

Design

Design Slideshow

Notes to accompany Responsive Web Design. (1st, 2nd, 3rd slides, etc.)

1. The key to a good design is to create a unified whole. Unity is the state or quality of one; singleness or state or quality of being in accord; harmony. Support a common goal, create elements that support each other. Avoid mixed messages. Design attempts to solve a problem, it's in aid of the message to be brought across it's not the designers job to be cryptic. Design is not an aesthetic alone, it's trying to communicate a message.
2. There are two kind of unity; conceptual unity and visual unity. Here conceptual unity is indicated through the photo of a luxury house, an Ibiza real estate website.
3. Visual unity is a measure of how well elements belong together. The first perception is of the whole and then the sum of its parts. The goal is to communicate one message, perhaps one secondary message. Unified ideas will reinforce your message, through unity your elements aren't competing for attention. Unity adds order to design (can become dull and boring). Variety adds interest and energy (can become chaotic). A balance between the two, variety can become complementary to unity. The key to a unified design is to have a clear idea about your message while creating what you're trying to communicate. Every element in your design should serve a functional purpose to your design. Contrast; differentiation to unity. Repetition; objects that appear the same relate to each other. Alignment; things that are aligned appear relative to each other. Proximity; elements that are placed close to one another appear more related to each other. Images, colours and style should relate conceptually to our idea with the design. The key to a unified design is where nothing can be added or deducted without having to re-adjust the design. Each element is integral to the overall design. Always ask why (why this as opposed to that?). Make your design more than the sum of its parts (x factor).
4. Negative space is the space between design elements. Make use of negative space and don't cram everything together. Crowded design is hard to read, scan and follow. Densely used space is seen as a way to save costs. Who can afford to waste space? Less is more, what's left out is as important as what's left in. At the micro level; space between lines of text. At the macro level; space between text blocks and images.
5. White space has an association to luxury. Who can afford to waste space? It add sophistication and elegance to design. Empty space can add value to your brand. White space aids flow and balance to design providing organisational relief. Use negative space effectively, let your content breathe, margins, padding and line height are your friend. Simplicity and clarity lead to good design.
6. Dominance is; commanding, controlling, prevailing over others. The act or state of being dominant. At first sight what do you see on the page? (squint test). Where is your attention brought? Emphasising an element creates a focal point. A focal point leads to other parts of the page, through composition, scale of items, colour, etc. A design should have a primary area of interest or focal point. The focal point is an entry into the design. Flow is created through generating secondary or tertiary elements of dominance. The degree of dominance exists in three levels in your design. Dominant; element given the lost visual weight, or primary emphasis. Sub-dominant; elements that become the middle ground, secondary emphasis. Sub-ordinate; elements with tertiary emphasis, least visual weight receding into the background. Fourth level dominance is difficult to create. We see most or least, shades of grey (in-between) have less distinction and become equal. What do you want people to notice first? Dominance aids visual hierarchy to your design. Lack of

dominance creates competition between elements. Without dominance you leave the viewer to work out where to start. Make it easy for me to find my way into the design and content. Don't be cryptic or I'll need to think. Through sub-dominate elements you can navigate your viewer through your your content. You can overdo dominance, you still want the rest of the design to be seen.

7. Through hierarchy we can make it easier for visitors to find what they're looking for. Where is it? How do I complete my task? Use visual weight in typography. Hierarchies create centres of interest and make clear the primary, secondary and supporting elements on a page. Contrast; relative importance of h1, h2, h3. Repetition; accented / coloured links. Alignment / Grids; connectedness of elements across the page. Proximity groups; within hierarchies creating sub hierarchies.