

Website Basics Notes

1. Process & Design Overview

- Focus: How to approach building a site, understanding audience needs, and presenting information effectively.
- Goals:
 - Identify target audience and their expectations.
 - Organize information for easy navigation.
 - Apply design theory to help visitors achieve goals.
 - Use design tips for attractive, professional sites.

2. Understanding the Target Audience

- Design for the target audience, not just the site owner.
- Ask questions to define audience demographics:
 - **Individuals:**
 - * Age range, gender mix, location (country, urban/rural), income, education, marital/family status, occupation, work hours, web usage frequency, device type.
 - **Companies:**
 - * Company/department size, visitors position, purpose (personal or for others), budget.

- Create fictional visitor profiles to guide design decisions (e.g., color, detail level):

Name	Gordon	M
Gender	M	F
Age	28	4
Location	Chicago	S
Occupation	Teacher	A
Income	\$62k	\$
Web Use	2–3 days/wk	D

3. Why People Visit

- Understand motivations and goals to tailor content/design.
- *Key Motivations:*
 - Entertainment or specific goal (personal/professional).
 - Essential or luxury activity.
- *Specific Goals:*
 - General research vs. specific information (e.g., facts, products).
 - Familiarity with product/service (introduction needed?).
 - Time-sensitive information (e.g., news, updates).
 - Purchase decisions or contact needs (e.g., map, email, phone).
- Example visitor goals:
 - Gordon: Buy a tennis racquet for his girlfriend.

- Molly: Evaluate doggy daycare service suitability.
- Jasper: Complain about a hotel experience.
- Ayo: Learn about a new architecture course.
- Ivy: Review photographers portfolio for commissioning.

4. Information Needs

- Provide information to achieve visitor goals quickly.
- Offer supporting information to enhance relevance.
- Prioritize information (key to non-essential).
- Key questions:
 - Familiarity with brand/subject (need introduction?).
 - Key features of offerings.
 - Unique differentiators vs. competitors.
 - Common follow-up questions post-goal.

5. Visit Frequency

- Update frequency depends on content type (e.g., news vs. static services).
- Questions to determine update schedule:
 - **Goods/Services:**
 - * Return purchase frequency, stock/service updates.
 - **Information:**
 - * Subject update frequency, percentage of repeat visitors.
- Set a regular update schedule for efficiency.

6. Site Maps

- Diagram pages and group information for site structure.
- Use card sorting to organize information into pages/sections.
- Involve target audience for intuitive grouping.
- Example site map:
 - Homepage
 - About: History, Foundation, Future Plans
 - Articles: News, Press, Book Reviews
 - Visit: Location, Opening Times
 - Shop: Books, Gifts, Trinkets
 - Contact
- Section homepages for large sites (e.g., product categories).

7. Wireframes

- Simple sketches showing key information hierarchy and space allocation.
- Focus on content placement (e.g., logo, navigation, headings), not visuals (color, fonts).
- Tools: Paper, Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, online tools (e.g., gomockingbird.com, lovelycharts.com).
- Example: Product page with logo, navigation (Home, Products, Services, About, Contact), product photography, key selling points.
- Benefits: Ensures all required information is included, clarifies functionality before design.

8. Design for Communication

- Aim: Communicate effectively via visual hierarchy, prioritization, organization.
- *Prioritizing*: Use visual hierarchy (size, color, style) to emphasize key messages.
- *Organizing*: Group related content into blocks for simplicity.
- *Visual Hierarchy*:
 - *Size*: Larger elements (e.g., headings) attract attention first.
 - *Color*: Bright foreground/background draws focus.
 - *Style*: Distinct styles (e.g., bold, italic) highlight content.
 - *Images*: High-contrast images draw attention, convey messages succinctly.
- *Grouping and Similarity*:
 - *Proximity*: Close items perceived as related.
 - *White Space*: Gaps separate unrelated items.
 - *Closure*: Imaginary boxes group elements.
 - *Color*: Background color links related items.
 - *Continuance*: Linear/curved alignment guides eye flow.
 - *Borders*: Lines define groups.
 - *Similarity*: Consistent color, size, font, shape suggests related content.

9. Navigation Design

- Helps users find content and understand site structure.
- Principles:
 - **Concise**: Limit to 8 links, use section homepages.
 - **Clear**: Descriptive link names (e.g., single words).
 - **Selective**: Reflect site sections, place functions (e.g., login) elsewhere.
 - **Context**: Highlight current page (e.g., color, marker).
 - **Interactive**: Links clickable, change on hover/click.
 - **Consistent**: Keep primary navigation uniform.
- Types: Primary (top/left), secondary (below/side), tertiary (footer).
- Example: Home, Artist Profiles, Exhibitions, Galleries, Publications, About, Contact.

10. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

- Improves site visibility in search results.
- *On-Page Techniques*:
 - Use keywords in 7 places:
 1. *Page Title*: In `<title>` (inside `<head>`).
 2. *URL*: Keywords in file name.
 3. *Headings*: Use in `<h1>`–`<h6>`.
 4. *Text*: Repeat keywords 2–3 times in body.
 5. *Link Text*: Keywords in `<a>` text.
 6. *Image Alt Text*: Descriptive alt attributes.
 7. *Page Descriptions*: In `<meta>` description tag.
 - Avoid hidden text (e.g., same color as background).
- *Off-Page Techniques*: Increase relevant inbound links, use keywords in link text.
- *Keyword Identification*:
 1. *Brainstorm*: List search terms for site topics.
 2. *Organize*: Group by site sections (e.g., products, services).
 3. *Research*: Use tools (e.g., adwords.google.co.uk, wordtracker.com, keyworddiscovery.com) for suggestions.
 4. *Compare*: Check competition via Google advanced search (titles).
 5. *Refine*: Select relevant keywords, add location for local services.
 6. *Map*: Assign 3–5 keywords per page, specific to content.

11. Analytics

- Use Google Analytics to track visitor behavior.
- *Setup*: Sign up at google.com/analytics, add tracking code before `</head>`.
- *Metrics*:
 - *Visits*: Total site visits (new visit after 30min inactivity).
 - *Unique Visits*: Total unique visitors.
 - *Page Views*: Total pages viewed.
 - *Pages per Visit*: Average pages per visit.
 - *Average Time*: Time spent per visit.
- *Content Analysis*:
 - *Pages*: Most viewed pages, time spent.
 - *Bounce Rate*: Percentage leaving from entry page.
 - *Landing Pages*: Entry pages.
 - *Top Exit Pages*: Common exit pages.
- *Traffic Sources*:
 - *Referrers*: Sites linking to yours.

- *Direct*: Direct URL/bookmark/email access.
- *Search Terms*: Keywords used to find site.
- *Advanced*: E-commerce tracking, goal paths.

12. Domain Names and Hosting

- *Domain Names*: Web address (e.g., google.com). Register via providers, check availability, pay annual fee.
- *Web Hosting*: Upload site to web servers for public access.
 - *Disk Space*: Total file size (HTML, CSS, images, scripts).
 - *Bandwidth*: Data transferred to visitors.
 - *Backups*: Check frequency, access for recovery.
 - *Email*: Mailbox size, number of mailboxes.
 - *Server-Side*: Support for languages/databases (e.g., PHP/MySQL, ASP.Net/SQL Server).
- *Hosted Services*: Platforms (e.g., WordPress.com, Shopify) provide hosting; may need separate email hosting.

13. FTP and Third-Party Tools

- *FTP*: Transfer files to web server using FTP programs (e.g., FileZilla, FireFTP, CuteFTP, SmartFTP, Transmit).
- *Setup*: Use provided FTP address, username, password; secure credentials.
- *Third-Party Tools*:
 - *Blogs*: wordpress.com, tumblr.com, posterous.com.
 - *E-commerce*: shopify.com, bigcartel.com, magento.com.
 - *Email Newsletters*: campaignmonitor.com, mailchimp.com.
 - *Social Sharing*: addthis.com, addtoany.com.

14. Summary

- *Process & Design*:
 - Understand audience, their goals, and information needs.
 - Use site maps and wireframes for structure and content planning.
 - Visual hierarchy (size, color, style) and grouping (proximity, similarity) enhance communication.
 - Navigation: Concise, clear, selective, contextual, interactive, consistent.
- *Practical Information*:
 - SEO: Use keywords in 7 key places, secure relevant links.
 - Analytics: Track visits, content, sources with Google Analytics.
 - Hosting: Secure domain, choose hosting based on disk space, bandwidth, backups, server-side support.
 - FTP/Tools: Use FTP for file transfer, leverage third-party platforms.