

All Web Design Rules and Guidelines

All Design Ingredients -

01. Typography
02. Colors
03. Images and Illustrations
04. Icons
05. Shadows
06. Border-radius
07. Whitespace
08. Visual Hierarchy
09. User Experience
10. Components and Layout

All Website Personalities

Design ingredients need to be applied in different ways to different website personalities. Different personalities have different traits, therefore choices for design ingredients need to be made accordingly.

A detailed description of each personality can be found in the course slides, which are also available for download. Here is an overview:

01. Serious/Elegant: For luxury and elegance, based on thin serif typefaces, golden or pastel colors, and big high-quality images.

02. Minimalist/Simple: Focusses on the essential text content, using small or medium-sized sans-serif black text, lines, and few images and icons.

03. Plain/Neutral: Design that gets out of the way by using neutral and small typefaces, and a very structured layout. Common in big corporations.

04. Bold/Confident: Makes an impact, by featuring big and bold typography, paired with confident use of big and bright colored blocks.

05. Calm/Peaceful: For products and services that care, transmitted by calming pastel colors, soft serif headings, and matching images/illustrations.

06. Startup/Upbeat: Widely used in startups, featuring medium-sized sans-serif typefaces, light-grey text and backgrounds, and rounded elements.

07. Playful/Fun: Colorful and round designs, fueled by creative elements like hand-drawn icons or illustrations, animations, and fun language.

01 Typography

01. Use only good and popular typefaces and play it safe
02. It's okay to use just one typeface per page! If you want more, limit to 2 typefaces
03. Choose the right typeface according to your website personality
04. When choosing font-sizes, limit choices! Use a "type scale" tool or other pre-defined range
05. Use a font size between 16px and 32px for "normal" text
06. For long text (like a blog post), try a size of 20px or even bigger
07. For headlines, you can go really big (50px+) and bold (600+), depending on personality
08. For any text, don't use a font weight under 400 (regular)
09. Use less than 75 characters per line
10. For normal-sized text, use a line height between 1.5 and 2. For big text, go below 1.5
11. Decrease letter spacing in headlines, if it looks unnatural (this will come from experience)
12. Experiment with all caps for short titles. Make them small and bold and increase letter-spacing
13. Usually, don't justify text
14. Don't center long text blocks. Small blocks are fine

02 Colors

01. Make the main color match your website's personality: colors convey meaning!
02. Use a good color tone! Don't choose a random tone or CSS named colors.
03. You need at least two types of colors in your color palette: a main color and a grey color
04. With more experience, you can add more colors: accent (secondary) colors (use a tool)
05. For diversity, create lighter and darker "versions" (tints and shades)
06. Use your main color to draw attention to the most important elements on the page
07. Use colors to add interesting accents or make entire components or sections stand out
08. You can try to use your color strategically in images and illustrations
09. On dark coloured backgrounds, try to use a tint of the background ("lighter version") for text
10. Text should usually not be completely black. Lighten if up it looks heavy and uninviting
11. Don't make text too light! Use a tool to check contrast between text and background colors

03 Images and Illustrations

01. Different types of images: product photos, storytelling photos, illustrations, patterns
02. Use images to support your website's message and story. So only use relevant images!
03. Prefer original images. If not possible, use original-looking stock images (not generic ones!)
04. Try to show real people to trigger user's emotions
05. If necessary, crop images to fit your message
06. Experiment combining photos, illustrations and patterns
07. Method #1: Darker or brighten image (completely or partially, using a gradient)
08. Method #2: Position text into neutral image area
09. Method #3: Put text in a box
10. To account for high-res screens, make image dimensions 2x as big as their displayed size
11. Compress images for a lower file size and better performance
12. When using multiple images side-by-side, make sure they have the exact same dimensions

04 Icons

01. Use a good icon pack, there are tons of free and paid icons packs
02. Use only one icon pack. Don't mix icons from different icon packs
03. Use SVG icons or icon fonts. Don't use bitmap image formats (.jpg and .png)!
04. Adjust to website personality! Roundness, weight and filled/outlined depend on typography
05. Use icons to provide visual assistance to text
06. Use icons for product feature blocks
07. Use icons associated with actions, and label them (unless no space or icon is 100% clear)
08. Use icons as bullet points
09. To keep icons neutral, use same color as text. To draw more attention, use different color
10. Don't confuse your users: icons need to make sense and fit the text or action!
11. Don't make icons larger than what they were designed for. If needed, enclose them in a shape

05 Shadows

01. You don't have to use shadows! Only use them if it makes sense for the website personality
02. Use shadows in small doses: don't add shadows to every element!
03. Go light on shadows, don't make them too dark!
04. Use small shadows for smaller elements that should stand out (to draw attention)
05. Use medium-sized shadows for larger areas that should stand out a bit more
06. Use large shadows for elements that should really float above the interface
07. Experiment with changing shadows on mouse interaction (click and hover)
08. Bonus: Experiment with glows (colored shadows)

06 Border-radius

01. Use border-radius to increase the playfulness and fun of the design, to make it less serious
02. Typefaces have a certain roundness: make sure that border-radius matches that roundness!
03. Use border-radius on buttons, images, around icons, standout sections and other elements

07 Whitespace

01. Use tons of whitespace between sections
02. Use a lot of whitespace between groups of elements
03. Use whitespace between elements
04. Inside groups of elements, try to use whitespace instead of lines
05. The more some elements (or groups of elements) belong together, the closer they should be!
06. Start with a lot of whitespace, maybe even too much! Then remove whitespace from there
07. Match other design choices. If you have big text or big icons, you need more whitespace
08. Try a hard rule, such as using multiples of 16px for all spacing

08 Visual Hierarchy

01. Position important elements closer to the top the page, where they get more attention
02. Use images mindfully, as they draw a lot of attention (larger images get more attention)
03. Whitespace creates separation, so use whitespace strategically to emphasize elements
04. For text elements, use font size, font weight, color, and whitespace to convey importance
05. What text elements to emphasize? Titles, sub-titles, links, buttons, data points, icons
06. Emphasize an important component using background color, shadow, or border (or multiple)
07. Try emphasizing some component A over component B by deemphasizing component B
08. What components to emphasize? Testimonials, call-to-action sections, highlight sections, preview cards, forms, pricing tables, important rows/columns in tables, etc.

09 User Experience (UX)

01. Don't design complicated layouts. Don't reinvent the wheel. Use patterns that users know
02. Make your call-to-action the most prominent element, and make the text descriptive
03. Use blue text and underlined text only for links!
04. Animations should have a purpose and be fast: between 200 and 500 milliseconds
05. In forms, align labels and fields in a single vertical line, to make the form easier to scan
06. Offer users good feedback for all actions: form errors, form success, etc.
07. Place action buttons where they will create an effect (law of locality)
08. Use a descriptive, keyword-focused headline on your main page. Don't be vague or fancy!
09. Only include relevant information, efficiently! Cut out fluff and make the content 100% clear
10. Use simple words! Avoid technical jargon and "smart-sounding" words
11. Break up long text with sub-headings, images, block quotes, bullet points, etc.

10 Elements and Components

01. Use common elements and components to convey your website's information
02. Combine components into layouts using common layout patterns
03. Assemble different layout areas into a complete, final page