one user is 100% better than testing none" proved to be true when I asked some of my friends to test one of my first versions of the site. It allowed me to make improvements faster and think of things I wouldn't have otherwise.

## Conclusion

Overall, I wanted my site to meet the needs of its users while still using my own creativity. By using Don't Make Me Think and the Web Style Guide, applying CRAP and POUR principles, and responding to usability feedback, I think I have created a personal website that is not only functional, but also uniquely shows who I am as a student and what I want for my future.