

AQUENT

GYMNASIUM

RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Lesson 1

MATERIALS & ASSIGNMENT

THIS LESSON'S CORE CONCEPTS

1. Designers and developers have long strived for web layouts that naturally work within different size screens and devices. The technical limitations of layout capabilities and the appeal of “pixel perfect” layouts made this a rarity in the early days of web design.
2. The advent and popularity of smartphone devices with their smaller screens forced the issue and made the adoption of flexible layouts a priority.
3. The three components of Responsive Design are Fluid Grids, Flexible Media, and Media Queries.
4. Fluid grids are layout columns and rows that are not fixed. Instead, they expand and contract depending on the size of the user's browser window or screen size.
5. Flexible media are primarily images (but also video) that will also scale smaller or larger based on the size of the user's browser window or screen.
6. CSS3 Media Queries are a way to detect certain conditions of the user's screen or device and send them styles accordingly. An example would be changing the layout when a user turns a smartphone from portrait to landscape view.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Quiz

2. Locate three portfolio sites you have NEVER visited

In order to find these use your favorite search engine and enter terms such as “css portfolio sites” or “web designer portfolio sites.” Don't specifically go looking for responsive sites, though; that's not the point of this assignment. Do keep track of the sites that you visit, because you'll be needing them shortly.

Navigate to at least three pages throughout each site

Try to go a few levels down the site and keep track of the pages you visited. Note how elements on the page work (or don't work). Is the type readable and/or attractive? What about the images?

3. On a smartphone*, visit the same three portfolio sites, navigate to the same pages (if possible), and compare the experience

- Was your first experience of the page what you expected? If not, why not?
- Was one site's experience better or worse than the others? What aspects can you point to specifically that made it that way? Here are some specific elements to evaluate:
 - Rotate your phone from portrait to landscape
 - Did you need to pinch and zoom?
 - How easy was it to navigate to the same pages?

**If you don't have a smartphone you can use a desktop emulator such as <http://quirktools.com/screenfly/>.*

However, use this only as a last resort, as an emulator will never give you the full range of experience that the physical device will.

READING

- The article that started it all: Ethan Marcotte's 2010 article "Responsive Web Design"
<http://alistapart.com/article/responsive-web-design>
- A 2009 article by Ethan that set the stage for RWD: "Fluid Grids"
<http://alistapart.com/article/fluidgrids>
- Slideshare presentation by Aaron Gustafson "Progressive Enhancement & Mobile"
<http://www.slideshare.net/AaronGustafson/progressive-enhancement-mobile>
- W3.org article "Graceful degradation versus progressive enhancement"
http://www.w3.org/wiki/Graceful_degradation_versus_progressive_enhancement
- Mike Cherim: "CSS Layouts: The Fixed. The Fluid. The Elastic."
<http://green-beast.com/blog/?p=199>
- Luke Wroblewski's article "Why Separate Mobile and Desktop Pages?"
<http://www.lukew.com/ff/entry.asp?1390>
- Kayla Knight: "Responsive Web Design: What It Is and How To Use It"
<http://coding.smashingmagazine.com/2011/01/12/guidelines-for-responsive-web-design/>

EXTRA CREDIT

The term "responsive design" is widely acknowledged within the industry as a combination of fluid grids, flexible images, and media queries, but you may also run into the term "adaptive design." So what's the difference between the two? There is a bit of debate surrounding this, but please read Dan Cederholm's article "Adapted" to get a clear sense of what it means to have an adaptive design.

<http://simplebits.com/notebook/2011/08/19/adapted/>