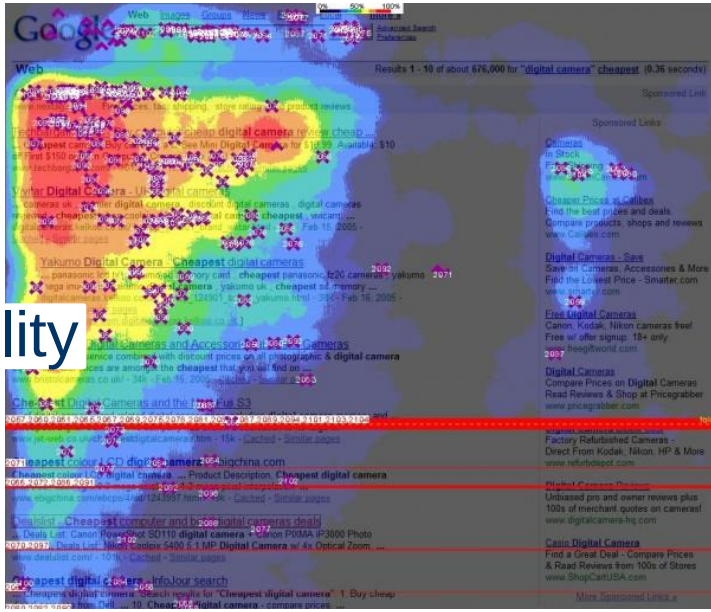
Page-Level Visual Information Management (VIM)

Learning Expectations:

- Provide a summary of behaviour characteristics common to web users
- Understanding what VIM relates to when designing web pages
- Page-Level Content & Presentation Planning
  - Conventional page layout skeleton alternatives
  - Typography: conventional vs web use
  - Colour & Graphics (previously covered)
- Applying *"The Rule of Thirds"* & *"Divine Proportion"* to page-level design
- Revision of other related page-level design considerations

Think about your users!

In order to use the principles properly, we first need to understand how users interact with web-pages, how they think, & what are the basic patterns of users' behaviour.



- Users want to have control
- Users appreciate quality and credibility
- Users do not read, they scan
- Web users are impatient & insist on *instant gratification*
- Users do not make optimal choices

Think about your users!

In order to use the principles properly we first need to understand how users interact with web-pages, how they think, & what are the basic patterns of users' behaviour.

- **Users want to have control**
  - Users want to be able to control their browser and rely on the consistent data presentation throughout the site.
  - e.g. they do not want new windows popping up unexpectedly and they want to be able to get back with a "Back" button to the part of the site they have been to before: therefore it's a good practice to *never open links in new browser windows*.

    "It depends" - *Duncan*

Think about your users!

- **Users appreciate quality and credibility**
  - If a page provides users with high-quality content, they are willing to compromise the content with advertisements and the design of the site. This is the reason why *not-that-well-designed* web-sites with high-quality content gain a lot of traffic over years. Content is more important than the design which supports it.

- **Users do not read, they scan**
  - Analysing a web-page, users search for some fixed points or anchors which would guide them through the content of the page.

Think about your users!

- **Web users are impatient & insist on instant gratification**
  - Very simple principle: If a website is not able to meet users' expectations, then the designer failed to get his job done properly and the company loses money.
  - The higher the cognitive load and the less intuitive the navigation, the more willing users will be to leave the website and search for alternatives.
- **Users do not make optimal choices**
  - Users do not search for the quickest way to find the information they are looking for. Neither do they scan web-page in a linear fashion, going sequentially from one site section to another one.
  - Instead users satisfice; they choose the first reasonable option. As soon as they find a link that seems like it might lead to the goal, there is a very good chance that it will be immediately clicked.

Content Presentation & Planning

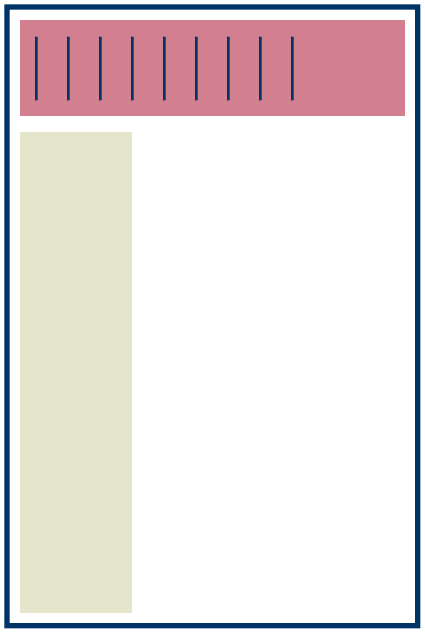
- Spatial organisation of text and graphics serves to:
  - Engage the user with graphical impact.
  - Direct the user's attention.
  - Prioritise information.
  - Facilitate intuitive and enjoyable interactions.
- It is all about creating a visual logic…
  - Dense text = difficult to read.
  - Dense graphics = content light.
- Ease of Access & Location – "*Content Chunking*"
  - Easier to scan and locate short information chunks.
  - Chunks lend themselves to hyperlinks.

Principles of Visual Design

- **Repetition & Consistency**
  - Repeat visual component throughout the design
- **Contrast**
  - Add visual excitement and draw attention
- **Proximity**
  - Group related items
- **Alignment**
  - Align elements to create visual unity

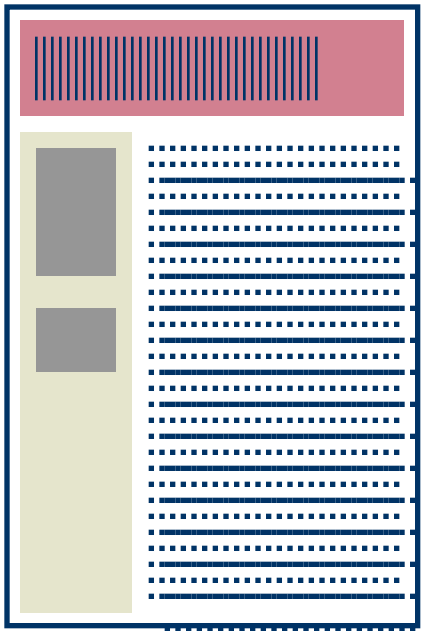
Visual Scanning & Page Structures

Rough scanning



Contrast recognition

Finer detail



Graphics

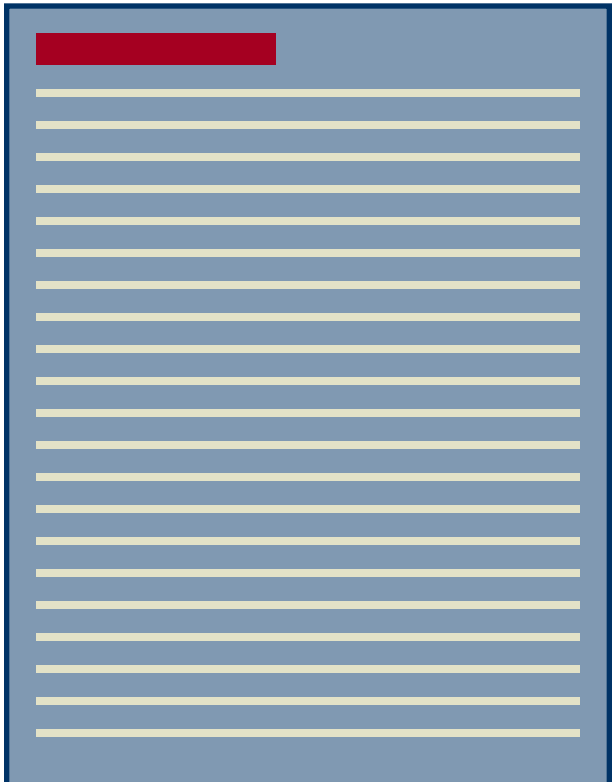
Header reading

Parsing & reading

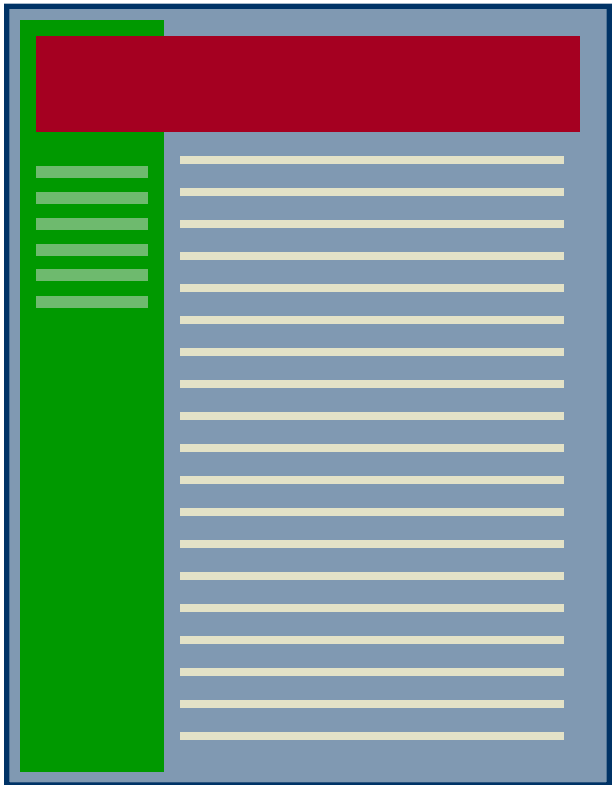
Graphical Balance

We need an appropriate balance between text, graphics, colour and layout that attracts the eye with visual contrast:

Dull, no visual focus

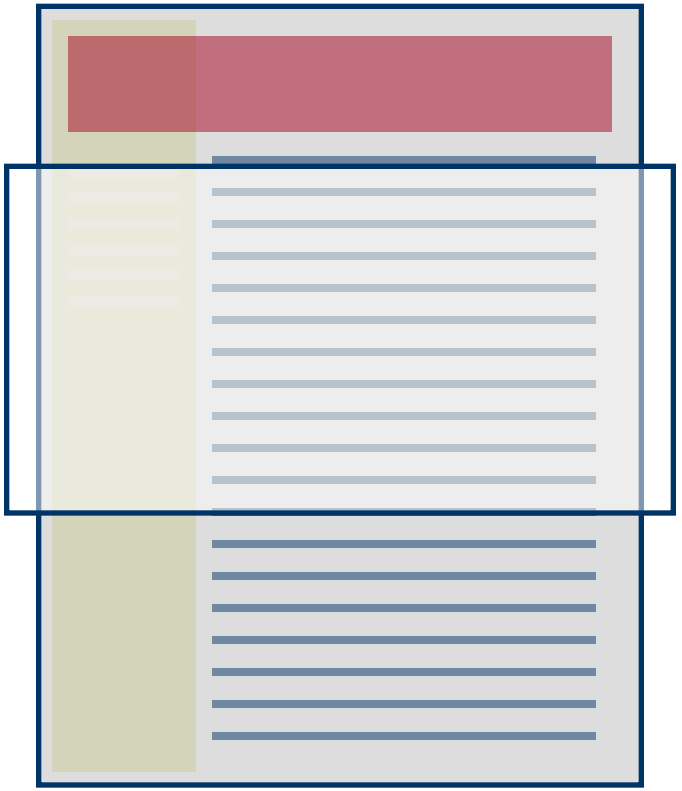


Strong visual contrasts



Page Dimension Issues

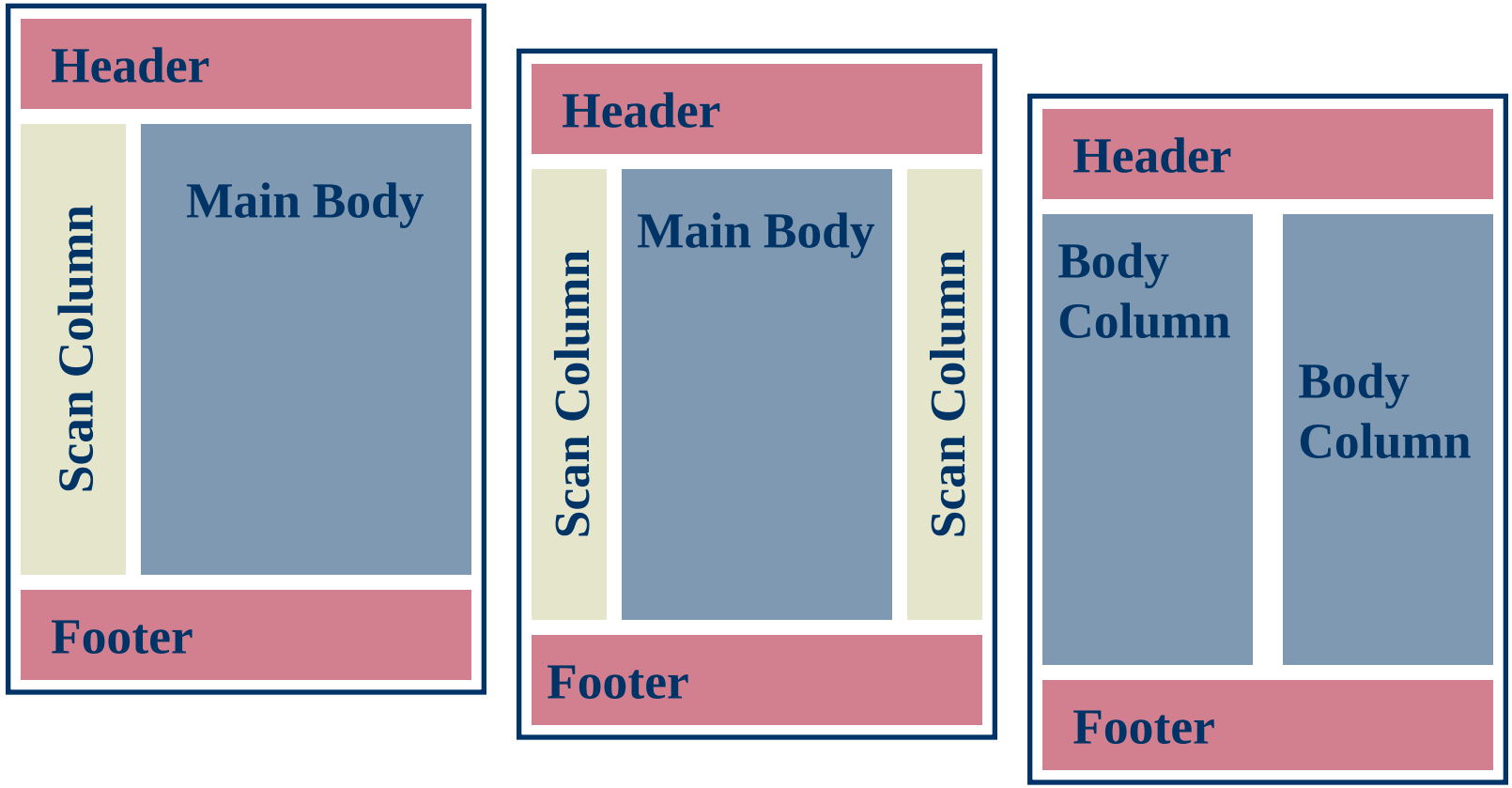
- Context Problems
  - Large scrollbar movements.
  - Lack of length indicators
- Solutions
  - < 4 screen lengths.
  - Provide ‘top’ links regularly.
  - Mirror navigation links.



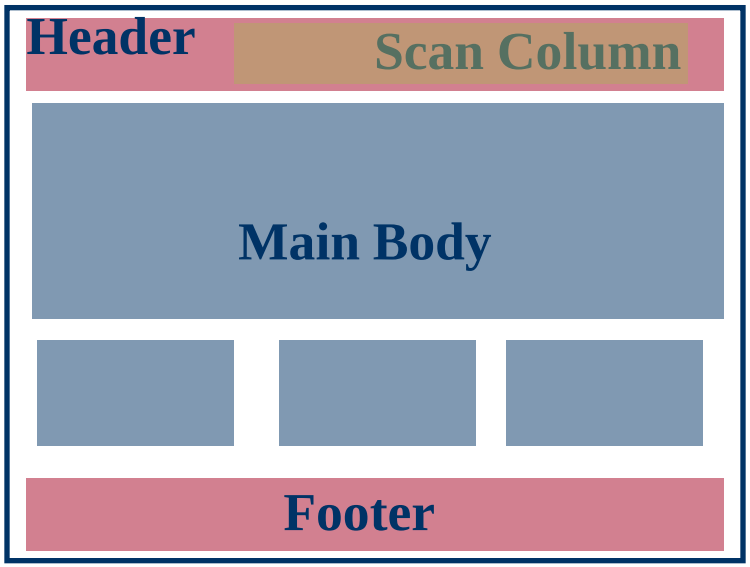
Page Layouts

- Layout Skeletons
  - Set placement and style guidelines for text & graphics.
  - Goal = consistent and logical screen layout.
- Classic Grid
  - Header, footer, scan column, main body.
  - Header, footer, left & right scan columns, main body.
  - Header, footer, 2 column body.
  - Remember: there is no *right* grid for all types of page!

Page Layouts



Page Layouts



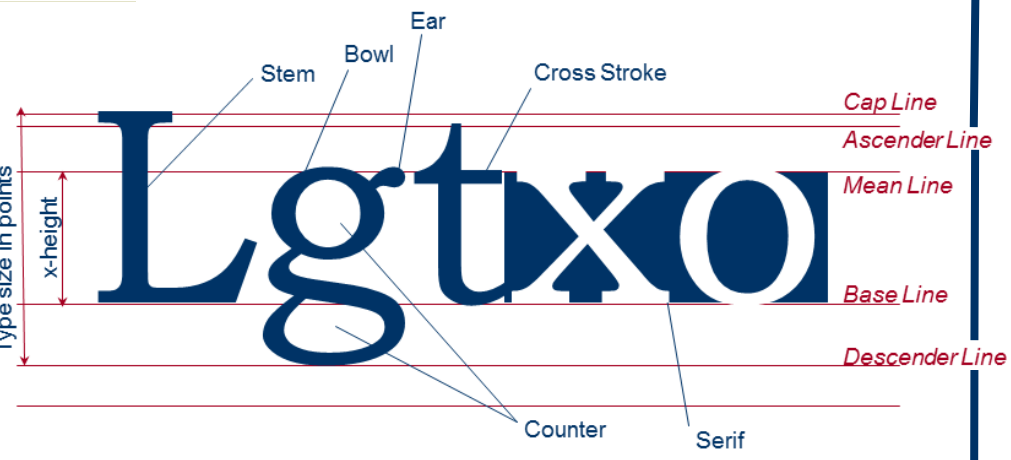
- Lots of options for layout!
- Pay Attention to:
  - Reading Patterns
  - Space
  - Minimalism

What is Typography?

- Typefaces, type sizes, layout styles
  - Creating patterns and contrast through text (typographic colour)
- Rules of Typographic Style?
  - Familiar typographic conventions (newspapers, novels,…)
  - Look at existing documents and publications.
- Typography in Web Sites
  - Severe limitations! Acceptable solutions.

Fundamentals of Type

- Type is traditionally measured in points
  - 1 point = 1/72 of an inch (approx.)
  - Point size indicates type depth from baseline to baseline but gives little indication of letter size.



117 Point Times New Roman

Lgtxo

117 Point Veranda

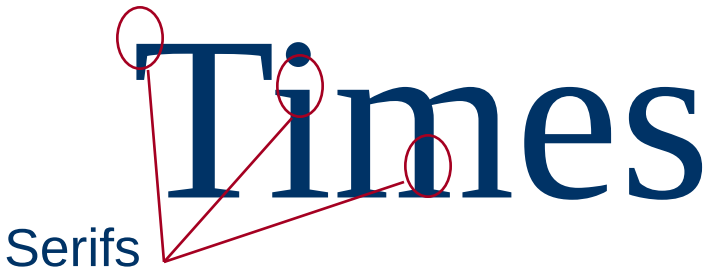
Fundamentals of Type

- x-height is critical to legibility
  - x-height = height of lower case x
  - Fonts with the same caps height can have differing x-heights.
- Typeface Style
  - A great deal of the individual style of a typeface can be found in the counters and the white space around the strokes.

Fundamentals of Type

- Seriffed Typefaces
  - Regularisations of the finishing strokes found in Roman inscriptional lettering (brush stroke relics).
  - Serifs help to emphasise

  textual flow and can aid reading.



- Sans-Seriffed
  - High legibility for individual words

  or short lines.

Arial

Fundamentals of Type

- Stressed Typefaces
  - Most seriffed typefaces have strokes with clearly different thicknesses: they are described as having *stress*.

- Monoline Typefaces
  - Most sans-seriffed typefaces have only one apparent thickness of stroke and are said to be *monoline.*

Fundamentals of Type

- Monospaced or Fixed Type
  - With monospaced type each letter has the same width whether it's an 'i' or a 'W'.
  - Courier is monospaced
- Proportional Type
  - With proportional type each letter is just the width of a character which results in a more pleasing appearance.
  - Garamond is proportional

Fundamentals of Type

Capitals

CAPITALS

Legibility depends on the top half of words

It is more difficult to read with the bottom half

Initial Caps Introduce Disruptive Bumps

Legibility Issues

- x-height is critical when it comes to font legibility.
- Seriffed fonts aid the reading of lengthy texts.
- Distinctive word profiles improve word recognition.
- Legibility depends on the tops of words.
- Initial capitals in headlines can disrupt scanning.

Computer Type

- Typefaces *vs* Fonts
  - A typeface is a family of alphabets related by design.
  - Each typeface will consist of variant fonts (bold, italic, condensed, expanded, etc.)

> 20 point Arial
>
> **20 point Arial Black**
>
> 20 point Arial Narrow
>
> **20 point Arial Rounded MT Bold**

- Screen *vs* Printed Type
  - 72dpi *vs* 600dpi

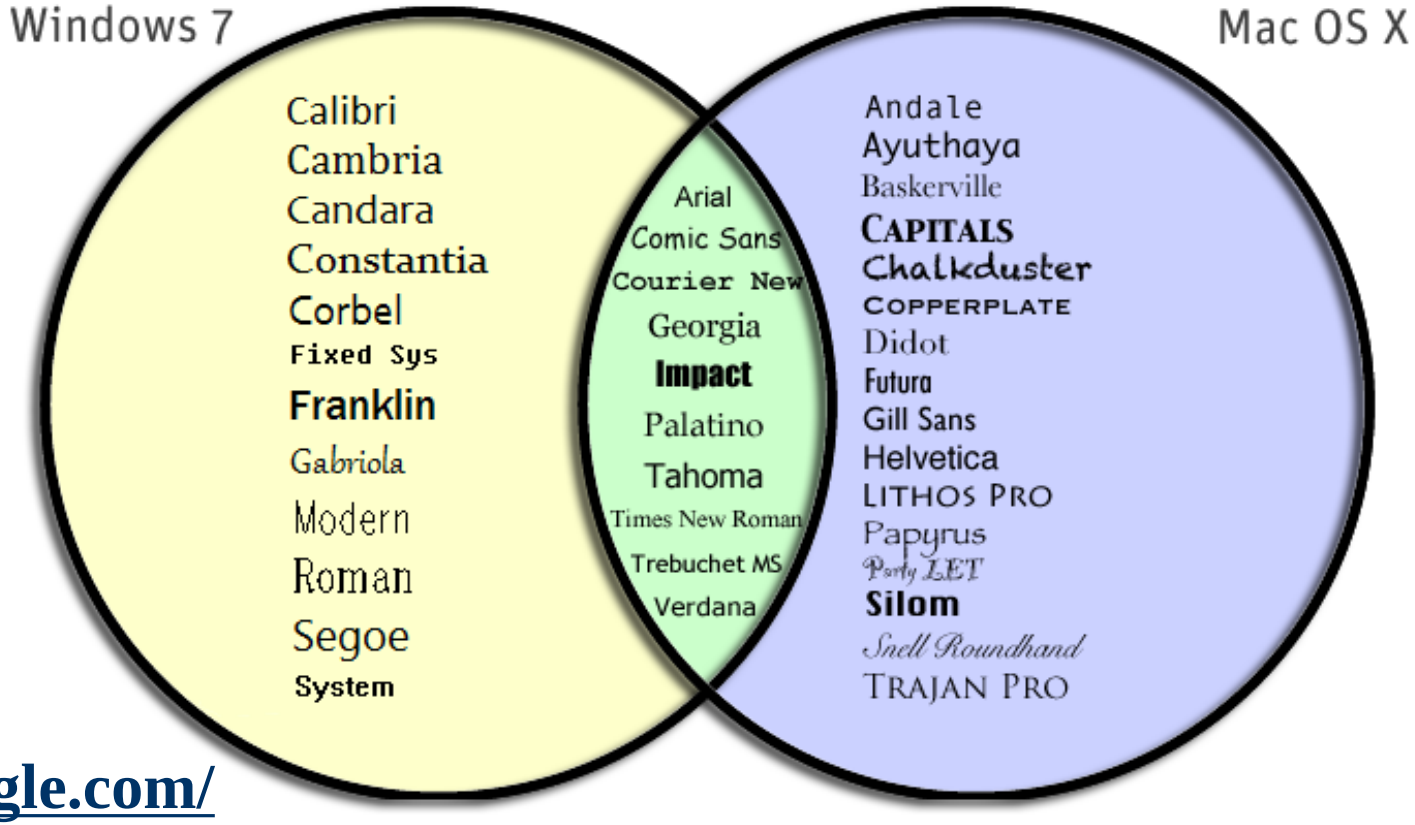
The Power of Type

- Type has personality
  - Change your typeface and you can go from casual to formal, silly to serious, staid to stylish, old-fashioned to modern.

  - Times is a serious typeface.
  - Arial and Helvetica are almost morose.
  - Comic Sans MS is anything but serious!
  - Courier is somewhat staid.
  - *Monotype Corsiva is extremely ornate.*

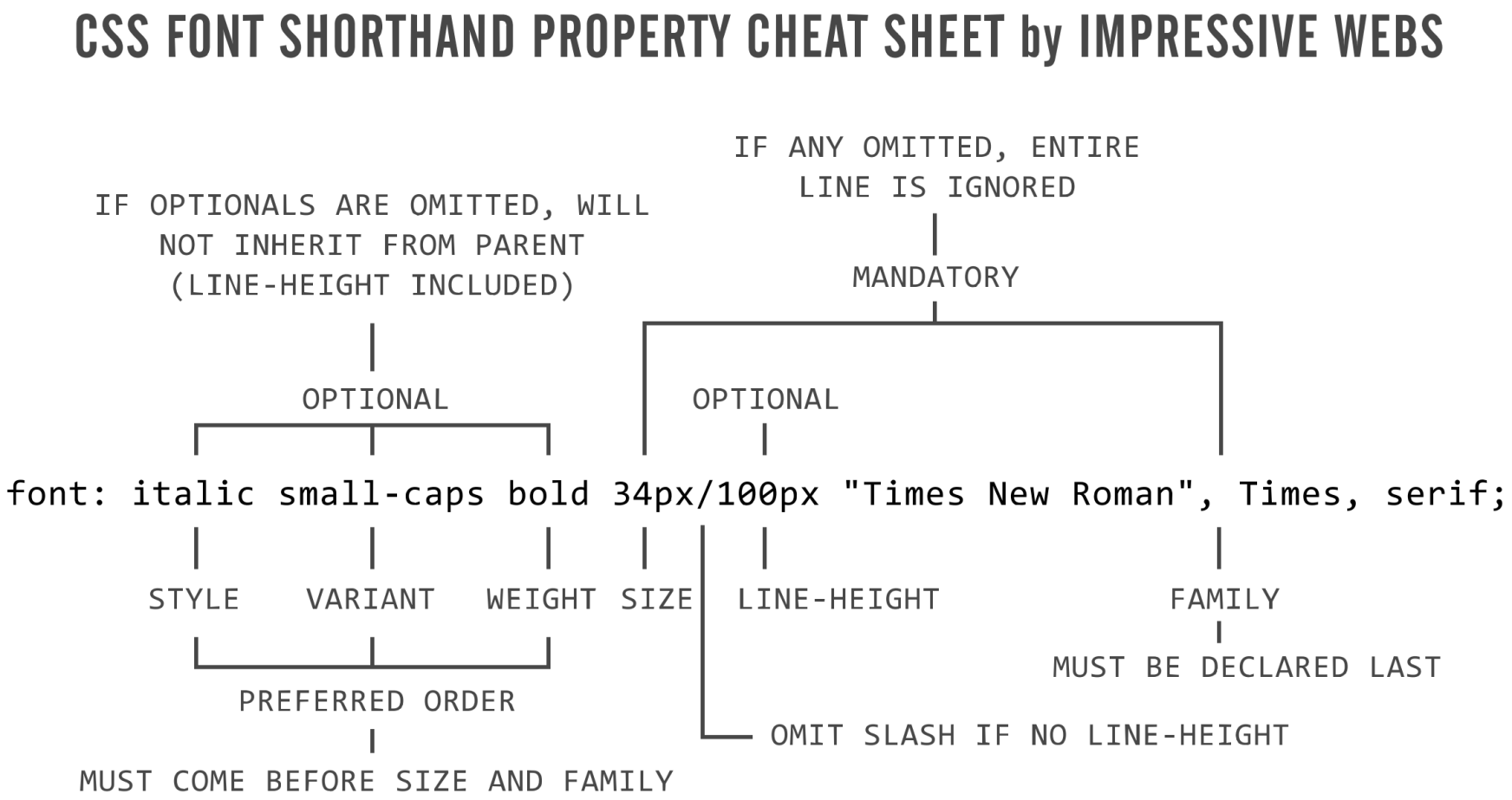
Practical Considerations

- **The only fonts your site visitors will see are the ones they have on their browsers!**



fonts.google.com/

Practical Considerations



Good *vs* Bad Typefaces

- Rule 1
  - Type can be beautiful and decorative - but if it draws undue attention to itself or makes it more **difficult to read the text then it becomes distracting and self-defeating**.
- Rule 2
  - There are **no** good and bad types faces. There are only appropriate and inappropriate typefaces. Think about your reader and the feeling and message you want to convey.
  - Will the type be small? Must it be readable by everyone, under various lighting conditions, on a range of systems? Is the message casual or formal?

Typographic Emphasis

- Bold
  - Used for headings and body text (with and without size changes).
  - Use bold with **working words** only.
  - Bold should be used sparingly to preserve contrast and emphasis.
  - If semantics are what you're looking for, use <mark> or elements
- Caps
  - Properly letter-spaced caps can work well but this level of control is limited in HTML so caps are usually avoided.
  - Generally used to SHOUT in text.

Typographic Emphasis

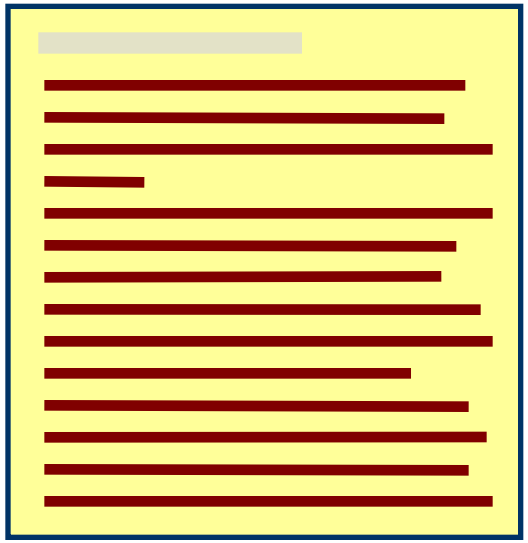
- Italics
  - Words that *whisper*, words that are *new*, or *personal*.
  - If semantics are what you're looking for, use element.
- Underlining
  - Emphasis means italics! Always has. So use *italics* instead!
  - Underlining breaks the rhythm of a text.
  - Most importantly, underlined text can be mistaken for links.

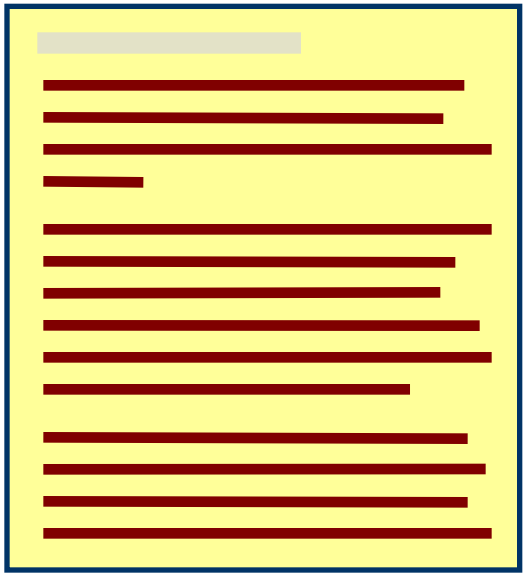
Typographic Layout & Alignment

- Why have alignment?
  - Visual guide during reading.
  - Alignment facilitates indentation to differentiate chunks of text.
- Alignment Options
  - Left, right, or full justification.
  - Center text.
- Note
  - Justification is not necessarily an aid to legibility.
    - Issue: varied letter and word spacing.

Typographic Layout & Alignment

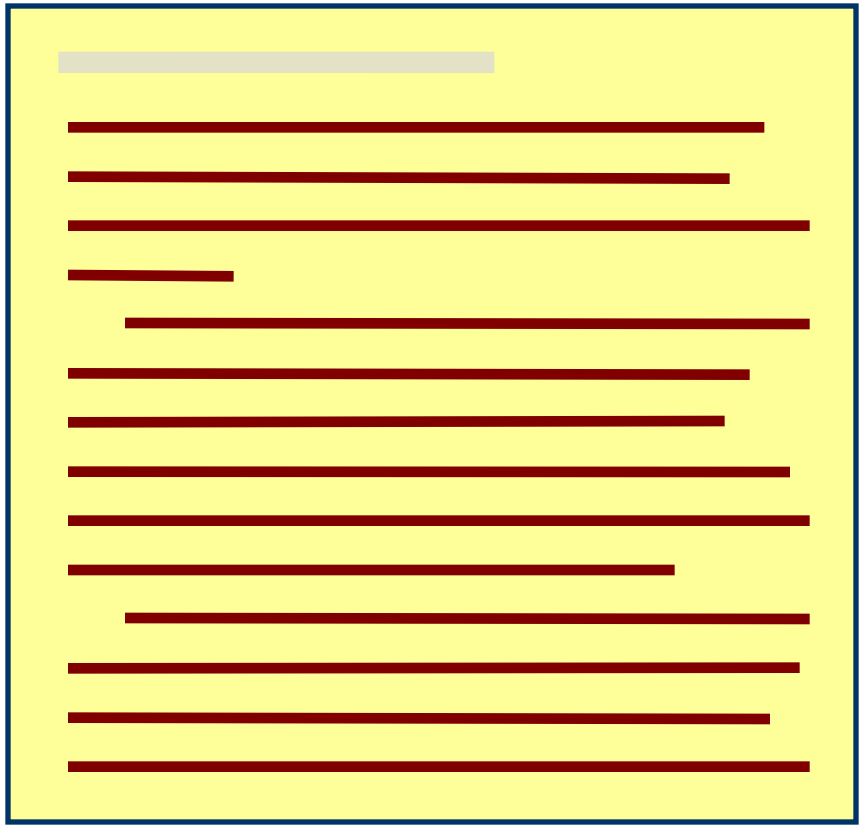
- No indentation
  - Can cause **ambiguity** when last paragraph line is not visibly shorter than others.
  - Increased line spacing is necessary to differentiate.





Typographic Layout & Alignment

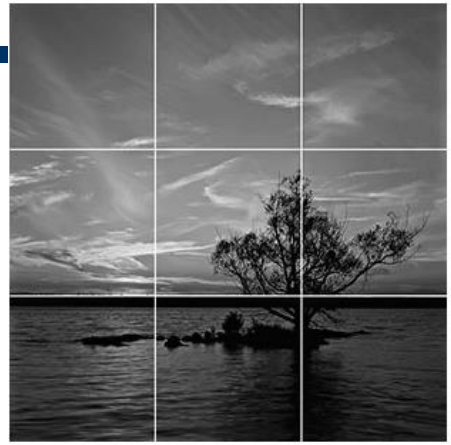
- With Indentation
  - Helps differentiate paragraphs and remove the need for extra line spacing.



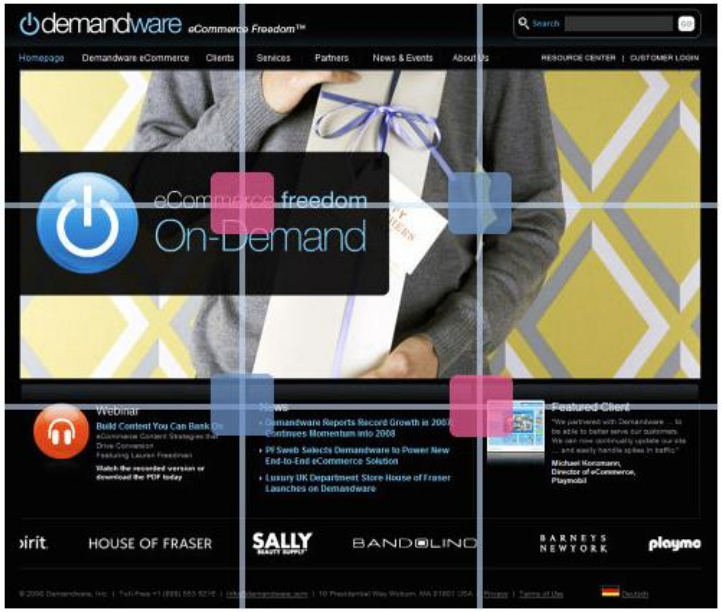
Principles of Visual Design

- **Rule of Two-Thirds**
  - Rationale: The brain understands symmetry and brushes it aside. Asymmetry, however, is challenging. Exciting. New. Oddly enough, it is this aesthetically pleasing reason that has lead to artists using the likes of the rule of thirds (and its cousin, divine proportion) for centuries.

Principles of Visual Design



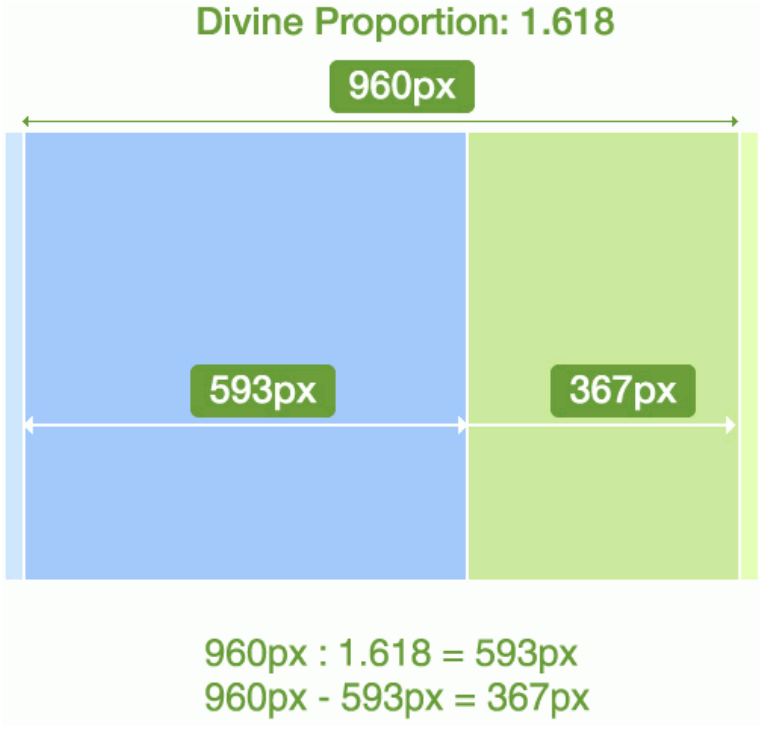
- **Rule of Two-Thirds**
  - The 4 points formed by the intersections of these lines can be used to place the most important elements — the elements you want to give a prominent or dominant position. Aligning a composition according to Rule of thirds creates more tension, energy and interest in the composition than simply centering the feature would.



- This example almost perfectly uses the Rule of Thirds as two out of four intersections of the lines (pink blocks in the picture) **contain exactly the information which the company wants its users to see** — namely what the site is all about and an example of their work.
- Note also how perfectly the main sections are placed on the second horizontal axis.

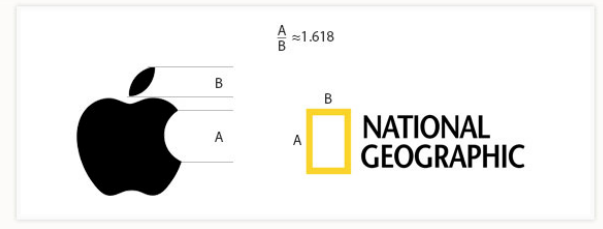
Principles of Visual Design

- **Divine Proportion**
  - Basically, it is a proportion **1.618033988749895 ≈ 1.618** which holds between objects placed within some context.
  - The rationale behind it is the belief that this proportion is organic, universal, harmonic and aesthetically pleasing.
  - Divine proportion (often called *the Golden ratio)* is probably the most known law of proportion which can dramatically improve the communication of your design.

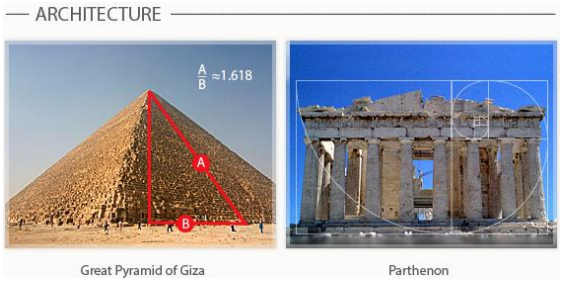


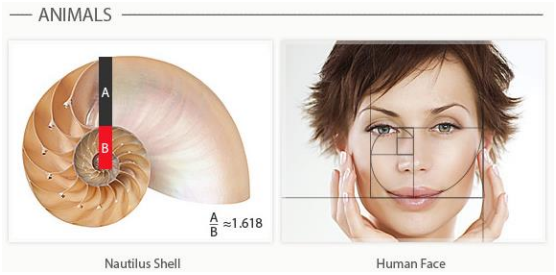
Principles of Visual Design

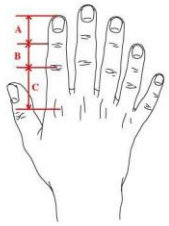
- Divine Proportionality (AKA “The Golden Ratio”)
  - Adds interest to vector-based shapes
  - Many companies use it in the design of their logos

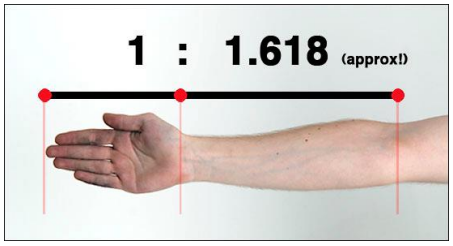


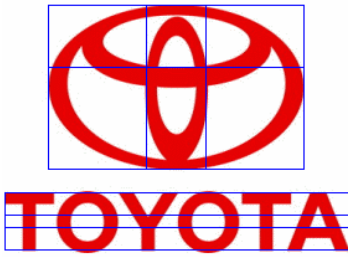
- Other examples







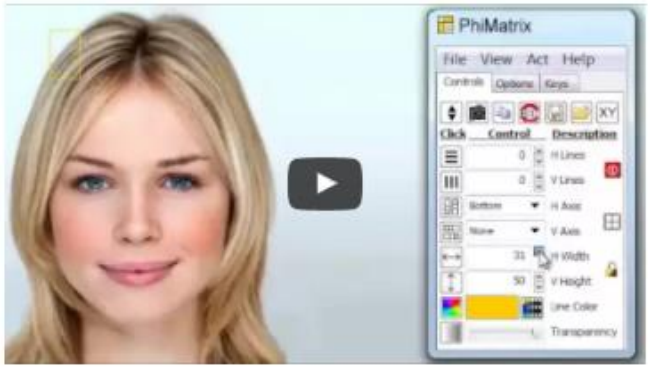




Principles of Visual Design

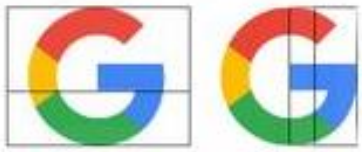
Φ = Phi $\approx$ 1.618

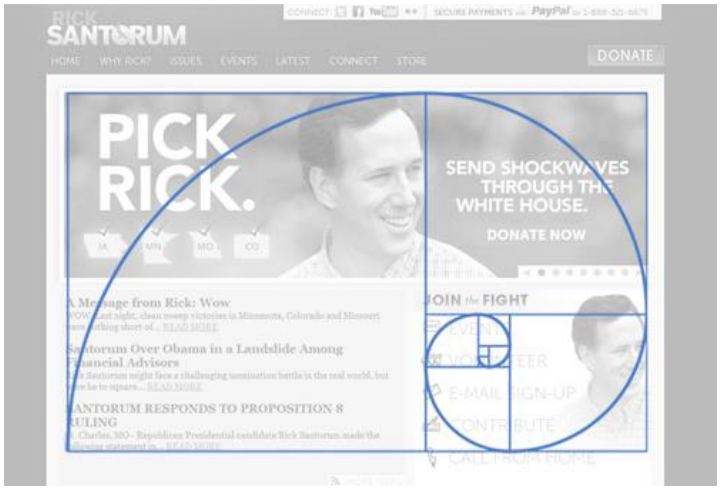
The Golden Number



Top to bottom of lower case letters

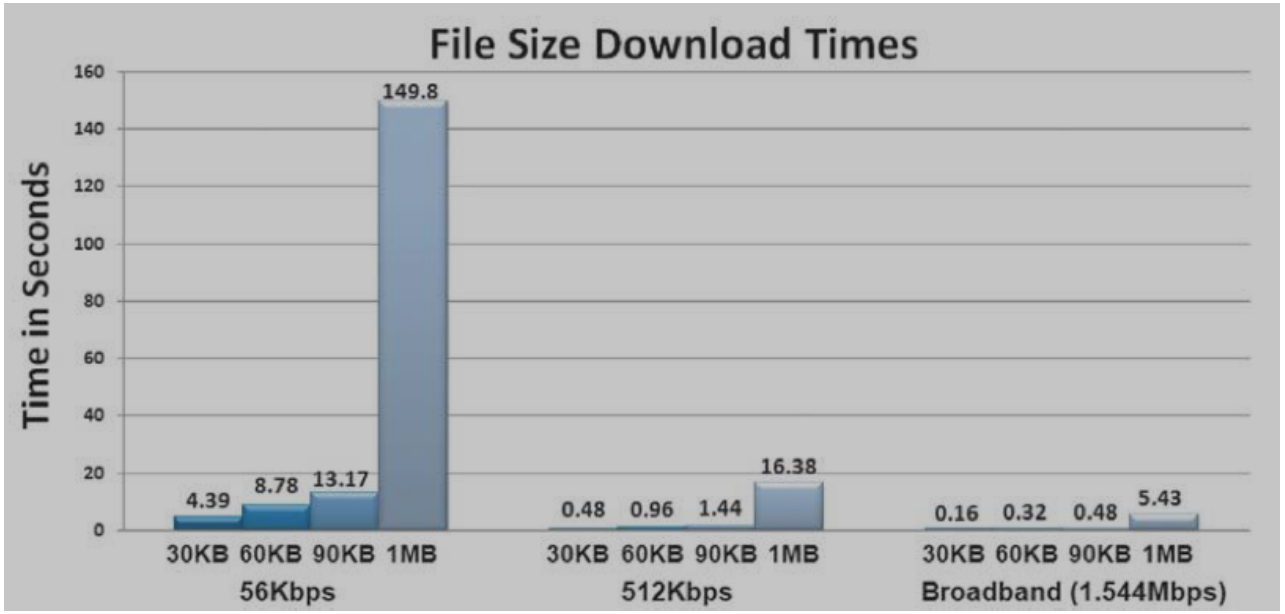
Top to bottom of lower case g





Other Design Considerations

- **Load Time**
  - Visitors will often leave a page after waiting more than 10 seconds.
  - Popular web-authoring tools can calculate load time at various transmission speeds (e.g., Microsoft Expression Web, Adobe Dreamweaver)



Comparison of file size download times and internet connection speeds. Table calculated using the calculator available at: http://www.t1shopper.com/tools/calculate/downloadcalculator.php

Other Design Considerations

- **Above the Fold**
  - On a web page this is the area the visitor sees without scrolling down the page. Arrange interesting content in this area for maximum impact.
  - At one of the most popular screen resolutions of 1024X768, the amount of screen viewable above the fold (after accounting for menus, controls, etc) is usually ~600 pixels.
  - Avoid placing important information and navigation controls on the far right side because this area may not initially be displayed by browsers at certain screen resolutions.

Other Design Considerations

- **Adequate White Space**
  - The term “white space” is borrowed from the publishing industry
  - Placing white (or blank,/empty) space in areas around blocks of text increases the readability of the page.
  - Placing empty space around graphics helps them stand out.
  - Experiment, experiment, and experiment some more!