How-To Guide

Due May 24 by 11:59pm   **Points** 10
Submitting a website url

How To Guide Requirements

Overview

You are going to write a how –to guide for a library, tool or concept associated with web development. The idea behind the guide is to supplement pre-existing documentation. The guide may help someone get set up to use a library for the first time or it may detail how an advanced feature of the library works. Either way, the how-to guide should help someone do a task that otherwise would be difficult.

Selecting a Library

You have two weeks to get to know the library you are using and to write the how to guide. The majority of your time should be spent learning the new library. It may be a little bit difficult to judge the library at first glance, but if after an hour or two you are not making any progress, it may be time to select a different library. Likewise, if you get it all figured out in an hour you may have picked a library that is too simple.

Some examples of things that may be appropriate depending on your comfort with the topic:

-Using functions as classes in JavaScript

-Node.js

-Making components for video.js

-PDOs in PHP

-Automated build tools for web development

Things that might not be a good idea:

-How to use a color scheme picker. While valuable, it is probably too simple and does not warrant a guide of its own.

-Google libraries. Their documentation is typically excellent and includes things like video tutorials. Actually adding to this documentation would require a very high bar.

-Some undocumented half done library you found on Github. This is a dangerous road. You may not make any progress, it may be a tool that is really not that useful.

I would recommend you pick a topic you are interested in and look for related libraries. You may start with a computer science topic like "functional programming in JavaScript" or you might start from a person interest like "guitar tabs in HTML5". If you are unsure about a library after spending some time on it, post it to the discussion

boards and myself or the TAs will give it our best shot at figuring out if it would be good or not.

Deliverables

For this assignment you should create a website that serves as your how-to guide. The content of that website should be generally equivalent to a 5-10 page document. This largely depends on the number of screenshots or code samples use. Additionally you can use videos to provide some of the content if you think that would be appropriate, but this should be in the context of other documentation. Submit a URL to your website by the end of week 8. You are free to use any technology covered in the class or a different technology if you want. You can also use something like Bootstrap to help with CSS styling.

Considerations

The purpose of this is to learn how to do something novel with a library and teach that to other people. If you are just restating existing documentation this is not meeting the objective of the assignment. If good documentation exists for sub steps of your guide (like if there is good documentation on how to install a library), be sure to link to it and don't restate it. Just tell people to go read that then come back to this guide once those steps are completed.

Examples help! Think about the things you ask for. You want to see real examples of the code. So you should provide it in your guide if it is appropriate. If you do provide an example, make sure to explain what is going on and why things are the way they are.

Visuals help! If you are making a guide for a library that changes the way a page is displayed, make sure to show before and after screenshots so someone knows if they are doing it write.

Think about what might go wrong. If you ran into trouble, make sure you address it, because other people using the guide will probably run into trouble too. What makes a good guide is figuring out where people are probably going to go wrong and giving them additional support in that area.

Get someone in your target audience to test drive the guide. This is the best way to get feedback. If someone can do the task in your guide with minimal outside support, you are in good shape.

Some Example Guides

The following are some good examples:

http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~riceand/cs494/howto/index.php   (shared with permission from Andrew Rice)

http://www.javascriptkit.com/javatutors/closures.shtml

https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/JavaScript/Guide/Regular_Expressions?redirectlocale=en-US&redirectslug=JavaScript%2FGuide%2FRegular_Expressions