

# Best Practice: Flat Design

## What is Flat Design

Design constantly changes and evolves. Something considered in style now may not be at a later time. However, the amazing thing about design is how easily it can adapt to new environments, an example being the development of mobile devices. Mobile devices require a new approach to design because they have limited screen space, so it's impossible to jam full-size desktop sites onto the smaller mobile screen. Pictures, text, and navigation need to be revisited to be just as functional on mobile devices.

In the past, web designers focused on showing off their skills in design by packing sites with flashy illustrations and animations meant to wow their visitors. Flat design, however, opposes excessively detailed design techniques in favor of a more simplified look to fit the digital medium and replaces the overly detailed design style found in older websites.

Flat design is a simple approach that emphasizes the usability of designs and features clean, open space, crisp edges, bright colors, and two-dimensional or flat illustrations. Unlike skeuomorphic design, a style that tries to mimic real-life objects in digital format, flat design separates technology interface and tactile objects.

Flat design is a style of design in which elements, logos, and pictures lose all stylistic characteristics that make them appear 3D and realistic. It removes stylistic features such as drop shadows, gradients, textures, and the tiny elements included to mimic the real-life version of the object, making it appear more lifelike. This design style can be applied to all kinds of digital content.

## Easier to Use

In flat design, the meaning of the design is important, especially if the design will accommodate mobile devices. A design element is a distraction from the user experience if it does not attribute anything meaningful to the whole design. Flat design uses simple designs that allow someone to understand the website more clearly.



Simple images allow messages to be conveyed more quickly than a detailed illustration. These simple details can be processed in the mind faster, allowing meaning to be determined sooner.

Some people may argue, “Won't it look boring without all those extra fancy effects that really allow it to pop?” My answer would be no. Although it may seem like removing all of the stylistic characteristics will make the images boring, it has the opposite effect. The reason is that flat design uses bright contrasting colors to make illustrations and buttons stand out from backgrounds and grab attention.

## Key Attributes

The main idea that pulls flat design together is the idea of simplicity. Solid, vivid colors give aspects the emphasis needed to set them apart in place of illustrative detail; sans serif typography provides a clean, crisp supplement to illustrations; the text is concise and to the point; UI elements like buttons and links are clear and noticeable. Everything should be designed with the same goal, to create a cohesive visual and functional web design.

Flat design brings purpose back into design. Instead of designing an amazing and graphic website for the sake of looking nice, flat design makes every piece and part of the design a functional tool whose purpose is to enhance the user experience and guide the user to relevant information without distraction.



This picture illustrates what a cohesive flat design of buttons would generally look like.

## Flat Design and Consistency

Not only does flat design look nice on a full-page website, but it also easily translates across different devices. Because of its simple nature, all of the important information is already being conveyed on the full page, so there is no loss of information when you adjust it for a smaller

screen like a smartphone or tablet. One thing that you have to realize about flat design is that it puts a lot of focus on the content.

## Material Design

If you still crave a little bit of stylistic characteristics on your website there is actually a design style for that. It combines everything that is great about flat design and everything that is great about detailed design and creates a happy medium in the middle. Material design is probably most similar to the way the Apple iPhone software looks. Many icons have one flat color, but at the same time, there are a couple of elements of gradients and drop shadows.

## Summary: Pros and Cons

### Pros:

- Extremely easy to navigate
- Functional and remarkable across all media. Including tablets, mobile, and desktop
- The new universal standard of digital design and interaction in the 21st century and beyond
- The website loads faster because of simple graphics

### Cons:

- Because the design calls for such a simple display of content many websites that use this style might begin to look alike. Applying variety in website elements can alleviate this.
- This style really emphasizes content, so if you don't have any content the design doesn't look as great.

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