

Introduction

I wrote the following concept topics as part of a project for a technical writing workshop towards the end of my certificate program. While I had used the software Balsamiq Mockups 3 for another class, I struggled to come up with appropriate concepts for the project at first. I first decided to cover the Asset Library as I experimented further with the software, but I still needed more topics. I also struggled with how to cite my sources. I wanted to show the research I had done for these topics, but I wasn't sure how to go about it.

Eventually, I added topics for wireframing and for designing websites, and I provided links and references to my research sources so that users can also view them. I'm very proud of my finished topics, which I believe convey their information clearly while relating the information back to the product.

[Wireframing and Mockups](#)

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Wireframing and Mockups

Wireframes are visual representations, usually illustrations, of a user interface design. While they can include styling and content, they normally don't have much. Instead, they function as more of a prototype, giving designers and clients an idea of what the finished interface may look like.

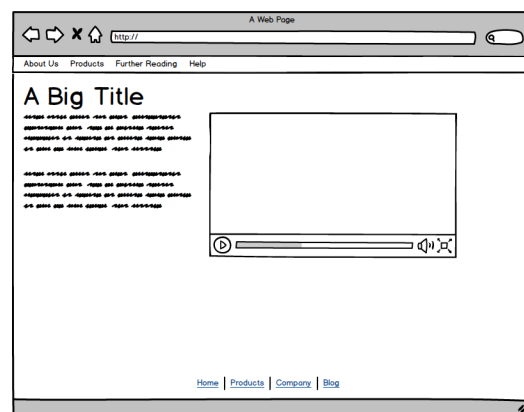
How Wireframes are Used

Wireframes are mainly created by interface designers and information architects. They use them to lay out where content will be in their project and how users will navigate through it. They're creating blueprints for how their projects will work.

Advantages of Wireframes

There are a number of ways that wireframes can help you:

- You can review your wireframes with your team or your clients. You can show them how you envision the layout for the project, even at an early stage of the design process.
- You can position and edit the wireframe's content easily and plan how their functionality.
- You can edit and change your wireframes when needed, and the changes you make aren't as permanent as changes to an actual website would be.
- You can use your wireframes to focus more on how the content is organized and how the space on a given page is used. This is because the branding and styling are stripped away.



How Balsamiq Mockups can help

The mockups you create in Balsamiq Mockups 3 are wireframes. The software offers options to design both for websites and for mobile devices, allowing you to design your interface at a more structural level. You can also link your mockups together to show how a user would navigate from one page to another.

Though wireframes do not normally include styling and content, Balsamiq allows you to add these in your projects. You can add intended text to pages and format it to suit your needs. You can add images to any placeholders on different pages.

Additional Sources

[Wireframing from usability.gov](#)

[Wireframes - The Beginner's Guide from the UX Review](#)

[What is Wireframing? From Experience UX](#)

[Related Topics](#)

[Creating Mockups](#)

[Publishing Mockups](#)

Assets and the Asset Library

Once you've created your mockup, you can start adding content to it. This content takes the form of **assets**, which are stored in your **Asset Library**.

What are Assets?

Assets are files that are imported from your computer or downloaded from the web into your mockup project. Assets are typically image files, either JPEG or PNG files. When added to your project, the images are displayed on the mockup.

You can add other file types as assets as well, such as Photoshop or Illustrator files, PDF files, Microsoft Word documents, and more. Unlike image files, these **non-image assets** only show up as their file icon rather than showing the file itself. However, they are still saved to the project.

Note: Asset files are limited to 20 Megabytes per file for performance reasons.

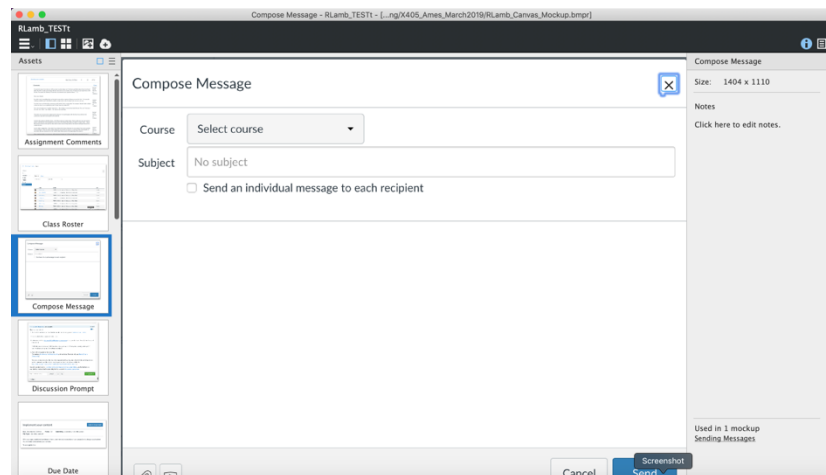
Icons and Assets

Custom icons that you create are also stored as assets in your project. Like image files, these icons are saved for future use in your project. For more on this, see [Creating Custom Icons](#).

The Asset Library

Once you've added a file to a mockup, it will be saved to the Asset Library. This allows you to reuse the file on other mockups as needed. There are two ways to view the Asset Library:

- On the elements menu bar, select Assets. This shows the assets on the bar across the top of the screen.
- From the View menu, select Assets. This shows the assets at a larger scale while hiding your mockups.



The Asset Library will only show assets for the project you're working on. It will also show any custom icons you've created for the project.

Related Topics

[Adding Images](#)

[Importing Files to your Asset Library](#)

[Creating Custom Icons](#)

Designing for Websites

You may be creating mockups of a potential website. Your mockups can help determine how users experience your website, forming a blueprint of what will become the final product. It helps to keep your users in mind as you go through this.

How Users Navigate

Users don't read and navigate through websites as we would think. Instead of reading carefully, they often scan through the page, looking for what they want. Depending on their situation, they may be in more of a hurry.

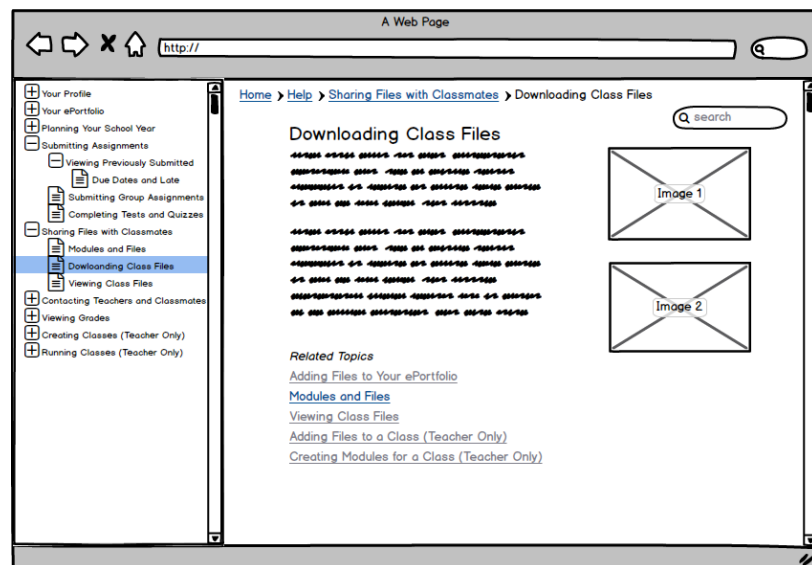
If they find something close to what they want, even if it just seems close, they will reach for that option first. This may work well in some cases, but it can lead users astray if the website doesn't clearly mark where they're going. Clearly marked options in terms the users can understand will help them figure out where they need to go.

There isn't much of a penalty for users if they go to the wrong page, but they can become easily frustrated if they cannot find their way back to where they started. Having multiple ways to navigate the website helps. This can include elements as a tree pane on the side or a breadcrumb trail along the top.

Elements to Use

When creating a mockup, you generally want to start with a container element. The Browser element will best mimic how a webpage looks.

Once you have your container, you can start adding further elements. To start, you may want a title and text. You can use the Title and Subtitle elements to label the page you're mocking up. For text, we recommend either the Text element if you know what you want to say or the Block of Text element if you only need a placeholder.



There are multiple navigation elements that you can choose from. In the image above, we've used a Tree Pane on the left-hand side formatted with drop-down menus of related items. Along the top of the page is a breadcrumb trail showing the path the user took to get to this page, complete with links back to those pages. Using more than one navigation element will help your users, as they will have more ways to get to what they need.

Media elements, such as images and videos players, are also good elements to add. These elements are placeholders for where visual content will go in future designs. Balsamiq allows you to add actual images to your mockups.

Further Reading

If you're curious to learn more about website design and usability, we highly recommend *Don't Make Me Think Revisited* by Steve Krug.

Related Topics

[Designing for Mobile Devices](#)

[Designing for Apps](#)

[Adding Elements to Mockups](#)