TYPES OF WEB LAYOUT

**In short, each page layout name describes how the layout behaves when the page is viewed at different browser widths.**

Static Page Layout

A static page layout (sometimes called a “fixed” layout or “fixed width” layout) uses a preset page size and does not change based on the browser width. In other words, the page layout might have a permanent width of 960 pixels no matter what.

Different devices will treat a static page layout in various ways, so the rendered page could be slightly unpredictable. For example, on a desktop browser, if the window is too small horizontally, then the page will be cut off and horizontal scroll bars will be displayed. On a mobile device like an iPhone, the page will be scaled automatically, allowing the user to zoom in on points of interest (provided that no metatags override this default behavior).

## Liquid Page Layout

A liquid page layout (sometimes called “fluid” or “fluid width”) uses relative units instead of fixed units. Typically a liquid layout will use percentages instead of pixels, but any relative unit of measurement will work, such as ems.

A liquid layout often will fill the width of the page, no matter what the width of the browser might be. Liquid layouts don’t require as much thought as a responsive design, but there are some major drawbacks at very large or very small browser widths. If the browser is very wide, some content might be stretched too far. On large screens, a single paragraph might run across the page on a single line. Conversely, a multi-column layout on a small screen could be too crowded for the content.

## Adaptive Page Layout

An adaptive page layout uses CSS media queries to detect the width of the browser and alter the layout accordingly. Adaptive layouts will use fixed unit like pixels, just like a static layout, but the difference is that there are essentially multiple fixed widths defined by specific media queries.

A media query is an expression of logic, and when used in combination with other media queries, they form a basic algorithm. So for example, an adaptive page layout might say something like, “If the browser 500 pixels wide, set the main content container to be 400 pixels wide. If the browser is 1000 pixels wide, then set the main content container to be 960 pixels wide.” Beyond the main content container, other parts of the page might change in width, swap places, or be removed. For example, a two column layout might become a single column layout if the browser is too narrow.

Adaptive layouts are a good stop-gap solution if a legacy static layout needs to be converted to support mobile devices. They also typically require less development time than a responsive layout. The major drawback is that device widths in-between the explicit breakpoints are often less than ideal, with either too much space or not enough space.

## Responsive Page Layout

A responsive page layout uses both relative units and media queries, ostensibly combining the ideas of a liquid layout and an adaptive layout. As the browser increases or decreases in width, a responsive layout will flex just like a liquid layout. However, if the browser goes beyond certain widths defined by media query breakpoints, then the layout will change more dramatically to accommodate a wide or narrow width.

Typically responsive designs are built using a mobile-first approach. That means the mobile layout is designed first, and then as the browser becomes wider on tablets and desktops, the designer will find ways to expand the mobile layout. This tends to create better experiences overall, because it’s easier to expand a design than to try and simplify a large layout for mobile screens.

6. Elastic Design Link

There is a third option when working with Web page layouts. An elastic design is sometimes preferred by designers because it mixes the two other main layout types. It works by sizing all elements with em‘s. The quote below explains exactly what an em is and why it can be beneficial.

PROS LINK

If implemented correctly, this layout style can be very user-friendly. The goal is to have everything grow larger or smaller in proportion with the user’s preference.

Elastic layouts are perfect for designers who love both fluid and fixed designs, because the pros of each are found in elastic layouts.

CONS LINK

Even given the first pro above, this type of layout can create a huge problem with usability. It takes a lot of savvy and testing to get the layout right for all users.

This type of layout is much more difficult to create than the other two, and the extra bit of usability it brings may not always seem worth it.

Depending on the specifics of the layout, some elastic designs may require supplementary style sheets and cheats for IE6.

