Mockups and Wireframes

Lesson Time: 5 Minutes

PLAN FIRST. CODE LAST.

When creating a great looking page, it's far too slow to write some html and css, stop, see how it looks, make some edits, stop, see how it looks, stop, see how it looks. No one wants to create this way. We need a way to try out ideas quickly, change them quickly, and get experiment to the look we want.

Now, a web developer is not a graphic designer, but you may find yourself in a situation where you are asked to design from scratch. A **mockup** is an image of a website, created in a graphics program that can be used to build the real thing. A **wireframe** is a simple skeleton layout of the UI that helps us figure out where to layout our user interface (UI).

In this set of lessons, we'll try our hand at a graphic design program to make our own mockups.

Key Terms	
Lesson Files	
Additional Resources	
Further Learning	

Mockup Tutorial
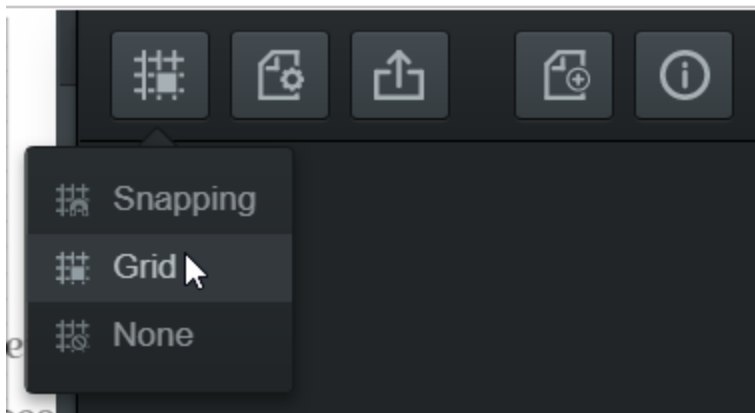
Lesson Time: 25 Minutes

WORK FASTER WITH MOCKUPS.

Vectr is a free online vector graphics program. It's simple to use and we can create mockups for our websites quickly with no code. There are many free and paid mockup software to choose from.

To get started goto https://vectr.com

Grids

First, let's turn on the grid so that all our objects will line up.
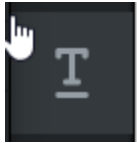

The Rectangle Tool

Pick the Rectangle Tool and draw a rectangle for our header across the top of the page. Change the color to a green.

Draw another rectangle to create a footer and set it's color to black.

Draw another rectangle down across the left side to make a sidebar. Color it gray.

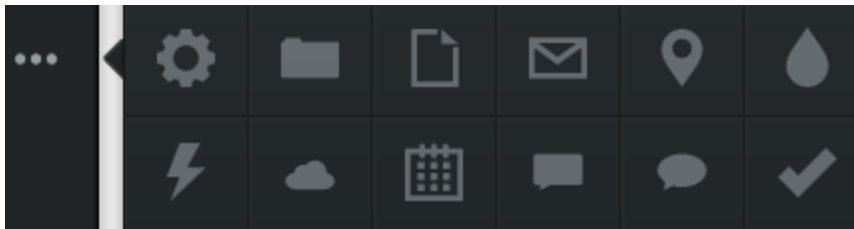Draw some more buttons inside of the sidebar and color them a dark gray.

The Text Tool

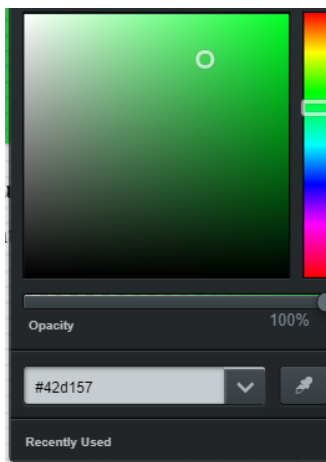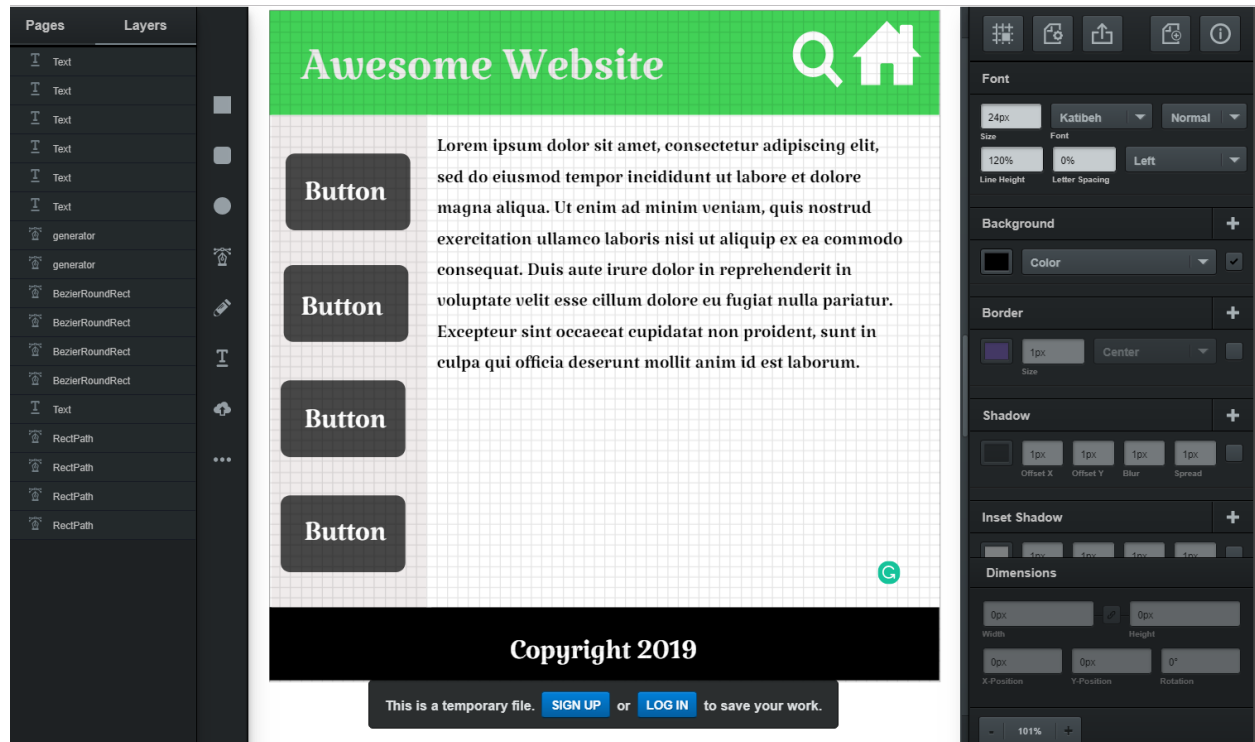Click the text tool and add some text to the header, the footet, and the buttons.

Icons

Click the **…** on the toolbar and add a Home and Search Icon into our Header.

Hex Color Codes
Play with the colors of our shapes and text. Notice that as we change the color, we get the exact hex code to add the color code to CSS in the future. To create this exact color green in CSS, we would use color: #42d157;

Here's the mockup built in about 15 minutes, which is much faster than starting in CSS. mockup tools let me figure out the colors I want and gives me the color hex codes. It lets me figure out the fonts I want and the font sizes, and let me figure out the layout of the page. My web site is going to look much better by experimenting with a mockup first.

The important takeaway is that by the time I start coding my CSS, I should already know what I want my page to look like, and not be blindly coding away.

Other Vector Programs for Mockups

The best professional mockup tools we recommend are Adobe Illustrator and Affinity Designer, however neither is free to use. Balsamiq is a popular paid tool as well.

Krita is a great free tool that's pretty easy to use, and while it's more for digital art, it has the same vector features. Adobe XD is free mockup tool offered by Adobe.   Inkscape is a free vector graphics tool that is very difficult to use.

All of these software packages do the same thing -- they let you create layouts and mocks using simple shapes and colors.

Free Icons

In this tutorial, we added a cool home and search icon to our page. In a professional setting, these icons will come from a graphic designer. For class, you can get free icons from https://www.flaticon.com . All you must do is credit the author of the icons in your HTML

Key Terms	
Lesson Files	
Additional Resources	https://www.flaticon.com https://loremipsum.io/ https://vectr.com
Further Learning	https://colibriwp.com/blog/website-layout-design-ideas/ https://www.adobe.com/products/xd.html https://krita.org/en/download/krita-desktop/

Lab: Mockup

Lesson Time: 35 Minutes

Use Vectr.com or another free Vector Graphics tool of your choice to create the layout shown below. Experiment with colors, texts, and icons to bring the page to life. The design is up to you, so try to experiment. The layout should be a header and footer with 3 unequal columns of content.

Header and Footer layout with 3 unequal columns.

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