**What is Web Design?**

Web design refers to the design of websites that are displayed on the internet. It usually refers to the user experience aspects of website development rather than software development. Web design used to be focused on designing websites for desktop browsers; however, since the mid-2010s, design for mobile and tablet browsers has become ever-increasingly important.

A web designer works on the appearance, layout, and, in some cases, content of a website. Appearance, for instance, relates to the colors, font, and images used. Layout refers to *how* information is structured and categorized. A good web design is easy to use, aesthetically pleasing, and suits the user group and brand of the website. Many webpages are designed with a focus on simplicity, so that no extraneous information and functionality that might distract or confuse users appears. As the keystone of a web designer’s output is a site that wins and fosters the trust of the target audience, removing as many potential points of user frustration as possible is a critical consideration.

Two of the most common methods for designing websites that work well both on desktop and mobile are *responsive* and *adaptive* design.

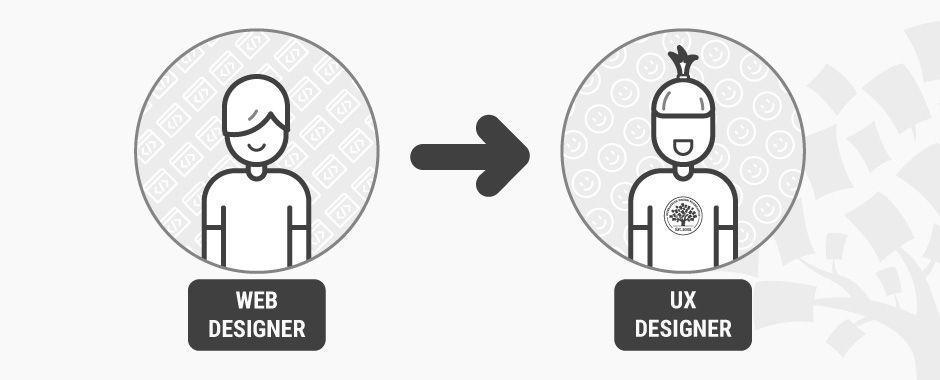
In responsive design, content *moves dynamically* depending on screen size; in adaptive design, the website content is *fixed* in layout sizes that match common screen sizes.

Preserving a layout that is as consistent as possible between devices is crucial to maintaining user trust and engagement. As responsive design can present difficulties in this regard, designers must be careful in relinquishing control of how their work will appear. If they are responsible for the content as well, while they may need to broaden their skillset, they will enjoy having the advantage of full control of the finished product.

**Literature on Web Design**

Here’s the entire UX literature on **Web Design** by the Interaction Design Foundation, collated in one place:

**How to Change Your Career from Web Design to UX Design**



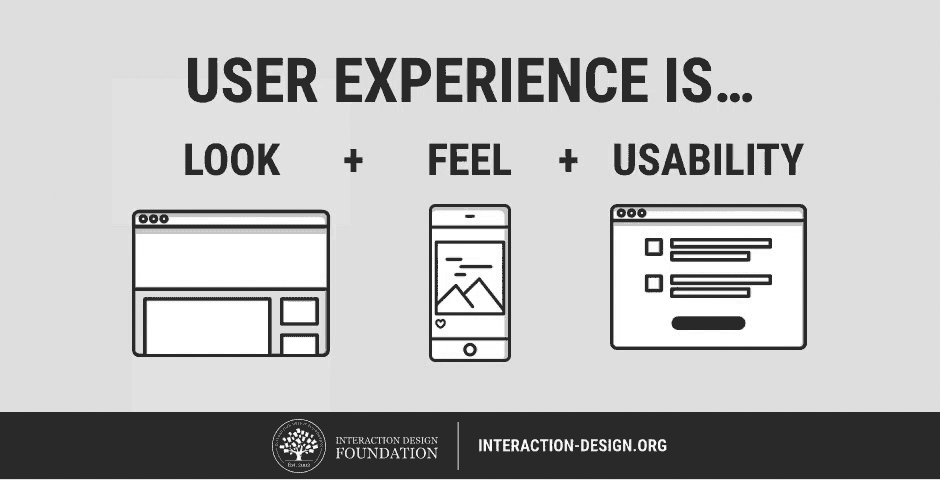
Changing careers isn’t as hard as it’s often made out to be, especially if you’ve got the right resources to help you make the change. For many web designers, now is the perfect time to make the switch into [UX design](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/ux-design). To start with, there’s the monetary boost that comes with the change in career. According to PayScale, web designers in the US earn an average of $46,000 annually(1), while [UX designers](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/ux-designers) on the other hand earn a sizeable $74,000(2). Secondly, job opportunities for UX designers are booming: CNN reports that a total of 3,426,000 UX design jobs will be created in the US alone within the next 10 years(3). Furthermore, UX design is a meaningful job, not only because you get to work on a product from the inside out, but also because—as DMI has shown—UX design makes a significant impact on businesses, with UX design-driven businesses outperforming the S&P index by 228%(4). So, where do you find the right resources to help you make your career change? Why, you’re reading one right now.

**What is User Experience and User Experience Design?**

To start with, let’s have a brief introduction to what we mean by “User Experience”. Products have users, and the user experience (UX) is simply the experience a user has from using that particular product. So far, so good?

UX design is the art of designing products so that they provide the optimum possible user experience. If this description sounds broad, it’s because the nature of UX design is pretty broad. Building the optimum UX encompasses an understanding of psychology, [interaction design](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/interaction-design), [user research](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/user-research), and many other disciplines, but on top of it all is an iterative problem solving process (but more on that later).

Broadly speaking, user experience can be broken down into 3 components: the look, feel, and [usability](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/usability).



The look of a product is about using visuals to create a sense of harmony with the user’s values, and that creates [credibility](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/credibility) and trust with the user. It’s about creating a product that not only looks nice, but looks right too.

The feel, then, involves making the experience of using a product as pleasant and enjoyable as possible. It’s built by crafting the interactions between the user and the product, as well as the reactions they have when (and after) using the product.

Lastly, usability underpins the user experience. Quite simply, if a product isn’t usable, no amount of good looks can salvage it, and the only feeling users are going to have is anger and frustration. Ideally, products should be personalized to user’s needs, and deliver functionality in a predictable way.

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**What Do Web Design and UX Design Have in Common?**

The job title “Web Designer” has many definitions, and indeed, what a web designer does is largely dependent on what the client or project requires. Some web designers simply create visual designs and/or high fidelity [interactive prototypes](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/interactive-prototypes) of the website, and leave the coding of the website to front-end and back-end developers. The majority of web designers, however, do get involved with both the designing and (front-end) development of the website. Some web designers even regularly do user research and testing as part of their jobs (and if you’re one of them, you’re already almost ready for a job in UX design).

But no matter what your job as a web designer entails, here are some aspects of [web design](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/web-design) that can also be found in UX design.

**Problem solving**

Web designers look to solve problems for their clients; UX designers look to solve problems for their users. Web designers work with a problem solving process: first, they find out the problems their clients have, then design a web solution for them, and then proceed to develop and [test](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/test) the website before releasing it. And after a website is launched, web designers often are involved with further testing the site, collecting feedback from users, and then reiterating on the design.

This iterative problem solving process is similar to the UX [design process](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-process) (shown in the image below). UX designers begin with user research; it’s essential to get to know the potential users of a product and find out what their problems are, how to solve them and how to make users want and/or need that solution. User research is often done via [user interviews](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/user-interviews), observations, demographic studies, drafting [user stories](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/user-stories) and [personas](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/personas), etc. Thereafter, UX designers would create a design solution that solves the user’s key needs, and often bring the prototype back to users to test its validity or usability. After the product is launched, UX designers collect more user feedback, which feeds into a new round of user research, thereby starting the process again.

If you’ve done user research before as part of your web designer job, you will find it a great advantage when making the switch to UX design. If not, don’t worry—you’ll have many opportunities to learn the best ways to conduct user research (read on to find out more).

**Emotional design**

When designing websites, web designers often make use of [typography](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/typography), [color](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/color) and layout to shape the emotions of users. A sense of credibility could be established, for instance, by using darker colors and serif fonts; similarly, a sense of fun could be created using colorful imagery and playful typography. Web designers are familiar with [emotional design](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/emotional-design); that is, creating designs that elicit emotions from users. UX designers are also concerned with emotional design, but on a larger scale—they are concerned with eliciting emotions from users throughout their entire experience of using a product.

To do that, UX designers work with not only typography and color, but also psychology, motion design, content curation and [information architecture](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/information-architecture). Web designers making the change would innately understand what emotional design in UX entails; they simply need to pick up new knowledge in other areas to augment their ability to do so on a bigger picture.

**Multi-disciplinary**

Web design is a multi-disciplinary job, where you’d need not only knowledge in design (typography, [color theory](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/color-theory)) but also skills in developing a website (HTML, CSS, JavaScript). Some web designers are also involved in interaction design when they code for [animations](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/animations) and interactions using CSS and/or JavaScript. UX design is also a multi-disciplinary field, but perhaps supercharged in that sense. UX designers need to make use of knowledge from the areas of psychology, user research, [visual design](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/visual-design), and even business to create the best UX for their products.

**The Differences between Web Design and UX Design**

**User-focused vs technology-focused**

A large part of your job as a web designer is spent on catching up on the latest developments in HTML, CSS and other coding languages—all of which change and improve at a dizzying pace. Which browsers support what versions of CSS? Would CSS animations work in Safari on a Mac? Don’t even get me started on Internet Explorer! These might be a few questions (and frustrations) that are constantly on your mind as a web designer.But UX design isn’t concerned with *technology*. Instead, its focus is centered squarely on users—technology is only a means for users to get what they need. Only by focusing on users can UX designers create solutions that cater to the specific needs they have, and ultimately, that users will be willing to pay for. UX designers do extensive user research to find out the most they can about their users, most of which the majority of web designers wouldn’t have had the chance to perform.

**UX is more than the web**

UX design is platform independent. Its principles and processes are applied to many diverse areas outside of web browsers: on mobile apps, desktop software, and even hardware products and retail spaces. On the other hand, the domain of web design is strictly tied to web browsers. This means that UX designers are able to find job opportunities not only in up-and-rising fields like tech startups, but also in mature and stable industries like car manufacturers. As long as there’s a product, there’s a need for UX—and this really opens up your world of opportunities.

**The Big Benefit of Web Design Experience when Moving to UX Design**

**Relevance of web design background**

The biggest benefit of moving from web design to UX design is the amount of overlap between the two fields of design. While it’s true that UX design covers more platforms than the web browser, a sizeable portion of UX design work is still done on products that are at least partially web-based (think of [social media](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/social-media) websites like Facebook and Twitter, web apps like Dropbox, and services like Google). The overlap between web design and UX design is greater if you’ve done some form of user research or iterative process of continually improving a website with user data.

Being fluent in design and website coding terminologies will also give you a boost that cannot be ignored; after all, UX design is a collaborative process where communication is crucial. Being able to use industry terms while talking to your colleagues will definitely put you in a better place than someone who came from a non-design background.

**Aesthetics**

Your ability to create beautiful [aesthetics](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/aesthetics) as a web designer will also come in handy when making the switch to UX design.

Firstly, aesthetics is a great tool to augment your communications with internal stakeholders. As a UX designer, you have to constantly present your findings and recommendations to internal stakeholders (such as the CEO or product manager), and your ability to create visually pleasing reports and presentations will maximize the absorption of your key points.

***{Aesthetics is a core design principle that defines a design’s pleasing qualities. In visual terms, aesthetics includes factors such as balance, color, movement, pattern, scale, shape and visual weight. Designers use aesthetics to complement their designs’ usability, and so enhance functionality with attractive layouts.)***

Secondly, aesthetics plays a vital role in UX design. A common myth of UX design is that great usability trumps aesthetics—but that is far from true. In fact, a study of more than 2,500 participants by the Stanford Credibility Project showed that nearly half of them assessed the credibility of websites based on their visual appeal(5). This goes to show how aesthetics works hand in hand with other factors like usability to bring about the optimum user experience of using a product.

**How to Enhance Your Skills to Make the Jump from Web Design to UX Design**

Moving from web design to UX design can sometimes be quite straightforward, especially if you’ve done some aspects of user research in your job as a web designer. For other web designers, however, there is no cause for concern. You’ll be able to make the leap if you’ve spent some time studying UX, practicing some UX skills during your web design work, and constructing a CV which shows your understanding of UX design. If you’re wondering where to