

INFO/CS 1300: Project 1 Requirements and Milestones

Overview

Project 1 is a chance for you to develop a personal web presence suitable for a target audience or audiences of your choice. This might be a general personal site; it might be a more professional presence; it might be a site that emphasizes some aspect of your interests or activities (a club, a hobby, a business, etc.).

The goal is to get experience using a number of the concepts from the first third of the course: design principles around information structuring and visual design; designing with and for users, including specifying requirements and doing initial user testing; and technologies, primarily HTML and CSS. For those of you who are thinking about careers in design and web development, you might also think of this as both a site where you'll assemble your portfolio and a portfolio piece in its own right, a first version of the first impression you'll make on future employers down the road.

Milestones

Milestone 1: An initial, single page, personal page.

Due: 8/29 @ 17:00

You'll upload an initial version of your site and a design rationale as a zip file to CMS.

Webpage Requirements

- A one page website (index.html).
- Correct, clean, consistently structured HTML5. Use the validator in Atom or <http://validator.w3.org/>.
- A variety of HTML tags. Shoot for at least 5, more if they make sense.
- At least one correctly-linked relative path image. No hotlinks!
- Cite the source of the image in the content of the page or in a comment.
- Test your site in Firefox and Chrome/Chromium.
- Add all files for the website into a folder called: p1m1-<your NetID>. Example: p1m1-kjh235.
- Zip the FOLDER (not the contents of the folder) as p1m1-<NetID>.zip (example: p1m1-kjh235.zip) and upload it to CMS for this assignment.

I strongly encourage you to not push ahead and complete any future milestones for this submission. Especially, adding any style to this milestone. Wait until we've covered the appropriate material in lecture.

Rationale Requirements

In addition to the site, the folder should also contain a PDF document, rationale.pdf, that presents your design rationale so far. For this milestone, it should include:

- A brief description of your target audience(s).
- The feel and features your site will have to cater to those audiences.
- The content you plan to include in the final version, and why it's the right content for those audiences.
- Any specific questions you have or feedback you want from the TA staff.
- Your rationale should be about 1 page, single-spaced.
- Save/Export your rationale document as a PDF. Do not submit a Word .doc or .docx file!

Make the case for your decisions using concepts from class, as well as other design principles, theories, examples, and cases from outside of class. You can use bullet points and lists, or full paragraphs, or a combo, whichever is appropriate. The writing should be solid draft quality but doesn't have to be fancy.

Potential Gotchas & Tips

- Don't wait until the last minute; technologies don't always cooperate and require some fiddling, especially the first time you use them.

Milestone 2: A multi-page personal site with creative and effective informational and navigation structure.

Due: 9/5 @ 17:00

Upload the next version of your site as a zip file (p1m2-<NetID>.zip) to CMS.

Website Requirements

- Multiple (2 or more) pages.
- Appropriate linking and structuring of pages for your audience.
- No dead-ends; no broken links; all reachable pages.
- Correct, clean, consistently structured HTML5. Use the validator in Atom or <http://validator.w3.org/>.
- Images placed in a separate folder (i.e. images) and correctly linked to using relative paths.
- All external content (i.e. not created by you) must be cited in the content of the page or in the comments.
- Test your webpage in Firefox and Chrome/Chromium.
- A clear theme or metaphor for the site's contents.

I strongly encourage you to not push ahead and complete any future milestones for this submission. Especially, adding any style to this milestone. Wait until we've covered the appropriate material in lecture.

Rationale Requirements

You'll again include a rationale.pdf, building on last week's but with more info since you're farther along. Again, a paragraph or two about each of these:

- A clearer description of audience: who are they, what are they interested in with respect to this site, and what are the design goals for that audience.
- A description of your overall site theme and why it's appropriate for the audience.
- A description of how you generated and considered alternatives for the site structure.
- An explanation of how you came to the organization and content that you chose.
- Why the choices you made are good ones, what tradeoffs this design makes, and why the design is appropriate for your audience.
- Any specific questions you have or feedback you want from the TA staff.

As always, make the case for your decisions using concepts from class, as well as other design principles, theories, examples, and cases from outside of class. This is a longer story than last time and so probably will require closer to 2 pages.

Potential Gotchas & Tips

- Do not forget about the requirements on this milestone in order to explore design. This week we focus on information and structure; next week we focus on design.
- On rationales, many people just say what they did, which we can directly see from the site and is thus not useful for us and a waste of time for you. Instead, give us the things we can't see: the alternatives, the justifications, the processes. Articulating reasons is important for convincing us, future teammates, clients, bosses, and yourself that you're making good choices and know what you're talking about.
- Start going to office hours now. TAs love to work with folks; they'll help you catch problems and make useful suggestions early; they can explain tech stuff that you're not sure about; they can help you diagnose problems with both code and tech; they can show you how to go about finding things out on your own. It's a big win.

Milestone 3: Site with improved content and navigation and (at least) two distinctly visually styled versions of the site (i.e., not just different colors).

Due: 9/12 @ 17:00

This time you'll submit 2 versions. Inside your p1m3-<NetID> folder, create two sub-folders, v1 and v2. The content, structure, and navigation for these can be the same (they can also be different if you are still considering multiple alternatives). Zip the p1m3-<NetID> folder and upload it to CMS.

Website Requirements

- Substantial improvements in content and structure versus Milestone 2 based on feedback.
- Correct, clean, consistently structured HTML5 and CSS3. (This means validated and tested in our two major browsers)
- An appropriate file structure for the project with pics (images) and CSS (style) in separate folders.
- Cite external content.
- Test in multiple browsers to make sure your page renders the same.
- Substantially distinct styles for the two versions, i.e., not just different colors, but different looks and feels (see <http://www.csszengarden.com/> for examples of how much power CSS gives you to render the same HTML file in different ways). Talk to your section TAs if this is unclear.

Rationale Requirements

Put the rationale in the p1m3-<NetID> folder. For this rationale, focus on the new bits:

- What changes did you make from Milestone 2 to content/information/navigation, and why?
- Discuss your visual designs: how did you come to them, what are their strengths and weaknesses, how do they fit your overall design goals and audiences?
- Emotion is a big part of design. What emotions were you thinking about or trying to convey in your designs?
- What's your plan for finishing the assignment: what things will you do, and when?
- Any specific questions you have or feedback you want from the TA staff.

As always, make the case for your decisions using concepts from class, as well as other design principles, theories, examples, and cases from outside of class. Remember to focus on the things we can't see just by looking at the site: changes, alternatives considered, processes, and justifications. Again, this is probably 1-2 (maybe 3) pages of reasonable quality writing.

Potential Gotchas & Tips

- Do not wait to start this milestone! CSS can be surprisingly difficult and often renders differently in different browsers. CSS can take a surprisingly long time to fiddle, and visual design takes a while; start early.

- Don't forget to acknowledge images, video, and CSS/HTML source code you borrow. Not acknowledging is passing ideas and work off as your own; this is plagiarism and kills grades (in school) and reputations (everywhere). Borrowing and adapting is totally in the spirit of the web design community but you have to give credit where it is due.
- Spend some time designing in sketches (paper, Inkscape, GIMP, whatever is a comfy medium for you) before moving to CSS. It's hard to both design and implement at the same time, especially when using new technologies; sketches also encourage you to consider multiple ideas, mitigating a key risk in design (locking into one thing too early).

Final Version: A finished and polished website.

Due: 9/19 @ 17:00

Create a folder called p1final-<NetID>. It should be an evolution of Milestone 3, with a final design choice (v1 or v2) and changes to content, visual, and navigation design based on testing the site with at least two people. Requirements are largely a union of the above assignments, done well; see the rubric/checklist for the kinds of things you want to make sure you're doing.

Site Requirements

- Follows previous milestones' requirements.
- Include only one design (remove both v folders).
- Test the design with 2 people.

Rationale Requirements

Your rationale should be a polished version of the earlier rationales:

- A description of the audience and design goals, based on earlier rationales.
- Explanations of how your visual, information, and navigation design choices meet those goals and satisfy those audiences, based on earlier rationales.
- Changes since Milestone 3 and why, particularly ones you learned from testing.
- Problems that remain.
- Things you did that are above and beyond.
- Any specific questions you have or feedback you want from the TA staff.

As always, make the case for your decisions using concepts from class, as well as other design principles, theories, examples, and cases from outside of class. Remember to focus on the things we can't see just by looking at the site: changes, alternatives considered, processes, and justifications.

This rationale should be a more polished document, one you might submit as a report to a client or boss to help explain the project and convince them you did a good job. You'll be surprised how much writing and communicating you need to do about projects and choices on internships and jobs; practice that here. It should be a comprehensive, complete story of the project. You might find that it runs 4-5 pages in the end. Sketches can often help tell the story of your design. Screenshots are also useful for describing issues discovered during user testing and how you addressed them. Quotes from your users during testing are also very powerful when explaining your rationale.

Potential Gotchas & Tips

- Things take time and if you have technical problems with uploading you don't want to find this out 8 minutes before the deadline, which is absolutely firm. Plan to be done well in advance.
- Don't assume that if you didn't get a comment about something you turned in for an earlier milestone that everything was great. Don't assume we'll catch all problems every time. TAs have different levels of experience, grading sessions are long, and mistakes will be made. (Note that this means sometimes we won't take off points we probably should, so it evens out from a grade perspective.) Be a thoughtful critic of your own work.
- Finally, people also sometimes didn't write a full rationale and only focused on the changes for the last version and lost points because of this.
- Getting more feedback from more people -- TAs in office hours, people you're designing the site for, both along the way and in the informal user testing required -- will help you improve your work quickly.
- The general version of "plan to be done well in advance", "be a thoughtful critic of your own work", and "get more feedback from more people" is "take responsibility for yourself". Do that.

Rubric

This is the rubric for the final project. However, you should keep it in mind while working on your milestones. I reserve the right to tweak this, but this should be close to the final version.

Use of external resources

All external resources' sources are easily identified and cited. Failure to do so results in an immediate 0.

Design process and rationale

Good descriptions of potential audiences and design goals. (10)

Who, and what, is this site for?

Justifications of design decisions based on audience needs, class concepts and other principles, examples and cases, and arguments around aesthetics and usability—especially for unusual choices. (10)

You don't need all of these, and I expect audience needs and class concepts to dominate, but you need to say why and not just what.

Learning from testing. (5)

You don't need a full test plan, but you do need enough that it's clear that you did this and learned from it.

Adequate writing—bullets are okay if well-used, but the writing has to be clear either way. (5)

Design quality

Follows visual design principles (10).

C.R.A.P., color and typography, whitespace use, and other principles are evident in the design; exceptions are justified in the rationale.

Follows navigation/information design principles (10).

Links and organization are reasonable, navigation structure works, you know where you are on the site, no broken links or dead ends.

Pleasant to look at and use (10).

General usability and ease of reading and navigating.

Technical quality

Readable and well-structured HTML and CSS (15).

Correctly validating HTML5 and CSS3 (10).

Cross-browser compatible (5).

Site should work with both Firefox and Chrome/Chromium. High-five for Internet Explorer, Edge, and Safari.

Overall quality/above and beyond

You don't need to do all of these. We'll plan to give ~5 for each that feels like it applies in a reasonable way, max grade 100 (meeting the requirements above gets you to 90). Having self-descriptions of above and beyond things you did in your rationale will help.

- Finish: Overall, site feels polished and complete.
- Scope: Site is ambitious (and good) in terms of scope/content.
- Rationale: Particularly thoughtful rationale, clear mastery of class concepts, extra-good job of testing, direct references to tradeoffs and alternatives.
- Design: creative and interesting, good metaphor/theme, engaging, unusual choices that work, visually interesting.