

WEBD3100 - Workshop 01

Part 1: Course Introduction

Web design is the art and science of creating websites. It involves a blend of **aesthetics, functionality, and user experience (UX)**. A well-designed website is not just visually appealing; it's also easy to use and accessible to everyone. In this course, you'll learn the principles behind creating effective and inclusive web experiences.

Part 2: Learning Activity: Website Critique

The core of this activity is to learn by doing. You'll choose two websites—one you consider **well-designed** and one you feel has significant **design issues**.

Step 1: Select Your Websites

Choose one site that you find easy to use, visually appealing, and effective. Then, select a second site that you find difficult to navigate or has a clunky design.

Step 2: Apply Usability Heuristics

Usability heuristics are a set of general principles for user interface design. We'll use Jakob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics as our framework. For each of your chosen websites, evaluate them against these principles.

1. **Visibility of system status:** Does the site keep you informed about what's happening? (e.g., loading spinners, progress bars).
2. **Match between system and the real world:** Is the language and design intuitive and familiar? (e.g., a shopping cart icon for an e-commerce site).
3. **User control and freedom:** Can you easily undo mistakes? (e.g., a clear "back" button or an "undo" function).
4. **Consistency and standards:** Are elements consistent throughout the site? (e.g., is the navigation menu always in the same place?).
5. **Error prevention:** Does the design help you avoid mistakes? (e.g., clear form labels, confirmation before deleting).
6. **Recognition rather than recall:** Are elements and actions visible rather than requiring you to remember information? (e.g., recent searches are displayed).
7. **Flexibility and efficiency of use:** Does the site offer shortcuts or customization for advanced users?
8. **Aesthetic and minimalist design:** Is the design clean and free of unnecessary clutter?
9. **Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors:** Are error messages clear and helpful?
10. **Help and documentation:** Is help information easy to find and understand?

For each website, take notes on how well it performs on each of these heuristics.

Step 3: Check for Accessibility

Web accessibility means making sure a website is usable by people with disabilities. This includes users with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive impairments. A simple way to check for basic accessibility is to test how the site functions without a mouse.

- Can you navigate the entire site using only the **keyboard** (using the Tab key and Enter)?
- Can you read the text easily? Consider **contrast** between text and background colors.

Step 4: Use Developer Tools & W3C Validator

These tools provide an objective look at the website's underlying code.

- **Browser Developer Tools:** Right-click on a webpage and select **"Inspect"** or use a shortcut (**Cmd+Option+I** on Mac or **Ctrl+Shift+I** on Windows). Explore the **Elements** panel to see the site's HTML and CSS. In the **Lighthouse** tab, you can run an audit that provides scores for Performance, Accessibility, Best Practices, and SEO.
 - **W3C Validator:** This tool checks a website's code for errors against web standards. Go to the [W3C Markup Validation Service](#) and enter the URL of your chosen websites. The validator will show a list of errors and warnings, which can indicate poor coding practices that affect a site's performance and accessibility.
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Part 3: The Deliverable (Submission)

Your final submission is a **one-page website critique**.

Structure of Your Critique:

1. **Introduction:** Briefly state the purpose of your critique and introduce the two websites you chose.
 2. **Critique of Website 1 (The "Good" Site):**
 - Identify the site and its purpose.
 - Discuss what makes it effective based on the usability heuristics and accessibility checks you performed.
 - Mention what the W3C validator showed (even if there were no errors, note that).
 3. **Critique of Website 2 (The "Challenging" Site):**
 - Identify the site and its purpose.
 - Pinpoint specific usability issues using the heuristics. Be detailed and provide examples.
 - Discuss any accessibility problems you found (e.g., keyboard navigation issues, low contrast).
 - Mention what the W3C validator showed and what the errors might mean for the user experience.
 4. **Conclusion:** Summarize your findings. Reflect on how this exercise has changed your perspective on what makes a website successful.
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Reflection Section

Take a moment to reflect on this entire process.

- **What was the most surprising thing you learned?** Did you notice any usability or accessibility issues on sites you use frequently without thinking about them?

- **How do the subjective concepts of "good design" (aesthetics) relate to the objective, measurable metrics you found (like W3C errors or Lighthouse scores)?**
- **Why are both usability and accessibility so crucial for a good user experience?** Consider the potential consequences for businesses or organizations if their websites are difficult to use or inaccessible.
- **What is one key takeaway you will apply in your own web design projects in the future?**