

Lets Code!

CSS - Mockup Breakdown

CSS - Breaking Down a Mockup

Your best tool...

The Awesome Pencil and Paper

As with many jobs big and small, a great place to start is with pencil/pen and paper.

The Awesome Pencil and Paper

Starting with this medium allows you to quickly sketch out ideas with very little overhead. You can begin to break the design down to sections and sub-sections, allowing you to visualize what HTML elements need to be in what place.

The Awsome Pencil and Paper

By doing this simple step you can get a better idea of how you want to plan your journey to a solution.

Once you have a good plan in place you can begin coding with a clear idea of what to do next

Image editing tools

You do not need to be a digital artist to take advantage of what image editing tools can offer you.

Image editing tools

The two main reasons for using an image editing tool:

A selection tool - this will help you measure out the dimensions various elements, margins, padding and approximations of font sizes

A color picker - this is essential to finding the exact values of various colors used in a design.

Image editing tools

There are many image editors that can provide these tools so you are not starved for choice.

Below are a couple examples:

- GIMP - Opensource and Free :)
- Photoshop - Paid \$ubscription

Analyze Mockup

Now that we have our tools in place it's time to use them.

Break down sections of the page

Using pencil and paper, sketch out the basic sections of the page. Such as, overall content boundaries, header, footer, main content, navigation, side bars and anything else that is relevant.

Break sections into subsections

Now it's time to drill a little deeper. Looking at each main section break it into parts.

Example: If we are looking at the header section, we might create sub divisions for menu items, a search bar, a logo.

Example: The main content area may feature a video at the top followed by a written article followed by a 'related content' section with thumbnails

Continue the process until satisfied

We continue to break down the design until we arrive at a point that address all the elements of the design. At this point we can feel good about beginning development while having a clear view of where we are going with everything.

Create basic html containers

Open up your favored IDE and begin the dirty work... code.

You can actually repeat the process you did on paper but this time with the actual HTML elements you plan you use.

First, create a tag to contain the page. Then you can make the footer, header, and main content nested inside the page container element.

Use some data (actual or dummy)

You will need to throw in some content and images to help you visualize how content will look on the page. It is not important what the content is at this point. We are only using it as a stand-in until we are ready for the production ready content.

So don't waste too much time with this, proper layout of elements are what we are focused on here.

Create the style sheet

Now that our basic structure is in place, time to pretty things up a bit. Create an external style sheet and link to it from your html page.

Create styles

Here is where your image editor comes into play. Open the design file in whichever image editor you choose and begin taking measurements of the design elements. From there we can create CSS statements to replicate those properties in the web page. Using the color picker we can find the color values to assign properties as needed.

Example: The header may be 1048px wide and 200px high. with 25px padding all around. The background may be #666666 with a black border that is 5px thick.

Create more html & styles

Using the design image file as a guide, go back and forth iteratively building up the page to meet the needs of the design.

You may have to insert, remove, combine or separate HTML elements. More CSS may be needed to accommodate these changes.

It's an iterative process that we tackle one opportunity at a time. Don't approach the problem all at once. Break it down to smaller pieces, divide and conquer

Fine tune the layout

Once the page has been molded to the proper form. It becomes about precision and details.

Remember the design is what the client or boss, possibly even yourself has approved. This is the expected product from the web developer when completed, so don't deliver an approximation.

Measure twice, cut once.