

Today, I will be
analyzing the
design and
accessibility of...

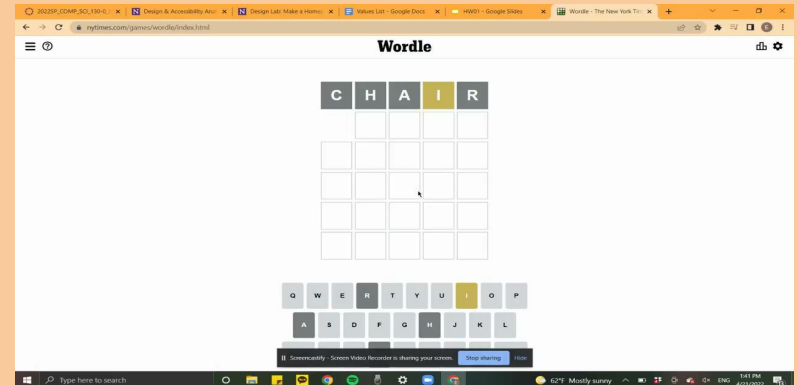
WORDLE

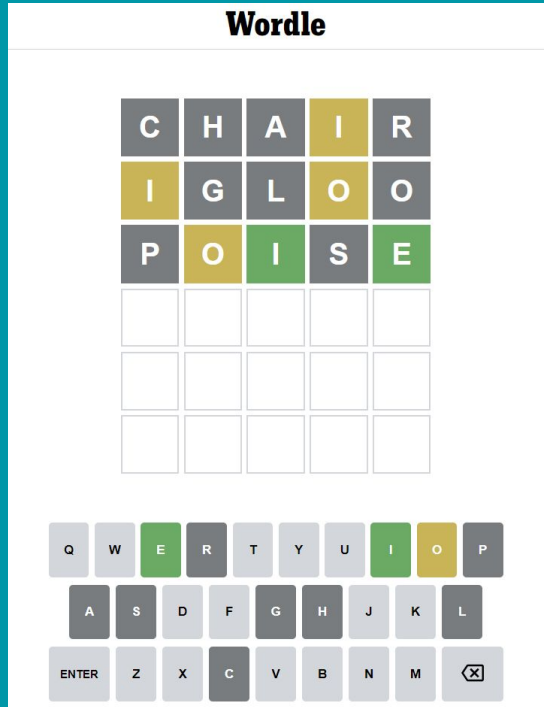
the

DESIGN

What values and priorities does this website communicate and how?

Curiosity: everytime you input a letter, the boxes have a very small bouncing animation which invokes a sense of playfulness and encourages persistent guessing.



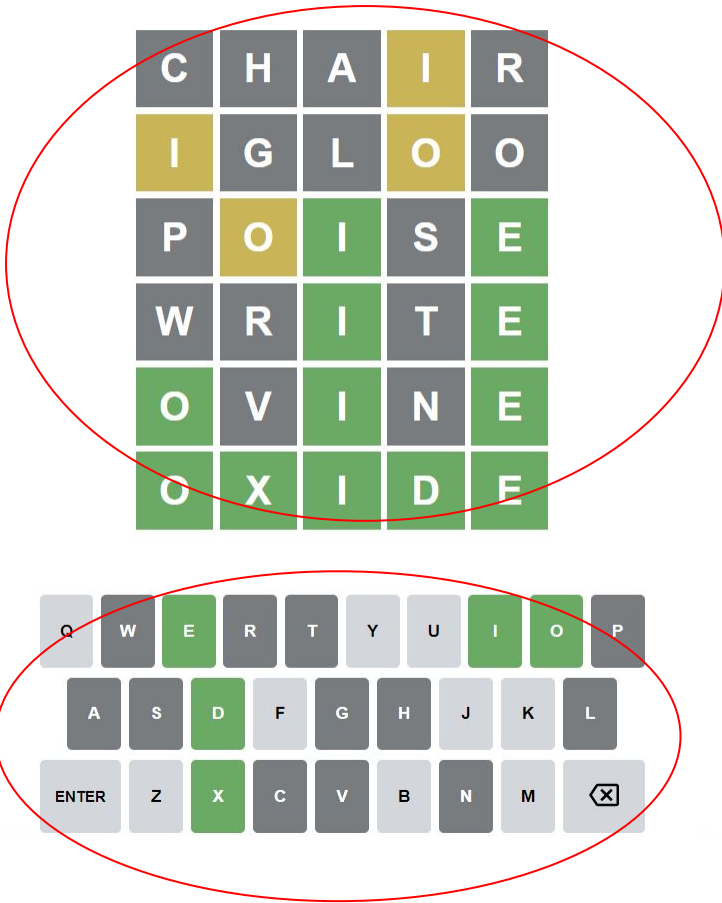


Simplicity: Wordle wants to convey that it is a *simple* word game. There aren't many colors involved, there aren't many shapes involved; Wordle wants you to know that you don't need much to play this game. Just your eagerness to guess that word!

Sophistication: The new Wordle design as created by *The New York times* wants to make game-playing sophisticated and cool. If you look on the apps, other games such as Spelling Bee or The Daily Mini Crossword follow a very clean, minimalist design with use of very few colors.

Proximity

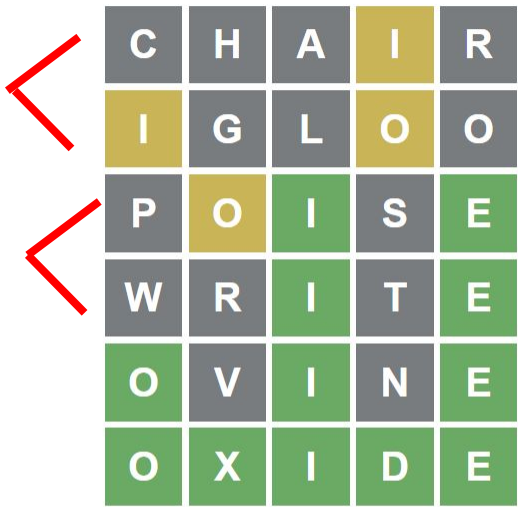
The way the grid and the keyboard are grouped together makes it easy to navigate where your guesses are located and where you are supposed to guess.



Drawback: The closeness of the individual squares on the guess grid might lead first-time users to confuse the game's rules with that of something like a crossword puzzle, where the individual vertical and horizontal lines have to be coordinated with each other. Maybe some more space between the horizontal rows of squares could help differentiate them?

Repetition

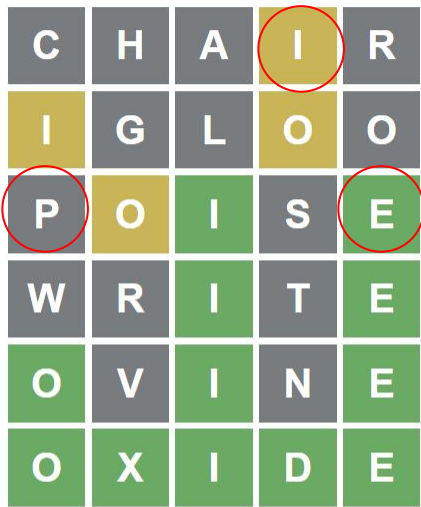
The repetition and continuity of guesses = square is key for players' ability to navigate and follow the progression of their guesses.



Contrast

The game effectively uses the contrast between three colors (dark grey, green, and yellow) to convey meaning.

Although the colors don't necessarily look "pretty" together (their location on the color wheel respective to each other isn't the most ideal), the ideas with which they are associated with (such as green=go) is a great design choice that makes the game even more intuitive for users.



*These colors aren't great for people who have Tritanomaly color blindness, which makes it hard to differentiate blue and green between red and yellow. The game DOES provide a solution for this, a **"high contrast"** setting which makes the green tiles into orange and the yellow tiles into blue.

Strengths

Wordle's biggest strength probably comes from its simplicity, which reflects the game's rules and premise incredibly well.

Although the user might need some direction for the rules when first using Wordle, the layout and way the letters are color-coded are very intuitive once you understand the rules. In that way, using Wordle becomes almost second-nature, especially with its new-puzzle-a-day game format. You open it up, press on a bunch of letters, then guess a bunch more letters. It's a simple game, and the design doesn't oversell it.

Weaknesses

I mentioned this in the strengths portion, but the user needs more instruction beyond the design on how to navigate the game when it's their first time playing.

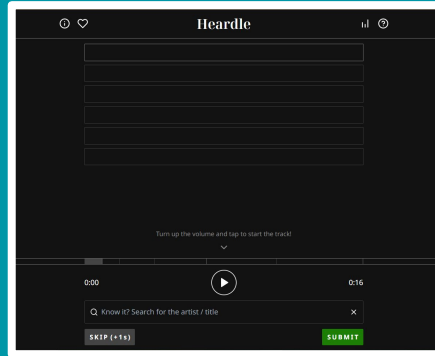
One common misunderstanding about the game's rule for people who play the game for the first time is that they need to incorporate the 6x5 grid into their guesses, meaning they saw the grid and assumed that it was a crossword style game that required them to coordinate their guesses vertically and horizontally.

Although the design makes gameplay natural once the player understands the rules of the game, the game design isn't intuitive from the get-go.

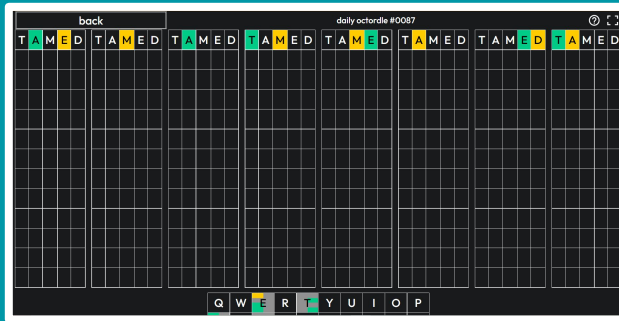
Comparable websites?



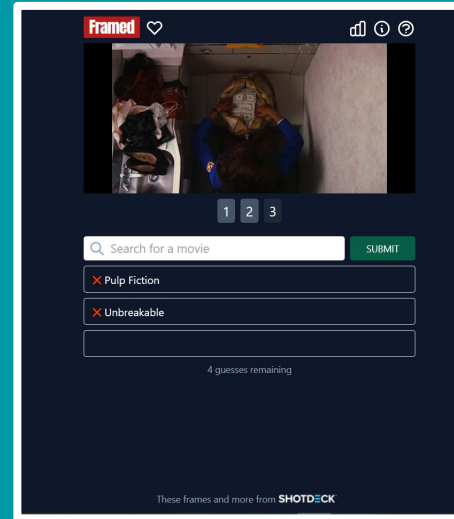
Dordle -
Guess two
words at
once!



Heardle - guess the song
from the first couple of
seconds! Each guess gives
you more seconds.



Octordle - guess eight words at once!!



Framed - guess
the movie a
single frame!

It's hard to find Wordle alternatives that do a better job of Wordle-ing than Wordle's design, because its simplicity is fundamental. Adding more components to it, like guessing multiple words at once, guessing songs, movies, guessing words of a specific theme etc. take away from the incredibly simple intentions and rules of the original Wordle, in my opinion.

And because Wordle's simple, clean, sleek design, colors, and shapes are already quite iconic, any attempt at replicating this style runs the risk of looking very home-made or tacky.

However, I would argue that the appeal of these sites actually comes from their home-madedness and overt, sometimes humorous complexity or community-specificity, like Queerdle, which makes you guess words related to the LGBTQ+ community and culture.

ACCESSIBILITY

Is Wordle accessible?

Not as much as it COULD or SHOULD be.

Turning the touchpad off:

You can still play the game without the touchpad, since the game is exclusively played by pressing keys on a keyboard. However, I couldn't access the instructions for how to play the game or the "share score" function at all with the keyboard.

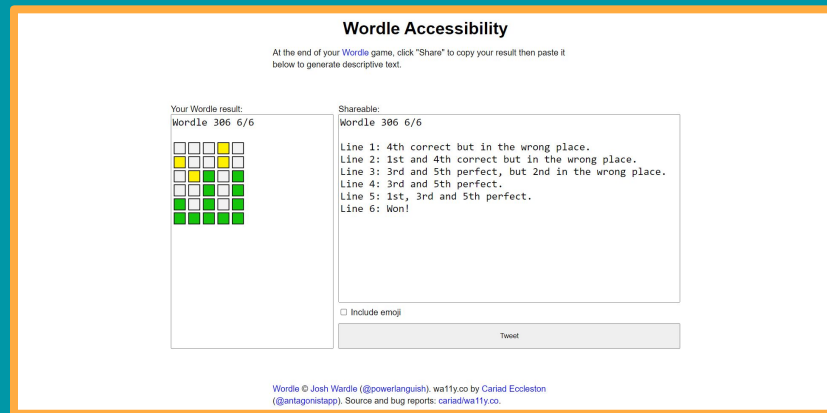
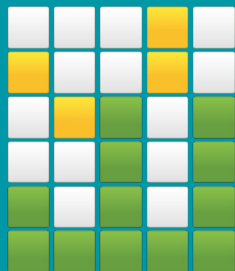
Checking the Investigator:

When I inspected Wordle, I saw that there was a section for “Accessibility,” and under this section, I found ARIA Attributes. I searched this up online, and found that ARIA is a set of attributes that you can add to your HTML elements to make your websites more accessible. However, when I opened this, it was empty. I don’t think Wordle has any ARIA attributes at all.

The problem with the “Share” feature:

When you finally finish your daily Wordle puzzle, the game gives you the option to share your score. It will copy your results to a clipboard, which are represented through colored square emojis, then you can paste these results online to social media sites or share them with friends. It looks like this..

Wordle 306 6/6

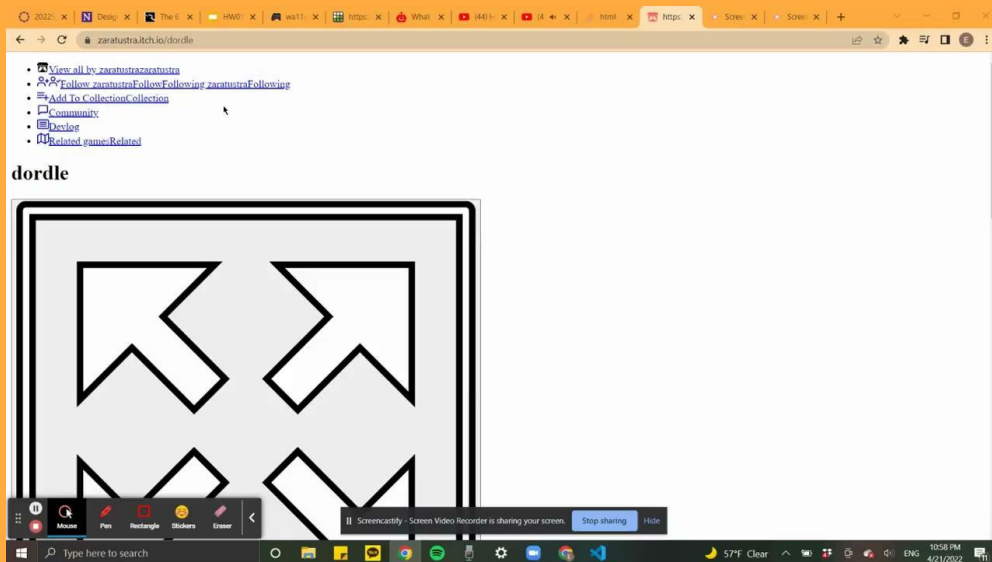


Looking around on the Internet to see what others have said about Wordle’s accessibility, I’ve come across the criticism that when people share their Wordle scores through the share feature, it’s almost impossible for their screen reader technology to decipher what this means in a comprehensible way. There IS a solution to this problem, but it’s not offered by Wordle.

In fact, people have made bookmarklets that make Wordle accessible through a screen reader since no aspect of the game can be processed through a screen reader by default. Here’s a [video](#) of someone trying it out! Again, this is NOT something offered or facilitated by Wordle.

How do alternatives compare?

To put it shortly, they aren't much better. In fact, here's what Dordle looks without CSS. It still seems to take input from the keyboard, but the site becomes impossible to navigate. The structure completely breaks down and I couldn't find any alt text nor ARIA attributes.



In the video I linked in the slide before, the YouTuber, who is a blind content creator, says that “Wordle, by default, is actually not accessible for the blind.” I think because, by default, Wordle’s entire premise was created without accessibility in mind, it’s probably incredibly rare that an alternate version of Wordle is any more accessible. The most accessible version seems to be the bookmarklet which allows a screen reader to be used **specifically** for Wordle, so I don’t how how many of these alternatives have people making bookmarklets specifically for the game.