**Responsive Web Design (RWD) :**

Responsive design works on the principle of flexibility. The idea is that a single fluid design based upon media queries, flexible grids, and responsive images can be used to create a user experience that flexes and changes based on a multitude of factors. The primary benefit is that each user experiences a consistent design.

The distilled definition of a responsive web design is that it will fluidly change and respond to fit any screen or device size.

**Adaptive Web Design (AWD) :**

Adaptive design is more like the modern definition of progressive enhancement. Instead of one flexible design, adaptive design detects the device and other features, and then provides the appropriate feature and layout based on a predefined set of view-port sizes and other characteristics. This can result in a lack of consistency across platforms and devices.

The distilled definition of an adaptive design is that it will change to fit a predetermined set of screen and device sizes.

**Comparisons and distinctions :**

The biggest similarity between the two methods is that they both allow websites to be viewed in mobile devices and various screen sizes, ultimately providing visitors with a better mobile user experience. Where the two methods differ is in their delivery of the responsive/adaptive structures: RWD relying on flexible and fluid grids, and AWD relying on predefined screen sizes.

One of the main distinctions between the two is that RWD might take more code and implementation strategies with the fluid grids, CSS, and flexible foundations, while AWD has a streamlined, layered approach, which utilizes scripting to assist with adapting to various devices and screen sizes.