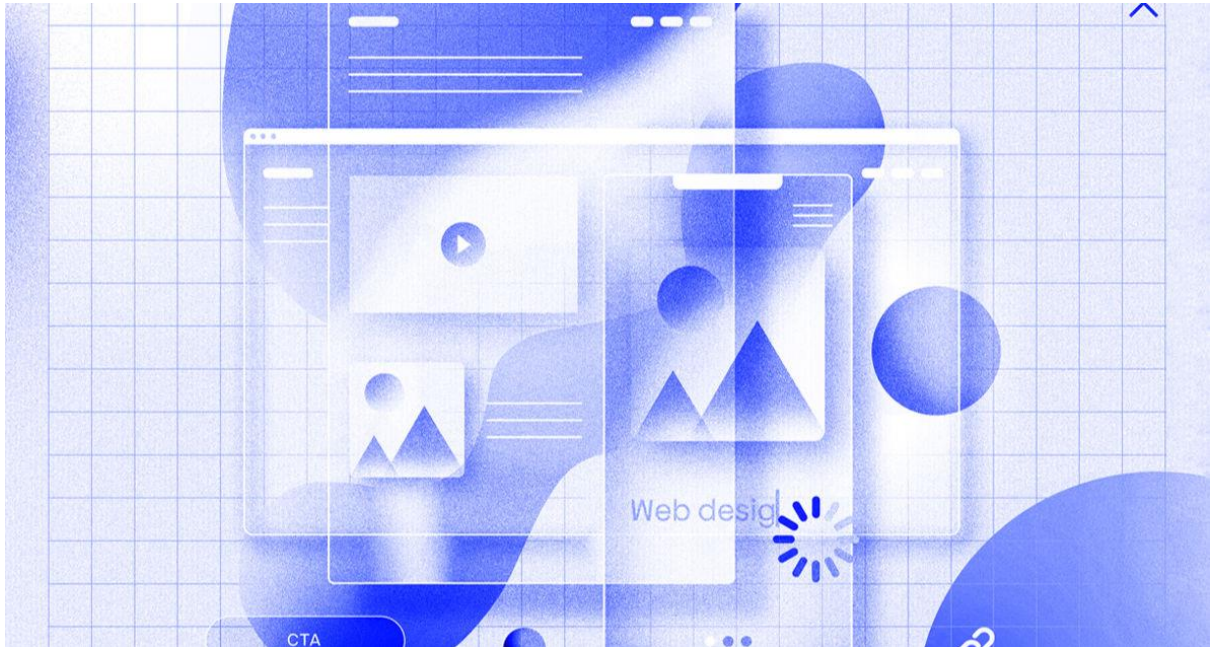


The principles of good website design

While every website is a brand-new project, some golden rules forever apply. Discover these ten north stars of web design.



Good [website design](#) is all about striking the perfect balance between aesthetics and usability. A well-designed site builds trust and guides visitors to take action, all the while creating an enjoyable user experience.

So how will your website provide visitors with a great experience, from start to finish? Read on to find out how to design a website using important principles for effective results, why they matter, and relevant points on getting them right for your next project.

10 principles of good website design

01. Seamless navigation

Great navigation allows visitors to easily locate information and find what they're looking for. Without it, it can be hard for users to understand what to do when landing on your page. For that reason, it's important to structure your website in a meaningful and logical way that feels predictable and understandable. Many sites use a combination of methods to help visitors find their way around, including structured menus, keyword searches, and internal linking.

The use of clear labels, intuitive categories, and consistent placement of elements can help visitors easily access information on your site. Keeping navigation simple, intuitive, and consistent are key to a seamless navigation experience.

02. Responsive design

Responsive web design fluidly adjusts to accommodate your visitor's device or browser, taking into account factors such as screen width, resolution, and screen orientation. Responsive design allows visitors to experience your site just as you intended on any device type or screen size.

A successful website is one that works equally well on all viewports, no matter its size or aspect ratio, from mobile to desktop and anything in between. Responsive design achieves this result by [resizing images](#) and rearranging content rearranges to accommodate various screen sizes and browsers.

03. Across the board consistency

A cohesive look and functionality throughout a website make it feel whole, while also improving usability and learnability. This includes anything from the use of colour and typography to the placement of icons and buttons, to the functionality of your site. A consistent design ensures that visitors who learn how to use one part of your site can transfer that knowledge to other parts of your site, resulting in a positive and familiar experience.

Creating a style guide or [design system](#) with reusable elements and components is a great way to ensure consistency when designing your website.

There are a few categories to keep in mind when designing for consistency:

- **Visual consistency** ensures that your site maintains a coherent look and feel throughout, using mechanisms such as colour (like these [black and white websites](#)), typography, and imagery.
- **Functional consistency** ensures that similar components of your site work in the same way.
- **Content consistency** ensures that the voice and quality of your site's content remains steady throughout your entire site.

04. Smooth performance

A good website design should load quickly, work properly, and give informative feedback when there's an issue or delay. There are a variety of tools available to measure how quickly content loads on your site, such as [Google's PageSpeed Insights](#).

You can optimize your site's performance by adjusting image sizes or any behind-the-scenes functionality that can slow down your site. Checking whether your pages [scroll smoothly](#) and whether interactions work seamlessly in a variety of digital environments, including [browser type](#) or connection speed, also contributes to site performance.

In cases of a delay in loading content, displaying a reassuring error message, showing a loading animation, or loading the most important elements first while other elements continue to load in the background are all ways to boost the perceived performance of your site.

05. Frictionless conversion

For visitors who want to sign up, subscribe, or make a purchase, the process should be as easy as possible. Websites have a desired action that they encourage users to take, and converting visitors into taking that step is a top priority in their design.

Introducing points of friction — whether it's distracting visuals, confusing labels, or asking for too much information — can make it even harder to convert your visitors to potential customers. That's why it's important to design conversion processes that are free of distraction, confusion, and frustration. This might mean removing any unnecessary steps, asking only for relevant information, or designing clear calls-to-action, to name a few approaches.

06. Clear communication

Websites communicate with visitors in a number of different ways. Written content, visual elements, and interactive components all work together to communicate a clear and cohesive message. Visitors who arrive at your site should be able to understand quickly and effortlessly why your website exists, what you're offering, and what actions they can take. Without a clear, coherent message, visitors can end up feeling frustrated and leave your site.

Be clear on the message you want to convey early on in your design process, in order to enhance and support that concept in your various design choices. In addition, take care of readability and legibility, so that your message is easy to read.

07. Effective visual language

In [good website design](#), all colors, icons, typography, imagery and other visual elements amount to a powerful visual language that tells a story. A strong UI and visual language is clear and distinct, with a recognizable style that creates a unique brand identity. When combined with well-written content, an effective visual language helps create a cohesive, memorable and enjoyable experience throughout your site and beyond.

08. Hierarchical content structure

The [information on your site should be well organized](#) and easy to digest. Visual hierarchy allows you to structure the content meaningfully and logically, so that the most important information receives the most emphasis and the least important information receives the least emphasis.

Hierarchy can be achieved using a variety of visual techniques, including the use of color, contrast, size, white space, alignment and movement. Hierarchical content structure helps visitors better

absorb information and guides them to find the information that they're looking for in a clear and user-friendly way.

09. Familiar web conventions

A good website design often feels familiar, even when we encounter it for the first time. In these cases, navigating from page to page is intuitive, information is easy to find and understand, and everything functions as you would expect.

That's because the best website design often follows familiar web conventions, or industry standards that outline clarity and usability in web design. Web conventions represent mental models that visitors have developed from visiting countless other sites and rely on them in creating a user-friendly interface. As [Jakob's Law](#) explains, visitors spend most of their time on other sites. This means that they prefer new sites to work in a similar way to the ones they already know.

Designing your site according to familiar web conventions — including conventions around [interaction design](#), visual design, and information architecture — allows visitors to find information quickly and confidently, rather than trying to learn a new system each time. One example of a web convention is placing a global navigation bar at the top of the screen, with clearly labeled categories that represent your site's content. Moving the navigation bar to the bottom of the page or using labels that people may not be familiar with might be innovative but is far from what users have come to know and expect and could cause usability issues.

10. A reliable, transparent interface

A website design should establish trust with its visitors. In order to create a credible online environment, the information on your site should be clear, consistent and accurate. It should also be free of errors or confusion and show attention to detail.