



Review Guide: How Design Works

Let's review some of the key ideas introduced in this unit. You can also download all this content for future reference by clicking on the attached file.

Key Definitions

- **Call To Action:** The element on a page prompting the primary desired user action.
- **Pixel:** The smallest “picture element” of screen based images. Often represented relative to size, i.e. ppi, or pixels per inch.
- **Above The Fold:** The top section of a website — the part that's visible without scrolling down.
- **Below The Fold:** The part of a website that can't be seen without scrolling down.

Above the Fold



Below the Fold



- **Index Page:** Also called the home page, this is the main page on a website.
- **Prototyping:** A part of the design process, usually for the purposes of testing and iterating, in either a digital or analog space.
- **Iteration:** Typical "design-speak" for the process of creation and destruction whereby new solutions are found while others are abandoned.
- **Mockup:** The presentation of the basic visual layout of a website. Designers use mockups in order to quickly present ideas and concepts for testing, allowing them to make rapid changes to the design based on feedback.

- **Comps:** Short for "composites," are proposed design directions. These may take a number of forms, including sketches, wireframes, and thumbnails.
- **Thumbnail Sketch:** In terms of web design comps, thumbnail sketches are most commonly used to refer to basic shapes and drawings that represent page elements.
- **Target Audience:** The viewers you anticipate gaining the maximum value from the site.
- **Responsive Design:** The construction of web sites to render in the optimal setting based on the size of the user's browser & device.
- **GitHub Repository:** A folder that lives online in the cloud where you can store web files.
- **Cloned Local Folder:** A folder that lives on your computer that connects with your GitHub Repository. Any changes made to files in this folder must be committed and synced in the GitHub Desktop app to connect them with the GitHub Repository.

Visual Design Elements

Use the following elements as guides for articulating and defending your choices when creating the design for you website.

- **Visual Balance:** The distribution of an object's "visual weight" (often used in relation to positive and negative space on a site). Visual balance can also refer to the overall arrangement of the objects on a web page.
- **Scale:** Refers to the size of an object on a page, and in turn, its visual relationship to the size of other page elements. Sizing objects on a page is a common method of attracting visual attention or organizing elements based on relative importance.
- **Space:** *Positive space*, or the content of the page, is framed by the *negative space* (often called "*white space*", even if the color isn't white).
- **Focal Point:** The primary point of visual emphasis, or in other words, the element on the site that the users should focus on. Examples of this include logos, headlines, and large images (often called "*hero images*").
- **Hierarchy:** In web design, hierarchy may refer to the organization of elements on a page, or more broadly as the organization of different pages on a site.
- **Flow:** The movement of the user's eye through the site content, initiated by a focal point and influenced by hierarchy.

Design Process

1. Understand The Problem

Key idea: Each website has a goal, or a problem its attempting to solve. For example, a portfolio site is solving the problem of a designer's work not being visible online; or a healthcare site is solving the problem of a lack of information for patients. If you clearly understand the problem, it will be easier to communicate your idea (solution) to the end user.

2. Brainstorm

Key idea: When you become comfortable with the practice of brainstorming and not feeling as if only "good" ideas are worth further consideration, you will shed the anxiety that often occurs when faced with a blank page.

3. Create a Sitemap

Key idea: By building the site's structure as well as the overall goals for the viewer ahead of time, this will prevent unnecessary and time-consuming site restructuring later.

4. Thumbnail Sketching

Key idea: Rapid generation of clear ideas is the purpose of thumbnail sketching. Relationships of size, space, and balance should be evident at this stage.

5. Iterate

Key idea: Don't be afraid to "kill your darlings," or rather, don't be afraid to abandon an unsuccessful design even if it holds special personal significance.

6. Deploy

Key idea: Remember, the design process is iterative in nature. Once your page is live on the web, continue acquiring user feedback to inform future changes on the site.

The Visual Design Toolset

Although we've decided to use wireframe.cc — a free, browser-based sketching tool — there are a number of other great tools available, ranging in both price and complexity. Below is a list of software programs commonly used by professional user-experience designers and web designers.

1. Sketch

Designed to rapidly concept nearly any type of digital execution—allows for the rapid updating of reusable elements such as buttons and other interface styles.

[Check it out here.](#)

2. Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign

The most common software found across design disciplines. Adobe Creative Cloud mobile and desktop solutions are utilized at all steps of design, development, and deployment.

[Check it out here.](#)

3. OmniGraffle

Useful for diagramming website structure, refining webpage sketches, adding annotations.

[Check it out here.](#)

4. Apple Keynote

Useful for laying out rough comps or more detailed drafts as well as adding basic interactivity at the between individual elements and/or pages.

[Check it out here.](#)

5. Inkscape

A free, open-source version of Adobe Illustrator.

[Check it out here.](#)

Questions to Review With Your Mentor

1.

What are some examples of "good" web design and "bad" design?

2.

Can you show me an example of a website that's effective in guiding the user's eye through the page?

3.

What software, hardware, and other tools do you use to design websites? When comparing tools, what features and functionality should I look for in web design hardware/software?

4.

What are the most common industry tools for designing web pages?

5.

Where do you find web design inspiration?

Further Reading

Looking for more help with the design basics? Here are a few places you can check out:

An interesting read on how good design promotes understanding:

<https://www.vitsoe.com/rw/about/good\-design>

Design agencies worth following: R/GA, Razorfish, AKQA, Huge, Blue State Digital, and Possible:

- <http://www.rga.com>
- <http://www.razorfish.com>
- <http://www.akqa.com>
- <http://www.hugeinc.com>
- <http://www.bluestatedigital.com>
- <http://www.possible.com>

SmashingMagazine.com, a content provider specific to web designers and developers, frequently posts “how-to” articles in addition to articles covering code and design techniques, inspirational sites, and the business of web development:

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com>

Communication Arts is standard reading for professionals working in various design disciplines:

<http://www.commartarts.com/>

A good site to examine flexibility and continuity. Although the number of columns defining the site’s grid appears to change between pages, what the viewer is experiencing is the merging of smaller column units into larger fields, a design common to print media:

<http://www.ffmark.com/>

DOWNLOADS

Summary