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PUI

HTML and CSS - Muddy Paws

Moving from design, an area where I am extremely comfortable, to implementation, where I have much less expertise, was an interesting journey. I designed a prototype with implementation in mind. I didn't create anything over the top. Every design decision made was one I knew I could code or quickly learn how to code myself. As clever as I thought I was, there were still plenty of learning opportunities and road bumps along the way of creating the Muddy Paws website.

During the heuristic evaluation, I found several issues that I was able to correct during the coding process. The first involves user control and freedom. If a user was to

navigate into the site, a product details page for example, and decide that they wanted to end their process and return to the homepage they would have had to repeatedly click the browser back button. I did not link the logo in the upper left corner back to the home page. I gave the user no simple escape button. This also violates the consistency and standards heuristic because it is commonplace for a logo to link back to the home page of a site. The fix was simple: make the logo link to the home page. The second usability issue was the lack of a 'shop all products' option in the main navigation bar. I had placed a button that took users to the entire catalog of products, but it was in the body of the home page rather than the navigation bar (fig. 1). My first solution was to make the navigation bar a drop-down, but, for reasons I will discuss later, I instead added an 'all products' button in the navbar (fig 2). The next heuristic issue

fig. 1

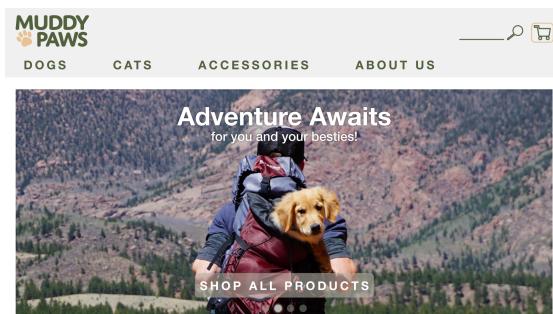


fig. 2



was both a system status and a user control problem. The product details page did not have a quantity selection. What if my user had two dogs? It was would require them to

fig. 3

fill out the required options and add to cart two separate times. When fixing this issue I noticed another potential problem in the order of items below the product description. The average reviews/rating was below the size and color options (fig. 3). This makes little sense because the reviews are more logically tied to the product description than the ‘add to cart’ or color options. While adding the quantity option, I rearranged the product details interface (fig. 4). These were the major issues I discovered through my heuristic analysis. However, there were many more small issues such as different text sizes, alignment problems, and inconsistent color usage.

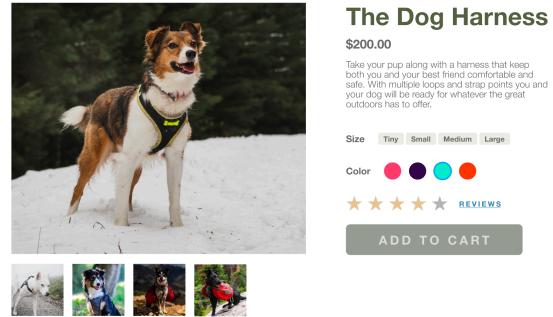
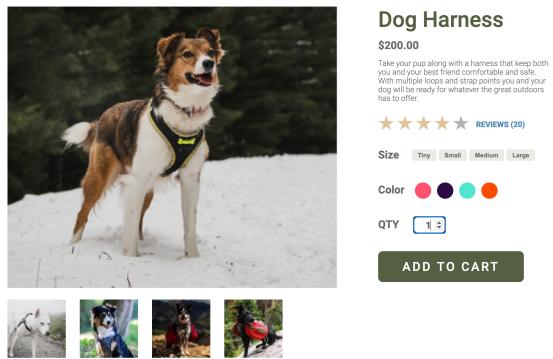


fig. 4



I encountered plenty of challenges while creating the HTML/CSS for the site. Most had to do with a lack of general knowledge of the capabilities of CSS. HTML makes sense to me (I probably use too many `<div>`s though), but CSS is much more nuanced and therefore the learning curve is much steeper. My first challenge was to format the home page to resemble my prototype. The combination of margins, padding, parent/child was difficult at first. However, after the lab discussion of flex box I was able to create much more attractive and responsive layouts. Once I got the flex basics, I was able to quickly set up the remainder of the site. The responsiveness is not perfect, but it is much cleaner than my first attempt earlier in the process. A difficulty that affected the design of the site was my inability to understand how to create a dropdown menu only using HTML/CSS. After searching for, and ultimately not finding, a solution I could understand, I decided to make all of the menu items visible. The solution is temporary I hope, as I will return to this problem when I have more script knowledge under my belt. When it came to how to style elements using CSS, [w3schools.com](https://www.w3schools.com) was a lifesaver. The site was usually the first option after a google search of my problem, and their feature to use the code on the site helped me understand the content rather than just place code into the stylesheet. One area where I still need work is with the class and id standards. If you look at my CSS file there are, at the time of this writing, 777 lines of code. I am sure if I spent more time working on HTML/CSS I will become much more efficient in this area.

The Muddy Paws branding is reflected in about every design decision made on the site. The exception here is the actual imagery which was all taken from unsplash.com, a royalty-free image service. The focus was to create an aspirational outdoor brand geared toward serious outdoor enthusiasts. The site carried the outdoors feel with the use of the color pallet. The pallet consists of desaturated earth tones that had the added benefit of not feeling abrasive to the users' eyes like we discussed in class this past week. The aspirational nature of the brand is conveyed in the large lifestyle images that focus as much on the subjects as on the products. The minimalist design of the site also nods toward higher-end fashion brands to reinforce the premium nature of Muddy Paws' products.

I felt that this was a great project and I have certainly learned a lot. I did feel limited by just using plain markup text and not using java. Some of the things I had in mind will have to wait until the next project I suppose.