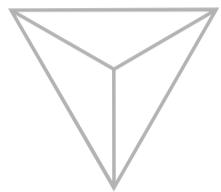


The Essential Web Design Handbook

A complete guide to designing simple
and beautiful websites from initial ideas
to the final Photoshop project files.

Rafal Tomal



The Essential Web Design Handbook

Version 1.0

January 2015

Rafal Tomal

www.RafalTomal.com

The future is bright for designers.

Hi there! My name is Rafal Tomal and I'm a graphic designer, web developer, and the author of this book.

First, I'd like to thank you for purchasing "The Essential Web Design Handbook". Now it's my job to make sure that you have a great return on your investment.



Rafal Tomal

If you [follow me](#) and read [my blog](#), you probably also know that I provide free web design tools, resources, and advice on designing websites. Your contribution in the form of buying this ebook supports me in giving even more back to the growing community of web designers.

My long term goal is to provide much more value than just what you can learn from this ebook. I want to constantly teach what I learn and translate that into a form of easy to understand courses, tutorials, and even more ebooks.

The future is bright for designers. All major industries appreciate a good design now more than ever before. A user friendly interface and experience becomes a marketable feature of some of the biggest brands and products on the market. There has never been a better time to be a designer.

No matter what's the next big thing is, it'll need to be designed. The technology may change and maybe we'll use completely different tools than what we use today but the design theory will remain the same.

I'm very excited to share with you some of my best methods and techniques on designing websites. I believe that by teaching, inspiring, and helping other fellow web designers, we can make a small contribution in making the web a better and more beautiful place.

If you have any questions, you can always find me on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Google+](#), or [email me](#).

Enjoy and thank you for your support!

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction	5
--------------------	---

CHAPTER 2:

Getting Started.....	12
----------------------	----

CHAPTER 3:

Ideas and Inspiration.....	25
----------------------------	----

CHAPTER 4:

Design Environment.....	44
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER 5:

Typography	63
------------------	----

CHAPTER 6:

Colors.....	98
-------------	----

CHAPTER 7:

Wireframes and Layout	126
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER 8:

Putting It All Together	163
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER 9:

Resources and Further Reading.....	202
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER 1

Introduction



Hello World!

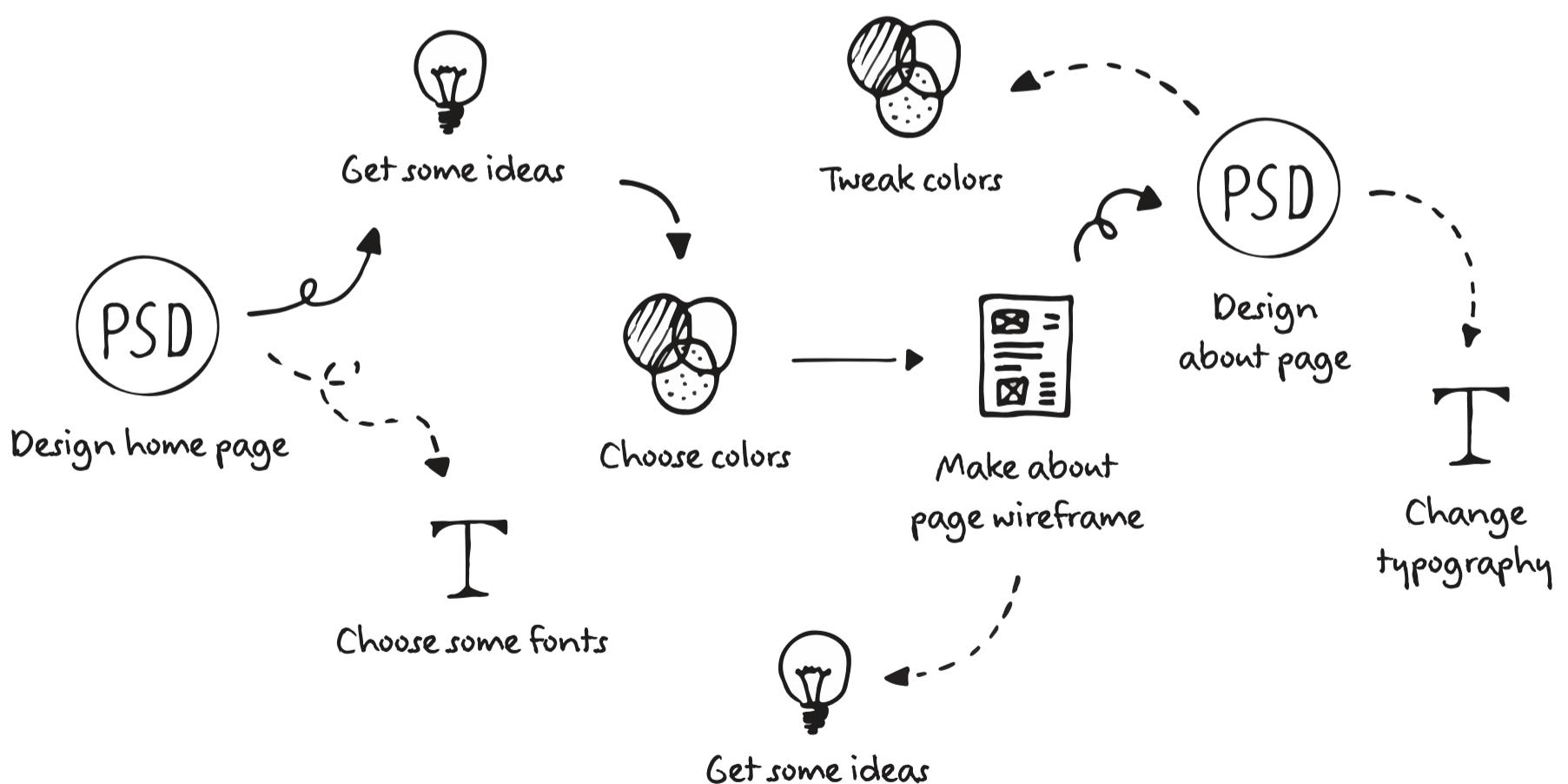
I made my first website in 2002. Since then I've designed hundreds of all kinds of websites: blogs, personal sites, small businesses, big corporations, organizations, magazines, music bands, doctors' offices, med spas, hospitals, and, of course, my own personal projects or portfolio websites.

Some of those projects involved ten people and in other cases it was just me. Sometimes I had to deal with five managers and I needed an approval on the project from all of them. On the other hand, there were projects when I was the boss and the designer in one and needed an approval from just myself (those were the most difficult ones though...).

Why am I telling you this? I realized that even though all of those projects had different designs, goals and requirements, they all shared almost the same design process.

My design process was evolving and growing through all those years. In the beginning it was all chaotic and I was easily distracted by random ideas or inspirations that took the lead on the project.

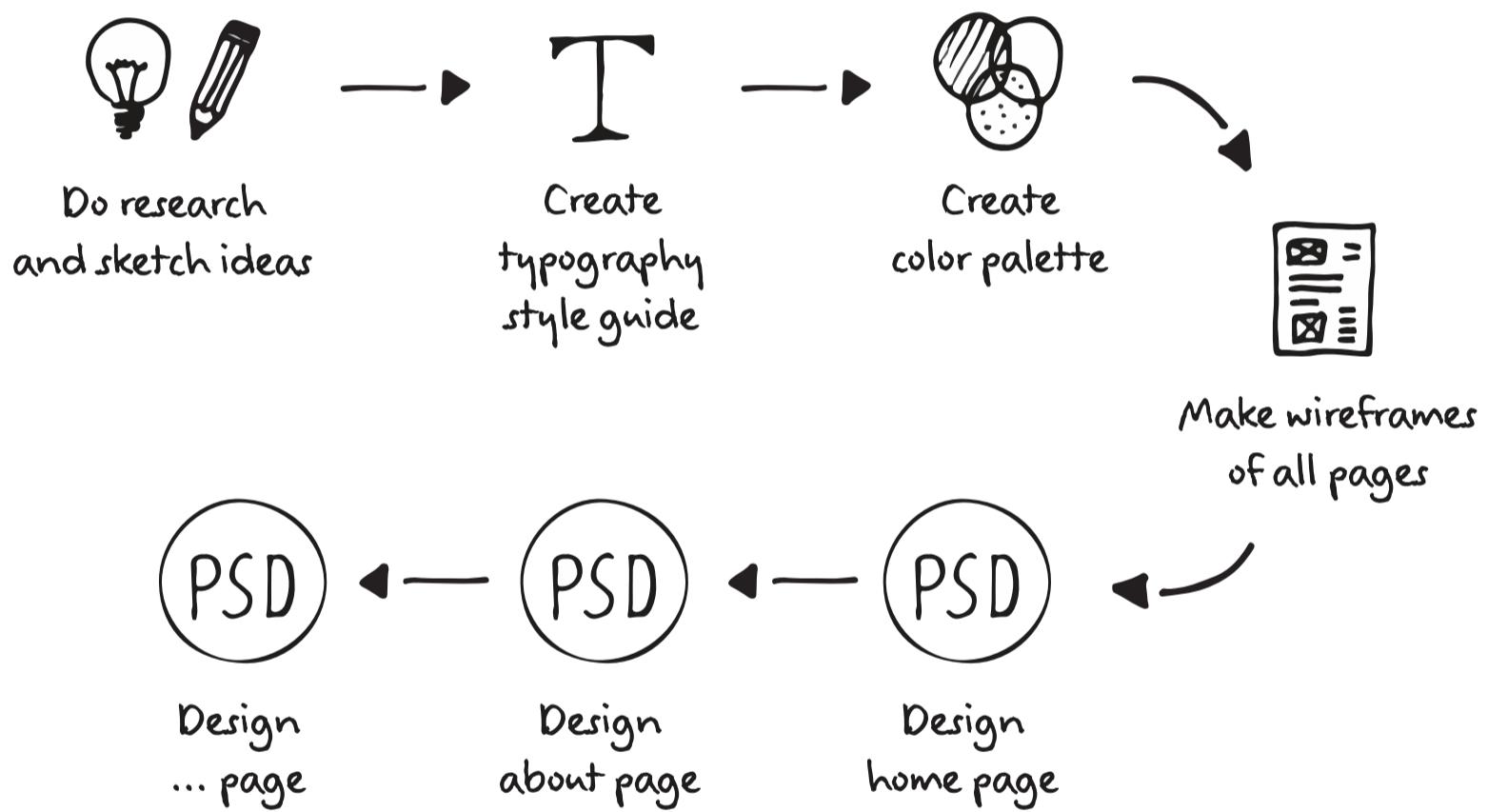
My early design process looked like this:



That was wrong. It consumed a lot of my energy and the final design was often visually inconsistent and never had a solid style guide. I realized that my design skills are nothing without a good work process.

A good design process will help you stay on track, make you more creative, help you find better ideas, get more approvals from your clients, and even let you do your work faster and more efficiently.

In this ebook I'll show you my current design process from getting ideas and inspiration to creating the final website design project that is ready to be passed to web developers and be coded:



Of course, my current process is not perfect and it'll never be. However, I found it to be the most effective way to design websites and I've been using it for a long time now with some great results. Maybe you have your own habits that work for you and that's fine! Treat my process just as a framework. Feel free to customize it with your own methods and improve upon it.

There are a couple more short paragraphs in this introductory chapter and then it'll be all good stuff. We'll get our hands dirty and do some real designing.

What are we doing here?

I want to take your hand and walk you through my entire website design process step by step. The best way to do it is by showing it on a sample project. I chose a general website template as a sample project, so the techniques and examples will be easy to apply to any kind of designs.

It's a kind of template that you might want to turn later into a working WordPress theme or just a static HTML template and sell on a marketplace like ThemeForest.net or CreativeMarket.com.

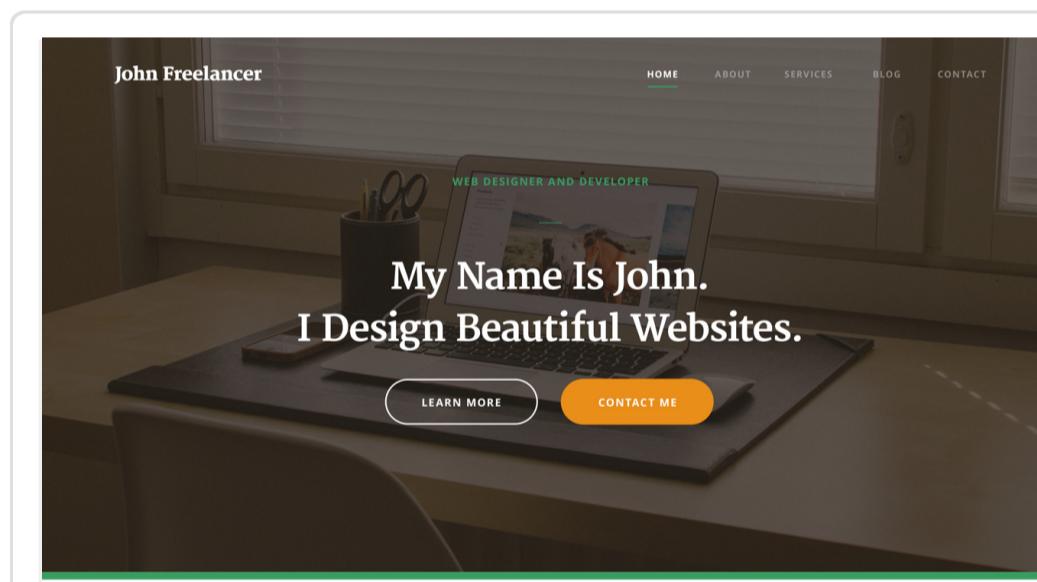
It's not a project I already did for a client or something I sold as a template somewhere. This project was designed and made especially for this ebook, so you can use it as you want without worrying about any licenses. Feel free to modify it and make it your own. The most important thing here is the process and to learn how to do it.

This is the project we'll be working on in this ebook. I'll walk through the entire process step by step.

We'll start with setting some goals and doing a basic project research. Then, you'll learn where to seek design inspiration and how to turn your first ideas into sketches on paper. The next step will be setting up your project folder and creating your first empty project template file in Adobe Photoshop. Next, we'll work on a particular project by choosing typography and colors and putting it all together into a solid web style guide.

Finally, we'll make some wireframes of individual pages and create final design mockups in Photoshop.

Each step is supported with a general design theory and detailed descriptions of what we're actually doing. So, you'll learn about those steps and will be able to apply them in various cases to your own scenarios.



My Services

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.



Graphic Design

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)



Web Development

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)



Research

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

About Me

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.



John Freelancer

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

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Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

Besides all this, you'll also find a lot of good advice and the best design practices that you can apply to your work no matter what project you're working on.

It's like sitting right next to me and looking over my shoulder while I'm doing a project and talking about each step for hours. Sounds good?



Colors

Color Palette for Your Project Name

COLORS

Primary color	Hex: #ffff00 RGB: 255 / 255 / 255 CMYK: 0 / 0 / 0 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C	Hex: #000000 RGB: 0 / 0 / 0 CMYK: 100 / 100 / 100 / 100 PANTONE: 0000 C	Hex: #ff0000 RGB: 255 / 0 / 0 CMYK: 0 / 100 / 100 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C
Active (highlight) color	Hex: #ffff00 RGB: 255 / 255 / 255 CMYK: 0 / 0 / 0 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C	Hex: #000000 RGB: 0 / 0 / 0 CMYK: 100 / 100 / 100 / 100 PANTONE: 0000 C	Hex: #ff0000 RGB: 255 / 0 / 0 CMYK: 0 / 100 / 100 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C
Base color	Hex: #cccccc RGB: 255 / 255 / 255 CMYK: 0 / 0 / 0 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C	Hex: #cccccc RGB: 255 / 255 / 255 CMYK: 0 / 0 / 0 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C	Hex: #cccccc RGB: 255 / 255 / 255 CMYK: 0 / 0 / 0 / 0 PANTONE: 0000 C

GRADIENTS



Typography

Web Typography Style Guide for Your Project Name created by RAFA TOMAL.COM

FONT FAMILIES

Heading font

Font family: Helvetica
Styles: Light 300, Regular 500, Bold 700

Body font

Font family: Georgia
Styles: Regular 500, Bold 700

Special font

Font family: Damion
Styles: Regular 500

TYPOGRAPHY

Heading 1

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 48px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 2

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 36px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 3

Font family: Merriweather

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.



Layout

Home page wireframe: big photo in the background, two buttons (secondary) and Contact Me (primary).

Services – three main services with an icon, short description and button to learn more.

About – short bio and a link to the about page to read more.

Portfolio – eight card projects and a link to see a full portfolio.

Who is this book for?

This book is a good fit for both existing designers and people who want to be designers but don't know where to start. Web developers may also find it useful if they want to learn more about design and how designers work.

If you're already a designer, this ebook might help you to refine and improve your current design process. You may also find some good practices and solutions that you can quickly apply to your own techniques.

If you're completely new to design and want to become a designer, then this ebook will provide you with a solid framework and show you the correct path you should take on your way to becoming a designer. You'll learn some basic design theories and will be ready to go further and learn even more on your own.

If you think you don't have enough talent to be a good designer, let me tell you a secret: *all designers were amateurs in the beginning*. My first web designs were terrible. You would laugh at them and make fun of me if you saw them today. I wasn't good at all in the beginning but hundreds of designs later, I finally feel like I know what I'm doing.

So, it may take you some time too, but you have to start somewhere. The best way to start is by incorporating a good framework into your process. That way you'll acquire some good habits and focus on what's most important.

People say that you need talent to be a designer but I call it an ability to distinguish a good looking design from a bad one. If you can do that and you're good at it, it means that you have that most important skill that is needed to become a great designer.

Can you see a difference between these two designs? Which one looks better to you? If you think that the design on the right side is better, it means that you have everything you need to become a good designer. It's that simple.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit.

21 June, 2014 - Written by John Smith

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The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

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June, 2014

Written by
JOHN SMITH

**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
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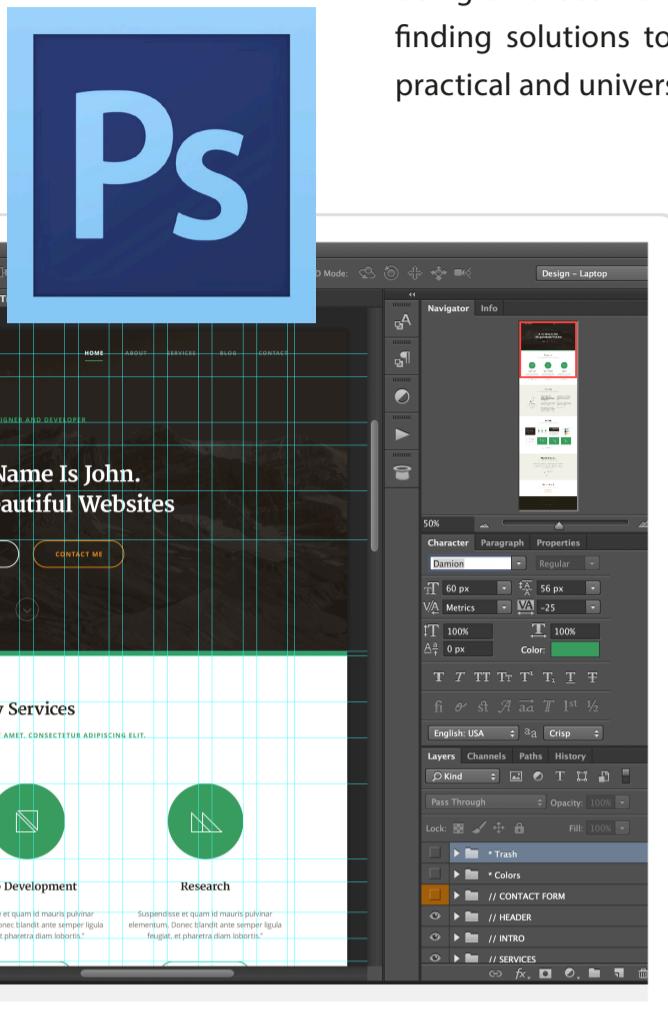
The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

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Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus. Mauris posuere fermentum fermentum. Pellentesque commodo at elit eu commodo. Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus.

VS.

One must especially understand that web design is not about pretty graphics – just being an artist won't help you. Designing websites very often needs analyzing data, finding solutions to common usability problems, doing research, and making it all practical and universal.



What do you need?

All you need is Adobe Photoshop but you can also use any other design software of your choosing. All screenshots are taken from version CC (14.0), but even if you're still using CS 4.0+, you should be able to follow all the steps.

I use Adobe Photoshop for creating all my design mockups but it is not the software that does all the work. I'll teach you some universal techniques that you should be able to use in any other professional designing software or even if you design right from the browser.

However, notice that if you bought this ebook together with the project files, you'll need Photoshop to open them. All the project files can be opened only by using Adobe software.

Learn by doing!

The best way to learn is learning by doing. I don't want you to just go through this ebook and read what I do, but actually I'd like to encourage you to do your own project at the same time.

Some chapters have a  **Project** section at the end where I'll show you how to use a theory in a real life project.

If you've purchased the ebook with all the design files, you can look into them as well and deconstruct my work from the inside out. If you don't have the design files yet, you can always log in to the [Designers Area](#) on my website and get it additionally from there.

Ok, let's get started!

CHAPTER 2

Getting Started



The design process

The website design process can be a very complex process, including more people (UX designer, visual designer, user researcher, copywriter) and requiring more research if you work on a big project with a huge budget.

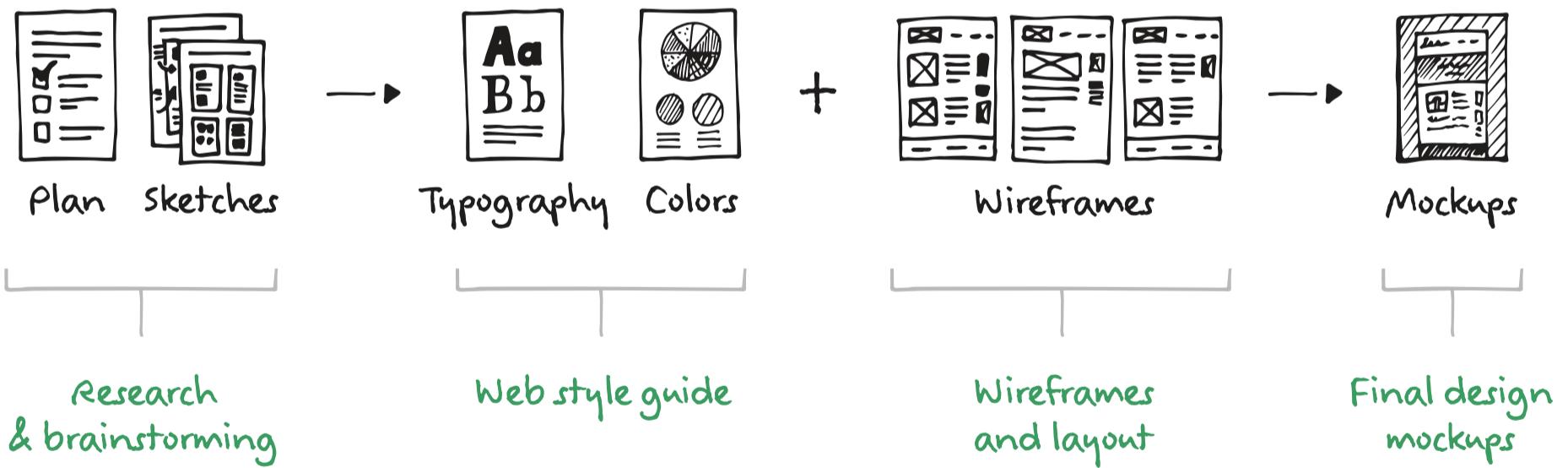
We're going to focus here on a typical small design project where you (a single designer) are responsible for all of the web design aspects.

It's a good idea to have a progressive design process where each step is a separate breakpoint. This will allow you to stop at any moment, review your work or get approval from a client.

My process requires creating a web style guide before you get into designing the actual website interface. That way you know exactly what fonts and colors you should use in your project and how to be more consistent across all design files.

Of course, sometimes you want to get back to one of the steps and tweak or update something, but a solid web style guide helps you to keep it all together.

This is what my basic process looks like:



► **Planning. (Next page)**

Project description, requirements and goals help to define the project you're working on before you get into the creative part of designing it. At this stage you want to also make some important decisions on how to accomplish the project, research your target audience, set up project milestones, and create a sitemap.

It's very tempting for creative people to skip this boring step and get right into the designing part but once you're more experienced you'll know how important it is to spend some time and do your homework.

► **Brainstorming and sketching. (Chapter 3)**

It's the time when you look for inspiration, do some research and sketch or take notes of all the new ideas you find. Designers think visually, and sketching your ideas will help you to save all your great thoughts exactly how you imagined them.

► **Typography. (Chapter 5)**

I believe typography is the most important visual element of every website and that's why I usually start by designing the typography first.

In this step, you define a basic typography style guide that will be used as your cheat sheet for the rest of the project. The style guide includes the main fonts of your choice and sample headlines and paragraph styles. Some projects may require a really complex style guide, so take your time and plan your typography well.

► **Colors. (Chapter 6)**

Choose primary, secondary, background, and active colors for your project and save them in a color palette file. Similar to typography, a well defined color palette will help you to keep consistent schemes across all design files.

► **Wireframes and layout. (Chapter 7)**

In this step, you plan a layout of all major web pages and draw wireframes that will help to visualize website interface and make important layout decisions.

► **Complete design mockups. (Chapter 8)**

It's time to put all the design elements together and use your typography style guide, color palette, and wireframes and design your complete visual website mockups.

Project planning

Every design project needs some planning. It's the first and very important step in our process because that's where we make some important decisions for the rest of the project.

A custom website design for a client is a bit different at this stage than a template design.

In this ebook, we're focusing on designing templates, so let me skip all the details about dealing with clients and writing project proposals. A business side of designing websites is a good topic for a whole new book ;-).

You have to remember that design is way more than what you see. There is a lot more thinking and planning involved before you even open Photoshop for the first time.

Preparing a good project description, setting some primary goals and planning a process to accomplish those goals will help to save you a lot of time and problems later.

Let's say you are working on your own project – like a theme design. In this case, your project description (or project brief) will be your idea that you will keep in your head, write down in a simple text document, or even use to create doodles in your sketchbook.

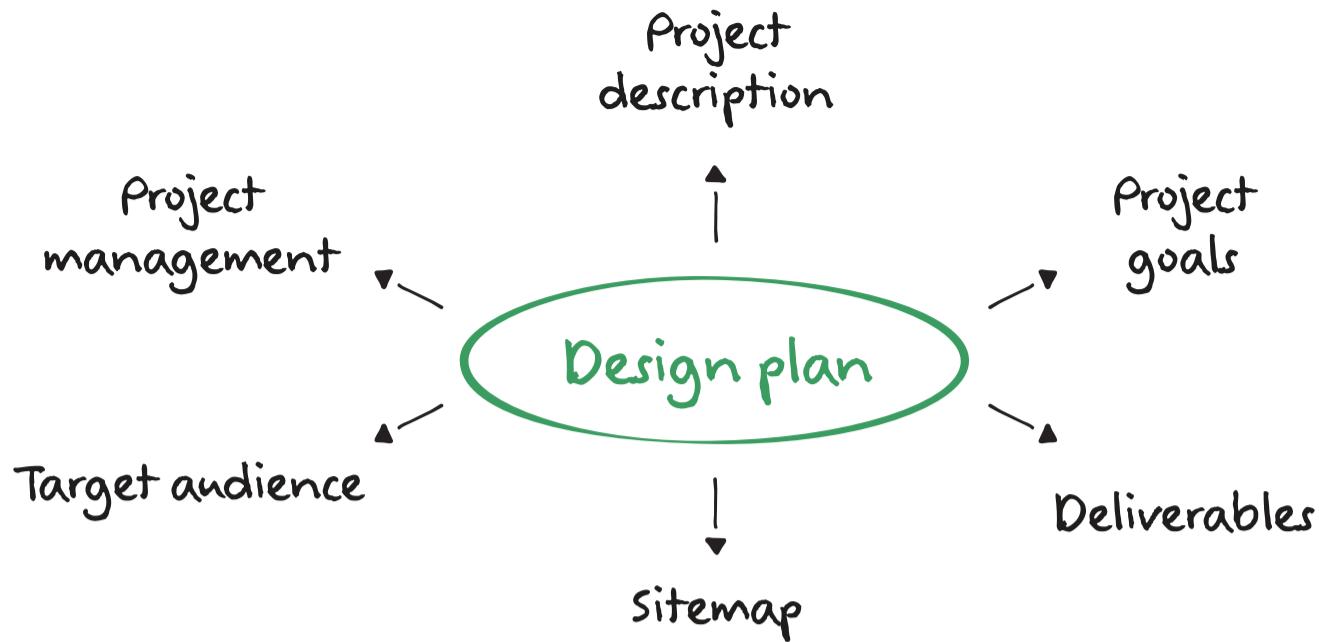
This is how every design project begins.

So, we're designing a website theme and we don't have a client who gives us a set of goals and expectations. We need to communicate with ourselves and plan it all on our own. This process is very often even more difficult because we might not even know where to start or what our goals are.

On the other hand, we're much more flexible and basically our imagination is the only border. This is a perfect situation for every creative person who just wants to turn a lot of their ideas into a real thing.

During your project planning process you want to include at least these basic elements:

- **Project description.**
- **Project goals.**
- **Target audience.**
- **Deliverables.**
- **Project management.**
- **Sitemap.**



Let me now explain and describe each of these points so you can learn more about our project in this ebook and see how a sample completed project plan looks.

Project description

You should start writing a project description by answering this one question: "*What are we building?*" It will help you to focus on what exactly your project is. Is it an ecommerce store, a coffee shop or a blog template? Answer that question in a couple of sentences and it'll help you to clear your mind and define the project.

It really helps when you include others by simply describing the new project to someone else. When you explain and describe any idea to an "outside" person, you look at it from another perspective. It forces you to think harder and make sure your idea makes sense.

The less tech-savvy the person is, the better. Yes, your ideas must be so simple that you would have no problems explaining them to anyone.

What are we building in this ebook?

Our project throughout this ebook is a website template for freelancers and consultants.

Because it's for individuals, we want to make sure the theme design will be focused on personality. The website should help to promote a personal brand and sell services.

To help freelancers sell services, we need to find an easy way to list them and make them easily accessible. Also, we want to show their portfolio and clients who they've already worked with.

The main freelancers' marketing strategy is to build their authority and reputation in the community by running a blog. We need to make sure to include that function in our template.

Because we're not creating it for a specific client, we're free to choose our own brand, design style, colors, and a sample logo. It's all in our hands and we need to come up with something that would fit most needs of the targeted clients.

Moreover, it's very important to keep everything as simple as possible and avoid any specific or custom elements that would be hard to use in varied situations. We want to make sure the design template will be universal and usable for a big group of people and in different ways.

Project goals

Defining your project goals is a fundamental part of the design process. As with every journey, we need to know our destination. Otherwise, we may be traveling in many different directions and easily get lost.

By setting clear project goals, we know where to go and when the project is done. It's much easier to review our own work and see if we did a good job by asking this one simple question: "*Have we reached our goals?*"

As we mentioned in our project description earlier, we're building a website template for freelancers. We want to create a theme that will help our clients get more business. That should be our main focus and if we achieve that, our customers will find great value in our product. This will make our theme more desirable.

Based on our project description we can define three main goals:

1. Create a website theme that helps to get more business for freelancers and consultants.
2. Include design functions that will help to: list services, present portfolios, show clients reviews/testimonials, write a blog (build authority) and get in touch.
3. Design a simple, minimalistic and aesthetic design.

These three simple goals cover the main focus of the theme design, define the main functionalities that we need to design, and show us how we should treat the overall aesthetic look.

Target audience

This is not an easy task because you're building a product that has two groups of audiences. The first group are your clients: people who buy your theme. The second group are visitors: people who visit your client's website.

So, who are your clients? Can you describe a typical customer who buys your theme? Are they mostly men or women? How would you classify their age group? These and many other questions can be asked to create an imagined profile (persona) of a typical user/client.

Let's look at our template project for freelancers. Our target audience here are all individual workers like copywriters, developers, web designers, coaches, and marketers who offer their consulting services. This applies to both men and women and the age group can be as old as 16+. One common element these people share is that they all run small and personal businesses.

The visitors to your client's website can be really hard to define in this case because that can be anyone. This task could be easier if you narrow your clients to one specific group of freelancers; for example, web developers. Then, you know that your client's visitors will be mostly business owners or some web design agencies who are looking for a developer.

Creating personas and doing user research is a really complex task that may involve the entire design team. If you want to learn more about this topic, I would recommend reading the book, "[A Project Guide to UX Design](#)".

Deliverables

Every project has its final outcome. When working on a website design template, we can either send our design project to a web developer and turn it into a working website, or make our design files a final product and sell it as is.

Either way, we need to make sure to clean up our files and make them easy to work with. Delivering well-organized project files serve to prove your professionalism, accuracy and precision which are in high demand from designers.

Our deliverables in this ebook project will be a typography style guide, color palette, wireframes, and design mockups. They're all PSD files and we'll also include some assets (design materials, photos, etc.) and information (links to web fonts) that are necessary to work with our project.

Project management

Whether you work with a big team or you're just a one man theme shop, at least a basic knowledge of project management is necessary. It'll help you to track your progress and know what stage of the project you are currently at.

Start by defining your bigger milestones in the project and then divide those into smaller portions, until you have full lists of to-do tasks for each milestone. The more detailed and smaller the tasks are, the easier they will be to handle.

It is also a great motivational system, because every single time you cross out an item from your to-do list, it will feel like you are really making progress!

So, here are some milestones and simple tasks in our template project:

- **Project research**
- **Style guide:**
 - Typography
 - Colors
- **Wireframes:**
 - Home page
 - Blog page
 - Blog post
 - About page
- **Design mockups:**
 - Home page
 - Blog page
 - Blog post
 - About page
- **Delivering the final PSD files**

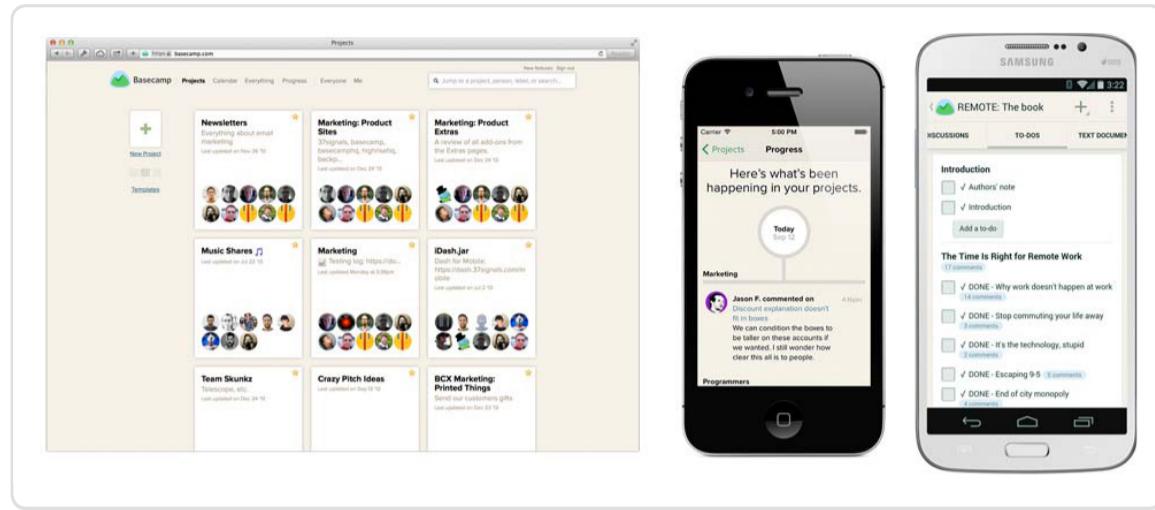
Please notice that while creating themes, your milestones and tasks will be almost the same for every project. This will help you to systematize the entire process and save some time while planning your future projects.

It might be very helpful to use some project management tools if you work on multiple projects at the same time and there are more people involved in the process. As a designer, you may need an app that will help you to better organize your projects, present your mockups and collaborate with other people.

Here are some project management apps that I would recommend for designers:

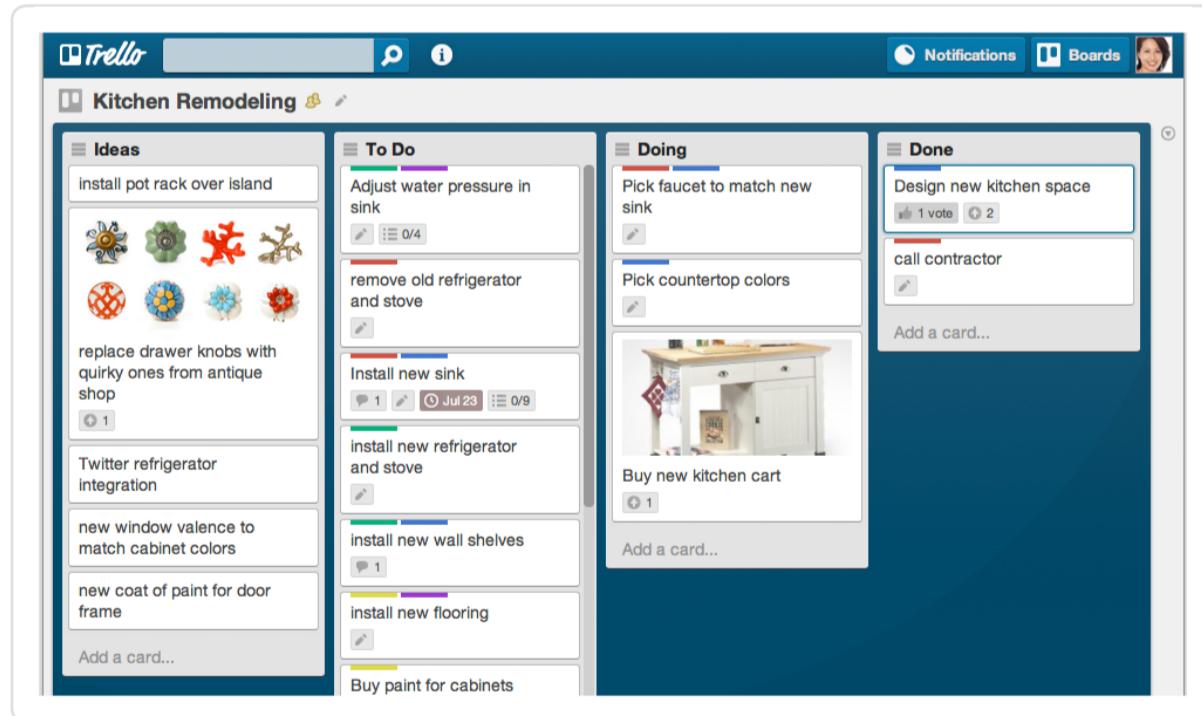
► Basecamp.com

Basecamp is the most popular project management app. You can store all of your projects, set milestones, create tasks, and use it to communicate with other team members.



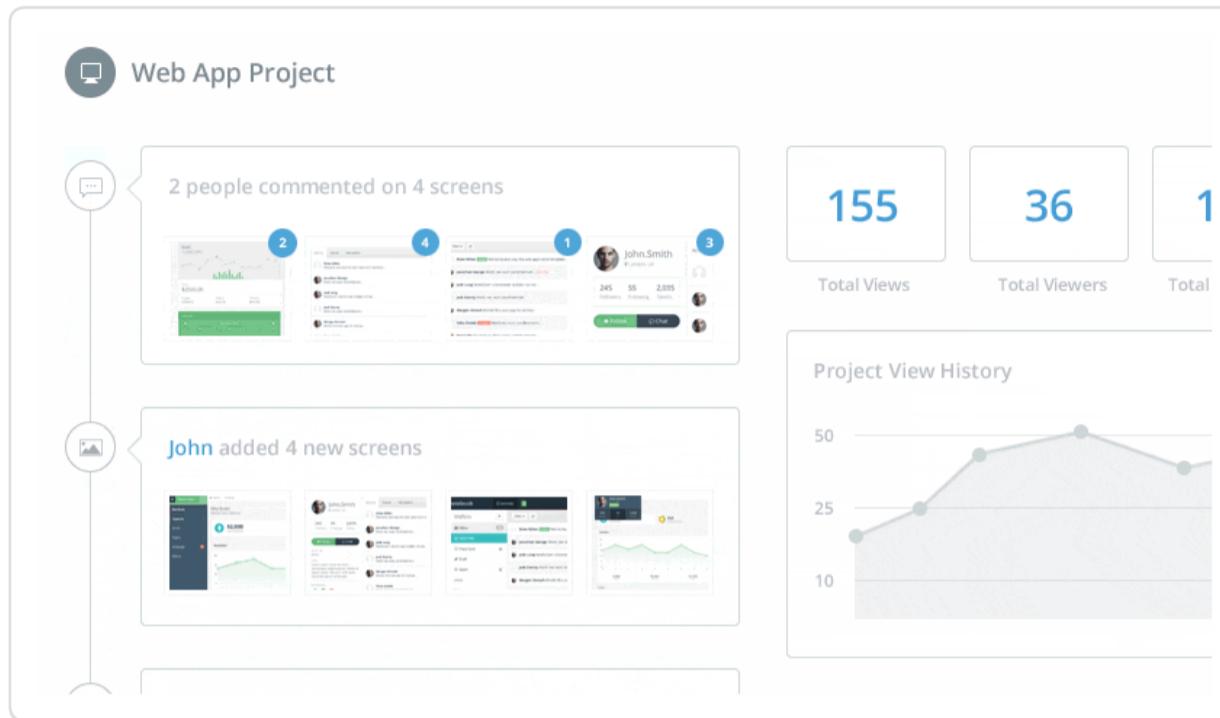
► Trello.com

In contrast to Basecamp, Trello is not that advanced. Rather, it's a simple and free (premium version available with some extra functions) app that can be used to create quick to-do lists. It's visual, intuitive, and very easy to work with.



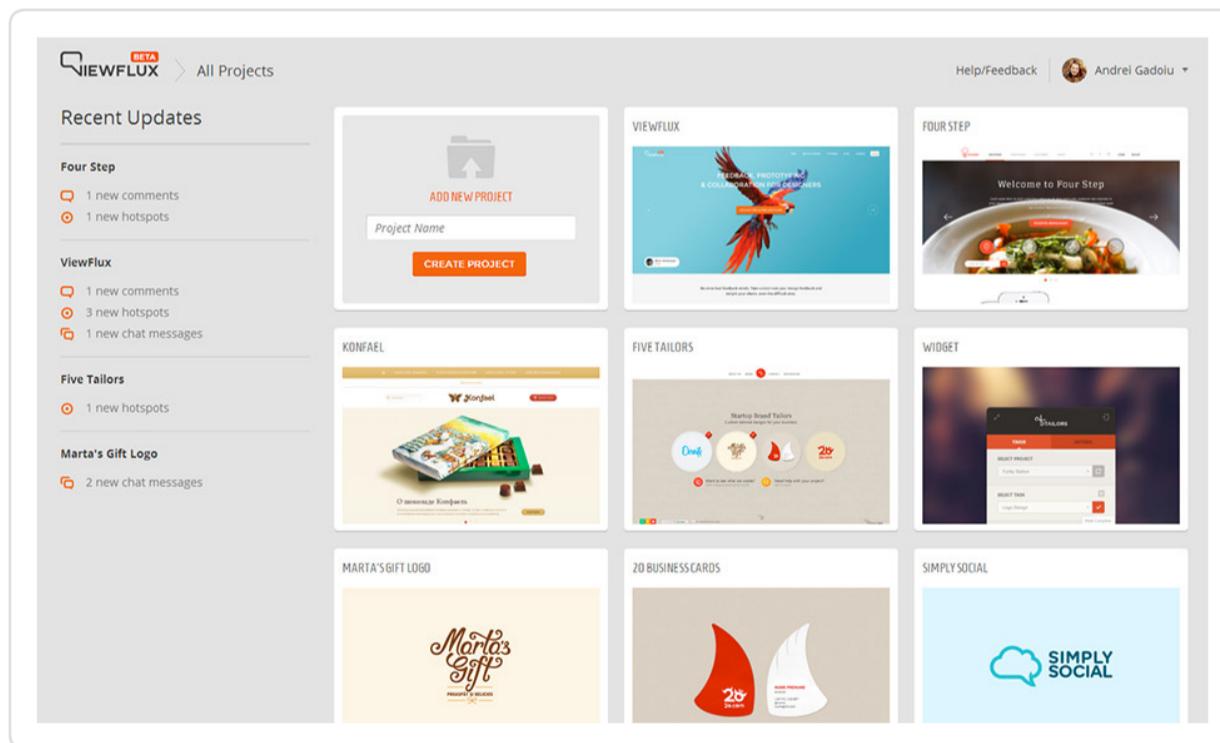
► InVisionApp.com

InVision is more of a design prototyping tool but it can also be used as a basic project management app for designers. You can store your projects, present interactive design mockups, and collaborate with other team members.



► Viewflux.com

Viewflux is a new app that can be a great tool for designers. You can organize your projects, get design feedback, create prototypes and even control versions of your design files.



Sitemaps

A sitemap is a great tool to plan your entire website structure. It can help you to have a bigger image of the entire project before you even get into the actual designing phase.

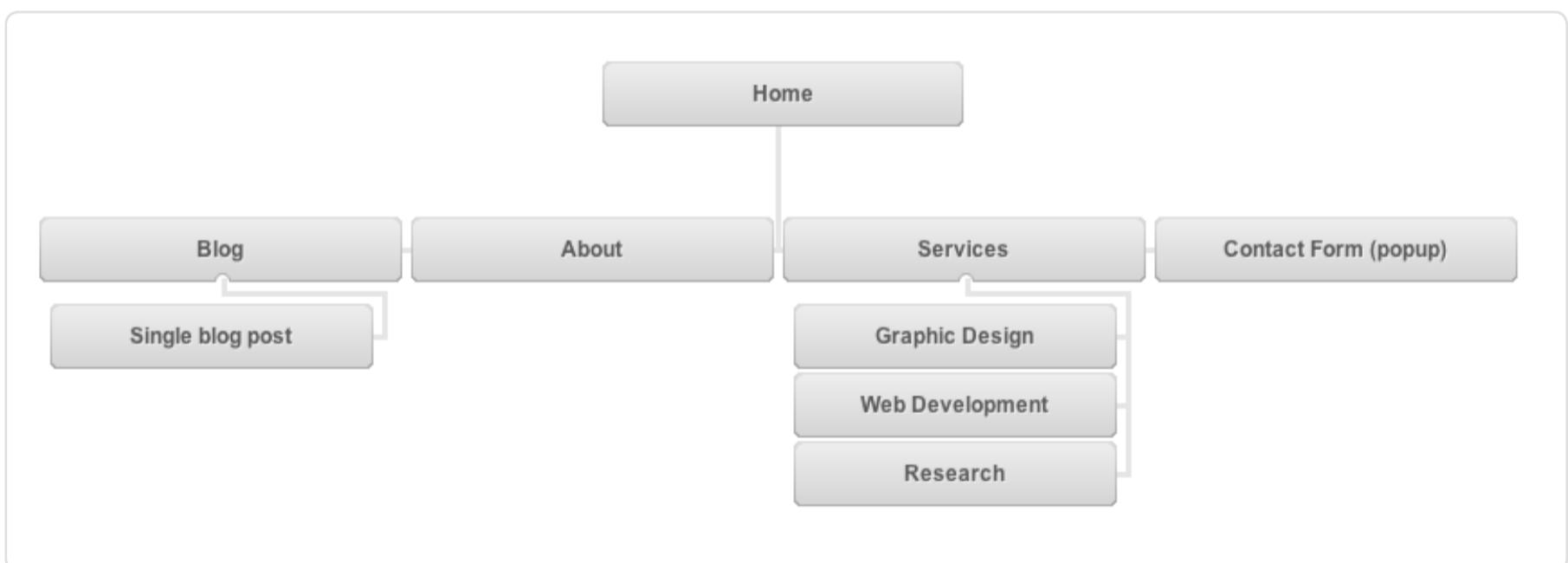
Sitemaps are usually based on the project brief and requirements. A typical sitemap looks like a chart that shows a hierarchy and connection between the main pages and subpages. It helps both web designers and developers better identify the entire website's structure.

Also, because of their visual presentation, they are a great way to communicate with other team members and clients. You don't need tech-savvy people to easily read website sitemaps.

Sitemaps should reflect the website's navigation including both the main pages and subpages as well as any other hidden pages, landing pages and popups.

The sitemap of our template design project in this ebook is pretty simple. It's a template, so we're going to focus only on some general pages that every website of this kind may need.

This is how the sitemap looks for this ebook website template project:

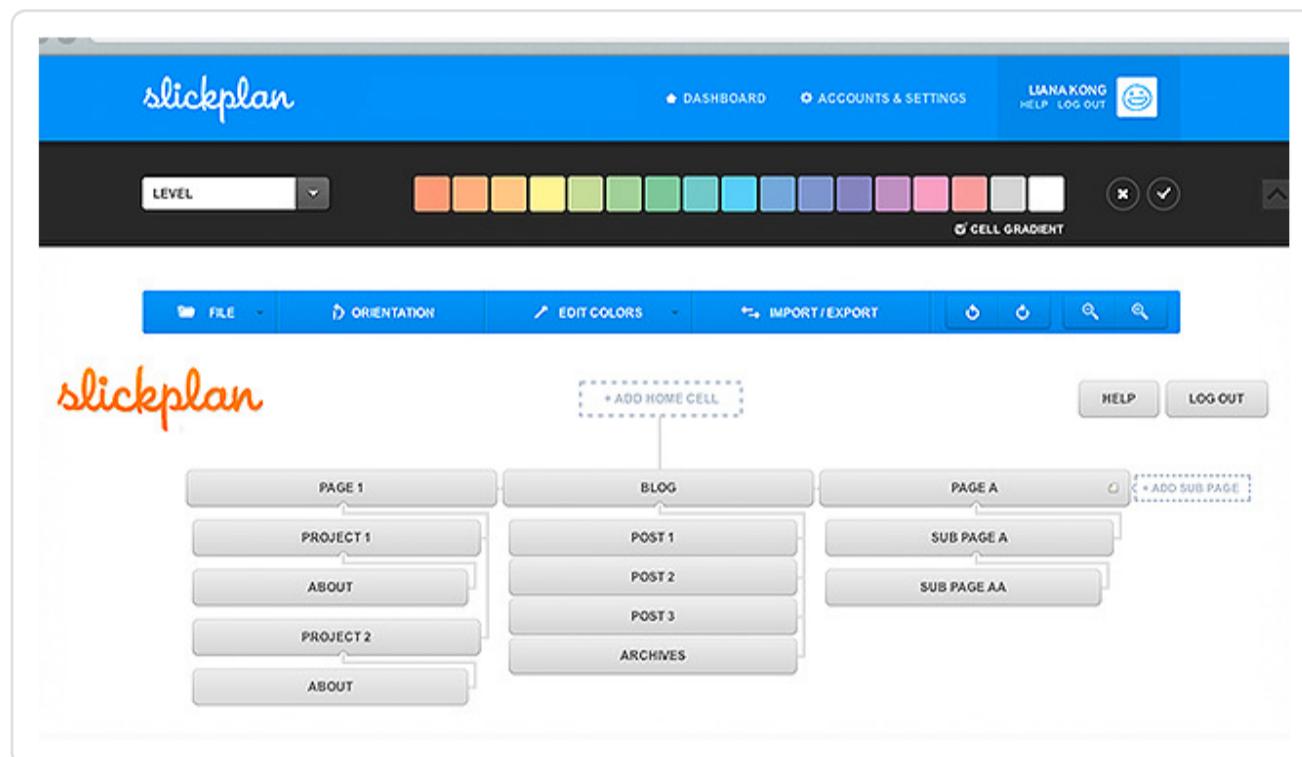


Sitemaps can help you identify what pages you need to design for. Apparently, we can design a one page template that will be common for the About page and all Service pages.

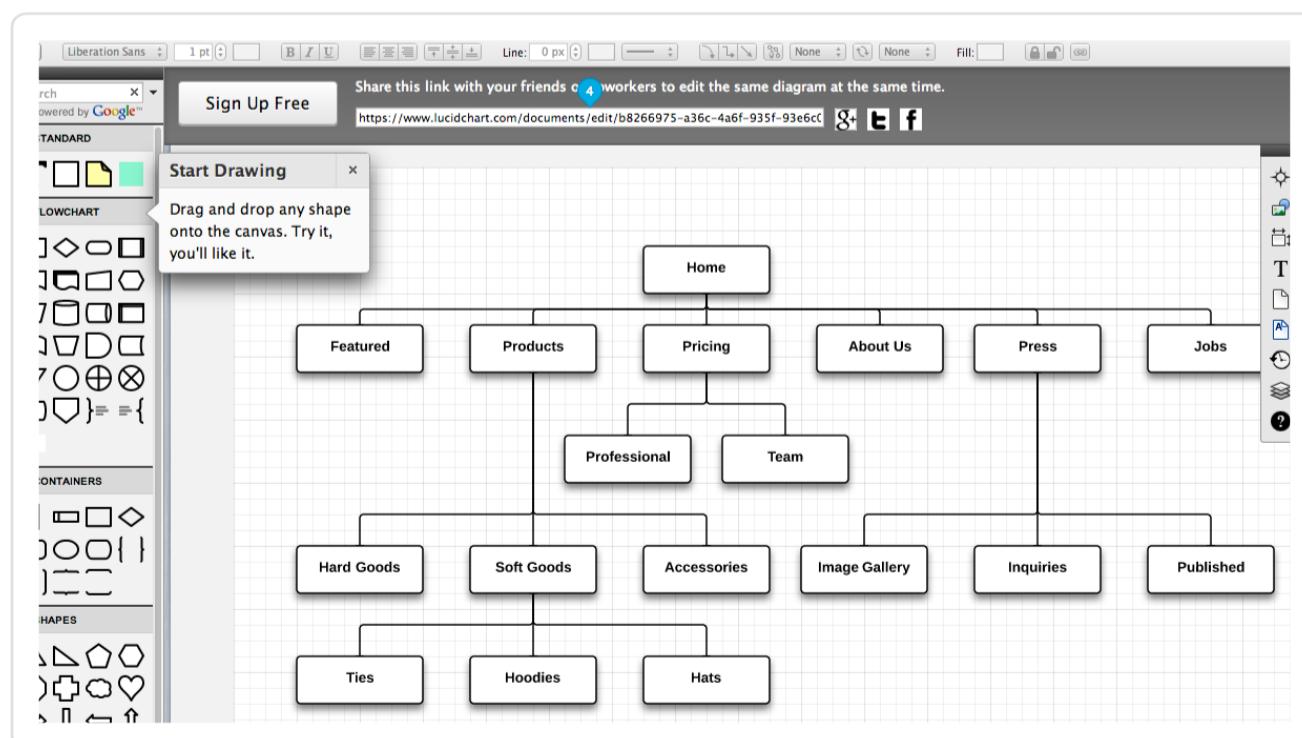
It's very easy to create a quick visual sitemap for your website project. You can use any design software for this, and after making a couple of sitemaps you'll have some templates that you can reuse for another project.

Of course, there are tons of tools and apps that can make this task even easier and may be especially helpful for some really big projects. Below, I listed some of my favorite tools I tried and recommend:

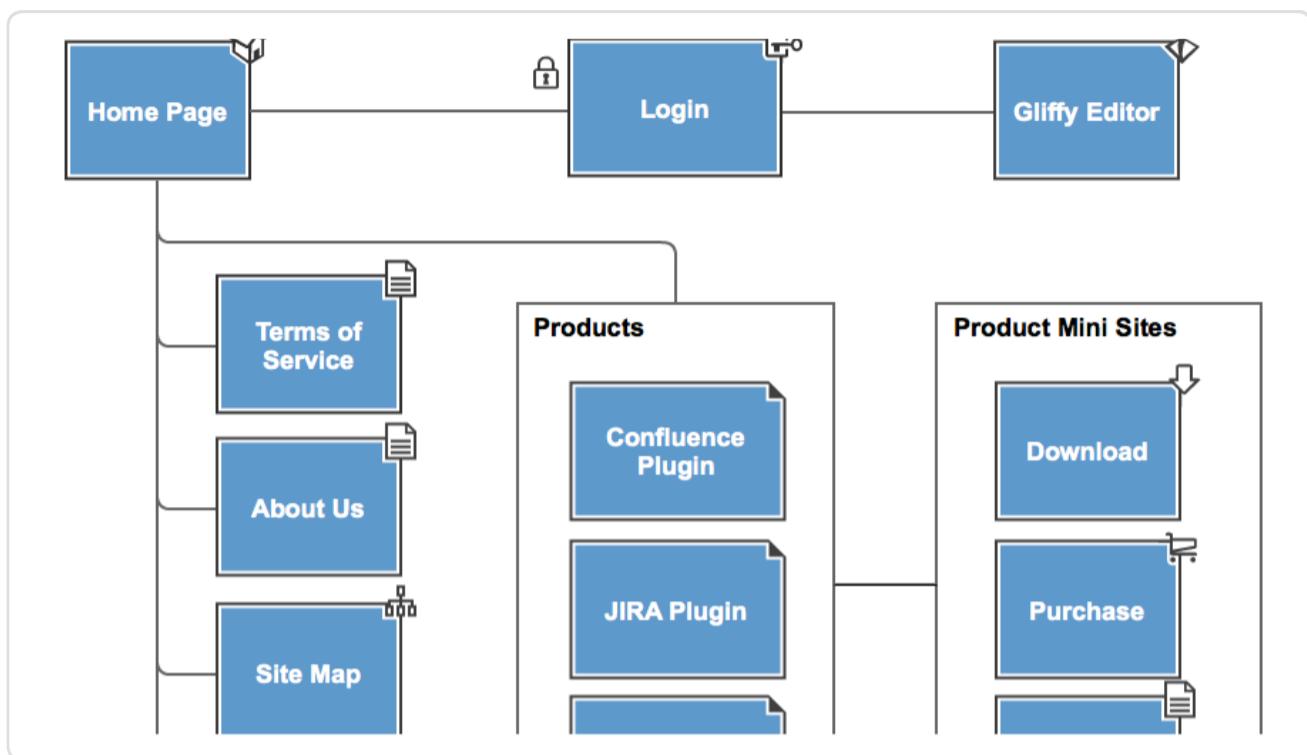
► [Slickplan.com](#)



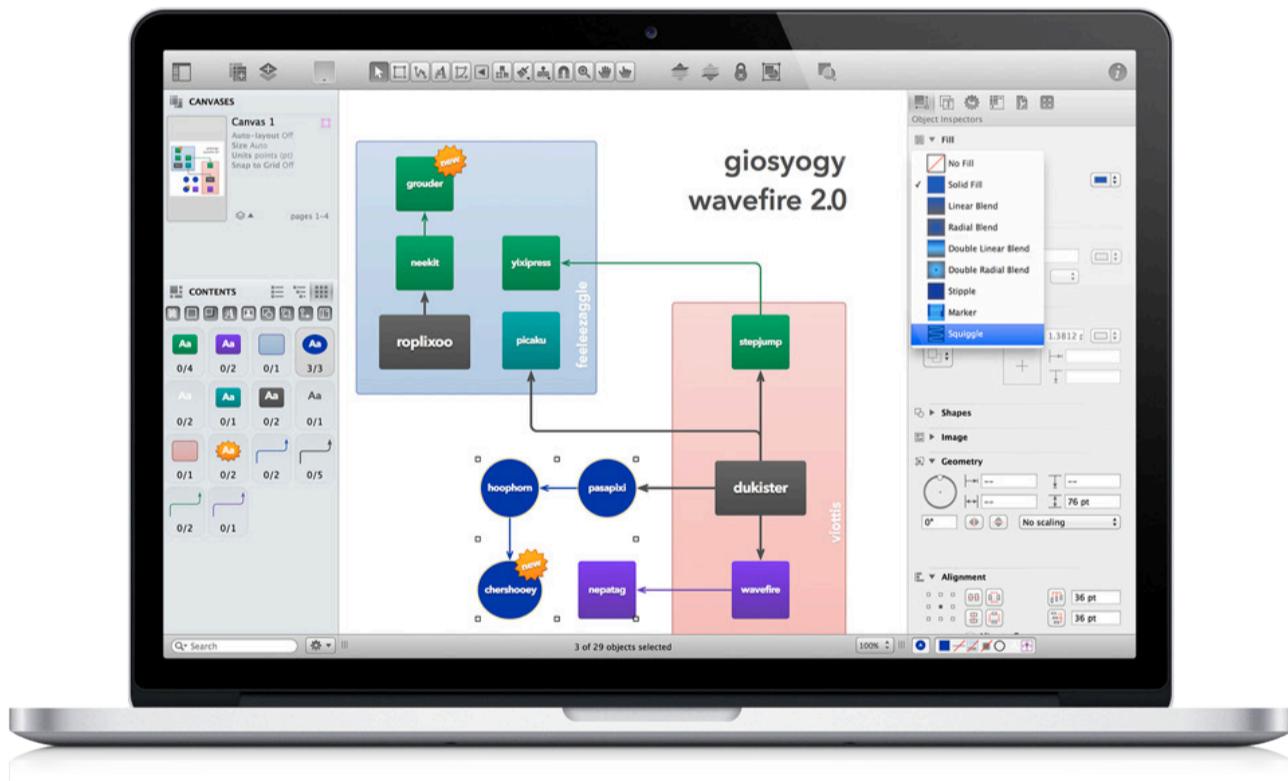
► [Lucidchart.com](#)



► **Gliffy.com**

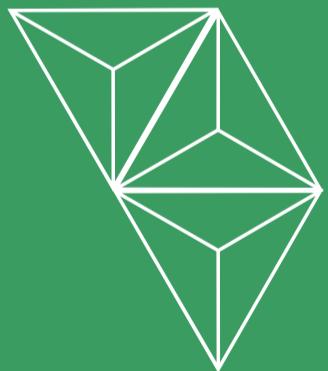


► **OmniGraffle.com**



CHAPTER 3

Ideas and Inspiration



Brainstorming and getting ideas

Here is where the fun part starts. Before you start your brainstorming session, make sure you have completed your project brief and have clearly specified your project goals, so you know in which direction you should go.

Brainstorming is a process of creative thinking, looking for ideas, and sharing your thoughts with others. It should be a big part of your work, whether you work alone or with an entire team.

Switching your brain into a creative thinking mode will help you to focus on the subject and get some really interesting ideas. It's not that easy, though. We're not robots, and very often you may find yourself struggling to get some good ideas. This is normal, so don't push yourself too hard.

Let's see how to make this process easier and more effective:

► **Find your most creative time.**

The human brain loves patterns. We're all different and have different habits but there are certain patterns in our lives. Our brain usually knows when we should wake up, when it's time to go to sleep, and when we are ready to work. So, for example, don't expect to be extremely creative when your brain says that it's sleeping time.

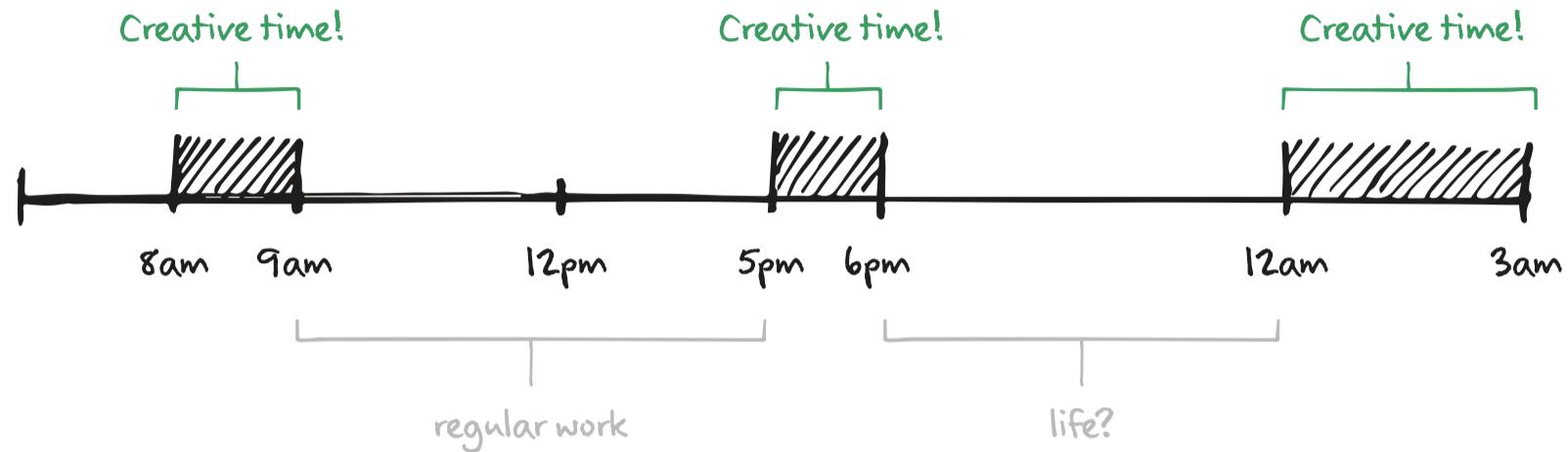
Try to find when you're the most creative during the day. Perhaps it's early in the morning right after breakfast and before you start doing any work. If you start your day by checking emails, reading news or browsing social media, maybe you should change your habits. Try to introduce your brainstorming sessions into that first 1-2 hours of your work day. It might be a huge advantage for you.

If mornings are not your best time, find your most creative time during the day or maybe late after midnight and get the most out of your creative thinking.

Of course, it doesn't mean that you can be productive for only those couple hours a day.



Creative time is for brainstorming and finding good ideas. Then, you can spend the rest of the day working on them and doing the actual production work.



Unfortunately, there are not too many creative hours during the day. My most creative time is early before I even check my email, in the middle of the day and late at night right before I go to sleep.

► **Don't judge ideas.**

This is one of the main principles of all brainstorming sessions. There are no bad ideas at this stage. Try to come up with as many ideas as you can and simply don't judge them. Some ideas might seem bad or crazy but they may lead to other ones, great ones.

If there are more people who participate in the brainstorming session, the "no judge" rule will help everyone open their minds and be more creative. We don't want anyone to be afraid to speak up.

► **Set timing and take breaks.**

Set a time limit for the brainstorming session. It's easy to get off track and lose control over the direction of your ideas. You don't want to end up too far from your original assumptions and project goals.

Take short breaks every 15 minutes during your sessions. Stand up, stretch your legs, walk around the office, get a cup of coffee and that might be the moment when a great idea strikes you.

► **Don't try too hard.**

Unfortunately, not every brainstorming session is successful. If you find yourself struggling too much with finding ideas for your project, just stop the session. You may want to take a walk, get some fresh air or do something for fun. Relax and get back to it later during the day or early next day.

► **Save everything.**

Write down, sketch and save everything you do during the brainstorming sessions. There are many apps and online tools that you can use to build your mind map or save quick notes. However, it might be good to go with just a pen and a piece of paper to write down some ideas or sketch them out.

I love sketching my ideas and saving everything in my sketchpad. I'll talk more about sketching later in this chapter.



I usually use Evernote or Google Drive to gather all inspirations and ideas I find. It doesn't matter if I'm somewhere at the store and take a quick picture or I'm browsing websites and take a screenshot. I can put it all together into well-organized notebooks.

► **Get inspired.**

Of course, inspiration is a fundamental part of brainstorming sessions. In fact, our every thought or idea is somehow inspired by something we saw, read about or just experienced. It's all stored in our memory and our brain makes the right connections between those thoughts in order to produce ideas.

Don't be afraid to look for inspiration in another designer's work. I'll talk more about this and list sources where to look for inspiration later in this chapter.

► **Share your ideas.**

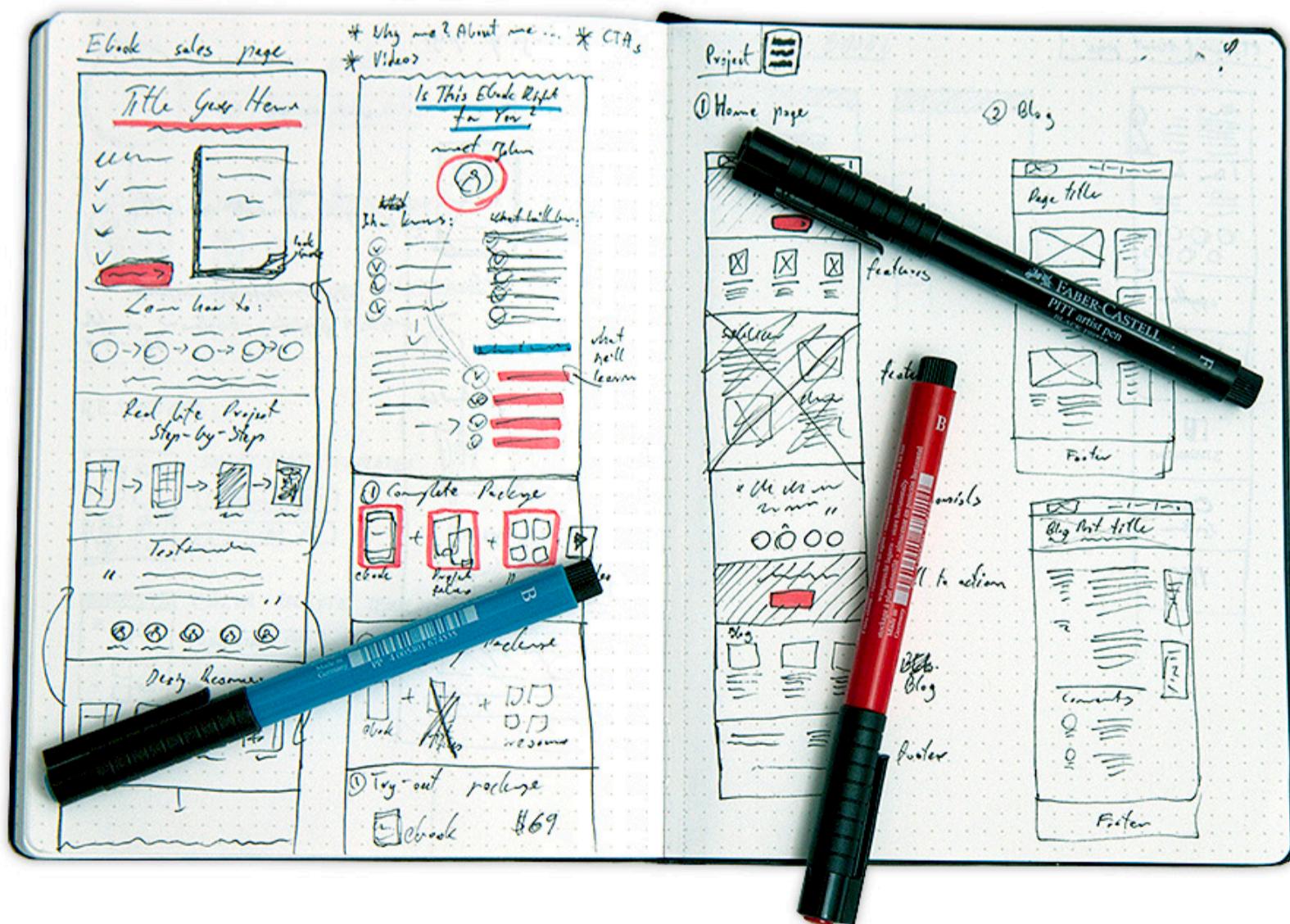
Last but not least: share your ideas with others! Show people what you're working on, such as your ideas and design concepts. Collect feedback and improve your work.

Sketching your ideas

Sketching design ideas is the process of visualizing your thoughts with simple drawings and annotations. If you've never sketched your ideas before, it might be difficult in the beginning, but the more you practice, the easier it becomes.

There are many designers who never sketch and skip this step entirely. Yes, you can design websites without doing any sketches. However, I believe that thanks to sketching, you can be more creative and you can quickly try out some ideas.

You can make some visual website prototypes before doing any actual design work in your Photoshop or browser. That way you'll focus on functionality and the core of your concept before even adding some styles and making it look nice visually.



There are a couple of rules you need to remember while doing your sketches:

- ▶ **Don't make them perfect.**

You don't have to be an artist to make sketches and you don't have to show them to anyone. Make them as fast as you can and focus on the concept, not the visual details.

- ▶ **Add notes.**

Some sketches can be rough, so don't forget to annotate and describe your thoughts. It'll help you to review your own sketches later.

- ▶ **Keep it organized.**

Collect your sketches for particular projects and try to keep them all in one place. It's also a good idea to carry a small sketchbook or moleskin with you. You never know when you might get some ideas.

What to use for sketching

The best thing about sketching is that you don't need any fancy stuff to sketch your ideas. You can have a pencil and a piece of paper and you're good to go.

Of course, if you want to make sketching a part of your design process, you may want to get some better quality tools to keep it all organized or even use some templates with a mobile phone or browser mockups. The options are endless and you'll find your own way, but here are some of my recommendations on how to start:

- ▶ **Get a good quality pen.**

I started using pens because you can't simply erase anything. I believe there are no ideas in my sketchbook that would deserve to be completely erased and forgotten. Keep all of them because you never know when you may need them.

You can make your sketches multi-color by using some colors like red or green for accent or by highlighting some more important areas.



If you're looking for a good quality pen, I would recommend the Faber-Castell (fabercastell.com) brand.

► Get a sketchbook.

Have at least one small sketchbook that you can carry with you to make some quick sketches. Use it to save your random ideas. Just remember to always add a date and a short title for each idea, so you can easily refer to them later.

I use one of these dot grid moleskins from [Action Method](#). Dots make drawing some shapes much easier which will help you to make quick and accurate sketches.

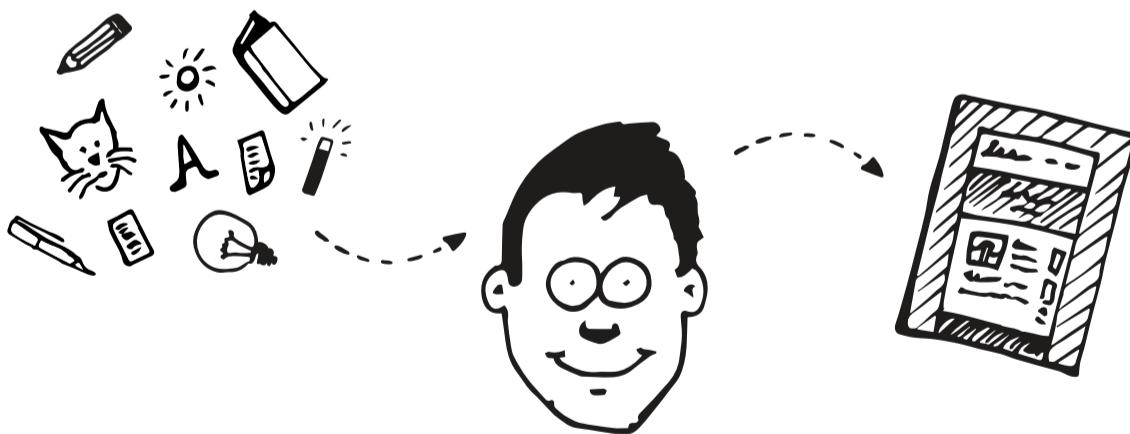


► Use sketching templates.

You'll find some ready-to-use sketching templates in the [Designers Area](#) on my website. Use them for some more advanced sketches and projects that require more thinking and planning. You can even draw complete wireframes which we'll talk about in the [Wireframes and Layout](#) chapter.

Looking for inspiration

It's also almost impossible to create something from nothing. No matter how creative we are, it's still all based on our life experience and things that we've already seen in our surrounding world.



There is of course a thin line between being inspired and copying. However, I believe that every designer should be able to judge that on their own and decide if it's fair to use some particular ideas.

The best way to make sure you're not copying someone else's work is to never focus on just one specific source of inspiration but try to diversify your resources. Do some research both online and offline and combine it all together.

Also, try to browse other designers' work every day and save the ones you really like. You can go back to your collections of favorite designs when you start working on a specific project.

Remember that everything you use is just for inspiration and to get some ideas. When you're ready to start designing, put away all those resources and let your imagination work. Use some ideas as you remember them, not as you see them. That way, you're not limiting yourself but instead you're applying your own style and thoughts to the process.

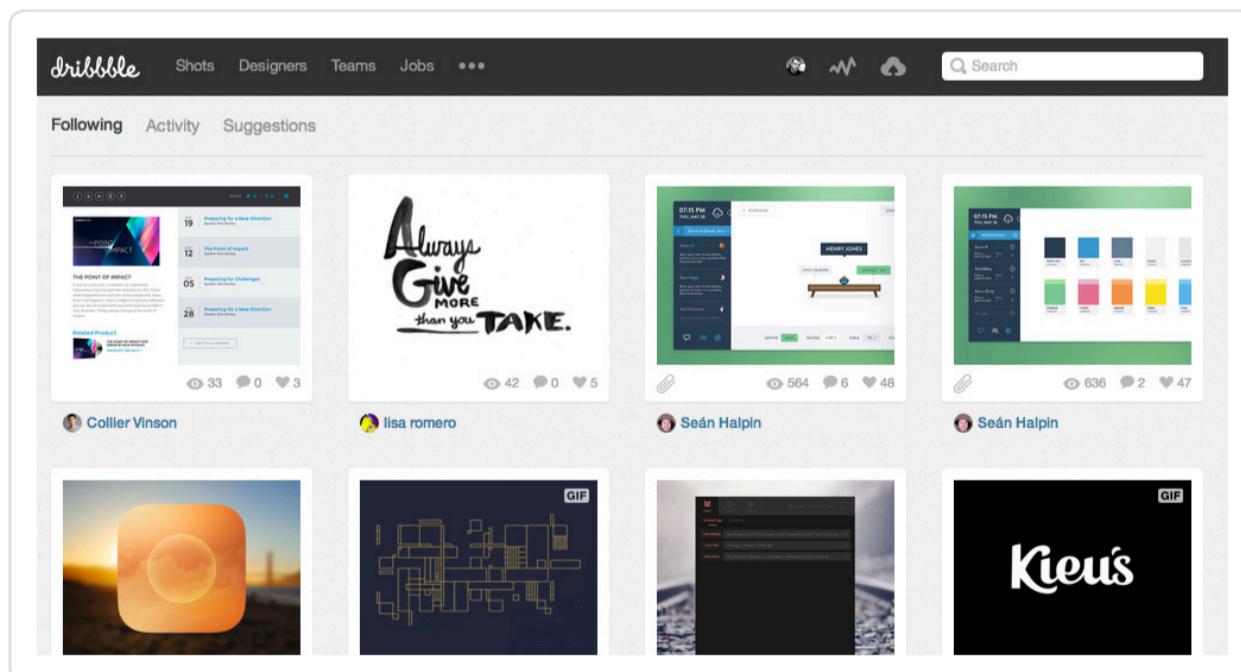
Let your brain process all inspiration in your own unique way.

Let's see where to look for inspiration. Here are some of my favorite resources:

General inspiration

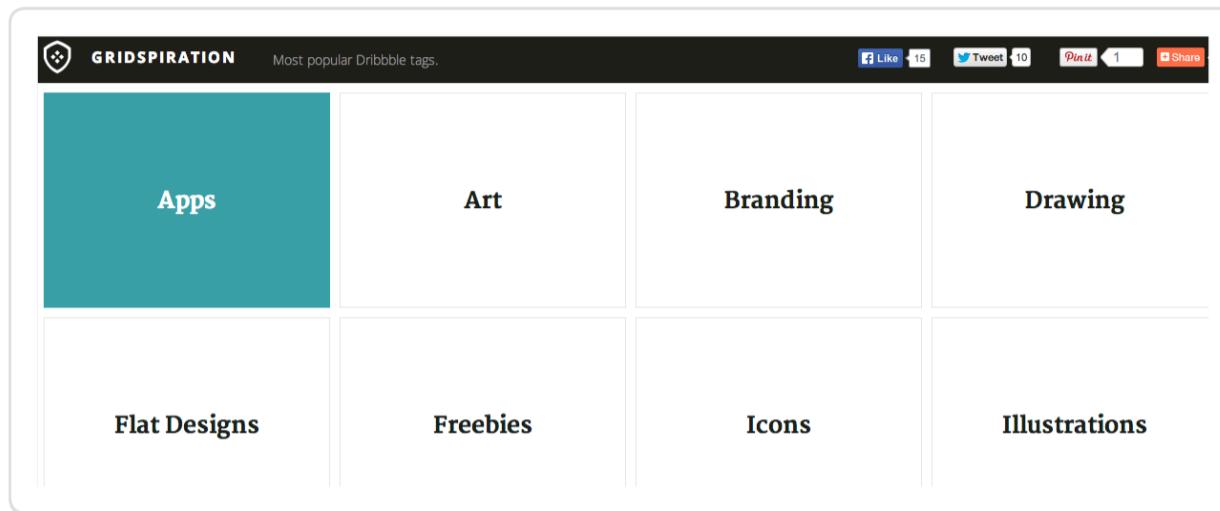
► [Dribbble.com](#)

Dribbble is a large community of designers who share screenshots of everything they're currently working on. This is my favorite source of inspiration. The designers are limited to posting 400x300 images (or 800x600 for retina display), so you can't actually always see a full project but it lets you focus on small parts of the design instead, like a navigation menu, search box, logo design, typography, illustration, etc.



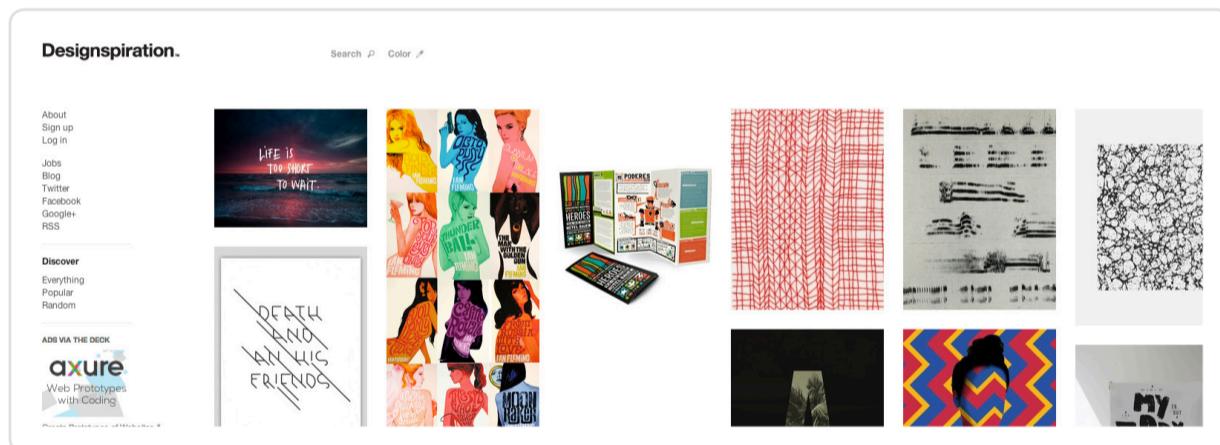
► **Gridspiration.com**

This is my own personal project where I listed some of the most popular Dribbble tags for immediate and fast browsing.



► **designspiration.net**

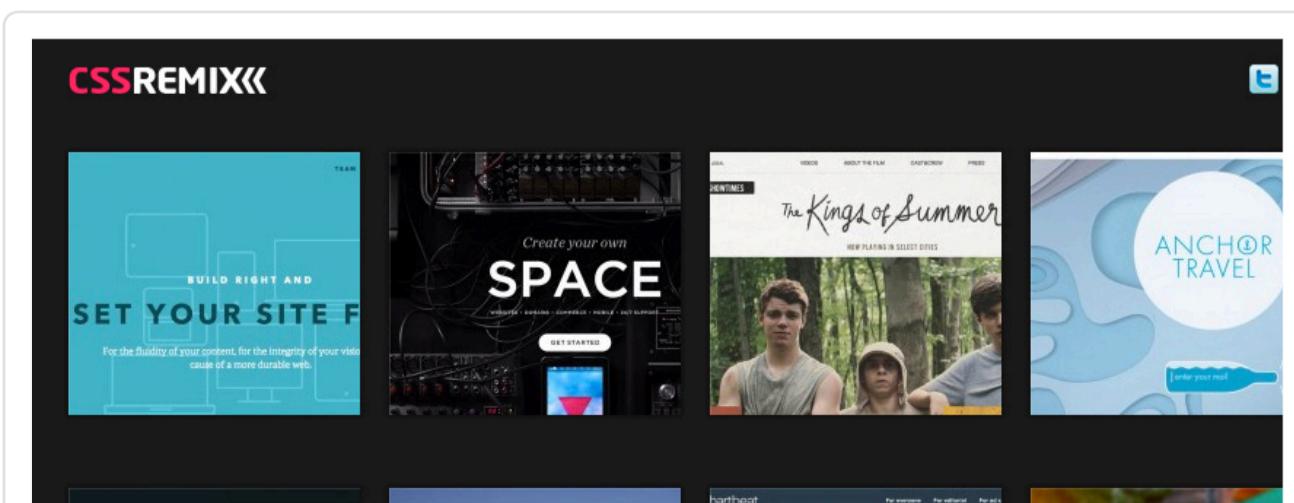
This is the place where you can find design-specific inspiration. There are many print designs, icons, photographs and product designs.



CSS Galleries

There are tons of CSS galleries where you can find many examples of beautifully designed websites from around the world. They are called "CSS galleries" because they list only websites that are HTML/CSS coded and are not using flash.

► **CSSRemix.com**



► **CSSMania.com**

The screenshot shows the homepage of CSSmania.com. The header features the site's name "cssmania" in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. To the right of the name are links for "SUBMIT A SITE (\$10)" and "RSS". Below the header is a green navigation bar with links for "home", "galleries", "colors", "api", "advertise", and "contact". To the right of the navigation bar are social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, along with the handle "@cssmania". The main content area has a white background. On the left, there's a section titled "LATEST UPDATES" with two thumbnail images: one of a dark, abstract design and another of a clothing store's website. In the center, there's a button labeled "ADD A SITE". On the right, there's a search bar and a sidebar with a heading "SIZE DOESN'T MATT" and a sub-section about "Wrapbootstrap : Bootstrap themes to make your".

► **Awwwards.com**

The screenshot shows a project page on Awwwards.com. The top navigation bar includes the AWWWARDS logo, filter options ("Filter sites by Category", "Tag", "Colour"), and a "SUBMIT YOUR SITE" button. The main content area features a project by "AURORA ROBSON" titled "STAYIN' ALIVE". The project image is a vibrant, abstract composition of various materials like feathers and plastic. Below the image, there are four circular rating scores: 7.68 (red), 6.02 (yellow), 7.30 (green), and 7.81 (teal). To the right, there are two more sections: "SITE OF THE DAY" (with a laurel wreath icon) and "AVERAGE" (with a score of 7.12). Below these sections are small profile pictures of the team members.

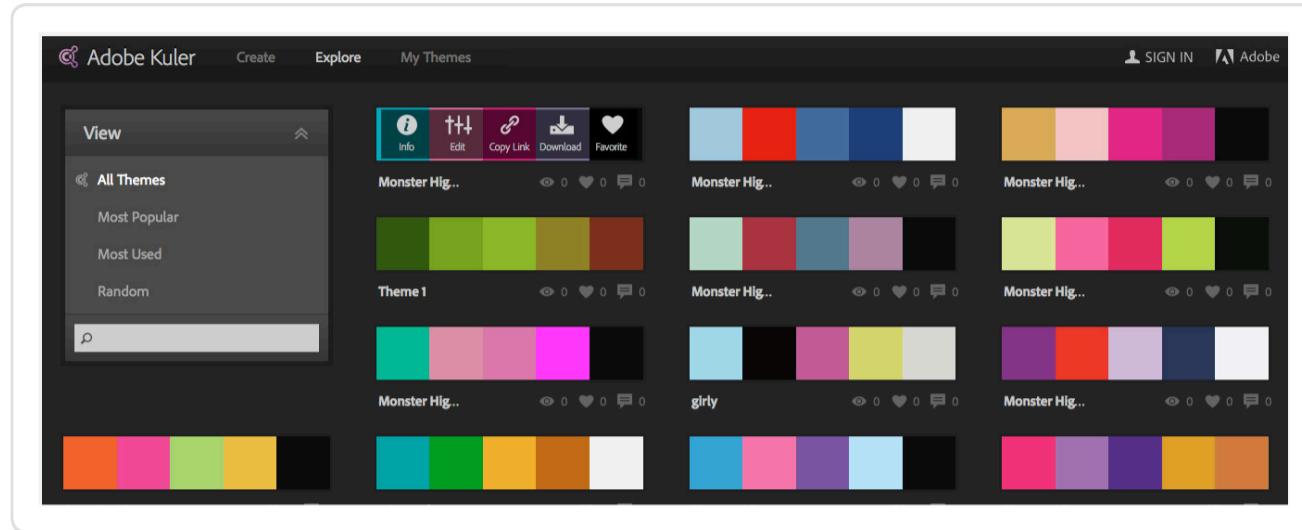
► **Fltdsgn.com**

The screenshot shows the homepage of Fltdsgn.com. The top navigation bar includes links for "AGENCY", "ANNUAL REPORT", "APP", "CAUSE", "EVENT", "OTHER", "PORTFOLIO", "PRODUCT", "PROJECT", "RESOURCES", "SERVICE", "SHOP", "THEMES", and "TRAVEL". The main content area features a large image of a woman singing into a microphone, with the word "MONA" partially visible in the background. Above the image is the text "Flat UI Design". To the right of the image is a blue sidebar with the text "EASY, HASSLE-FREE WEB HOSTING FOR \$4.95 /MONTH" and "unlimited space, transfer, & domains on 1 account". At the bottom of the sidebar are the "bluehost" logo and a "sign up >" button.

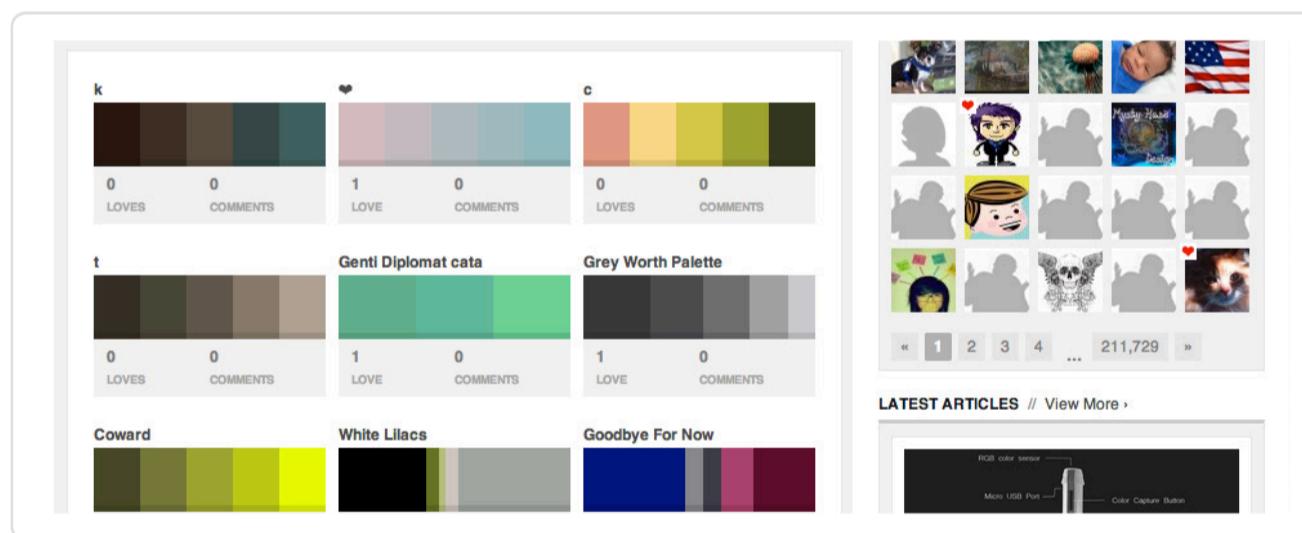
Colors

Are you looking for some color inspiration? On these websites you'll find some great color schemes that you can easily use in your own projects:

► color.adobe.com



► colourlovers.com



Typography

Check out these websites for some interesting typography ideas and usages:

- ▶ typespiration.com

The screenshot shows the homepage of typespiration.com. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'home', 'about', 'request invite', 'login', and 'rss'. Below the navigation, there are social media counts: 50 posts on Pinterest, 781 tweets on Twitter, 75 Google+ posts, 503 likes on Facebook, and 18 posts on StumbleUpon. The main content area features several typography examples. One example on the left is titled 'Lorem Ipsu' and includes a date 'FEBRUARY 18, 21'. Another example in the center is titled 'Anti-wrinkle Inje' and discusses dermal fillers. A third example on the right is from a story by 'Fix the detective' and mentions 'Passepartout' and 'Priests of Fix'. The bottom of the page has a footer with links to 'Font Clusters', 'Fonts in Use', 'Interviews', 'Product', 'Font News', and social sharing buttons for Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.

- ▶ typecache.com/fonts-in-use

The screenshot shows the homepage of typecache.com/fonts-in-use. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Typecache.com', 'Font Clusters', 'Fonts in Use', 'Interviews', 'Product', 'Font News', and social sharing buttons for Twitter, Facebook, and Google+. The main content area features two large images. The left image shows a close-up of a handwritten note with the word 'KARA' written in a stylized font. The right image shows a blue background with white text that reads 'ONLY A D N G' in a bold, sans-serif font.

- ▶ justmytype.co

The screenshot shows the homepage of justmytype.co. It features two main sections. The top section is titled 'H&FJ PAIRINGS' and shows a dark grey background with the text 'Pack my boxes with five dozen liquor' in a large, elegant serif font. Below this, it says 'The five boxing wizards jump quickly. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.' The bottom section is titled 'TYPEKIT PAIRINGS' and shows a dark background with the same text 'Pack my boxes with five dozen liquor' in a large, bold sans-serif font. Below this, it says 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The five boxing wizards jump quickly.' Both sections have a small 'PAIRINGS' link at the bottom left.

Offline

Why limit your research to only online resources? There are a lot of great designs around you every day. Just make sure to take pictures of everything interesting you see.

► Movie posters.

Some movie posters are true art. Pay attention to the typography and colors that are carefully designed by world-class artists.



► Books and magazines.

Books and magazines are great examples of beautiful typography and layout design.

Offscreen magazine (offscreenmag.com) has a great layout design that can be inspiration for your own projects.

An open issue of Offscreen magazine. The left page shows a grid of small images labeled 'Where the Magic Happens'. The right page features a large landscape photograph of a boat on a rocky shore, with a smaller inset image of a person riding a bike. Below the photo is the headline 'A Daring Disconnect' and a paragraph about a remote worker's challenges. The right margin contains a column of text about digital makers' challenges.

► **Signage and banners.**

Even simple signs you see every day can be a good source of inspiration. Look at these in stores and on streets. Take photos and collect.



► **Art galleries and museums.**

If you're working on a design that requires a specific style, you may find some great inspiration in thematic art gallery or museum exhibitions.

► **Coffee shops, shopping malls, stores, restaurants.**

These places are full of nicely designed stationeries, seasonal themes, menus and ordering signage.

► **Urban architecture, cities.**

Look around in your own town: maybe it has a grid based street system, interesting buildings, historical places. I'm a big fan of modern-looking cities and well-designed infrastructures.



Sketching ideas

This is the first part of the practice section in this ebook. As I mentioned before, I'm going to show you a complete website design project step-by-step at the end of every theory chapter.

I'd really like to encourage you to start your own project right now and work on your design while following other practice parts. You'll see how easy it is when you actually try and you'll be amazed by what you accomplish at the end of this ebook.

Once you understand how it all works and what great results you can get, you'll only need to improve your process and repeat it over and over again for future projects. It'll soon become a habit that you won't even think about when you design your next website.

Are you ready for the fun part?

So, you've done your research, you explored some other websites and design materials for inspiration. You have a vision of what the design could be but there are still too many random ideas going through your head. You need to put them in order, save the best of them and move forward.

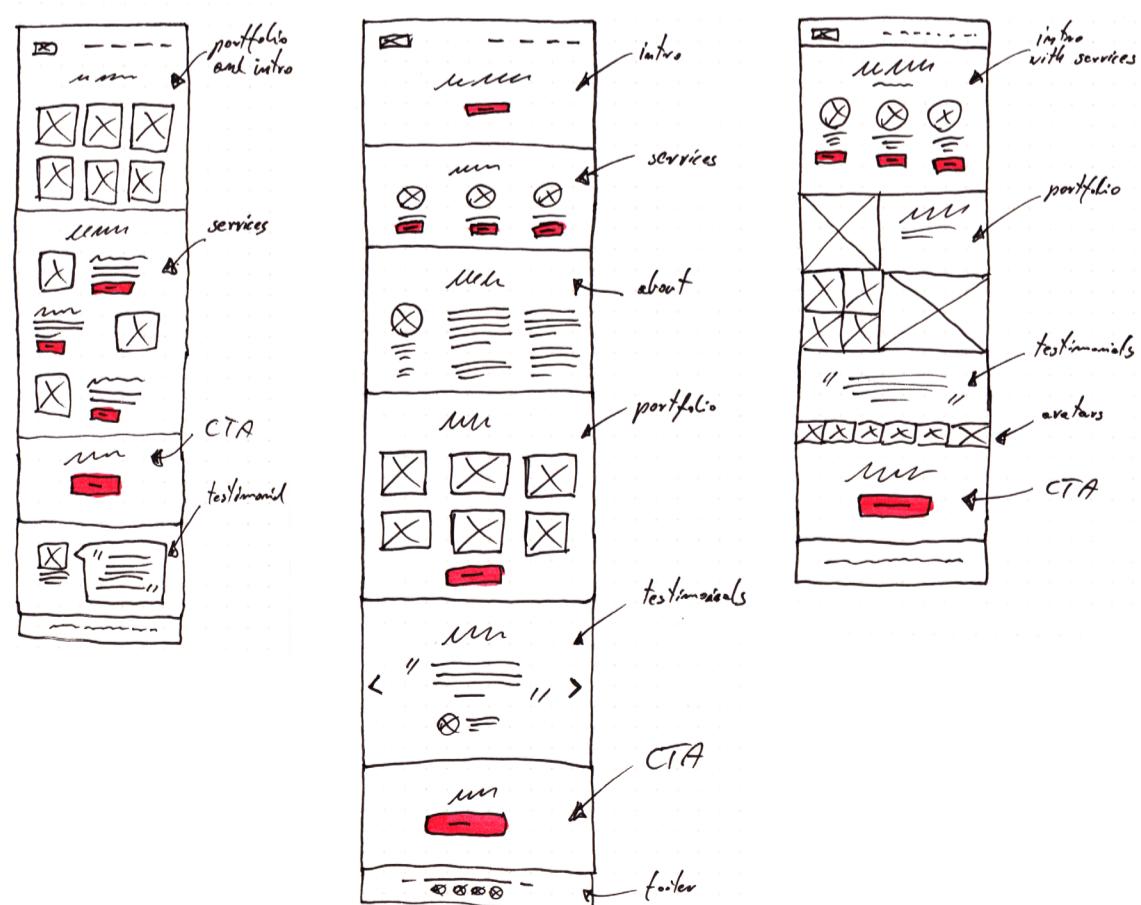
Step 1

I usually start my sketching by planning an overall website's content layout. I know what subpages I'm going to have on my website and now I need to only plan it all out, so it makes it easier for visitors to navigate and understand.

I started with drawing a few variations of my home page. My plan was to divide the home page into separate full width sections, so the entire page has a smooth vertical flow.

This is only an overall home page layout and I'll make some more variations for each of the elements in the next steps.

I marked in red the primary buttons that will lead to other sub pages.

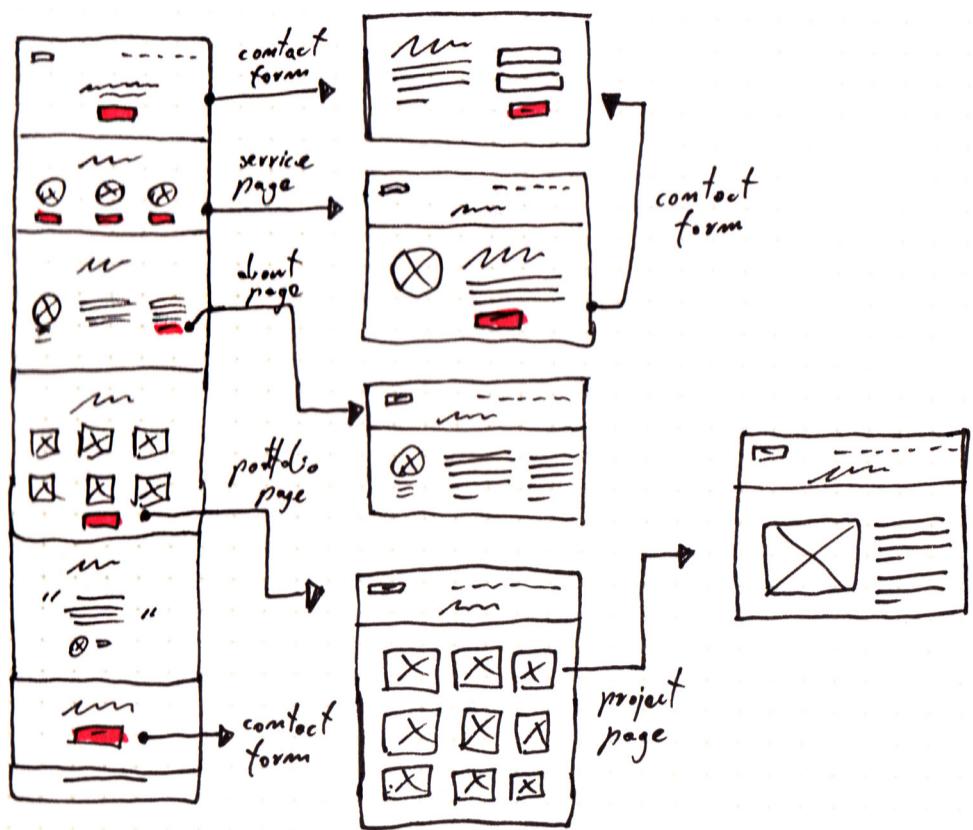


Step 2

I like the first option of the layout with all sections spread out across the page. So, I'm taking that concept a bit further and I'm drawing a quick flowchart to illustrate which sections will link to which sub pages based on the sitemap I made before.

In this concept, the contact form will be a popup screen that can be easily implemented without wasting time to load another page.

Remember that there is no good or bad at this point. Draw your ideas, don't erase anything, keep going.

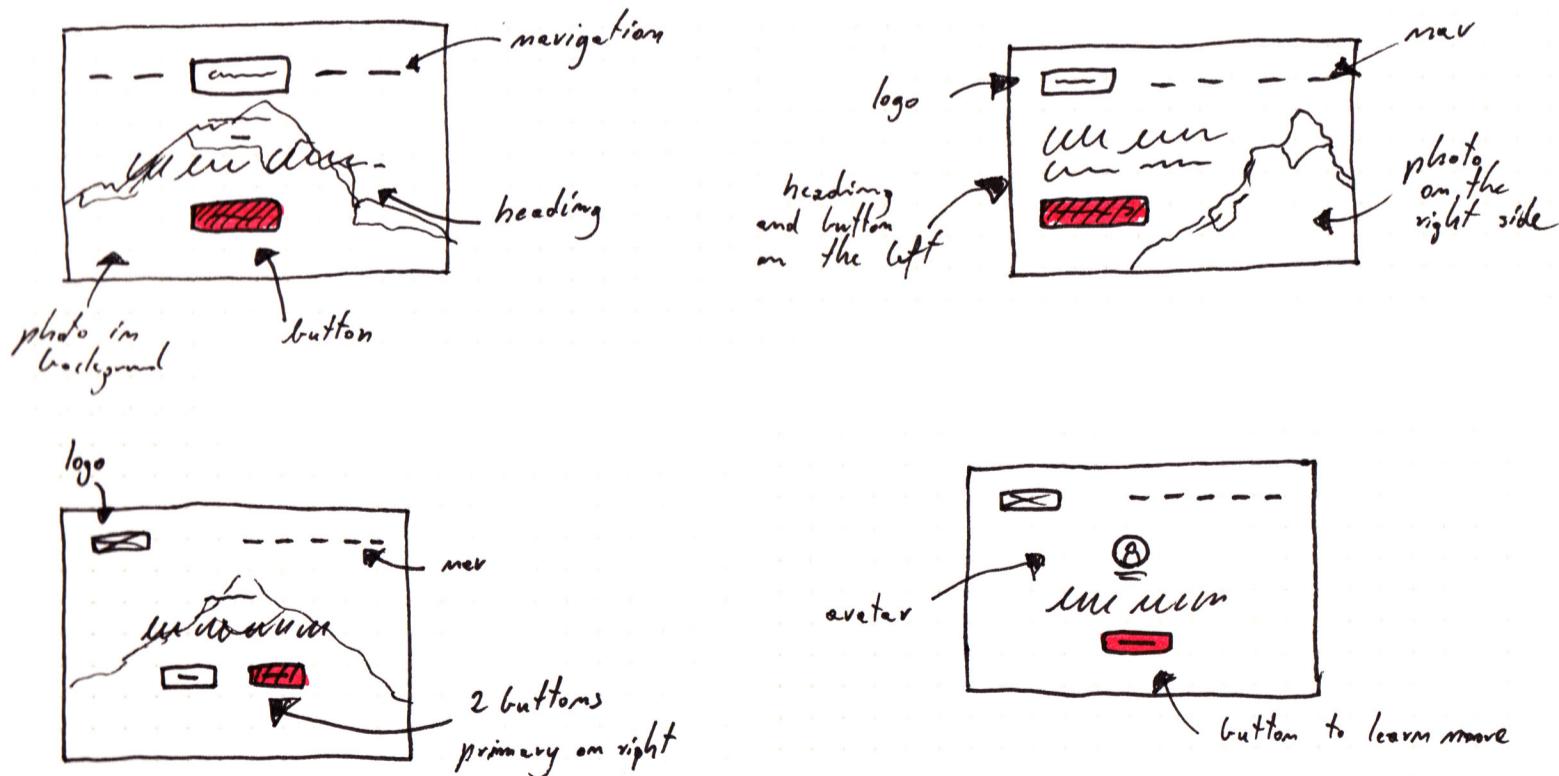


Step 3

As I mentioned before, I'm going to sketch each home page section individually. Let's start with the intro section.

My idea is to have a big background photo stretched across the entire screen. Here's what I'm trying: centered and left-aligned intro copy, one or two buttons, centered or left-aligned logo.

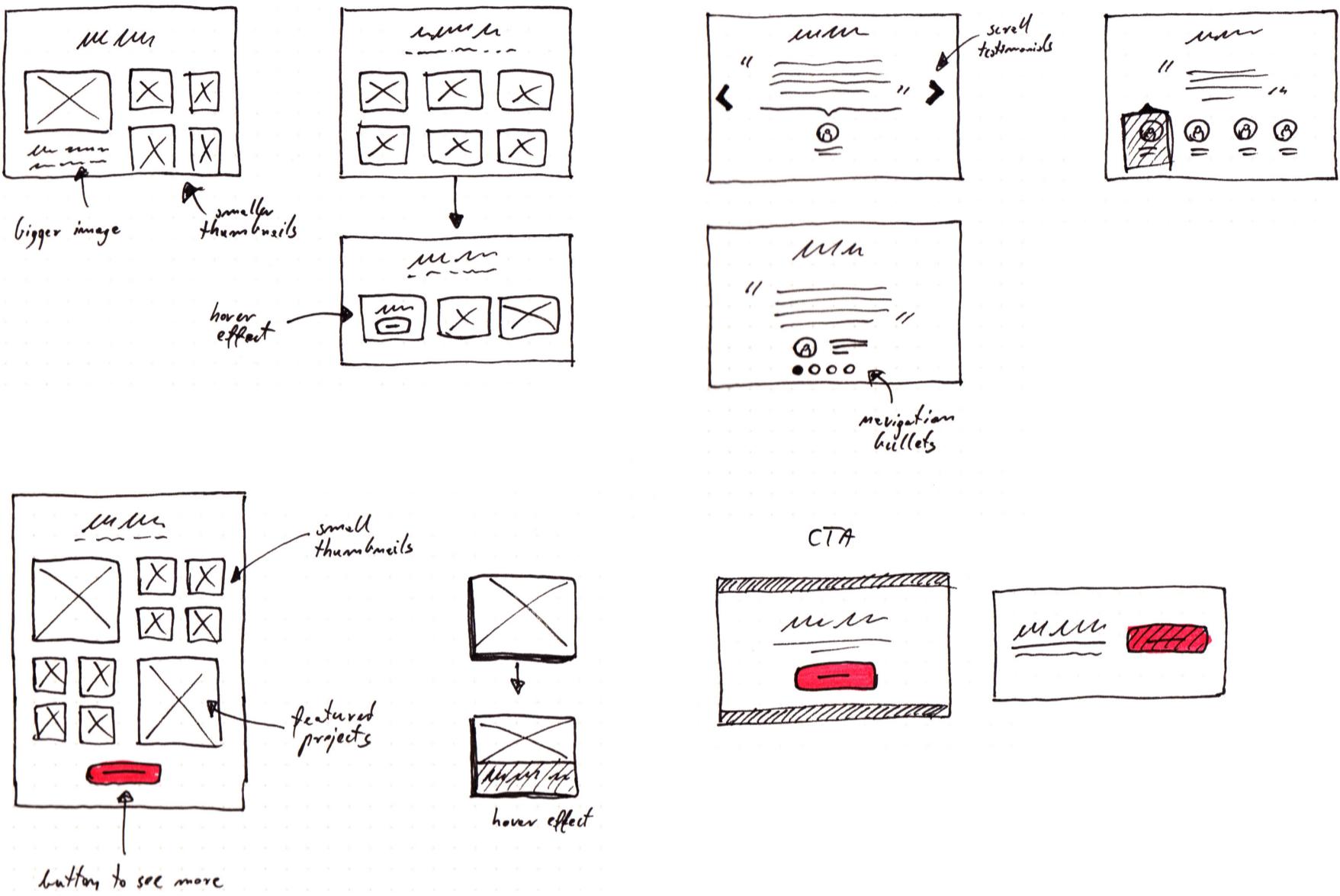
I have four different good-looking concepts to choose from.



Step 4

Now, I'm drawing other home page sections. I'm pretty happy with the services and about sections from my first sketch. I'm not going to draw anything new for that.

I feel like I need to focus more on portfolio, testimonials, and the main call to action banner.



There are some different ideas regarding how to lay out the portfolio items and how they should behave on hover (when you move your cursor over it).

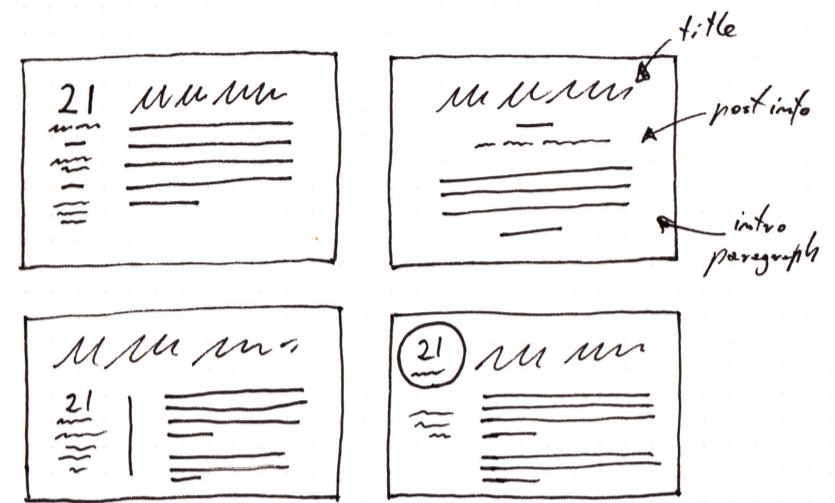
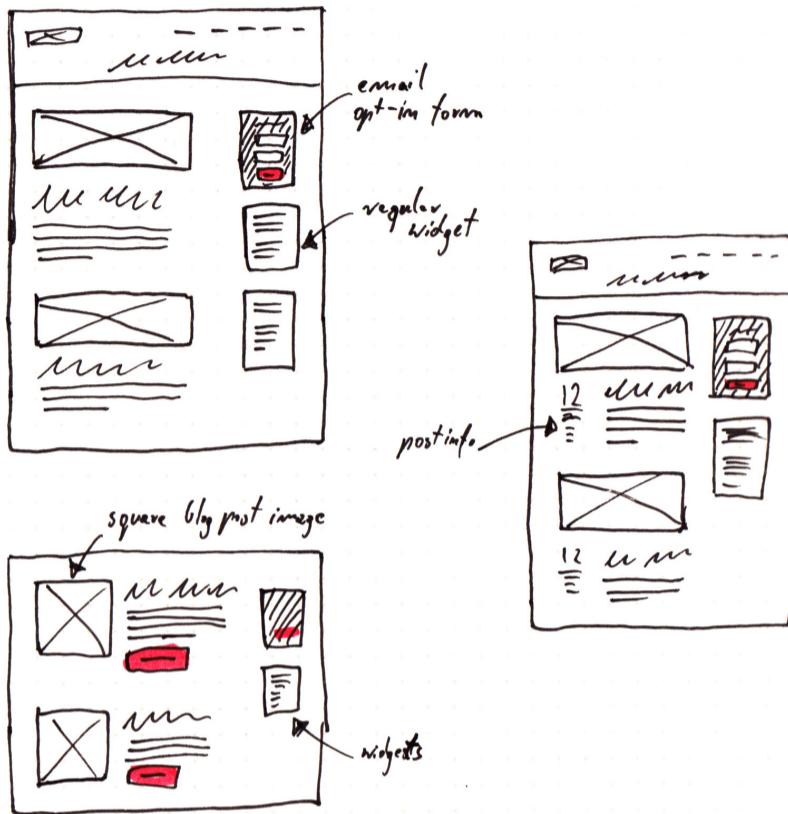
When it comes to testimonials, I want to have one big quote with a carousel to rotate between three or four people. I'm trying three different concepts: arrows on the sides, simple bullets and big client profiles. I'll decide later which one to choose.

The call to action banner should be simple. It's just a short title and one button. I'll need to figure out how to make it more prominent while designing it in Photoshop.

Step 5

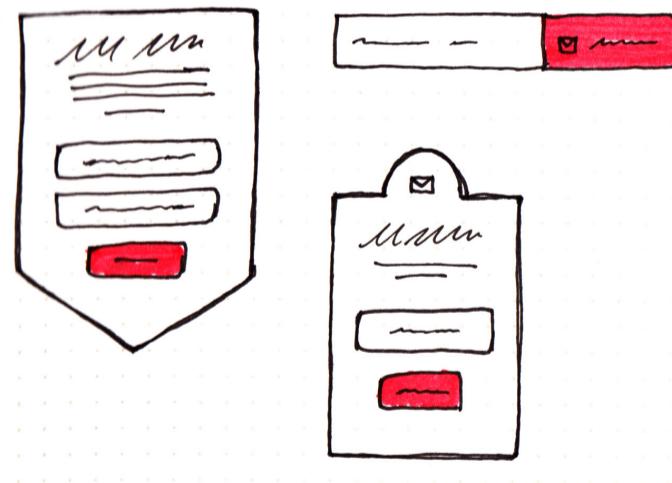
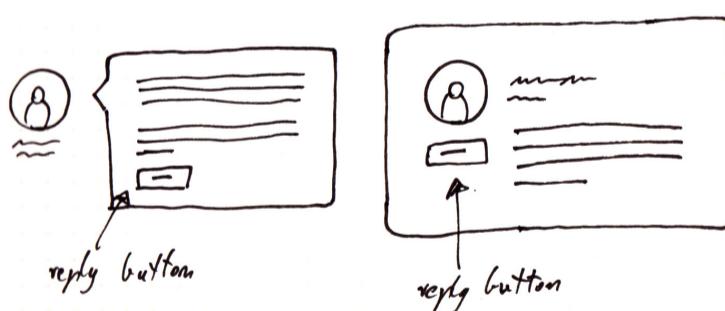
I'm moving into sketching some ideas for the blog pages. I want to make the blog page very simple with a traditional "content + sidebar" layout and big featured images.

I also drew some different blog post layouts by positioning a title, post date and post author in a few different variations.



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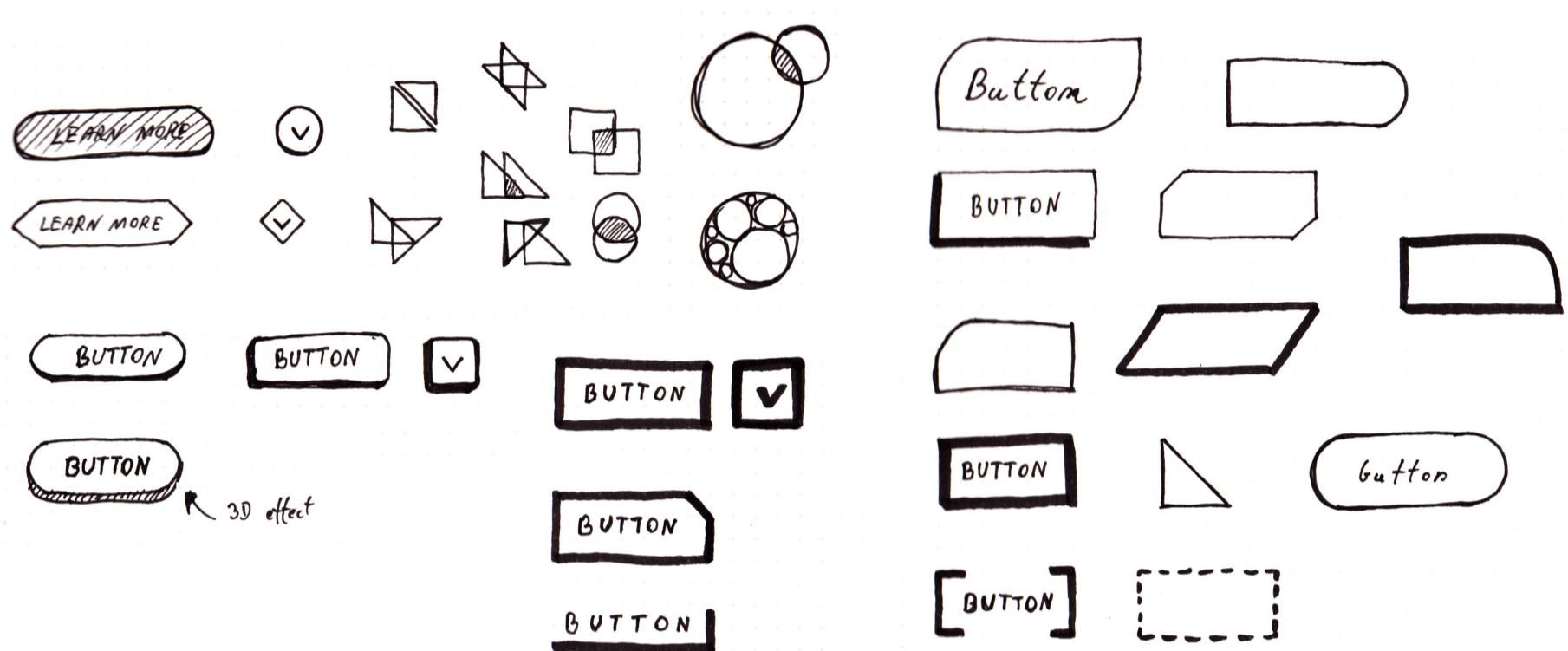


Of course, don't forget about the email sign up form. It's a very important part of the blog and I want to make it look a little more attractive. I'm making sure to use different shapes for the opt-in box to get some more attention.

Step 6

In this last step of the ideas sketching process, I'm having some fun with some buttons and I'm trying to come up with simple shape illustrations that I could use in the project.

I'm experimenting with some different button shapes. I thought it would be cool to use buttons with big rounded corners, so they're fully rounded on both sides. I also saw 3D looking buttons somewhere, so I saved that idea here too.



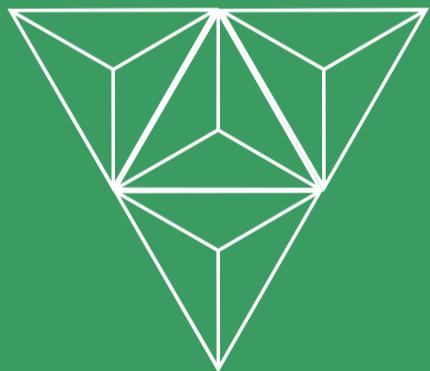
This ebook project is pretty simple and I have a good idea of what I want to accomplish, so my sketches are not complicated and I didn't have to go through too many versions and layout options. However, there are some projects where sketching just the ideas can take a few days.

If you're doing your own project sketches with me now, I hope you've experienced how flexible you can be in coming up with different concepts of your designs.

Take some time and keep drawing your ideas. We'll need them in the next chapters of this ebook.

CHAPTER 4

Design Environment



Organizing your project files

Now that you have some ideas for your design project and you have your first sketches done, it's time to set up your design environment on your computer.

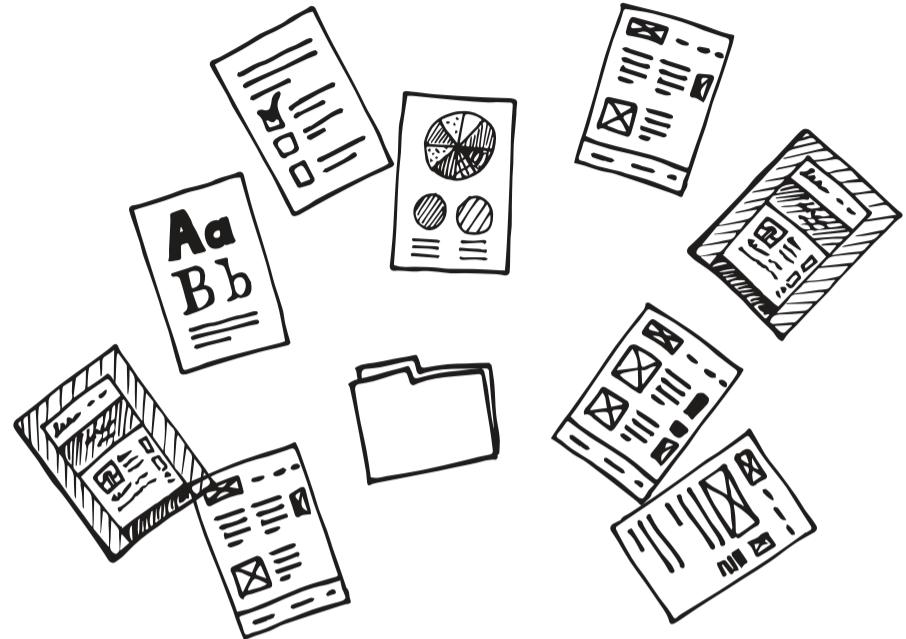
We'll start this chapter with some suggestions on how to organize your project files and folders. Keeping your project files organized is definitely not an easy task, especially when your creativity is taking control over the project and you've ended up with a bunch of design files all over your hard drive.

Designers have a tendency to skip the "boring" organizational process and move directly to the production phase.

You can solve that problem by incorporating a solid folder structure that will be like a template for all your projects. Having that consistency will save you a lot of time and every member of your team will appreciate it.

Later, during the design process, you may need some client's materials, stock photos you purchased in the past, or simply an older version of your own design files. A proper folder structure will make it easy and fast.

So, keeping your project files well organized might be a huge time saver and you won't have to pause your creative phase for too long in order to find a particular file.

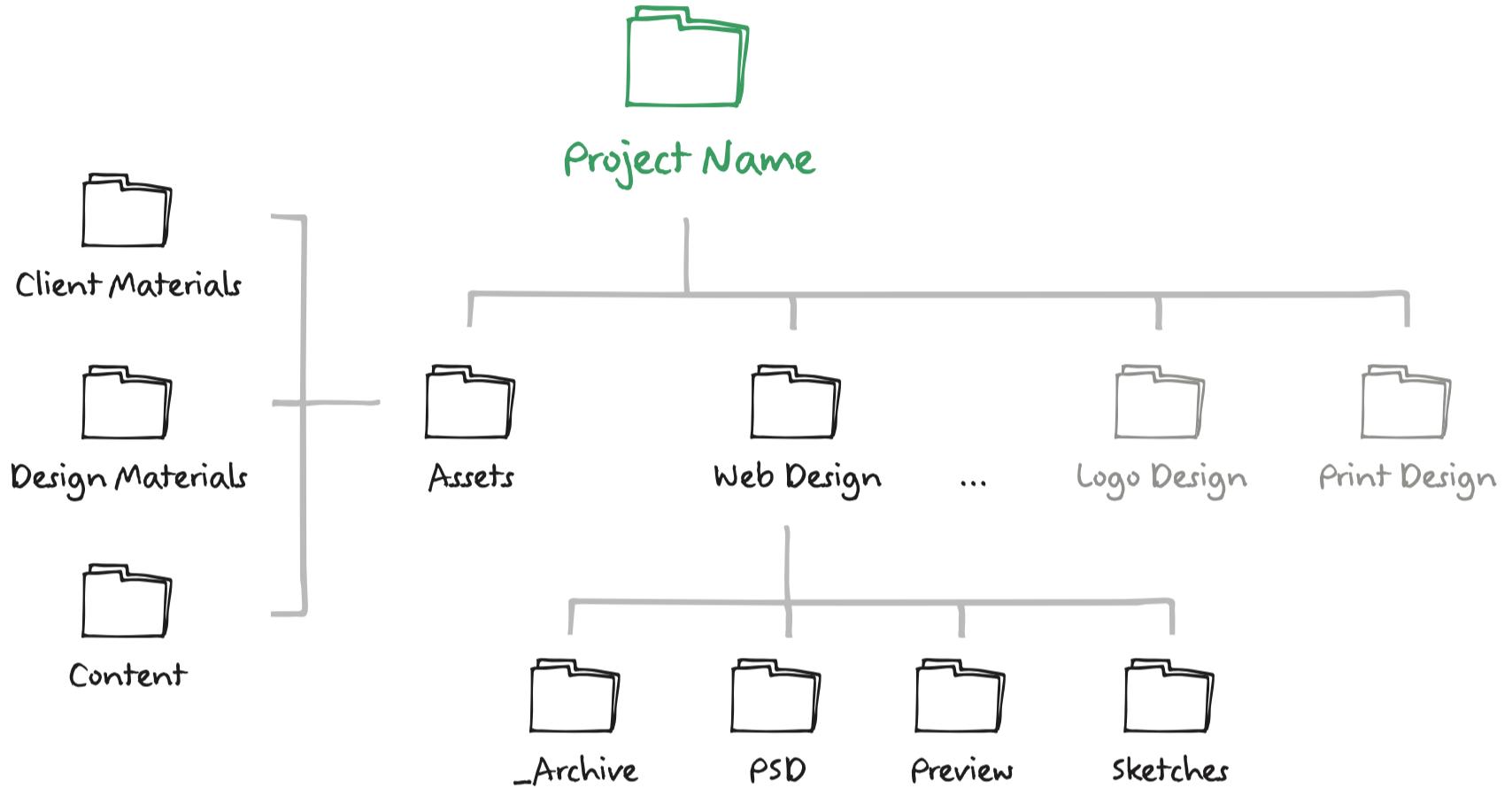


Project folder structure

I've been working on my folder structure for many years. In the beginning, it was a very simple folder, but as I started becoming more experienced, my folder structure started growing too. Today I've ended up with a pretty solid scheme that I think covers most of my projects' needs.

Feel free to modify and tailor it to your needs, as you may have different habits or perhaps you use other assets than I do.

Let's look at this structure:



Let me explain the role of some of these folders:

- ▶ **Project Name.**

This is your main project folder. Use a name that is easily recognizable for you and your team. Avoid any unofficial names or nicknames. It can be confusing after some time. If you do several different projects for one client it's good to put all project folders into a "client folder."

This is a place where we can keep all the "production" parts of the project. Some projects may include more design work than just the website. It's good to keep it all in one place and name it accordingly: "*Logo Design*", "*Print Design*", etc.

- ▶ **Assets.**

We can use this folder to gather all the materials that are associated with the project. It can be a client's logo, stock photos or some website content.

Also, you can keep all the stock photos and any specific design materials (like icons, textures, patterns) you purchased for this project here. After some time, you may need to make some design additions and it'll be very helpful to quickly reach for the same icon set or texture that you used before.

► **Web Design.**

We focus on web design in this ebook, so I'm going to add some more details about this folder (other design project folders may look very similar).

As you can see, we have four subfolders here:

_Archive – never remove old or unused design files! If there are any design concepts that weren't approved by the client, you can always keep them in the **_Archive** folder. You never know when you may need them. You can zip it to save some space on your hard drive. I can't remember how many times this folder saved my life.

PSD – here you can keep all of your design project files like final mockups, style guide files, wireframes, etc. Some projects need many PSD files, so you may want to group them by versions or type.

Preview – this folder is reserved for all files that you show to other people. These files are usually in PNG, PDF or JPG format. You may want to categorize the preview files by revision rounds to keep track of the progress.

Sketches - take photos of your ideas from the sketchbook and save it here. You may need your original ideas after awhile and it'll save you a lot of time if you keep it here.

Naming project files

Naming your project files matters as much as good folder organization. To properly name your project file, imagine that someone sent you his PSD file which is a part of a bigger project. What would you like to know about it?

It could be information like:

- Client name.
- Project type.
- Designer's name or initials.
- Revision number.

Let's see some examples of correct naming conventions:

- CompanyName_HomePage.psd
- CompanyName_LandingPage-rev3.psd
- ProjectName_IntroPage-John-rev1.psd

These are of course just examples but it should give you an idea. Even if you get some files like this completely out of the blue, you can glean a lot of information just from the file name.

It's very useful especially when you communicate through emails or project management software and you can't preview PSD files in the browser. Looking at the attached file names can save you and your team members a lot of time.

Just like with your folder structure, you may find your own perfect file naming convention that you're going to stick with through all of your projects. It's a good idea to keep a consistent pattern through the years, so you can easily refer to your older projects.

Choosing design software

There are many options when it comes to choosing your design software but before I list some of the most popular positions, I want you to know that the design software is NOT that important at all.

I've been using Photoshop for years but I never considered myself as a Photoshop master because I don't use or need most of its functions.

You should focus much more on developing important design skills than mastering one particular design program. What we use to design websites may change in the future but the design technique may remain for years.

The most important thing is to have skills that are completely independent from the software and hardware you use. If you know how to correctly plan the entire design process, choose typography, match colors and design a layout, then you'll be able to create beautiful designs using any professional tools.

Please note that this is my software opinion at the time of writing this ebook (early 2015) and this list may change in the future, so please check my website for any ebook updates (RafalTomal.com).

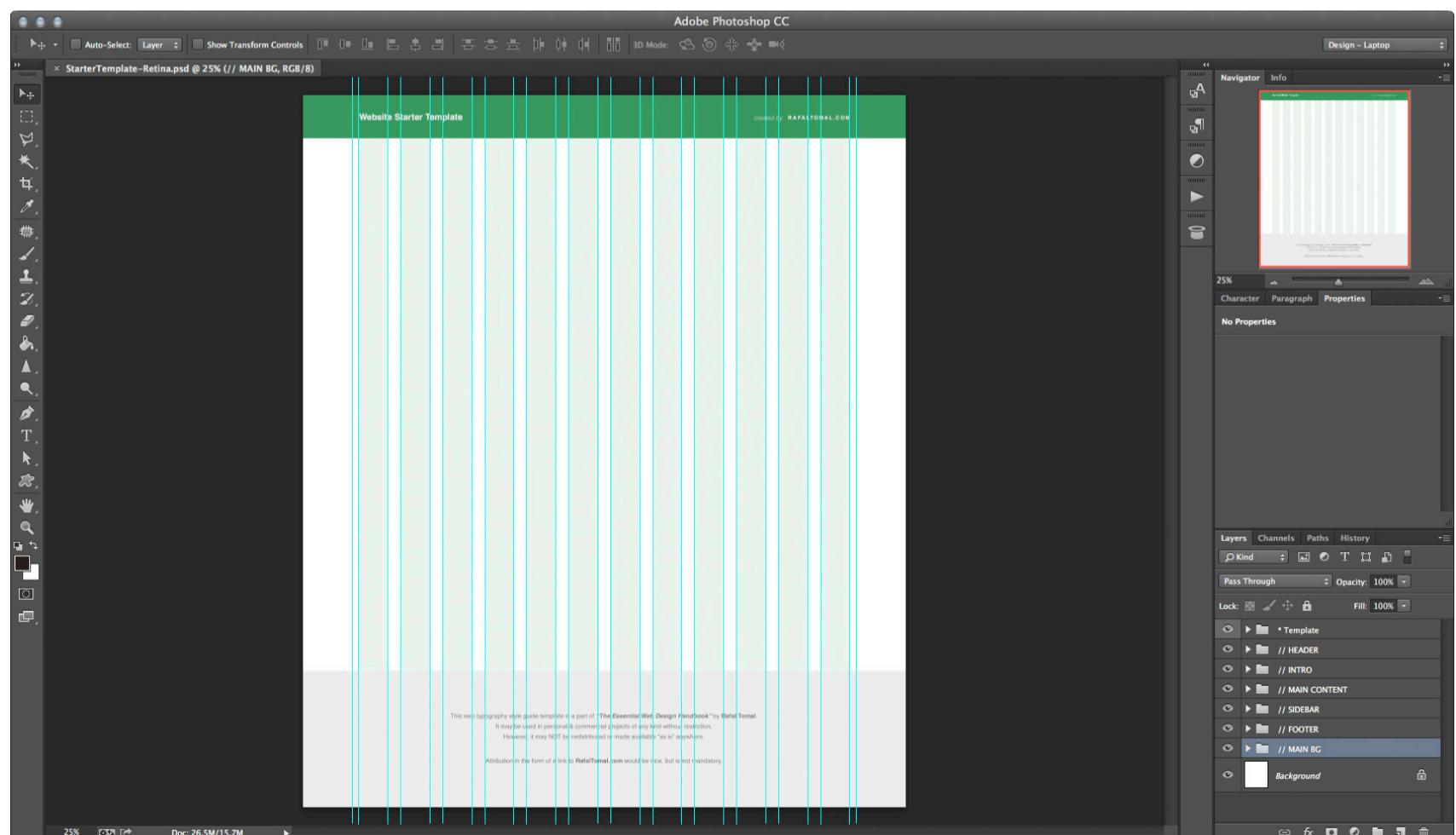
What software you should choose depends on individual needs and preferences. To show you some more interesting options, I listed the most popular applications that got my attention:

► **Adobe Photoshop.**

This has been the most popular design software for years. It's very flexible, and it'll let you work on many layers and create full website design mockups. It has all the tools you need like guides, shapes, effects or filters and you can import external images. There are also many great design resources available like textures, brushes, actions and plugins.

The biggest problem with Photoshop these days is that you can only make static designs. You cannot make your website easily responsive. As a result, there was a big discussion about it and Adobe subsequently came up with a new web tool called [Adobe Edge Reflow](#).

It lets you import your PSD files and easily make alternative versions of your design for different screen sizes. This program is still in an early version but it's a very nice extension to Adobe Photoshop.



► **Adobe Fireworks.**

This has been a great alternative to Photoshop for many designers. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this ebook, Adobe decided to no longer continue developing Fireworks; however, you can still buy the most recent version and use it.

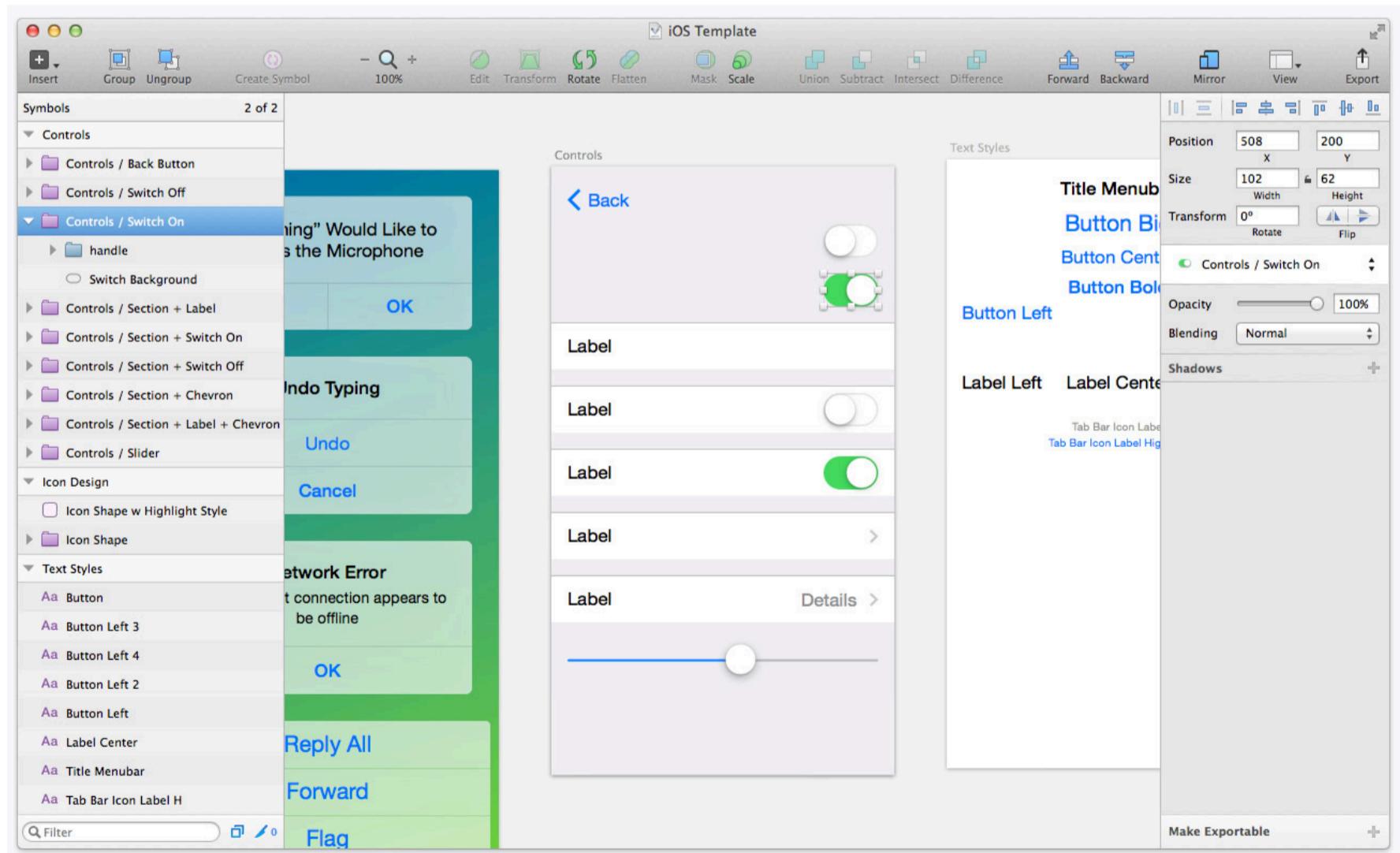
Adobe announced that they're going to release some great new tools that will replace Fireworks, so I wouldn't recommend using Fireworks anymore.

► **Sketch.**

Sketch is probably Photoshop's biggest competitor when it comes to designing websites. While Photoshop originally was made for editing and retouching photos, Sketch was created specifically for UI design work.

All designs in Sketch are fully vector based, so you don't need to worry about image resolution or saving images for retina display. It's full of great features like symbols, layers, grid tools, artboards and easy image exporting.

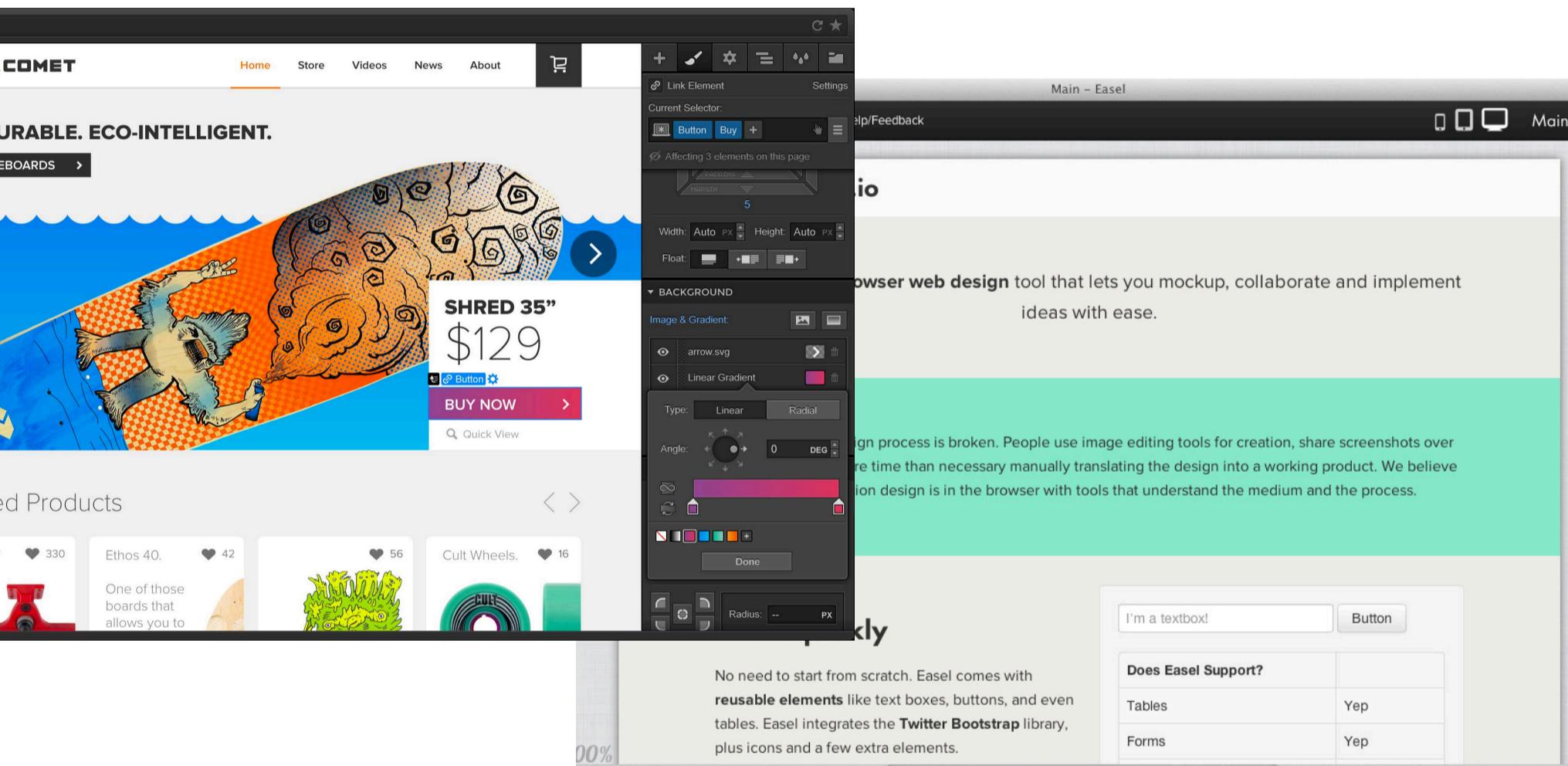
Sketch is definitely one of the apps that is worth trying and comparing to Photoshop.



► Webflow and Easel.

These are some new web apps that will let you do the entire website design right from your browser. They are very interesting alternatives that recently got my attention. They will let you completely create design mockups using shapes, web typography, and imported images.

The greatest advantage of these tools is that you see your design right in the browser and you can quickly export HTML and CSS for fast prototyping. I would still be careful with using that code in the production, though. There is nothing better than a hand-crafted code.



► Designing in the browser.

This technique has become more and more popular since many designers discovered that they don't need to use Photoshop to effectively design websites. You can do everything directly in the browser by using HTML and CSS. Working on your design in its true environment, the web browser, can help you save a lot of time.

Adobe Photoshop is the software of my choice at the moment of writing this ebook (early 2015) and I use it for wireframes, web style guides, and design mockups. I usually only need mockups of the most important pages like the home page, blog page, landing page, etc. Next, I finish up the entire design in the browser based on my web style guide and mockups.

Pre-designing everything in Photoshop allows me to be more creative and try different design concepts faster. I can also use it for photo retouching or making illustrations that I need to use in my design project.

Photoshop is still the safest option in which to do your designs these days. It's the most popular design application and most of your clients and web developers will request PSD files of your designs.

There are also many extensions that help to improve Photoshop's functionality, like fast slicing your graphics and exporting images ([Slicy](#)) or even exporting the entire design to HTML and CSS for fast prototyping ([Cut&Slice](#)).

Next, I'll show you how to correctly setup Adobe Photoshop for your web design project.

Setting up Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop can be used for both print and web design. It lets you work in different resolutions and color settings. Let's see how to setup your Photoshop so it works best specifically with your web design projects.

Color settings

Since we're not going to dig into too many details about color management here, I'm going to briefly describe the best color settings for our workspace.

Color settings in web design are pretty simple. Some of this information might be obvious for you but let's quickly refresh the theory.

There are two most popular color modes:

- ▶ **RGB (Red, Green, Blue).**

This color mode is used for all graphics that are meant to be displayed on the screen.

► CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black).

This color mode is used for all graphics that are meant for printing.

As you can see, RGB is the only color mode you want to work with while designing websites. Simple? Yes, but...

...to make this a bit more complicated, there are many different color spaces that use the RGB color model; for example, sRGB, Adobe RGB, etc. The color spaces define exactly what colors you see on your computer screen or any other device with an RGB screen.

I found that some designers recommend using *Adobe RGB (1998)* because it has more colors than *sRGB*. It's true that *Adobe RGB* has a larger color gamut but web designers shouldn't be using it.

The best practice is to use *sRGB* color space, which is a standard color space created cooperatively by HP and Microsoft in 1996.

By using *sRGB* in your working space, you make sure that the colors you see in your Photoshop are very close to what other people will see in their browsers. *sRGB* is the most commonly used color space on computer screens.

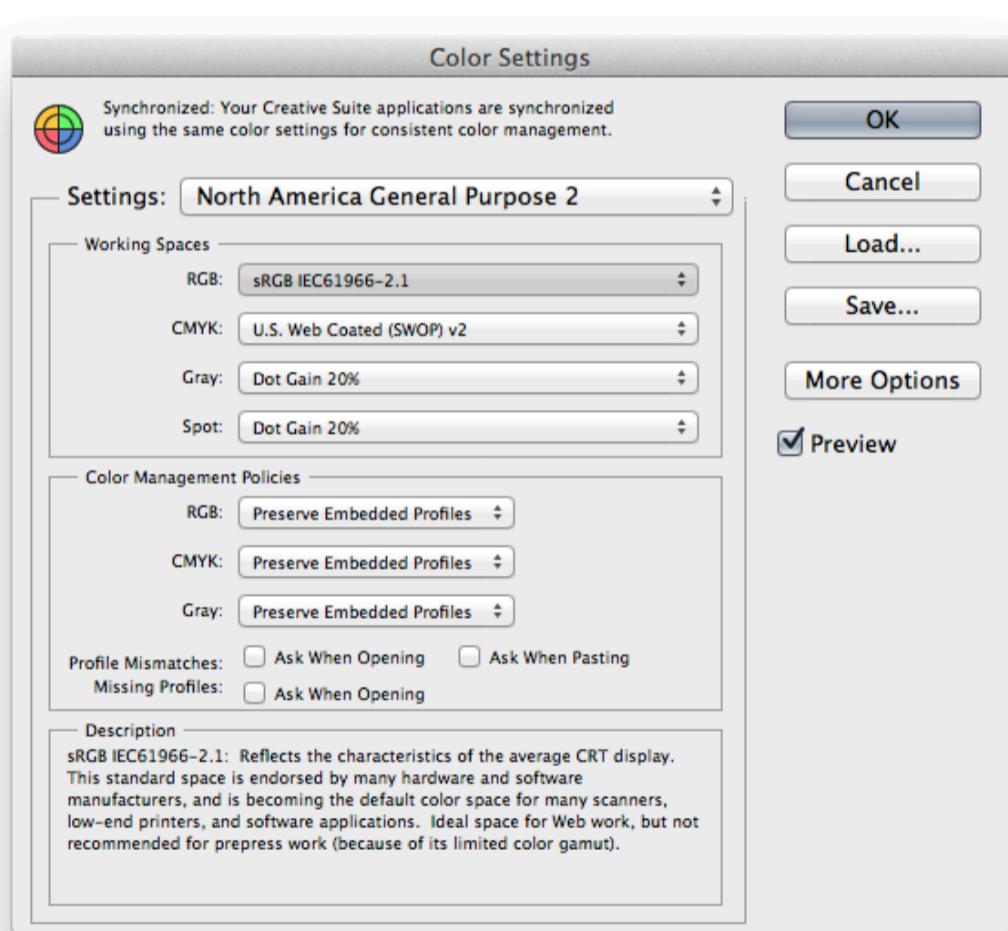
Of course, what you see on your screen will never be 100% accurate with what other people see because every monitor is different. However, you want to use the most standard color space, which positions you in a good spot as a designer.

By knowing that basic information, let's see what your Photoshop color settings should look like.

First, go to **Edit -> Color Settings** (*Shift+Command+K* or *Shift-Ctrl+K*). In order to make our life easier, Adobe offers a standard color setting called "*North America General Purpose 2*." If this is not what you have currently selected, change it. Once you change your color settings, click "OK."

Now, be sure that the color profile of your files is **sRGB IEC61966-2.1** and that it is always embedded to your PSD files.

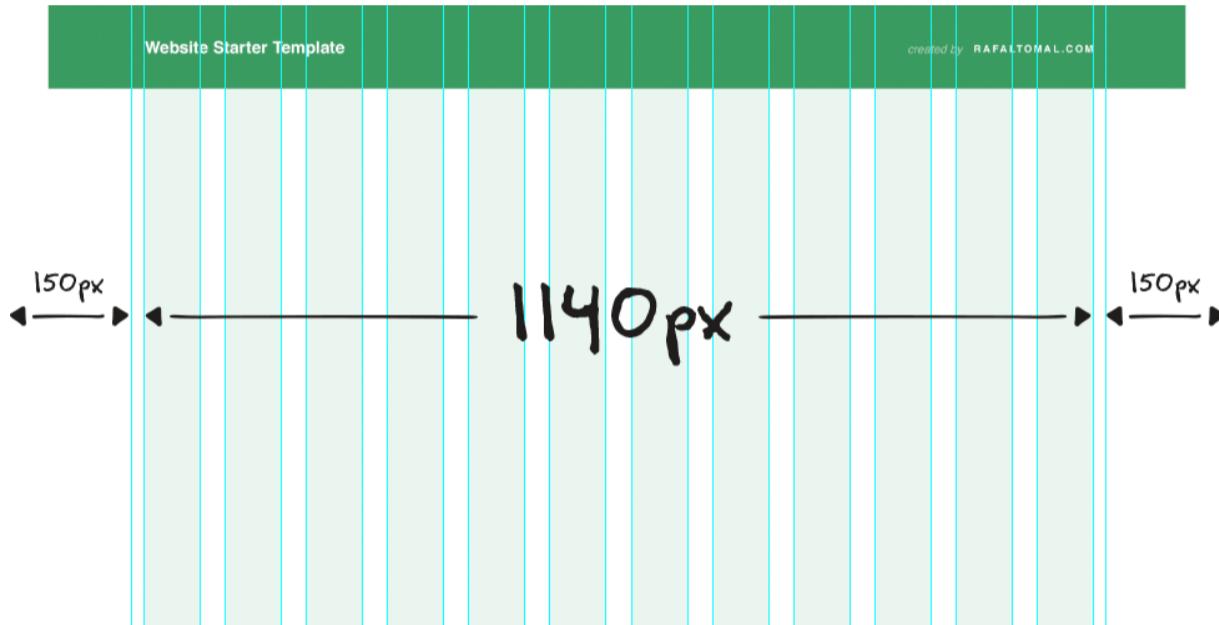
So, whenever you send your project file to someone else, you know they will be working in the same color space as you are.



Project file dimensions and resolution

Once we have our color settings done, we can take care of our project file dimensions and resolution.

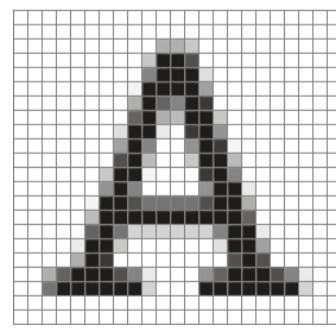
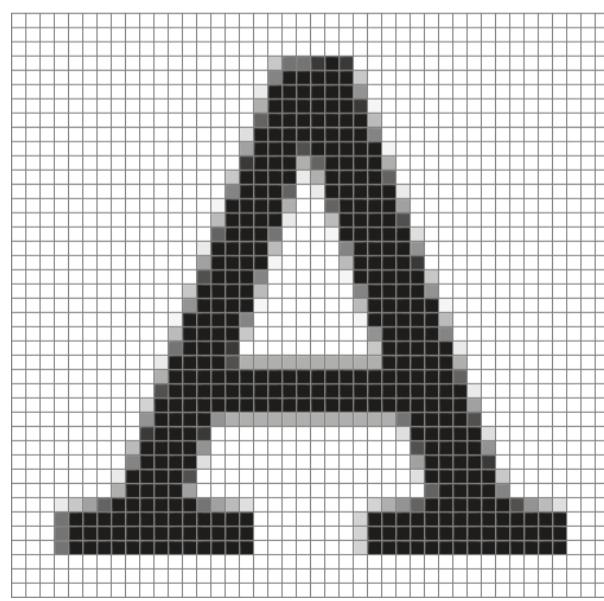
Your canvas size depends on what project you're working on. A typical full size website is **1140px** wide and you may want to add at least **150px** on both sides, so you can see some background around the page.



72 DPI (Dots Per Inch) or PPI (Pixel Per Inch) is the standard resolution for all graphics displayed on the web. In fact, you shouldn't be worried about your image's resolution when designing for the web because no matter what DPI/PPI your image has, it'll always look the same in the browser. DPI/PPI makes a difference only when you design your images for print.

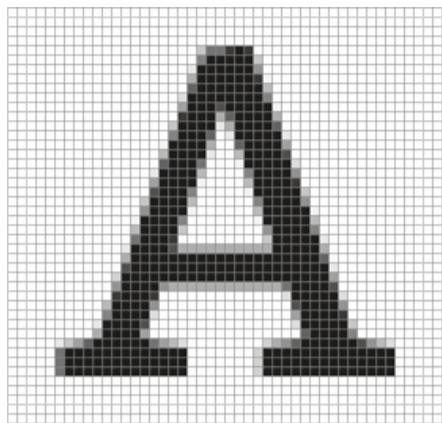
You should also remember that web image file formats like PNG and GIF don't even store the DPI/PPI setting. What's really important in designing for the web is pixel dimensions of your images.

However, it's not all that easy. It would be all very simple if there were no high resolution screens, like Apple's retina display. All images made for retina display should be exported in 2x size if you don't want your graphics to be blurry.

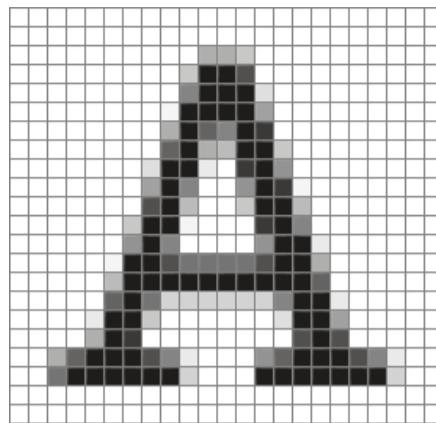


All your images should have a 2x size version for the retina display.

It'll look like an image that is two times bigger when you preview it ...



retina screen



regular screen

... but it'll look sharp and crisp on the retina screen in the browser.

So, now you need to remember that you'll need to provide two complete sets of images: **1x size** (regular screen) and **2x size** (retina display).

This makes a designer's work a little more complicated and you may want to prepare your design project files ahead of time to make sure your design covers high resolution screens.

There are at least two good ways you can create your designs in Photoshop and make sure your graphics can be exported for retina screens:

- ▶ **Create initial design at 1x.**

In this case, the project's canvas pixel dimension is adequate to its final size in the web browser. You should use only vector-based shapes and images that can be easily scaled up for retina display without losing quality.

If you work using a retina screen, everything will be blurred in your Photoshop which can be very disturbing or can even hinder you getting your work done.

- ▶ **Create initial design at 2x.**

In this case, the project's canvas pixel dimension is two times bigger than it should be in the browser. You need to remember that everything (font sizes, line heights and all other dimensions) is 2x bigger in your design.

You can use both vector shapes and raster images. Your raster images won't lose quality after scaling down images for export. If you work on a retina screen, everything in Photoshop will be clear and sharp. You can still work on a regular screen if you look at the design in 50% view.

As you can see, both ways have pros and cons and there is no one perfect way. I usually design at 2x because I very often use retina display while designing in Photoshop which makes it the only way for me to clearly see and work on the project.

I would suggest trying both methods and choose the one that fits your needs.

It's generally a good practice to use many vector-based images and shapes that can be easily recreated using just CSS and HTML. That guarantees that your design can be easily coded and turned into a well-optimized website. If you have to use raster images, make sure that you always have a high-res copy in your project assets.

Setting up the workspace

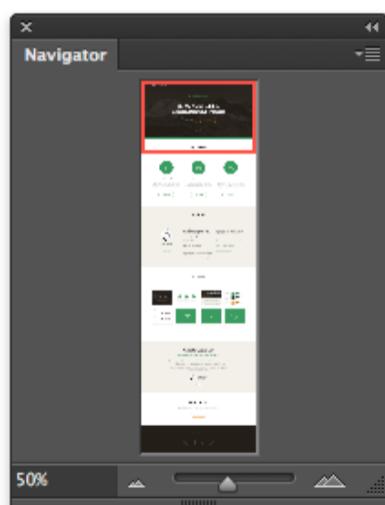
Our last step is setting up a designer's workspace in Photoshop. By correctly positioning your tools, you can optimize your workflow and routines.

Workspace in Photoshop is a custom setting of panels, menus and keyboard shortcuts. You can create many different workspaces and switch between them depending on what you are currently working on.

Adobe Photoshop is made for many different purposes. You may not ever need most of its tools, so you don't really need too many panels open on your screen - the fewer windows you use, the better you can focus on your design.

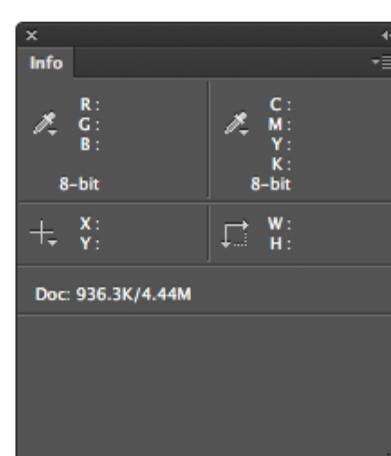
First, I would suggest turning off all the panels to make sure you start with a clean slate. Go to the **Window** menu and uncheck all the items you see.

Now, here are some essential windows that you will need to design websites:



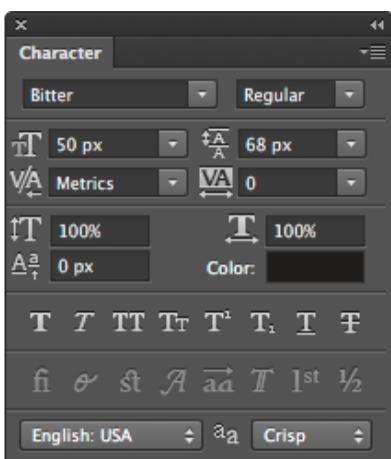
Navigator

Use it for a quick preview of your design. You can quickly get to the place you want.



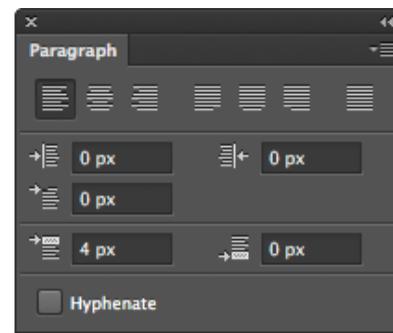
Info

Read all dimensions and color information.



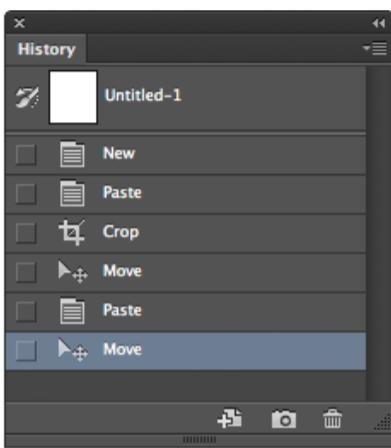
Character

One of the most important panels when designing typography. Here you can change font type, font size, tracking, etc.



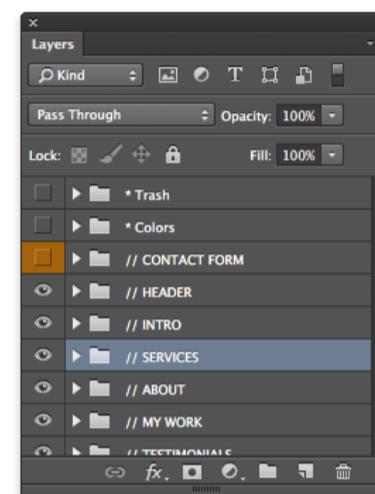
Paragraph

Edit entire paragraphs by changing text alignment and spacing.



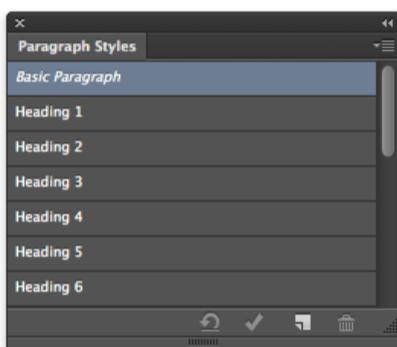
History

Your every move is saved here in history. You can easily revert your changes or create a snapshot of the current state, so you can go back in time when you need to.



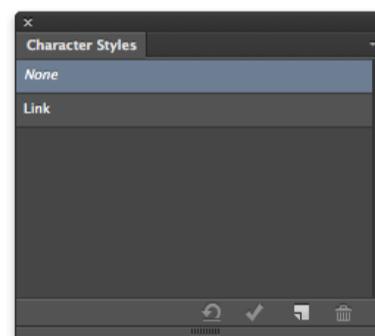
Layers

This can be your most frequently used panel, so make sure it's big and easily accessible. All single parts of your design are saved as separate layers, so you can independently edit them.



Paragraph Styles

Create typography styles like headings and paragraphs, so you can reuse them in your design.



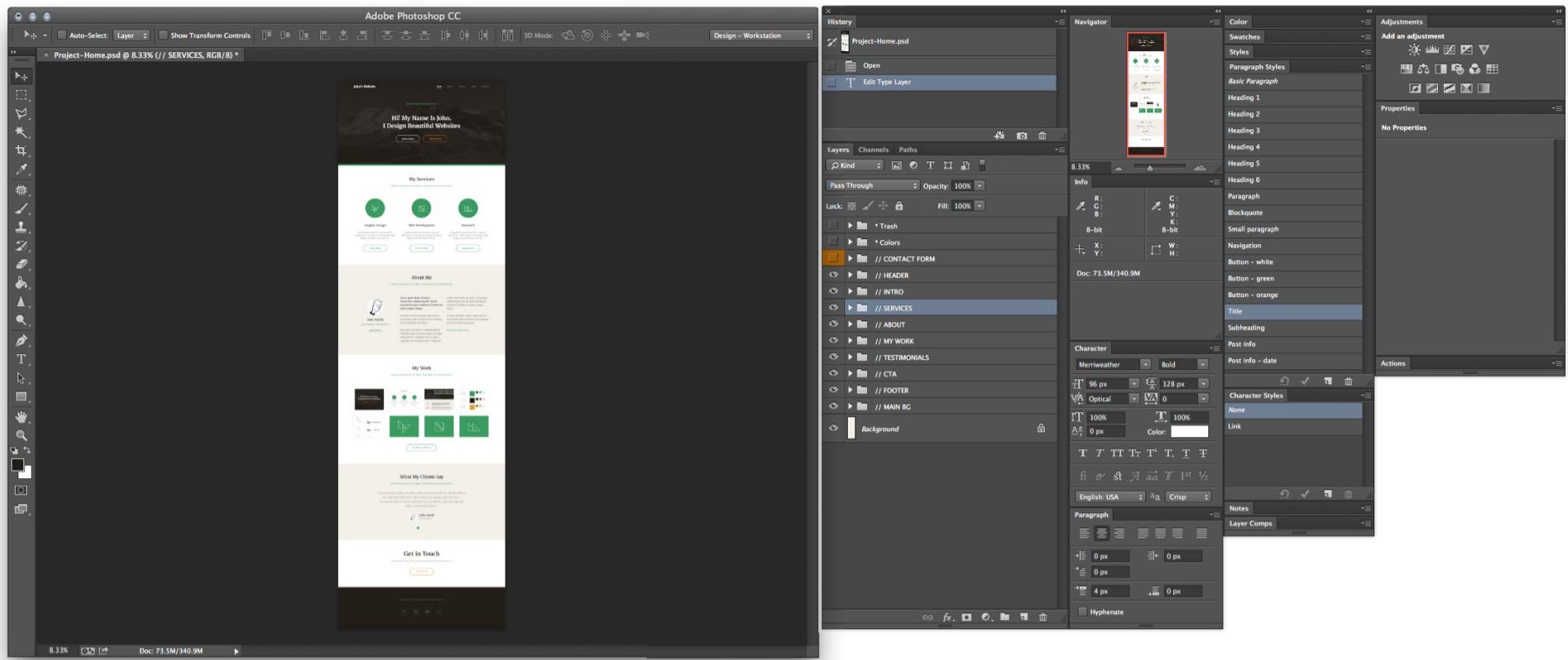
Character Styles

Same as paragraph styles but for individual characters. You can define styles for links or single words.

You can activate these windows one by one by clicking on them in the **Window** menu. Next, you can rearrange panels and group them in the way you like and go to **Window -> Workspace -> New Workspace** to save it as your own *Workspace* that you can use in the future.

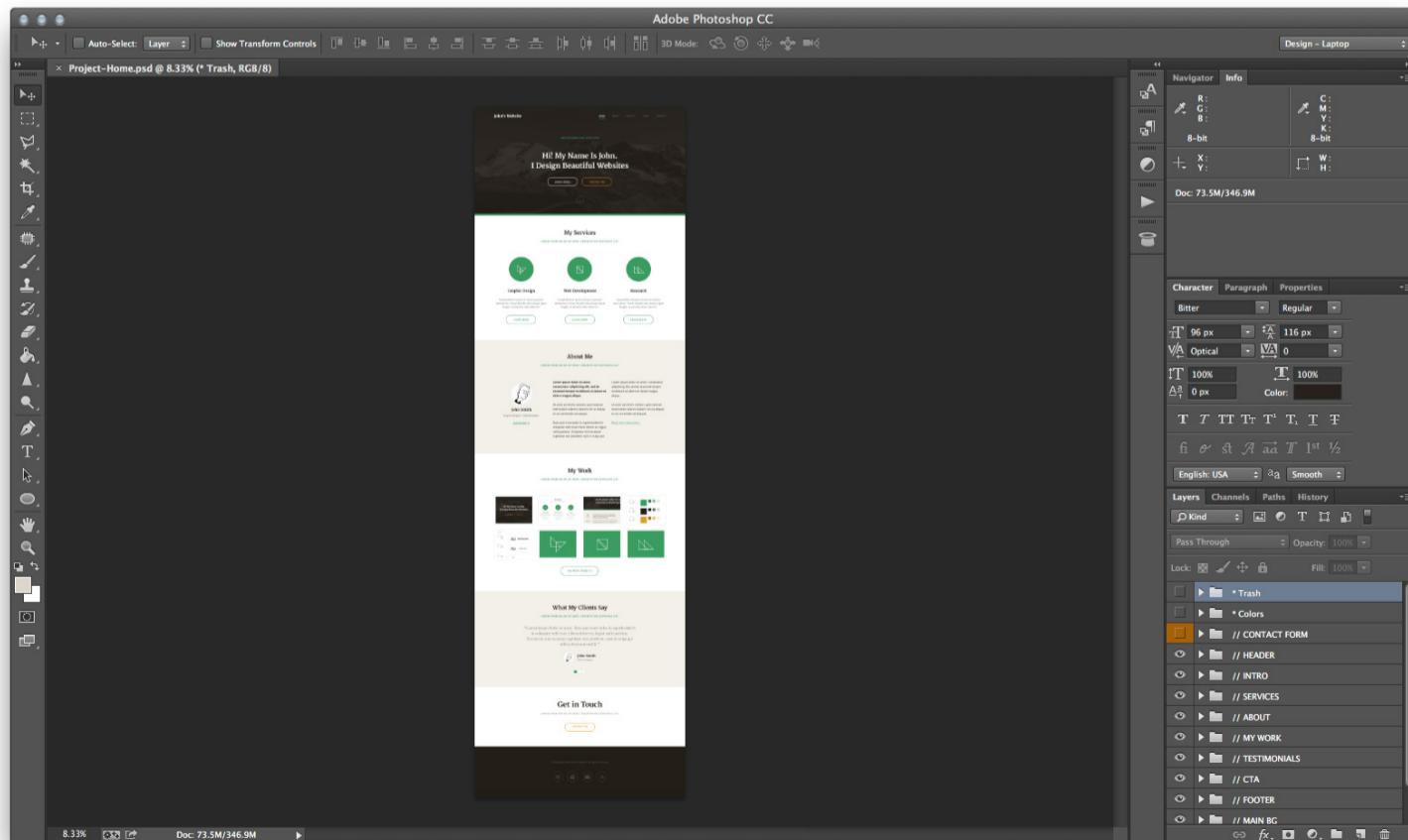
Whenever you want to use it, go to **Window -> Workspace** and choose your workspace from the list. You can even create more than one workspaces depending on the screen size you work on. I usually have two different workspaces: one for my widescreen and one for my 15" laptop.

Here is what my widescreen workspace looks like:



As you can see, I use a few more panels like *Styles*, *Adjustments*, *Properties*, etc. It all depends on your own preferences, so I would suggest adjusting your workspace to your own needs.

And this is my laptop workspace:



Creating a design project template

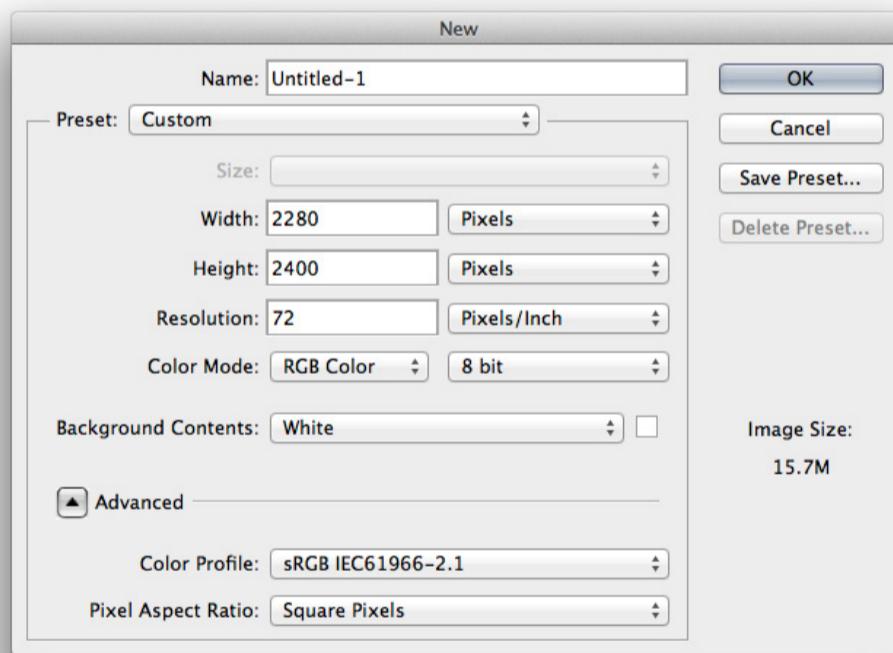
A project template is an empty PSD file with already pre-defined dimensions, guides, and a layer group structure. You may want to use that file for future projects as your starting point.

By having a project template, you may save yourself some time and avoid repetitive work. It's a good practice to always find a routine in your workflow and try to come up with a template for that.

*You can find a sample starter PSD template in the [Designers Area](#) on my website.
Feel free to modify it and customize it to your needs.*

Step 1

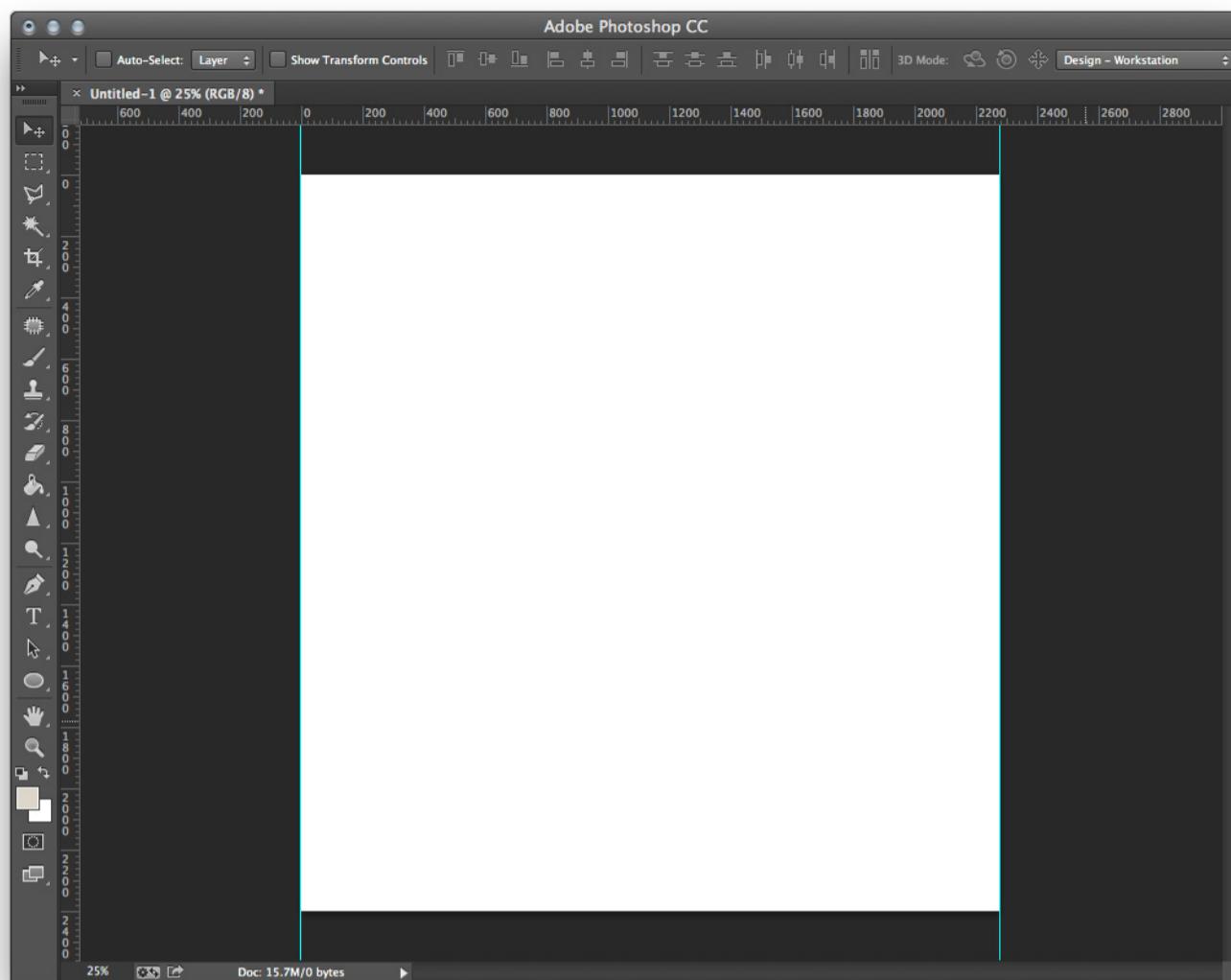
Let's start with a blank new file in Photoshop by clicking **File -> New** and choosing our file dimensions:



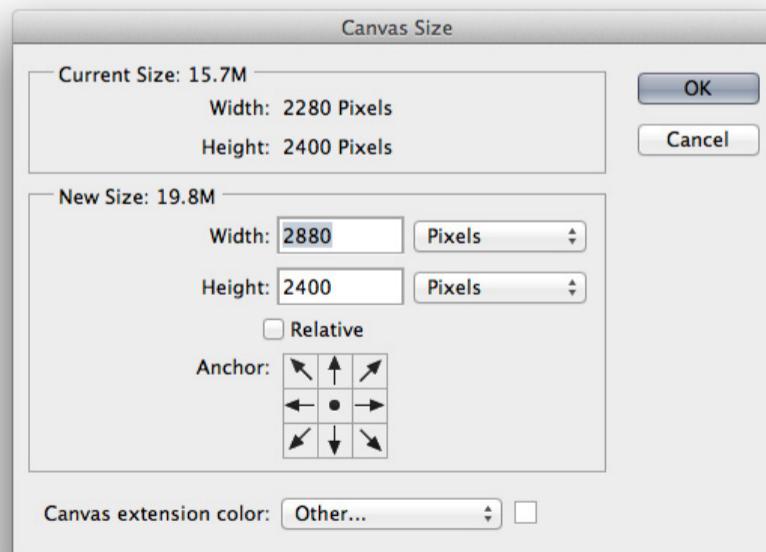
So, we made our file **2280x2400** pixels at 72 DPI which means that we start our initial design at 2x and it's all ready for retina display (these settings would be **1140x1200** pixels if we wanted to design at 1x). Make sure the color mode is set to RGB and then click "OK."

Step 2

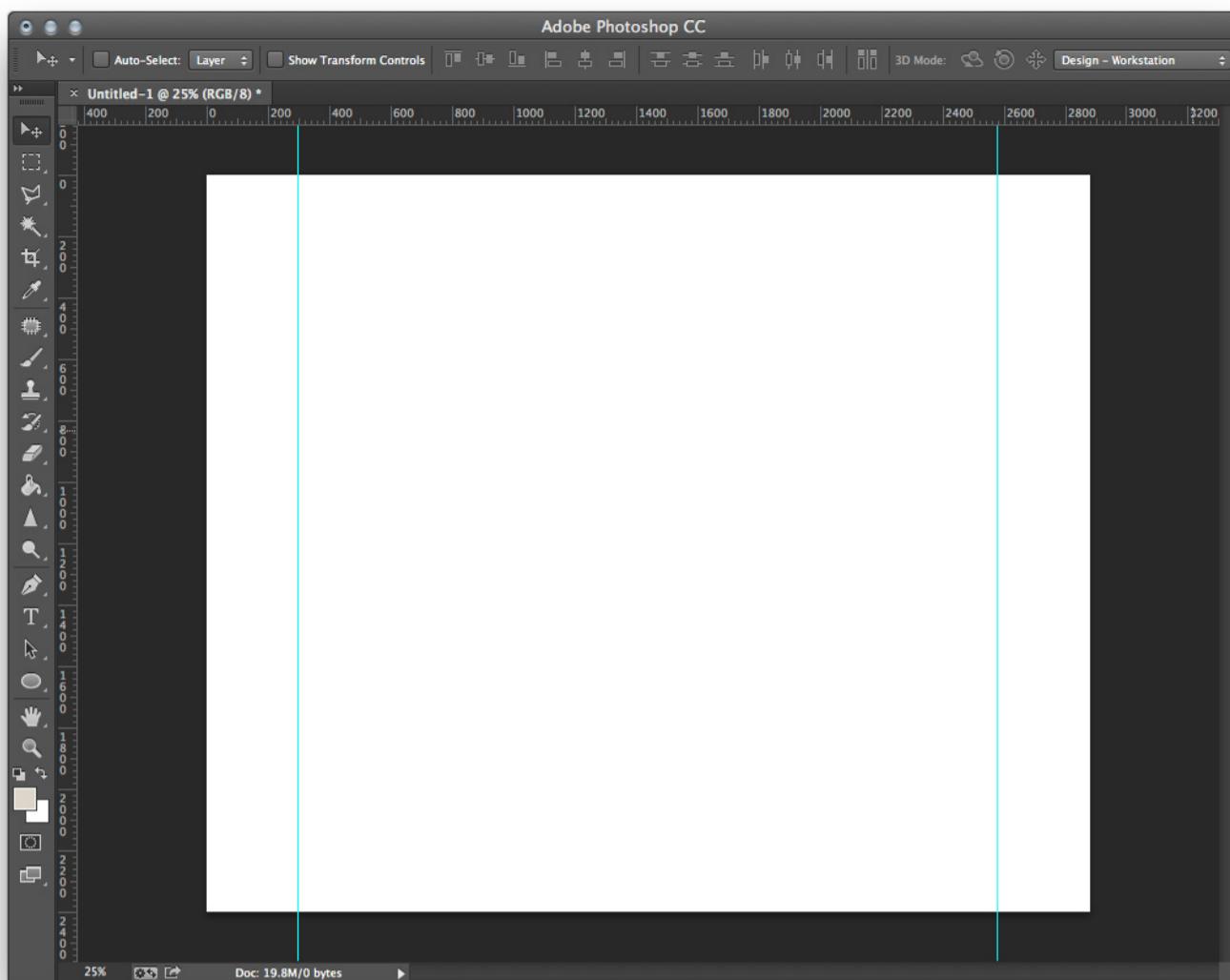
Next, let's set some ruler guides on the sides of the newly created document:



We can add some space on the sides to see some background around the page. You can do this by changing the size of your canvas. Go to **Image -> Canvas Size** and add 600px to the width, so it's now 2880px:



That way we added 300px on both sides which should be enough for most projects.



Step 3

Now, let's take care of our project layer groups. Keeping your project file organized is very important, so other people can easily work with your files.

In the beginning, we can add layer folders for some common website elements like:

- Header
- Navigation
- Content
- Sidebar
- Footer

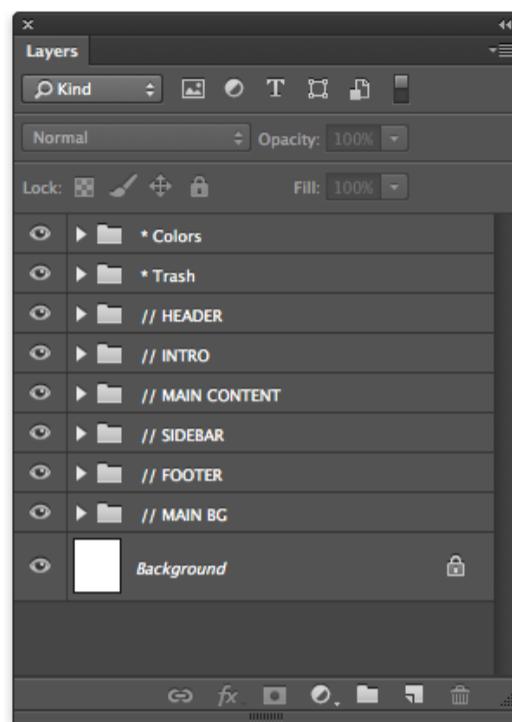
They can be our primary folders and will probably remain the same for most of our projects. To keep a good visual hierarchy in our layer window, you can use a simple prefix “//” for all first level folders.

We can also add two more folders – “**Colors**” and “**Trash**” that will help us in our design work. Use the “**” prefix for layer folders that should be hidden and are not a part of the actual design.

“**Colors**” is the folder where you store your current project color scheme and “**Trash**” is for

any elements that you don't need but you don't want to completely remove from the project yet. So, you can just drag any layers and drop them to the “* Trash” folder and keep them hidden from view. You never know when you may need them.

Here is the final layers set up:

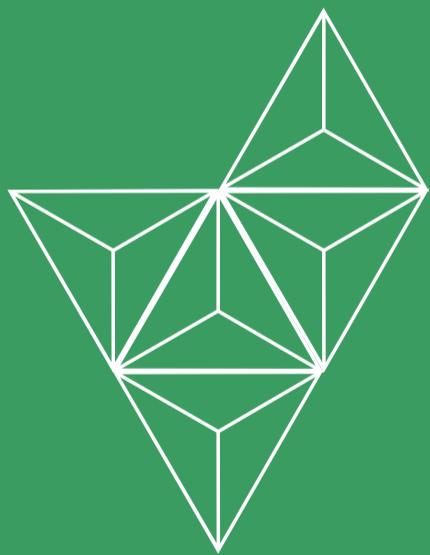


That should be all we need in our basic project template.

It's a good idea to have a couple of different templates that will be meant for different kinds of web design projects like a blog, a landing page, or a small version for mobile devices.

CHAPTER 5

Typography



What is typography?

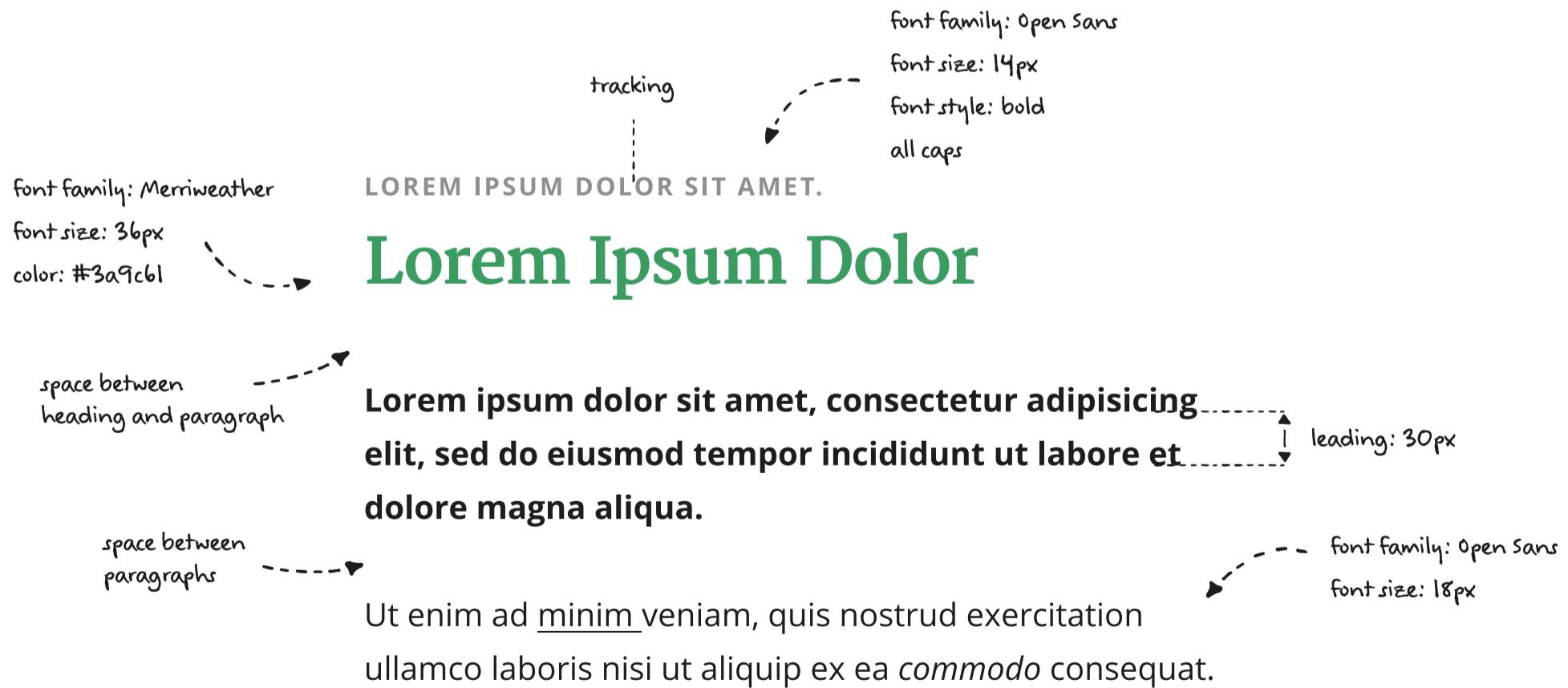
The easiest definition of typography is that it's the art and technique of arranging type. Typography is everything that involves choosing typefaces, positioning letters in a specifically designed layout, changing font sizes, or adjusting spaces between the lines (leading) and letters (tracking).



Typography plays a special role in design because it's a form of art and communication at the same time. Every word has a meaning itself and by designing it we can deliver this message more effectively or even empower its interpretation.

On the other hand, a bad design can disturb a basic function of typography which is readability and completely discourage recipients from reading the content.

Typography is not just about choosing nice looking fonts. There are so many details and small decisions involved in the designing process. Just look at the example below and see how important it is to match correct font sizes, font colors, line heights (leading), space between letters (tracking), etc.



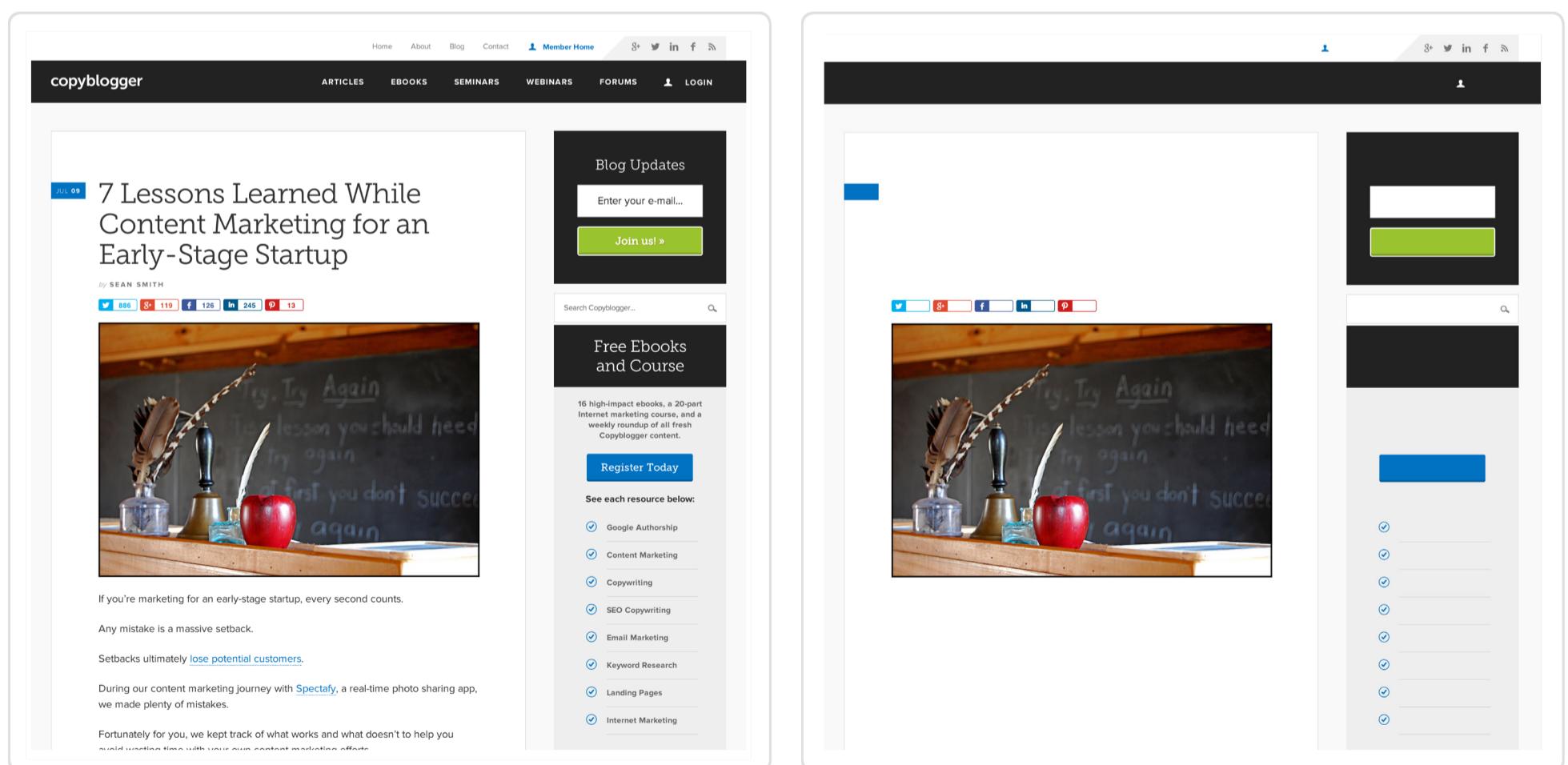
Typography design is a very broad subject and there are many books devoted to just this one topic. In this ebook, we're going to focus on website typography and study some basic techniques on how to effectively and correctly design type in your projects.

It's really not that hard once you apply good habits to your process and start following some common rules. So, let's get started...

If you want to explore this topic and learn more about typography, I would recommend reading Robert Bringhurst's book "[The Elements of Typographic Style](#)."

Why is typography for the web different?

Is typography important in web design? Look at any website and imagine taking out all the text from it. What does it look like?



This is Copyblogger.com website with and without typography.

As you can see, not too much remains when you get rid of all the typography from the website. The truth is that almost every website is 90% nothing more than pure typography. So, if you know how to choose and mix the right fonts, apply interesting styling techniques and create a typographic hierarchy, your entire website design will be great just by that.

So, the answer is: *yes, typography is important in web design.*

It's so important that, in fact, I very often start my entire visual design process with defining the typography before even planning the layout and doing any wireframes. It helps me to recognize how much space I need on the website and figure out a general brand style for the entire project.

Check out my blog article where you can find out more [why I start the visual design by defining the typography first](#).

Designing typography for the web is not the same as designing typography for print. There are some significant differences that you should know about:

- ▶ **Font choice.**

This was the biggest limitation for a long time when it came to designing websites. Even though you could choose any font you wanted in your Photoshop mockup, you were curbed to use only "web-safe" fonts that were common on most operating systems to make sure that your website was displayed correctly in the browser.

Well, that age is past and all modern browsers now support `@font-face` rule in CSS which lets you use fonts that are not originally installed in your visitor's operating system.

However, it still doesn't mean that you can use any font you want. If you want to use your own font using `@font-face` rule, you need to upload that font to the server which means that you give other people access and they can download it. Most of the fonts are licensed and they cannot be shared for free.

Fortunately, there are both some free and premium services that give you access to their web font repositories and you can use them on your websites by loading them from their servers. Many of these fonts are also optimized for better rendering in the browsers which can only make your designs even more beautiful.

Here are the two most popular web font choices:

► **Google Fonts.**

The screenshot shows the Google Fonts homepage with a search bar at the top containing the text "Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the". Below the search bar are filter options: "Word", "Sentence", "Paragraph", and "Poster". The preview text is set to "Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the". The font size is 48 px, and the sorting is by Popularity. A "More scripts" link is visible in the top right corner. The main area displays a grid of font families, each with a preview, name, styles, and a "Normal 400" style. The fonts shown are Open Sans, Roboto, Oswald, Lato, Droid Sans, Open Sans Condensed, PT Sans, Roboto Condensed, and Source Sans Pro. Each font card has an "Add to Collection" button. At the bottom left is a "Collection (0 font families)" link, and at the bottom right are "Choose", "Review", and "Use" buttons.

Google has a huge catalog of fonts and they're all free. Google Fonts also lets you download a font to your computer so you can use it in Photoshop or any other design software to create your design mockups.

► **Adobe Typekit.**

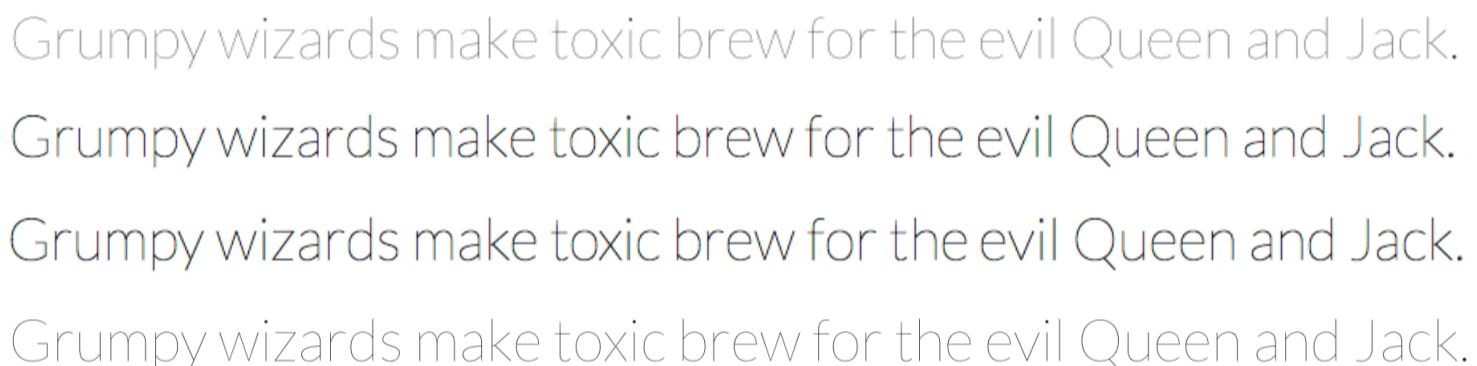
The screenshot shows the Adobe Typekit website. At the top is a navigation bar with the Adobe logo, "Adobe Typekit", and links for "Fonts", "Lists", "Blog", "How to Buy", "Learn & Support", "SIGN IN", and "Adobe". Below the navigation is a search bar with the placeholder "Search Typekit...". Underneath the search bar is a toolbar with "Full Library" (selected), "Personal Library", "Trial Library", and "Purchased Fonts". It also includes a "Choose sample text..." input, a font size slider, and a "Sort By Featured" dropdown. The main content area displays a grid of font samples, each showing a large letter "A" and the font name. The fonts listed are Proxima Nova, Museo Slab, JAF Facit, Brandon Grotesque, Clavo, Adelle, Adelle Sans, and FF Tisa Pro. To the right of the grid is a "Classification" section with categories like Sans Serif, Serif, Slab Serif, Script, Blackletter, Mono, Hand, and Decorative, each represented by a stylized letter "M". Below this is a "Available For" section with "Web Use" and "Desktop Use" buttons. A "Recommended For" section features the quote "Design is an art of situations." and categories "Paragraphs" and "Headings". At the bottom is a "Properties" section.

It's a paid service if you want to use it for more than just one website. Typekit also has a pretty big choice of fonts and many of their fonts are much better quality than the free fonts from Google. If you are an Adobe Cloud user, you can sync Typekit fonts to use them in Photoshop and other Adobe software.

- ▶ **Font rendering.**

This is another nightmare for web designers. Fonts in your PSDs will look pretty much the same in Photoshop on both Mac and Windows but when used in HTML/CSS code, they may all look different depending on the browser and operating systems. Safari, Google, Firefox and Internet Explorer render fonts differently. Also, you'll see a difference between Mac OS, Windows Vista, and Windows 7/8.

It seems like you won't have to worry about this when you're responsible just for the design part in Photoshop, but you may want to be very careful with using some of those too thin or too bold fonts. Thin fonts may be hard to read when anti-aliasing is off in some browsers and systems. On the other hand, too bold fonts may look too thick with anti-aliasing on.



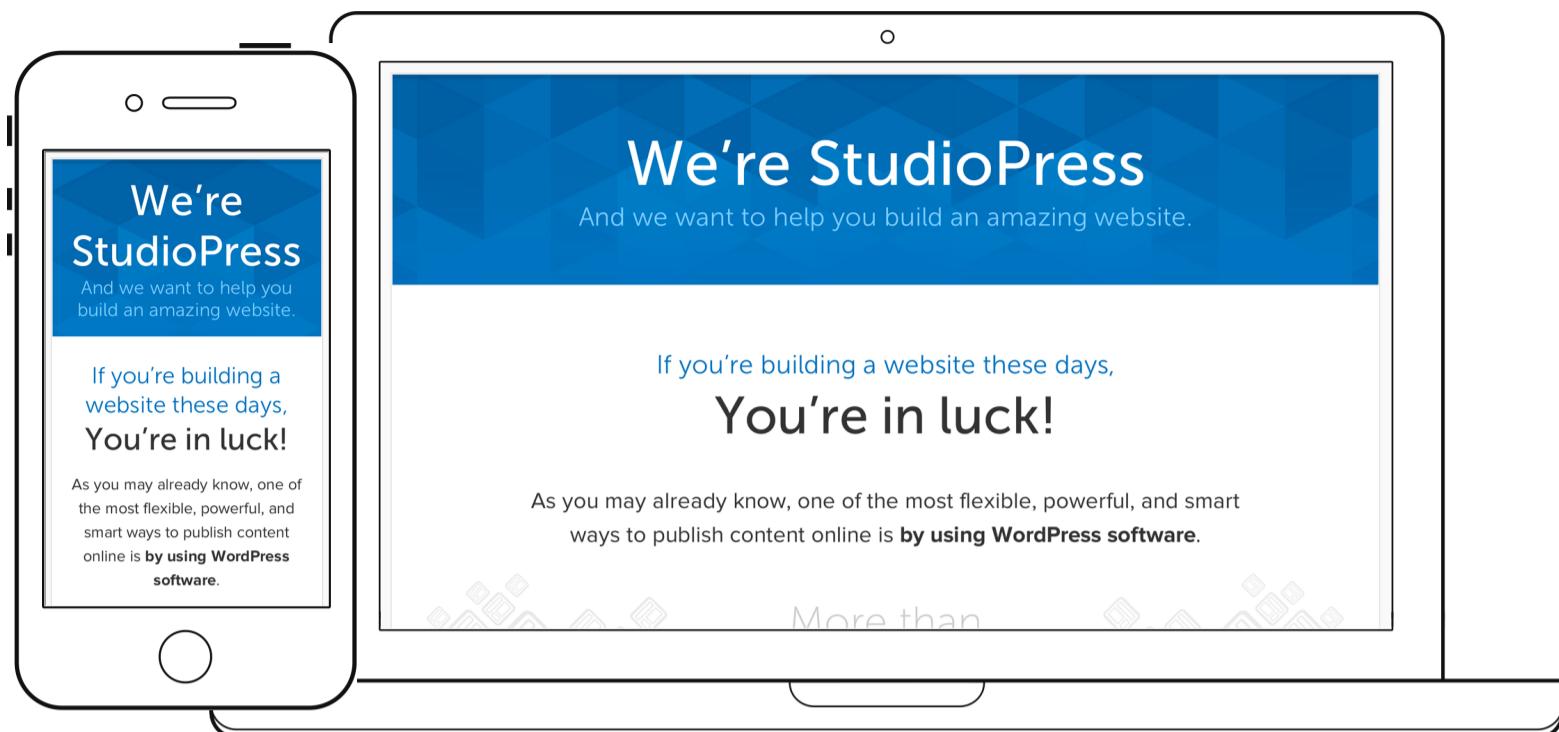
Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the evil Queen and Jack.
Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the evil Queen and Jack.
Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the evil Queen and Jack.
Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the evil Queen and Jack.

Same text displayed in different browsers with anti-aliasing on and off.

It's always a good idea to check different font styles directly in the browser before using it in your design mockups. That way you'll be sure that your typography looks as good in the browser as it looks in your design project.

- ▶ **Responsiveness.**

Even though your text will easily wrap on smaller screens, you should still consider making the font size and line height proportionally smaller for tablets and mobile phones.



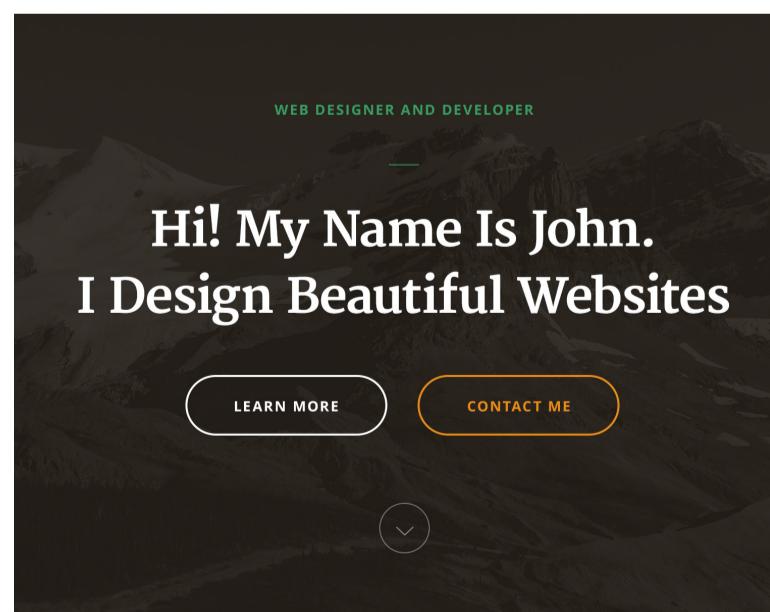
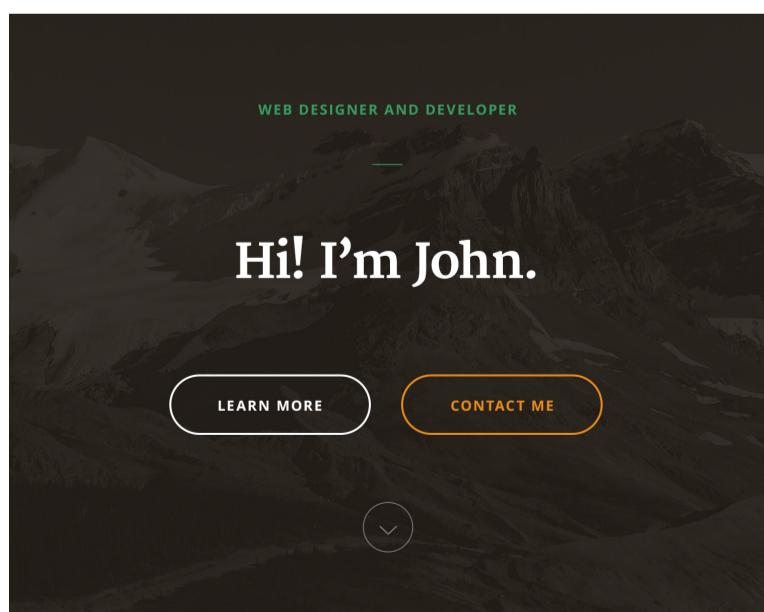
In the example above (StudioPress.com), you can see a difference in typography between a mobile screen and a desktop screen.

Body text size usually doesn't change that much. It can be just a couple of pixels' difference but headlines may change the entire design depending what screen size they're displayed on.

► Content management.

A website is a living form. Almost every website these days is based on some content management system. It means that the text in your design is editable by people who are not designers or web developers. You should predict how your design behaves if some content is changed.

What happens when the main headline is too long or if the blog post is really short? Of course, there are unlimited possibilities and nobody expects that your design will work perfectly in all situations. However, it's something you should consider and make sure that it covers at least some basic content variations.



Font classifications

You already know some basics of web typography and you know where to search for fonts that will be safe to use on the web. Let's look now at some font classifications and what font types we recognize.

There are thousands of fonts but because of some specific characteristics we can classify them into a couple of main groups:

Georgia *chaparral Pro* **Droid Serif**
Merriweather *Times New Roman*

- ▶ **Serif.**

"Serifs" refers to the little lines that are attached at the end of strokes that create letters. Serif fonts are easier to read in printed materials and that's why they are the most popular and preferred in books, magazines or newspapers. They are great for body text as well as big headlines. Serif fonts can give a classy and elegant look to your design.

Arial **Helvetica** **Open Sans**
Delicious **Droid Sans**

- ▶ **Sans serif.**

"Sans serifs" literally means that letters are without serifs. Very similar to serif fonts, sans-serifs are great for both body text and headlines. They're preferred on a computer screen because it's much easier to read when the fonts are small. Serif fonts will give a modern, simple and minimalistic look to your design. It's currently the most popular choice for the body text in websites.

Museo Slab Josefin Slab

Arvo *Rockwell*

- ▶ **Slab serif.**

"Slabs" are block-shaped serifs which give a unique and classy look. Slab serif fonts may be hard to read when used in body text but they're great for headlines. Slabs can make your headings look more interesting and visually separate them from the rest of the text.

Dancing Script Damion
Allura Marck Script

- ▶ **Script.**

Script fonts are very elegant and can be a great decorative addition to your design. However, you should be very careful when using script fonts in important headlines and especially for body text because they may cause difficulties in reading.

Lucida Blackletter
Astloch Blackletter Sans

- ▶ **Blackletter.**

Blackletter is also known as Gothic Script or Old English. Blackletter fonts are very decorative and can add an old-time look to your design. It may be great to use in some old-style restaurant or bar design.

Felt Tip Woman Just Another Hand Writing for the Sunrise

► **Handwriting.**

Handwriting fonts mimic a hand-written text and, similar to script fonts, can be a great decorative addition to your website. Handwriting fonts also usually get some attention from the human eye because of its personal and unique style. You can use them when pointing to some important actions that you want your visitors to take.



Akronim Brangajadocio
Cocomystar Londrina Shadow

► **Decorative.**

Decorative fonts encompass all the funny and unique types. Some decorative fonts are very hard to read or contain only specific symbols that replace the alphabet letters. They can be used in certain situations where you want to achieve a very original look.

Choosing and mixing fonts

Because there are so many available fonts, there is an endless amount of font combinations, and choosing the right fonts can literally take you hours of work. It's never easy, but you should always base your decisions on your project brand guidelines and your audience's preferences.

First, you should start by choosing your main body font which might be your base font for the entire project. A body text is typically either serif or sans-serif to guarantee readability in web

design projects, so you can already narrow your search to only these two groups (there are only thousands of options...).

It's very important that the body font you choose comes with different styles like bold, light, italic, etc. It'll give you more design flexibility in using it in the project. Test the body font on big blocks of text and in various situations like bullet lists, intro paragraphs, smaller and bigger font sizes, etc.

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Bold

Bold italic

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- Pharetra diam lobortis.
- Mauris malesuada, mauris sit amet.

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Your body font should be very universal and easy to use.

Test your body font in various situations and with different font styles.

Second, match another font for headings. Although there is no general rule for this, it's recommended to choose a different font than the body text to make your headings more appealing. You can of course achieve great results using your body font but by changing a font style; for example, making it bolder.

You can mix font groups and match a sans-serif heading to the serif body text. These two groups match pretty well together and create some very interesting and beautiful typography designs. Test your heading fonts using short sentences and large font sizes.

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Sans-serif headings with serif body text on the left side.

Serif headings with sans-serif body text on the right side.

Third, you can add one more font to your design which can be used as an accent to make some specific elements of your design more prominent. In this case, you can use a decorative font or a hand-written style in order to get some attention.

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Best practices on choosing and mixing fonts:

► Readability first.

Whatever font you choose for the body text and main headlines, remember that they need to be easy to read for the human eye. Of course, the readability of some fonts may depend on how they are set: proper font size, line height and color. Before using fonts in your design, you may want to preview them in various situations and colors to make sure they're a good match for your project needs.

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CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.**

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Some fonts may seem like they are difficult to read (see left side) but you can always try to fix it (see right side).

Fonts on both sides are the same but used with different styling to improve readability.

There are some exceptions to this rule; for example, if you work on a website design for kids, you may want to choose more decorative and funny looking font styles that kids will like. Sticking strictly to sans-serif and serif fonts just because there are studies that prove those fonts are easier to read may not be a good choice in this case.

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Reading hollow headings and hand-written body font may be a little distracting.

Kids might not mind...this Star Jedi heading and body text looks like their own writing style! :)

Remember that you design for the audience, not for yourself or other designers.

► **Don't use too many fonts.**

It's best to use no more than three fonts (possibly an optional third font for some special elements) in your design project. There are at least a few good reasons for this:

1. If you're using one of the online font services like Google Fonts or Typekit, every new included font to your website may significantly increase its loading time.
2. Too many fonts cause distractions and it might be hard for visitors to focus on reading the content.
3. Maintaining less than three fonts in one design is much easier to make it look great.

► **Be consistent.**

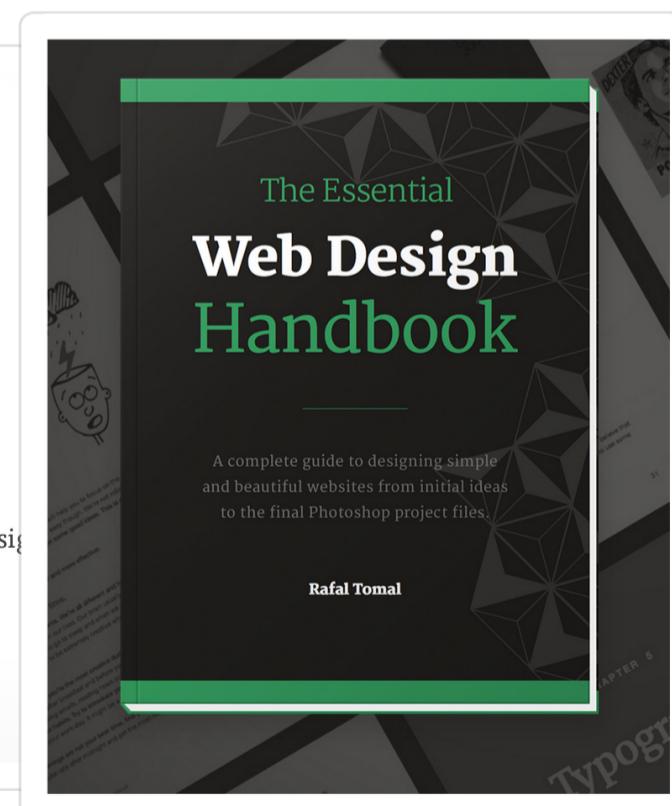
Consistency is incredibly important when it comes to choosing, mixing and using fonts.

Choose your fonts and then be very consistent in using them across your entire design project. By creating a solid pattern in using fonts, your design will not only be easier to read, but will also look very professional and add some personality to your design.

You can go one step further and stick to the same fonts on any mini sites or landing pages that are still a part of the same brand.

I used "Merriweather" font as my main heading font across all my design elements on my website, free web design resources and even this ebook.

A screenshot of a landing page. At the top is a circular portrait of a smiling man (Rafal Tomal). Below the portrait is the text: "Hello, I'm Rafal Tomal." and "The Lead Designer at Copyblogger Media." Underneath that is a statement: "I teach how to make simple, smart and effective designs that better connect websites to their audience." At the bottom is a teal button labeled "Get Started".



- ▶ **Avoid awkward combinations.**

Combining two fonts that are meant strictly for headings or mixing too many decorative fonts will never look good. These combinations are very risky and may cause many problems in your design.

While browsing fonts on [Typekit.com](#) you can filter them by recommendation for “paragraphs” or “headings” which can be very useful.

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“Futura PT Heavy” looks great as a heading but it’s way too bold to be used as a body font.

Examples of great font matches

- ▶ **31Three.com**

Headings:

Sentinel (serif slab)

Paragraphs:

Gotham Narrow (sans-serif)

In this example, headings and subheadings have a more decorative slab serif font, while in contrast the body text is a simple and very easy to read sans-serif.

This design is very consistent in using two font families across the entire website. See how much you can achieve just by modifying styling and colors!

The screenshot shows the homepage of 31Three.com. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for PORTFOLIO, ABOUT US, and NOTEBOOK. The logo "31Three" is on the right, along with a "Have a project in mind?" button and a CONTACT US link. The main headline reads "We like to keep things simple" with the tagline "One client at a time with one flat monthly fee". Below this, there are three sections, each featuring a stylized butterfly and a name: "Focused" (blue butterfly), "Fluent" (orange butterfly), and "Flexible" (yellow-green butterfly). Each section has a brief description. A testimonial at the bottom quotes Chad Smith from Red Hot Chili Peppers. At the very bottom, there are bios for Jesse Bennett-Chamberlain and Drew Warkentin, each with a portrait, social media links, and a short bio.

► [avclark.com](#)

Headings and paragraphs:

Freight Text Pro (serif)

Other:

Freight Sans Pro (sans-serif)

In his personal website, Adam Clark used the same font for both headings and paragraphs. It looks great though, because headings are much bolder and bigger which make a good-looking contrast.

There is also one simple sans-serif font used for side elements like post info and buttons.

Published by Adam Clark on September 15, 2014

A Failure Isn't Always A Failure

A couple of months ago I [wrote an article](#) about how it was time for a change. In fact the article was titled, "It's Time For A Change". Clever, I know.

[CONTINUE READING →](#)

Published by Adam Clark on August 5, 2014

W. Clement Stone on Integrity

Have the courage to say no. Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.

Published by Adam Clark on August 4, 2014

How to Have All the Time in the World

Busyness. It's a sign of pride these days. The problem for most of us, is that even if we don't take pride in being workaholics, we don't know how to change. Especially for those of us who are entrepreneurs, there's a never-ending pile of stuff to get done. I

► [FocusLabLLC.com](#)

Headings:

PMN Caecilia (slab serif)

Paragraphs:

Gill Sans (sans-serif)

Focus Lab created a very subtle and minimalistic design. In this distraction-free environment you don't need bold and strong fonts. They chose a thin slab serif font for headings and a simple sans-serif for body text.

Both font families look great together, are very clean and easy to read.



Branding UI/UX Development Business Learning

Best in Show: Summer's Faves from the Design World 9/23

These inspire me. I could stare at them for hours... (And yes, apparently I am an Anagrama fan girl.)



Summer Teal Simpson

Sep 24, 2014

0 Comments

Behind the Scenes: A Day on the River

In preparing for our first annual company retreat in the mountains of East Tennessee, we were sure to suit up with multiple GoPros and accompanying apparatus. The result? An up-close-and-personal perspective of the awesomeness that ensued.

► CirclesConference.com

Headings:

Proxima Nova (sans-serif)

Paragraphs:

FF Tisa Pro (serif)

This example is a little different than the previous ones. Here you can see sans-serif headings mixed with serif paragraphs. The overall design is contrasting and uses big dark images, so it's smart to have big, bold and strong headings.

The screenshot shows the homepage of CirclesConference.com. At the top right is a "REGISTER" button. The main header "CIRCLES" has a "BLOG" link next to it. Below the header is a large black and white photograph of a group of people at a conference. To the left of the photo is a sidebar with a "Search site..." input field and a "SEARCH" button. The sidebar also includes sections for "ABOUT CIRCLES" (describing it as a two-day gathering of creatives), "Lindsey Clark" (author profile), and social sharing links for Twitter and Facebook. A "REGISTER TODAY" button is located at the bottom of the sidebar.

09/23

5 Things You Need to Remember After #Circles2014

Two days of pure inspiration. It's hard to believe that it's over. To be honest, we wish we were happening again this weekend.

In case you missed day two, need a refresher, or you just randomly stumbled here—we have 5 highlights that none of us ought to forget:

1. Experience Things

Two words: Killed It. Becky Murphy walked up on stage and absolutely killed it as she opened up day 2 with the question: "How do I become the most talented, creative, influential, consistent designer that I can be?" A question that perhaps most creatives ask themselves on a daily basis. Becky shed some interesting and next level perspective, as she shared the answer to this question in two words: *Experience things*. Challenge yourself to take a risk and experience for things yourself—that is the best way to grow as a creative. When you look at the process of design [or anything] as a means to a destination, the process becomes painful. Instead, view the process as a road-trip. For example, on a road-trip—you soak in

► ElliotJayStocks.com

Headings and paragraphs:

Skolar (serif)

Elliot uses one beautiful serif font for the entire design. However, you can see a clear difference between paragraphs and headings because of specific styling, colors and font size.

The screenshot shows the sidebar of the ElliotJayStocks.com website. On the left is a bio for "Elliot Jay Stocks" describing him as a designer, speaker, and author. To the right is a vertical menu with links to "Home", "Blog", "Speaking", "About", and "Music →". To the far right is a list of recent posts with dates:

- 2014
 - [So what actually is the UK?](#)
19 September 2014
 - [A lament for the iPod Classic](#)
15 September 2014
 - [Goodbye Digest, hello Lagom](#)
05 September 2014
 - [Viewport Industries has now closed for business](#)
02 September 2014
 - [On digital publishing in 2014](#)
12 August 2014
 - [Google's Material Design](#)

► LiftUX.com

Headings:

Brandon Grotesque (sans-serif)

Paragraphs:

Freight Text Pro (serif)

Another case where beautiful sans-serif and serif fonts match. As in other examples, here you'll find only two different font families. Headings are darker and much bigger than the body text. Both fonts are clear and incredibly easy to read.

The Essential Web Design Handbook

The screenshot shows the "Blog" page of LiftUX.com. The header features the word "Blog" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below the header is a subheader: "Company news, UX, apps, and WordPress." To the left is a sidebar with a "lift" logo and a "Circles" logo. The main content area contains two recent posts:

- [A Look Back at Circles Conference 2014](#)
This year's event was a combination of great people, fun swag, and solid coordination.
- [Using GitHub for Project Management](#)
Have you ever thought about trying to centralize your project management process using GitHub? It can be a challenge to manage tasks across apps and one of the things we've been looking for at Lift is a way to manage the full lifecycle of a project using GitHub entirely. Since we are primarily a company [...]

On the right side, there are "SUBSCRIBE VIA EMAIL" and "CATEGORIES" sections, along with a "RECENT POSTS" section.

Text styling techniques

You can use different typography styling techniques to get some attention, better organize massive blocks of content, make something more prominent or simply just for design aesthetics.

You usually start with a basic font size, color and style. Then, you start creating all the styling variations. Be careful to not go too far in any direction with your changes that would affect readability or mislead the original message.

Simple and subtle styling is most often good enough for the human eye to see a big difference. Let's go through some of your options:

- ▶ **Size.**

Changing the size is the simplest way to visually separate some more important fragments of copy. It's a simple rule: the bigger the type, the more attention it'll get. You need to remember though to keep your font sizes consistent according to a previously defined scale ([read typographic hierarchy](#)), so, for example, headlines are proportionally bigger to paragraph text.

11px	→	Written by Rafal Tomal
24px	→	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.
14px	→	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas facilisis nulla non egestas aliquam.
18px	→	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum.

- ▶ **Color.**

You can use a strong contrast color to get some attention or use a subtle, lighter color if you want to mute the message. Keep your font colors consistent with the entire website color scheme and use the same colors for similar type elements to create repetitive visual patterns.

light gray	→	Written by Rafal Tomal
black	→	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.
dark gray	→	<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas facilisis nulla non egestas aliquam.</p>
green	→	 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum.

► Style.

You can make your type bold if you want to emphasize it or use italics for any side notes, quotes or info messages. Don't underline text if it's not a link. Keep in mind that underlining in web design is used mainly for links and most users will recognize it as a clickable text.

italic and bold	→	Written by Rafal Tomal
bold	→	 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.
regular	→	<p> Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas facilisis nulla non egestas aliquam.</p>
bold	→	 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum.

► Letterspace.

Latterspace is the space between single characters. It usually looks great when used with all caps text. You can make short, big headlines look very interesting with some extra space between letters.

		Written by Rafal Tomal
reduced letterspace	→	 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas facilisis nulla non egestas aliquam.
increased letterspace	→	 LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET. Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum.

► **Leading.**

Also called a “line height.” It’s the distance between two base lines of text. In connection with a proper font size, it can dramatically improve the readability of your content. Also, as you can see in the examples, it can be used just for aesthetic reasons and to create interesting designs.

Written by Rafal Tomal

32px leading



**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit.**

21px leading



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► **Space.**

Spacing can be used for better visual separation and organization. Adding more white space around a headline or an important message can make it much more prominent.

Written by Rafal Tomal

**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit.**

extra space



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas facilisis nulla non egestas aliquam.

extra space



LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

extra space



Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum.

Typographic hierarchy

Typographic hierarchy is one of those elements that can help your design communicate better with users. Hierarchy creates a visual order of importance, so readers can quickly find that more significant information in your content.

A good hierarchy guides your visitors through the entire page. Your users can learn your typography pattern which will help them to quickly spot all the content breaks and detect the information that they're looking for faster.

Once you plan and set a hierarchy in your design, you can follow the same style for the rest of the project and even apply the same rules to any related projects to create a consistent visual brand.

The best way to explain this concept is to show a couple of examples of what typography design looks like with and without applied hierarchy:

heading 1

→ **Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit.**

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

heading 2

→ **Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida
sollicitudin.**

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

heading 3

→ **LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.**

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.

FUSCE SED SEM LACINIA, CURSUS EST VEL.

Aliquam bibendum facilisis dictum. Phasellus vitae fermentum nibh. Mauris eu elementum justo, quis gravida justo. Sed a blandit ex, ut aliquet est. Donec vitae est a purus luctus imperdiet.



VS.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida sollicitudin.

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.

Fusce sed sem lacinia, cursus est vel.

Aliquam bibendum facilisis dictum. Phasellus vitae fermentum nibh. Mauris eu elementum justo, quis gravida justo. Sed a blandit ex, ut aliquet est. Donec vitae est a purus laoreet imperdiet.



See how different styling techniques were applied in the example above to create a simple typographic hierarchy.

How To Create and Use Your Own Icon Fonts

Icons can make any user interface more intuitive by their simple and symbolic visual presentation. Some of us have become so familiar with some icons that we can easily recognize their meaning without any words.

This example is from my own website. See how I made the post info much smaller and lighter than the blog post heading and intro paragraph.

It seems pretty obvious, right?

Let's look at the design without a hierarchy once again. Now imagine that that's where you usually start your work, so you need to first figure out which information should be more prominent and which shouldn't. After that, there are plenty of small styling decisions to make like font size, font color, spacing and styles.

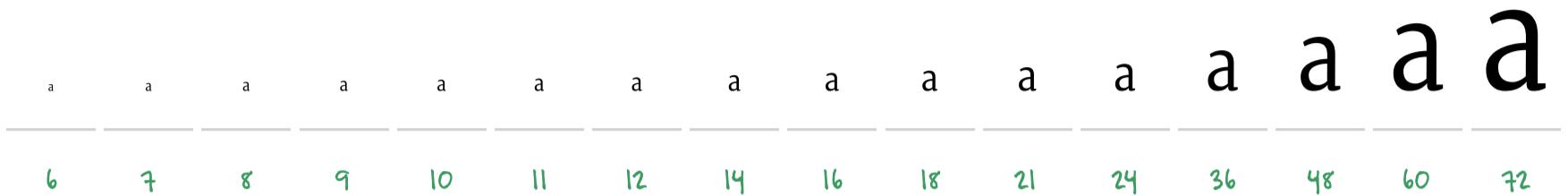
You should always start with defining a global typographic hierarchy first. In web design, it'll be designing all the main headings from H1 to H6 and body text paragraphs. This will give you a general idea of what your font size scale is (basic paragraph text is the smallest size and H1 heading is the biggest one) and what your vertical spacing is.

written by Rafal Tomal posted on June 5, 2014 / [7 Comments](#)

How To Create and Use Your Own Icon Fonts

Icons can make any user interface more intuitive by their simple and symbolic visual presentation. Some of us have become so familiar with some icons that we can easily recognize their meaning without any words.

Designing proper scale and vertical spacing is really important at this stage. Your font size scale should proportionally increase from paragraph text to H1. You can create your own scale which is based on a traditional scale that has been popular in designs for centuries:



Your typographical scale may change depending on the project. You can still base it on the traditional scale, for example: 16px for paragraphs, 18px for H4/h5/h6, 21px for h3, 24px for h2 and 48px for H1.

Line heights and all spaces before/after headings and paragraphs create a vertical rhythm of your content. All these numbers shouldn't be random but set according to a predefined scale. You can use the line height of your paragraph text as a base of your scale and then use it when applying new spacings and line heights. Let's look at this example:

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

24px

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

24px

Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida sollicitudin.

24px

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

24px

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

24px

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.

The easiest way to find the line height of your body text is to multiply the base font size by at least 1.5. For example, your 18pt body font size should have around 26-28pt leading. This rule can be

helpful mainly for body text where the fonts are small. In headings where the font size is more than 30pt, you want to choose leading around 1.25 of the font size to achieve a good look.

Once you have your global typographic hierarchy designed, you can move into some smaller and more specific areas of your design. That's where you design local typographic hierarchy based on your global font size scale and vertical rhythm. By keeping this order you'll make your typography look more organized and unified along the entire project.

Improving reading experience

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, while designing your typography you can't forget about its basic function, which is readability.

There are of course exceptions when you want to create some kind of art and you're using type to design abstract images. However, in any other case, making your typography readable should be a priority.

As a matter of fact, improving reading experience is not that hard at all. There are a couple of main principles that you should always keep in mind. If you regularly apply them to your designs, they'll quickly turn into a good habit and you won't even think about it.

- ▶ **Choose a proper font size and leading (line height).**

Choosing the right font size and line height for your body text depends all on the size of your content area. The wider your content area is, the more you may want to increase font size and line height.

Anything between 55 to 100 characters per line is considered an optimal length for easy and comfortable reading on the web. It's quite a wide range and you can even go beyond 100 characters per line by using certain fonts and layout. However, if you want to play it safe, stick to less than 100 characters per line.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. In placerat, libero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue. Quisque porttitor venenatis enim id porta. Sed posuere lacinia justo eu faucibus. In magna magna, sagittis at elit at, accumsan ultricies orci. Integer vehicula maximus turpis, sit amet mollis risus ultricies a. Vivamus ac rutrum purus. Morbi vehicula consectetur facilisis. Donec elit nisl, auctor vel pellentesque a, volutpat a nibh.

~ 70 characters

VS.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. In placerat, libero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue. Quisque porttitor venenatis enim id porta. Sed posuere lacinia justo eu faucibus. In magna magna, sagittis at elit at, accumsan ultricies orci. Integer vehicula maximus turpis, sit amet mollis risus ultricies a. Vivamus ac rutrum purus. Morbi vehicula consectetur facilisis. Donec elit nisl, auctor vel pellentesque a, volutpat a nibh.

~ 125 characters

Keeping that rule in mind, for a 600px wide content area, you want to set your body text at no less than 16px, which will give you approximately 85 characters per line. As I mentioned before, the easiest way to find your line height is to multiply the font size by 1.5 times. For a 16px font size it will be around 24px for the line height but you can make it slightly smaller or bigger depending on how wide your content area is. For a 600px content area, you can easily make your line height 25px or 26px.

A general rule of thumb is to avoid small and tightly congested text areas in your design. It's always a safer option to give your text more space to breathe and make your font sizes bigger (16px - 20px for body content).

Chris Pearson created a wonderful [Golden Ratio Typography Calculator](#) which might be very helpful if you want to quickly count how big your line height or font size should be for the desired line width and CPL (Characters Per Line).

► **Create a good vertical rhythm.**

I mentioned vertical rhythm when we talked about typographic hierarchy but this topic deserves a bit more attention. What exactly is a vertical rhythm?

Let's look at this example to illustrate situations where vertical rhythm is applied and where it's not:

**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
 consectetur adipiscing elit.**

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

**Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida
sollicitudin.**

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.



**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
 consectetur adipiscing elit.**

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

**Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida
sollicitudin.**

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.



Vertical rhythm is when you design your entire typography and all other elements according to a specific baseline grid that is spread across the entire page.

Let's look again at the same illustration with a visible 24px baseline grid:



It's much harder in web design where everything is more flexible and setting a fixed vertical spacing is sometimes impossible.

Not everything has to be perfectly aligned to your baseline grid and it'll never be in your design. Even if you make it once, it'll be very hard to maintain it in the long run because as we know, a website is a living form managed by a system and can be constantly modifying.

However, you can still achieve a good-looking vertical rhythm if you stick to this simple plan:

1. Choose a specific, general baseline; for example, 24px.
2. Use your baseline number as a unit whenever you apply paddings and margins; for example, you can apply 48px space below the headline and use 24px as a space between paragraphs. If you need less spacing, you can choose half of your base unit, so it can be 12px.
3. Use a one font size scale that fits to your baseline; for example, 16px on 24px line height and 32px on 48px (2 x 24px) line height, etc.

4. Keep the same numbers for similar elements across the entire project to maintain a vertical rhythm consistency.

► Increase contrast.

There was a bad trend around the web for some time when many designers used gray text on light gray background. Yes, it looked cool and aesthetic but by doing so, they ignored the main function of typography and made a bad reading experience for their website's users.

**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit.**

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

**Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida
sollicitudin.**

vs.

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.



**Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit.**

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida
sollicitudin.

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.



A low-contrast text is very hard to read—especially for elderly users and people with poor vision. Also, individuals using small mobile screens and low quality monitors may also encounter difficulties with reading the website content. You can't just ignore this segment of your audience.

Website content is there to be read and believe it or not, people read it. It might sometimes be hard to accept for aspiring designers that every so often you need to sacrifice making your design look cool for making it usable. However, that's a challenge of this job and that's one of the big differences between amateur designers and professionals.

Make sure to always support high contrast in your typography design.

There are a number of [studies](#) and [experiments](#) confirming that higher contrast improves reading time and makes reading a more pleasurable experience.

► **Avoid content congestion.**

Having a lot of text in a small area will never make a good experience for your users. Readers get easily distracted and tired when the content is tightly designed.

A well designed vertical rhythm can free your content from congestion, but vertical space is not enough.

You should clear out some space in all directions of your heavy content areas and make sure there are also visual horizontal separations between different columns of text.

The best way to explain it is by looking at an example:



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue.

Quisque porttitor venenatis enim id porta. Sed posuere lacinia justo eu faucibus. In magna magna, sagittis at elit at, accumsan ultricies orci. Integer vehicula maximus turpis, sit amet mollis risus ultricies a.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida sollicitudin.

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.

"In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue."

VS.



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue.

Quisque porttitor venenatis enim id porta. Sed posuere lacinia justo eu faucibus. In magna magna, sagittis at elit at, accumsan ultricies orci. Integer vehicula maximus turpis, sit amet mollis risus ultricies a.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Aenean eu mauris in justo fringilla convallis. Mauris mattis lectus scelerisque urna eleifend vestibulum. Nam sit amet sapien semper, vulputate elit non, gravida felis.

Praesent vestibulum nisi bibendum gravida sollicitudin.

Sed id sagittis sem, eu fringilla odio. Donec ut purus ac odio aliquet convallis. Duis condimentum mauris nisl, quis egestas ligula vulputate a.

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET.

Aliquam quis posuere odio, ultricies auctor dolor. Duis ipsum lectus, condimentum vitae facilisis ut, pulvinar nec nisi. Quisque in pellentesque elit.

"In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue."

Designing a web typography style guide

A web typography style guide is a document where you want to describe and define the typography styles used for your website project.

A web typography style guide should include whatever fonts are used in the project and a sample usage of those fonts shown as headlines, paragraphs, quotes and other typographical elements.

It's a crucial element of your design project because it'll help you to be more consistent in designing the typography across different pages. It's also a cheat sheet for developers when they start to code your design.

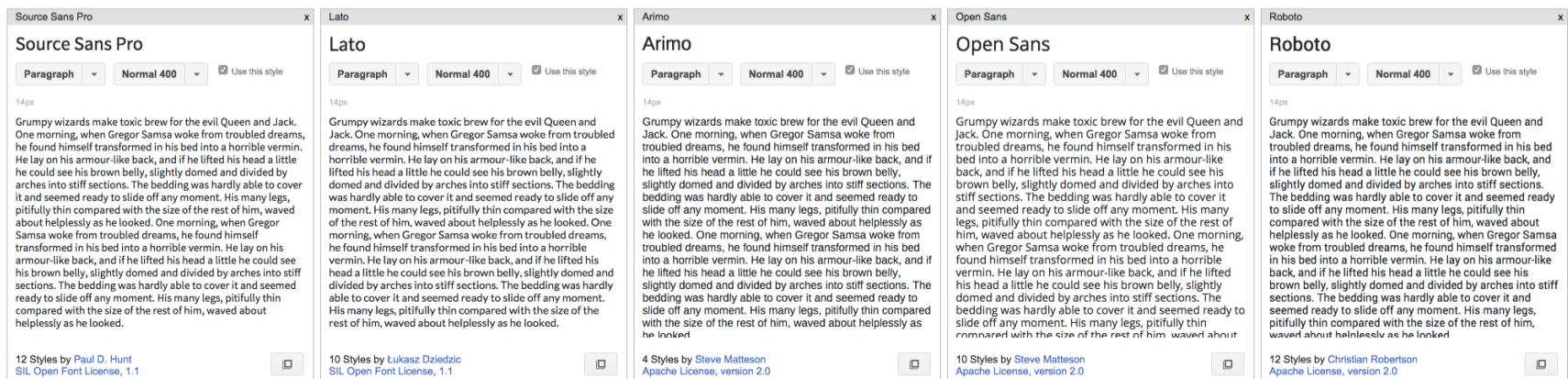
*Go ahead and grab my free [Web Typography Guide Template](#) from the **Designers Area** on my website. We'll use it as a starting point in this practice section.*

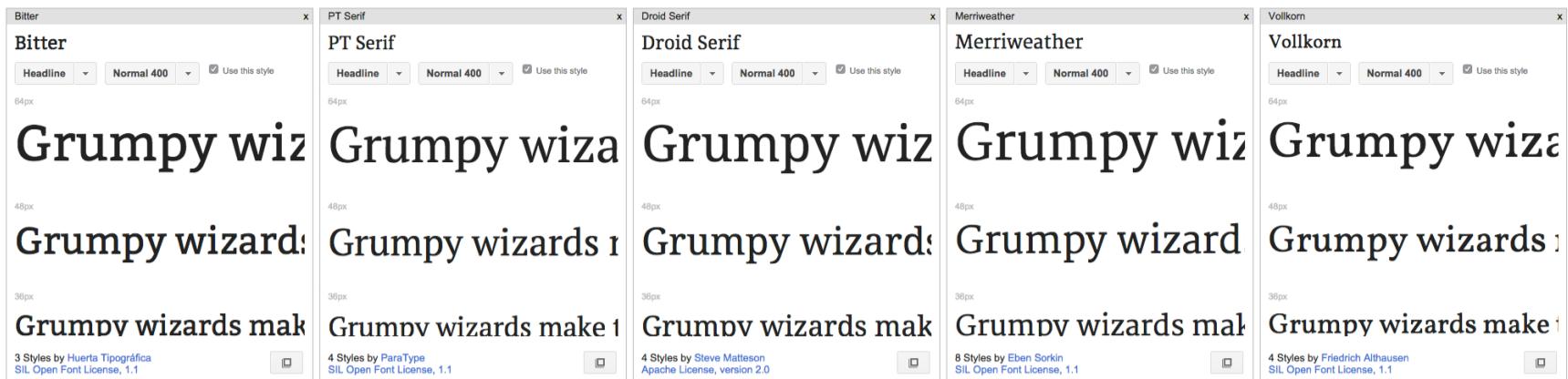
Step 1

Before I actually even put together my web typography style guide, I want to choose my heading font and body font first. I use only two fonts for the entire design to keep it simple and easily manageable.

I'm going with a pretty simple font type combination and using serif for headings and sans-serif for the body text. Serif headings look very elegant and it'll make my site look a bit more professional. I'm choosing sans-serif for the body because it's very easy to read and it'll make it look clean and simple.

So, I started by browsing the Google font repository and picking five sans-serif and five serif fonts I really like:





Step 2

Next, I create some quick combinations in Photoshop using the 10 fonts I picked and downloaded. I can make as many as 25 different font sets using my five sans-serif headings and five serif body texts. I have many options but I'm trying to be a little more selective. Then, I manually pick five sets that I really like:

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.

From all the five sets I chose, there is one set that really got my attention: **Merriweather (heading) + Open Sans (body text)**.

I like how the bold style of the Merriweather font makes a good contrast to the simple and thin Open Sans body text. I think it's a really good-looking font match.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.

Step 3

Now I'm going to use my web style guide template and define my new typography in it. First, I enter the font families I chose and delete the special font because I'm not going to use that one in this project.

Second, I provide some extra information about the fonts I chose, like name and available font styles, that I'll use in the project. You may not be able to tell how many styles you need at this point but be very selective here and make sure to reduce it to only a few essential styles. When you send this file to web developers, they can use it as a cheat sheet for what fonts they should include in their code. The more styles you use, the more loading time the website may take. You want to make sure that your design is fast in the web.

FONT FAMILIES

Heading font

Font family: Merriweather
Styles: Light 300
Normal 400
Bold 700



Body font

Font family: Open Sans
Styles: Normal 400
Normal 400 Italic
Bold 700
Bold 700 Italic



Step 4

In the next step I put together the entire typographical hierarchy from "Heading 1" to "Heading 6" including paragraphs, quotes and a small sample text. Of course, you can add more styles if you think you're going to need them (you can always add more down the road).

I'm using a traditional scale ([see page 84](#)) to choose appropriate font sizes: 48px (H1), 36px (H2), 24px (H3), 22px (H4 - I tweaked that one instead of using 21px), 18px (paragraph), 16px (small paragraph), 14px (H6).

Headings 1 to 4 all have the same styles but proportionally different sizes. I need only to find the right line heights (leading). I find them by multiplying bigger font sizes by 1.33 and smaller font sizes up to 1.5. I round the final numbers and tweak them to what seems good to me.

Remember that math can't do everything for you. You very often need to use your own judgment and trust your gut while designing.

TYPGRAPHY

Heading 1

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 48px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 2

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 36px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 3

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 24px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 4

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 22px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

I completely change the styling for headings 5 and 6. I use all caps and add a little spacing between letters for better readability. I use my second font for heading 5 and make it bold to add it a higher visual priority than heading 6 which looks much thinner.

Heading 5

Font family: Open Sans
Font size: 14px

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG. THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

Heading 6

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 14px

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG. THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

Paragraph styles are easy. I'm using Open Sans and an 18px font size which is a pretty standard size for body text when viewing on desktop screens. To find a leading size for paragraphs, I multiply the font size by 1.66 which gives me a number around 30px.

I can multiply it by 1.5 and it would still look perfectly fine but I want to add a little more space between lines for better readability.

Now, I'm styling quotes which I want to look a little more decorative in order to stand out from the regular paragraphs. I use a light style of Merriweather font and make it a bit bigger. I'm really happy with it.

Quote
Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 22px

“Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.”

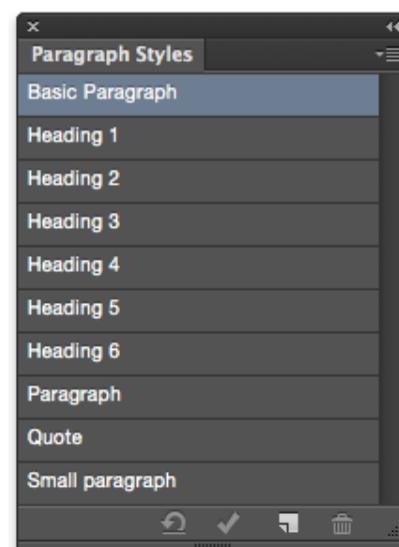
Note that I'm not using any colors yet. All my typography is just clear black. This helps me to focus on the correct font sizes, leading and overall hierarchy. I'll add some colors when I pick my color palette in the next chapter.

Step 5

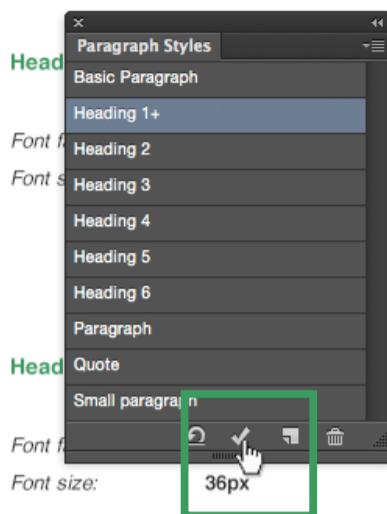
I'm all done with choosing and fixing my typography. The last step is to update my paragraph styles in Photoshop. If you've never used paragraph styles in Photoshop, go ahead and turn the window on by choosing **Window -> Paragraph Styles**.

You'll see a list of pre-made paragraph styles in my [Web Typography Style Guide](#) template. Now, when you edit any of the headings or paragraphs you've just customized, you'll see that an appropriate paragraph style is highlighted in the paragraph styles window.

If there were any changes made to the style, you'll see a small checkmark available that says "Redefine paragraph style by merging Overrides." Click it to update the style.



TYPGRAPHY



The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

So, I repeat this process and go through all type fields and update the paragraph styles. I want to always keep my paragraph styles updated and organized. I'll use them a lot while designing the final page mockups.

If you're completely unfamiliar with the paragraph and character styles feature in Adobe Photoshop, I would recommend [watching this short video tutorial](#) from Adobe covering this topic.

On the next page, you can see the complete web typography style guide that I've just created for this project... You'll also find the final PSD file in the [project files](#) of this ebook.

Congratulations! You've just designed typography, one of the most important parts of any website. The style guide you've just created is just a base for what you're going to use while designing complete page mockups. You'll be adding some new typography styles on the fly, but it's important to get back to the style guide and update it when necessary.

This file should be provided to your client or web developers as a part of your design project. Make it look nice and professional.

Now let's now move to the next part which is **Colors**. We're going to talk about some color theory and then learn how to create complete web color schemes.

FONT FAMILIES

Heading font

Font family: Merriweather
Styles: Light 300
Normal 400
Bold 700

Aa Merriweather

Body font

Font family: Open Sans
Styles: Normal 400
Normal 400 Italic
Bold 700
Bold 700 Italic

Aa Open Sans

TYPOGRAPHY

Heading 1

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 48px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 2

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 36px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 3

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 24px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 4

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 22px

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Heading 5

Font family: Open Sans
Font size: 14px

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG. THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

Heading 6

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 14px

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG. THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG.

Paragraph

Font family: Open Sans
Font size: 18px

 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis. Mauris malesuada, mauris sit amet posuere ultricies, justo diam scelerisque massa, nec molestie nunc eros non lacus. In at sapien mauris.

Quote

Font family: Merriweather
Font size: 22px

 “Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.”

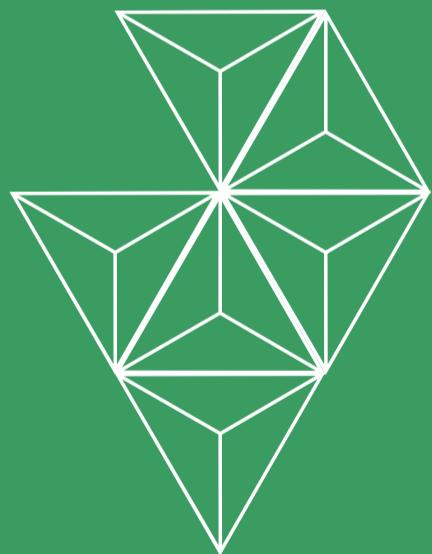
Small

Font family: Open Sans
Font size: 16px

 “Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat cursus. Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis.”

CHAPTER 6

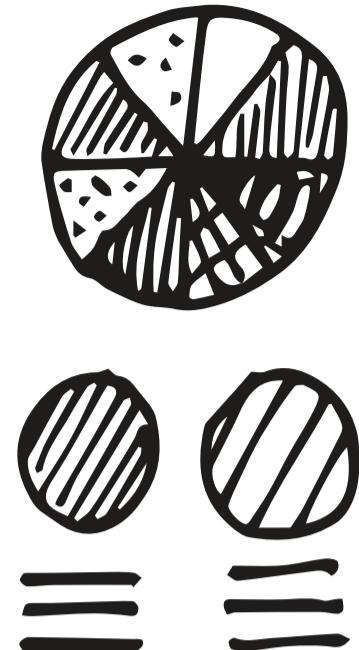
Colors



Color Theory

Most modern monitors can display over 16 million colors. Thinking about all the combinations that we can create using different shades, hues and tones, it can be a little bit overwhelming.

That's where the color theory comes in. It can help us understand the nature of colors and how to effectively use them in our designs.



Everything we know about colors today is a result of intensive studies of the greatest minds in the world from the last centuries. Thanks to this research, we can now easily organize colors into specific groups and discover how they relate to each other. Understanding color theory helps to eliminate very common color matching mistakes that could be uncomfortable and look awkward to the human eye. It may also help to choose the right shade and tone that can completely affect how people receive your visual message.

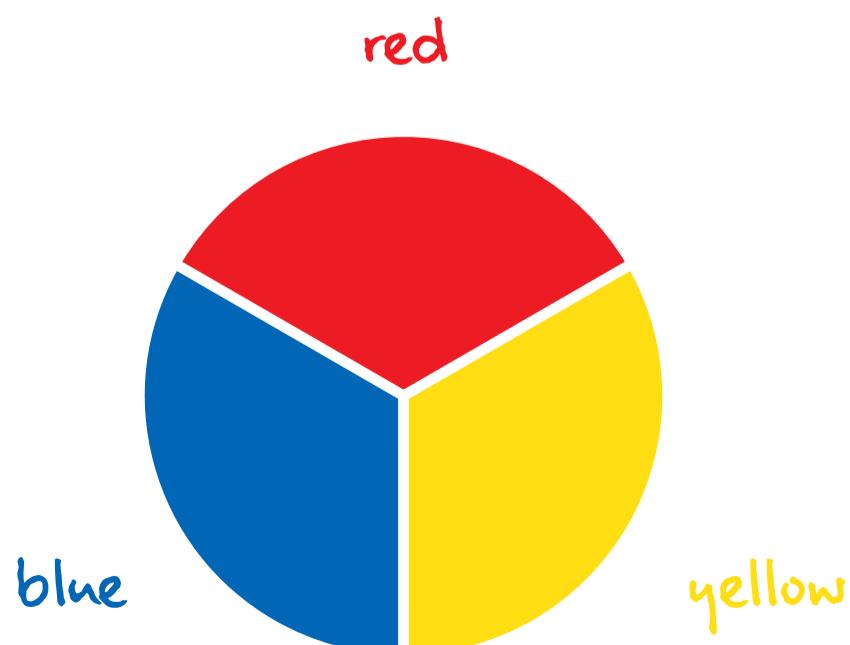
Choosing, mixing and using the right colors can be crucial for the success of your web design work. So, let's get started...

The color wheel

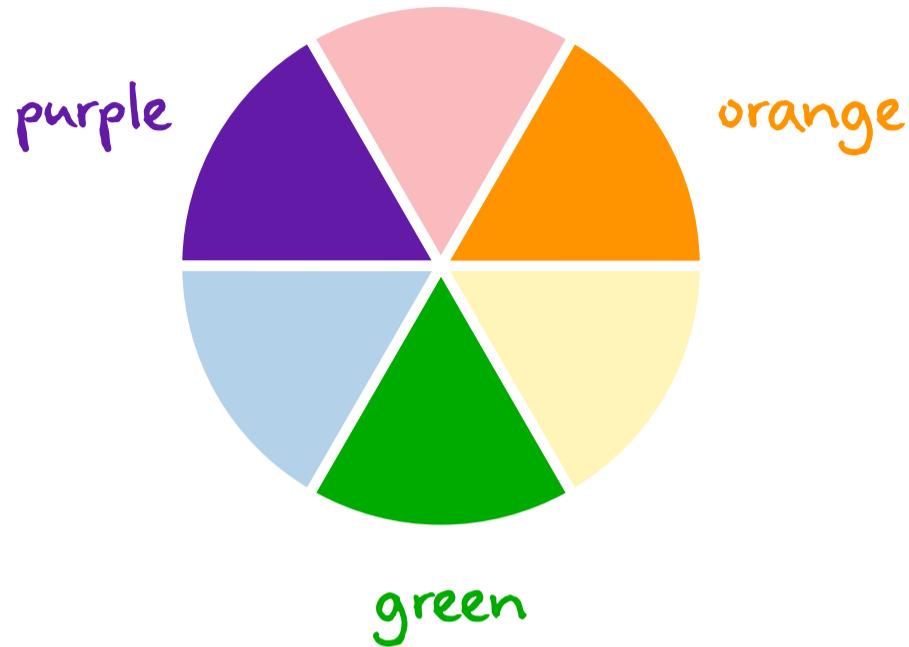
The color wheel is a visual representation of relationships between different groups of colors: **primary colors**, **secondary colors** and **tertiary colors** (also called complementary colors).

The first color wheel was created by Sir Issac Newton in 1706 and since then many artists and scientists have been exploring this idea using triangles, tables, charts and modified versions of Issac's color wheel.

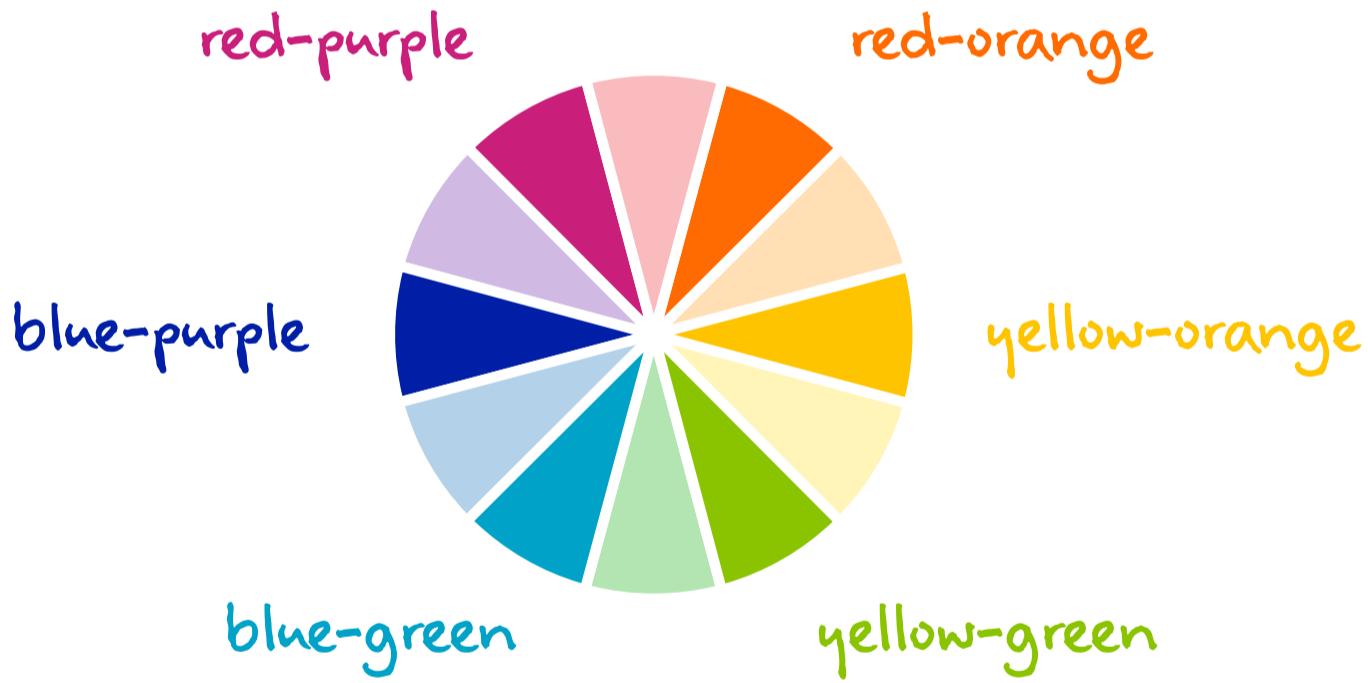
A typical artist's color wheel we use today is based on three **primary colors**:



Then, by mixing primary colors we can get three new **secondary colors**:



Going further and combining secondary colors with primary colors we receive **tertiary colors**:



So, what is so amazing about the color wheel?

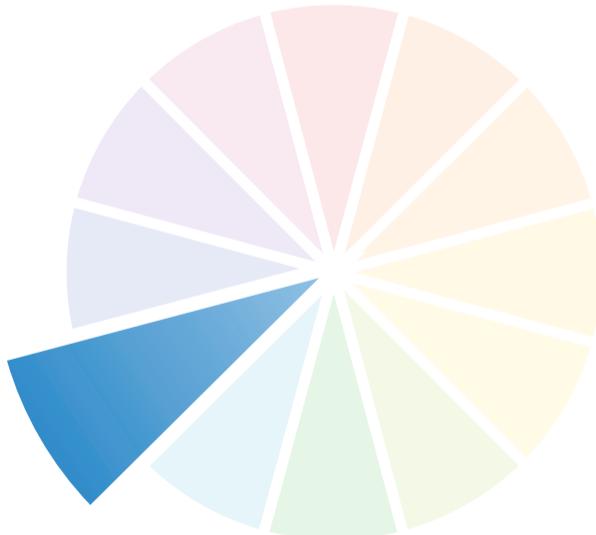
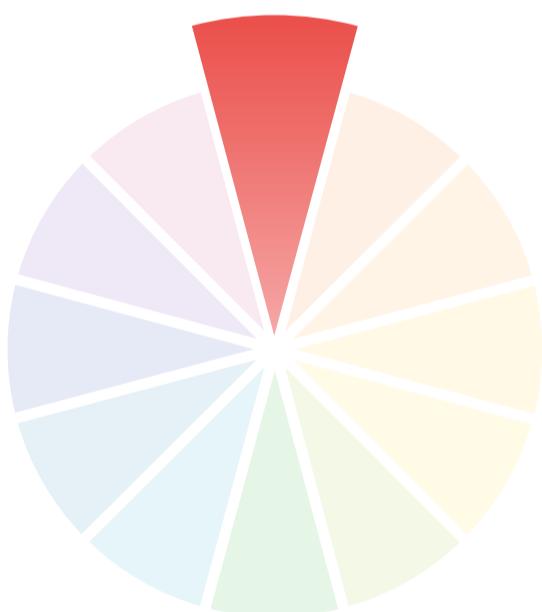
The color wheel can help you understand the relationships between specific colors and group them into a logical structure. It looks like a natural arrangement of colors in a circle but it actually hides many color mixing techniques. The color wheel can help you build beautiful color schemes.

Thanks to the color wheel, you can quickly separate the following color pairs:

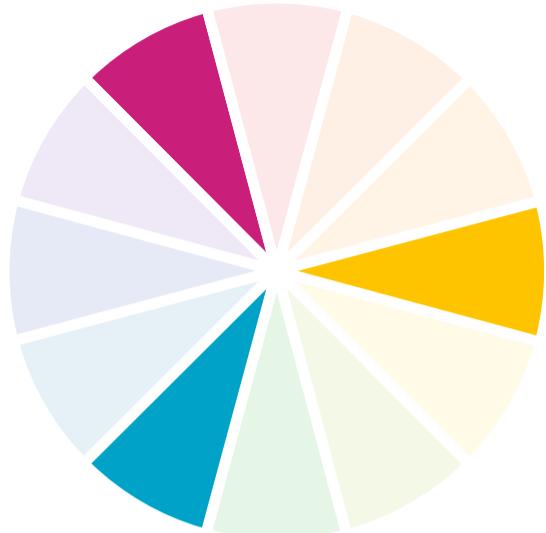
analogous



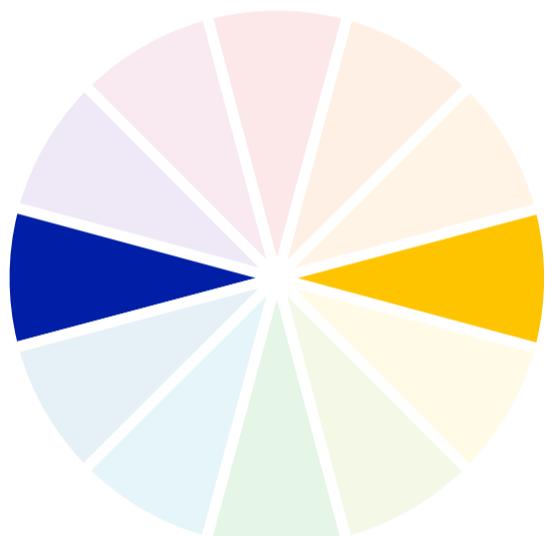
monochromatic



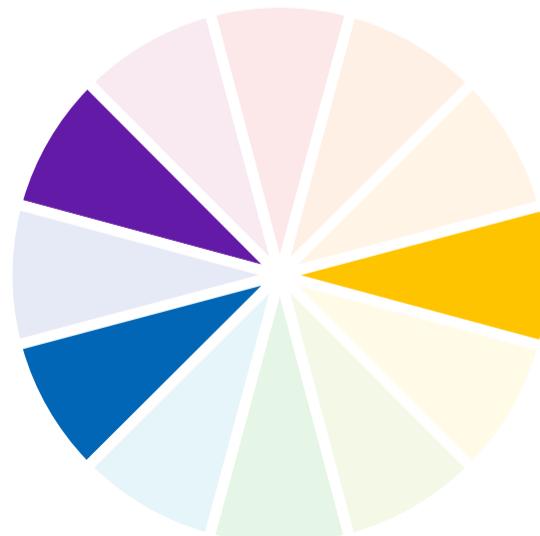
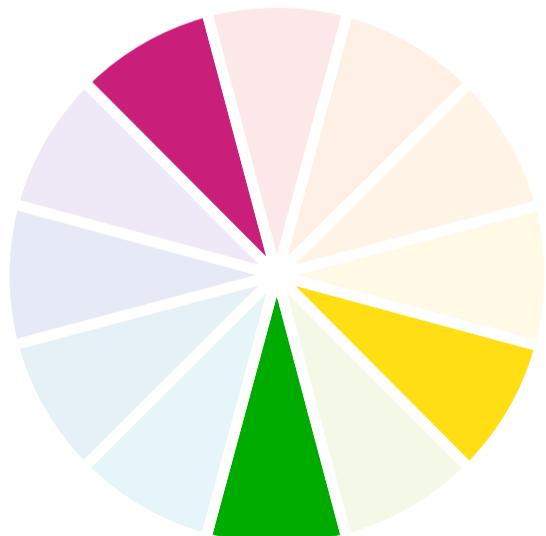
triad



complementary



compound



Color temperature

Colors have an entire range of different attributes and temperature is one of them. We categorize colors into two temperature groups: warm colors and cool colors.

Understanding the difference between these two groups may be very important in your design work. Colors can actually affect people's feelings and even influence them to make certain decisions.

► Warm colors.

Warm colors are associated with daylight, sunset and fire. They are very energetic and represent heat. Warm colors are all hues from red to yellow, including pink, brown, orange, and tan.

Warm colors usually dominate cool colors, so, for example, you can use them in call to action buttons. Just remember that red is also associated with "stop," that's why orange or gold is very often a better choice for buttons.



► Cool colors.

Cool colors are associated with water or an overcast day. In contrast to warm colors, cool colors can calm people down and create a soothing impression. Cool colors are all hues from green to blue, including violet which is closer to blue and most grays.

They are great when used as backgrounds because they can add more depth by making your design more open and relaxed.



Hue, saturation and brightness

We use terms like hue, saturation and brightness to describe and organize colors. Maintaining these three values can be crucial in creating the right color schemes in your design projects.

The process of creating color schemes usually starts with picking a few pure color hues. Then, you can start modifying them by changing their saturation and brightness to achieve a desired effect or feeling. That way, you have full control over your color scheme and you can easily add another color or replace the existing one.

Let me explain each value and show you some examples:

► Hue

Hue is any “pure” color from the entire spectrum of colors. Imagine your color wheel as a rainbow of all perfectly blended colors. Pick any color from it and that’s your hue.



► Saturation

Saturation is the intensity of a hue. A low saturation makes your hue color appear gray and dull and a high saturation makes it pure and vivid.



► Brightness

Brightness, as the name suggests, tells us how bright or dark a hue is. Imagine adding white color to a pure hue and that's when you increase its brightness. If you add black color then you decrease the brightness.



pure color

white



pure color

black

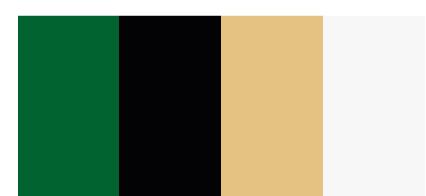
Creating color schemes

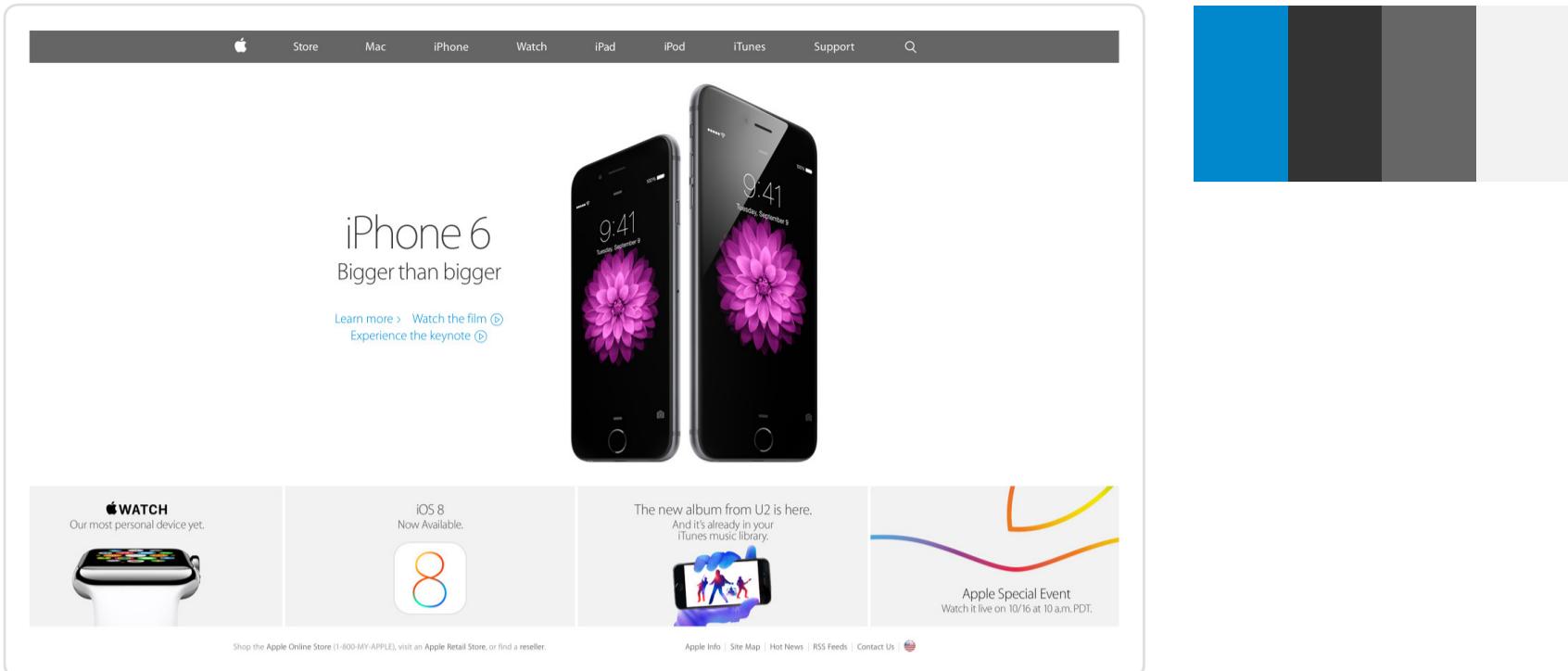
The process of designing color palettes for your website projects can be fun and not that hard at all if you know how to start.

One of the most important rules in choosing colors is simplicity. The more color you use, the more distractions and different feelings and emotions you incorporate into your design.

Color palettes that include more than 5 colors are usually very difficult to maintain. When you look around at color schemes of popular brands, you'll realize that they usually keep it very simple and use just a few colors.

A screenshot of the Starbucks website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for COFFEE, MENU, COFFEEHOUSE, RESPONSIBILITY, CARD, and SHOP. Below the navigation is a search bar with a placeholder 'Search this site' and a magnifying glass icon. On the left side, there's a yellow circular graphic containing the text 'CAN WE BUY YOU A DRINK?'. In the center, there's a large image of two Starbucks drinks: a latte with a caramel drizzle and a tall iced coffee. To the right of the image, there's promotional text: 'Get a free drink when you join our loyalty program' and 'Join My Starbucks Rewards and sign up to receive email rewards, and you'll get a free drink.' Below this is a button labeled 'GET YOUR FREE DRINK'. At the bottom of the page, there's a footer with the text 'A loyalty program that's all about you' and 'Get exclusive offers by simply registering a Starbucks Card.' The Starbucks logo is in the top left corner of the main content area.





I like to keep my color schemes between 3 to 4 main colors. I call them primary, secondary, accent, and background:

► Primary color.

This is your main color that identifies your brand and is used to draw some attention. It's very often used for important headlines, links, buttons and navigation.

You should start designing your color palette by choosing the primary color. It doesn't have to be the perfect shade right away. Choose a pure hue of a color that you think fits your project best and you can work on the brightness and saturation later.

If you're working on projects for clients, they usually already have a primary color chosen based on their brand or preferences. You can still add a secondary color and build the rest of the color scheme around it.



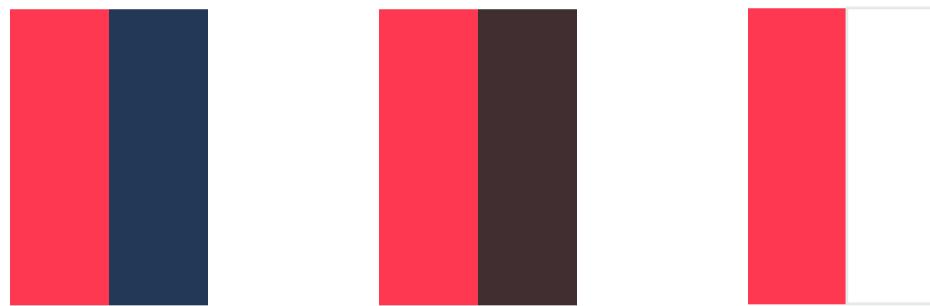
Let's say this is your primary color. We'll build the entire color scheme around it in the next steps.

► Secondary color.

It's usually a less prominent color than the primary. You can use it as a background for some specific elements that you want to stand out from the rest of the design. I usually use a darker shade of the secondary color for the body text and lower level headings.

There are many different techniques regarding how you can pick a secondary color. If you want your color scheme to look monochromatic, you could just choose a darker shade of your primary color. If you want to create a little more dynamic look, pick something contrasting.

Just remember that the secondary color shouldn't be stronger and more active than the primary or accent colors.

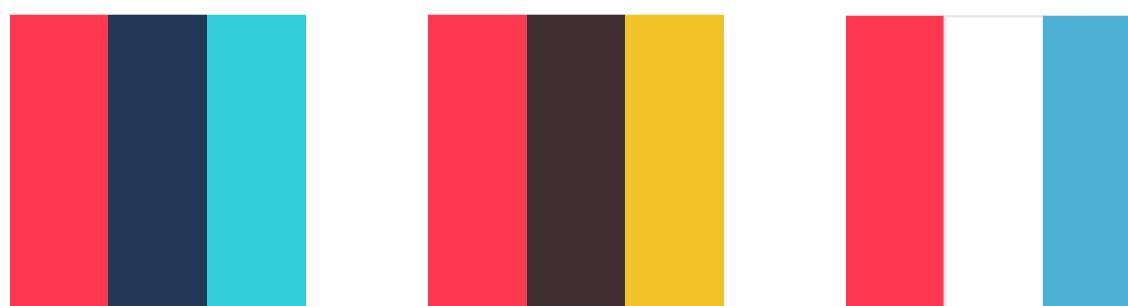


In the first example, I chose navy blue to cool it down and have a higher contrast. In the second example, I chose a darker shade that looks more like brown. It's more monochromatic and analogous. In the last example, I chose white to contrast with a dark background color.

► **Accent color.**

This is a very important color in your palette. We call it accent or highlight because that's exactly what it is used for. It's a kind of color that is supposed to break the pattern of your color scheme and get the maximum attention of the user. You shouldn't overdo it in your design and use it only when it's really needed if you want to achieve the best results.

It doesn't have to make a perfect color combination with your primary and secondary colors because you want it to stand out. Choose something that makes a really good contrast to your primary color.



In the first and last examples I chose blue as my accent color because it's contrasting really nicely with the primary color. In the middle example, I chose orange-yellow to make it a little warmer.

► **Background color.**

This is the main background color, which very often fills out those large portions of your white space. You want to make sure that your primary, secondary and accent colors look good on top of it.

The background color can be as simple as white and that's probably the most frequently chosen color in web design. It'll be very easy to maintain your color scheme and all of your other colors will match well with white.

If your primary colors are warm, you may want to tweak your background color from white to a very light tan color. On the other hand, if your primary colors are cool, you can make it a light grayish blue. It'll add a little more character to your entire color palette.



In the first example, I chose light blue as a base color to match the cool character of this scheme.

In the second example, you can see a light tan color as a base to keep it all warmer and to match the secondary and accent colors. In the last example, I chose a dark purple as my base color and you can see how the other colors make a good contrast with it.

That's of course just a theory and you can be more flexible in using your colors if you feel comfortable in dealing with more advanced designs.

The final step of working on your color scheme would be testing it with your typography. You want to make sure that your chosen colors look good when they are applied to text. Try both your headings and paragraphs in primary, secondary and accent colors displayed on the neutral color background.

Examples of beautiful website color schemes

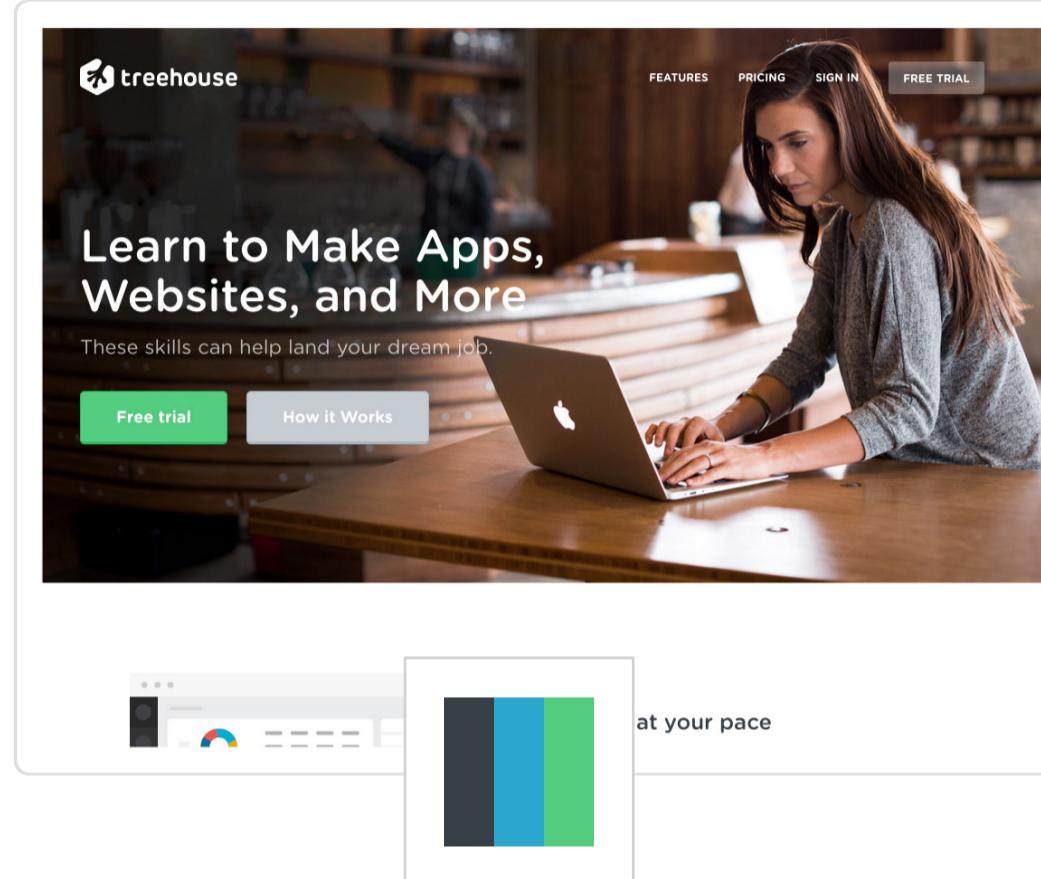
There are really no limits when it comes to creating color schemes. Let me show you now some real life examples of beautiful website designs and their color choices.

► [teamtreehouse.com](#)

Teamtreehouse.com has a very clean color palette with a lot of white background.

Dark gray is a primary color here that is used in most typography and sometimes as a background to separate particular page sections.

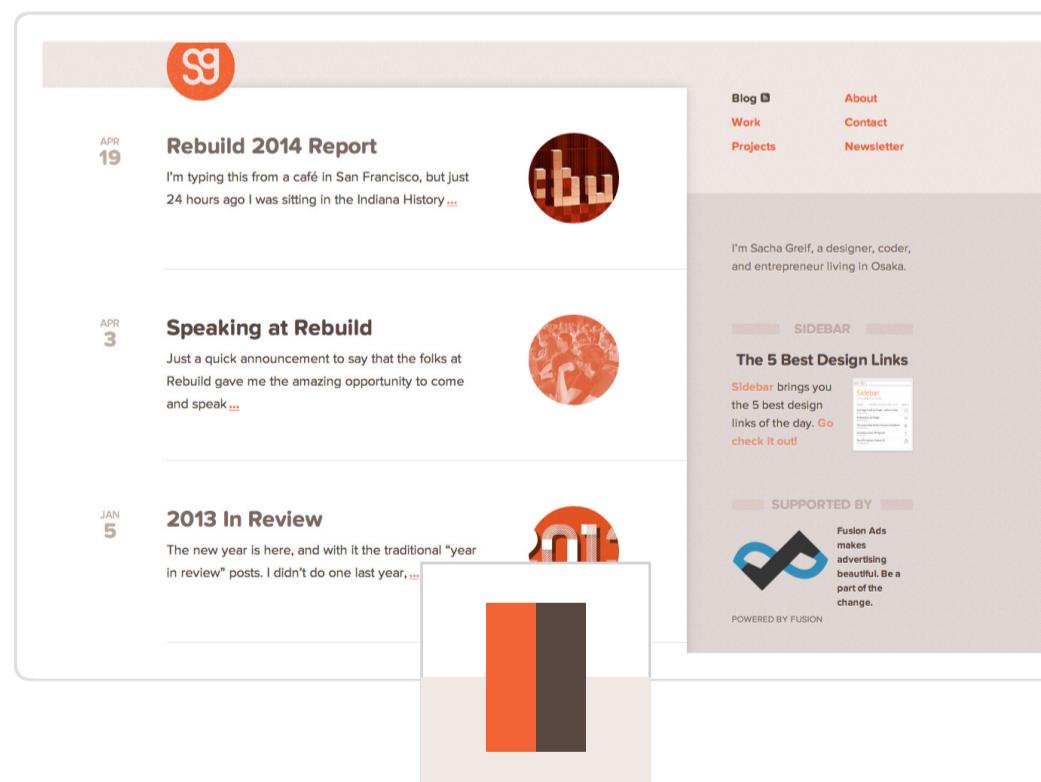
A blue color is used for regular links and secondary buttons. A green color is the accent color in this design and is used only for call to action buttons that lead you to sign up and get a free trial.



► [sachagreif.com](#)

Sacha's website has a little more monochromatic look where all the colors are from the same side of the color wheel. See how he used different background colors to separate the main content area from the sidebar.

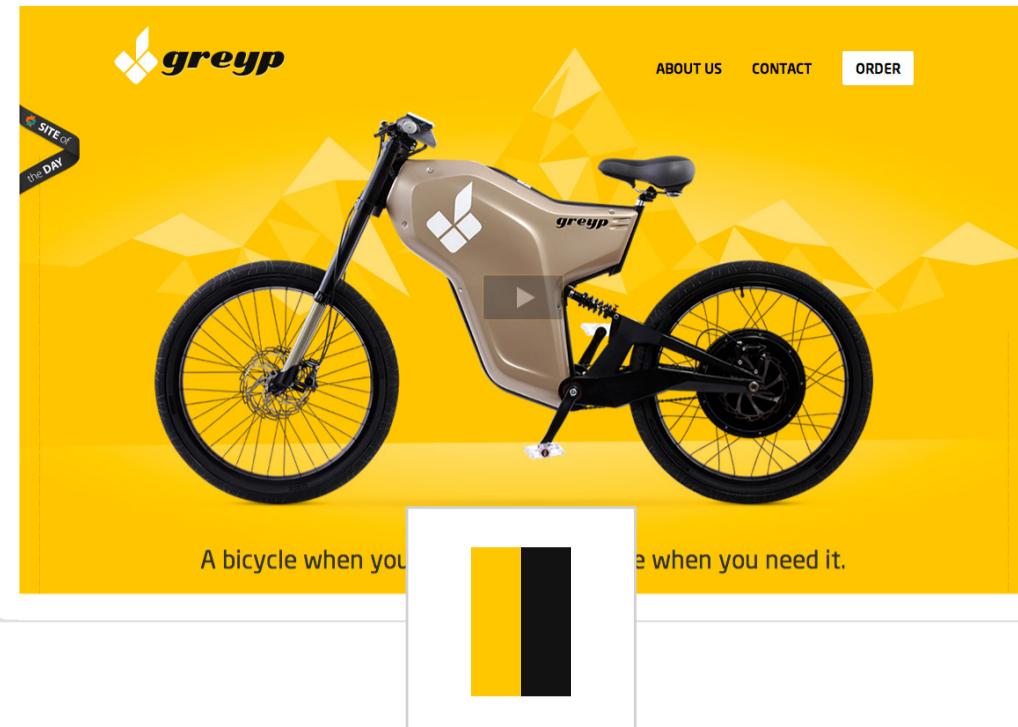
A dark brown color is used for all typography, while a red color is reserved mainly for links and buttons. There is really no accent color in this scheme but turquoise would make a good-looking contrast in this design.



► [greyp-bikes.com](#)

This website has a really strong and contrasting color scheme. Yellow and black make a perfect color contrast.

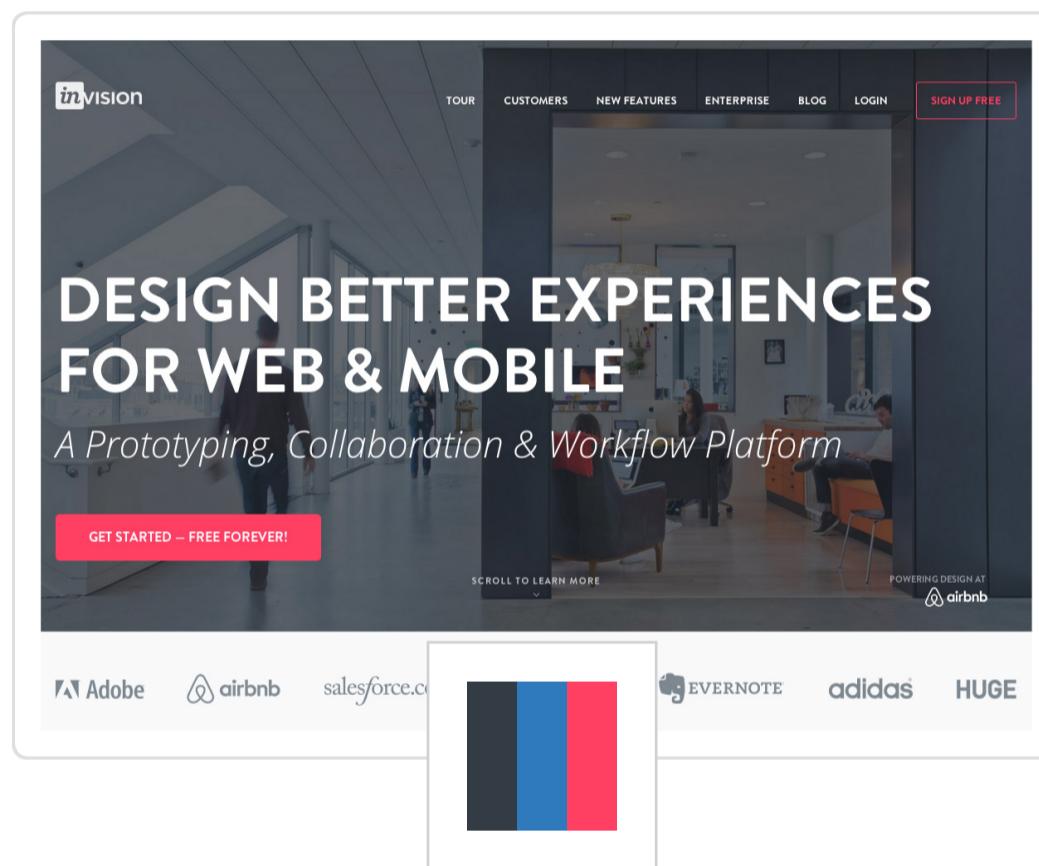
The main content area is white which makes reading text much easier than if it was completely yellow.



► [InVisionApp.com](#)

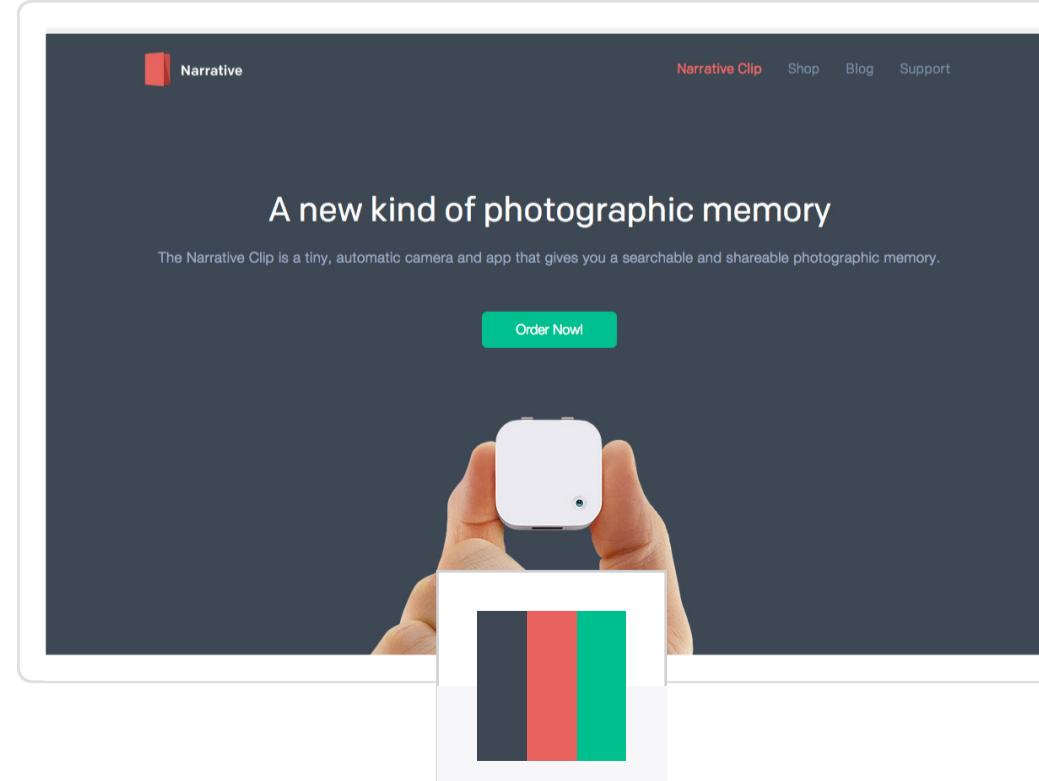
InVision website has one of my favorite designs. The main content area background is of course white for clarity and readability.

All typography and other backgrounds are in different shades of gray. Then, a strong pink accent color comes to break up the entire pattern and make all call to actions really prominent and more interesting. I also found a blue color on some subpages that is used as a secondary color for buttons and links.



► [getnarrative.com](#)

A blueish gray color is used here primarily for all text and big background blocks are used to set that calm and cold pattern. A red color is used as a secondary to make it all a little more active and alive. Finally, green is used for all primary buttons and as a highlight which makes great contrast to the rest of the design.

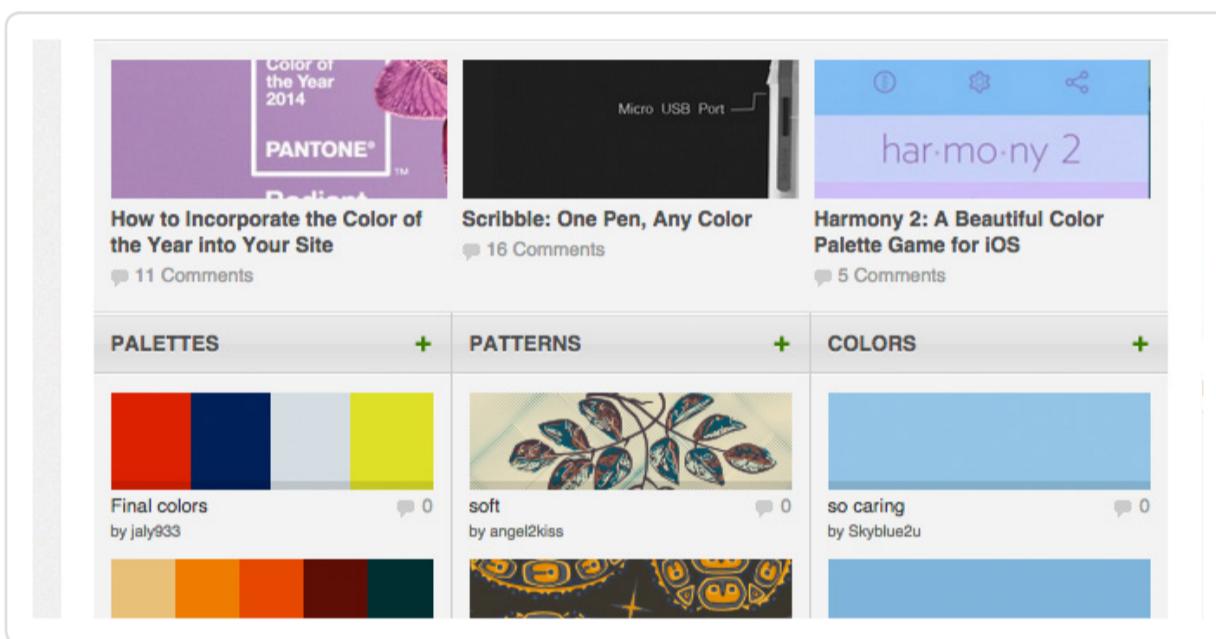


Getting color ideas

There are many places where you can look for color palette inspiration for your next project. It's hard to be original and creative when it comes to choosing colors. I'd rather play it safe and trust some popular color schemes that are well known.

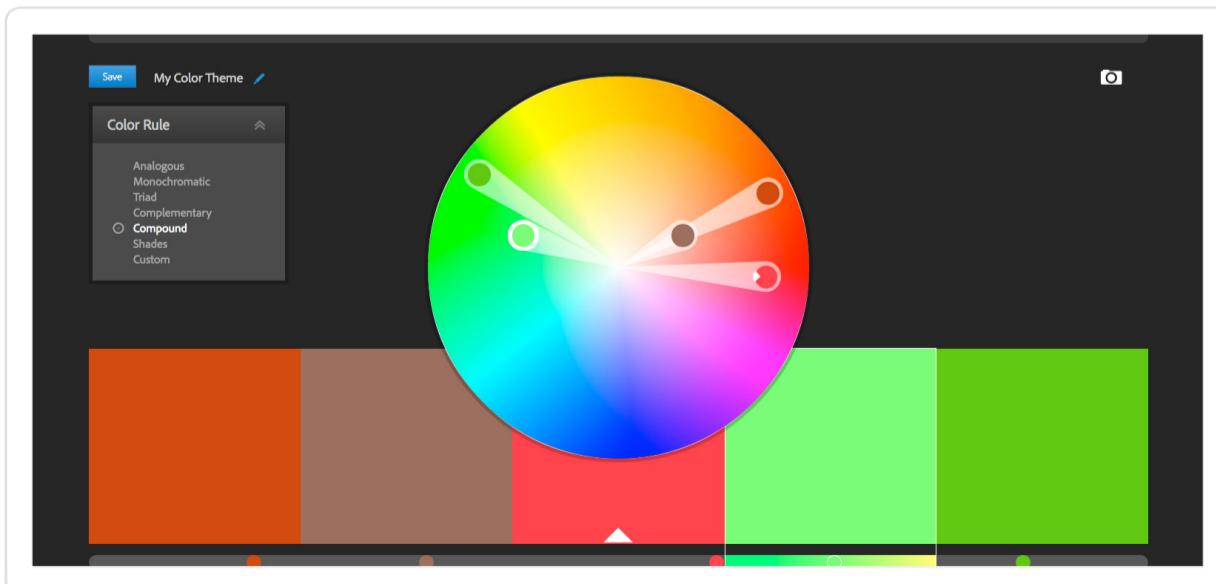
► [COLOURlovers.com](#)

Colourlovers is a place where people share their color ideas and inspiration. Here you may find thousands of different color palettes that are presented in an easy way and ready for you to pick and use. The color schemes are categorized by some popular usage: wedding, home, fashion, web, print, craft, business. Not every combination is beautiful but that's something I'll leave to your own judgment.



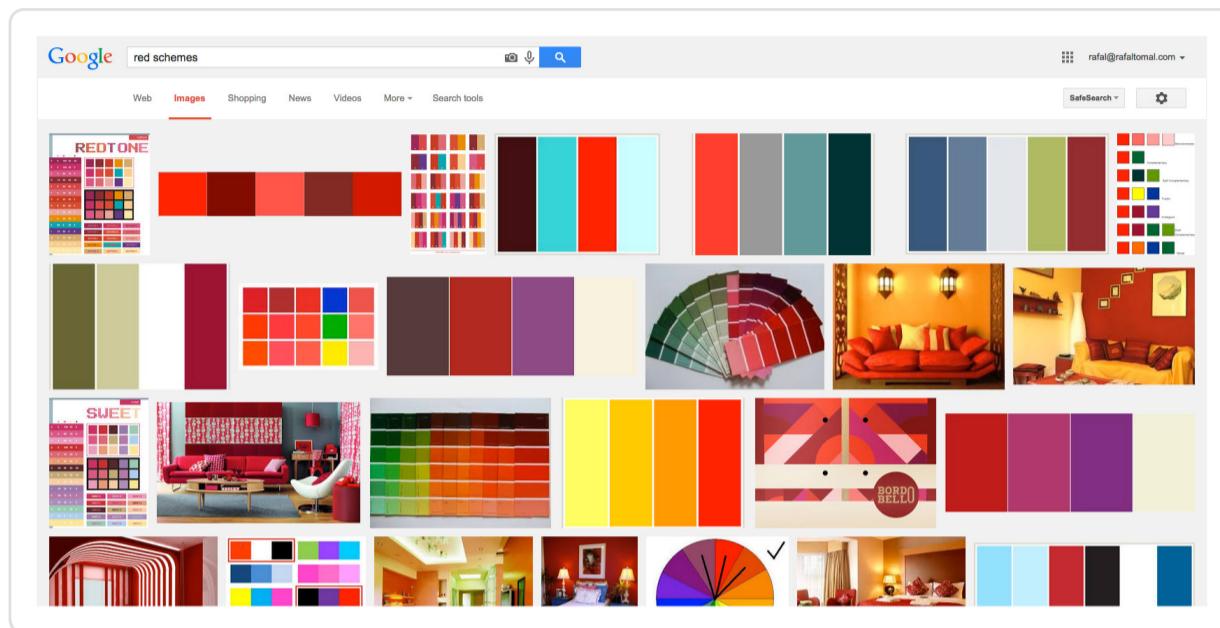
► [color.adobe.com](#)

Adobe Color is one of my color inspiration tools. In Color you can explore and edit the existing schemes or if you're an Adobe user, you can create and save your own themes. The user interface is very intuitive and helps you work off of the color wheel and quickly pick some analogous, monochromatic, triad, complementary, compound or shades based on your primary color.



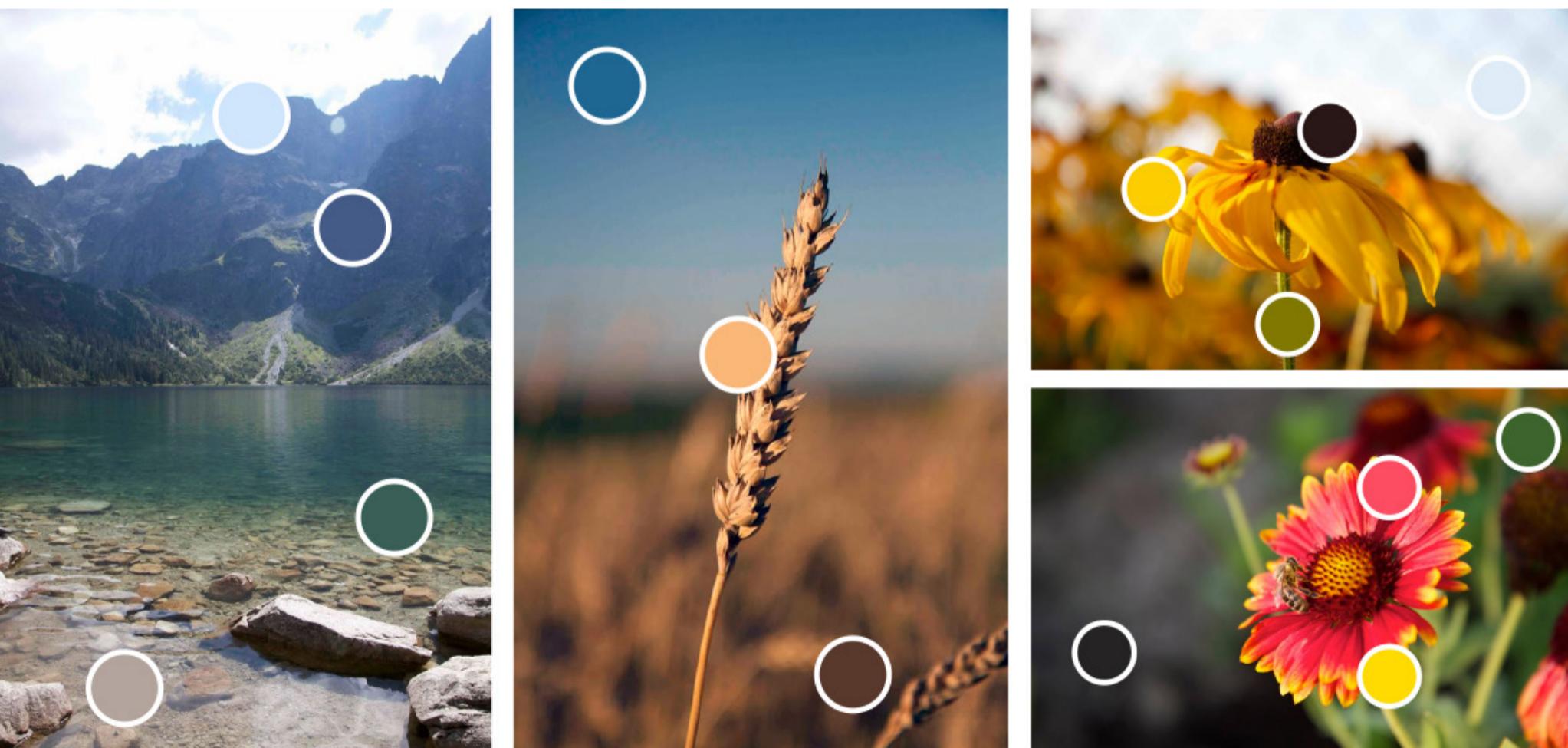
► Google Images

Are you looking for some good matches to go with red? You can simply type “red color schemes” in Google Images and you’ll get great results of red color schemes from the web. It might be a great reference point for your designs and can help you make some quick decisions because you can see the actual colors in real life examples.



► Nature

Nature is a true artist. There are no wrong color combinations in nature. Observe the world around you and you can find perfect color combinations everywhere.



Photos taken by Magdalena Gawlik-Tomal.

Color psychology

Colors have been researched not only by scientists and artists but also by psychologists because it's been shown that colors can affect our feelings.

Studies show that emotions have a really big influence on people's decisions. Therefore, marketers work very closely with designers to try to figure out the best colors for their brands, products and advertising campaigns.

It's very hard to say if there are any specific colors that work better because there are so many different factors that can affect the results.

How we feel about particular colors or color combinations very often depends on our own experiences and culture. Every one of us has our own color preferences and different color interpretations, but there are some general color associations that are specific for entire cultures.

To avoid any misunderstandings or confusion I would recommend to always deeply study the culture you're designing for. For example, simple colors such as black and white may have completely different meanings for Europeans and Asians.

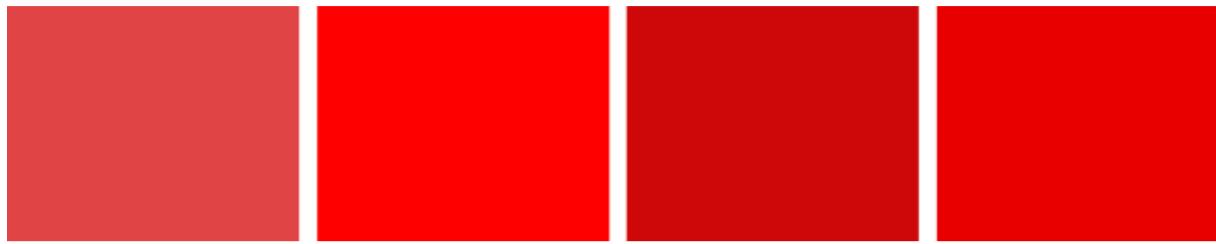
I believe that it's much more important how we use colors than what colors we use. You should be consistent in using your branding colors and always make sure to design schemes that are pleasurable and easy on the human eye.

Different shades of the same color can also evoke different feelings. A subtle and pastel blue won't be perceived the same way as a strong and highly saturated blue color. Color combinations are also important here. Analogous or monochromatic schemes may evoke different associations than complementary and triadic mixes which are usually much more prominent and active.

Let me describe here some of the most common color associations in Western culture. You have to remember that these are only common associations and it doesn't mean that you have to strictly follow them in your designs.



- **Red - physical courage, excitement, passion, aggression, hot, youthful.**



Red is a very active and energetic color that evokes strong emotions. It has a high visibility, which may be perfect to draw the user's attention and it also stimulates people to make their decisions faster. On the other hand, sometimes red is considered to be aggressive and it's easily associated with "stop."

I found red very easy to use in my work. Depending on the shade, it can combine well with gold and blue/aqua colors.

moresleep.net

wufoo.com

thedesigncubicle.com

- **Blue - intelligence, trust, calm, cold, loyalty, communication.**

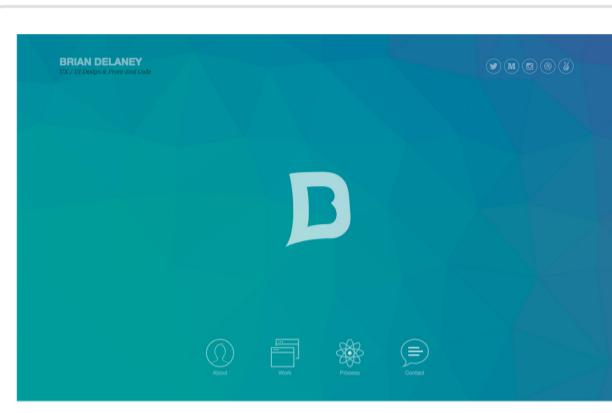


Blue is a favorite color for many people and that's why links are blue by default in all browsers. Blue is associated with calmness and peace. It's the most common color of all high-tech companies because it's associated with precision and intelligence.

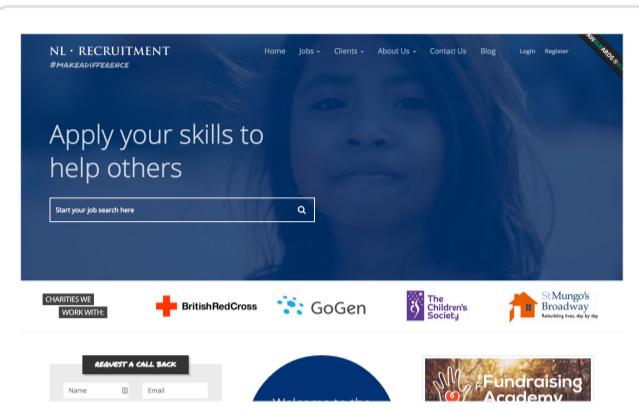
Blue can make a good combination with grays and greens. If you use blue as a base color, than yellow or orange can be perfect as an active color.



newrainmaker.com

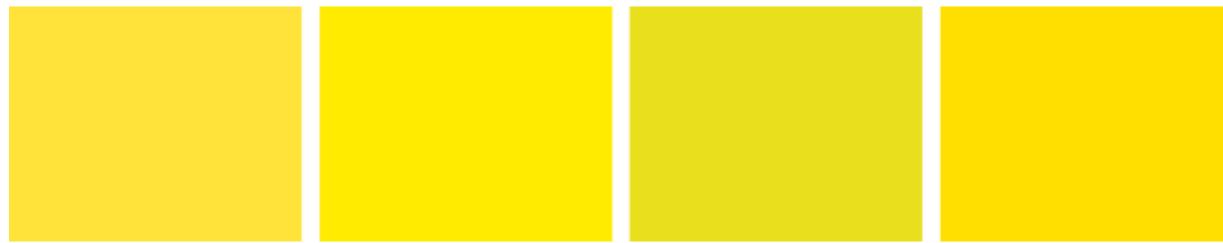


briandelaney.com



nl-recruitment.com

- ▶ **Yellow - optimism, cheer, clarity, friendliness, confidence, happiness.**

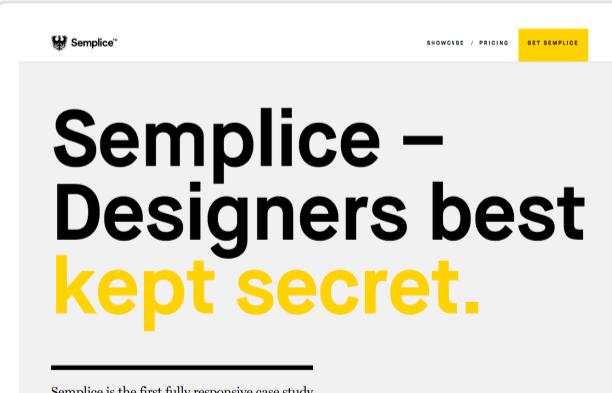


Yellow is a very bright color and associated with happiness. Be careful in using yellow text on a white background or using too big yellow areas because it can be hard for our eyes to see on the screen.

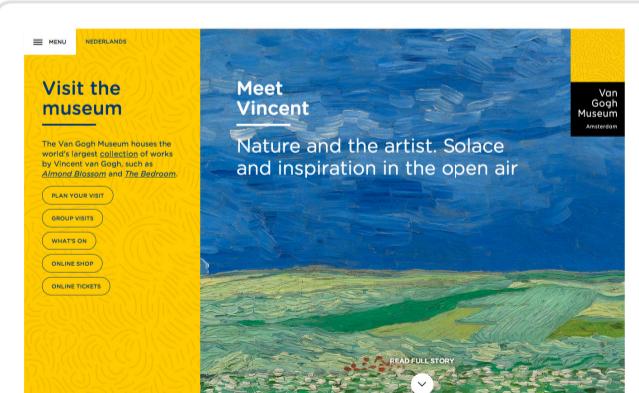
Yellow rarely looks good on its own in web design. However, it can make a great combination with black and blue, which gives it a very high contrast.



radicaltesta.com



semplicelabs.com



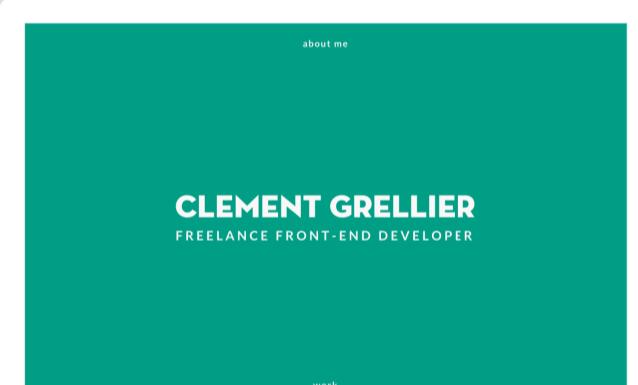
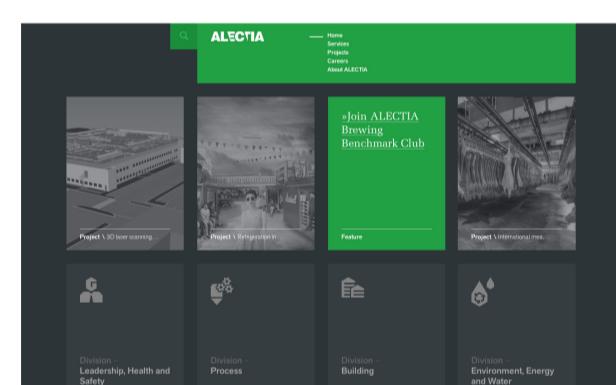
vangoghmuseum.nl

- ▶ **Green** - *peace, balance, harmony, rest, well-being, environmentally-friendly, growth.*



Green is associated with good luck, health, and well-being. It's a color of nature and even helps to relieve stress.

I really like a combination of green with browns and grays, which makes it appear even more calm and relaxed. If you want to achieve a more cheerful effect, you can make analogous schemes with lime/yellow or with aqua/blue.



presidentti3d.paulig.fi

alectia.com

clementgrellier.fr

- ▶ **Orange** - *friendliness, warmth, cheer, food, security.*



Orange is the color between red and yellow and shares some characteristics of both. It's a friendly, playful and hot color. It's not so strong as red but can be very prominent which is why it is very often effective as a "Buy Now" button.

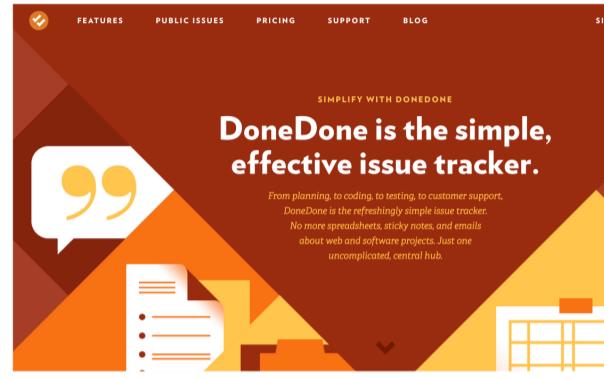
One of my favorite combinations is orange and turquoise where turquoise is used as a base color and orange as an accent. Another great scheme can be made by combining orange and purple, which can make any design look very interesting.

The 24/7: A Watch by You

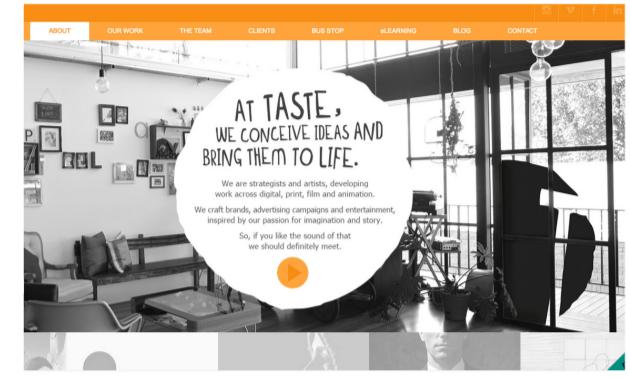
A Timeless 10-Piece Watch Collection That Retails for the Price of One

Design MJD's Watch Below
↓

designawatch.mijlo.com

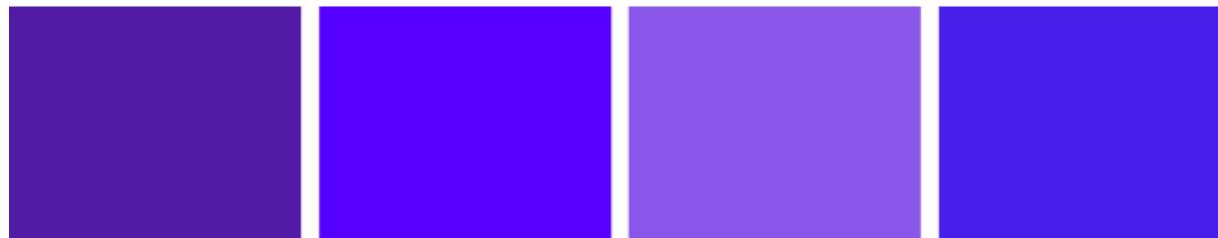


getdonedone.com



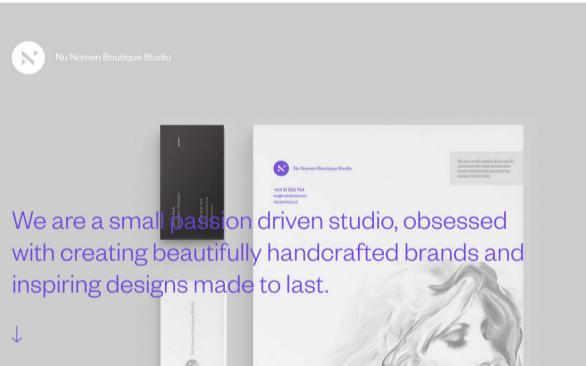
tastecreative.com

- **Purple - luxury, truth, quality, wealth, creativity.**

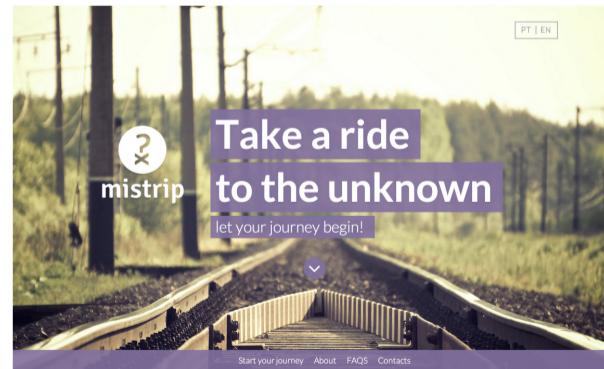


Purple is a very rare color in nature and has been associated with royalty, wealth, wisdom, and mystery. It's not used in web design too often but I believe it's a very powerful color that we could experiment more with.

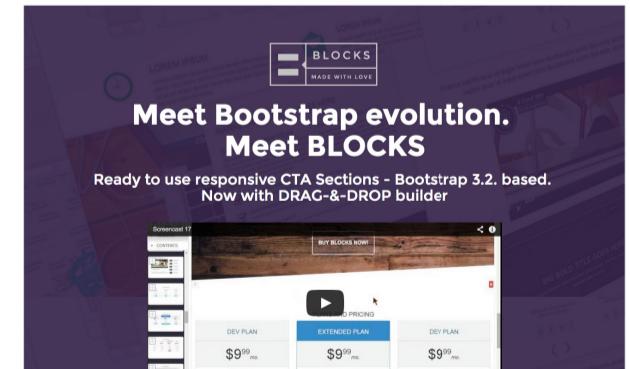
I would recommend designing schemes with gold and lime colors.



nunomen.co



gomistrip.com

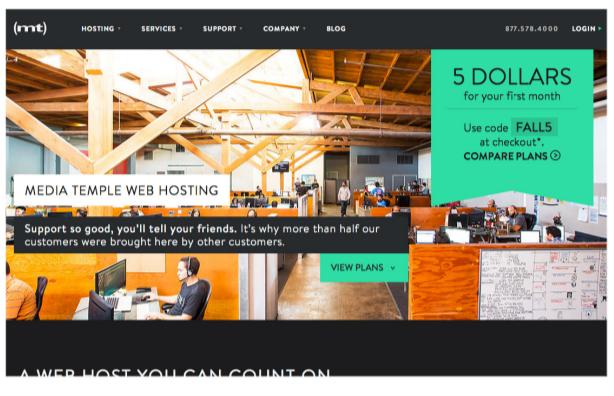


demo.bootstraptor.com/blocks.html

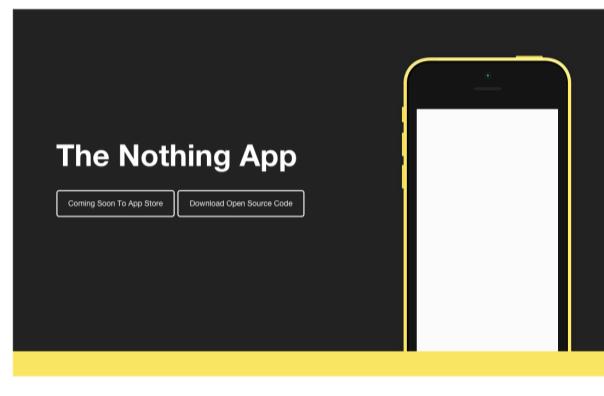
► **Black - sophistication, heaviness, glamour, power.**

Black is usually associated with power and death in Western culture. It's a formal color but can also be very elegant and prestigious.

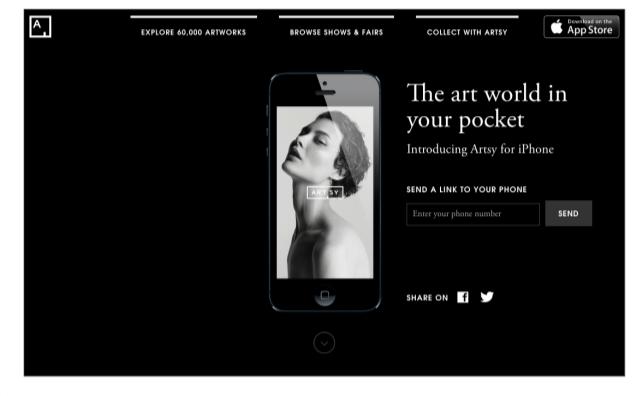
Black can make a good combination with any other contrasting light color. I would recommend avoiding matching black with dark colors because it can make your design look very sad and dull.



mediatemple.net



thenothingapp.com

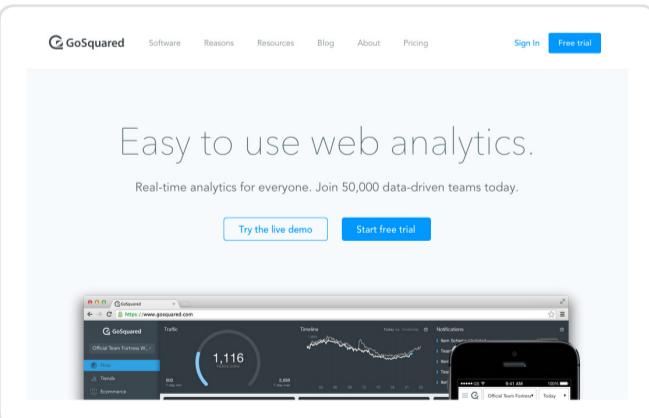


iphone.artsy.net

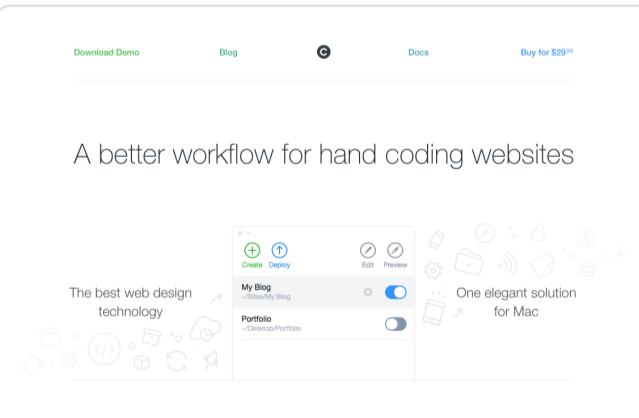
► **White - clarity, simplicity, purity, goodness.**

White is associated with light, goodness and purity in the West but has a completely different meaning in the East, where it's associated with funerals, death and mourning.

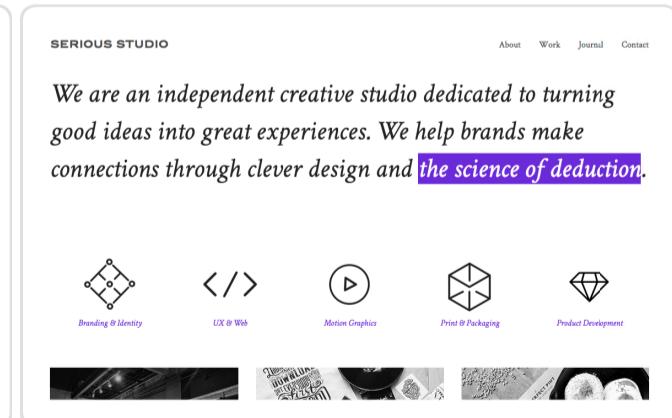
In web design, white is of course the most popular color for backgrounds because it enhances readability and makes a good base for any other color.



gosquared.com



cactusformac.com



serious-studio.com

Designing a color palette

Similar to a typography style guide, a color palette is a representation of a style that your website design should follow. However, in this case, you describe and define colors which together create a website color scheme.

Your color palette should include all basic color samples with indications if it's a primary, secondary, accent or background color. It's also very useful to add a color's hex code and RGB values. If you're planning to reuse similar colors for print, then adding CMYK and Pantone codes will be required.

A color palette should also show some standards and dictate rules as to how the colors should be applied and used. You may need some variations of your colors for different purposes. Sometimes, you need a little darker or lighter shade of your base color. Another time, you may need to use your base color as a light background. It's good to stick to the original values and only slightly modify them to get a certain color.

*Go ahead and grab my free [Color Palette Template](#) from the **Designers Area** on my website. We'll use it as a starting point in this practice section.*

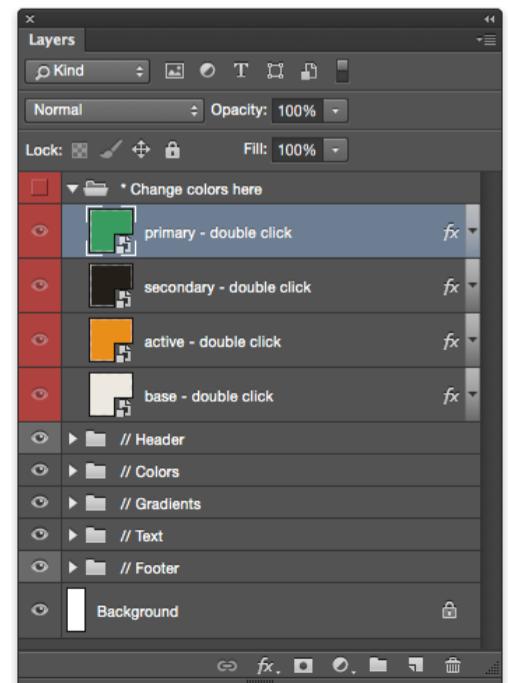
Step 1

The first step is to pick the right primary color. All I know at this point is that my primary color should be green. I choose green because it's a friendly and inviting color associated with good luck, health and nature. I want my website to have that kind of feeling.

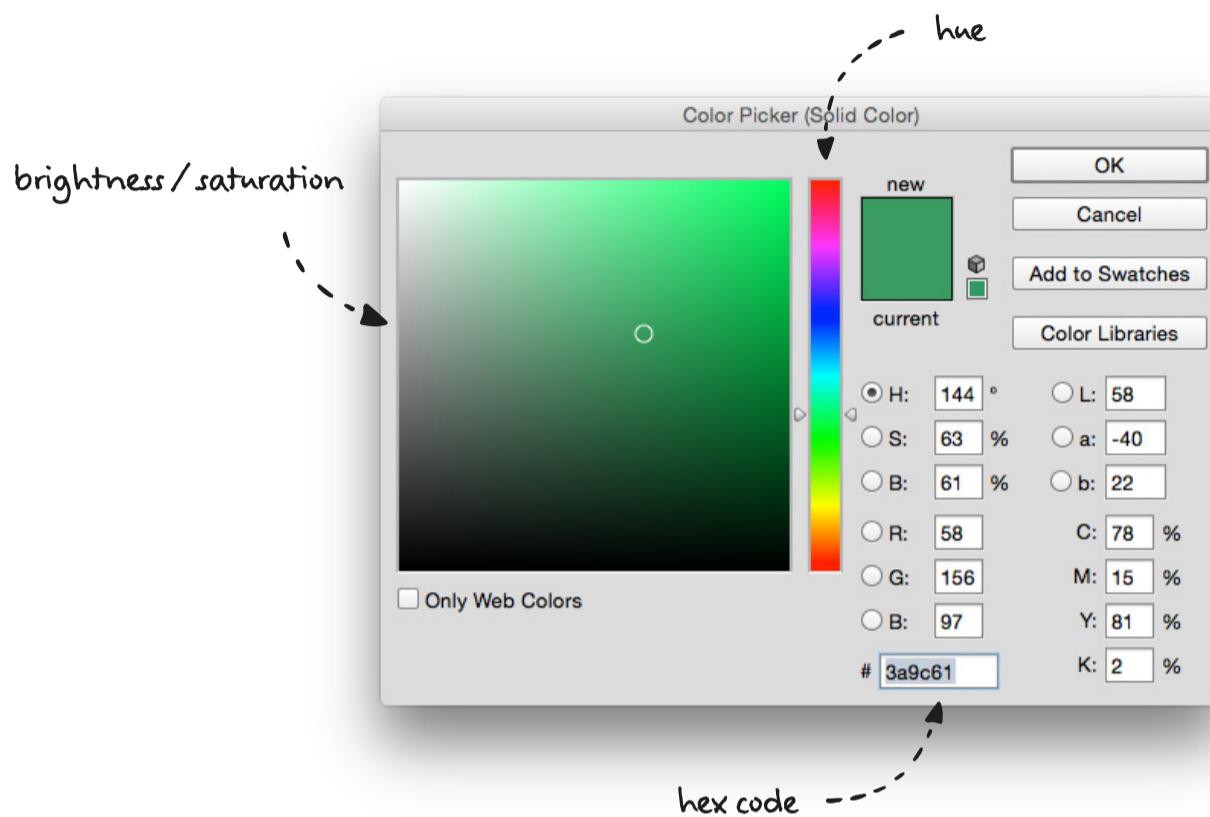
Well, the problem is that there are millions of different shades of green color. How to pick the right one? I'm using Photoshop color picker to help me with that.

I open my color palette template PSD file and look into the “* **Change colors here**” layer folder. Then, I double click on the first layer that says “**primary - double click**.” This is a smart object which opens up in a new window. I double click on the rectangle layer there and a color picker shows up.

If you're not familiar with smart objects in Adobe Photoshop, I would recommend learning more about it from [here](#).



Make sure you have a capital “H” letter selected which stands for hues. It shows you all the available hues in a thin stripe on the right hand side as well as saturation and brightness in the big box on the left hand side. I love that color presentation because it lets me first pick the right hue and then modify its brightness and saturation to get the perfect color I’m looking for.

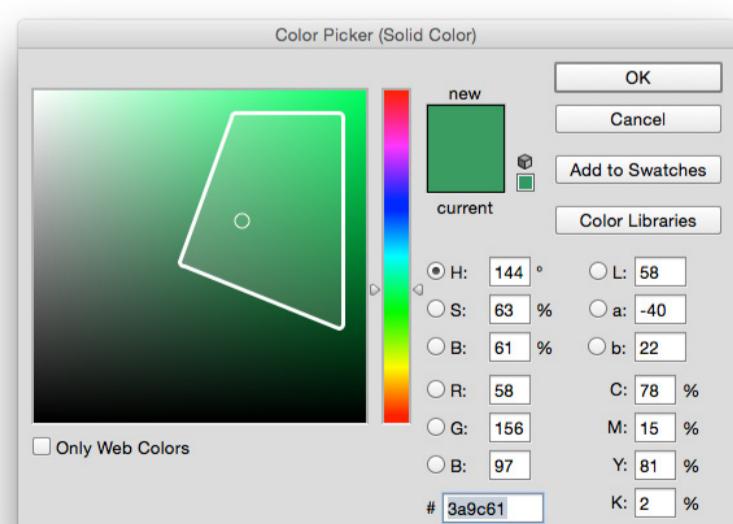


A green color takes up a significant part of the hue stripe. The closer I get to blue, my green color becomes colder and the closer I get to the yellow, my green color gets warmer. So, that’s the first decision I need to make. Do I want my green to be colder or warmer?



I choose a bit colder hue because I can use a warm color for the accent which is going to make a beautiful and useful contrast.

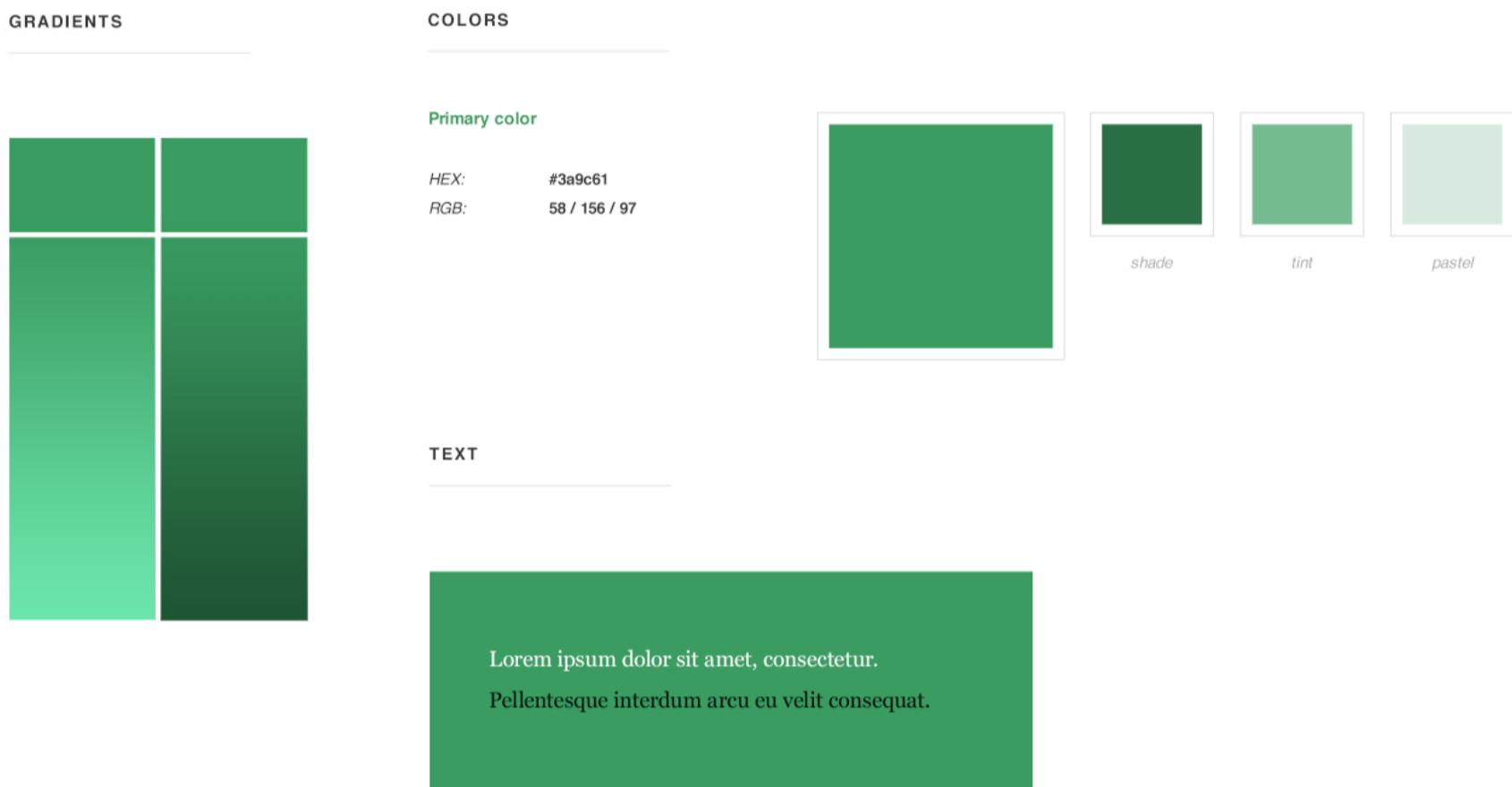
Next, I modify the brightness and saturation. My secret for a perfect color is to never go too close to any of the edges of this box. I aim for colors in the area shown on the right.



I'm not saying that the colors along the edge look bad. They're just more risky and you're more likely to make a mistake. If you want to play it safe, stay in the area I just showed you above.

I choose my perfect combination of saturation and brightness. Of course, I can still change it or modify it later. I save the smart object and close it.

Now, when I get back to my color palette file, I can see that it's all automatically updated with my new primary color. I'm going to check how it looks with text on white background and then I'm good to move forward.

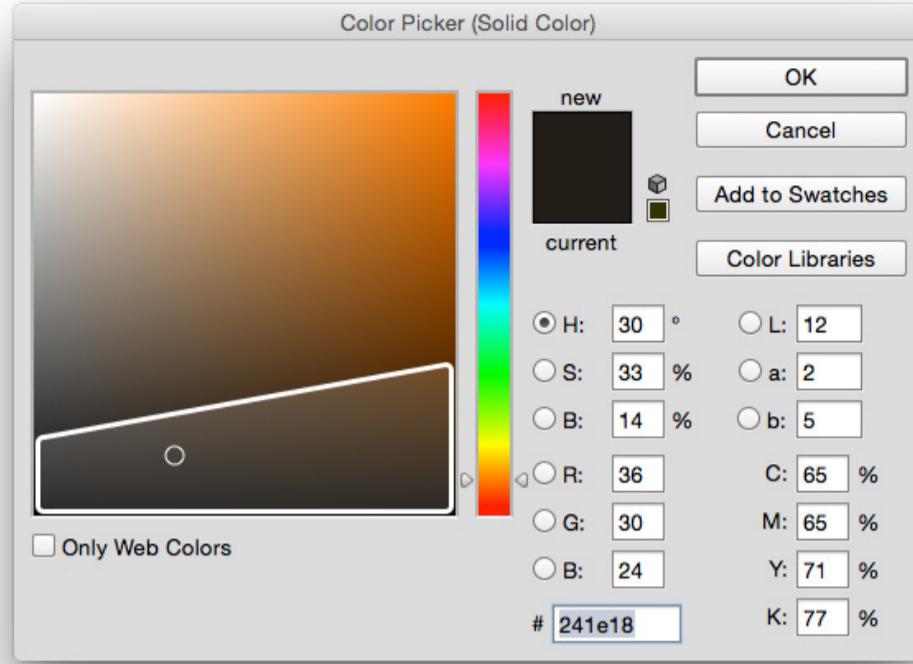


Step 2

I choose my secondary color this time. It's going to be mostly used for body text, so it has to be dark and strong enough to make a good contrast on a light background. I repeat my process from the first step but this time I double click on the "**secondary**" layer.

I could simply choose a dark grey for text but that would make my color scheme look cold with that primary color I chose. So, instead, I make my secondary color a bit warmer and I choose a dark brown.

I change my hue to orange colors and then pick something with low brightness and saturation. I usually choose my secondary color from this area:

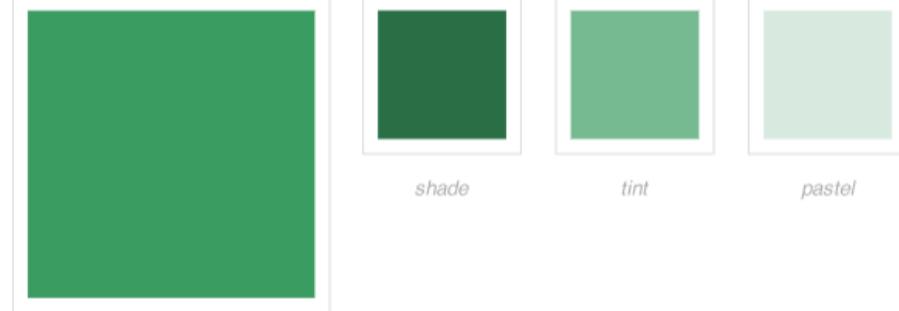


I save it and see how green and brown look together. They're both natural colors (grass and soil), so this match is looking good.

COLORS

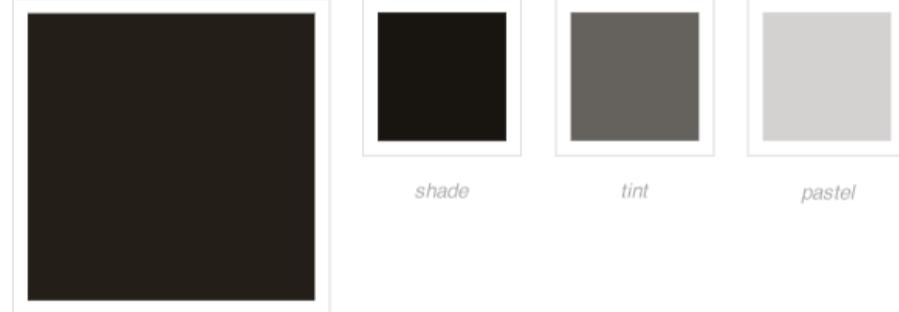
Primary color

HEX: #3a9c61
RGB: 58 / 156 / 97



Secondary color

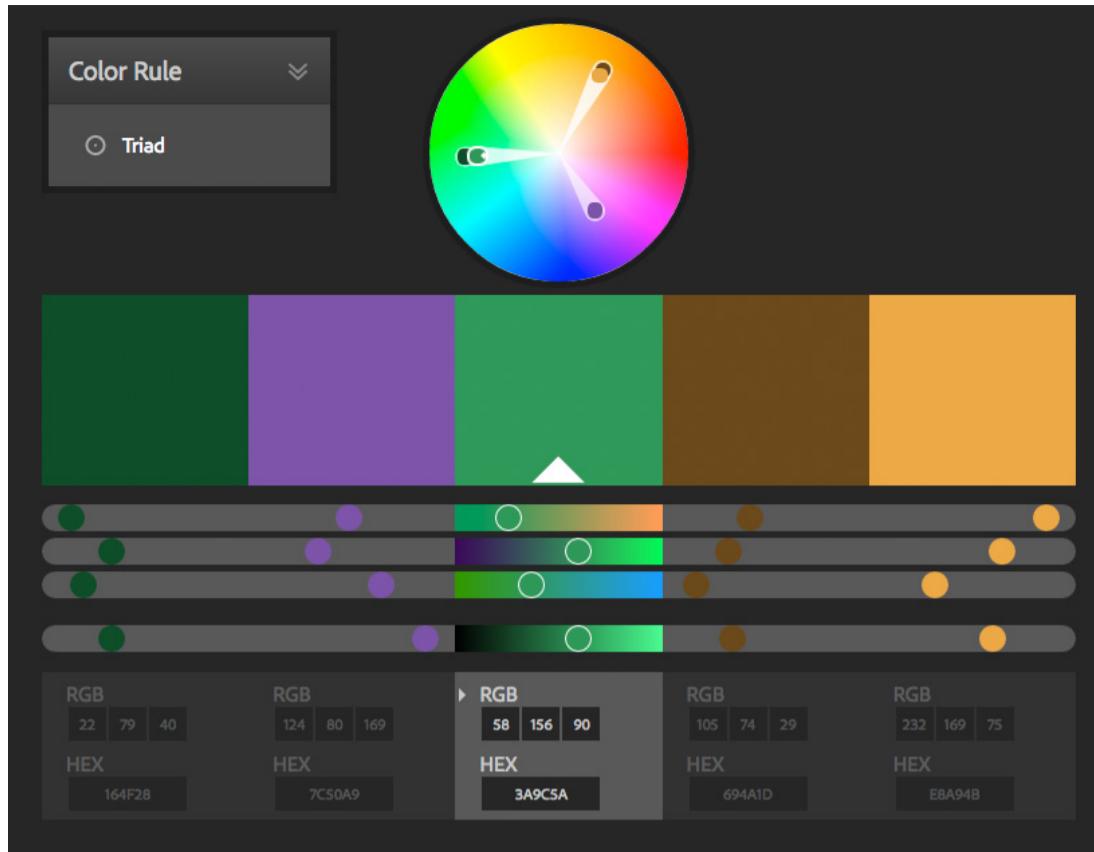
HEX: #241e18
RGB: 36 / 30 / 24



Step 3

My next step is to choose an active (or highlight) color. This color is going to be used mainly for my call to actions, link highlights and any other areas that need special attention.

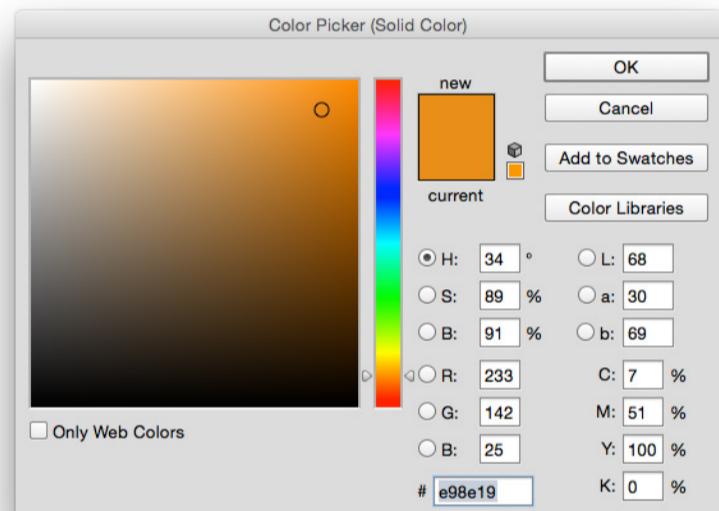
I get some help from [Adobe Color](#) (it used to be Adobe Kuler) here. I set my primary color as a base color and then ask it to show me a **Triad**:



From what I see here, both orange and purple are a good match for my green. I choose orange because it'll fit perfectly with my dark brown. I copy a hex code provided by Adobe Color and paste it to Photoshop color picker.

This shows the right hue but I need to make my accent much stronger than that. I change the brightness/saturation and choose something in the top right corner.

I save it and close it. Now, I can compare all three colors I've chosen so far.



Step 4

The final step is to find a background color. I could make my background white or light gray and that would match my other colors. However, I want to keep warming up my color scheme and so I decide to make it a very light tan. It'll look nice with my secondary dark brown color and continue a natural feel of the entire color scheme.

So, like in the previous step, I open Color Picker and I choose an orange hue. Then, I go all the way to the top left corner where the brightness is high and saturation low. That's the area I usually choose for my light backgrounds.

I choose a shade that looks good to me. I save the background color and I look at the entire scheme (see the next page).

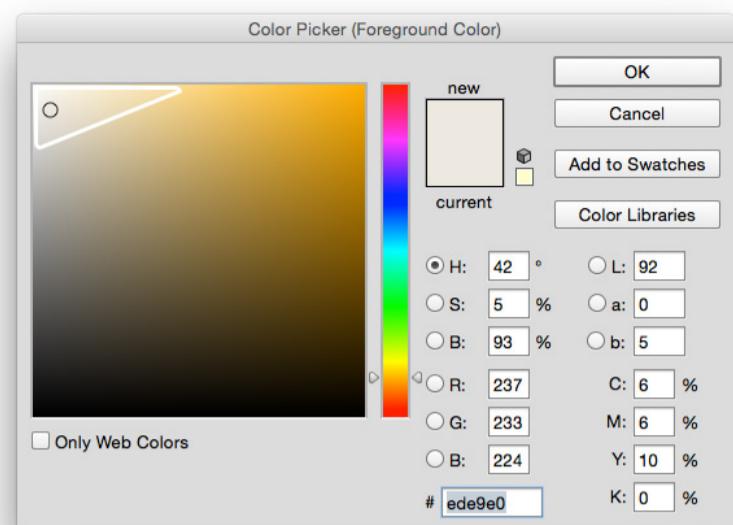
If my color scheme was taken from a photo, it would be an autumn forest on a sunny day. I like that feeling.

I can make some tweaks now and test it with typography. I want to make sure that my primary and active colors look good on white and on my background colors. They'll be often used as links or headings, so I want them to be readable.

You can take creating your color scheme even further and add more colors if you want. Just remember that the more colors you use, the more complicated your design becomes to manage.

However, no matter how many colors you choose, make sure that every color has its own role in your design. Be specific if it's for headlines, links, subheadings, backgrounds, call to actions or just for decoration. If you use one color for links, you'll need to be consistent in using only that color across the entire design for all links.

People learn your color scheme patterns from the first second they visit your website. They associate colors with a specific function. If you can sustain that consistency in your design, you create a good user experience and your color scheme not only looks nice, but it also works.



In the next chapter, you'll learn about designing layout and creating wireframes. We'll take our sketches from the first practice part to the next level and we'll be only one step from designing final pages.

COLORS

Primary color

HEX: #3a9c61
RGB: 58 / 156 / 97



shade



tint



pastel

Secondary color

HEX: #241e18
RGB: 36 / 30 / 24



shade



tint



pastel

Active (highlight) color

HEX: #e98e19
RGB: 233 / 142 / 25



shade



tint



pastel

Background color

HEX: #edc9e0
RGB: 237 / 201 / 224



shade

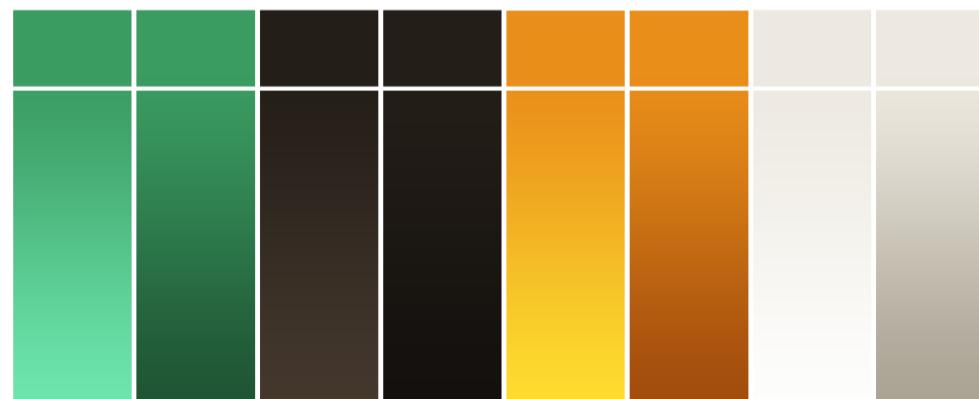


tint



pastel

GRADIENTS



TEXT

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur.
Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat.

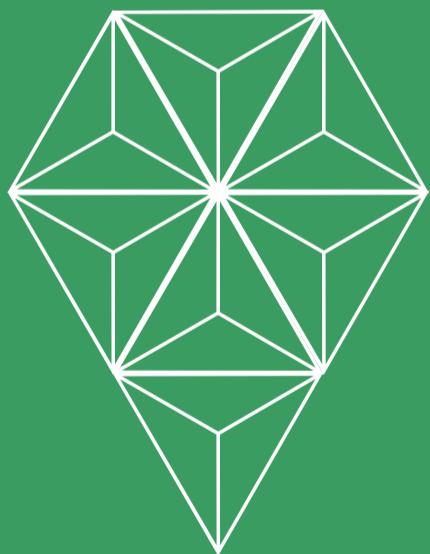
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur.
Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur.
Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur.
Pellentesque interdum arcu eu velit consequat.

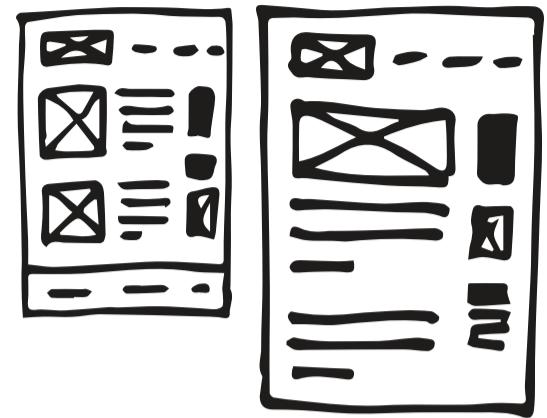
CHAPTER 7

Wireframes and Layout



Wireframes

Wireframes are the foundation of any website's visual design. They're used to present a content structure and layout of particular website pages without any specific colors, fonts or branding elements.



Wireframes are usually created in grayscale and use only simple shapes without worrying about any design details.

A typical wireframe outlines the most important elements of the website like navigation, content areas, logo placement, action buttons or any other specific features. It's used to guide the future visual design and helps to plan the entire page layout ahead.

Let's look at some good examples of wireframes:

The image displays a collection of wireframe designs for a website, arranged in a grid-like structure. The designs are primarily in grayscale, using simple shapes like rectangles, lines, and X's to represent different elements. Several wireframes include yellow callout boxes with text and small icons, providing specific instructions or notes about certain design choices or features. The overall layout is clean and organized, illustrating various page structures and content arrangements.

Do you really need wireframes?

There are many good reasons why you need wireframes in your web design process:

- **Save your time with fast and easy updates.**

The biggest advantage of creating wireframes is that they can save you a lot of time. They require you to make some important design decisions about the content placement and page structure before going too deep into visual design.

You can also try some new ideas and have a quick preview without spending too much time on designing them. Making any changes at this stage is much easier and faster than when it's all pixel-perfectly designed.

- **Look at the design from a different perspective.**

Wireframes are like the blueprints of your website. Looking at your website from an architectural perspective will help you make better decisions on what layout and structure to choose. A well-designed structure can be a good foundation for the rest of the design.

- **Get feedback during the early stage of the project.**

You can use wireframes to visually communicate with other people and show your initial design concepts.

It's always good to get valuable feedback both from your clients or other team members at the early stage in your designs. You'll be able to implement any important changes before it's too late and proceed much more smoothly through the rest of the project.

- **Focus on the website's usability and functionality.**

By using only placeholder content and omitting any design details, you can totally focus on your website's usability and functionality. Wireframes will let you plan ahead placement of important features of your website and be more flexible in trying various options. It might not be that easy during the visual design phase.

Wireframes are a very important part of the design process but it doesn't mean that every single page needs a wireframe.

Use wireframes only where they're needed. This means that some pages may have an obvious and easy structure, so even your simple sketches can be enough to plan their structure.

What should you focus on when creating wireframes?

There are a couple of important things you should remember when creating your wireframes:

- ▶ **Keep it simple.**

It's very tempting to make wireframes detailed and beautiful. You should focus more on the website's layout, content structure, features and functionality than how it all looks visually. There will be plenty of room for visual design later in the process and you don't want to spend too much time in wireframes.

- ▶ **Make annotations.**

Making your wireframes look simple visually can make them hard to read and understand for other people (and for yourself after some time). Make sure to leave annotations with explanations of certain wireframe elements. If you make a box called "Call To Action," you may want to add a comment with more information about what this CTA refers to and where it links to.

- ▶ **Use real dimensions.**

Work on your wireframes in the same pixel dimensions as the final website design will be made. It will help you to accurately plan your entire website layout. Of course, not everything has to be perfectly aligned and measured, but you'll be able to better judge the amount of space that is needed for specific features or website elements.

- ▶ **Try different concepts.**

You can work much faster with wireframes than while working on the final visual design mockups. Use it as an advantage and try different options of your website's design. Experiment with some new layouts and see if you can find something that looks best. You may not have that flexibility later.

- ▶ **Create a layout that solves problems.**

A wireframe is mainly just a website layout and a good layout can solve many design problems itself. Focus on making your layout smart, usable and functional.

Choosing a wireframing tool

We're lucky to have hundreds of wireframing tools these days. There are both simple and free apps as well as very advanced and expensive ones.

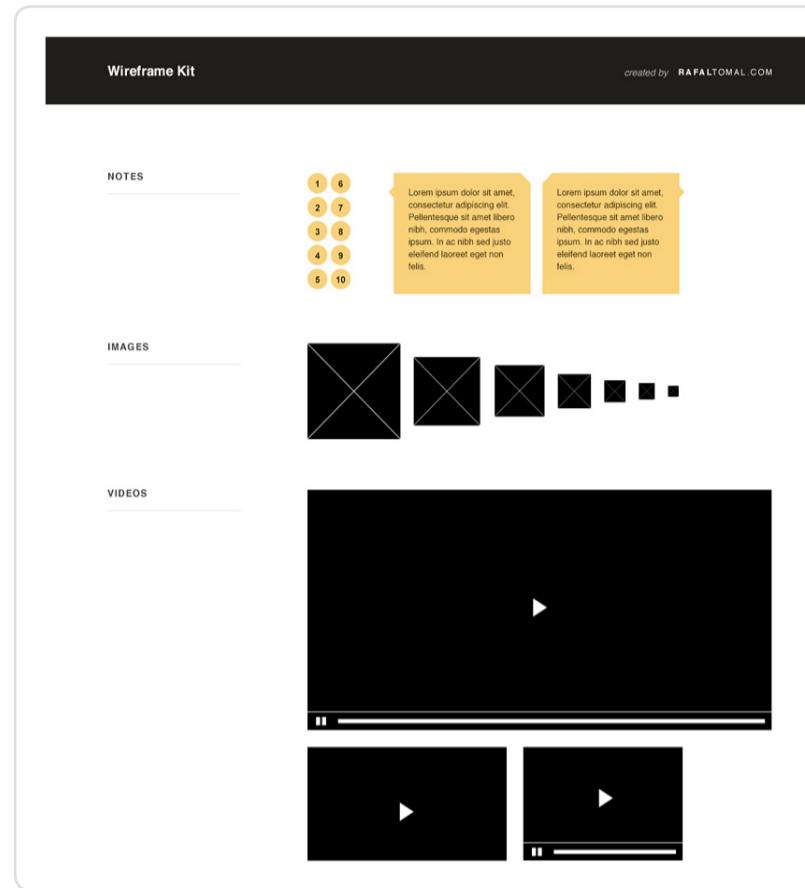
Choosing the right wireframing tool might be similar to choosing your designing software. It all depends on your own preferences and what exactly you're looking for.

I listed some of the best options that I found and tried:

► **Adobe Photoshop.**

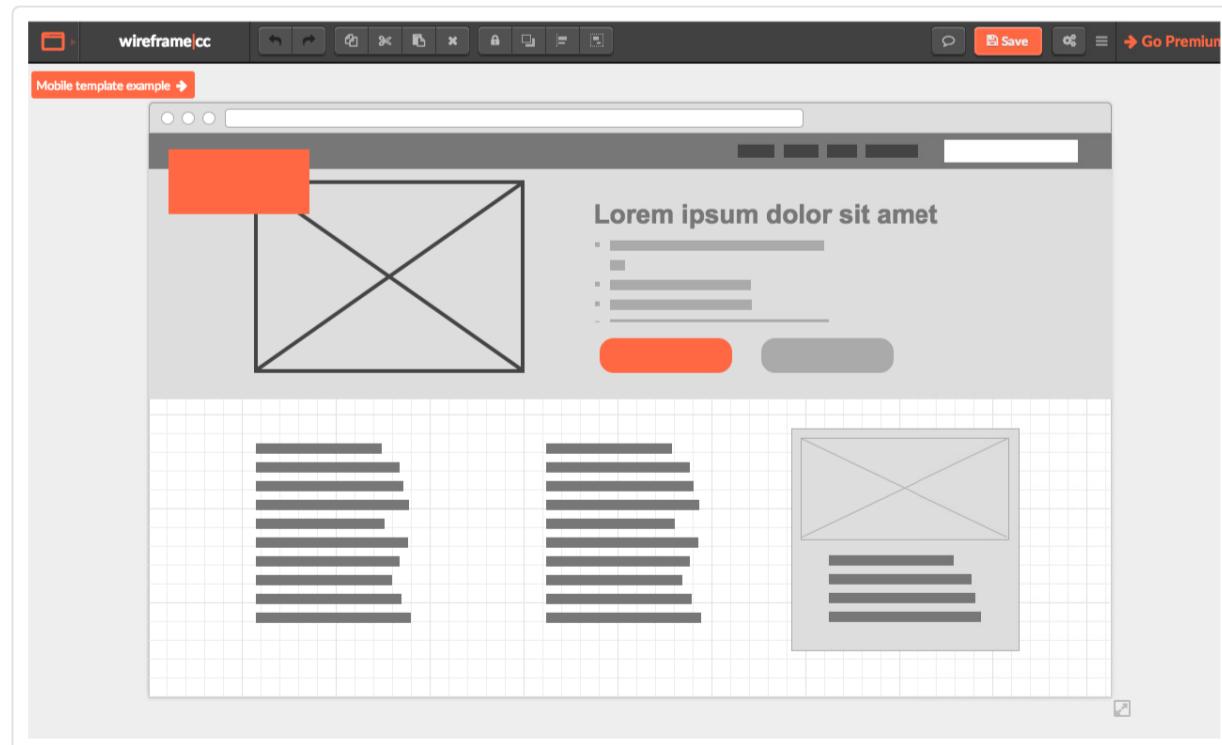
You can call it a free option if you already own a license to Photoshop as your design software. Yes, you can create wireframes with Photoshop. I prefer PS because this is the software I already know and feel very comfortable with. By having a proper wireframe kit, you can quickly and efficiently create mockups, add annotations and use it later as a base for your entire visual design mockup.

You'll find my wireframe kit in the [free web design resources on my website](#). You can use it to build your own wireframes in Adobe Photoshop.



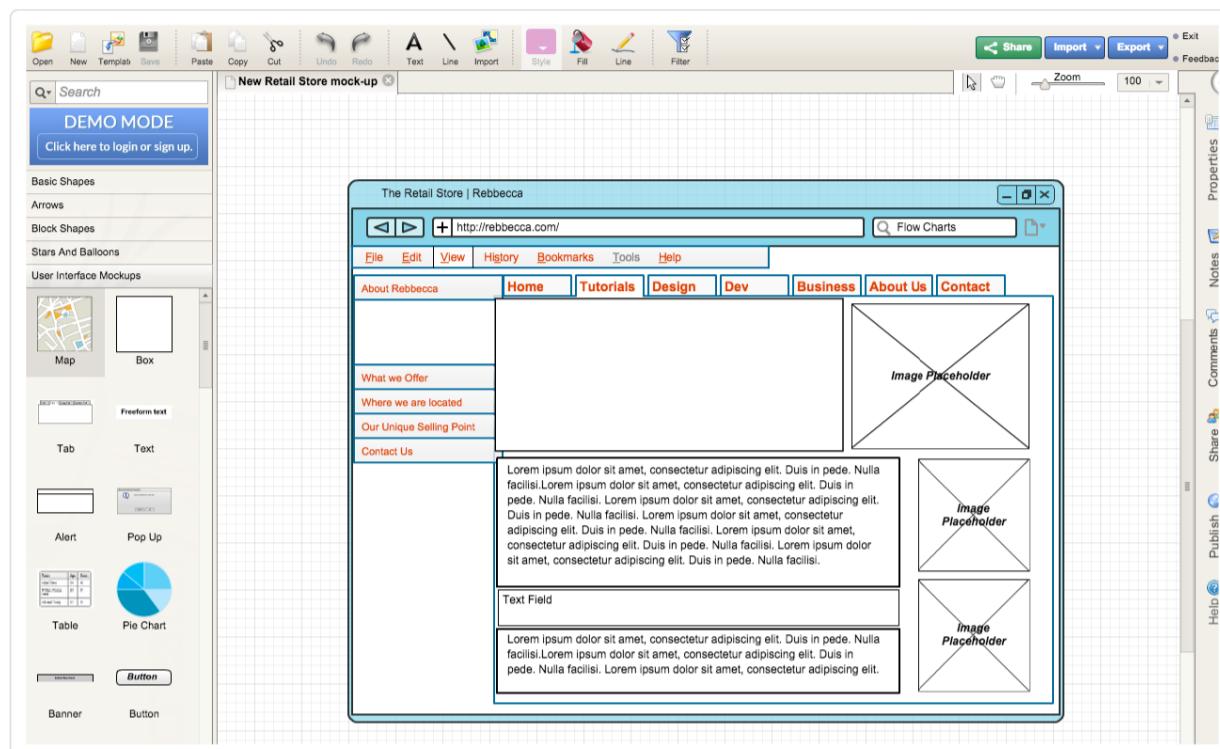
► **Wireframe.cc**

There is both a free and premium paid version of this app. It's all online, so you can build all your wireframes directly in the browser. It's very easy and intuitive to use. You can quickly build wireframes, share them online via unique URL, and get comments.



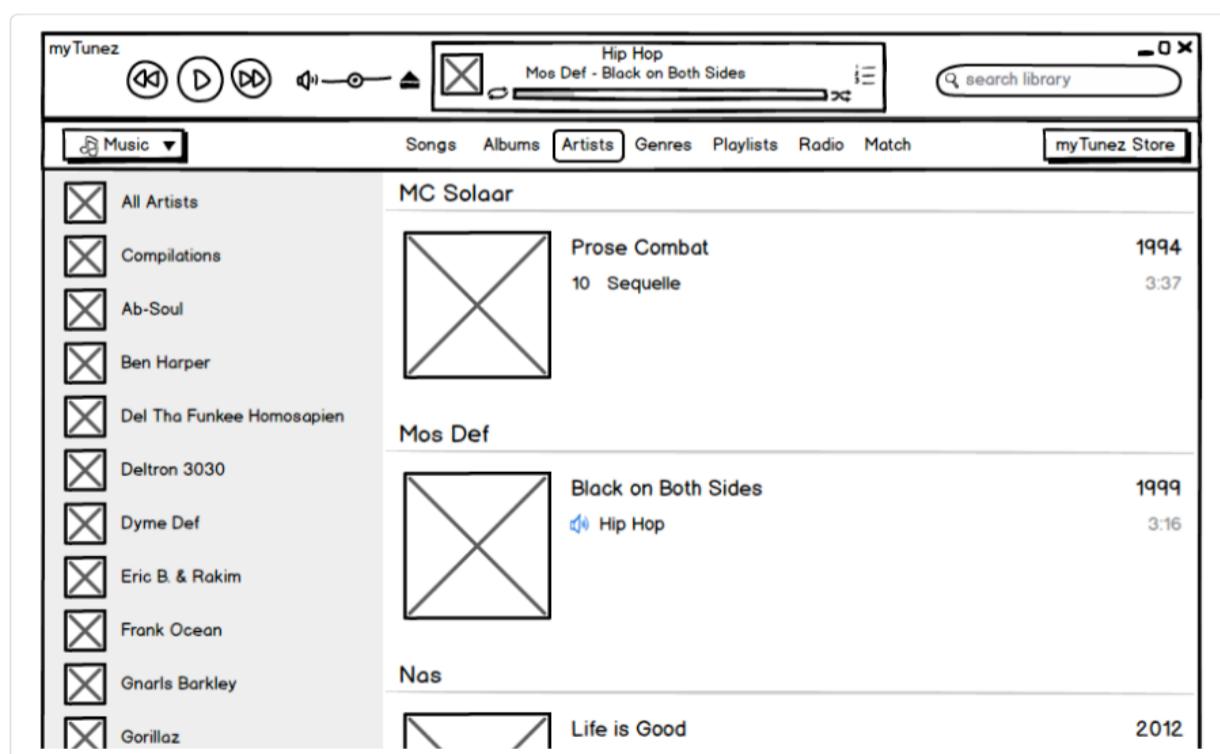
► Creatly.com

You can try Creatly online for free. It's one of those more advanced apps that will let you not only create wireframes but also make complete visual flow charts and sitemaps. The interface is also very intuitive and it is all as simple as dragging a specific element and dropping it onto the empty canvas.



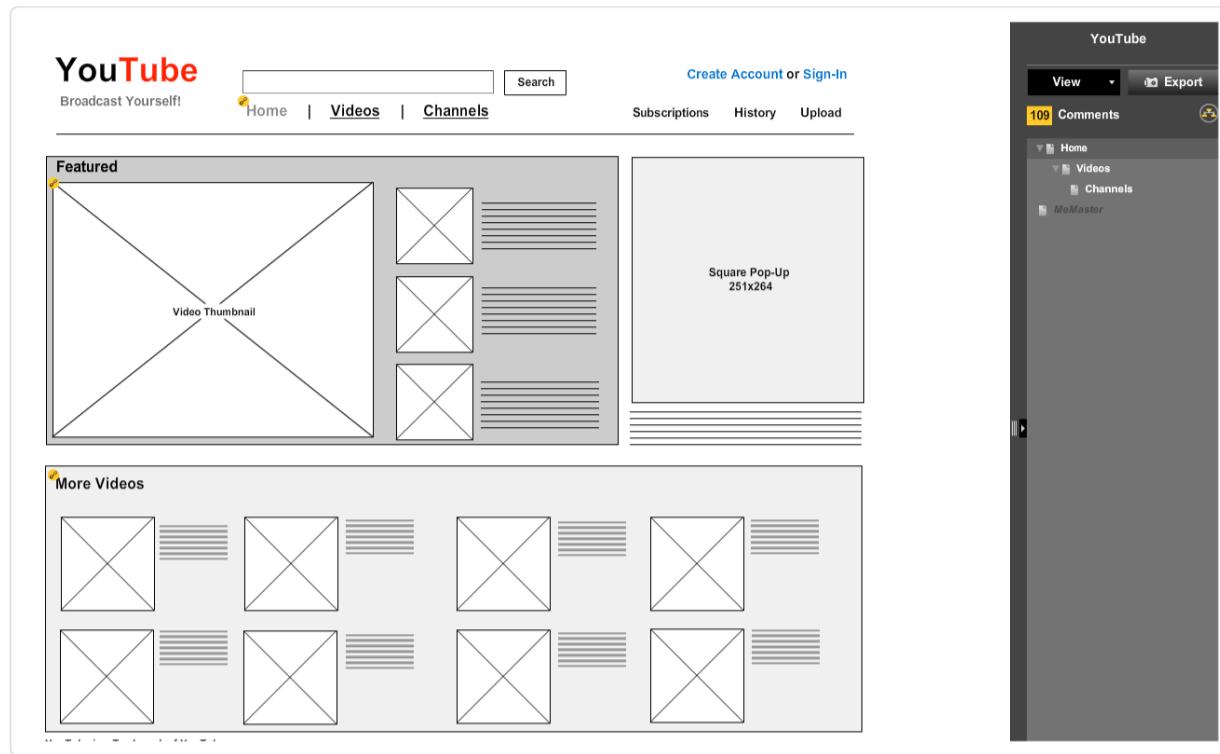
► Balsamiq.com

Balsamiq is very similar to Creatly. It'll let you create wireframes as well as flow charts and sitemaps. It's very flexible and easy to use. There is a funny sketchy skin available which may add a bit of different character to your wireframes.



► Mockflow.com

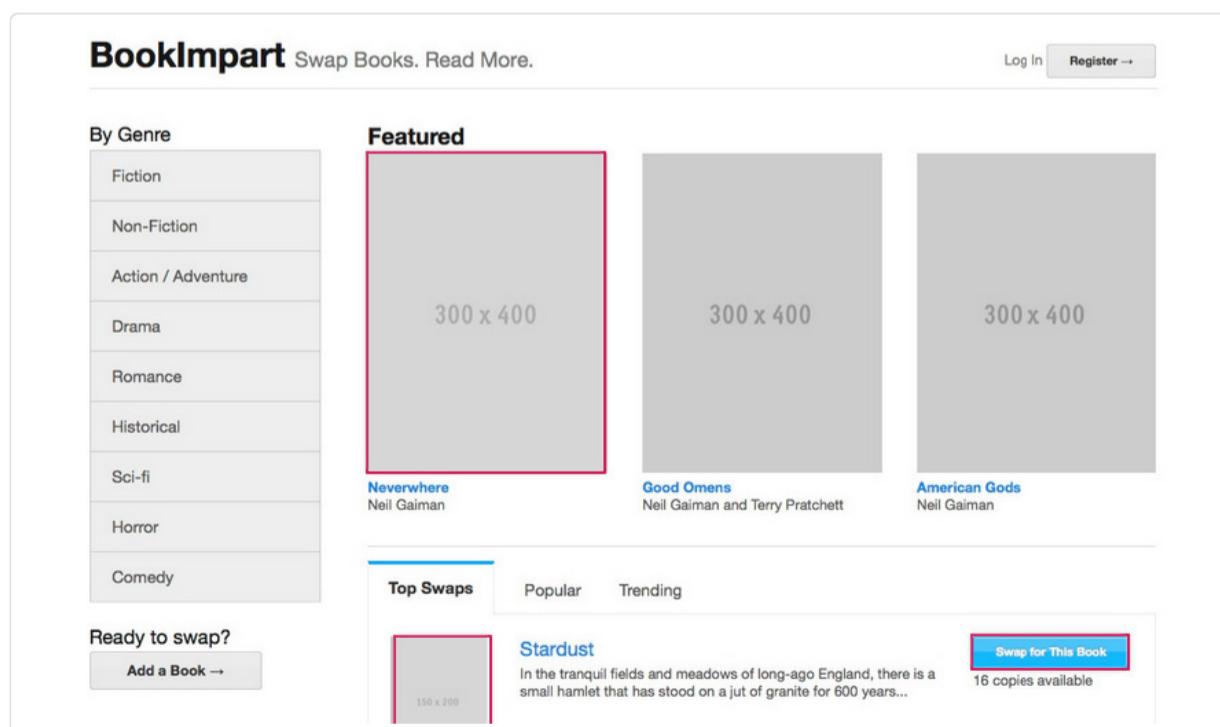
This is a full set of apps that will let you easily create wireframes, share them online and get feedback. You can use it for free if you sign up for a Basic plan.



► Solidifyapp.com

It's not a wireframing app but this tool can bring your wireframes to life and you can make working prototypes. You can upload any graphic files and make specific areas clickable and link them to other files. It's a good way to present your wireframes to your client.

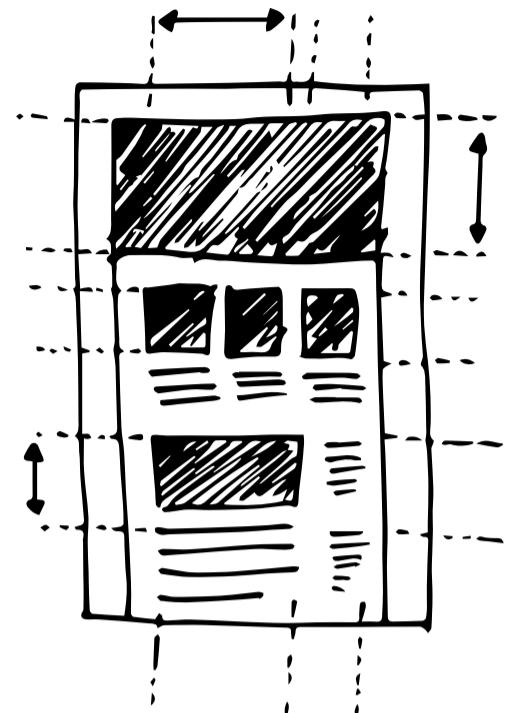
Moreover, you can try different layout concepts and conduct a user test at that early stage of the design process. It's very useful if you want to verify your design ideas and work on a user experience of your design.



Website layouts

When you start making wireframes, there are some important website layout decisions you need to make. Of course, there might be some organizational changes when you design complete visual mockups, but you'll want to stick to the layout you chose at the wireframing stage.

That's why I put together wireframes and layout together in this chapter.



What is website layout?

The easiest explanation is that layout defines the website skeleton and creates room for content.

I like comparing designing layout to drawing a picture on white paper. When you draw, you use your pencil only to mark shadows in your image. You can't draw light, so you need to think the opposite way and focus on drawing dark areas instead. All the remaining areas of white paper create your image.



Similarly, when you design a website layout you need to focus on designing that empty white space first and leave room for all the content that will be filled in later. Instead of making layout around the content, you plan layout first and match content to fit it in.

Designing website layouts is not an easy task. In fact, I found it to be one of the most difficult aspects of web design. It's especially hard because once you choose a specific structure of your website, you need to keep it consistent for the rest of the project.

There are also many things you need to consider when designing your website layout:

- ▶ **Responsiveness and flexibility.**

We need to think about websites as flexible and non-static forms. You definitely want to plan beforehand how your website's design should behave when it's displayed at different screen widths.

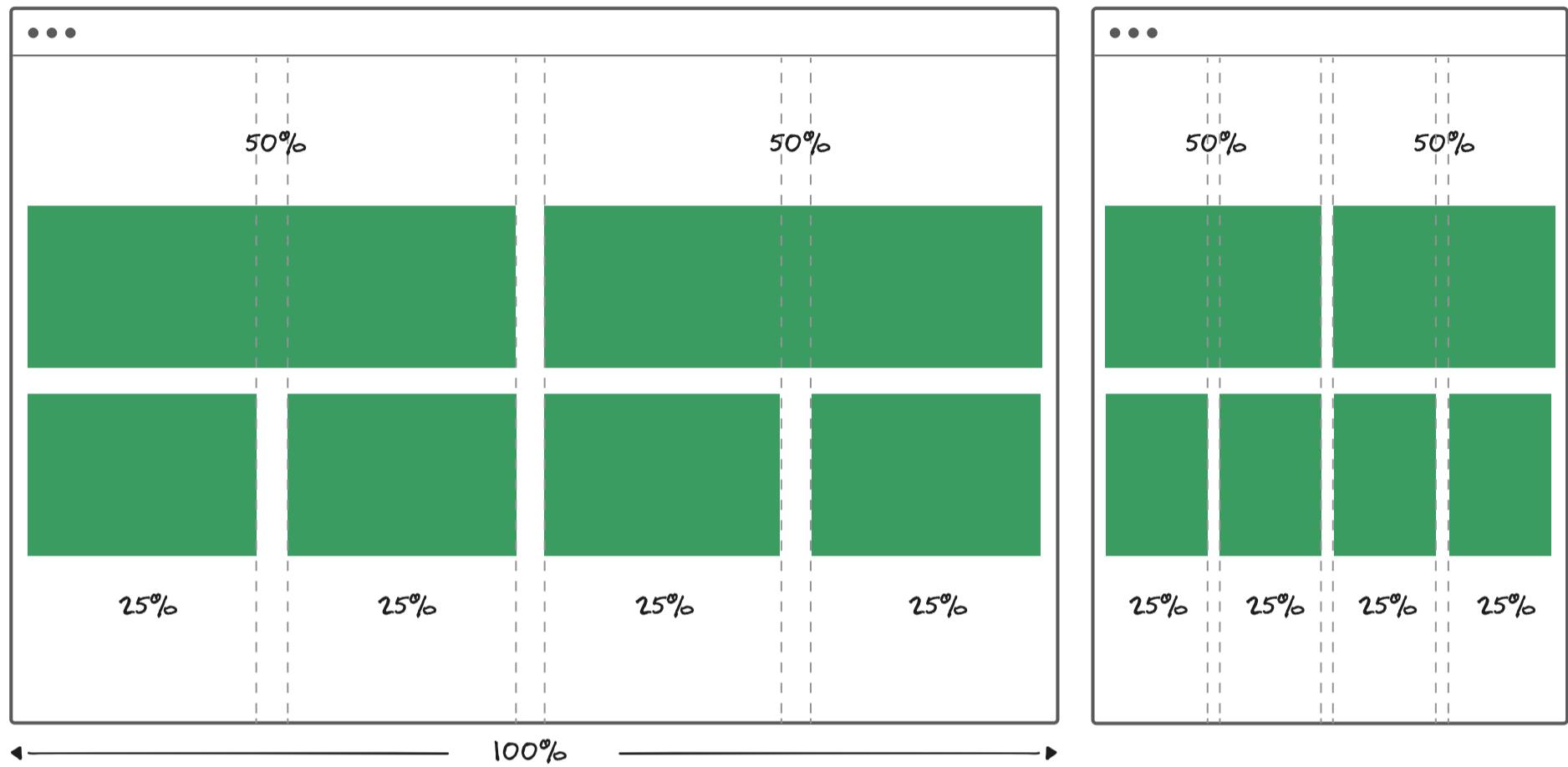
You need to think about the flexibility of your design all the time. Text can easily wrap on smaller screens and you may only need to adjust the font sizes. It's not that easy with graphics or bigger blocks of static content.

Imagine you have one long graphic banner across the entire width of the page (dark gray box in the illustration below). When you proportionally resize it for smaller screens, it'll be too small to be seen on a mobile device.

Now, let's say you design 4 boxes (green boxes in the illustration below) – each one next to each other for the desktop screen. Those 4 boxes may be moved into 2 boxes in 2 rows on a tablet screen and 1 box per row on a mobile phone screen. Managing smaller pieces of graphics is way easier.



You can also make your design totally fluid, which means that it's 100% wide on all screens and that all measurements are in % – there are no fixed widths. Maintaining and designing a fluid layout is quite a challenge because of the endless amount of possibilities as to how your design may look in different situations.



However, the most common way is designing a fixed width layout for desktop screens and making fluid layouts (100% wide) for tablets and mobile phones. That way, you make sure that your design won't go too big if someone uses an extremely big monitor but it also adapts to as many smaller device screens as possible.

As I already mentioned before, there is no one easy way to design high-fidelity mockups in Photoshop and make them responsive (unless you use external plugins or apps like [Adobe Edge Reflow](#)). You can design a couple of different mockups for different screen sizes and that way cover some most popular breakpoints.

To make sure the website is totally responsive and looks beautiful on all screens, you need to take care of it during the coding phase of the project. If you can't code, make sure to work very closely with a web developer, so you can provide constant feedback and guide the entire front-end coding process.

► **Hierarchy.**

You can't put emphasis on everything in your design. You need a good visual hierarchy that will help you to highlight those important areas and make less prominent those areas that are not so important.

You want to organize your website's content and put it in the order that you want people to perceive it. The best way to start is by assigning different levels of importance to specific content elements. Then, make sure to find the best spots on the page for those elements with the highest priority.

You can easily manage hierarchy while designing the layout by positioning some elements at the top of the page or closer to the left side (if you design for a language where people read from left to right), or by making those elements bigger, leaving more space around them (separating them) or even aligning them in a specific way.



Using specific colors and contrasts to break the pattern also helps to distinguish hierarchy, and you can show this in your wireframe by making some areas darker or lighter.

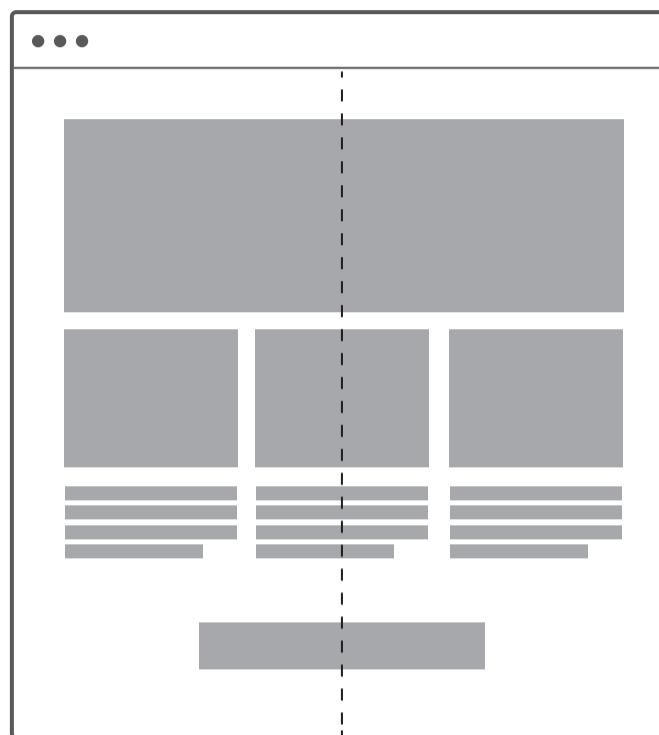
► **Balance.**

Unbalanced design can be a little disturbing for the human eye. Visual balance is one of those things that we look for all the time, and it can be noticed very fast by an average visitor who is not a designer.

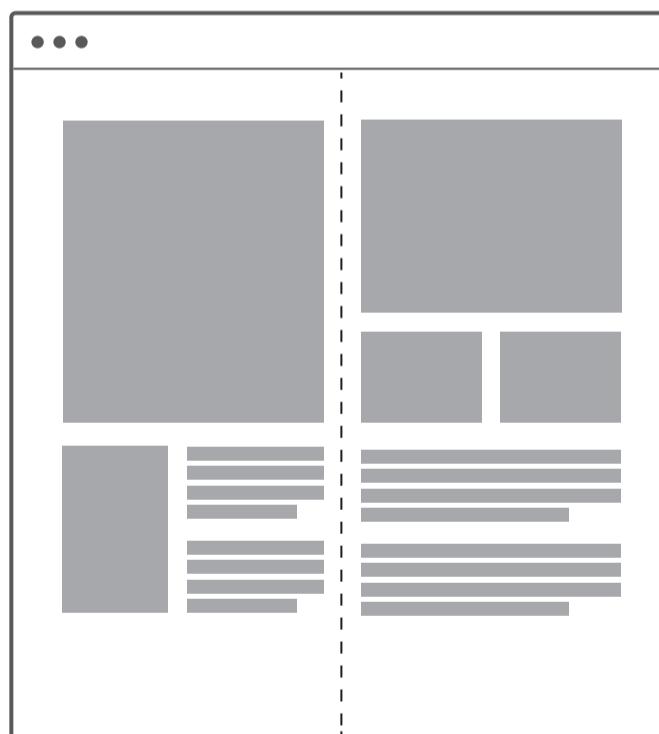
Imagine a vertical axis in the middle of your page. Now try to balance out elements on both sides, so there is an equal distribution of visual weight.

You can achieve this in two ways: symmetrical and asymmetrical.

Symmetrical balance means that both sides along the vertical axis are mirrored and create an even and perfectly balanced image:



Asymmetrical balance happens when both sides are not exactly the same but still, a visual weight on both sides is similar and creates an appealing balance:



When you achieve an overall well-balanced design of your page, it'll make it much easier to break it on purpose and use it to get the visitor's attention where you need it.

► Alignment.

All content elements of your design should be nicely lined up either horizontally or vertically. Imagine there are invisible lines and you put together your design along them.

This simple technique helps to create a relationship between different content elements on your page. They are no longer floating somewhere around, but instead they're visually grouped together and arranged in some proper order.

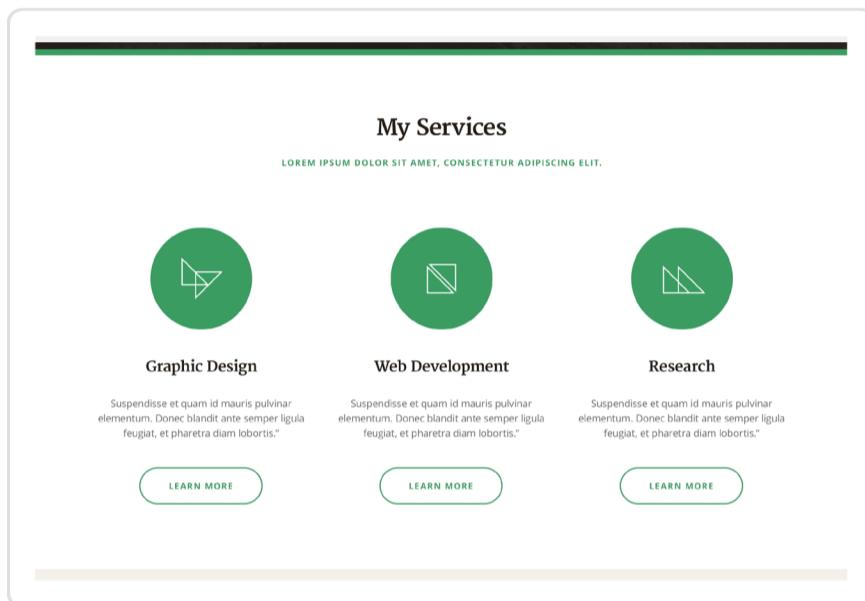


Lining up elements vertically is very easy to achieve, especially if you use guides in Photoshop and have "Snap to Guides" selected in View options.

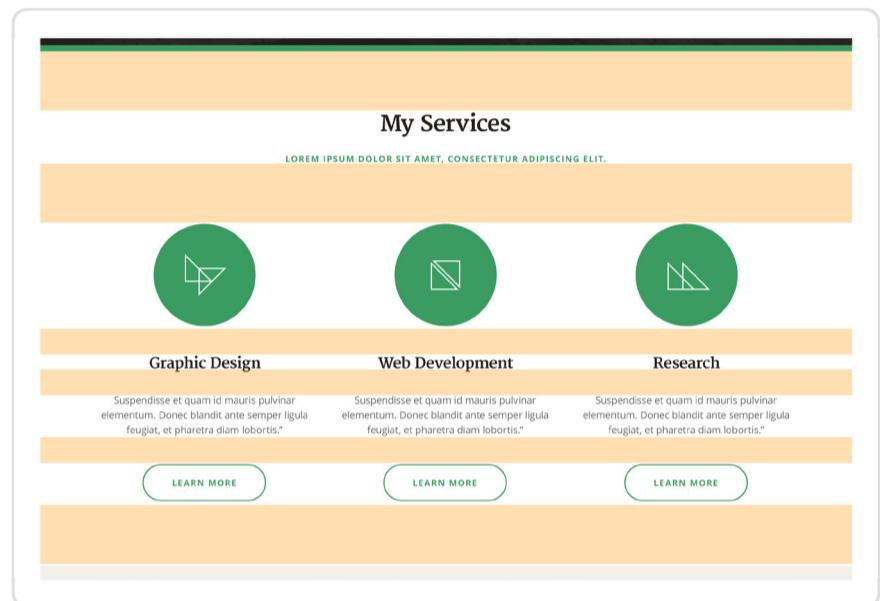
We'll talk later about the grid layout which will help you to create an invisible grid system that you can follow to line up entire designs.

Using white space

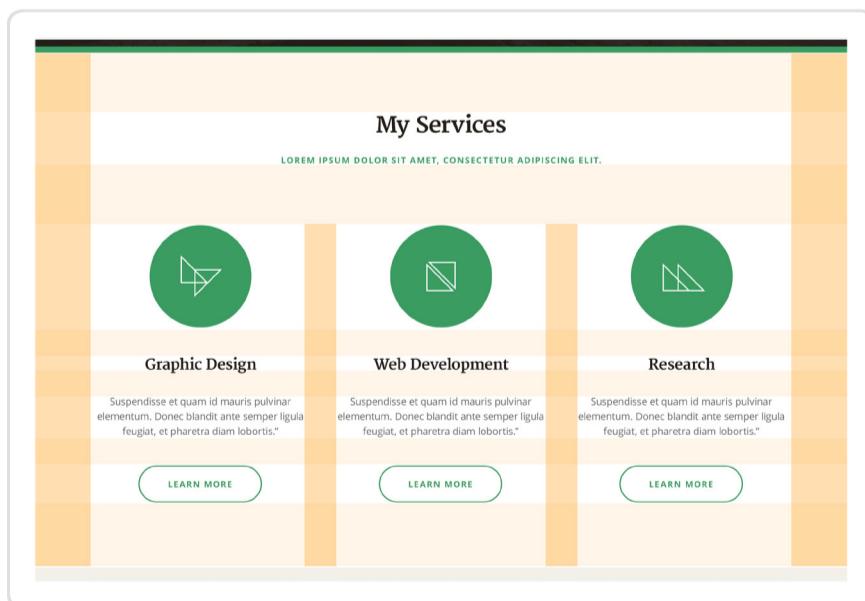
White space (also called “negative space”) is all the empty space that surrounds your content. It’s very hard to ignore it because it’s everywhere: space around images, space between the blocks of text, space between the lines of text and even that space between all single letters. It’s all white space and it all can be designed.



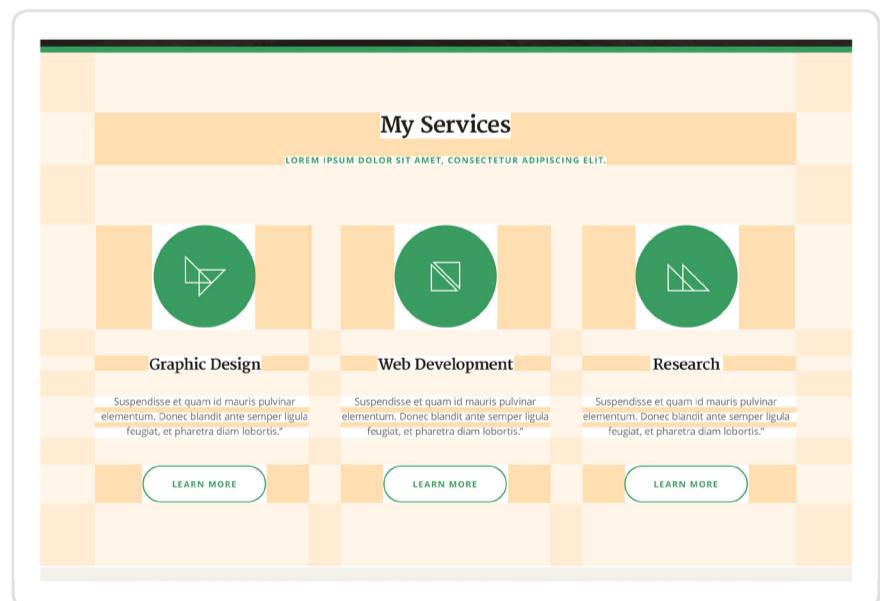
Original design.



Horizontal macro white space.



Vertical macro white space.



Micro white space.

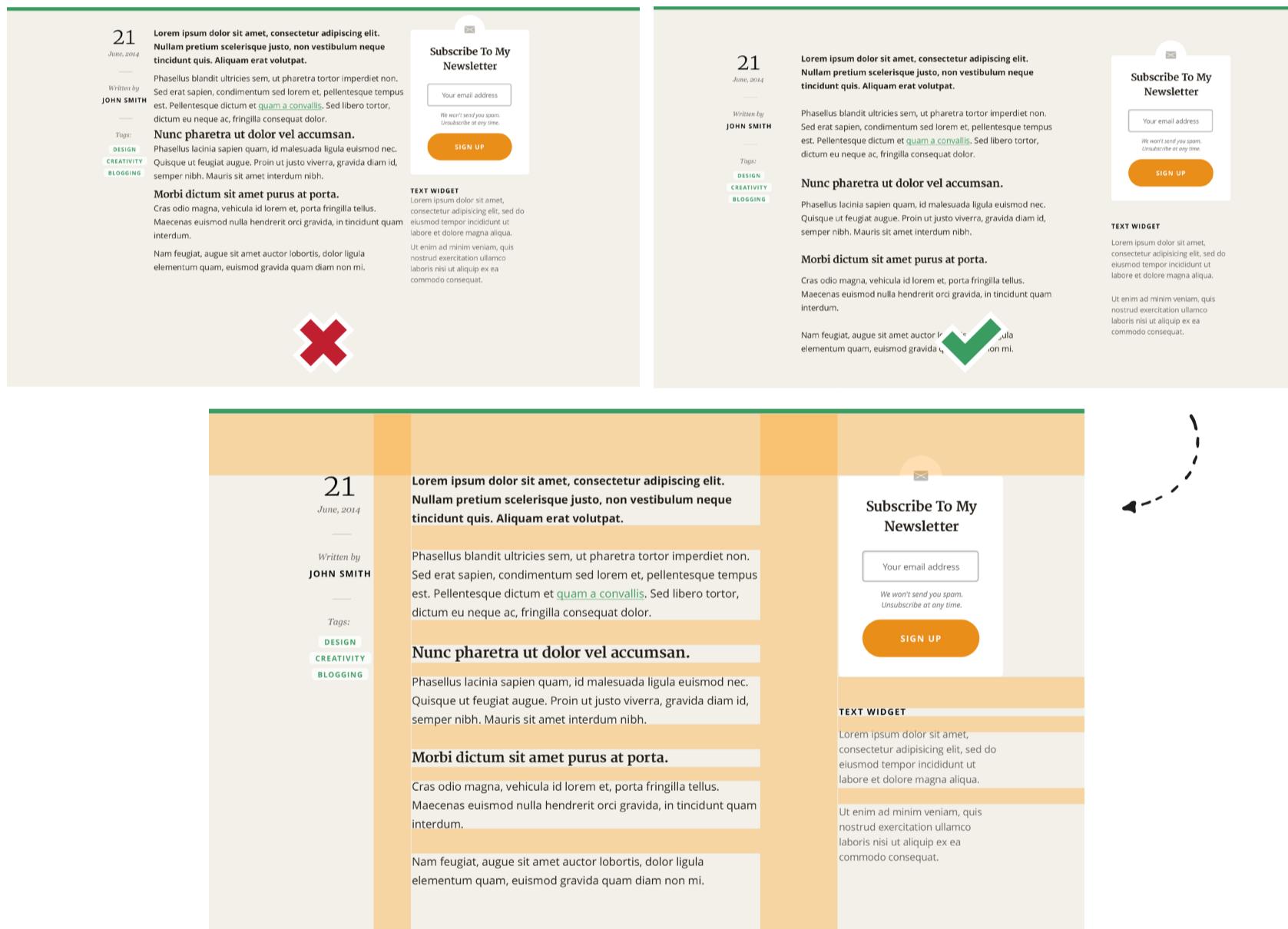
Therefore, it's very important to understand how to properly use this powerful designer's tool. You can especially use it not only to make your designs more appealing, but also improve your website's conversion rate, usability, or evoke some desired actions from the visitors.

Here is what you should know about using whitespace:

► Let your content breathe.

White space defines your content readability. If you design pages heavy in content, they have to look clear, organized and easy to scan by human eyes.

It's all about being smart in using the whitespace. There is no one golden rule how much space you should leave around certain content elements.



You need to find a perfect amount of whitespace that makes your content easy to read without looking too cluttered. On the other hand, a too-spacious design can be confusing, requiring too much scrolling or simply making your content appear to be floating around the page without any specific order.

Generally, there will be less harm when you use more space and let your content breathe, so that's always a safer option if you're not sure.

► **Keep it consistent.**

Consistency – you've seen this word many times in this ebook. Consistency in design creates some repetitive patterns and defines your design style. If you're consistent in using the white space along your entire design, it'll make it look professional and organized.

Let's say you have a box with some text inside it. If you choose to make 50px of inner spacing from the top edge of the box, then you should follow that pattern and make the same 50px of inner spacing around all the edges:



A box with a light gray background and a dark gray header bar. The text 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.' is centered. Below it is a paragraph of placeholder text. The box has red vertical padding on the left and right sides, but the top and bottom edges are very close to the text area, failing to maintain a consistent 50px padding rule.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue.



A box with a light gray background and a dark gray header bar. The text 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.' is centered. Below it is a paragraph of placeholder text. The box has orange vertical padding on the left and right sides, and a consistent 50px padding at the top and bottom edges, demonstrating proper consistency.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue.

 = 50px x 50px

Now, if you have more of these kinds of boxes on the same page or some other subpages, you need to make sure to keep the same whitespace for them as well.

Three identical boxes are arranged horizontally on a page. Each box has a light gray background and a dark gray header bar. The text 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.' is centered. Below it is a paragraph of placeholder text. The boxes are separated by white space, and each has orange vertical padding on the left and right sides, maintaining a consistent 50px padding rule across the entire page.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

In placerat, lib ero eu interdum tincidunt, eros mauris faucibus enim, eget auctor ex lorem quis turpis. Nulla et lacus tincidunt, fringilla libero et, laoreet augue.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

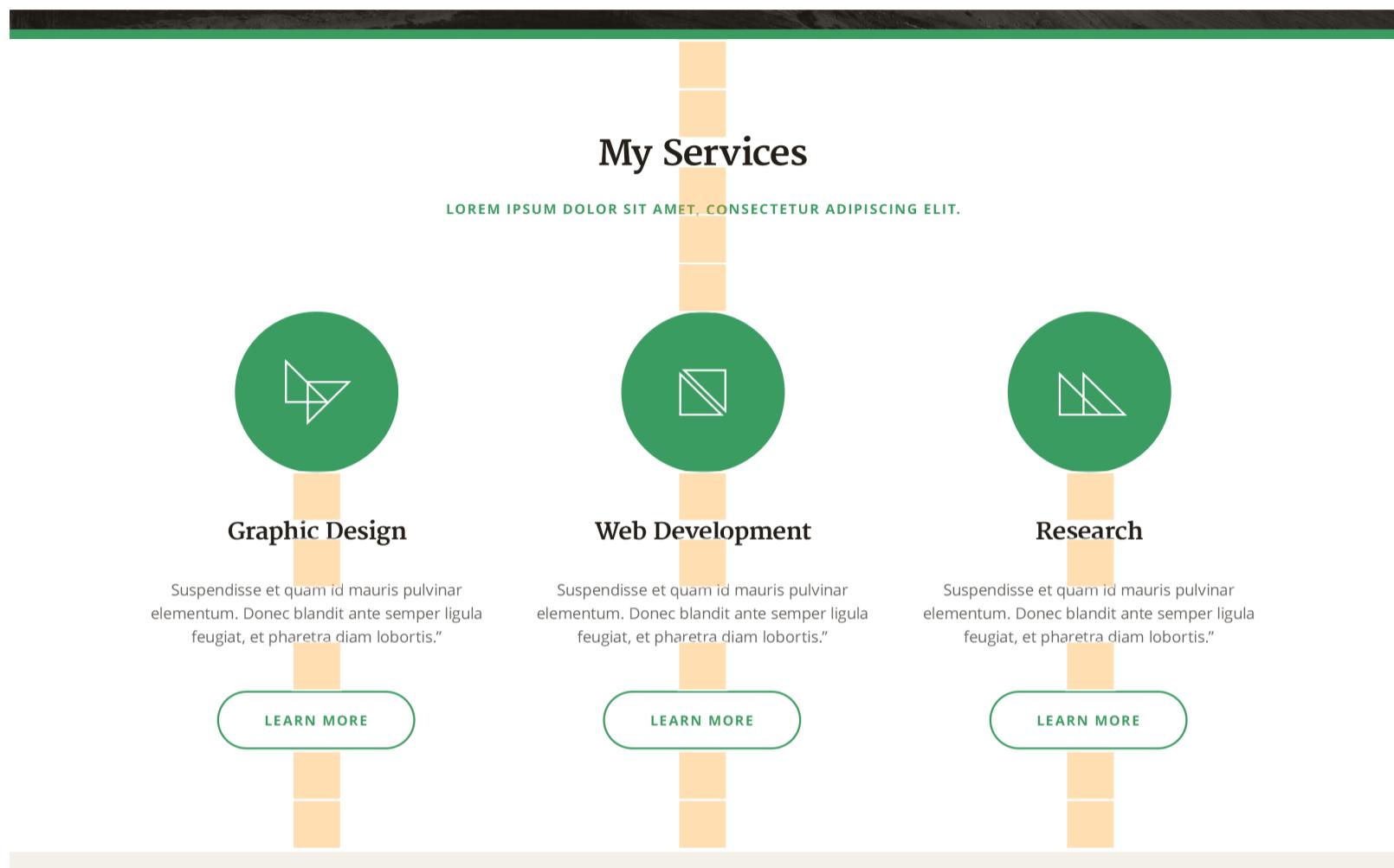
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Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

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 = 50px x 50px

It's a good idea to choose a base spacing unit when you start designing your layout. Then, use it as a standard spacing between the major elements and use 2x bigger or 2x smaller spacings for alternative bigger or smaller elements. It'll help you to maintain the whitespace consistency throughout the entire design.

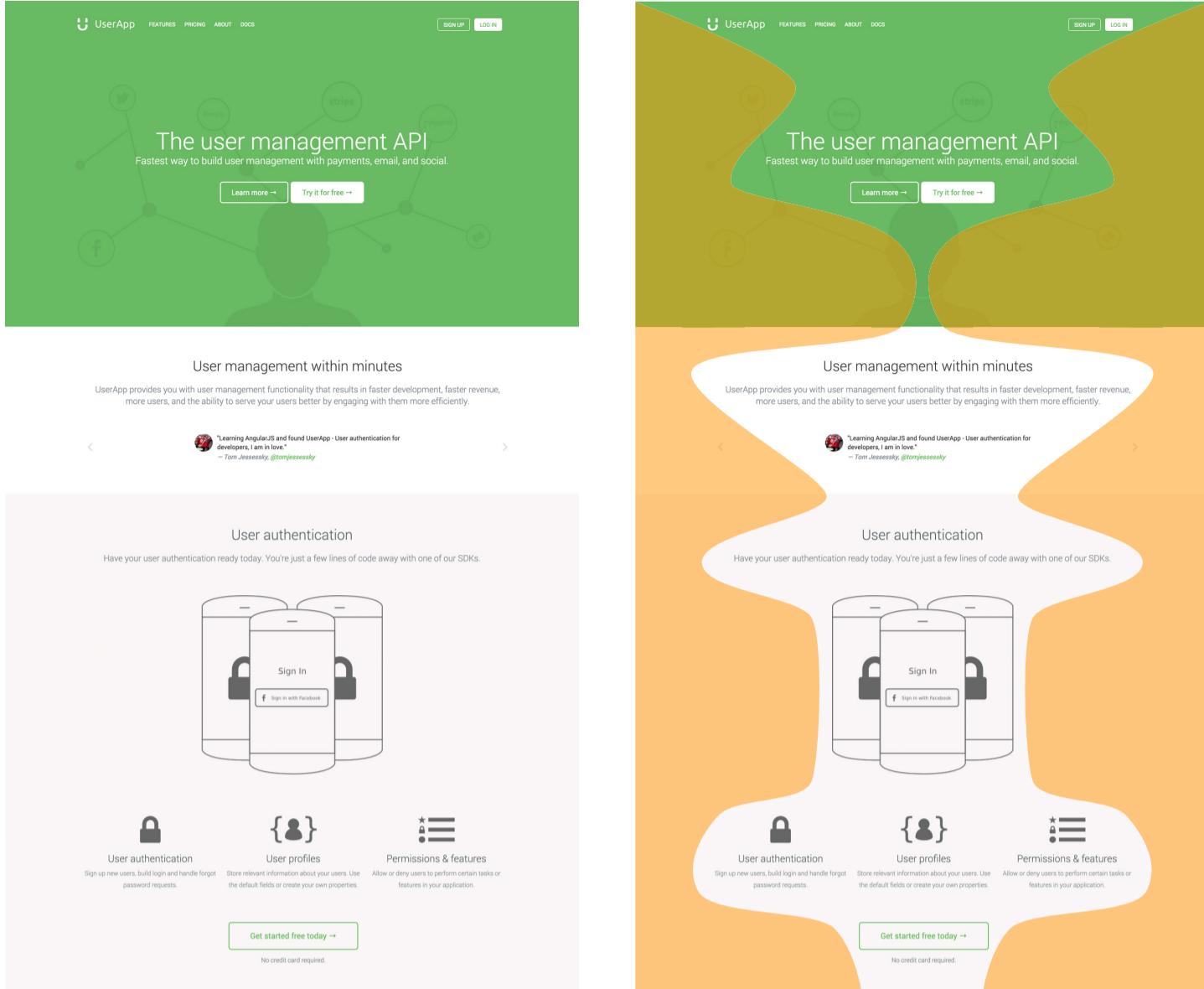


In the example above, all the orange blocks are same size. I multiplied them two or even three times to achieve a consistently spacious layout design.

► **Less is more.**

Use whitespace to simplify your design and add a minimalistic character to it. People prefer browsing simple-looking websites where the message is very clear.

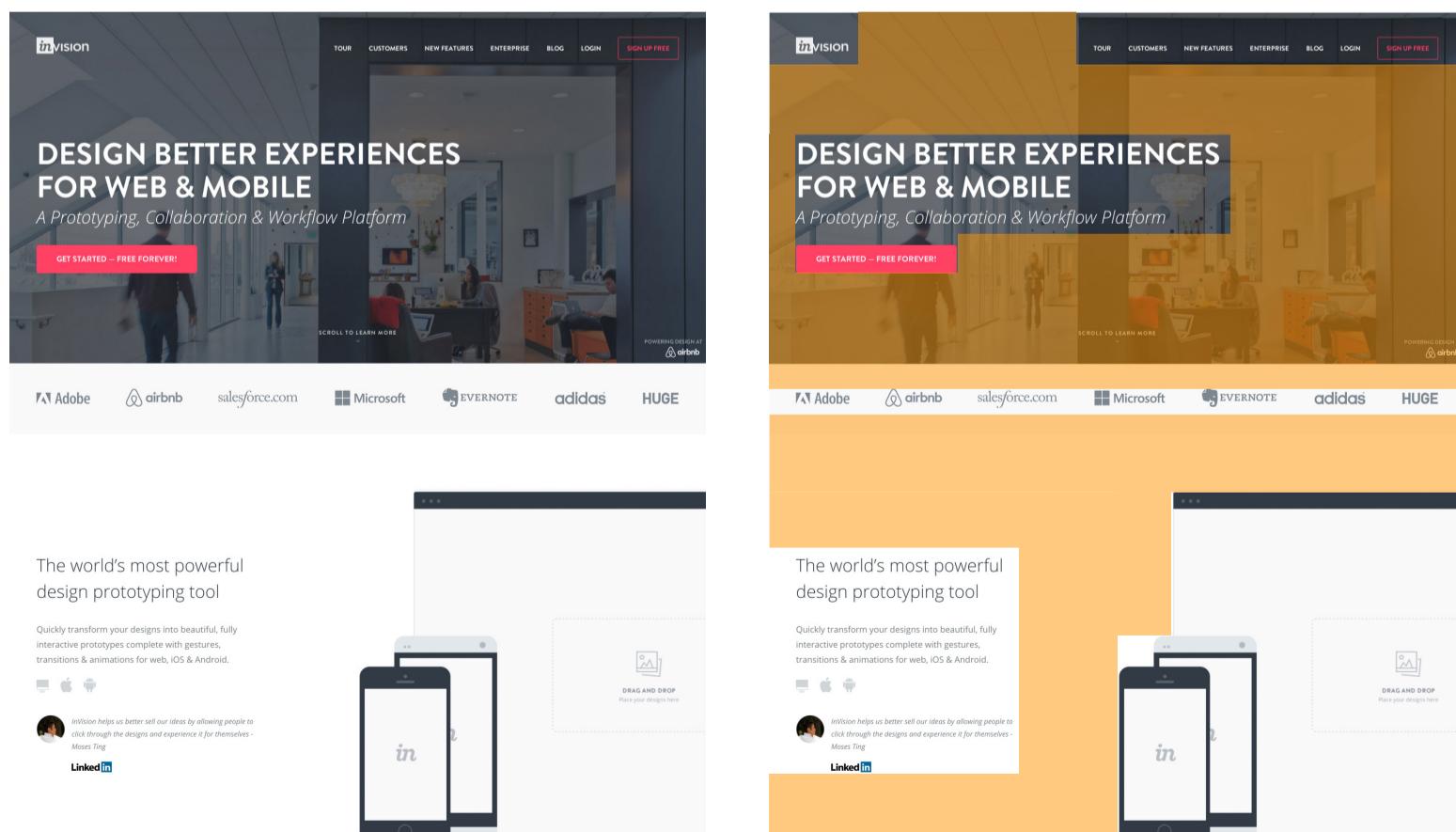
Don't try to fill out every empty space with some content in your design. Instead, you can use white space to create an invisible path that will lead your visitor's eyes through the page. Try to create an unbroken linear flow from the top to the bottom of the page.



► Make something more prominent.

Yes, you can use whitespace to make specific elements more prominent. You don't really need to use big fonts and contrasting colors just to get some attention.

By using white space, you can get people's attention in a very subtle way. It can be easily achieved by separating a particular element in order to provide more space around it. Visual separation breaks the pattern and requires your eyes to pause for a moment. That's the moment where you can put an important message.

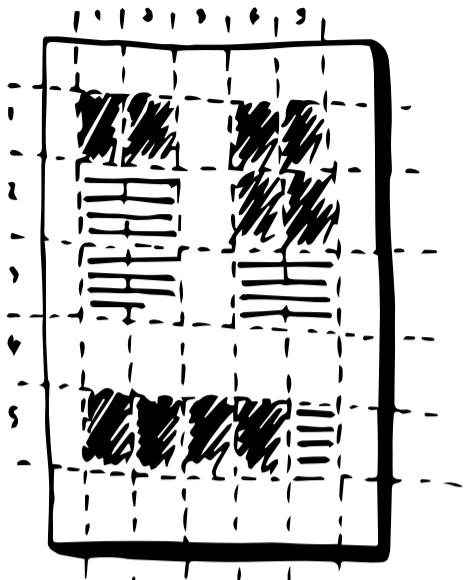


Grid-based layout

A grid-based layout is a set of vertical and horizontal guidelines that can help you organize your content and keep a consistent design structure throughout the entire project.

Grids have been used to lay out pages for ages to create optimal proportions and to make text easier to read for the human eye. The grid system we use today in web design was created and popularized by very talented Swiss designers in 1920s. Since then, their style has become an international standard of how to correctly organize content on the pages.

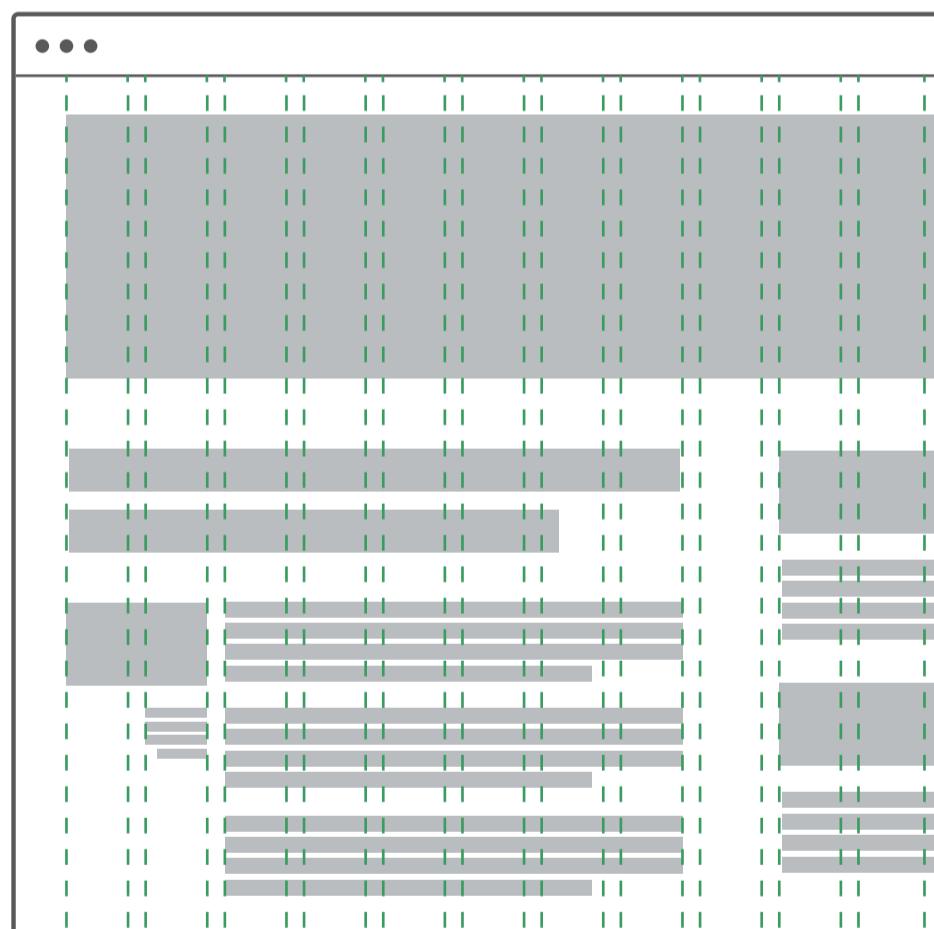
It's pretty obvious that this was also introduced into the online world because a grid-based layout helps to solve many problems that web designers have to face in their work. All aspects of a good layout I've mentioned so far are covered by a grid system:



► Responsiveness and flexibility.

Because your content is organized into specific columns, it's very easy for web developers to predict how it should behave on different screen sizes. It is also possible to create a "flexible grid" in HTML/CSS that is based on percentages instead of fixed numbers.

You can easily reduce the number of columns on smaller screens and reorganize content accordingly.



► Alignment and balance.

Your content is all aligned along the vertical columns throughout the entire page. It helps you to create a great visual balance by using equal spacings and containers horizontally.

► **Consistency.**

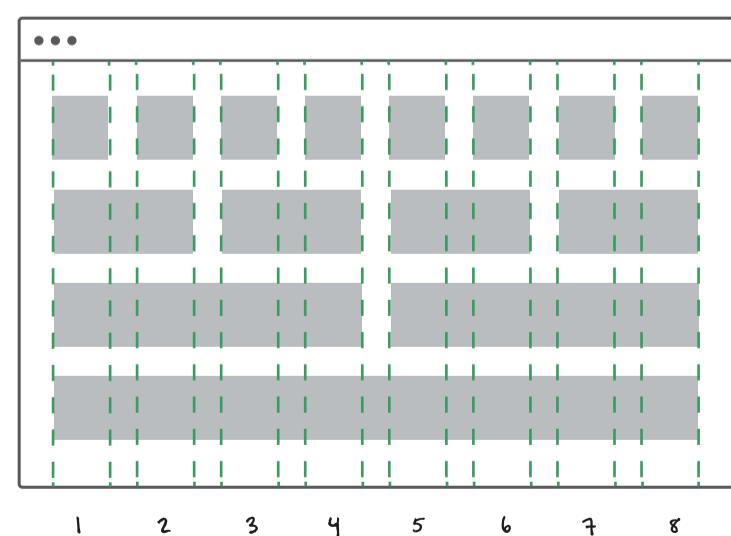
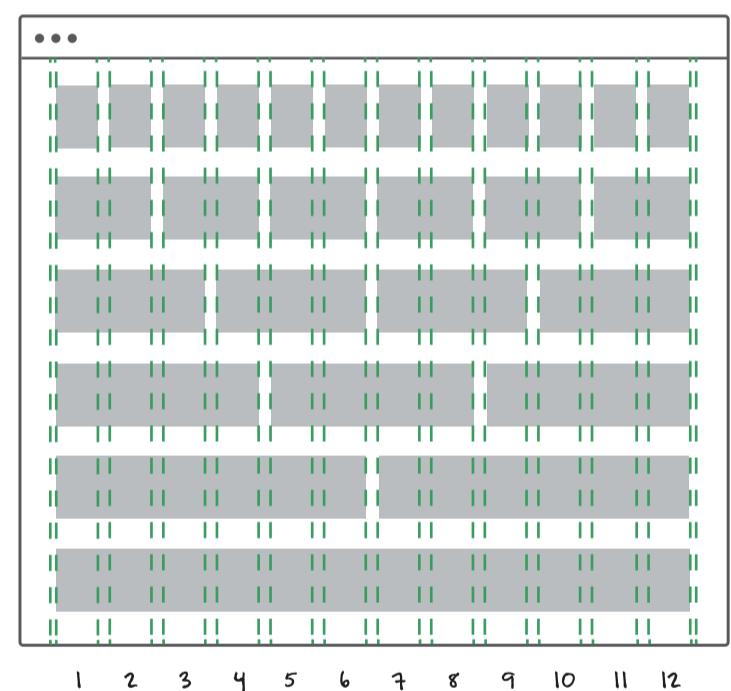
By using the same grid system on all of your website pages, you can introduce one consistent layout and create a pattern in organizing your content. It can save you a lot of time by reusing the same layout guides on different pages, and it guarantees that all elements will have the same dimensions and spacings.

► **White space.**

A grid-based layout gives your content a lot of space to breathe. It's a well-used space that is not randomly chosen, but is actually a part of a visual framework. White space itself creates a visual grid which introduces a logical structure and is easy to follow by the human eye.

Setting up and using a grid layout

Let's first look at what a sample website grid looks like:



A 12-column grid is the most popular layout on the web. By using 12 columns, you can easily divide the content into four columns, three columns or two columns. A 16-column layout may give you more layout possibilities but could also make your design more complex and difficult to work with. I found 8-column layouts very easy to work with, but this doesn't let you split the content into three columns.

12 is a magical number that gives you a lot of possibilities in designing your layout while making it still easy to maintain and use.

Contrary to print design, website pages don't have a fixed height, so we usually use only columns, and horizontal lines are seldom needed. Of course, you can make a beautiful static design in your Photoshop but web developers won't be able to both recreate it in the code and keep the website's content flexible.

So, how can you create your own grid layout?

The main principle is that every column in your grid should have the same width and equal gaps between them. You can do very easy math to count what the column widths are.

Let's say your total page width is 1140px and you want to set up a 12-column grid. In a 12-column layout, you have a total number of 11 gaps. You need to pick your gap width first, so let's say we choose 12px gaps:

$$11 \times 12\text{px} = 132\text{px}$$

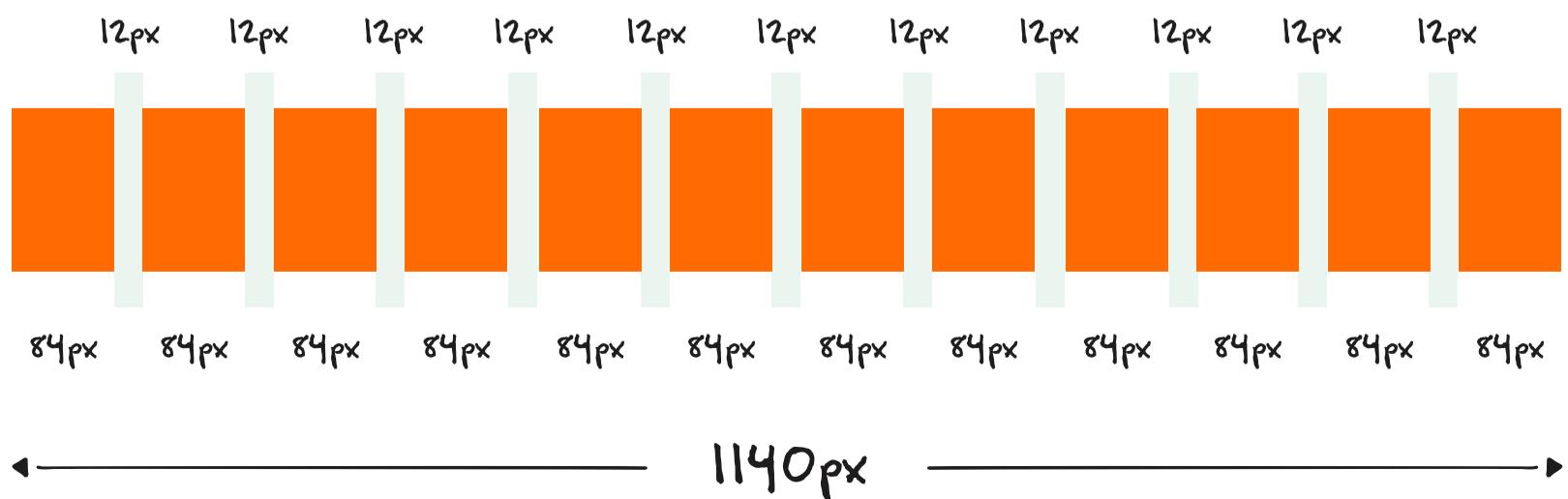
132px is the total width of all gaps

$$1140\text{px} - 132\text{px} = 1008\text{px}$$

subtract the gap widths from the total width of your layout

$$1008\text{px} / 12 = 84\text{px}$$

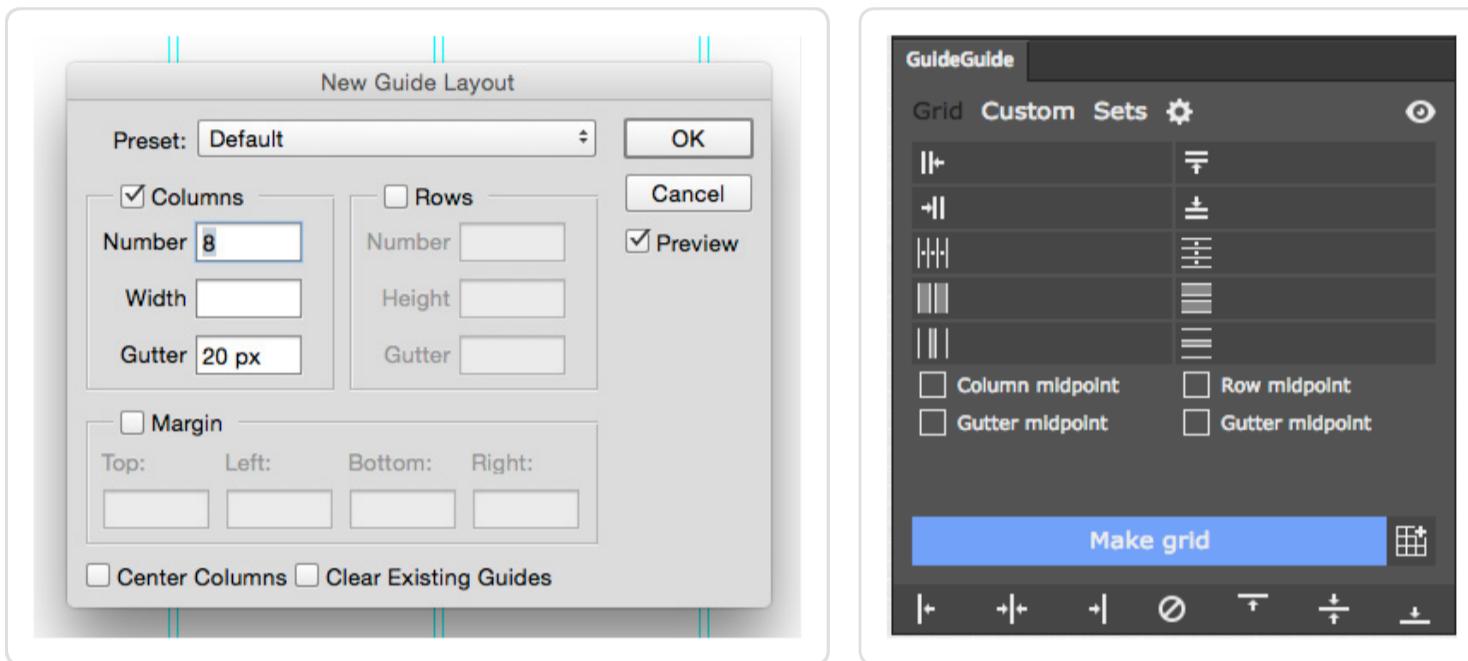
divide the remaining width by the number of columns



This gives you a layout where you have **12 x 84px columns** and **11 x 12px gaps**. The total width is 1140px. You can use the same technique to count a column's width for a given page dimension and gap size.

Setting up guides in Photoshop can be a repetitive and time consuming task.

If you use Photoshop CC 2014, there is a new feature called “Guide Layout” that you can find under **View -> New Guide Layout**. It’ll let you quickly generate a desired grid-based layout with both horizontal and vertical guides. If your Photoshop version is older, you can get a plugin called [GuideGuide](#) that does pretty much the same thing.



Additionally, you can download my starter Photoshop templates in the [free web design resources on my website](#). It's a template with most popular 12-column grid layout and a sample layer folders structure.

There is one more thing about grids to make it a little bit more difficult than it all seems. Before you set up your own layout, you need to make sure that the grid system you use in your design can be easily adapted by developers while coding your design.

If you use 12 columns in your design, then it should be covered by almost every popular CSS framework so you won't have to worry about redesigning your projects down the road.

A specific CSS framework can very often be listed in the project requirements by your client or web developer. You'll need to check what the dimensions of a grid layout are in that framework and match the guidelines in your design project.

Here are some of the most popular grid-based CSS frameworks that you may want to check out or even have your PSD templates with grid layouts prepared: [Foundation](#), [Bootstrap](#), [960.gs](#), [YAML](#).

As you can see, using grids can be very helpful in designing your website layout. It's an easy and very popular technique these days. You'll have a chance to see how to build a layout based on the grid later in the practice part of this chapter when we make the wireframes. Also, we'll use grid layouts while putting it all together and designing the final website page mockups in [Chapter 8](#).

Grid-based website examples

Now that you know how to create a simple grid layout, let's look at some website examples and see how grids are used and filled out with some real content.

The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of the [Wallpaper*](#) website, illustrating a 12-column grid layout. The left screenshot shows a standard desktop view with a grid of columns. The right screenshot shows a mobile or tablet view where the columns are compressed into a single vertical stack, though the underlying grid structure remains visible.

Left Screenshot (Desktop View):

- Header:** The header features the **Wallpaper*** logo and the tagline "***THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU**".
- Navigation:** A horizontal navigation bar with links to ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, ART, FASHION, TRAVEL, LIFESTYLE, and W⁺ BESPOKE.
- Content:** The main content area includes a large image of a city map (labeled "Paper trail"), a sidebar with a "DESIGN DRIVEN" section, and a social media follow section.
- Footer:** A footer with links to LATEST NEWS and EDITOR'S PICKS, along with a navigation bar for LIFESTYLE, DESIGN, ART, FASHION, TRAVEL, and LIFESTYLE.

Right Screenshot (Mobile/Tablet View):

- Header:** The header features the **Wallpaper*** logo and the tagline "***THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU**".
- Navigation:** A horizontal navigation bar with links to ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, ART, FASHION, TRAVEL, LIFESTYLE, and W⁺ BESPOKE.
- Content:** The main content area includes a large image of a city map (labeled "Paper trail"), a sidebar with a "DESIGN DRIVEN" section, and a social media follow section.
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22°

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<p>Unfurl * A spasmodic posting of books, books, books + articles of admiration. Perhaps you'll find an item of interest among them? —P.S. I love hard-cooked eggs.</p> <p>Subnature</p>			
Subnature	Acne Paper	The Hub	The Snow Show
I suspect even the most Winter-devoted of us have grown somewhat impatient with its dispiriting sky, frustrated with the appearance of an occasional sunny day, only to be betrayed once again by the return of the now all too familiar series of rainy days? Perhaps this architectural ... —Take a peek...	(Victory!) This intriguing cover featuring an unvarnished Leigh Bowery captured my attention months ago. Alas, its prohibitive online shipping rate forbade my curiosity's satisfaction, till I finally came upon it recently at a local newsagent. Perhaps you might also enjoy scrutinising its interior? —Take a peek...	Winter can be arduous on one's pocket-book, particularly when one's boyfriend's birthday inconveniently falls in mid-January. All the same, I couldn't pass up this premiere issue of 'The Hub'. / In the grand tradition of idiocy in the face of cruel providence and 'Oh bother!... —Take a peek...	This most ethereal art exhibition found its inspiration from the Scandinavians' perception of snow, which they hold as an opportunity for joy and celebration rather than as an inconvenience or an obstacle to bear. With our current Winter season nearing its end, perhaps... —Take a peek...
Page 1 2 3 4 5 ... 10 »			

Unfurl * × 22°

22°

Work	Play	Unfurl	About
print, interactive, branding design	photography & personal doodads	admiration for near & far afield	sonia chan sonia@area-22.com
<p>Unfurl * A spasmodic posting of books, books, books + articles of admiration. Perhaps you'll find an item of interest among them? —P.S. I love hard-cooked eggs.</p> <p>Subnature</p>			
Subnature	Acne Paper	The Hub	The Snow Show
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8-column layout - area-22.com

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Beginning of the week 24,370.00 Monitor your cash flow on a monthly, weekly or Sunday, Apr 26 daily basis.

Companies & Projects

Small Busin Organize your income and expenses by company and project.

Reports

Do more than just read your cash flow, visualize it.

Attach Files

Upload files to your income and expense items.

Pulse is the easy way to manage your cash flow online, allowing you to quickly manage and evaluate your income and expenses.

Benefits of using Pulse

Pulse empowers you to make decisions. While other accounting tools let you track your financials, they don't give you the ability to make the tough day to day decisions that happen when running a small business. With Pulse, you can know when to hire that new staff person or make that big new expenditure. You can know when to take a project or even turn one down. With Pulse, you're in control.

Who uses Pulse?

Pulse is specifically designed for small business. Freelance designers, web development companies, consulting agencies, hair salons, photographers, and entrepreneurs are just a few of the many types of companies that use Pulse.

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What People are Saying about Pulse

Subvert Marketing, Inc.
 "Pulse is complementary to our invoice and time tracking system because it gives me the high-level details..." [Read Case Study](#)
nGen Works
 "It's funny, but I've shown [Pulse] to colleagues and clients because I think it helps position us as a smart business." [Read Case Study](#)
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Notes Jim Caldwell - Delivered the fir Communicate with your team by adding notes to income and expenses.

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Export your cash flow data as a CSV file.

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Write Notes

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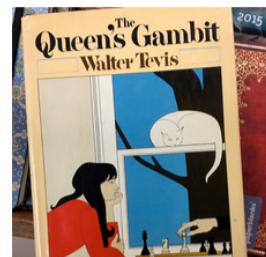
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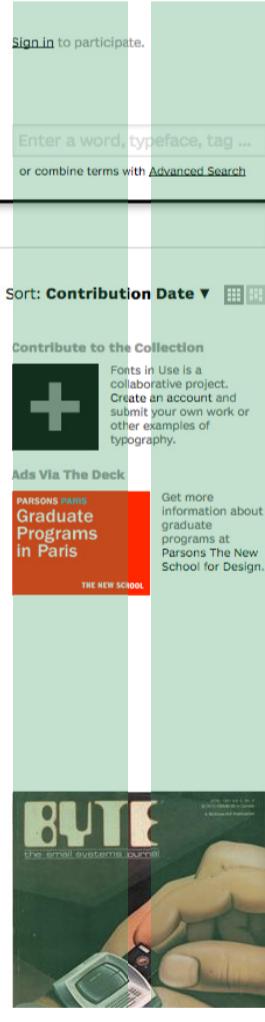
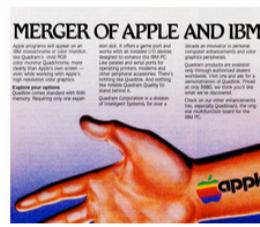
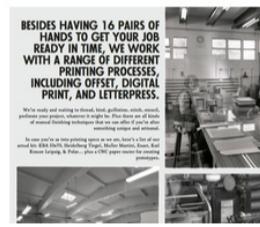
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12-column layout - fontsinuse.com

Creating wireframes

Wireframes are the last step before we get into designing the final page mockups. It's quite an important part of the entire process because it helps to organize all the ideas you had during the sketching part and plan the final layout of each page.

I'm going to make a separate wireframe for every page that I'll be designing. That includes the home page, blog page, blog post and about page.

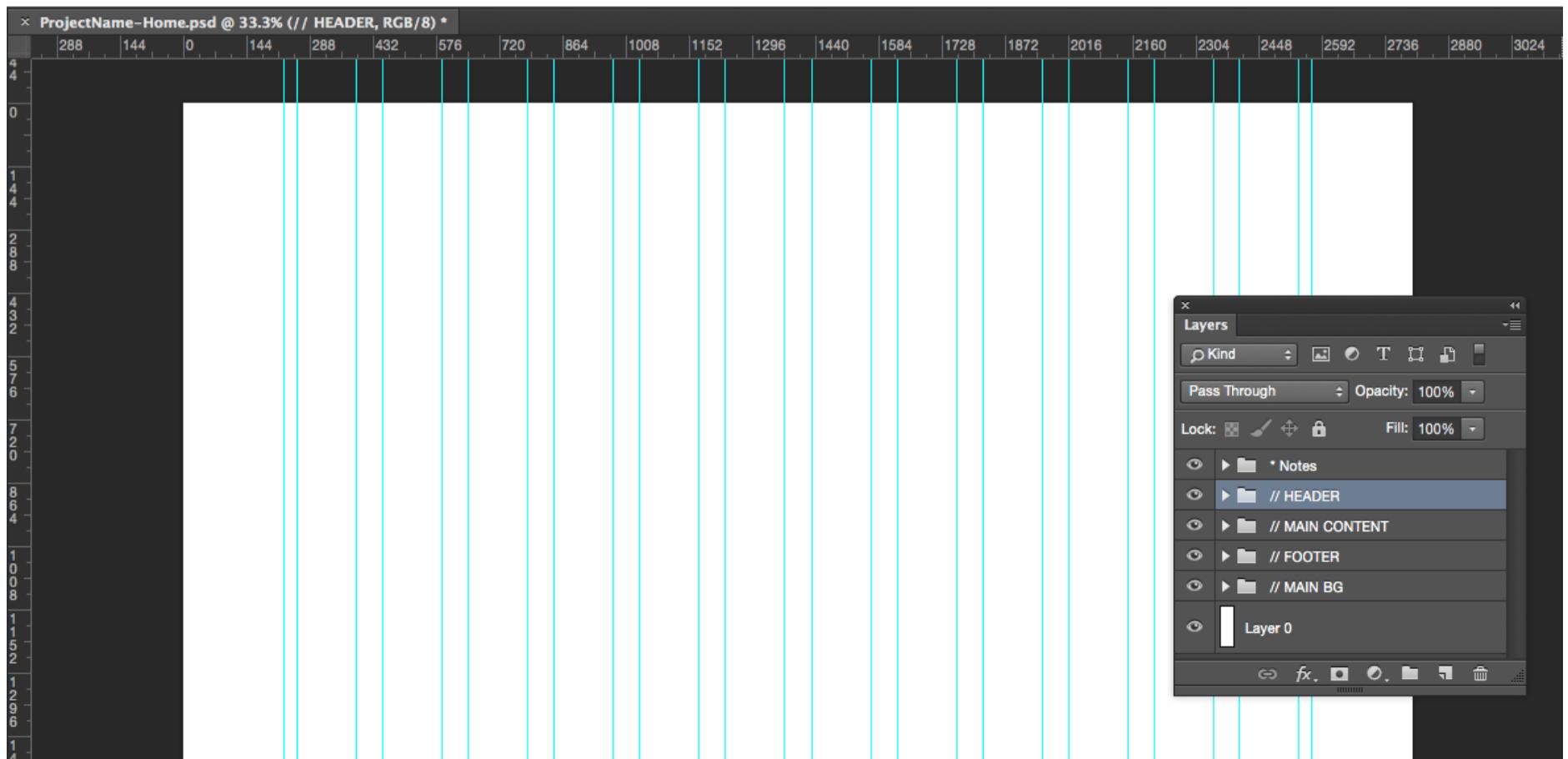
To make wireframes I use Adobe Photoshop and two of my free design tools: **Photoshop Wireframe Kit** and **Photoshop Starter Template**.

*Go ahead and grab my free [Photoshop Wireframe Kit](#) and [Photoshop Starter Template](#) from the **Designers Area** on my website.*

Remember that wireframes don't have to be pixel perfect and you don't need to worry about colors, typography and other visual elements. Focus on designing the layout and the entire page structure.

Step 1

I start by designing the home page. I make a copy of the starter template into a new folder called "**Wireframes**" and I name it "**ProjectName-Home.psd**". I open the file and turn on guides (*command + ; on Mac, or ctrl + ; on Windows*).



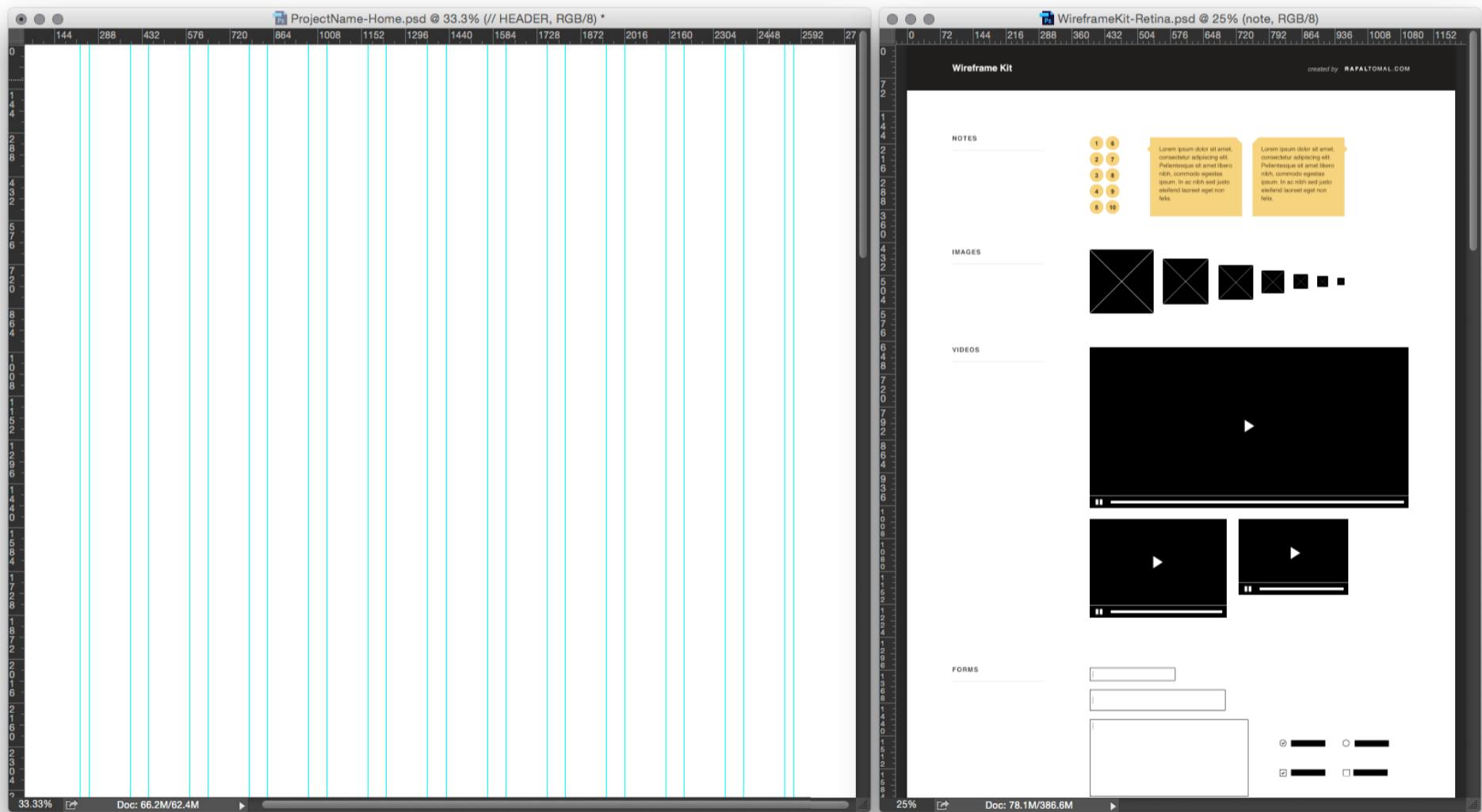
The starter template already has a 12-column grid applied, so all I need to do is just stick to the guidelines. I also have layer folders already named and prepared to use.

I clean it up and delete the "****Trash**" and "****Colors**" folders because I won't need them. Then, I empty the subfolders of the main folders because these won't be used that much during wireframing.

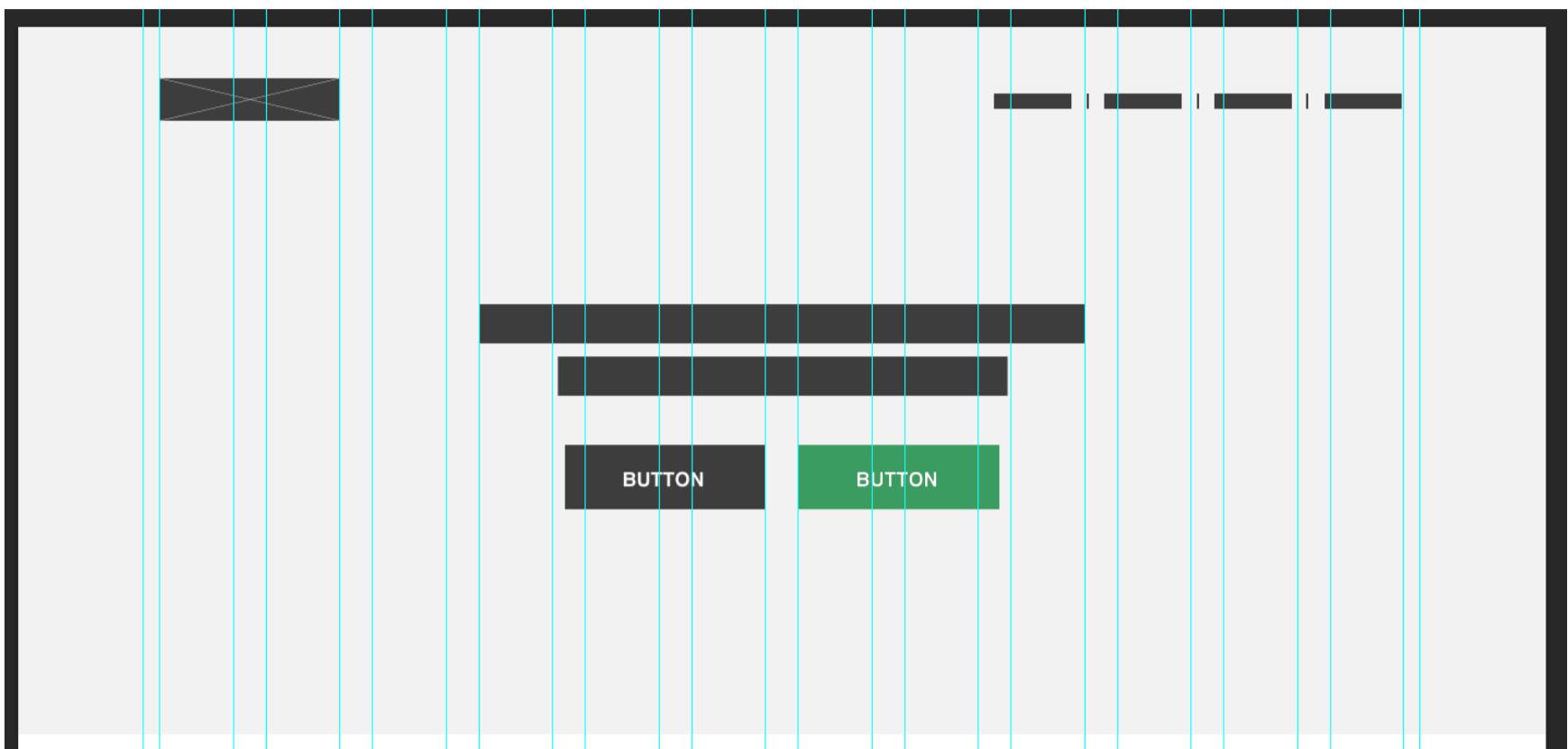
Step 2

With that prepared PSD file, I can start drawing some first wireframe elements. I start with the intro section.

Based on the sketches, I know that my idea was to have a big intro with a single message in the middle. I open my *Photoshop Wireframe Kit* in another window. I use it to drag and drop some elements, so I don't have to recreate them every time I make a new wireframe.



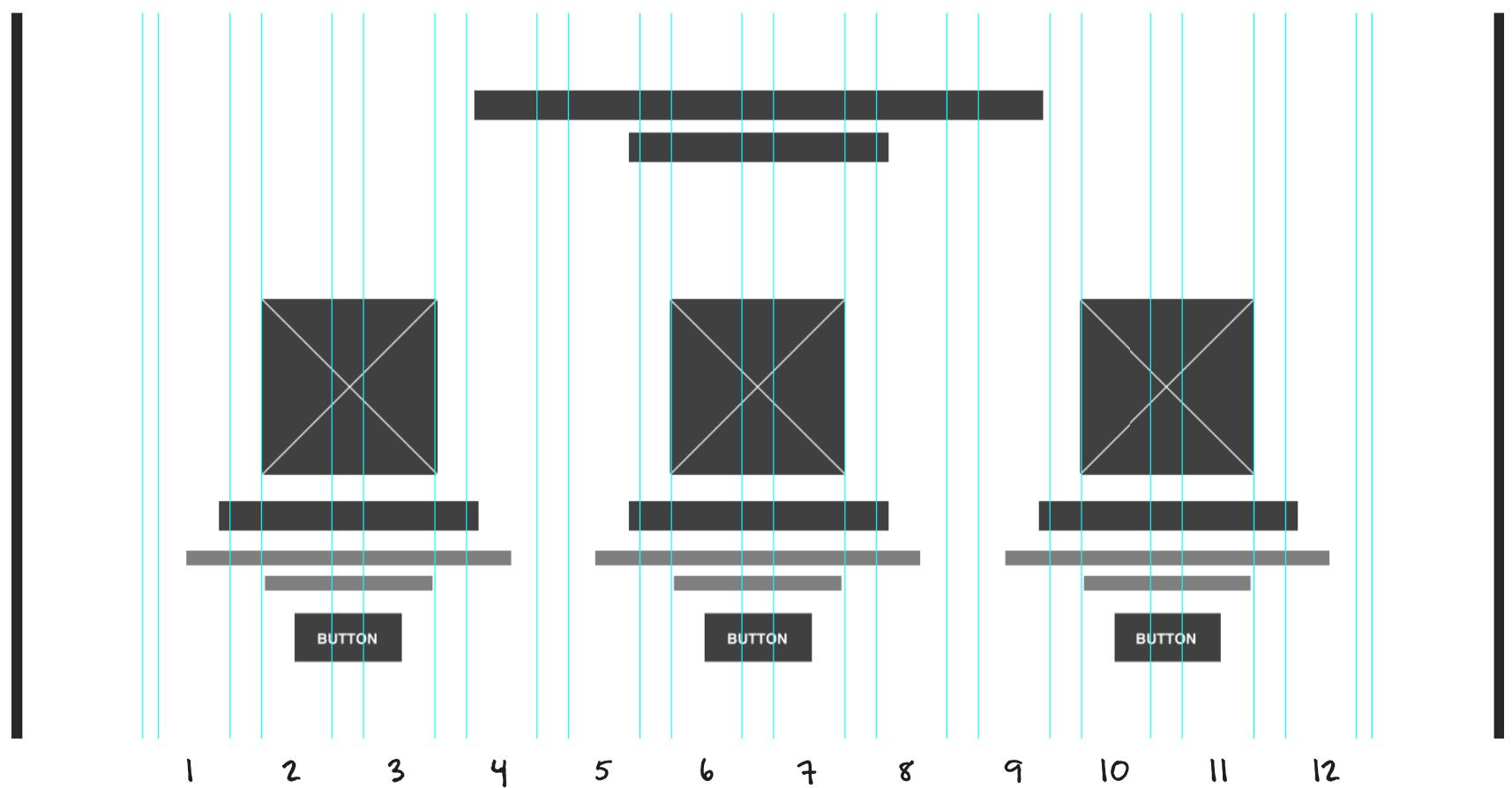
Now, using the **Rectangle Tool**  , I draw the intro section background. It doesn't have to be a perfect height. Using the *Wireframe Kit*, I can quickly get some elements like: image, headline, buttons, and navigation. This is my intro section:



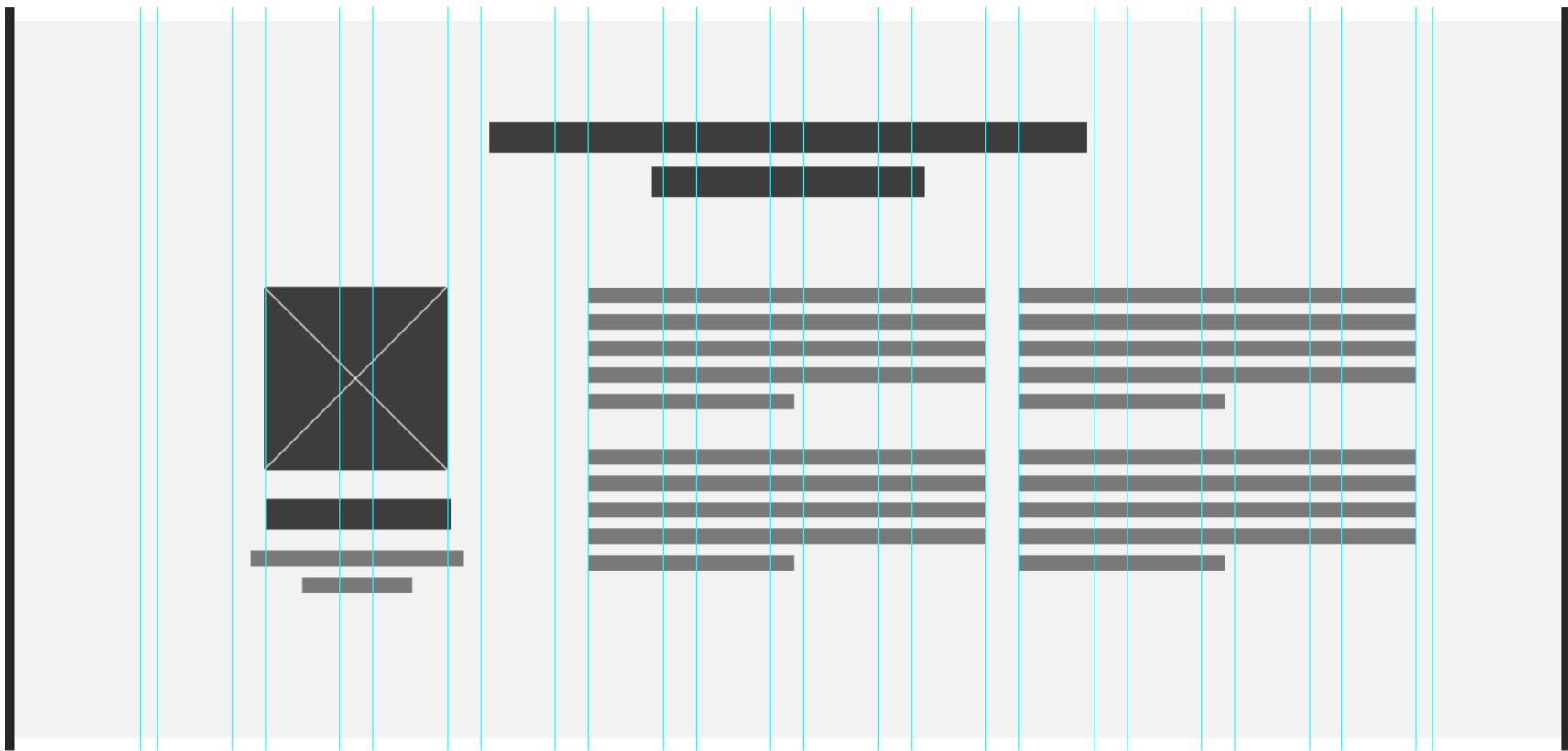
Please notice that I changed opacity on some layers to differentiate their importance. For example, a heading can be 75% but a subheading just 30%. It'll create a quick visual order.

Step 3

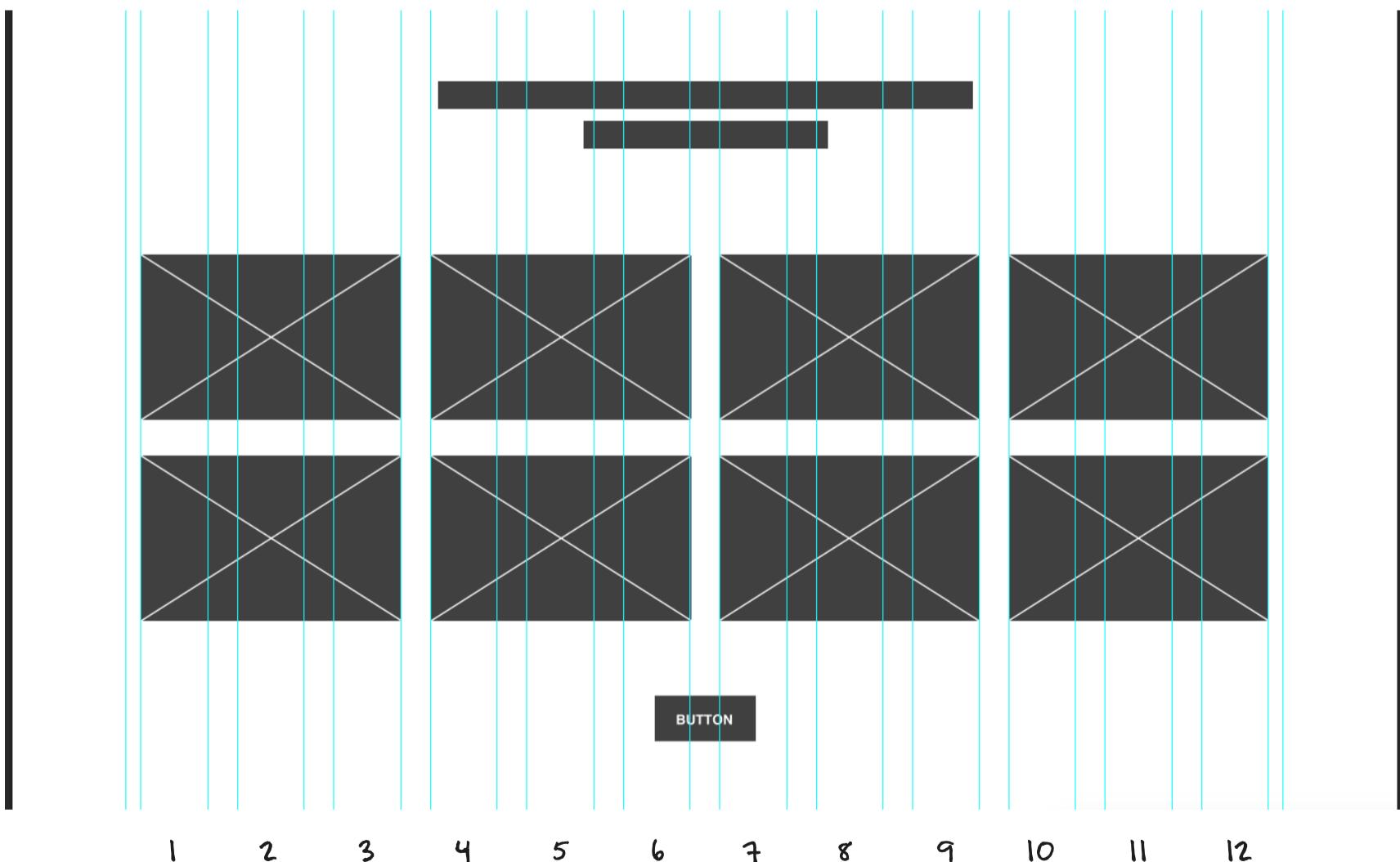
I start another section, which is going to be my services. Using a 12-column grid, I divide the layout into three big columns (3 x 4) and add some elements to show a sample service image, heading, description and button.



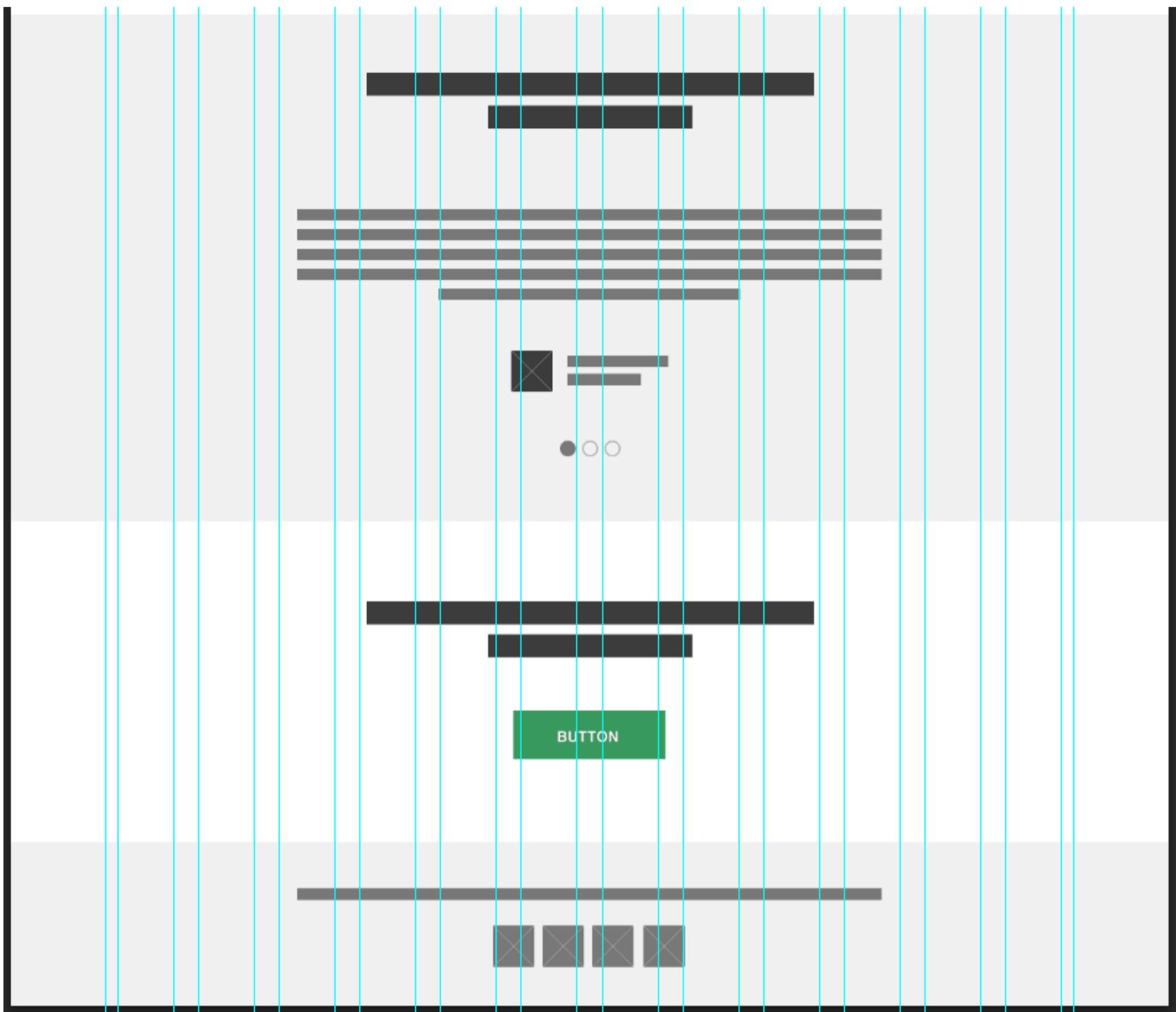
Next, the about section. I also use grids to split it into three big columns. I add an image and some text to the left columns and some 'about' text to the middle and right column.



I follow the same steps with the portfolio section but I want to show four projects in one row. So, this time I divide the layout into four columns (4×3). Fortunately, a 12-column grid is flexible enough to easily make both three or four equal columns.



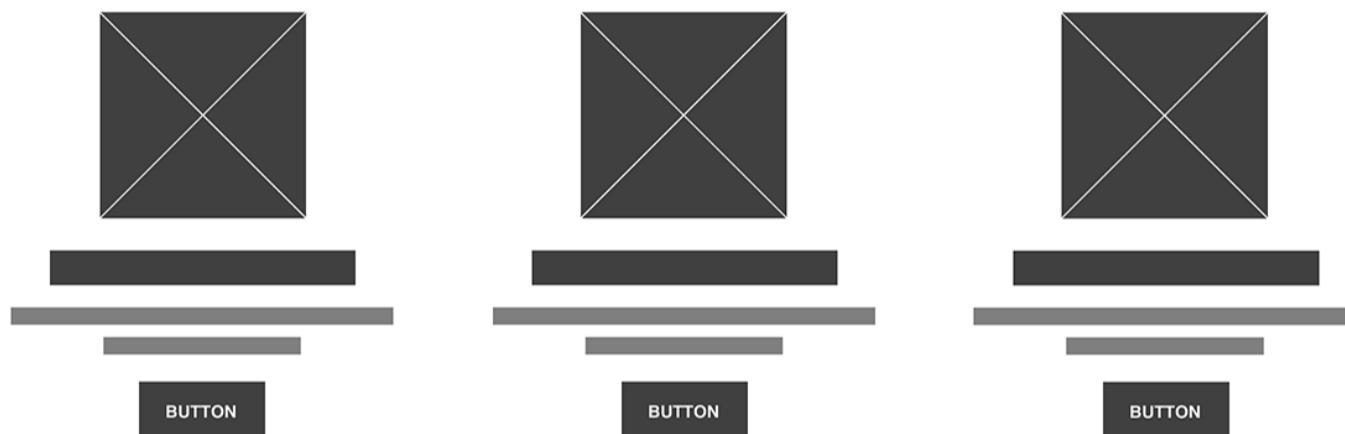
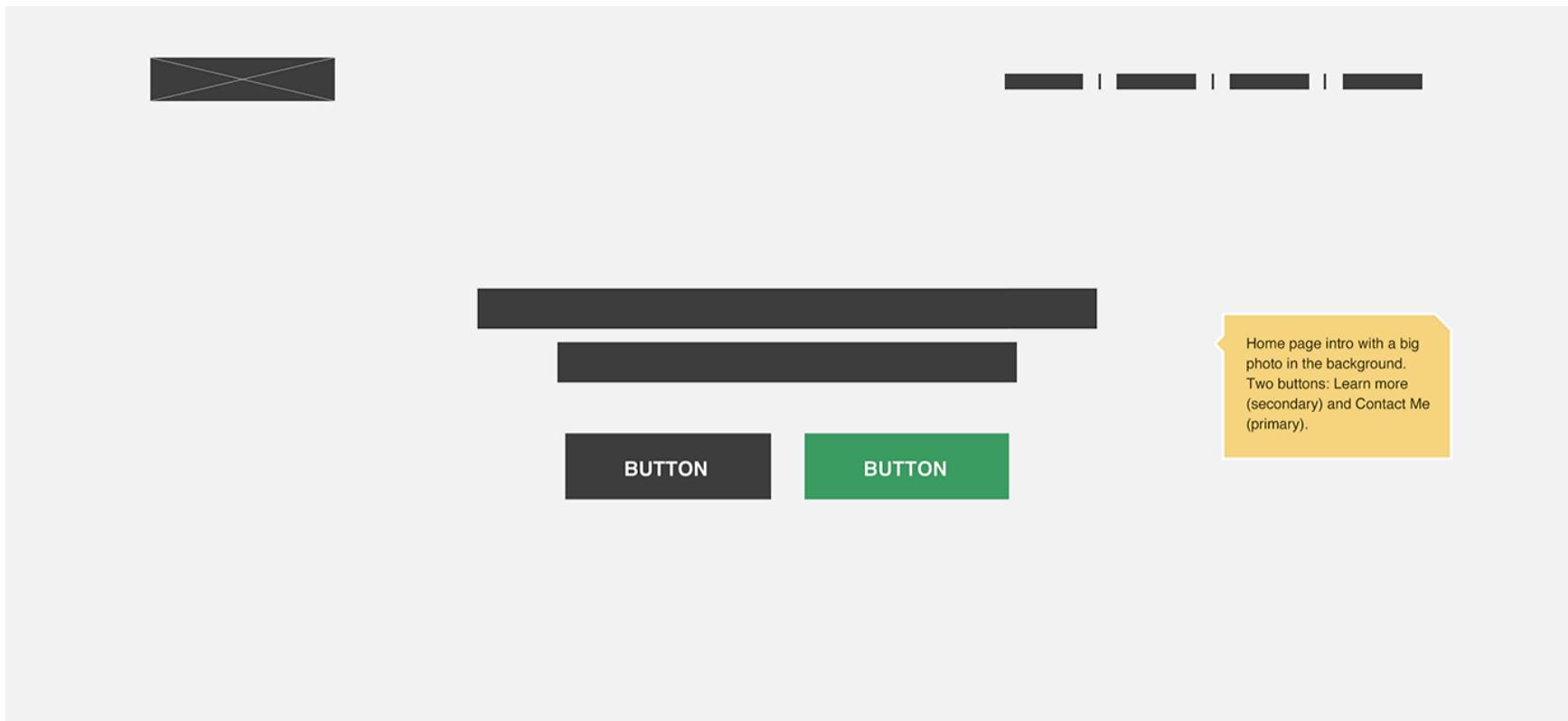
Testimonials, the call to action and the footer have a simple, single-column vertical layout:



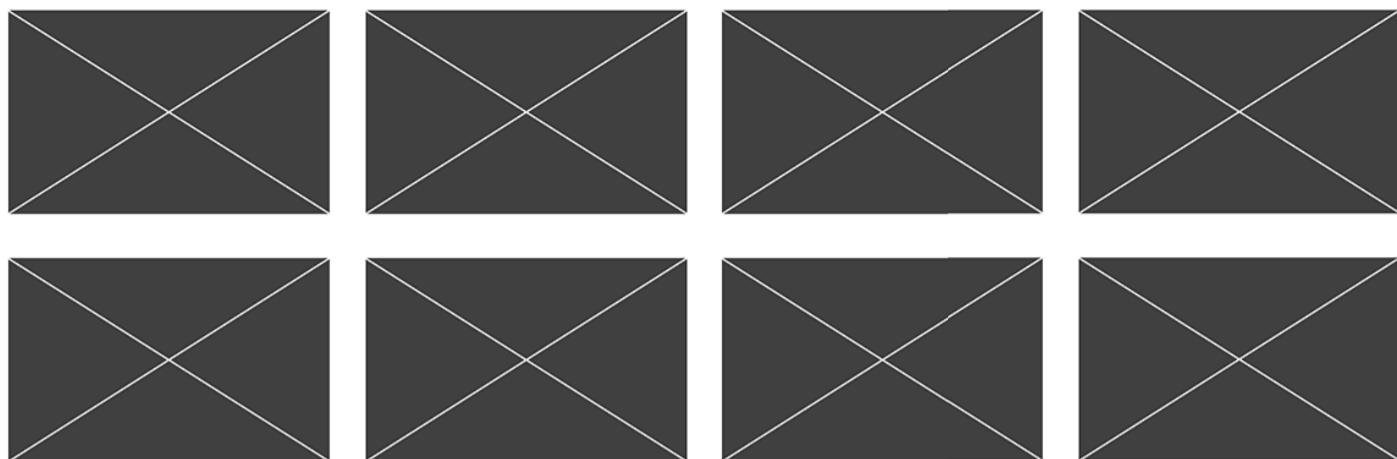
The home page wireframe is done. Now let's add some quick notes, so we can describe the sections and name some elements.

There is a ready to use element for notes in the wireframe kit. I make a new layer folder called "**Notes**", so I can quickly hide all the notes from the wireframe if I need to.

There, I add all of my notes and this is my complete home page wireframe:



Portfolio – eight best projects.



BUTTON

Link to see the full portfolio

Testimonials - up to 5 best testimonials from clients.



A simple navigation buttons to rotate testimonials.

Call to action.

BUTTON

Footer with social buttons.



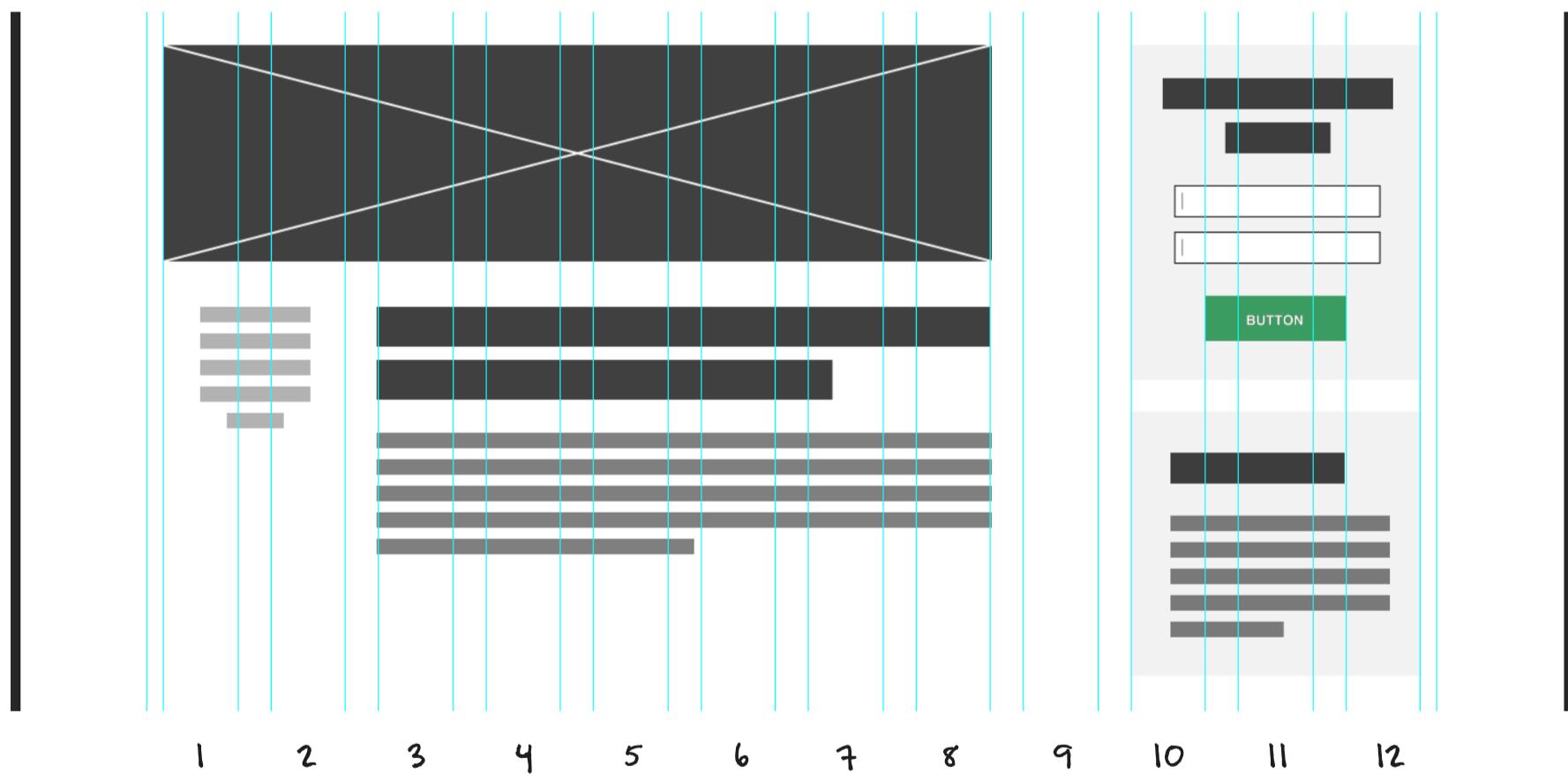
Step 4

Now, I can make a wireframe for the blog page. I make a copy of the home page so I can reuse some of its already designed parts. I delete the content sections but I leave the header, CTA, and footer. These three will remain almost exactly the same on all the pages for the entire website. Remember that it's good to keep these parts consistent.

Because it's a blog page, I don't want the header to be that big. So, I make a smaller version of the header:

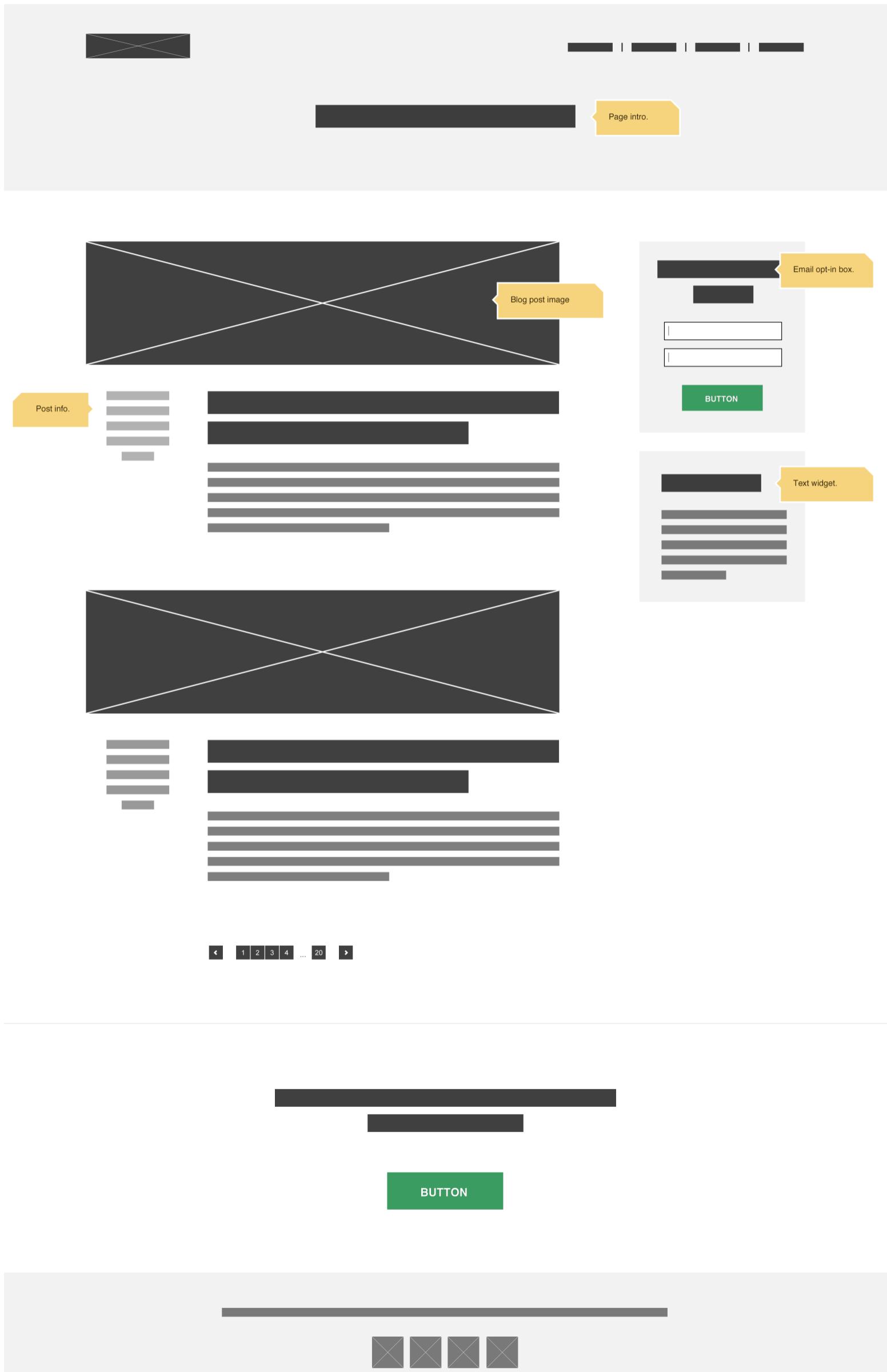


In the content area, I want to have a right hand sidebar and a list of blog posts. Using the grids, I divide the layout into two columns (8 + 1 + 3). There is one small, empty column between the content area and sidebar. It'll give my blog some space and my posts won't collide with the sidebar widget.



In the blog post layout, I also used grids to separate a small post info right next to the post excerpt. This makes my post content almost centered on the screen and I have a nice left margin from the left hand side thanks to the post info. It also makes my post content narrower what should improve readability. Perfect!

I add some notes and my complete blog wireframe looks like this:



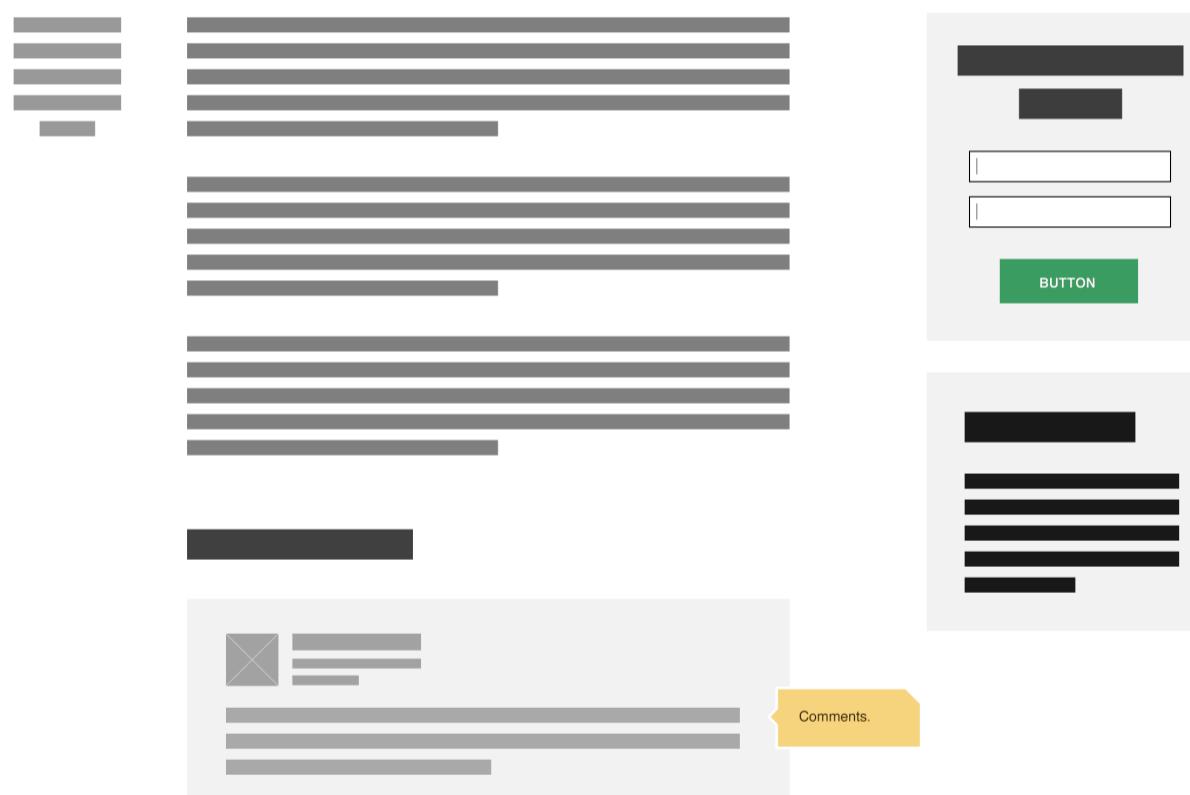
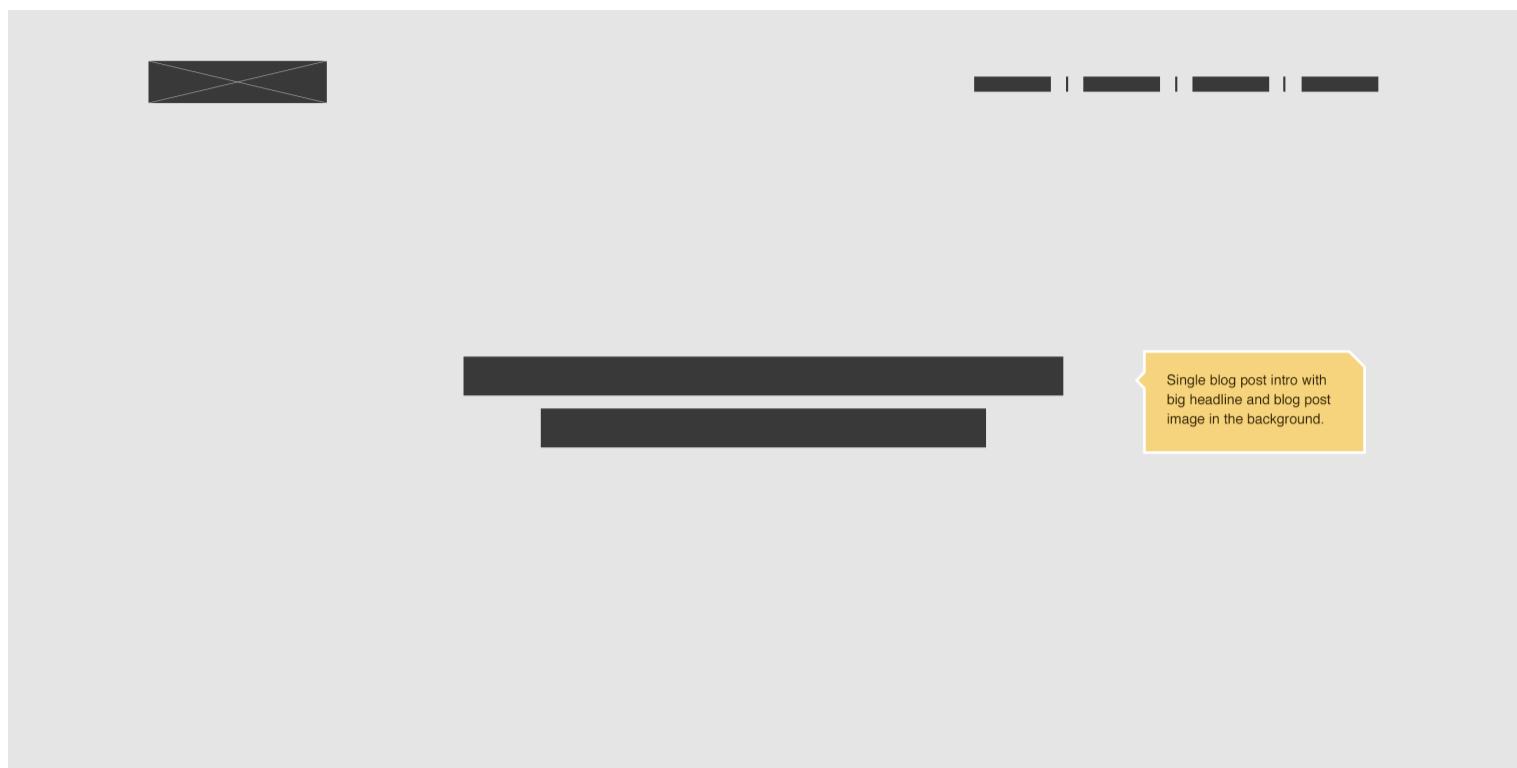
I do exactly the same thing for the other two pages: about page and a single blog post. There are no surprises here and the layouts are pretty simple. I'm not sure if you realized it, but I actually already dictated some layout patterns in the first two wireframes.

On the single blog post page, I copy almost everything from the blog page. The only difference here is that I came up with an idea to make a big intro similar to the home page that features the blog post title and its image in the background. I can't wait to see how it's going to look in the final mockup design.

Here is my complete wireframe for the about page:



And this is my wireframe for the single blog post:



BUTTON



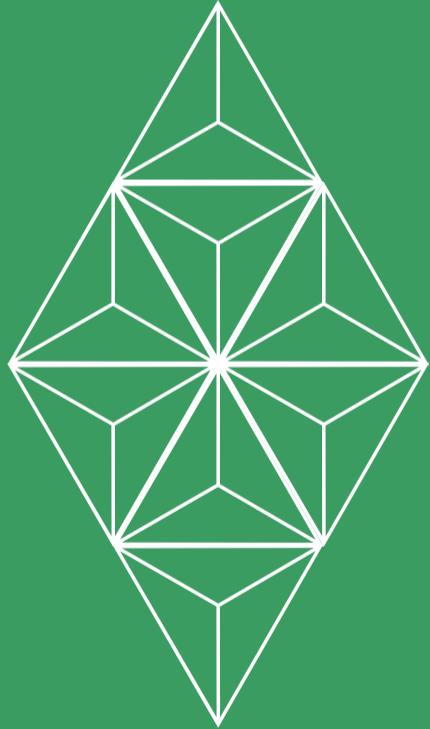
While doing wireframes, you are going to spend more time thinking and planning than actually doing any work in Photoshop. That's how it should be. I hope you noticed how wireframing forces you to focus on the function of your design, not the appearance.

You can make a few different versions of some pages if you're still not sure how they should look. Take a look at my wireframes in the project files attached to this ebook. See how I structured the layers and you'll also realize how messy it is. It's not perfect and that's fine!

However, that's the last time you'll hear me say that it's ok to not be perfect because we're moving to the final part of this ebook: putting it all together. We'll design the final PSDs for this project and everything will have to be perfect there!

CHAPTER 8

Putting It All Together



Do you need design mockups?

You've reached the final step of the website designing process. At last, we are finally going to create all the design mockups that can be transformed later into a fully working website.

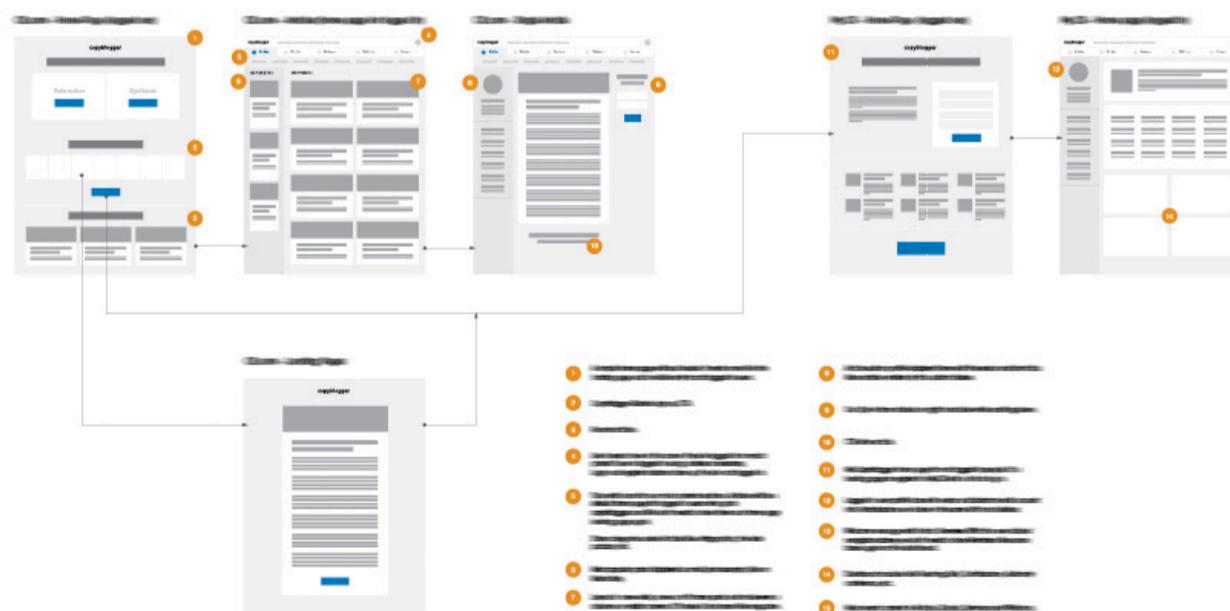
Many designers and developers are surprised when I tell them that designing Photoshop mockups is actually the last step in my process. Maybe you were expecting a bit different process before reading this book as well. I hope you see now how important it is to actually design the typography, colors and layout beforehand.

So, what are the design mockups? Do we even need them?

Design mockups are a presentation or a visualization of the website pages. It's not an actual working website yet and it won't even work in the browser. It's more like a preview of what the website should look like.

There are many designers that completely skip the mockup process and work directly in the browser using the CSS/HTML code. I'm sure these designers still need go through the entire process of planning, sketching, wireframing and even designing typography style guides and color palettes.

Without all of those elements designed beforehand, you might be putting the entire project at risk with inconsistencies. It's better not to be making random decisions on the fly.



A good design plan is crucial for the project's success. You can take wireframing further and make them more detailed or create complete flow charts.

There are some situations when design mockups are useless. If you work on the web application, then it may be more appropriate to focus on designing only the user interface elements. The team of developers can use it to build a modular system and put together all the pages during the programming process.

However, I worked on many different types of websites (small websites, blogs, magazines and even web applications) and I know from my own experience that almost every project required at least a few page mockups.

COLOR SCHEME




PRIMARY COLORS:
BODY TEXT, HEADLINES,
BACKGROUNDS, BYLINES

ACCENT COLORS:
LINKS, LOGO, HIGHLIGHT,
ACTIONS, BUTTONS

TYPOGRAPHY & UI

Roboto - heading

Helvetica Neue (bold, 20px) - body intro text

Helvetica Neue (regular, 18px) - body text

[Link text](#) [Link text](#)

BUTTONS:

BIG BUTTON
Small button

ACTIVE BUTTONS:

BIG BUTTON
Small button

BYLINE - LOREM IPSUM DOLOR

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. In eget quam quis arcu egestas euismod ut in nunc. Nunc nec egestas quam. [Pellentesque quis](#) dolor dui, sit amet imperdiet orci.

Praesent ut luctus enim. Quisque consectetur venenatis nibh, ut fermentum elit euismod a.

[Continue reading](#)

Form Title * Required field

*Your First Name:

Your Last Name:
 

Your Last Name:
Wrong input text 
Lorum ipsum dolor sit amet, cons ectetur adipiscing elit.

Your Message:

Radio buttons:
 Option 1 Option 2

Checkboxes:
 Item 1 Item 2

Dropdown

Option 1 Option 2 Option 3

Your birthday

SUBHEADING - LOREM IPSUM (H4)
Nula id mi metus. Etiam rhoncus facilisis risus ornare fermentum. Mauris aliquam, erat accumsan bibendum malesuada, eros sem congue leo.

Subheading - Lorem Ipsum (H5)
Fus ac accumsan massa. Etiam dapibus, eros ac sodales placerat, dolor metus fringilla est, blandit eleifend massa ante at urna.

 Aliquam at odio ut massa mattis feugiat. Phasellus sodales, diam sollicitudin semper vulputate, tortor eros rutrum enim, nec bibendum felis enim et velit.

by John Smith

Your web style guide can include more than just colors and typography. You can add buttons, input elements, forms, boxes, messages, modal windows, or even sample stock photos.

Subheading - H2

[Curabitur et imperdiet neque. In nec dapibus enim. Pellentesque varius dolor.](#)

- Suspendisse ipsum elit, elementum ut pellentesque non, mollis et ante.
- Aenean laoreet dignissim leo vitae laoreet.
- Donec eros lacus, porta sit amet consectetur sit amet, luctus et orci.



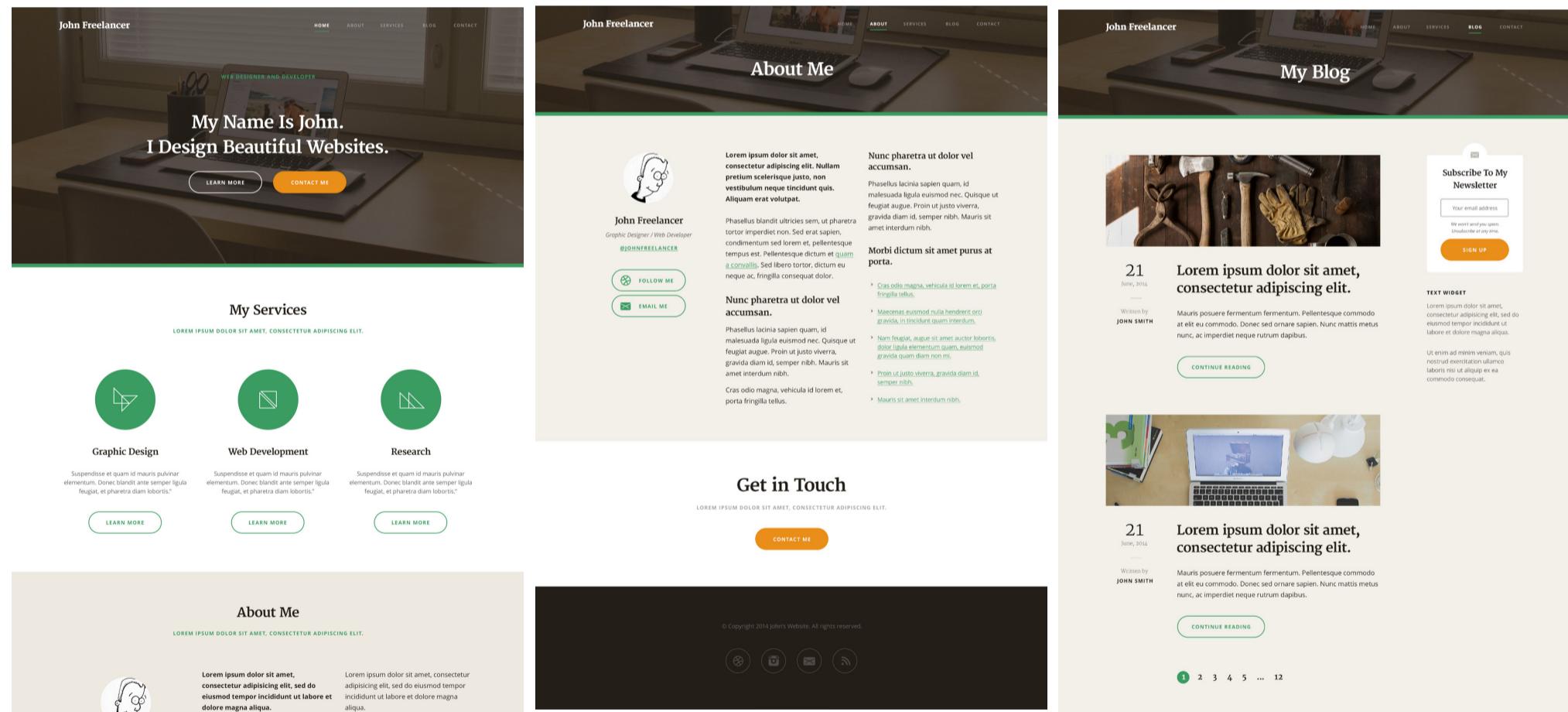
Even when it was a web application and I designed the entire user interface style guide that included all kinds of buttons, tables, navigations, forms, etc., it still needed sample page mockups that showed how these elements should be used together. So, it's more like creating a design system and presenting it to developers on how to use it.

When I design websites I like using both style guides and page mockups. In the style guides, I can present the entire typography, colors and some UI elements. That's the language of my design.

In designing individual page mockups, I can be more creative and come up with custom layouts and use the language I've just created in the style guides. I don't really need to design every single page and show it all in the page mockups. The style guides allow for some kind of flexibility of the design, so it can be easily used even when there is no actual page design.

That's why in the project we're working on in this ebook, I don't need to design more mockups for every single blog post or sub page. I designed common page templates that can be reused in various situations.

In the next part of this chapter, I'll show exactly how I design my page mockups:



You'll also see how important it is to have all these elements ready that we worked on in the previous chapters. Well, it's not a surprise why I called this chapter "Putting it all together". We'll literally put all the design elements together into beautiful website pages.

Designing the home page

I usually start my page mockups by designing the home page first. The home page is definitely the most important page of all. It's the first page that your visitors have a chance to see and you want to make a great impression on them. Actually, you have just a few seconds to get their attention before they leave for good.

I also found that showing the home page mockup first to my clients produced a really positive effect. They were usually shocked by attractiveness of that first page which helped me to easily introduce the rest of the design.

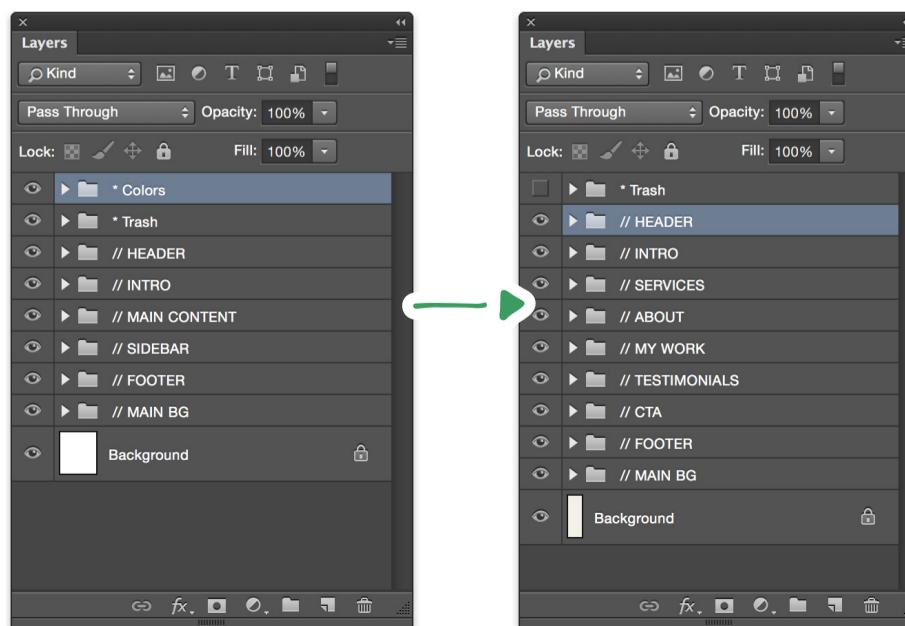
The home page usually has a little different design layout than other pages. It very often looks more like a landing page (in fact, it is your landing page!) and the current trend is to make it long with a vertical content flow. We've already planned the content flow and the entire layout in the previous chapter. Now, it's time to make it look nice and make some final decisions.

Let's get started and see how it all looks in practice!

Step 1

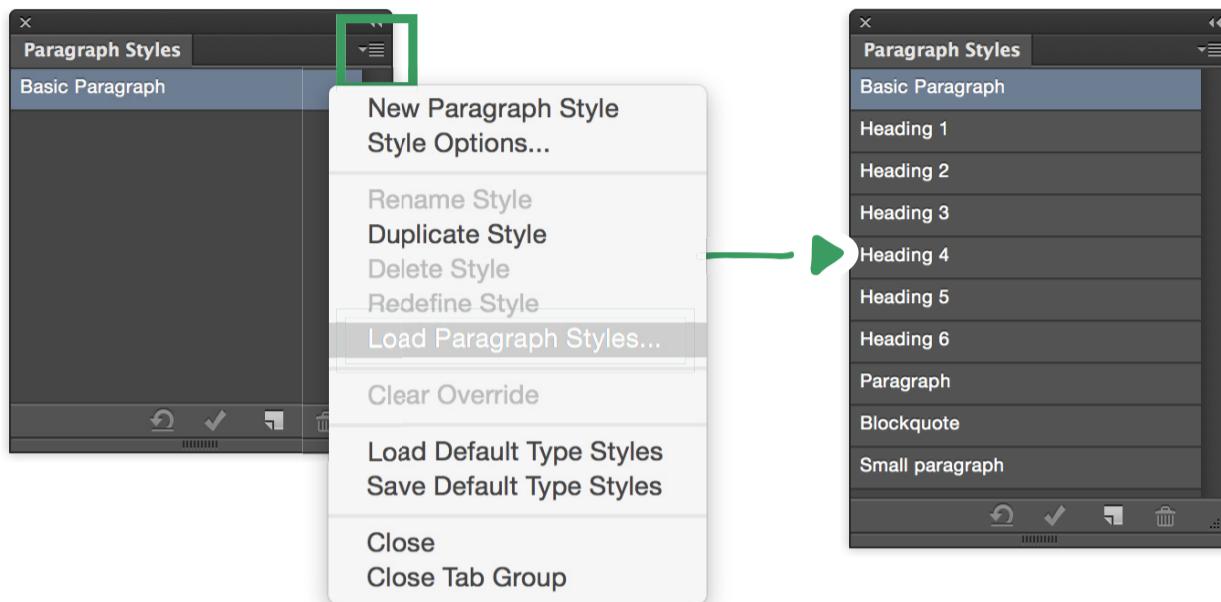
Similar to designing the wireframes, I start by copying my Photoshop starter template into a new folder where I'm going to store all my PSD files. I call this file "**ProjectName-Home.psd**". I also open the home page wireframe for the reference. It's very helpful to actually print it out and have a real copy of the wireframe on paper in front of you. That way you won't need to switch back and forth between the windows to look at it.

I open the starter template copy and I reorganize the layer folders to prepare the file for my home page content. By looking at my home page wireframe, I already know exactly what sections I'm going to have, so I can change the layers folders to this:



Remember that a good layer organization is incredibly important while working on your design project in Photoshop. It'll make your job much easier and faster if you need to get back to your project after some time.

Next, I load paragraph styles from my web typography style guide I created before. I can do this by selecting **Load Paragraph Styles** in the **Paragraph Styles** window.

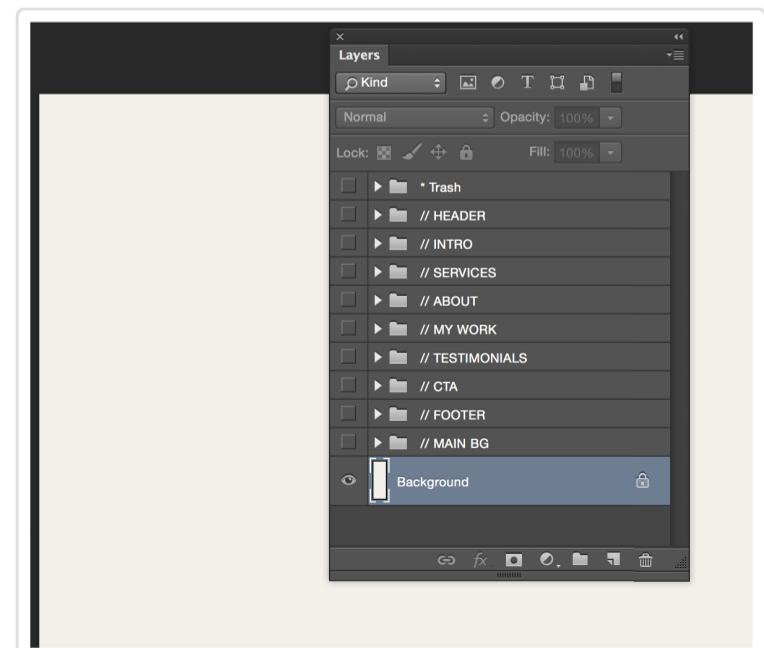


This will let me quickly use all the paragraph styles in this PSD file. It often happens that you may need to add some new paragraph styles while designing certain pages.

So, always make sure to go back to the original web typography style guide file and update that file with the most recent styles.

Now, I open my color scheme file that I've made for this project. I'll keep it opened all the time to have quick access to pick the right color from my palette. I have some tools here that will let me easily get a tint or shade of one of my main colors.

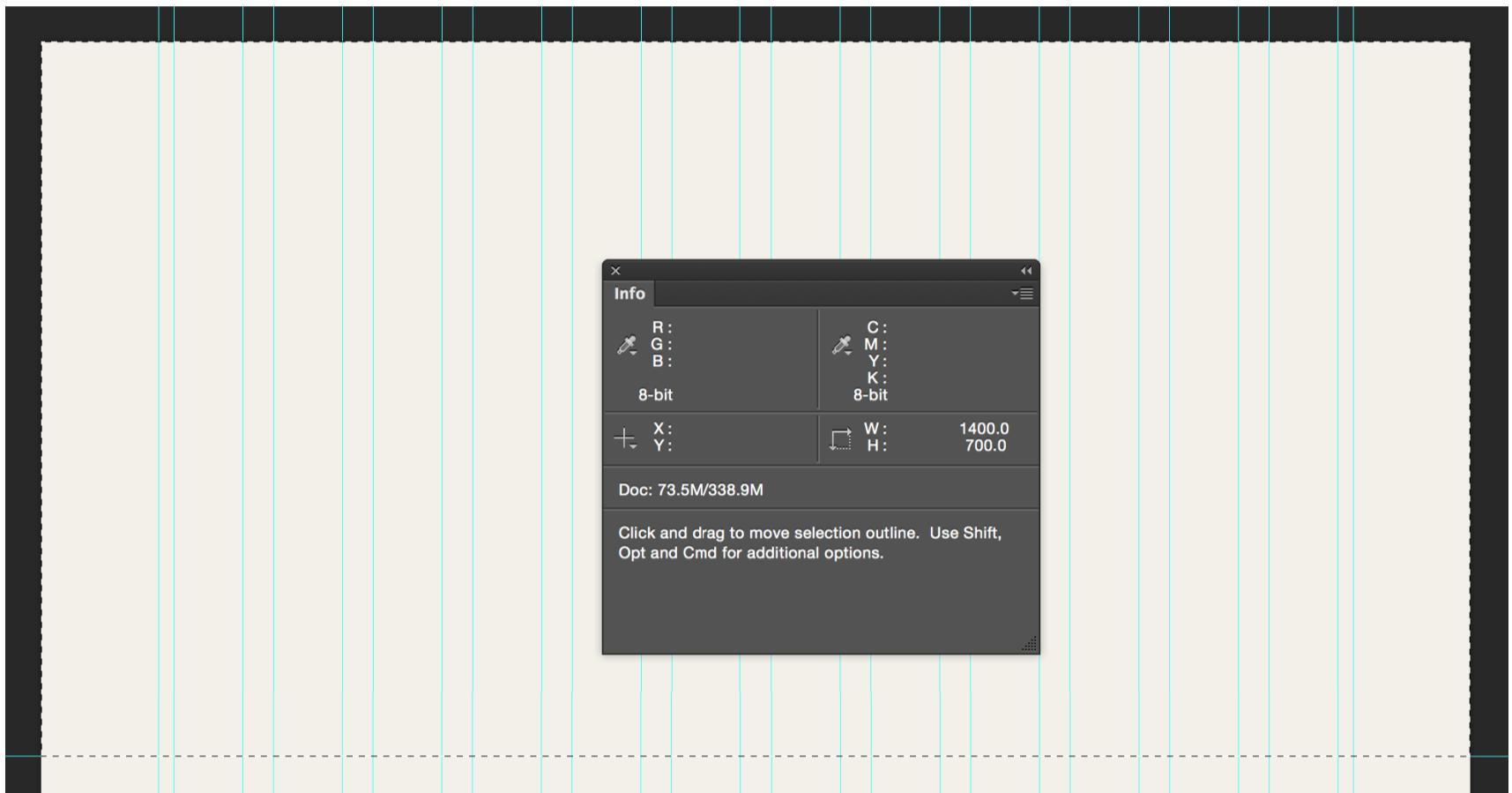
To get started, I pick the background color from the color scheme and I fill out the background layer in the home page file. This gives me a good starting point for what I'm going to do next.



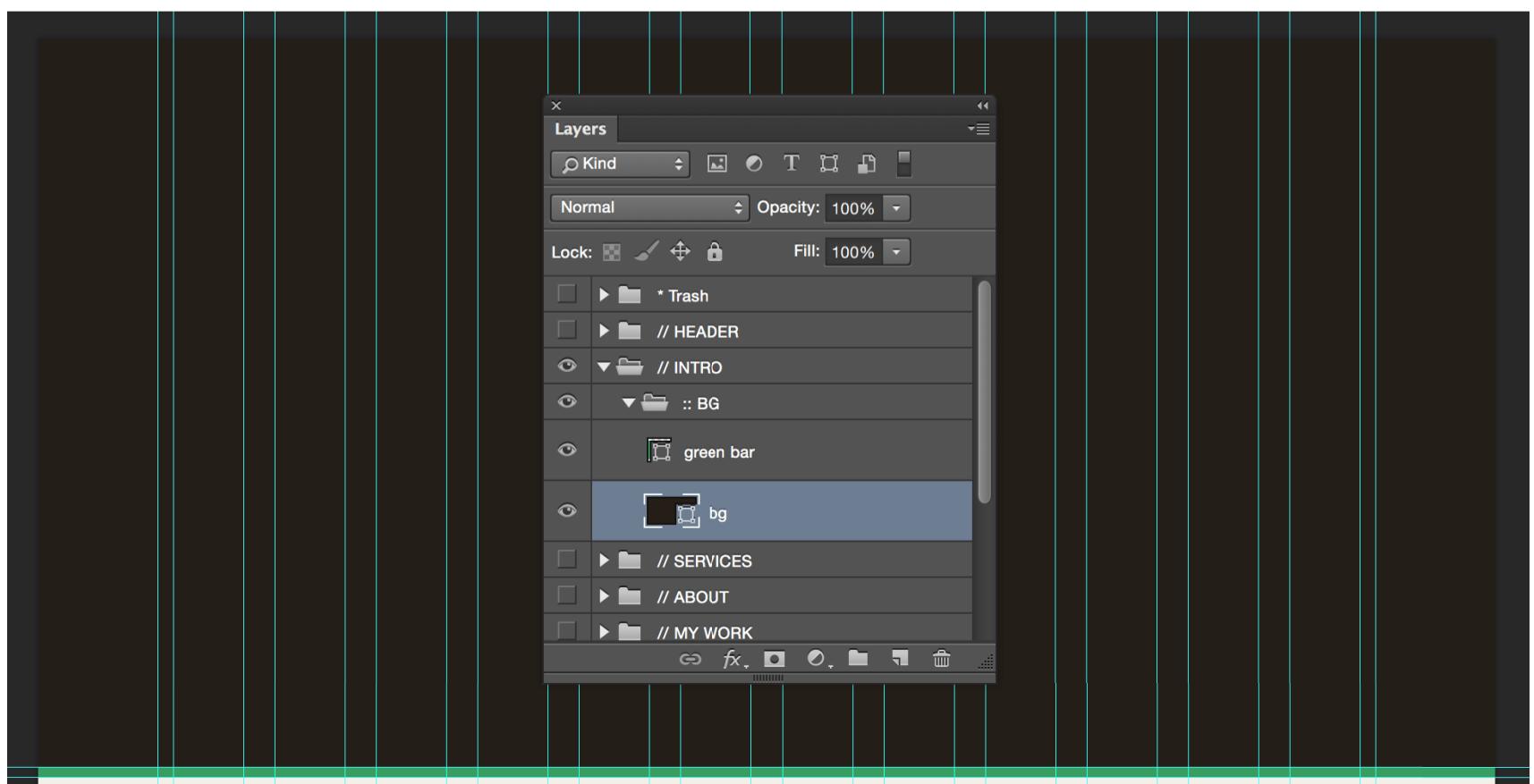
Step 2

When I have the PSD file prepared with a good layer organization, paragraph styles loaded, color scheme opened and wireframe in my hand, I can start designing the actual page. Let's begin from the intro and header which is the first section of the home page.

I know I want to have my intro big which was clearly indicated in the wireframe. I'm using the **Rectangular Marquee Tool**  to select the desired area, which in this case I chose to be 700px (please note that it might be 700pt or 1400px if you design for retina at 2x size and 144dpi), and I place a horizontal guide line at the bottom.



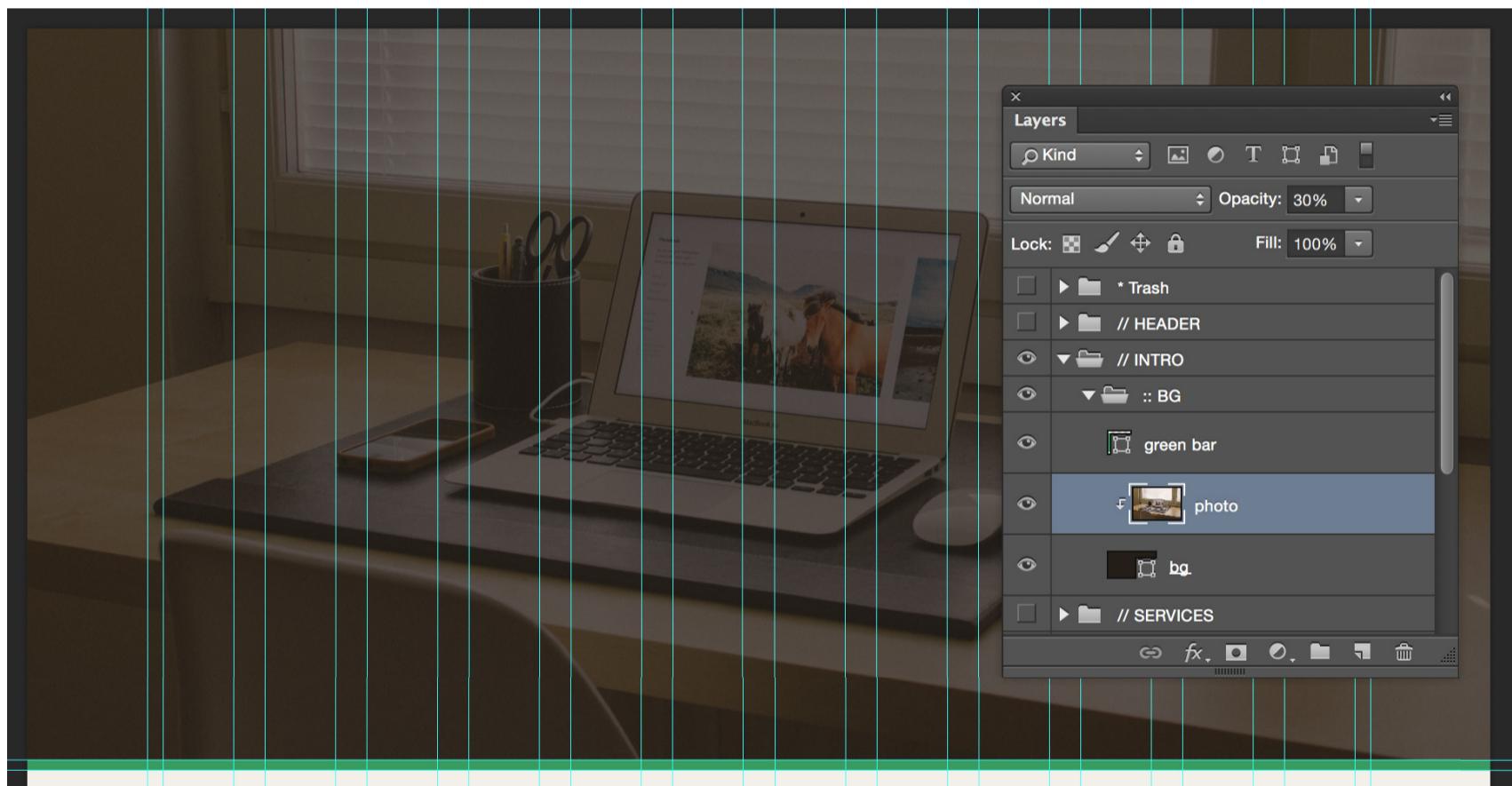
Next, I'm filling out this space with my secondary color using the **Rectangle Tool**  and additionally I decided to make a thin (10px) green stripe right below it to make a nice separation of the entire intro section from the rest of the page.



In place of the dark rectangle I've just created I'm placing a stock photo. It'll be used as a background for the intro. I paste the photo into the PSD file and I use a clipping mask, so the image is cropped to match the rectangle shape.

You can find many free high-resolution photos on [Unsplash.com](#). All photos published on Unsplash are licensed under Creative Commons Zero, which means you can copy, modify, distribute and use the photos, even for commercial purposes, all without asking permission.

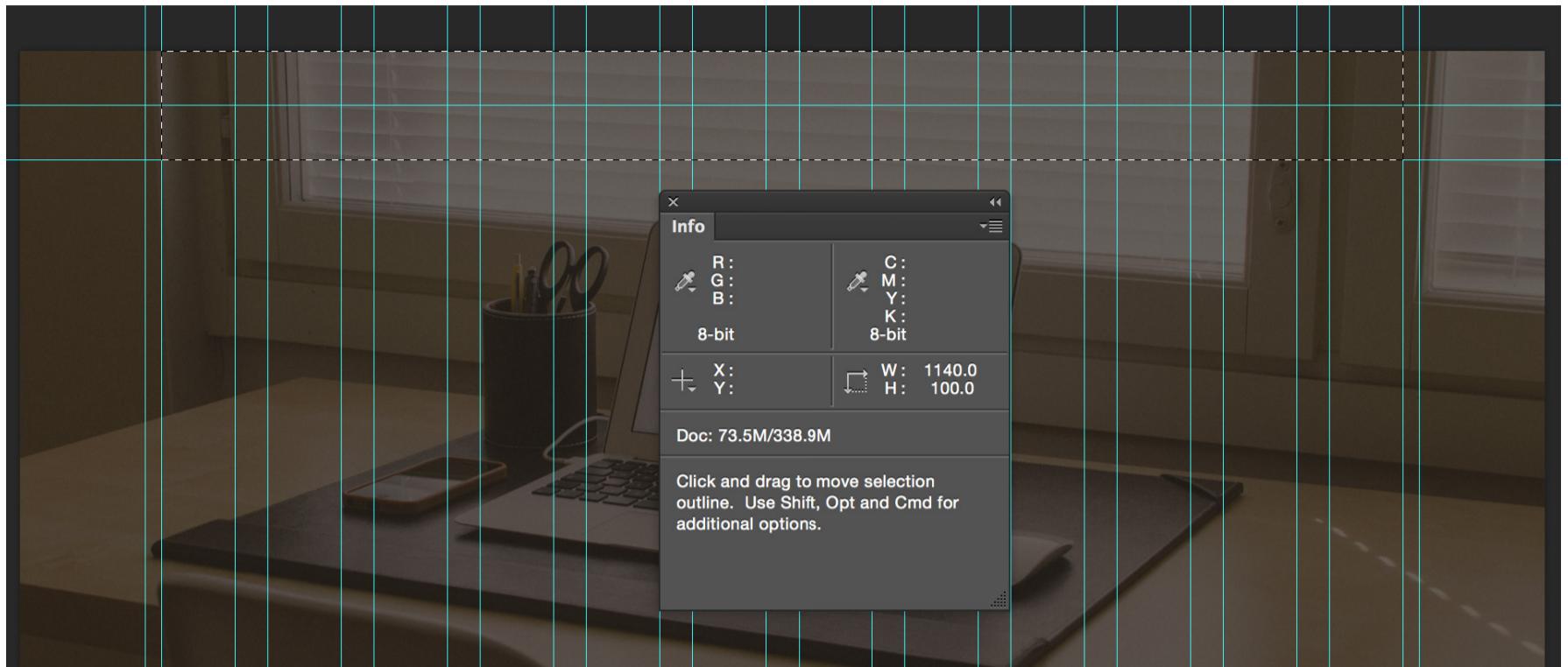
To create a clipping mask, you need to place the photo right above the shape layer, right click on the photo layer and choose “**Create clipping mask**”. You’ll see a small arrow pointing down right next to the layer.



I also use 30% opacity to make the photo transparent and blend nicely with the background. It'll increase the readability of my white intro text because it won't mix together with the light photo colors. This gives me a nice looking intro background.

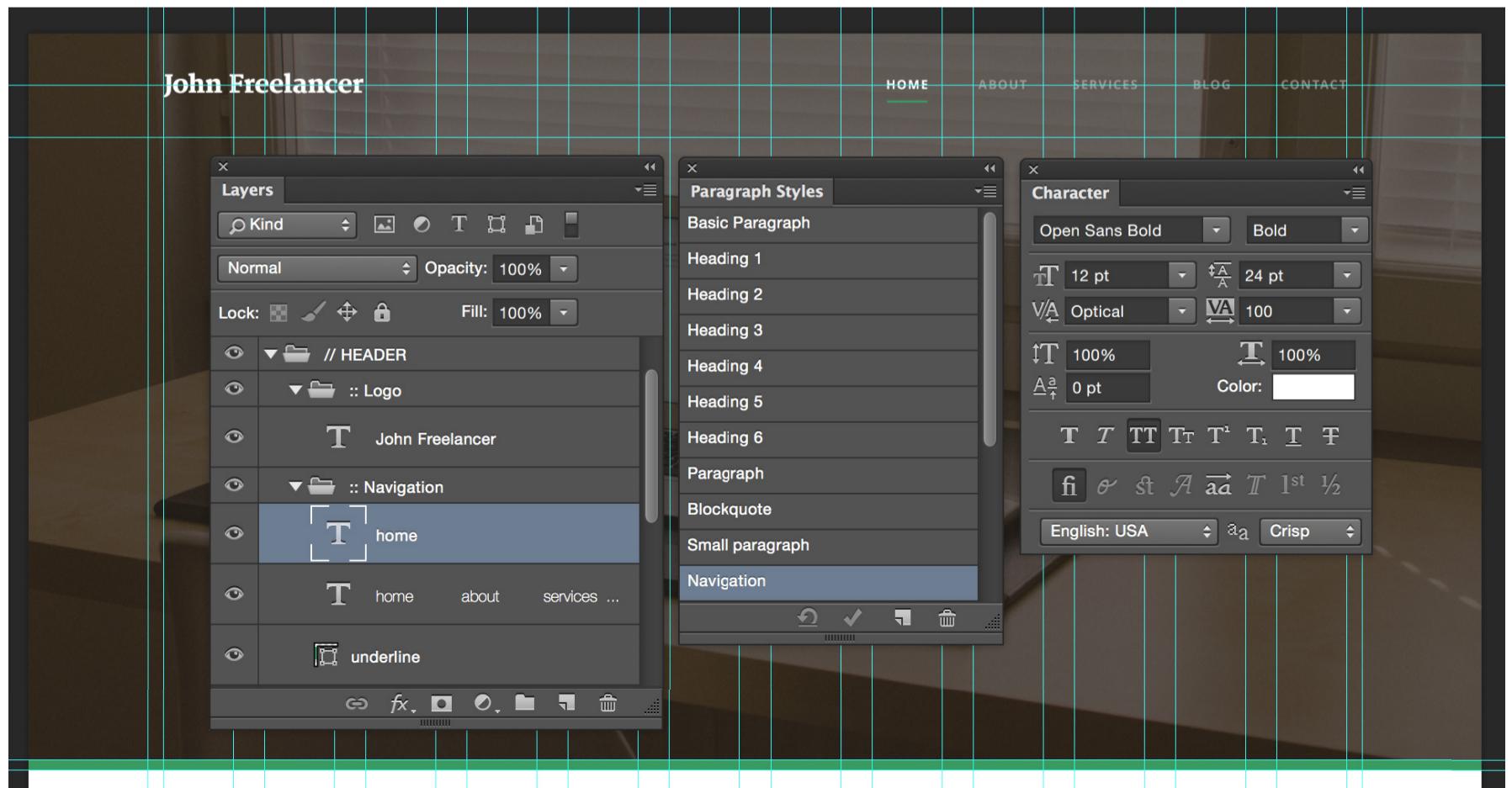
The logo and navigation, which are a part of the header, will actually appear on top of the intro background. I need to mark the place for it first. I'm choosing 100px for the header and I add two

guidelines: one at 100px and one in the middle at 50px (I'll use it to vertically align the logo and navigation).



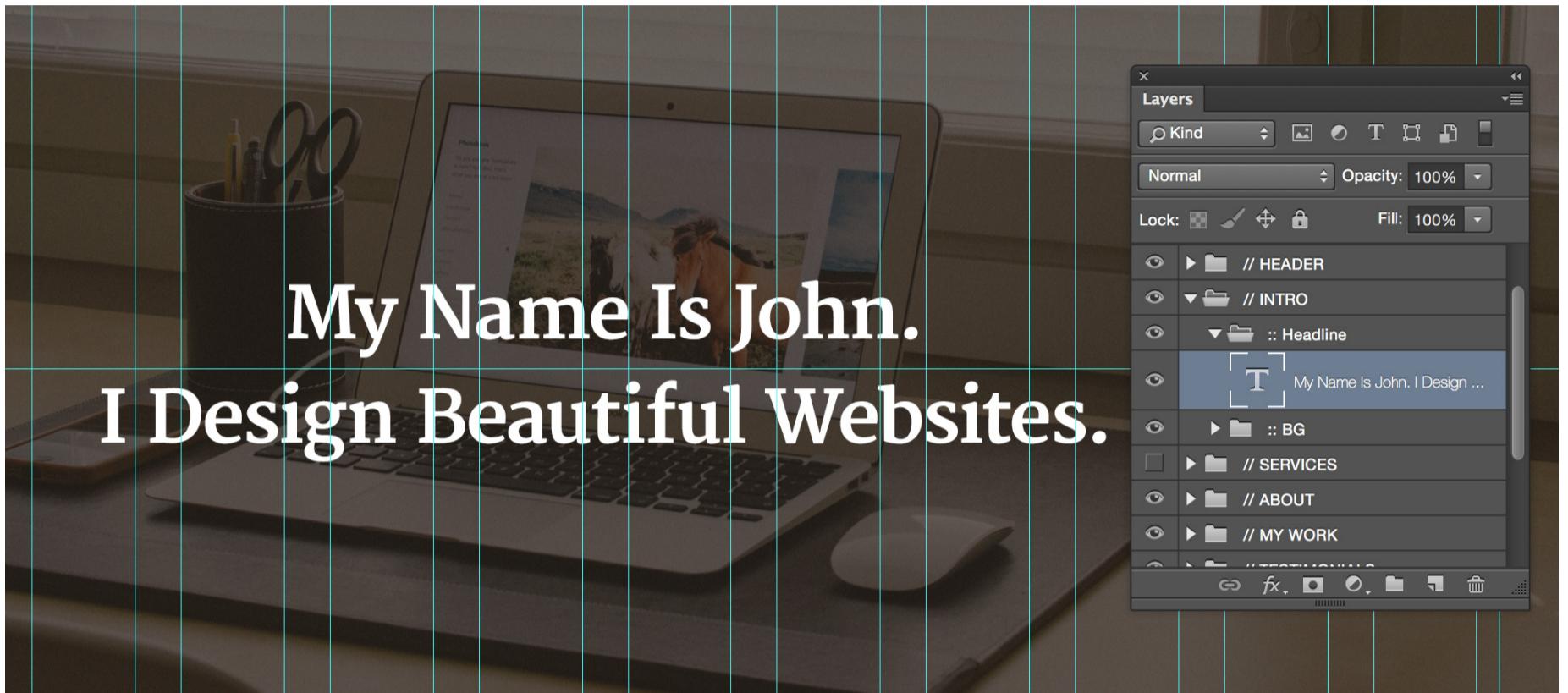
First, I add a simple typographical logo name. I choose one of the headings as a starting point and I scale it down to 24pt and I change the color to white. I don't need to create a paragraph style for the logo because it's kind of a unique element that won't be used anywhere else. Second, I add navigation items: Home, About, Services, Blog, and Contact.

Navigation is also kind of unique but I choose "**Heading 5**", as a starting point and I scale it down to 12pt and also make it white. I create a new paragraph style for the navigation, just in case I want to reuse it; for example, in the footer or some other pages.



To make the current page active, I make other elements at 30% opacity and the home link at 100% with a subtle green underline.

Now, I'm ready to design the intro text. I start by adding a guideline in the middle of the intro section (exactly 350px from the top). That's where I should place my intro headline. I use a “**Heading 1**” style for the headline but I change the color to white and I center the text. I create a new paragraph style “**Title**”.



I measure 2x 50px from the headline to the top. That's where my subheading goes. I use “**Heading 5**” and I change it to green and center the text. I also create a new paragraph style for it and call it “**Subtitle**”. In the middle, between the subheading and heading, I place a thin small line for accent and decoration.

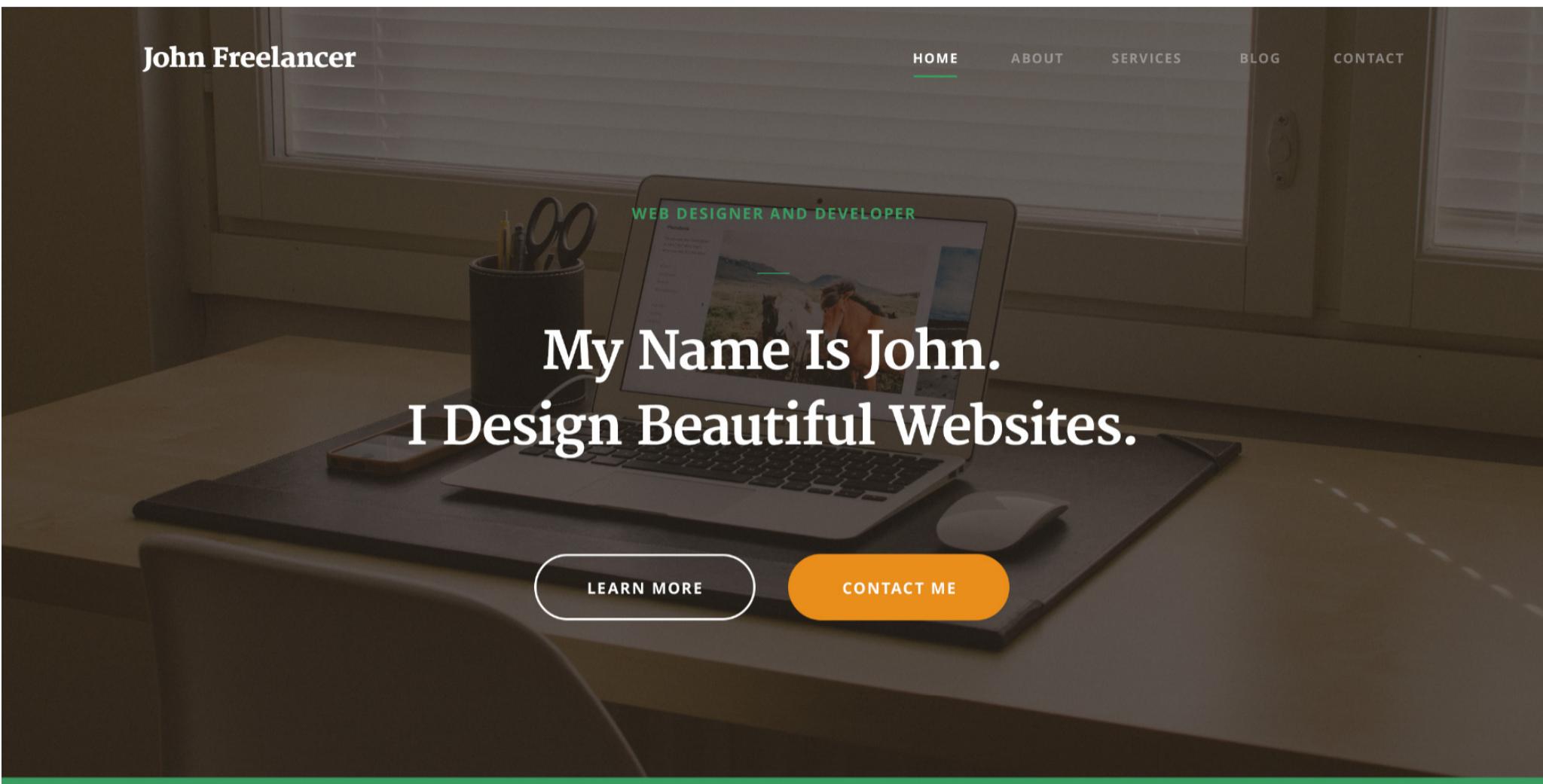


The last thing I need are buttons. I make two buttons in the intro: secondary and primary. The secondary button will link to the next section to learn more about my services. The primary one is used to open the contact form and contact me. To differentiate these two buttons, I make two different styles for each one. The secondary button is hollow inside and with a white border (remember the sketches? I took that idea from there) and the primary button will use my accent color (orange) and is filled, so it's much more prominent.

I create new paragraph styles for the button texts (based on “**Heading 5**”) and I also make hover effects which are placed in separate layer folders marked in orange (I usually use this color to mark any hover or popup elements).



The final intro section looks like this:

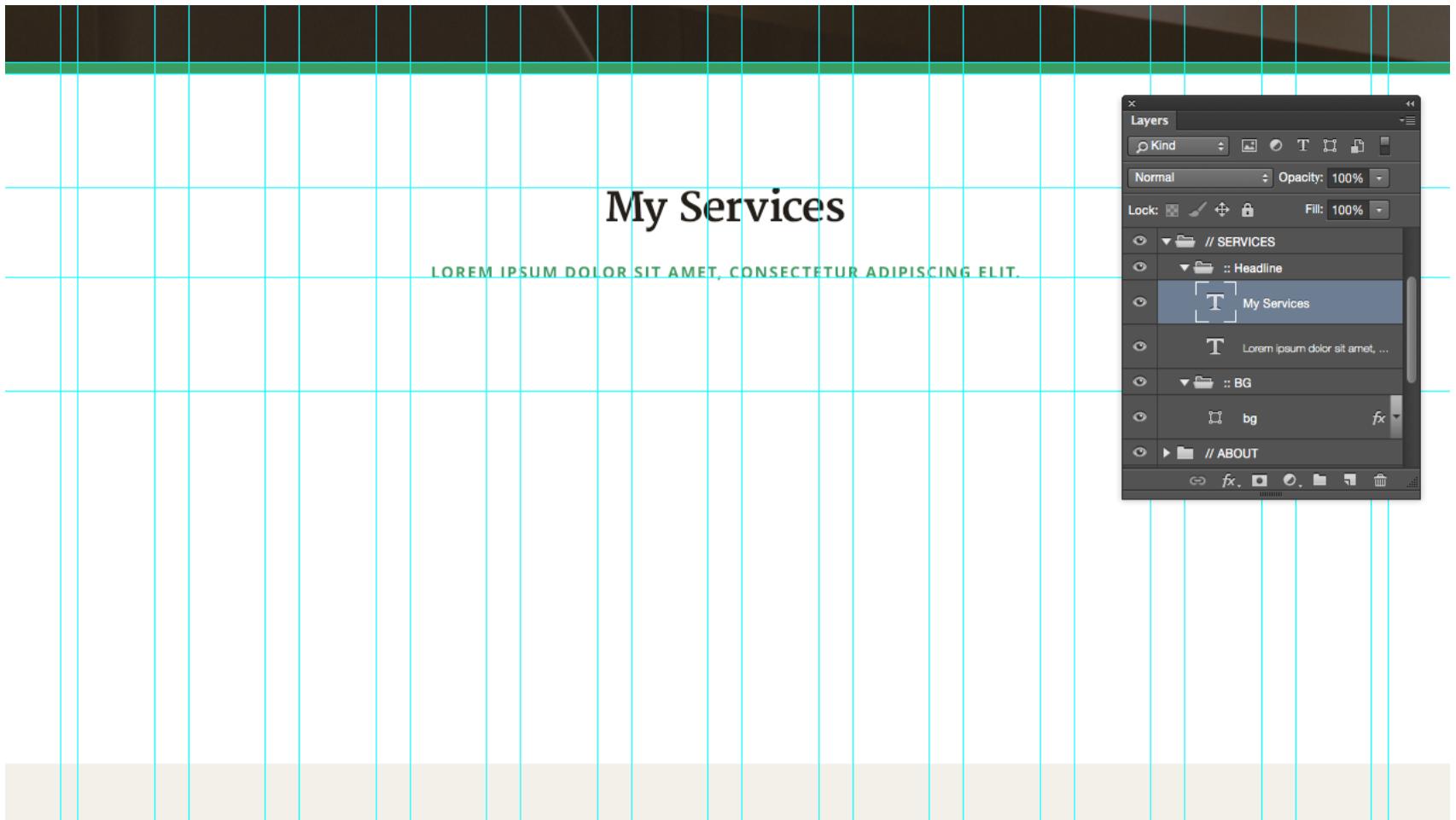


There was a lot of work in the intro section. Fortunately, the remaining home page sections will be much easier to do. I'm moving onto the next section, which is Services.

Step 3

First I'm adding heading and subheading. I add 100px margin from the top for this section. I used 50px as my base spacing in the intro section, so I'm trying to stick to that and multiply it wherever I need some space. I use a "**Heading 2**" style for the heading and "**Subheading**" style for the subheading. I change the color of the heading to my secondary dark brown and I update that paragraph style. I'll want to reuse the same color for all the "**Heading 2**" text.

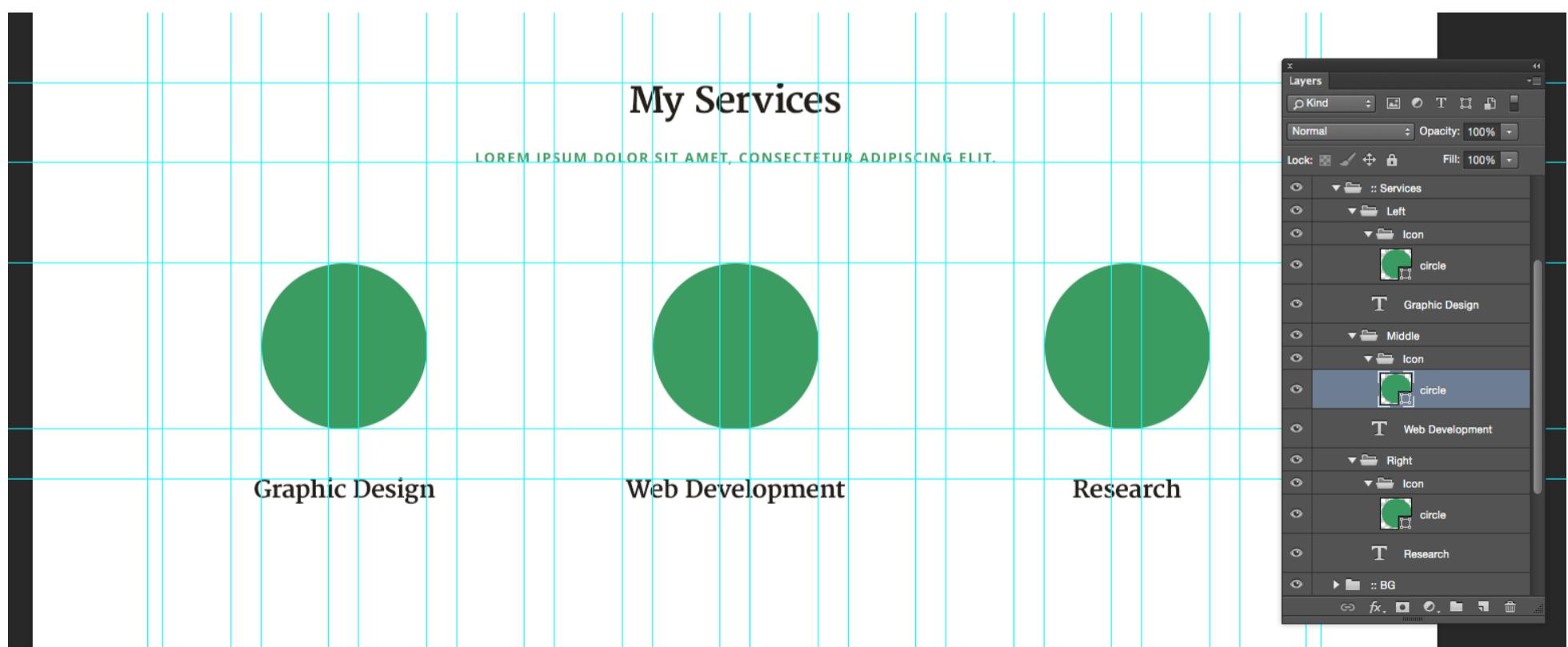
Please note that I use horizontal guidelines every time I mark a new spacing. I also want to make that section a little more prominent, so I'm changing its background to white. You can see a clear difference compared to the regular light tan background.



Next, I add three featured services. Based on my wireframe, I need to place them into three columns and I use my grid layout for that. I make three green circles that are going to be my icons and add a service name below each of them. I use a “**Heading 3**” style for the service titles with a secondary color.

You can already see a clear typography hierarchy used in this project. I used H1 for the intro title, then I used H2 for the section title and now H3 for services. If I wanted to add another subheading to services, it could be H4 or H5.

The spacing between the circles and headings is of course my standard 50px.



To make services icons, I use simple triangle shapes and position them in specific ways.

I had that icons vision while sketching ideas for this project in the beginning. I also make a very simple hover effect on them by changing the circle color to orange. I could make a cool looking hover effect by switching the positions of the triangles (maybe you can try out that idea in your own project).:-)



Graphic Design



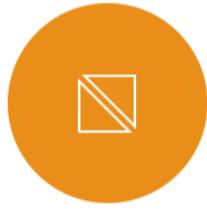
Web Development



Research



Graphic Design



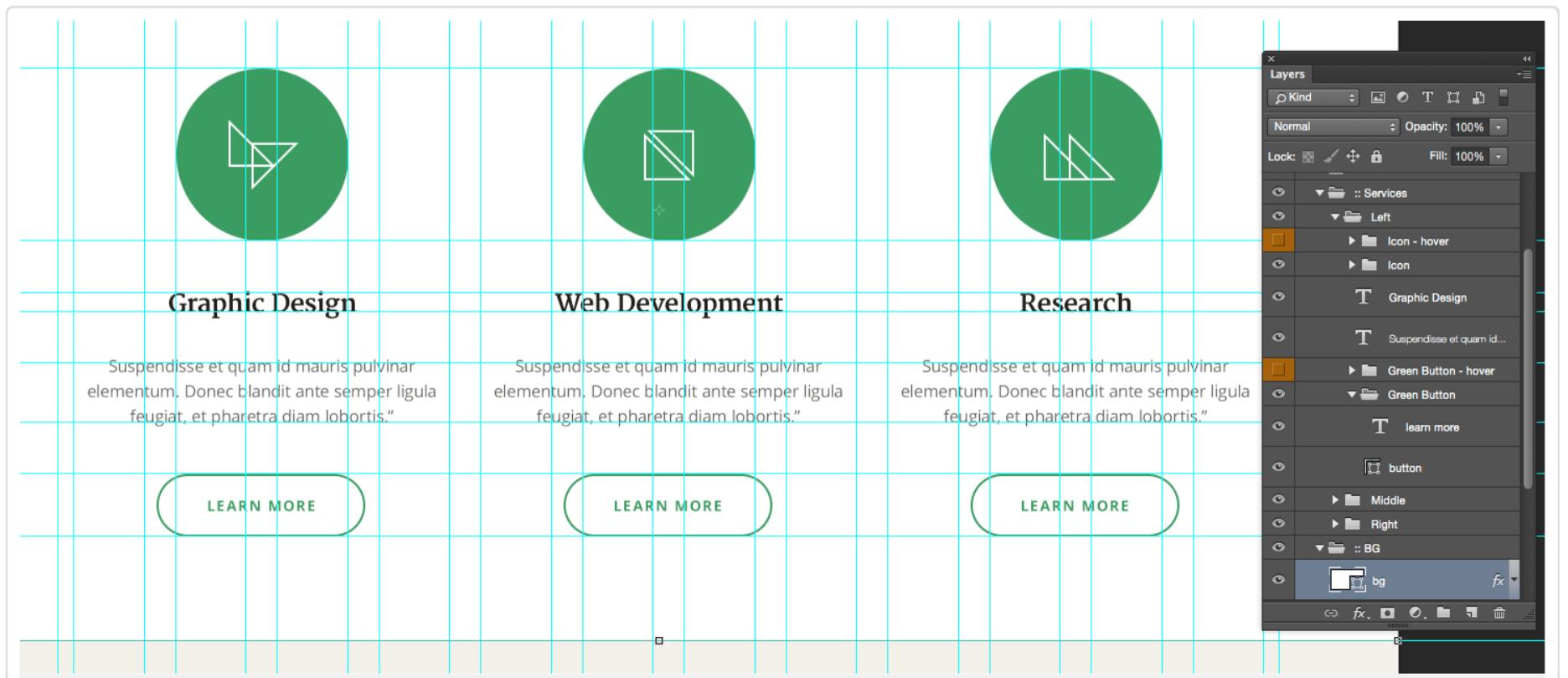
Web Development



Research

My services could be as simple as that—just the icon and service name, but I think it's always a good idea to add a short description and a button. Not everyone can figure out that you can click on the service name or icon to read more. Adding buttons with a clear call to action like "Learn More", "Find Out More", "Read More", or "Get Started" will be a no-brainer for visitors.

I use another 50px spacing before and after the service description. I use a "**Small Paragraph**" style, and as a color I'm choosing a tinted secondary color which is around 30% lighter than the base color. I update this style and save it for future use. This will make my descriptions a little more subtle. I want them to be less prominent than the service name and the button.



The screenshot shows the Photoshop interface with three service cards designed in a grid. Each card consists of a green circular icon with a white triangle pattern, followed by the service name, a short description in a small paragraph style, and a 'LEARN MORE' button.

- Graphic Design:** Icon shows three triangles forming a stylized 'G'. Description: "Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis." Button: 'LEARN MORE'.
- Web Development:** Icon shows two triangles forming an 'N'. Description: "Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis." Button: 'LEARN MORE'.
- Research:** Icon shows three triangles forming a stylized 'R'. Description: "Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis." Button: 'LEARN MORE'.

The Photoshop layers panel on the right shows the following structure:

- Root layer: :: Services
 - Left
 - Icon - hover
 - Icon
 - Graphic Design
 - Suspendisse et quam id...
 - Green Button - hover
 - Green Button
 - learn more
 - Middle
 - Right
- bg

To create buttons, I copy the secondary button I created for the intro section. I only change its border and text to green. I also make a quick hover effect for that button. It's very consistent with the other buttons in the intro.

[LEARN MORE](#)[LEARN MORE](#)

Finally, I add another 100px spacing after the buttons, and that's where my white background ends. The service section is complete:

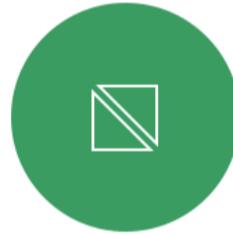
My Services

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.



Graphic Design

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

Web Development

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

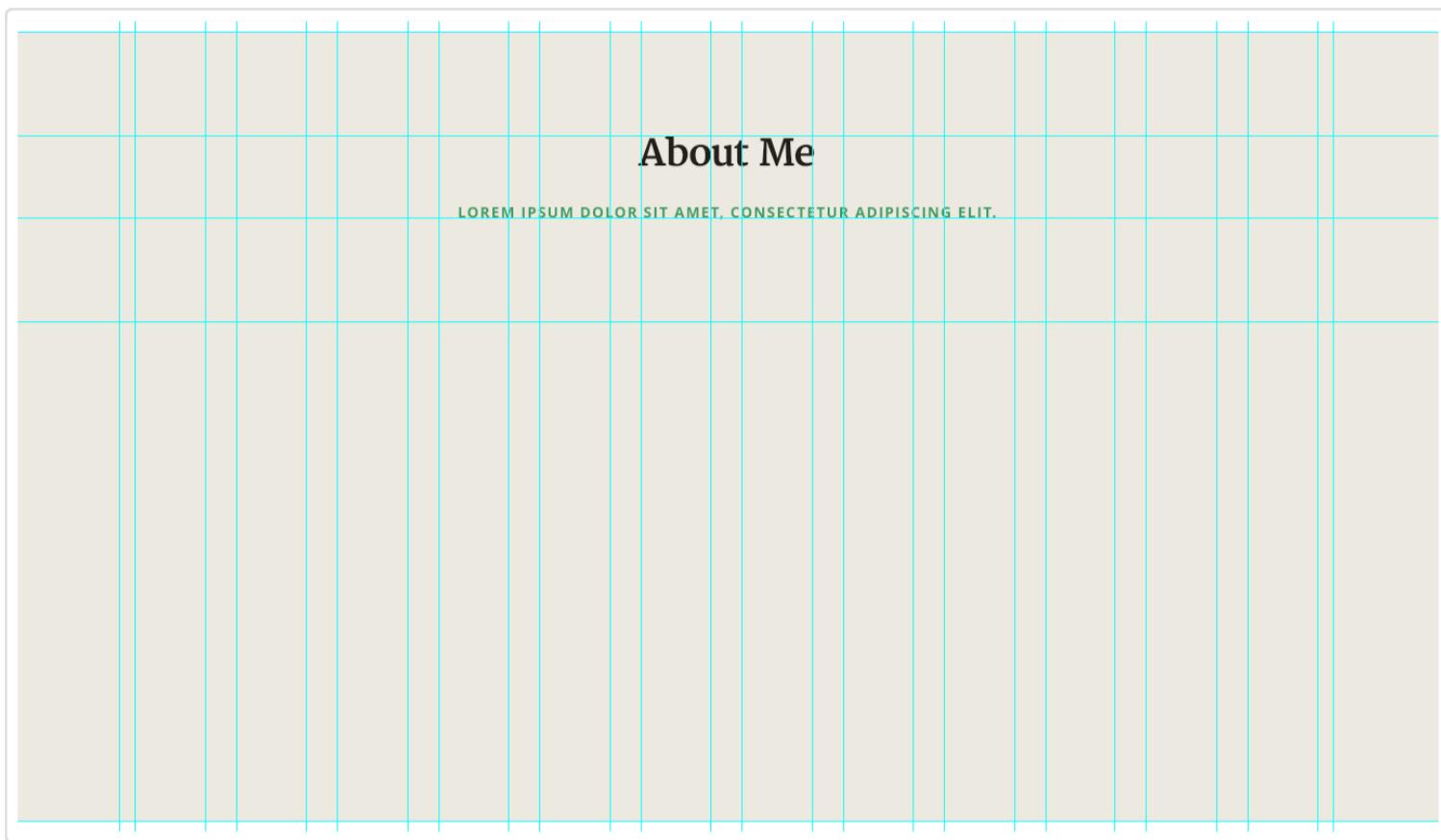
Research

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

Step 4

In this step, I design a very simple about section. I start the same way I did the previous section:



This gives me a good starting point. I have the heading ready and I put a guideline where the content should begin.

Based on my wireframe, I need to lay out the content in three columns. The middle and right column is just a simple about text with a “**Paragraph**” style and a secondary color. In the left column, I want to create something that looks like a profile card. Here, I add a photo in a circle (using a clipping mask the same way we did with the background photo in the second step) and right below it a name using a “**Heading 3**” style. I also add one line of a description (“**Small Paragraph**”) and a quick link to the Twitter profile (“**Subheading**” style and underlined).

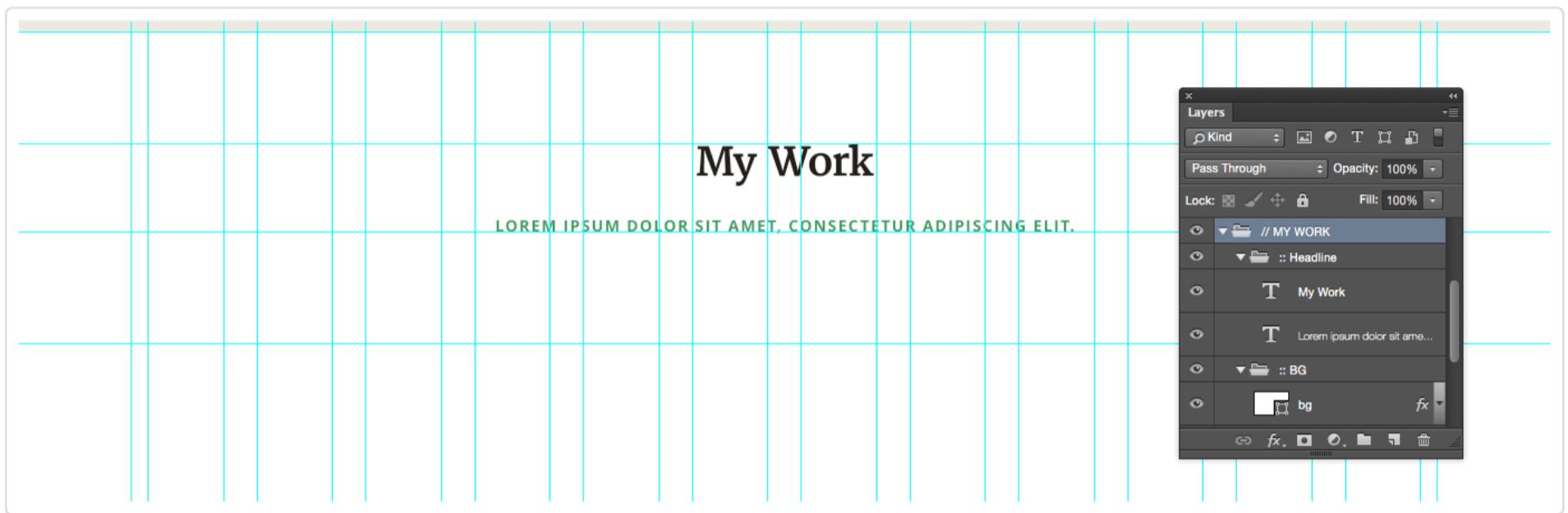
A screenshot of Adobe Photoshop showing the 'About Me' section design. The interface includes a toolbar, a layers panel on the right, and a canvas with a grid. On the canvas, there is a circular profile picture of a cartoon character, the name 'John Freelancer' in bold black font, and a subtitle 'Graphic Designer / Web Developer'. Below the name is a green underlined link '@JOHNFREELANCER'. To the right of the profile are two columns of text. The first column contains placeholder text 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.' and a second paragraph 'Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.'. The second column contains placeholder text 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.' and a second paragraph 'Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.' At the bottom right of the text area is a green underlined link 'Read more about me...'. The layers panel shows various layers including 'Layer 8', 'photo', 'John Freelancer', 'Graphic Designer / Web D...', 'Johnfreelancer', 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit ame...', and 'BG'. The 'BG' layer is at the bottom of the stack.

Note how everything is perfectly aligned with the vertical grid guidelines. It's all lined up with the top horizontal guideline as well.

You can see that the last line of the about content is a link to read more. I create a new “**Character Style**” with a green (primary color) and underlined text. I can easily use it on any text to show a link.

Step 5

I'm ready to move into another section, which is my portfolio. Let's first put a headline, add a white background and plan out some space:

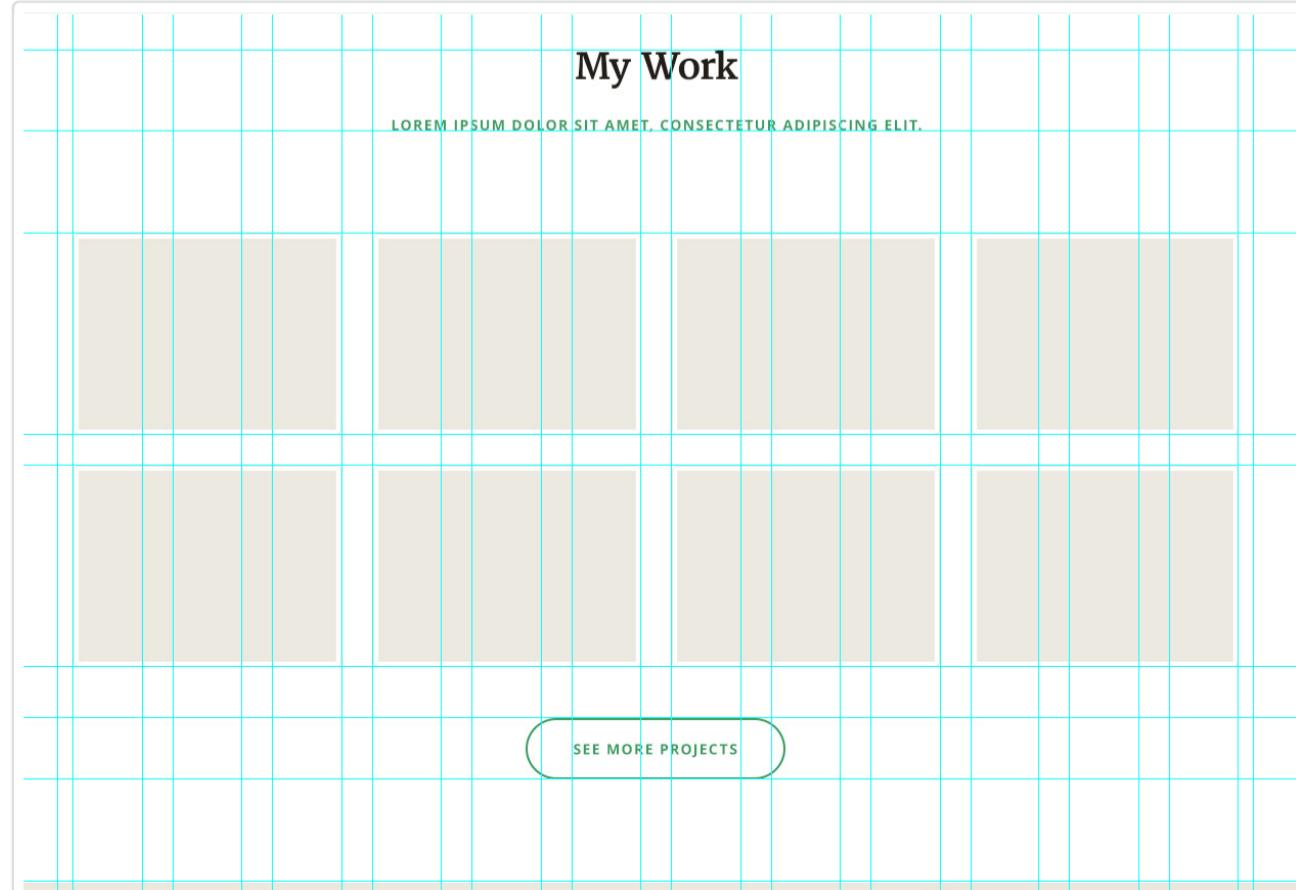


Again, you can see 100 pixels above the heading and 100px below the heading.

I'll make good use of the grid layout in this step. I want to show a total number of eight small project thumbnails, so I'm planning to have two rows of four projects. To get started, I use regular rectangle shapes with some styling, using 1px borders and a very light background.

The width is exactly three small columns in my 12-grid layout. I multiplied the width by 0.75, so my thumbnails have a standard 4:3 ratio.

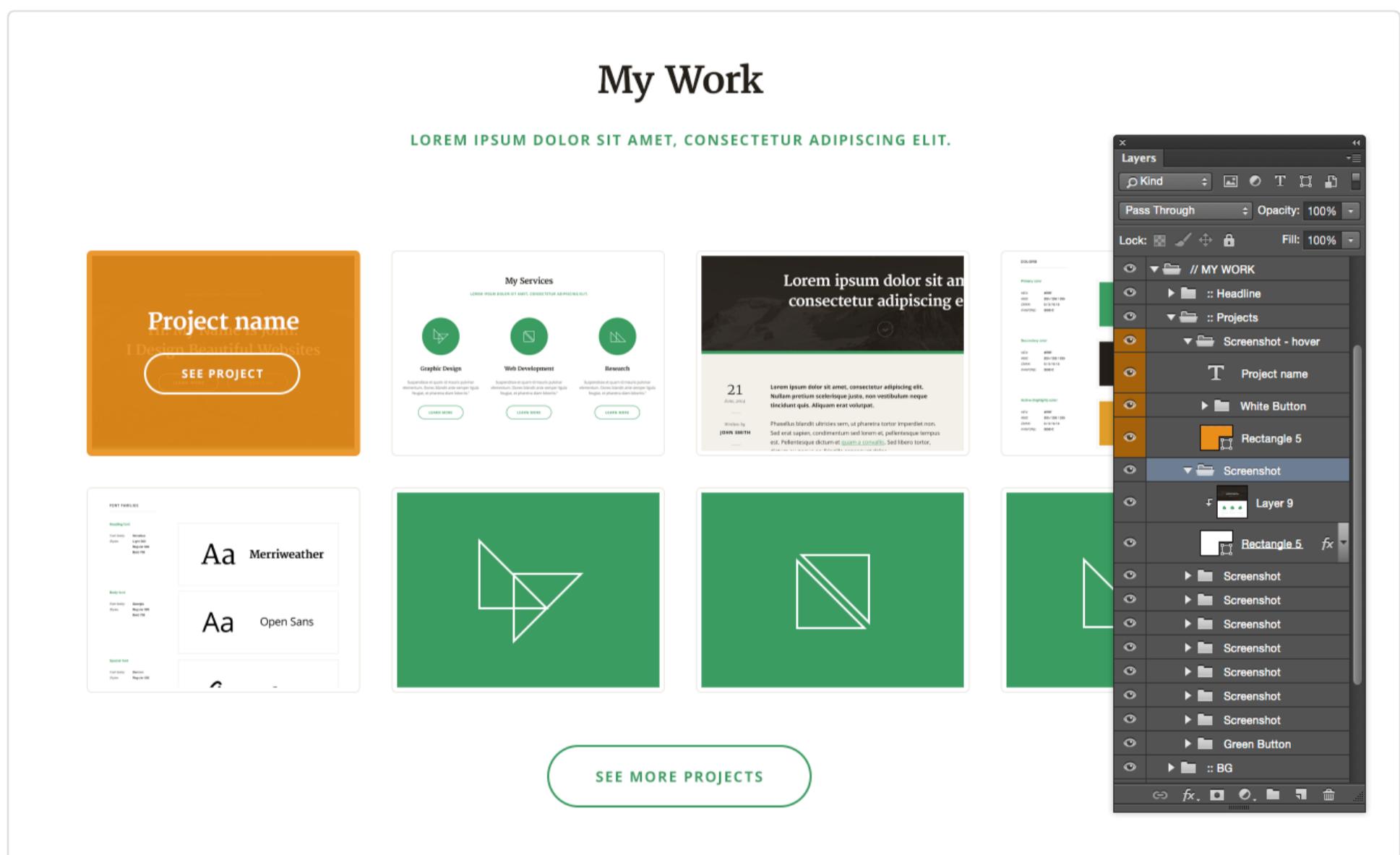
The spacing between the projects is the same both horizontally and vertically, which is equal to the gap between columns.



I also add a “See More Projects” button at the bottom and separate everything with my standard spacing units, 50px and 100px.

See how strictly following safe measurements creates a perfectly looking grid of placeholders for my designs? I can easily say that the math did the work for me here. I usually start with a very simple and logical layout, knowing I can always play more with it and add some variations and accents to it. Go ahead and try to make something more creative in your own design project by starting with this basic form.

Now I only need to fill out the placeholders with the thumbnails. I use the same “**Clipping Mask**” method like I used with the photo in the intro section. I repeat it for every single project thumbnail and design a simple hover effect as well.



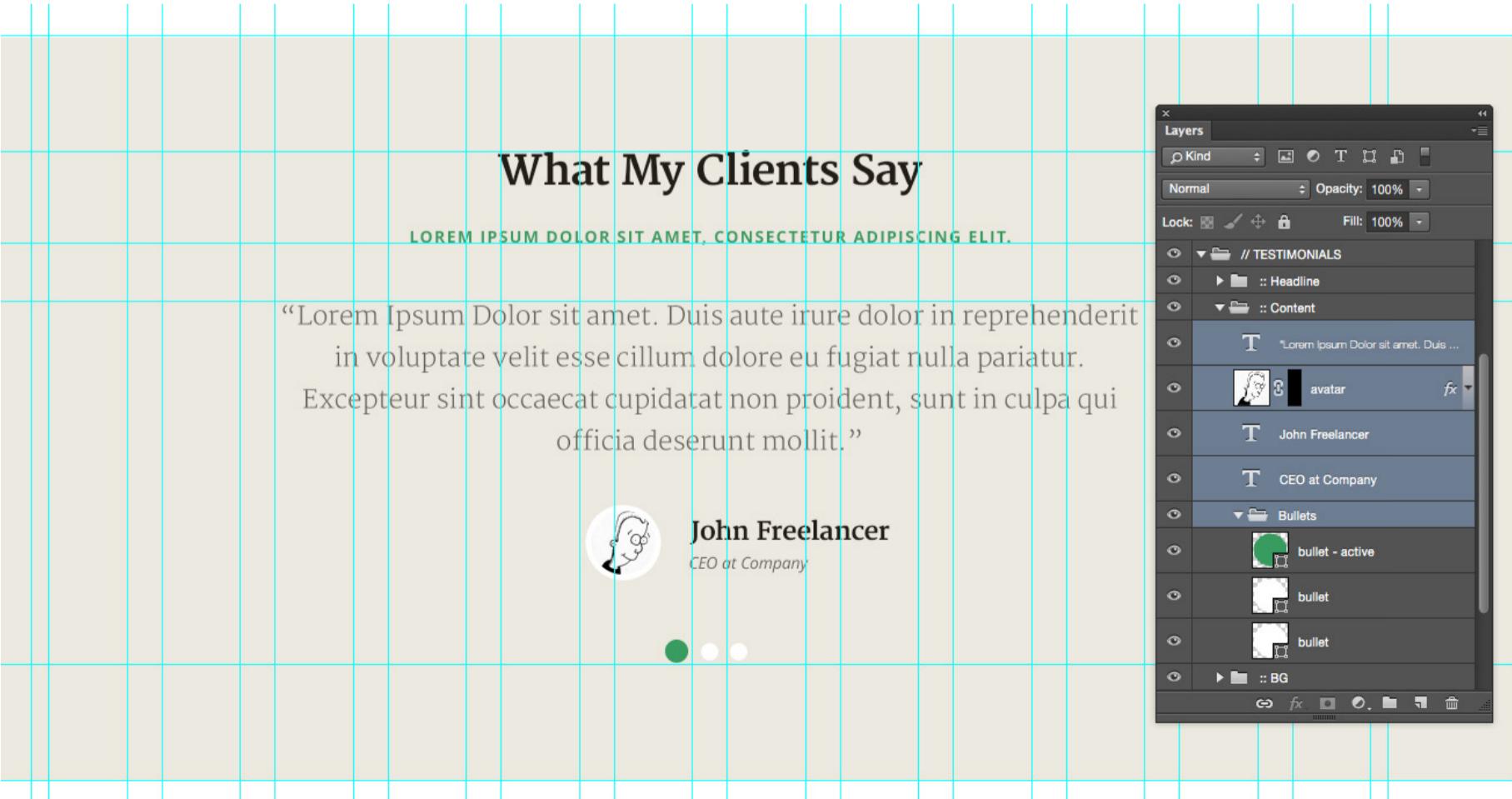
Step 6

And this brings us to the section with testimonials: "What My Clients Say". This one is going to be very easy. As usual, I start with planning some space, adding the heading and background:



Then I add a sample quote design based on my wireframe layout. I use "**Blockquote**" paragraph style and use a lighter version of my secondary color for it. The text is big enough and I don't want it to be too prominent versus the person's profile below it.

For the person's name, I use the "**Heading 4**" style and the caption below it is just the "**Small**



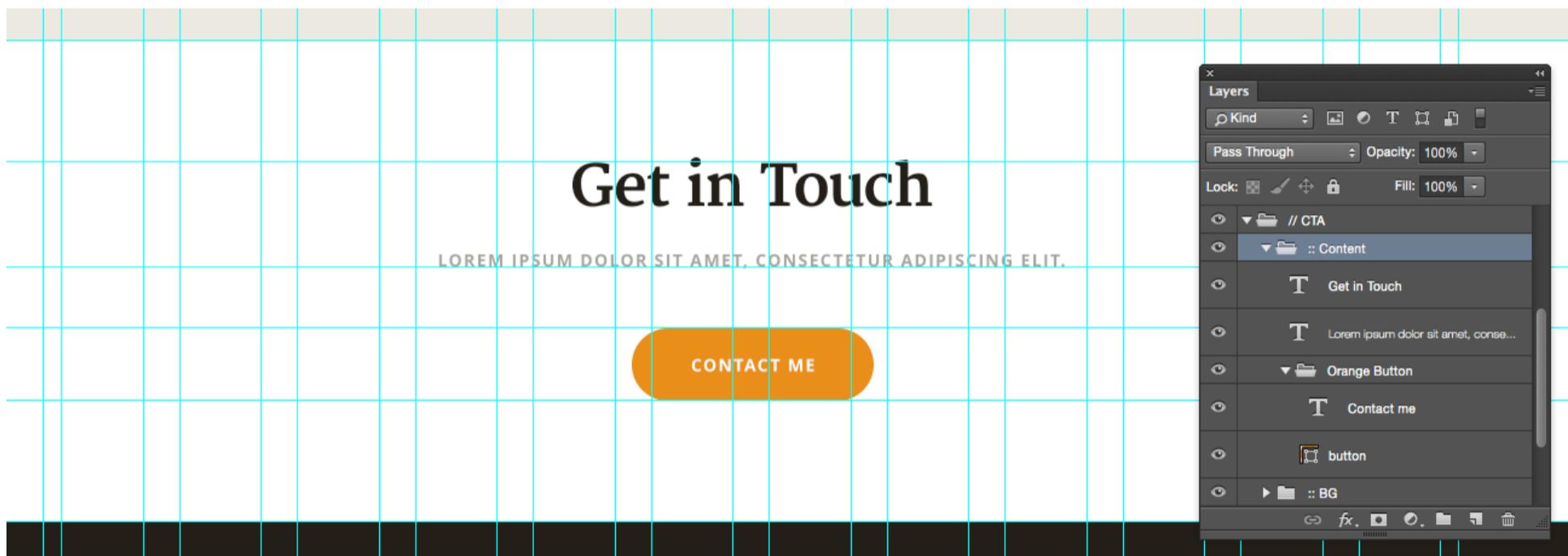
Paragraph". You can see how useful the typography style guide is here. I can easily reuse the already designed typography elements and make sure that everything has a consistent visual feeling.

Step 7

The final section is the "Call To Action" banner. It also has a very simple and predictable design.

I use my standard 50px based spacing and the heading style from other sections. The only difference here is that I'm using a light version of my secondary color for the subheading.

I'm doing it because I want to avoid a visual conflict between the subheading and the CTA primary button right below it. I want the button to be the most prominent element in this section.

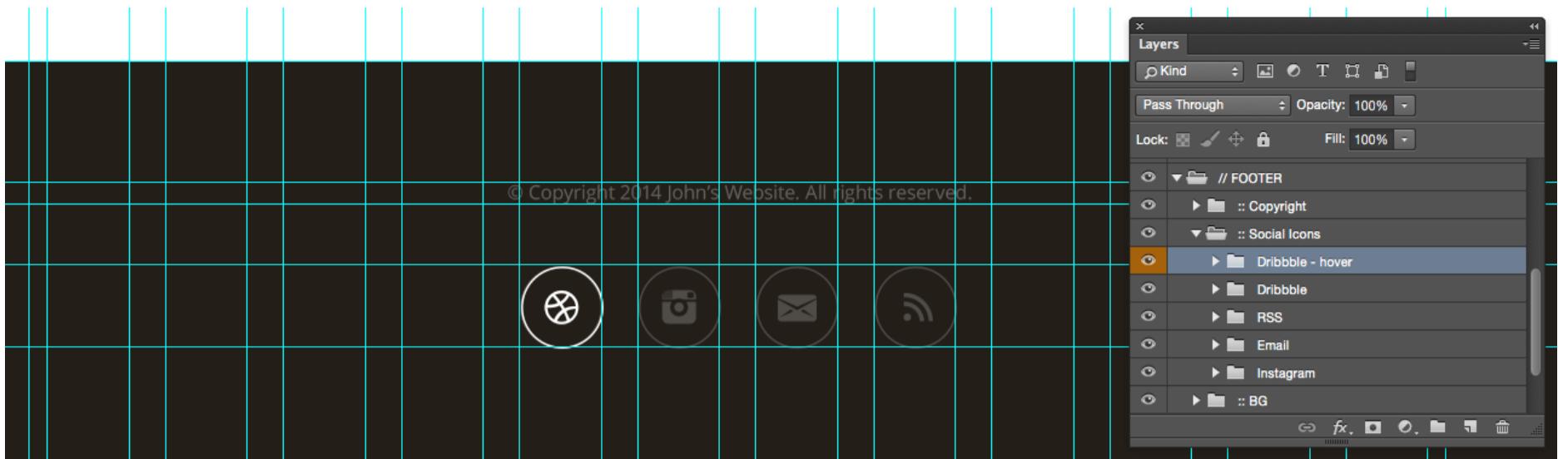


Step 8

Now it's time to close the entire page with a nice looking footer. The good thing is that I need to design it only once and we'll reuse the same footer on all the other pages.

I started the entire home page design with a dark intro background, so I think it'll be a nice connection if I also close the design with a dark background. The background color is my secondary color from the color palette, of course.

Note I position the social icons so every icon is exactly the size of a single grid column. The icons are all white but I change their opacity to 20% and they'll light up to 100% visibility on hover.



Step 9

This is the last step of designing the home page mockup. I want to have my contact form pop up on top of the page when you click the "Contact Me" button or "Contact" link in the top menu.

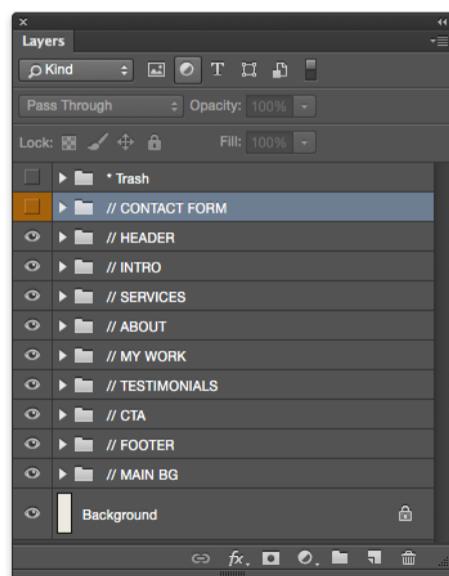
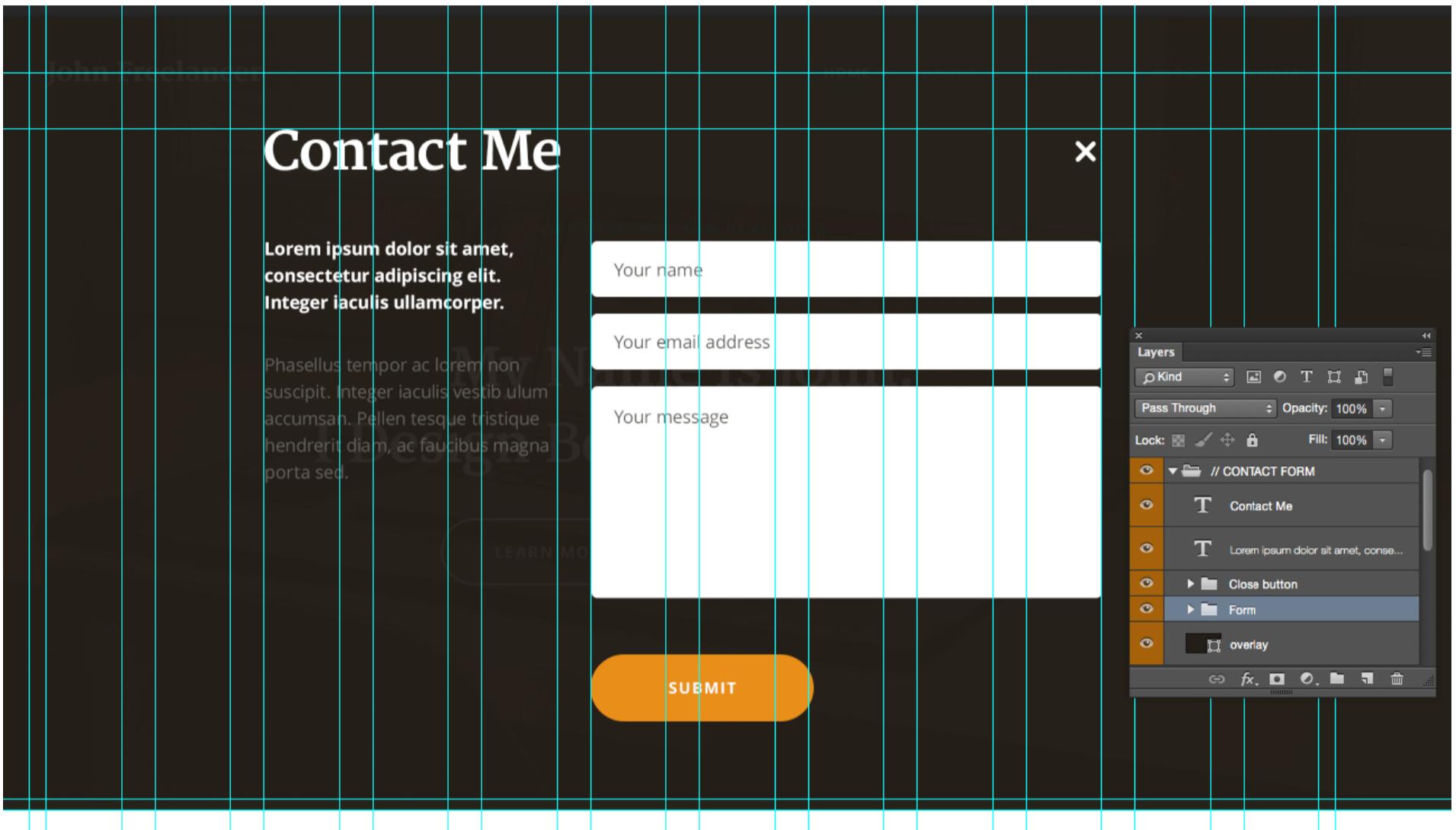
Because it's a popup screen and not initially visible on the home page, I mark it in the orange folder in my layers and move it to the top. My overlay background is the secondary dark brown color with 95% opacity. When the contact form pops up, I want to have a solid background that covers the original page but also have that feeling that it's only a popup and there is still something behind it.

I start with a heading, overlay background and a close button. Then, I add a simple contact form design and some text. I still stick to my grid layout to display it in two columns.

Now I can hide the entire "**// CONTACT FORM**" layer folder and keep it that way by default. If I ever need to change the contact form design or show it to someone else, I can turn it on and save a preview image file.

The screenshot shows a website homepage with a dark overlay. The overlay contains a close button in the top right corner. Below the close button, there is a contact form with a heading 'Contact Me', a text input field with placeholder text 'My Name Is John. I Design Beautiful Websites.', and a message area. The layers panel on the right shows the 'CONTACT FORM' folder is collapsed, while other layers like 'trash', 'close button', and 'overlay' are visible.

I can also put it in my notes for other designers or developers who are going to work on the same project that this folder is meant to be visible as a pop up screen.



My work on the home page design is done at this point. I hope you've been working on your own design at the same time and you're proudly looking at the final result.

You can go through all the sections again and fix some guidelines, remove unused layers, and reorganize the entire layers structure. There is always something that you might have missed while designing the initial concept. Don't worry if you did. Not everything has to be perfect in the first round. There is always time for polishing all the details at the end.

This is my final home page concept:

The image shows a website design for "John Freelancer". The homepage features a dark background with a laptop displaying a website template. The main headline reads "My Name Is John. I Design Beautiful Websites." with "LEARN MORE" and "CONTACT ME" buttons below it. The navigation bar includes links for HOME, ABOUT, SERVICES, BLOG, and CONTACT. To the right is a screenshot of the Photoshop Layers panel, showing a hierarchical structure of design elements.

My Services

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

Graphic Design

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

Web Development

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

Research

Suspendisse et quam id mauris pulvinar elementum. Donec blandit ante semper ligula feugiat, et pharetra diam lobortis."

[LEARN MORE](#)

About Me

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

John Freelancer
Graphic Designer / Web Developer

John Freelancer
Graphic Designer / Web Developer

[@JOHNFREELANCER](#)

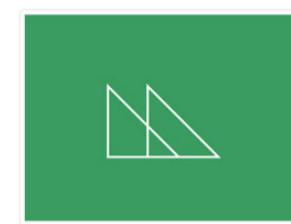
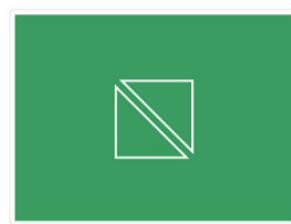
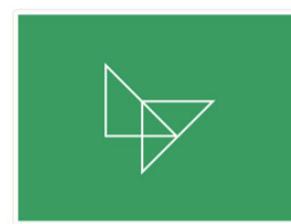
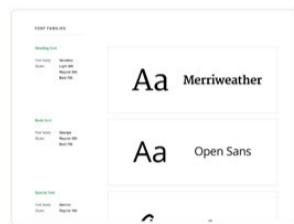
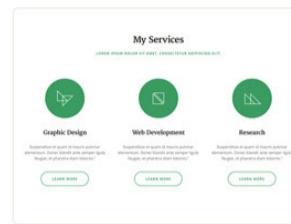
John Freelancer
Graphic Designer / Web Developer

John Freelancer
Graphic Designer / Web Developer

[Read more about me...](#)

My Work

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.



[SEE MORE PROJECTS](#)

What My Clients Say

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

“Lorem Ipsum Dolor sit amet. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit
in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.
Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui
officia deserunt mollit.”



John Freelancer

CEO at Company



Get in Touch

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

[CONTACT ME](#)

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See how easy it was to create a design with consistent typography, colors and spacing when you have all those elements designed beforehand?

Thanks to the web typography style guide, I didn't have to worry too much about choosing font families or specific sizes. I could totally focus on the concept and put all my energy and creativity into making the best possible page design. It was just a matter of applying the right style in the right place, which wasn't that hard after all.

It's the same with colors. My only job was to go back to the color palette and pick the right color which I've already categorized by primary, secondary and background. I could also quickly pick a desired tint or shade of the base color without guessing. It's all in the color palette file, which is my cheat sheet for the entire project.

If you followed my steps you should have achieved a very similar level of consistency in your own project and your design looks professional, organized and clean.

Designing the about page

The home page is already done and I can move on to designing the internal pages. I decided to create a mockup for the about page, but remember that this design will also be used as a template for any of these kinds of pages. So, it's more like showing what a sample of this type of inner page should look like.

Let's say the website requires a single service page. You can easily reuse the layout and structure of the about page and replace the content only. You can probably use the same PSD file and design alternate content or create a copy of the about page and make it a whole new file.

For more advanced projects, you may end up designing three or four different page templates for different content needs. It won't be necessarily specified if it's an about page or service page but just different template names with sample content. That might be all that is needed for web developers to code the working website.

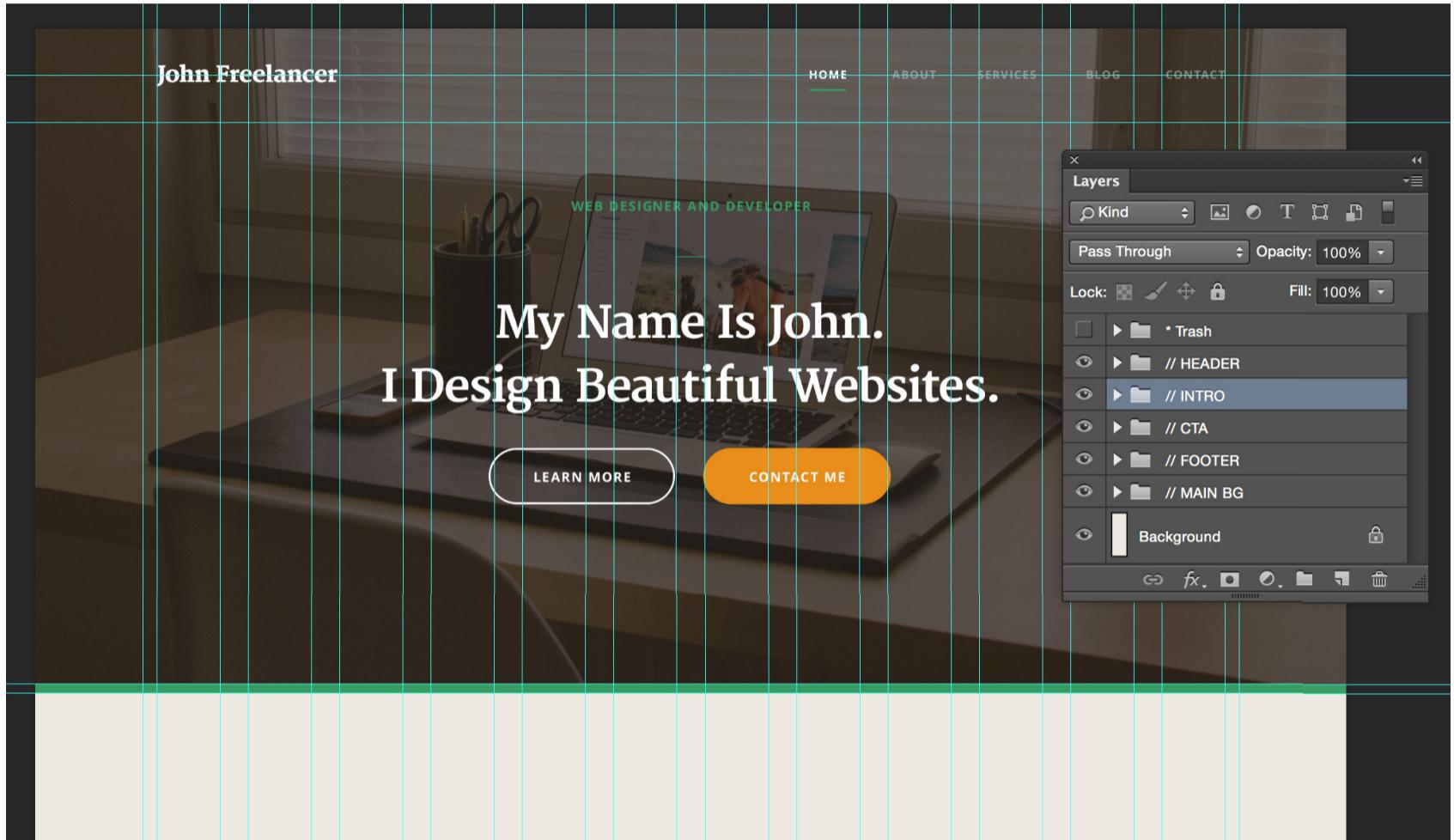
For smaller projects, I would recommend designing as many inner pages as you can, so it has a more custom look. Even if the inner pages have the same overall structure, header and footer, you can still completely customize the content layout.

Let's see how I made my sample inner page.

Step 1

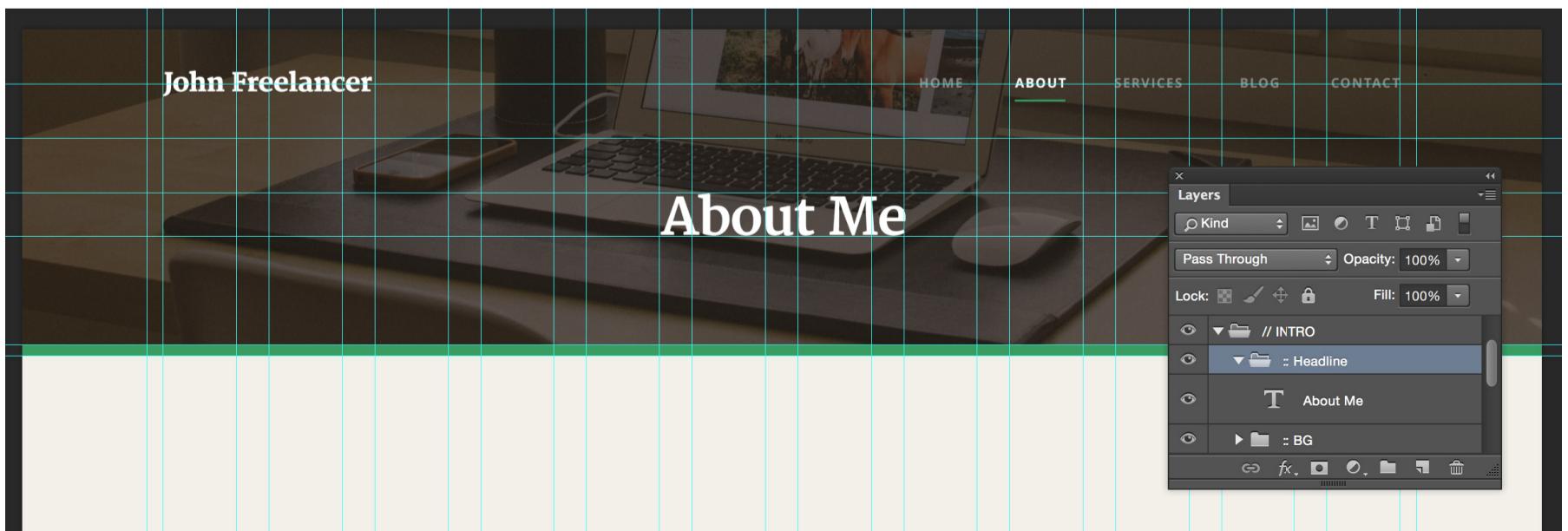
First, I make a copy of the home page PSD file, and change its name to “**-Page.psd**”. Next I need to clean it up with any content that was specific for the front page.

Thanks to the clear layer folders setup we made in the first file, I can quickly find the layers that I want to remove. I leave only “*** Trash**”, “**// HEADER**”, “**// INTRO**”, “**// CTA**”, “**// FOOTER**” and “**// MAIN BG**”. I can also take out most of the horizontal guidelines that aren’t needed anymore.



This gives me a new, clean slate for the about page. I start by redesigning the intro. I need to keep the header much shorter, so it features only the page title.

I position the title 50px from the top navigation and logo area and add 100px spacing below it. I reduce the size of the background element to match the new dimensions. Because I’m using a clipping mask, I don’t need to do anything with the photo. It’ll automatically crop to the size of the background shape.

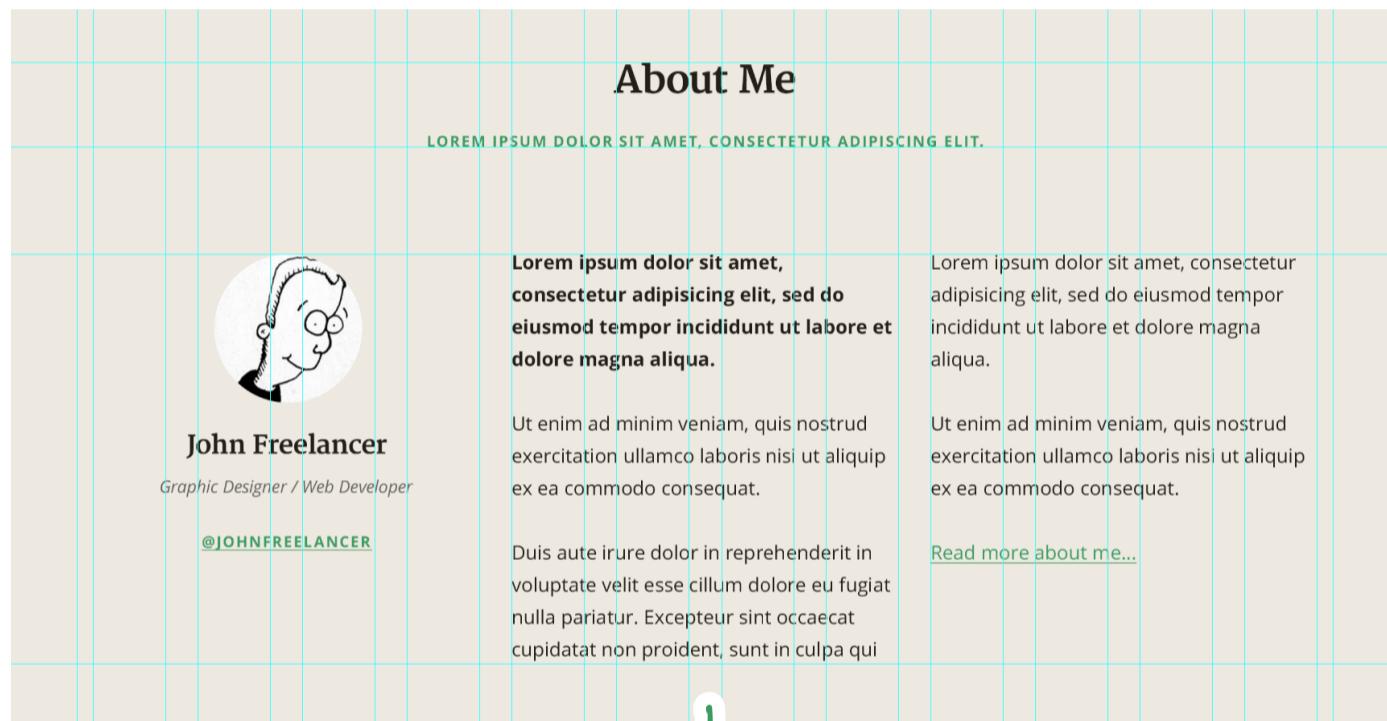


Step 2

Notice that I also changed the current menu item from "Home" to "About".

To design the page content, I use the grid layout, of course. It helps me to spread the content across the entire width of the page while still keeping it all according to the original structure.

I start by moving the about content from the home page section and adding it into the "**//MAIN CONTENT**" folder. I add two buttons right below my profile image and extend the copy with some sample subheadings (**Heading 3**) and text. That's all I really need for the about page. The most important thing here is the structure and the idea of how my single pages will look from now on.



John Freelancer
Graphic Designer / Web Developer
@JOHNFREELANCE

FOLLOW ME

EMAIL ME

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

John Freelancer
Graphic Designer / Web Developer
@JOHNFREELANCE

Nunc pharetra ut dolor vel accumsan.

Phasellus blandit ultricies sem, ut pharetra tortor imperdiet non. Sed erat sapien, condimentum sed lorem et, pellentesque tempus est. Pellentesque dictum et quam a convallis. Sed libero tortor, dictum eu neque ac, fringilla consequat dolor.

Morbi dictum sit amet purus porta.

- > Cras odio magna, vehicula id lorem et, fringilla tellus.
- > Maecenas euismod nulla hendrerit orci, gravida, in tincidunt quam interdum.
- > Nam feugiat, augue sit amet auctor loborum, dolor ligula elementum quam, euismod gravida quam diam non mi.
- > Proin ut justo viverra, gravida diam id, semper nibh.
- > Mauris sit amet interdum nibh.

Step 3

If it was a single service page, I would place the text describing the service in two columns on the right side and the service's icon with a button to email me on the left side. You can imagine how this template will help me to reuse the same structure for all the other pages.

In the last step, I close the entire content area with the call to action banner and my footer from the home page. These parts are already designed, so I only move the entire elements up. Here is what the final page design looks like:

The screenshot shows a website layout for 'John Freelancer'. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, ABOUT (which is underlined in green), SERVICES, BLOG, and CONTACT. Below the navigation is a banner featuring a laptop on a desk with the title 'About Me'. The main content area has a light gray background. On the left, there's a circular profile picture of a man with glasses, followed by the name 'John Freelancer' and the title 'Graphic Designer / Web Developer'. Below this is a social media handle '@JOHNFREELEANCER'. Two buttons are present: 'FOLLOW ME' with a globe icon and 'EMAIL ME' with an envelope icon. The central column contains two text blocks. The first block is titled 'Nunc pharetra ut dolor vel accumsan.' and includes placeholder text: 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nullam pretium scelerisque justo, non vestibulum neque tincidunt quis. Aliquam erat volutpat.' The second block is also titled 'Nunc pharetra ut dolor vel accumsan.' and includes placeholder text: 'Phasellus blandit ultricies sem, ut pharetra tortor imperdiet non. Sed erat sapien, condimentum sed lorem et, pellentesque tempus est. Pellentesque dictum et quam a convallis. Sed libero tortor, dictum eu neque ac, fringilla consequat dolor.' To the right of these blocks is a sidebar with a heading 'Morbi dictum sit amet purus at porta.' followed by a list of five bullet points, each containing a link to a placeholder text section: 'Cras odio magna, vehicula id lorem et, porta fringilla tellus.', 'Maecenas euismod nulla hendrerit orci gravida, in tincidunt quam interdum.', 'Nam feugiat, augue sit amet auctor lobortis, dolor ligula elementum quam, euismod gravida quam diam non mi.', 'Proin ut justo viverra, gravida diam id, semper nibh.', and 'Mauris sit amet interdum nibh.'

Get in Touch

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

CONTACT ME

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That was easy! Try to design more single pages in your own project. You can keep it all under the same file and change the “// MAIN CONTENT” folder name to “// CONTENT - ABOUT” or “// CONTENT - SERVICE”, etc.

Let's move to the last big portion of this project, which is the blog design. I'll show you how I put together the blog page and a single blog post.

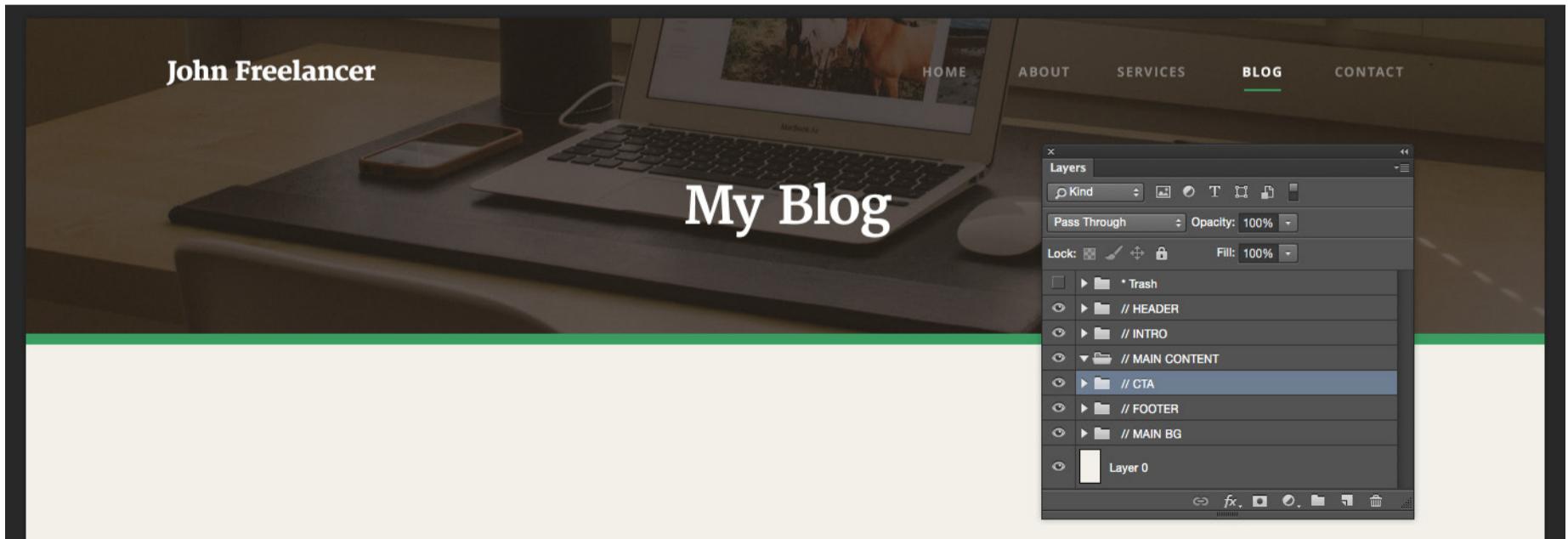
Designing the blog pages

Every simple blog needs at least these two page mockups: the archive page and the single post. Let's begin with the archive page, which is the page where I'm going to list all the blog posts including their title, image, excerpt, and a link to read more.

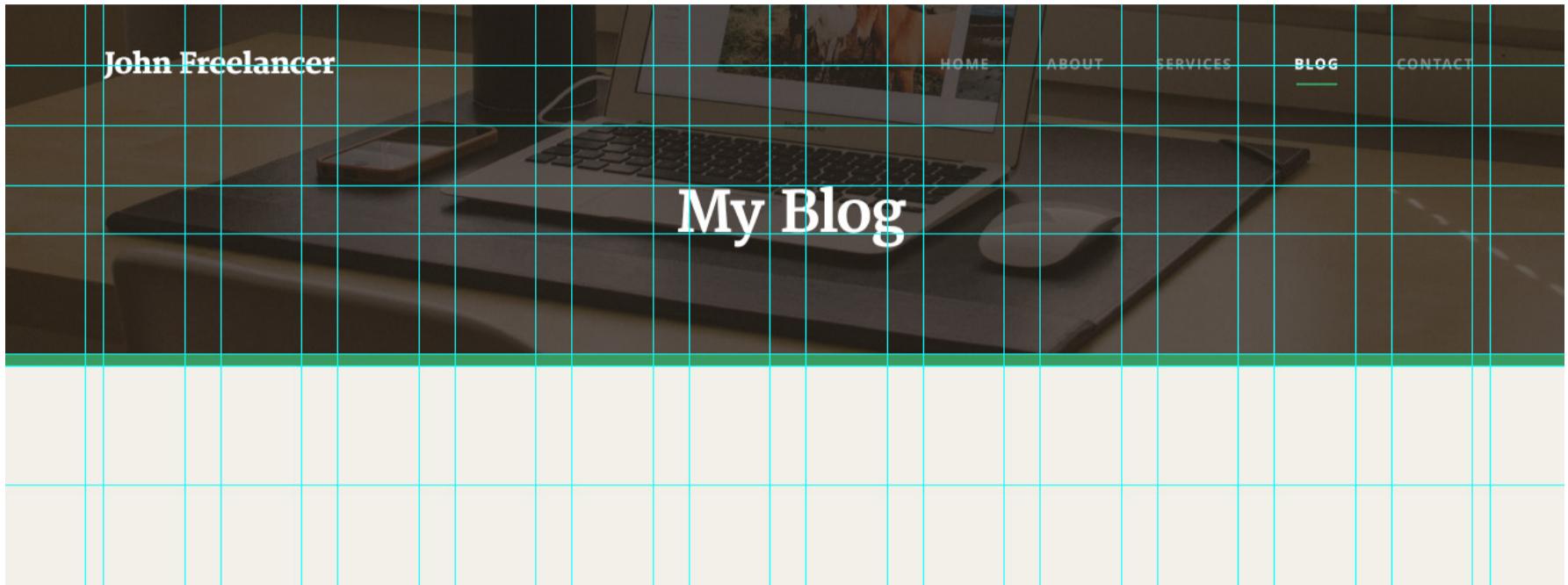
Of course, we're going to base this page design mostly on the wireframe we've already created. So, I have my blog page wireframe printed out and, as a starting point, I make a copy of the just-designed about page PSD file and call it “**ProjectName-Blog.psd**”. The about page and blog page have a lot in common when it comes to the layout, so it makes sense to use the about page as a template.

Step 1

I open the new PSD file and first I delete all the layers from the “// MAIN CONTENT” layer folder. Then, I change the page title to “My Blog” and I also change the selection in the top navigation.



I can now turn on guides and add a new guideline 100px from the green bar. That's where my page's content will start from.

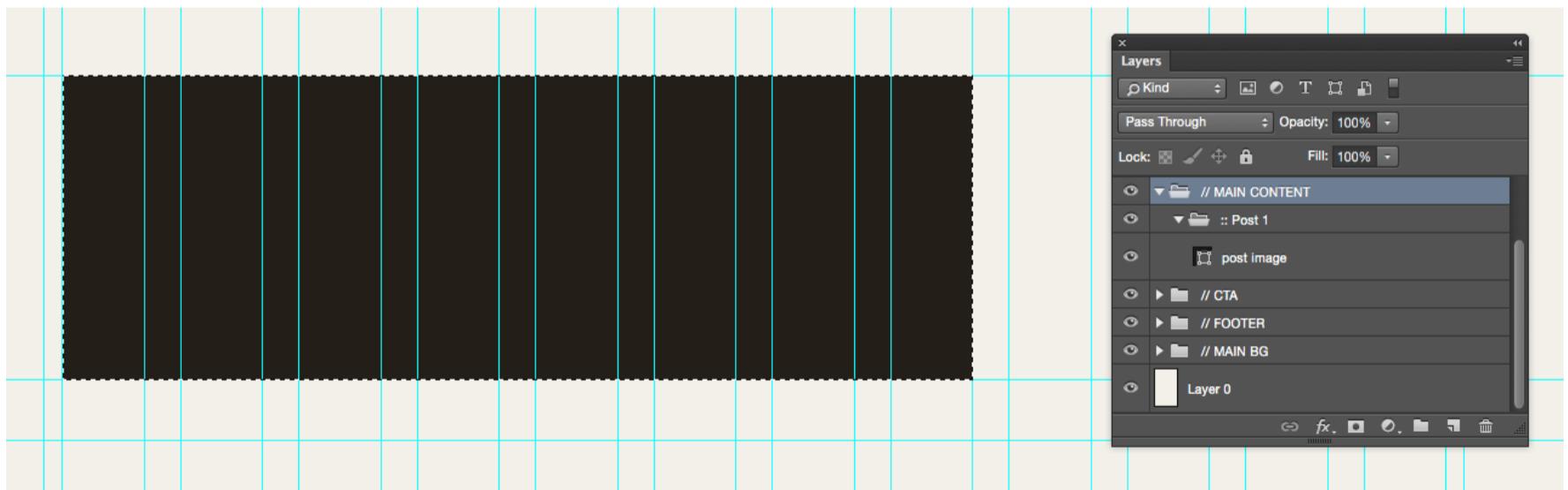


It was that easy. I've just made a new page template ready to fill out with new content in just a few minutes.

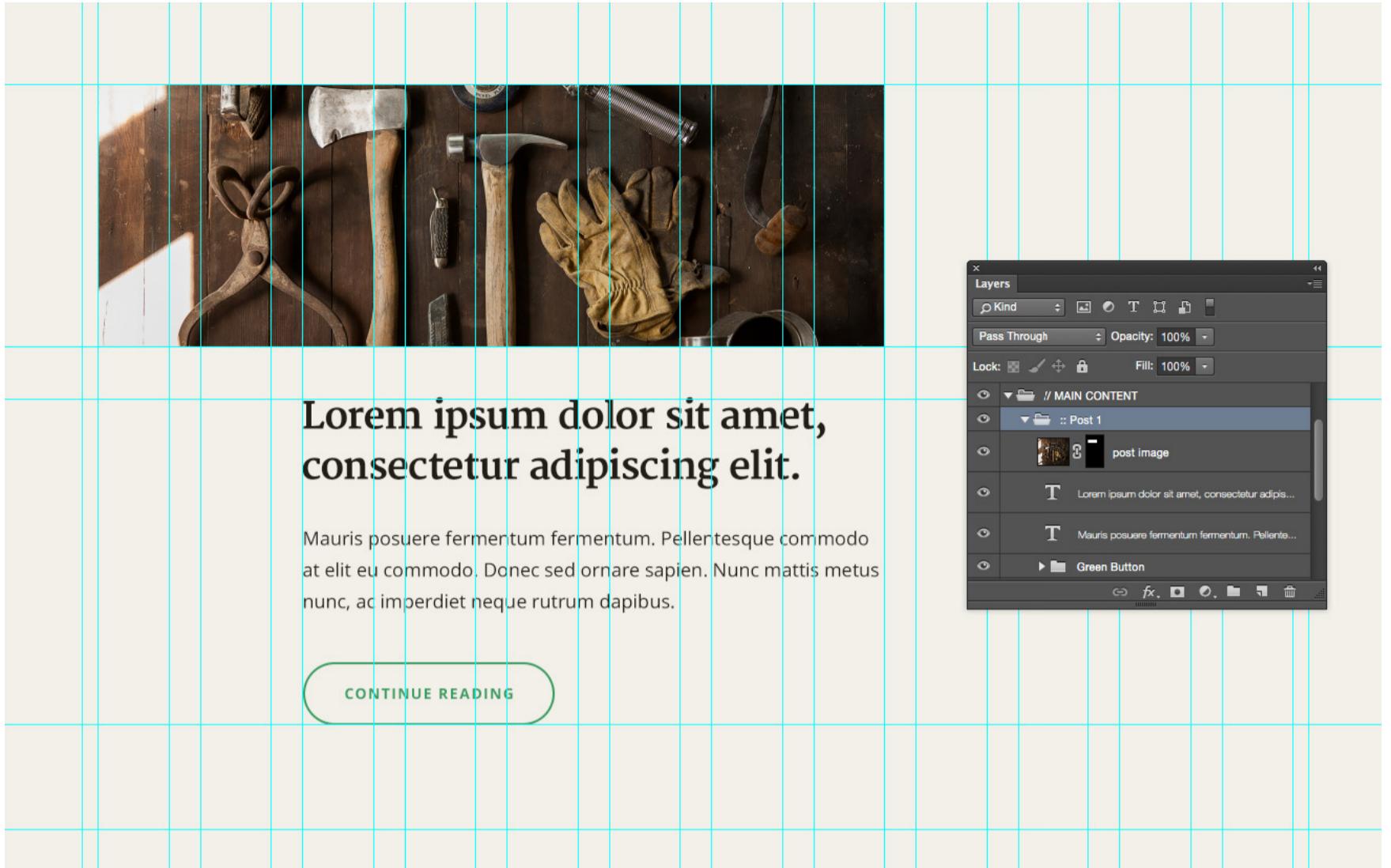
Step 2

First, I design a sample blog post in the main content area. It takes eight column grids from the left side, so I still have four more columns for the sidebar and some space on the right hand side.

I draw a rectangle to mark the post image and add 50px spacing below.

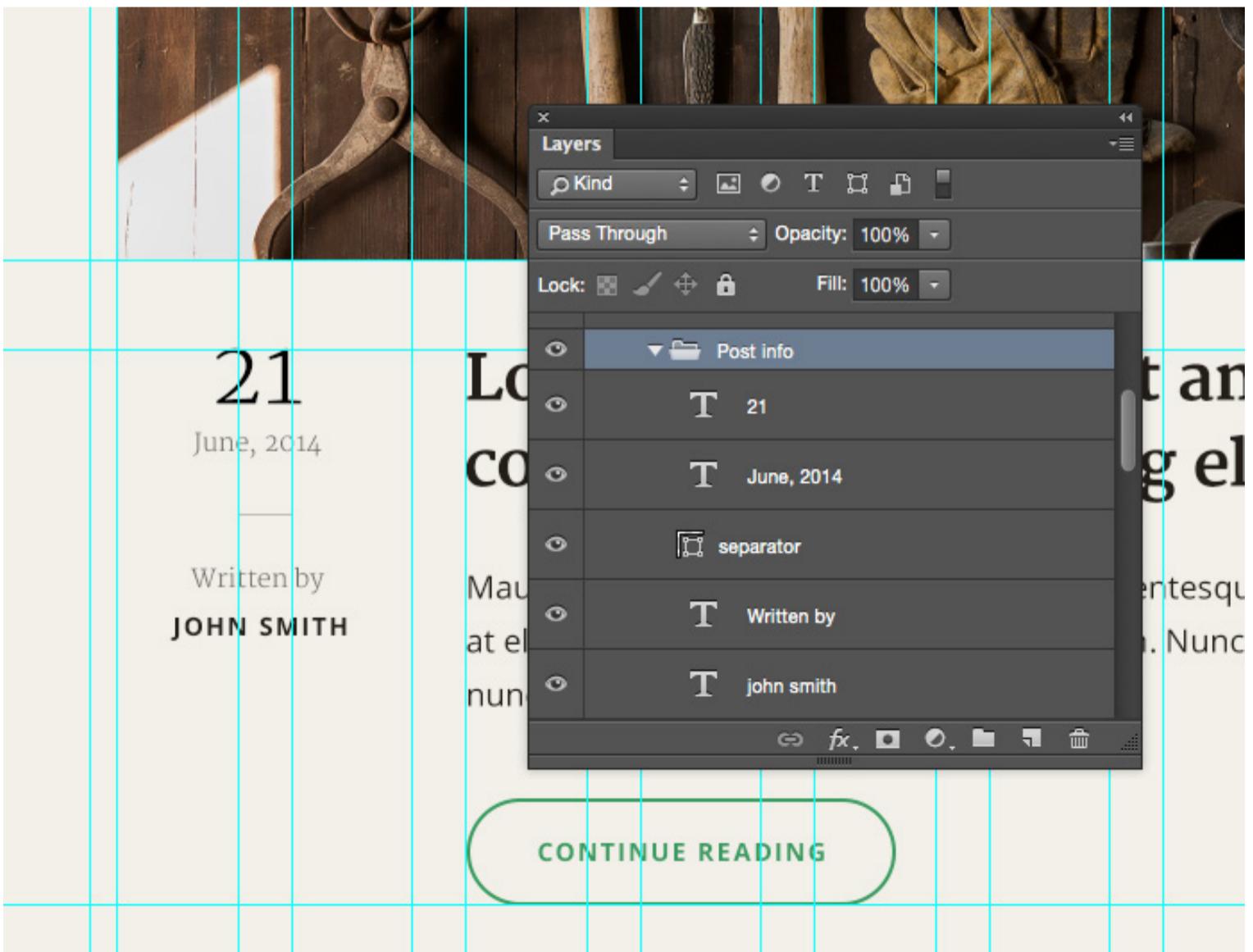


I use the rectangle as a placeholder for the post photo by using a clipping mask. Next, I add the post title (**Heading 2**), a sample paragraph excerpt, and the "Continue Reading" button. I use 50px spacing before and after the paragraph and 100px right after the button to mark the guideline where the next post should start.



You can see that I left the first two grid columns blank. That's where I'm going to add the post info.

Regarding the post info I want to display for the date and author, I make it very simple and design it using just typography. I don't really have any good current paragraph styles for this element, so I come up with some new ones.



Notice that I still used my main fonts: Merriweather and Open Sans. I tried only different colors and sizes to make something different. I centered it all and placed it in the middle of the two grid columns. You can see my final blog post on the right.

To finish up this step, I need to add at least one more post to show how the blog should display multiple posts on one page. I duplicate the entire “:: Post 1” folder and name it “:: Post 2”. I replace the image and position it 100px below the first post. I also add a guideline 100px after the second post.



21

June, 2014

Written by
JOHN SMITH

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Mauris posuere fermentum fermentum. Pellentesque commodo at elit eu commodo. Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus.

[CONTINUE READING](#)

21

June, 2014

Written by
JOHN SMITH

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Mauris posuere fermentum fermentum. Pellentesque commodo at elit eu commodo. Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus.

[CONTINUE READING](#)

21

June, 2014

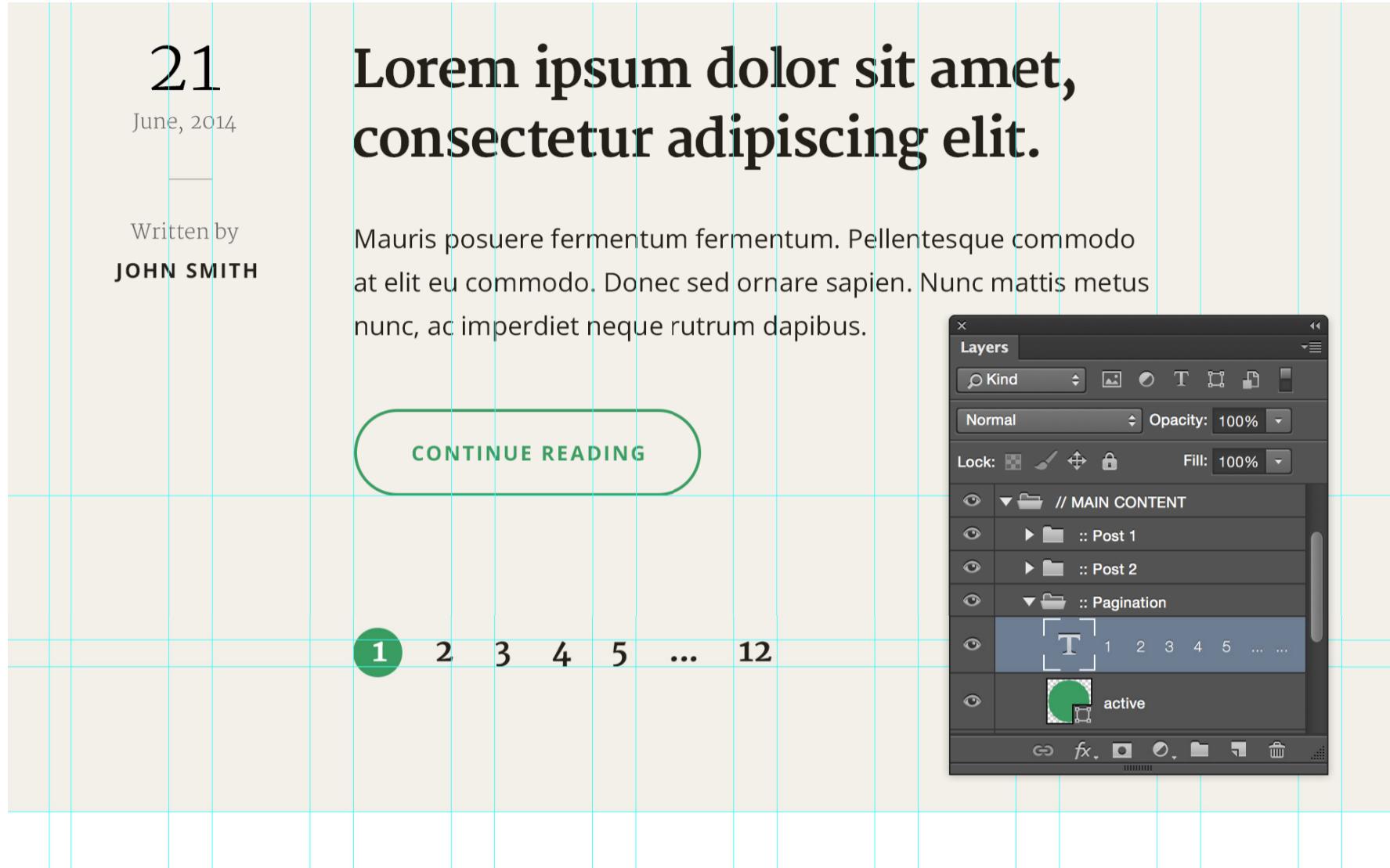
Written by
JOHN SMITH

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.

Mauris posuere fermentum fermentum. Pellentesque commodo at elit eu commodo. Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus.

[CONTINUE READING](#)

The last element I need to add is a numeric navigation (also called pagination) between the other blog pages. It's a simple text element with one sample active page.



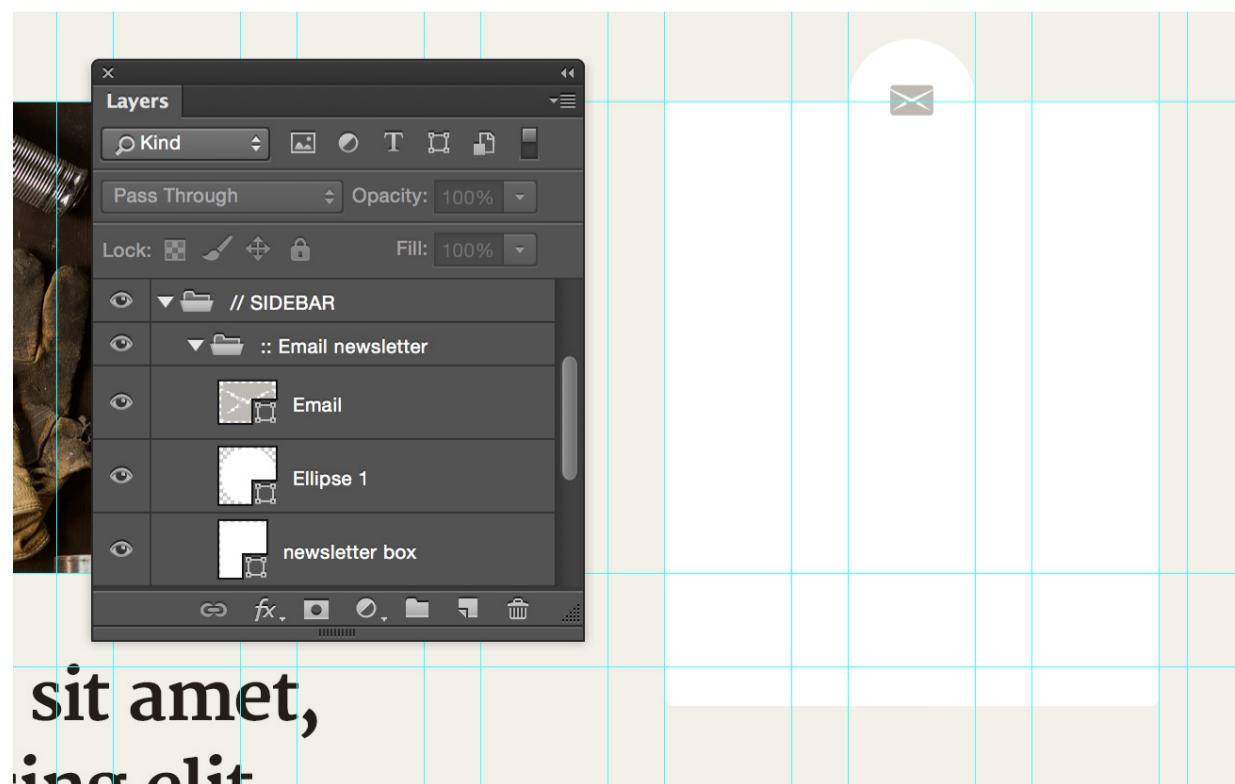
There is another 100px space after the pagination and that's where my content area ends and the CTA section starts. Let's move to the last element of the blog page, which is the sidebar.

Step 3

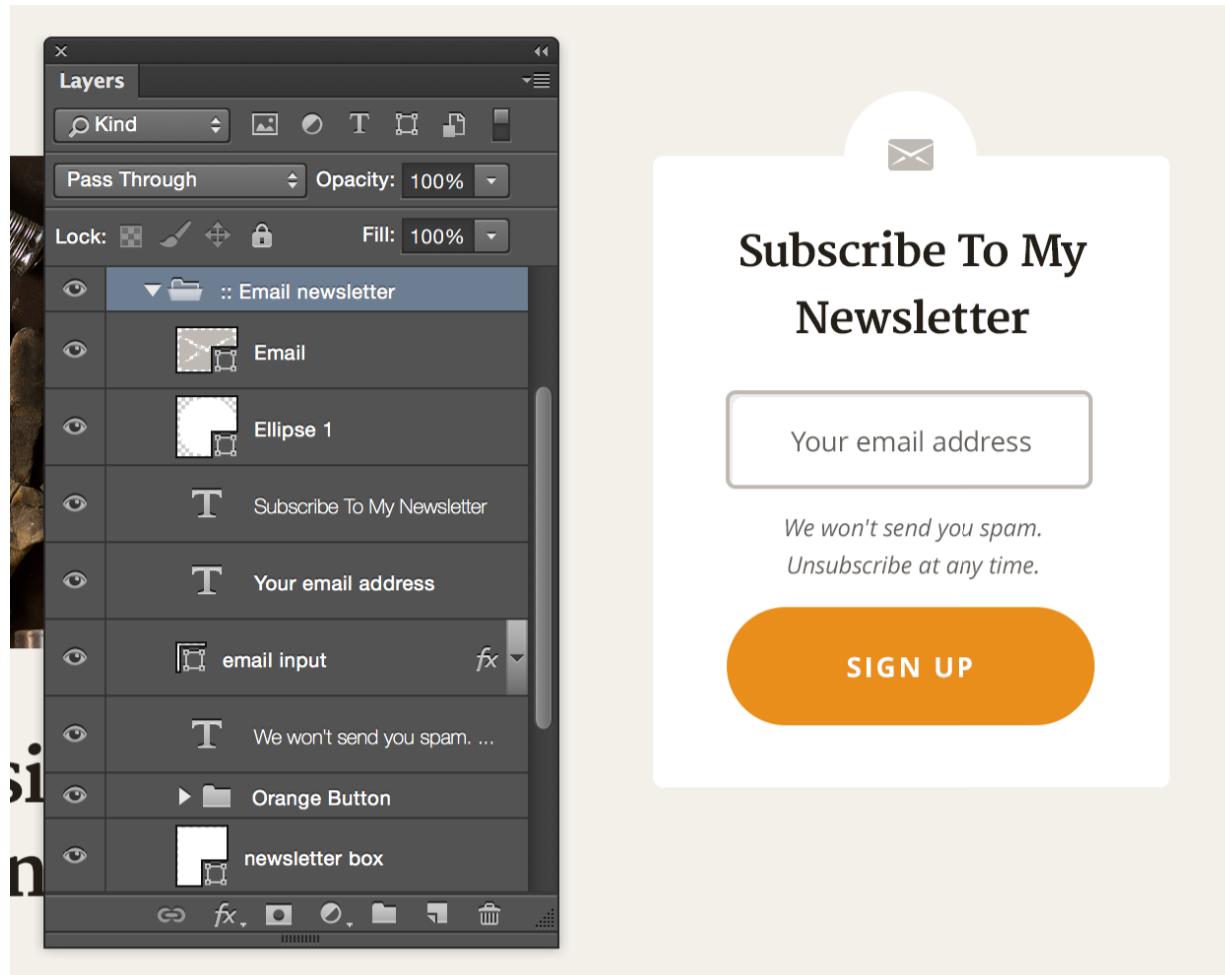
As I mentioned before, I reserved four columns on the right hand side for the sidebar. I want to have some space between the sidebar and the main content area, so I'm leaving one of the columns empty and using three columns for the sidebar widgets.

I start with the "Email Newsletter" widget. It should be the most prominent widget in the sidebar, so I place it at the top and use white as the background.

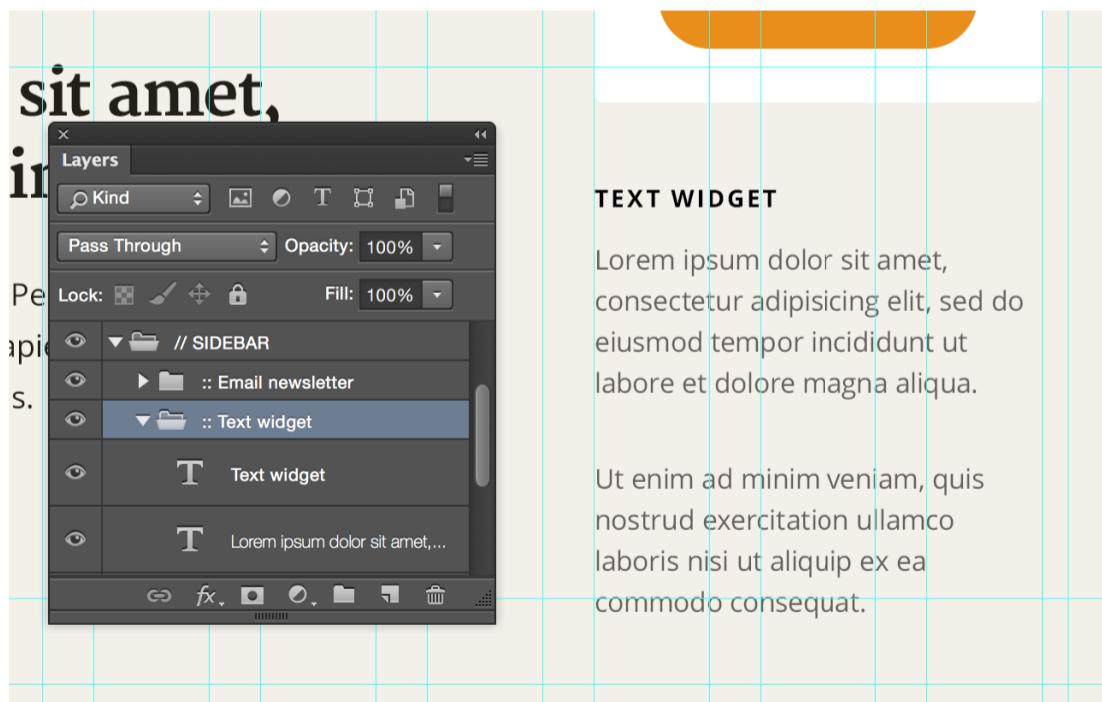
It'll stand out nicely on top of the tan background I used for the entire page.



Next, I add a widget title (**Heading 4**), email address input field, and a big orange "Sign Up" button. That's my final pretty little email sign up box:



Additionally, I design a sample text widget, which is nothing more than a title (**Heading 5**) and a few paragraphs (**Small Paragraph**).



Of course, you can go further and design more widgets in the sidebar if you feel like you'll need more. Many sidebar widgets can have a very similar design, and once you have a title and a few sample elements designed, it'll be very easy for web developers to figure out what other widgets may look like.

Here is my final blog page:

The screenshot shows a blog website with a header "John Freelancer" and a navigation bar with links: HOME, ABOUT, SERVICES, BLOG (highlighted in green), and CONTACT.

Blog Post 1:

Title: 21

Date: June, 2014

Written by: JOHN SMITH

Image: A top-down view of various tools (axe, hammer, gloves, etc.) on a wooden surface.

Text: Mauris posuere fermentum fermentum. Pellentesque commodo at elit eu commodo. Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus.

Read More: CONTINUE READING

Blog Post 2:

Title: 21

Date: June, 2014

Written by: JOHN SMITH

Image: An overhead view of a desk setup with a laptop, a white lamp, and some books.

Text: Mauris posuere fermentum fermentum. Pellentesque commodo at elit eu commodo. Donec sed ornare sapien. Nunc mattis metus nunc, ac imperdiet neque rutrum dapibus.

Read More: CONTINUE READING

Pagination: 1 2 3 4 5 ... 12

Newsletter Sign-up:

Text: Subscribe To My Newsletter

Form: Your email address

We won't send you spam.
Unsubscribe at any time.

Button: SIGN UP

Get in Touch

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

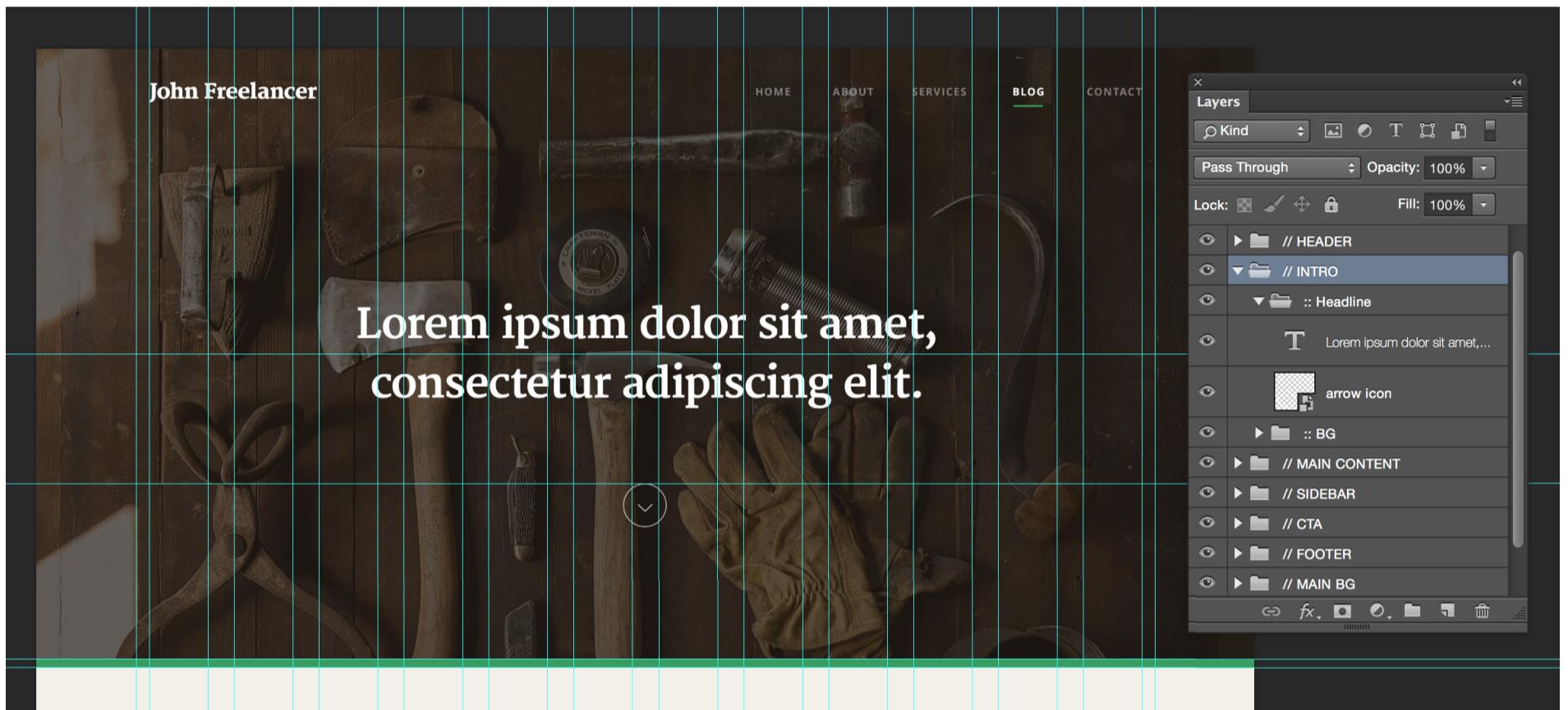
CONTACT ME

Step 4

Here is the final step of this chapter: a blog post mockup design. I start by duplicating the blog PSD file and name it “**ProjectName-Blog-Post.psd**”. My blog post is going to be pretty much like the blog page except for the big intro at the top.

To achieve this, I copy the entire “**// INTRO**” section from the home page. Notice how easy it is to distinguish particular parts of the page design thanks to a well-organized PSD file. If I had a mess in my files, it would take me forever to find the right layers.

I change the headline text to my blog post title and remove all unnecessary layers from it.



The background photo is now my blog post image, which gives a really nice effect. I also add an icon with an arrow below the title. This icon indicates the direction where the user should go to read more.

I don't need to make too many changes in the content area. The sidebar stays as is and in the blog post content, I use some different headings, sample paragraphs, and a quote. It's all to show how the sample content should look.

You can also see that I added tags to the left hand side under the author. I have some space in that column and thought that it could be a good place for it.

21
June, 2014

Written by
JOHN SMITH

Tags:
DESIGN
CREATIVITY
BLOGGING

Nunc pharetra ut dolor vel accumsan.
Phasellus blandit ultricies sem, ut pharetra tortor imperdiet non. Sed erat sapien, condimentum sed lorem et, pellentesque tempus est. Pellentesque dictum et [quam a convallis](#). Sed libero tortor, dictum eu neque ac, fringilla consequat dolor.

Morbi dictum sit amet purus at porta.
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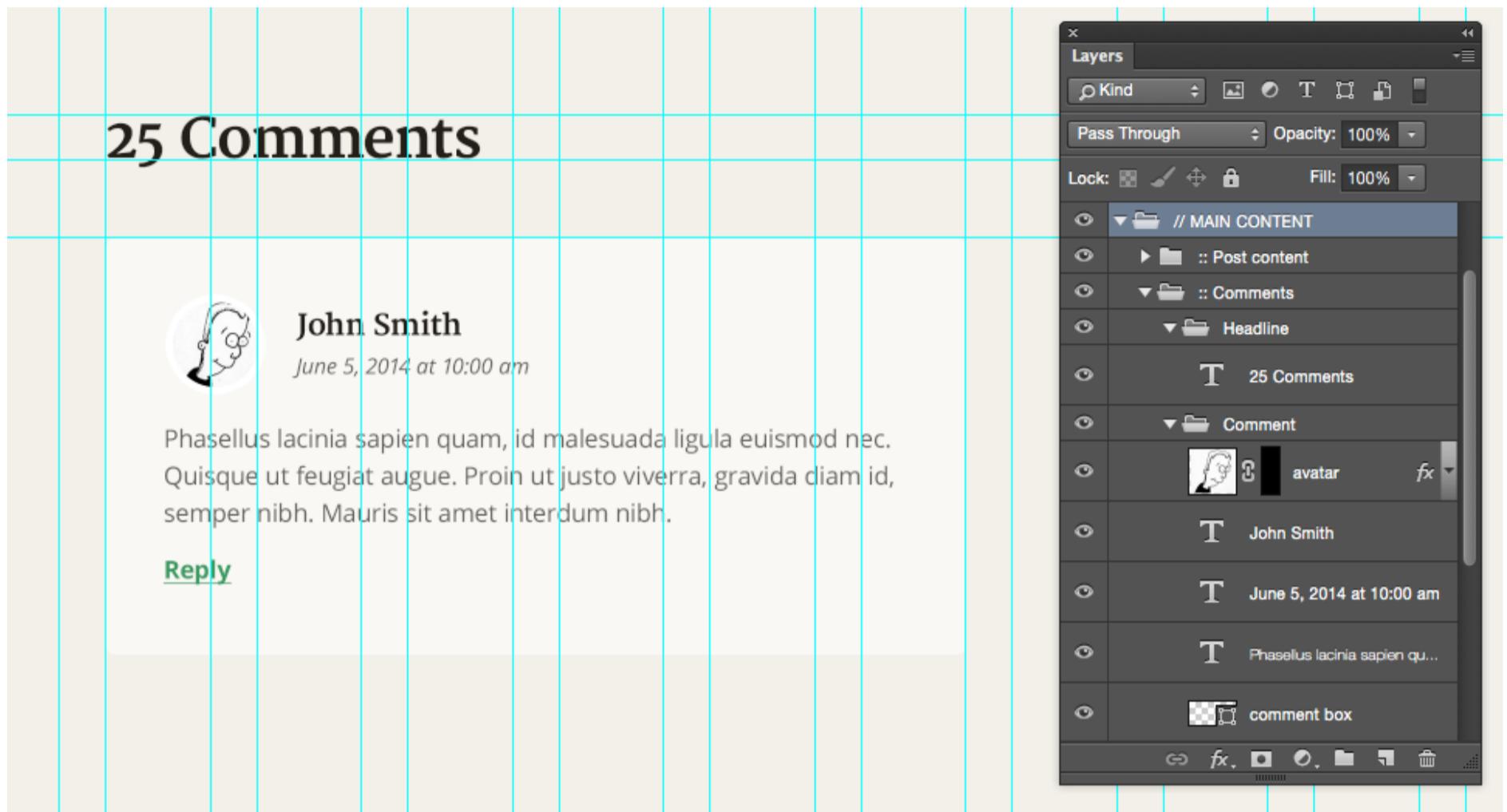
SIGN UP

TEXT WIDGET

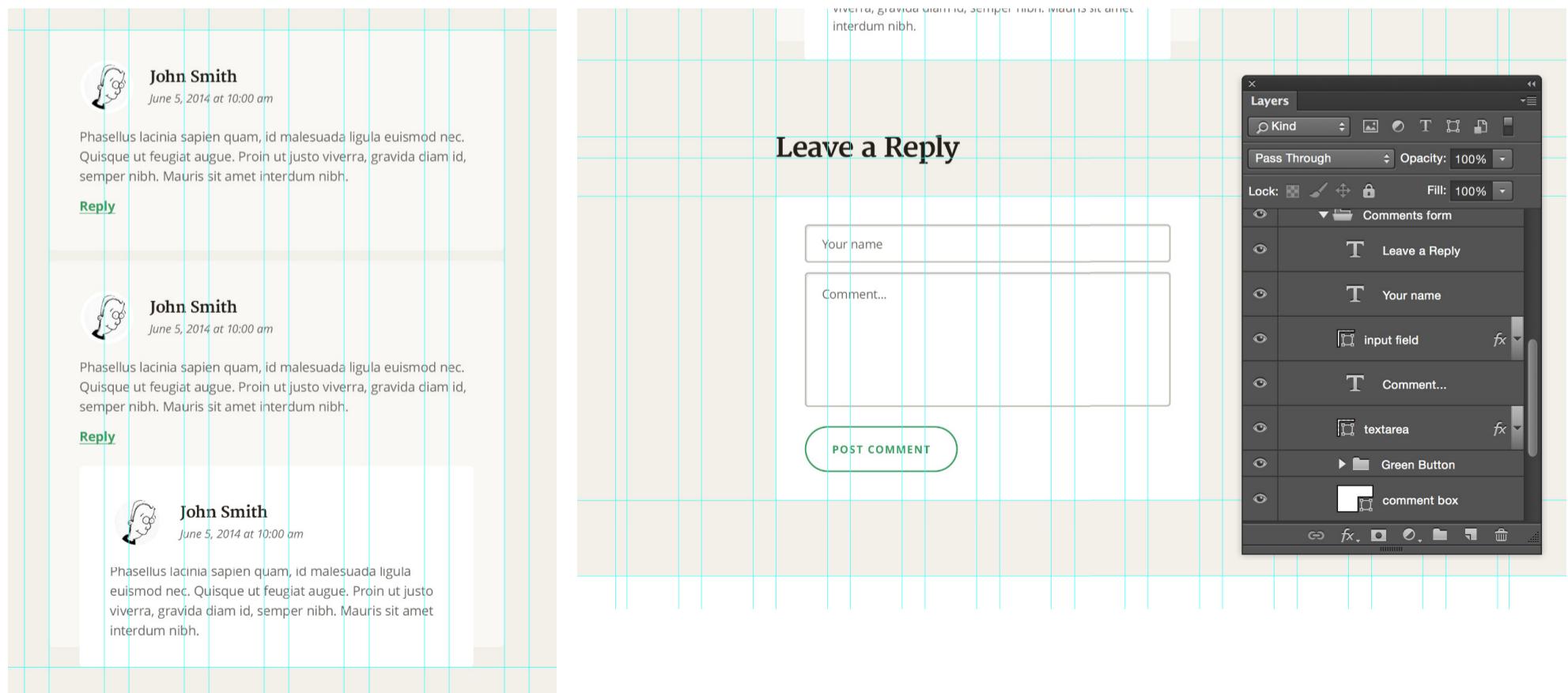
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Finally, every blog post needs comments. I place comments 100px below the post content. I start with a title (**Heading 2**) and then add one sample comment block. Inside the comment block, I use the “**Small Paragraph**” style for the comment text and the “**Heading 4**” style for the comment’s author.



Next, I add a few more sample comments and the simple comment form:



And this is what my final single blog post looks like:



21

June, 2014

Written by
JOHN SMITH

Tags:

DESIGN
CREATIVITY
BLOGGING

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25 Comments



John Smith

June 5, 2014 at 10:00 am

Phasellus lacinia sapien quam, id malesuada ligula euismod nec. Quisque ut feugiat augue. Proin ut justo viverra, gravida diam id, semper nibh. Mauris sit amet interdum nibh.

[Reply](#)



John Smith

June 5, 2014 at 10:00 am

Phasellus lacinia sapien quam, id malesuada ligula euismod nec. Quisque ut feugiat augue. Proin ut justo viverra, gravida diam id, semper nibh. Mauris sit amet interdum nibh.

[Reply](#)



John Smith

June 5, 2014 at 10:00 am

Phasellus lacinia sapien quam, id malesuada ligula euismod nec. Quisque ut feugiat augue. Proin ut justo viverra, gravida diam id, semper nibh. Mauris sit amet interdum nibh.

Leave a Reply

Your name

Comment...

POST COMMENT

Get in Touch

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET, CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT.

CONTACT ME

Congrats!

You've just completed **The Essential Web Design Handbook** and the practical guide.

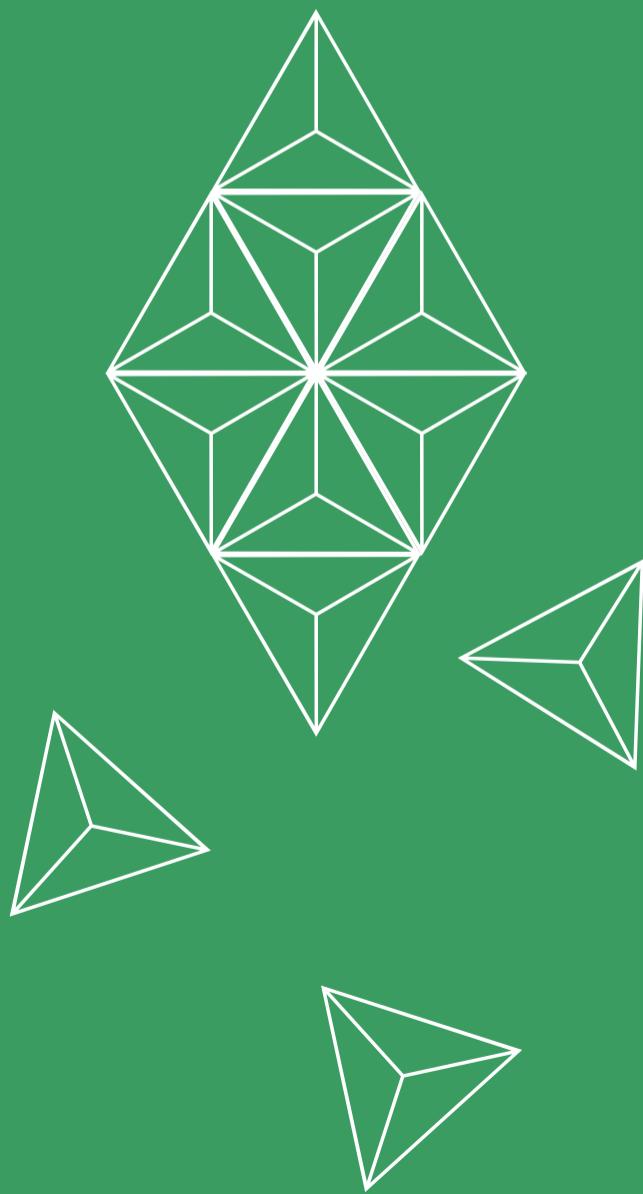
It's been quite a long process but how rewarding! If you haven't started working on your own project yet, I'd like to strongly encourage you to do it. You can only learn designing by practicing on your own.

The project I described was purposefully one of the simple ones but you can be much more creative and try some more advanced designs. You can come back to this guide for some inspiration and to check out my steps at any stage of your project.

If you've purchased the ebook with all the design files, you can look into them as well and deconstruct my work from the inside out. If you don't have the design files yet, you can always log in to the [Designers Area](#) on my website and get it additionally from there.

CHAPTER 9

Resources and Further Reading



You've made it!

This is it. This is the last chapter of this ebook. If you followed all the steps of my design process and created your own sketches, wireframes, typography style guide, color scheme and even designed page mockups, then I'm sure that now you're far better than most self-claimed designers out there.

Of course, what you've learned in this ebook is just the essential knowledge about web designing. That's why I called it "*The Essential Web Design Handbook*." Design is a huge subject and it's probably impossible to teach everything in one single book.

Every chapter of this ebook could be a completely separate publication full of information, theories, examples and best practices. In fact, there are hundreds of books just about typography, layout or colors. The good thing is that you don't need to know everything (and nobody does anyway!).

However, I'd like to encourage you to expand your knowledge and learn something new whenever you can. The best way to learn is by doing. So, push yourself beyond your limits every time you start a new design project. Come up with something that you don't know how to do. That way, you'll force yourself to learn about it and use it in practice immediately.

To make it easier for you, I gathered some very interesting blogs, books, and articles on all the design subjects we learned about in this ebook.

Of course, don't try to read it all at once. Come back to this chapter whenever you're looking for some inspiration on what to learn next. I chose resources that are basically timeless. That means that even if you come back to this chapter a year from now, you can still learn something useful that you can adapt into your most current projects.

Inspiration, Creativity and Design

Blogs and magazines

[99u.com](#) – Insights on making ideas happen.

[abduzeedo.com](#) – Design inspiration.

[alistapart.com](#) – For people who make websites.

[boxesandarrows.com](#) – Design principles, research, testing, process and methods.

[designmodo.com](#) – Design tutorials, inspiration and resources.

[informationisbeautiful.net](#) – Ideas, issues, knowledge, data — visualized.

[smashingmagazine.com](#) – Magazine for professional web designers and developers.

[speckyboy.com](#) – Web design magazine, web design news, resources, and inspiration.

Books

[A Practical Guide to Designing for the Web](#) – by **Mark Boulton**

[A Project Guide to UX Design](#) – by **Russ Unger and Carolyn Chandler**

[Disciplined Dreaming: A Proven System to Drive Breakthrough Creativity](#) – by **Josh Linkner**

[Don't Make Me Think, Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability](#) – by **Steve Krug**

[Creative You: Using Your Personality Type to Thrive](#) – by **Otto Kroeger**

[Manage Your Day-to-Day: Build Your Routine, Find Your Focus, and Sharpen Your Creative Mind](#) – by **Jocelyn K. Glei**

[Maximize Your Potential: Grow Your Expertise, Take Bold Risks & Build an Incredible Career](#) – by Jocelyn K. Glei

[The Accidental Creative: How to Be Brilliant at a Moment's Notice](#) – by Todd Henry

[The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles](#) – by Steven Pressfield

[Universal Principles of Design](#) – by William Lidwell, Kritina Holden, Jill Butler

Typography

Articles

[Creating Style Guides](#) – by Susan Robertson

[How We Read](#) – by Jason Santa Maria

[The Importance of Designing for Readability](#) – by Carrie Cousins

[When Typography Speaks Louder Than Words](#) – by C. Knight, J. Glaser

[Setting Type on the Web to a Baseline Grid](#) – by Wilson Miner

[Typography Matters](#) – by Erin Kissane

[The Elements of Typographic Style Applied to the Web](#) – by Richard Rutter

[How Typography Affects Conversions](#) – by Ankit Oberoi

[Web Design is 95% Typography](#)

Books

[Designing with Type](#) – by James Craig and Irene Korol Scala

[On Web Typography](#) – by Jason Santa Maria

[The Anatomy of Type](#) – by Stephen Coles

[The Elements of Typographic Style](#) – by Robert Bringhurst

[Thinking with Type](#) – by Ellen Lupton

[Type on Screen: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Developers, and Students](#) – by Ellen Lupton

Colors

Articles

[An Introduction to Color Theory for Web Designers](#) – by Thomas Cannon

[How Colors Help Make Websites Successful](#)

[How Color Theory Affects Landing Page Conversion](#) – by Josh Pigford

[How to Use the Psychology of Color to Increase Website Conversions](#) – by Jeremy Smith

[Usability Tip: Don't Rely on Color to Convey Your Message](#) – by Tammy Guy

[Which Color Converts The Best?](#) – by Ott Niggulis

Books

[Color Design Workbook: A Real World Guide to Using Color in Graphic Design](#)
– by Adams Morioka

[Color Inspirations: More than 3,000 Innovative Palettes from the Colourlovers. Com Community](#) – by Darius A. Monsef IV

[Design Elements, Color Fundamentals: A Graphic Style Manual for Understanding How Color Affects Design](#) – by Aaris Sherin

[The Secret Language of Color: Science, Nature, History, Culture, Beauty of Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, & Violet](#) – by Joann Eckstut and Arielle Eckstut

Layout

Articles

[Content-out Layout](#) – by Nathan Ford

[Ditching the Grid: Alternative Layout Strategies and Tips](#) – by Joshua Johnson

[Grid-Based Layouts 101](#) – by James George

[Original And Innovative Web Layouts](#) – by Shavaughn Haack

[Understanding the F-Layout in Web Design](#) – by Brandon Jones

[Understanding the Z-Layout in Web Design](#) – by Brandon Jones

[Whitespace](#) – by Mark Boulton

[Whitespace in Web Design: What It Is and Why You Should Use It](#) – by Gisele Muller

Books

[Layout Essentials: 100 Design Principles for Using Grids](#) – by Beth Tondreau

[Making and Breaking the Grid: A Graphic Design Layout Workshop](#) – by Timothy Samara

[Grid Systems in Graphic Design](#) – by Josef Müller-Brockmann

Design Resources

[**agiledesigners.com**](#) – Free and premium resources for designers and developers.

[**creativemarket.com**](#) – Handcrafted fonts, graphics, themes and more.

[**fontastic.me**](#) – Create your own icon fonts.

[**freevectormaps.com**](#) – Free vector maps.

[**graphicburger.com**](#) – Free design materials for both personal & commercial use.

[**gratisography.com**](#) – Free high-resolution photos.

[**iconmonstr.com**](#) – Free icons.

[**littlevisuals.co**](#) – Free high-resolution photos.

[**pixeden.com**](#) – Free and premium web design resources.

[**premiumpixels.com**](#) – Free PSDs.

[**unsplash.com**](#) – Free high-resolution photos.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my amazing wife, [Magda](#), for supporting me throughout my career and helping me stay focused while writing this ebook. I would have never have gotten this ebook done without her.

I'd like to also thank my proofreader, ESL teacher and good friend, [Laurie Jezuit](#), who made my English understandable. English is my second language and I never thought I could write more than a 1,000 words in any language other than my native Polish. Laurie made it all possible. You can find Laurie on her [LinkedIn profile here](#).

And thanks also go out to a good friend of mine and fellow web designer, Bartek Kregiel. He helped me to stay focused and come up with some good ideas for the ebook while working together at Starbucks. Bartek is also a part-time photographer who took my mug shot. You can find Bartek on his [website here](#).



The Essential Web Design Handbook

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