

Alt CSS Layouts

Let's try something a bit different

Parallax

WHAT IS PARALLAX DESIGN?

The term “parallax” first came from the visual effect of 2D side-scrolling video games that used different background image movement speeds to create the illusion of depth during gameplay.

This was generally done by making the background of the game move slower than the foreground in order to make it seem further away.

This same concept applies to parallax site design in which the background of the website moves at a different speed as the rest of the page for an impressive visual effect that allows for countless creative applications for online storytelling.

Pros

- Wow viewers with page depth and animation
- Take a storytelling approach to guide visitors through the site
- Make page visits last longer by encouraging visitors to scroll through the entire page
- Provoke curiosity
- Direct visitors to calls to action
- Reenforce website credibility with innovative interactive viewing

Cons

With all of these benefits of parallax site design, there are also several downsides to having a parallax site. Most of these problems stem from the fact that the majority of parallax websites only have a single long page which is extremely detrimental to the site's SEO as well as load speed.

- SEO takes a hit, websites with a single page allow only one set of meta information, one effective h1 tag, and one URL
- A ton of images and other information on one page cause slow load times, causing frustrated visitors to leave the page before they even see it

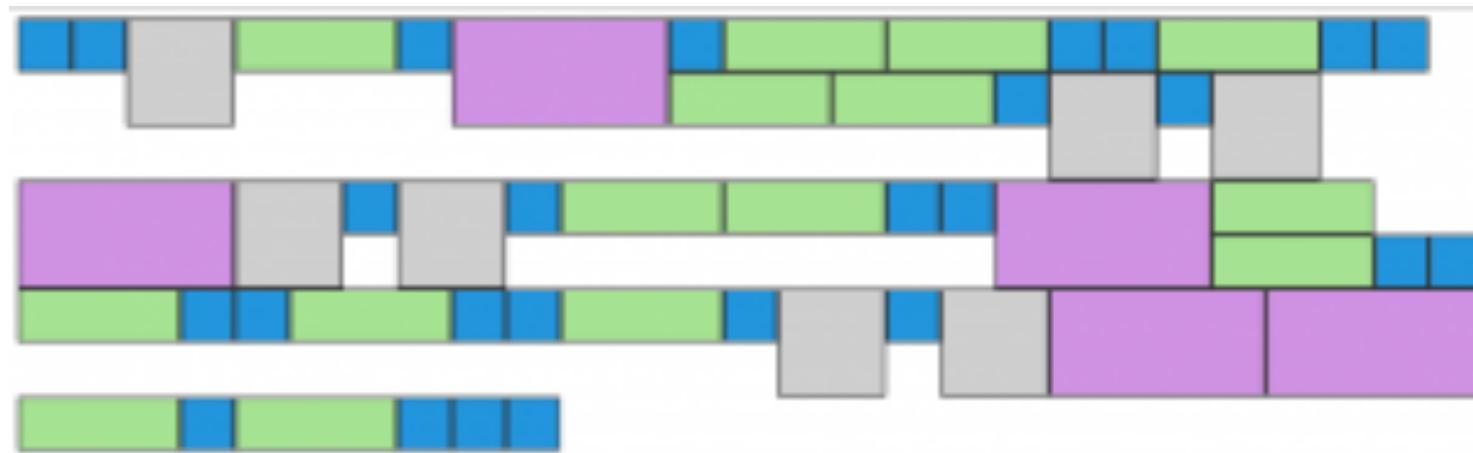
Masonry

Masonry is a grid layout based on columns. Unlike other grid layouts, it doesn't have fixed height rows. Basically, Masonry layout optimizes the use of space inside the web page by reducing any unnecessary gaps. Without this type of layout, certain restrictions are required to maintain the structure of layout.

Developers and designers are accustomed to seeing web pages laid out with CSS floats. But this common type of layout doesn't take the size of the elements into consideration. Instead, it adds elements one after another, first in the horizontal direction, then vertically.

Masonry

The following image shows, a typical web page that uses floats for layout:



As you can see, having boxes with dynamic dimensions makes it difficult to design a layout without unnecessary gaps.

This type of layout makes it harder for users as well, because the page height increases due to the additional spaces.

It requires unnecessary scrolling to navigate to the bottom of the page. In such scenarios, we have to use a fixed-size box in each row.

Masonry

The following image shows, a web page using Masonry:



Using a Masonry layout is the ultimate solution to this problem, as it reduces the spaces and tries to fit the maximum number of boxes into the rows and columns.

Considering the screenshot above we can see the changes to the previous design in a Masonry layout. Notice that the height of the page is reduced and the layout is easier on the eye.

Practical uses of Masonry

Masonry layout can equip a site with better functionality, as well as enhance a site's design. The following are practical examples of Masonry layout usage:

- Image Galleries – The most popular use of Masonry layouts is for galleries. Image galleries are built using different types of images with varying dimensions. It can be challenging to create a set of images with the same dimensions, without losing their quality.
- Blog Posts – Generally, a blog's home page lists the latest blog posts, along with a short summary. As long as we use one column to list posts, there won't be any problems. However, with multiple columns, it is not possible to list the posts with varying length summaries.
- Portfolios – Masonry layouts are useful for displaying portfolio items. It can be used to present projects, designs, images, or anything that is relevant to your profile.

Let's think about this.

If you are thinking about using a Masonry layout on your website, consider the following points before making your decision:

- Generally, you will need to use a grid-based layout.
- Items displayed on the grid should have varied dimensions.
- In order to experience the real effects of a Masonry layout, there should be a considerable number of items.

If you are thinking about using a Parallax layout on your website, consider the following points before making your decision:

- Is your site meant as a storytelling experience?
- What dimensions are you trying to convey via the animation?
- Can you use another layout method to better frame your content?

Final In Class Challenge

Create a CSS Zen Garden!

Go to <http://www.csszengarden.com/> Download the HTML and CSS file. Then using either using Masonry or Parallax make a version of this site.