Responsive Design Best Practices
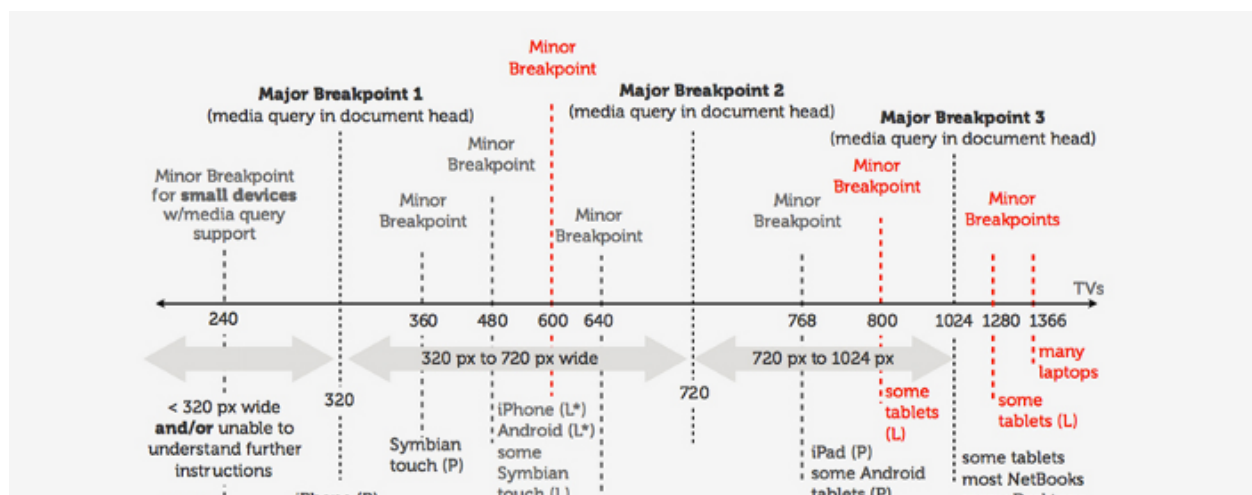
by [Nick Babich](#)

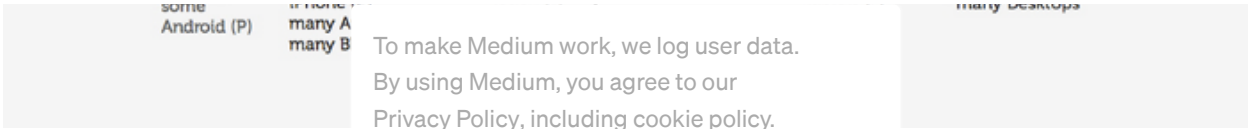Nick Babich (Follow)
Mar 2, 2016 · 4 min read

Responsive design is a design that that responds to the user's environment (user's device screen size, orientation and platform).The core thing about responsive design is *flexible layout*. Flexible layouts have flexible image and flexible text blocks that looks good on any screen.

Now let's focus on the keyrules of responsive design:

Pick Major Breakpoints

Design should look great on three type of device (mobile, tablet, and desktop). A breakpoint is the media query values that will mark the transition to a new class devices. While there is no universal set of breakpoints or best practices, you should use at least 3 breakpoints for the most device flexibility (see illustration).

Responsive design breakpoints. Image by Pragmatic Responsive Design (Stephanie Rieger)

When designing for specific breakpoints, consider the content you have. Don't build media queries for devices, built it for content.

Optimize images for different breakpoints

Images are not naturally fluid. But you should modify them to different resolutions.

Image by Developers.Google

Tips:

- On smaller screens, crop some images so they retain their impact. Great tutorial from Ethan Marcotte has answers on the most technical related questions.

- Try Scalar Vector Graphics (SVG). Unlike raster graphics which has fixed resolution, SVGs alter their resolution based on image paths, not pixels, so they remain the same at any size.

- Generate the optimal responsive image dimensions using tools like Responsivebreakpoints

ORIGINAL ASPECT RATIO

№	Width	Height	File size	
1	200	133	5.6 KB	View image
2	426	284	27.5 KB	View image

To make Medium work, we log user data. By using Medium, you agree to our Privacy Policy, including cookie policy.

			47.3 KB	View image
			64.9 KB	View image
			86.9 KB	View image
6	961	641	105.7 KB	View image
7	1060	706	124.1 KB	View image
8	1167	778	144.1 KB	View image
9	1271	847	165.3 KB	View image
10	1326	884	187.5 KB	View image
11	1396	931	205.6 KB	View image
12	1400	933	211.6 KB	View image

* Try and resize the browser window to see responsive behavior

HTML5 img tag example

```
<img
  sizes="(max-width: 1400px) 100vw, 1400px"
  srcset="
    dog_c_scale,w_200.jpg 200w,
    dog_c_scale,w_426.jpg 426w,
```

Responsive image generator

Pay Attention to Font Sizes

Typography is the cornerstone of the web making up approximately 95% of all content. When choosing a typeface, be sure that your font selection works well both on large or small displays.

Responsive typography. Image by ia

Tips:

- *Use real text in rather than text within graphics.* Text can also be enlarged without any loss of quality.

- *Make big headlines responsive.* Make headings clearly headings, at least 1.6 times as large as the text they support.

- *Make body text responsive.* Ethan Marcotte wrote <u>an excellent article on the Adobe Typekit blog</u> explaining why using *em* (and rem, coming in the next section) is a lot better than using pixels to size your fonts.

Design the Smallest Views First

Designing with the mobile (smartphone) layout first will help you prioritize your content (distinguish essential elements from the secondary elements). Once the mobile design questions are answered, designing for other devices will be easier.

Tips:

- *Avoid large graphics*. Large file sizes means longer loading for mobile users.

- *Test how your design l* To make Medium work, we log user data.   r site on a real phone or
  tablet.   By using Medium, you agree to our
                             Privacy Policy, including cookie policy.
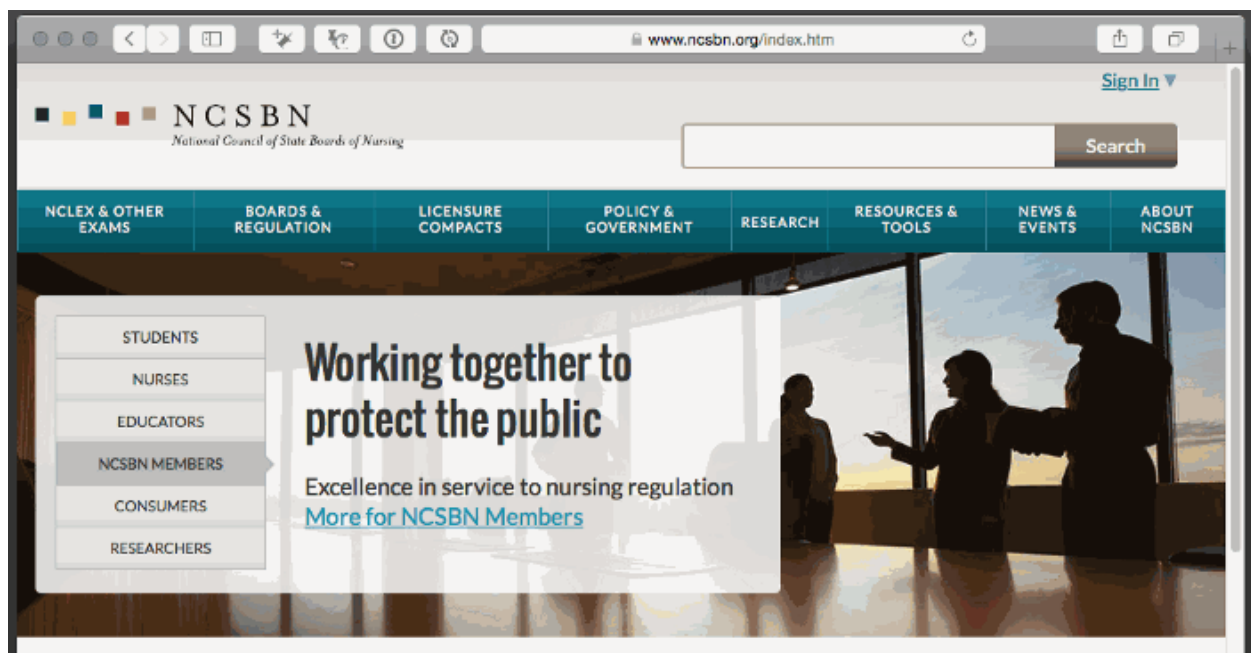

Responsive Design Testing across Devices. Image credit: smashingmagazine

Design scalable navigation

Ensure navigation works well on all types of devices. It's recommended to use Priority+ navigation pattern because it grantees that the top-priority options will always be visible for the user. Other options will be revealed based on their importance.
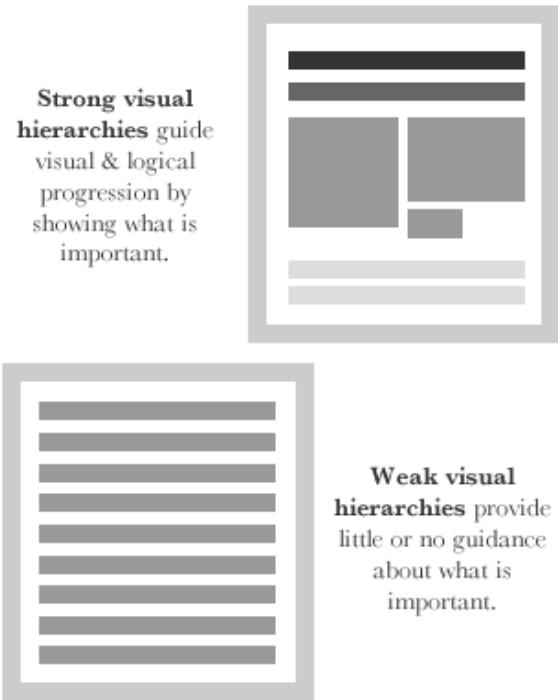

Priority+ navigation pattern in action. Image by css-tricks

Create solid visual hierarchy on all screen resolutions

Visual hierarchies take co   e content should be
viewed first, some secon   ntory, prioritize the
content and try to display   gly— the users shouldn't
need to scroll to find the content.

Follow UX Planet: [*Twitter*](#) | [*Facebook*](#)

Learn how to design better products

Interactions between computers and humans should be as intuitive as conversations between two humans. Interaction Design Foundation will help you to learn how to design for efficiency and persuasion.

Learn UX Design

Take all our online courses. Pay a flat fee. Get industry-recognized Course Certificates (see example) Self-paced...

www.interaction-design.org

Sign up for Design news

By UX Planet

Get the latest news from th

Get this newslett

Responsive Design   Web Development   User Experience