TABLET WEB DESIGN BEST PRACTICES

30 WAYS TO CREATE AMAZING WEB EXPERIENCES ON TABLETS

Mobify

Welcome

This ebook is a collection of tablet web design best practices, lovingly curated by the designers and software engineers of Mobify. Inside, you'll find 30 techniques for creating amazing website experiences on tablet devices. Whether you work in publishing, e-commerce, small business, large enterprise, or are just curious about how websites can be adapted for different technology platforms, there's definitely something in here for everyone.

Also, we know that web design skills and access to resources vary from person to person and business to business, so we've separated these tablet web design best practices into two parts:

Part One: A working desktop site is a great place to start.

In this section, we explore techniques for quickly fixing the user experience of your desktop website on tablets. This will help you make the most of conversion and revenue opportunities on this platform.

Part Two: Thinking outside of the desktop.

In Part Two, we ask you to leave the desktop paradigm behind and consider methods of creating fully optimized tablet websites.

If you'd like any more information about these best practices, please write to us!

Where do these best practices come from?

The best practices contained in this resource have been singled out by Mobify, the team behind some of the world's most popular adaptive websites, like Starbucks, Beyond the Rack, ideeli, BT and Threadless. We work with enterprises and developers to 'mobify' the web – to make it adaptive and amazing on any device. Our platform powers hundreds of millions of dollars in mobile commerce and over 75,000 designers and developers have used Mobify to go mobile.

After helping our customers launch a host of tablet-optimized websites, we've learned a lot about how to create awesome experiences that make users happy. Our intent with this ebook is to share the best practices we've picked up along the way and provide a guide for web designers and developers to make their websites a truly noteworthy experience on tablet devices.

Introduction

The most popular activity on tablets is browsing the web. This isn't really surprising; even the most popular tablet apps (like Facebook, Twitter and Flipboard) include browsers built into them. Yet the vast majority of websites in existence don't adapt for tablets in any meaningful sense.

Here's the thing: a standard desktop site doesn't work very well on a tablet. A typical 12-pixel font is too small. Buttons are frustratingly compact. Lengthy form inputs drive people away. Pinching and zooming are the status quo to get around. Images are fuzzy and pixelated. Links get accidentally tapped. Load times seem much longer than expected. And some features just flat out don't work.

At worst, a desktop website on a tablet is unusable. At best, it's just annoying.

Providing a good experience on a tablet means making sure that you are supplying a full-featured experience on a device that is used in a distinctly non-traditional way. Users swipe, prod, rotate and hold their tablets like a book - actions which don't make sense in a desktop environment. What you want to do is make your website feel like it belongs on a tablet - that it is responsive to the common interaction patterns of tablet users.

Why does it matter?

Because more and more tablets are being sold every week. Because tablet users have high expectations. Because half a billion tablets will ship in 2013 and 2014

alone. The quality of traffic represented by these tablet owners is also remarkably high; research shows that not only do tablet owners have lots of money, they're also prepared to spend it – as much as 20 percent more per purchase than regular desktop visitors, making them the exact kind of visitors you want.

The bottom line is that if you want to be relevant on the web today, your website must adapt and perform on all the devices that use the web. In this ebook, we'll show you how to overcome design, usability and performance challenges and open up distinct possibilities for increasing conversion rates, reducing load times and creating happy users on all tablet devices.

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Part One

Before you get too stressed out about not having a totally revolutionary, crazy-fancy tablet-optimized design, there's some good news: getting your website tablet-ready doesn't mean going overboard with zany features.

Because the truth is, most standard desktop sites work on tablets. Provided they avoid major obstacles like Flash elements, a non-optimized desktop site can be an underwhelming but passable experience for tablet visitors.

However, it's possible to dramatically improve the experience of your website with some small adaptive enhancements. Things like touch-enabled interface elements, larger buttons, and smart input forms will go a long way to transforming a user's tablet experience. It really is the small things that matter. What's more, many of these enhancements can be made using a responsive design approach - using basic media queries to adjust your site's CSS.

In this section, we'll discuss techniques to make your website look and feel like it belongs on a tablet. At the end of part one, you'll be armed with **17** minor adjustments you can make to take your existing website beyond a desktop site that is squeezed into too little space and feel much more at home on all tablets.

Make room for clumsy fingers

Our fingers are not nearly as precise as the single-pixel point of a mouse cursor. To help your users achieve tip-top tapping accuracy, increase the spacing between different touch targets. And don't forget to make them big! Research shows that human fingertips typically require upwards of 44px to comfortably fit within a touch target. It might sound like common sense, but it's worth reiterating: the bigger the touch target is, the less likely a user will hit the wrong button.

We recommend making each touch target at least 44px by 44px and using padding rather than margin. Padding increases the actual tappable area, whereas margin simply increases the whitespace around the element.

Go 100% touch friendly

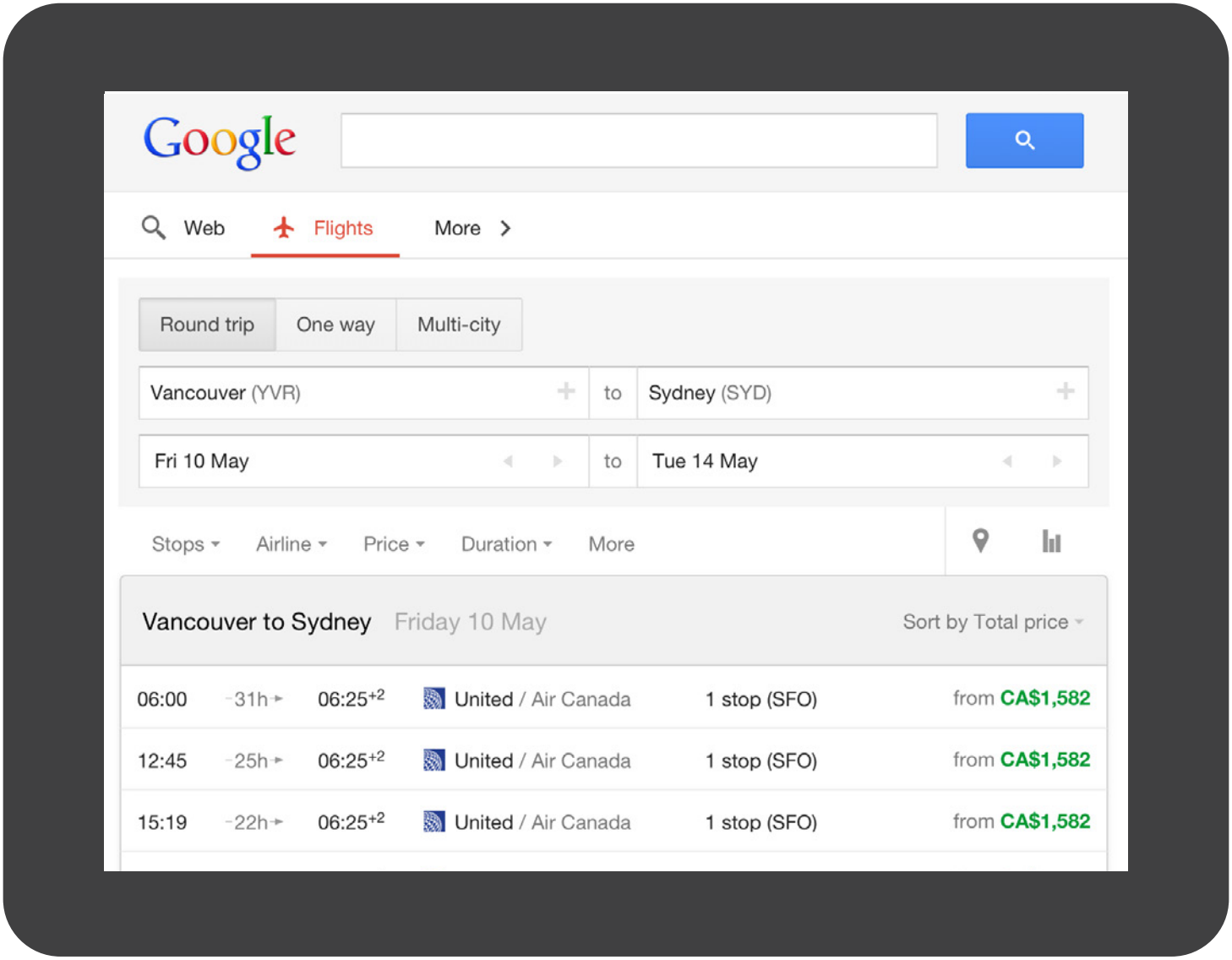
One of the most significant ways to improve the experience of your 'desktop' website on a tablet is to make it touch friendly. Are there any elements on your website that look like they can be tapped, swiped, pinched or pulled - but actually can't? Users expect to use common tablet gestures, so you'll need to examine your site and build in functionality for these kinds of elements.

Use elements like carousels and accordions, drawers and panels. Mobify has several open source JavaScript modules you can use for this exact purpose.

Minimize tablet typing

Using a software keyboard is not nearly as easy or as fast as using a physical keyboard, no matter what orientation or physical position a tablet is in.

Since it's more difficult to input data on a software keyboard, try to minimize the number of typing tasks required on your website. Your users will thank you by being more likely to stick with the task at hand.



One you've input the first couple of letters of your destination, Google Flights lets you get to the point of booking a flight just by tapping around.

Enable contextual keyboards

Software keyboards have one main advantage over their physical counterparts: they are dynamic. In other words, software keyboards can change their layout based on the context of the requested data.

For example, if your input field requires an email address, you should make sure the keyboard features the '@' symbol, underscores and hyphens. If the field requires a phone number, offer up a numeric keypad.

Try using the following input types on form fields.:

Standard keyboard	`<input type="text"/>`
URL parameters	`<input type="url"/>`
Email-specific keyboard	`<input type="email"/>`
Numeric keyboard	`<input type="text" pattern="[0-9]*"/>`

Turn off autocorrect and auto-capitalize on form fields

Smartphone and tablet operating systems have slightly more aggressive autocorrect systems than their desktop counterparts. This has been designed to combat the combination of clumsy fingers and keyboards that give no tactile feedback, both of which typically result in a higher rate of user error.

However, there's nothing more frustrating than having your email address, home address or username autocorrected - so turn off the autocorrect and auto-capitalization functions on these fields. To do this, you can use `<input type="text" autocapitalize="off" autocorrect="off" />` on relevant fields.

Increase the default font size and line height

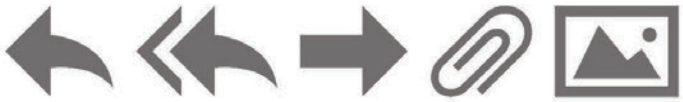
Rather than requiring users to double tap (or worse, pinch) your content, make sure the font size is at least 16px and above for maximum comfort on the ol' peepers. You can also use a line height of 1.5, although this can be set tighter or looser depending on the context. The idea is to size your text so that it is always legible, no matter how a user is holding their device.

The best icons are font based

Tablet screens typically have resolutions and pixel densities far beyond most desktop monitors and laptop displays. The result is graphics that look fuzzy or blurry if they're not designed for such beautiful screens. Font based icons offer a number of benefits for tablet web design: they scale extremely well on super high-resolution displays, they're easy to colour and shade using CSS, they only require one HTTP request to download, and you can avoid the hassle of dealing with a sprite sheet.

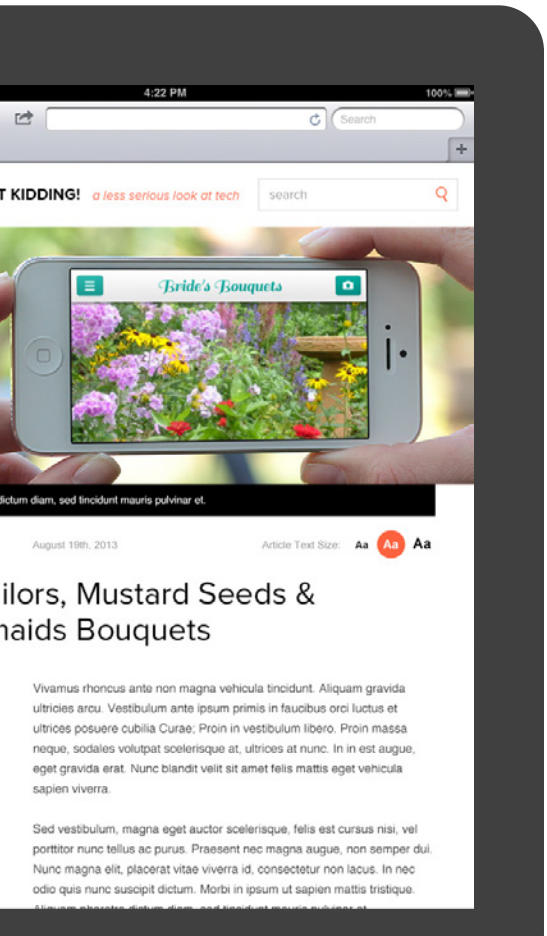
You can quite easily create your own icon font sets, or use existing sets like Font Awesome, glyphish, iconsweets, symbolset, icnfnt and more.

IMAGE BASED ICON



FONT BASED ICON

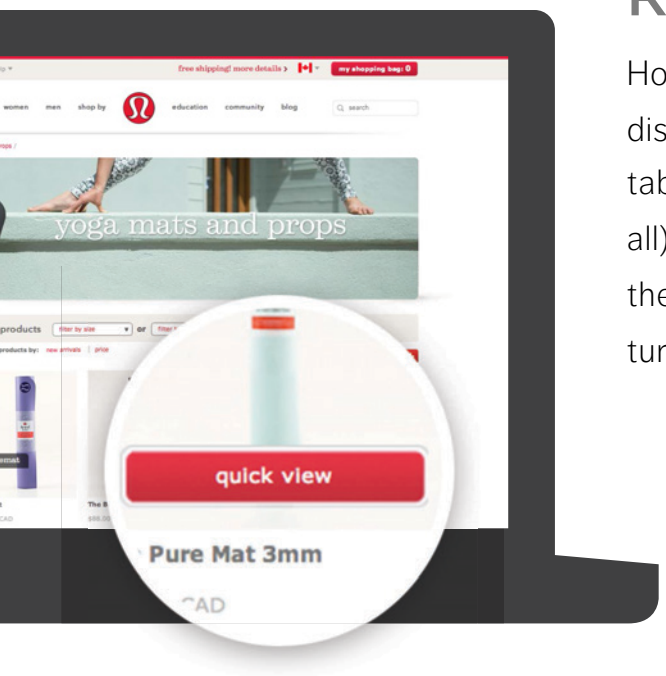
Vector graphics like icon fonts or SVGs will always scale better than images.



Tablet screens are gorgeous

So make sure you serve up images that look amazing on high DPI screens! Extremely high resolution images are a great way to surprise and delight your users (because most images on the web look fuzzy, pixelated or even blurry when viewed on a Retina quality screen).

If you have impactful images on your website, make sure you give them lots of space over trying to cram too many elements into the viewport. Users respond extremely well to high-quality images – larger product images can increase conversions by as much as 9% – so give them as much room as possible.



Remove broken hovers

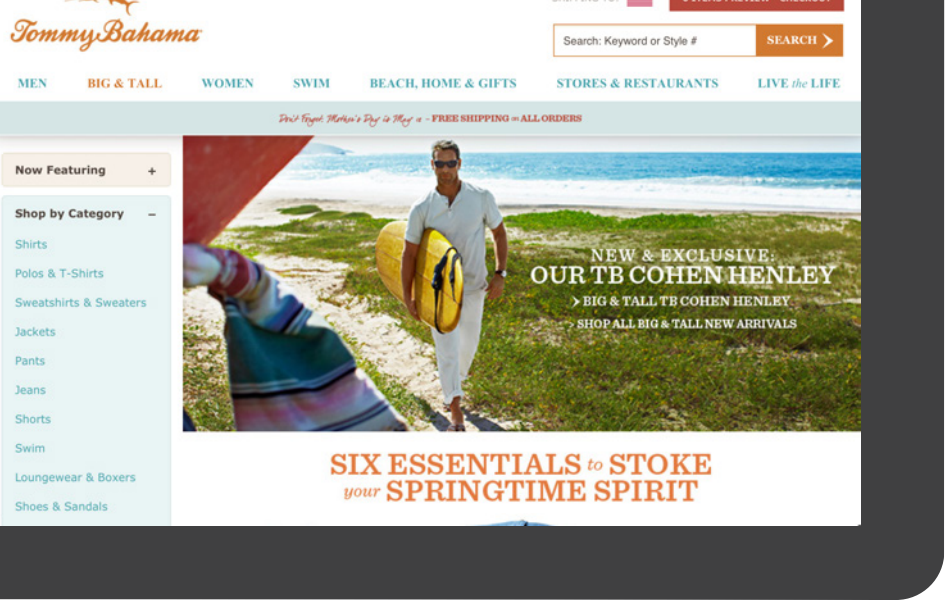
Hovers are great for showing extra information or displaying an additional call to action. However, on a tablet they can tend to work unexpectedly (or not at all). Make sure that any information contained within these elements can also be found elsewhere, and then turn them off for tablet users.

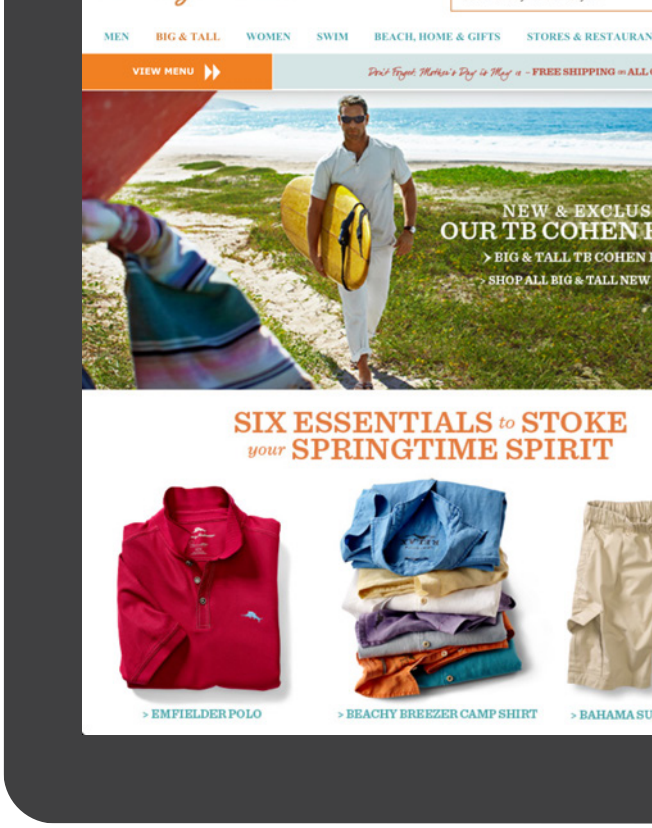
When viewing the lululemon site on a desktop, users see a quick view button hovering on a product. Clicking that quick view opens up the product in a modal. Since the hover paradigm does not work on touch devices, a tablet user bypasses the quick view and navigates to the product page instead.

Make content fluid

Flexible grids continue to provide the best way to ensure your content looks great across different tablet screens in different orientations.

Stick to regular tablet media queries to render your design, but instead of declaring fixed width elements inside of the body, use percentage-based widths so that your content stretches appropriately on differently-sized devices.





In portrait mode, the Tommy Bahama site navigation is tucked away to save space. In landscape mode, it is persistently open for easy access.

Design for both portrait and landscape

Tablets can be held in portrait and landscape orientations, so you'll need to design for both. It's also an opportunity to think critically about how users might use the website differently in each orientation.

Unlock camera capabilities

Tablet users expect to be able to do everything on your website that desktop users can. If your website contains the ability to create and manage accounts, make sure that you provide a way for tablet users to update their details – including taking and uploading new user profile pictures.

Use the following code snippet to access the camera:

```
<input type="file" accept="image/*" capture="camera">
```

Keep text out of images

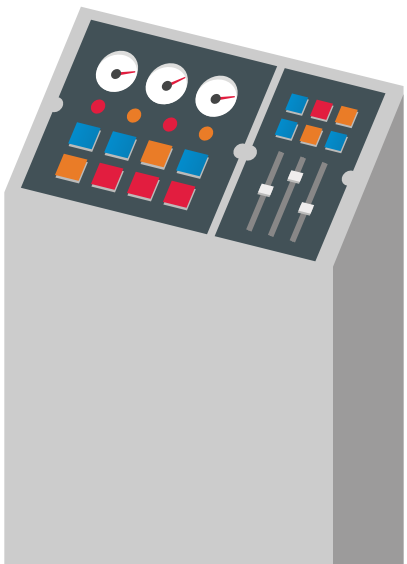
Separating text from images is a standard web design best practice, but it's especially important for tablets because high quality screens will immediately show up unwanted artifacts in any scaled up images. To ensure consistent (and beautiful) typography across devices, make sure you use web fonts instead.

Treat performance as design

Modern web design practices - most notably large responsive designs - can have a negative effect on the performance on your website. Since 57% of users are likely to leave your website if it takes 3 seconds to load, building performance into your design is critically important. Compress images and concatenate CSS and JavaScript to reduce the number of HTTP requests and overall page size. You'll see a significant decrease in the page load time and much happier, higher converting users. Tools such as Uglify, Sass, Compass and Mobify.js will do a great job at automating these performance improvements.

Test, test and test some more

The tablet ecosystem includes many different screen sizes and resolutions. It's impossible to test for every device in the market, but you can certainly cover off the main ones. Our advice? Target the iPad, iPad mini, Google Nexus 7, Google Nexus 10, and Microsoft Surface.



Part Two

Previous web design methodologies advanced the notion that desktop websites should 'gracefully degrade' to become usable on other devices. However, new design approaches such as adaptive web design are all about building upon a core layer of web content and progressively enhancing it for different devices and user contexts.

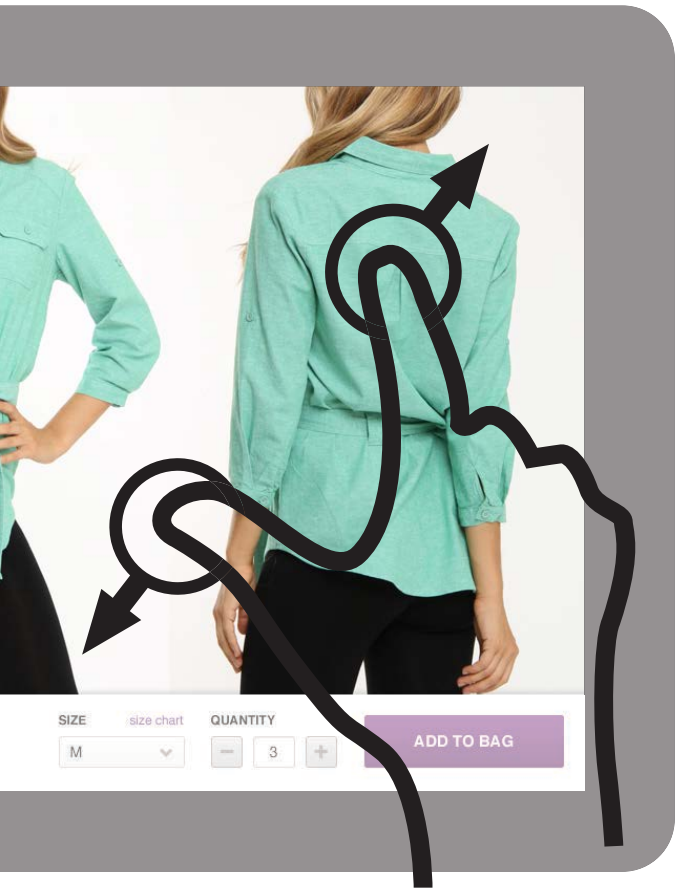
The implications are that you can throw off the constraints of the desktop web browser and start enhancing your website for, well, everything. Phones and tablets; TVs and fridges; Google Glass; cars; watches; and any future technologies that will access the web.

To get started, we suggest forgetting everything you know about the desktop web and instead asking yourself, "What's the best possible experience our users could have on a tablet?" It's an acknowledgement that tablets and PCs represent completely different environments and are used in completely different ways.

It makes good business sense to subscribe to this approach. At Mobify, we regularly see increased user satisfaction, effectiveness and conversions when websites are designed specifically for tablet devices, not with one-size-fits-all designs that just happen to accommodate tablets.

While it might seem unrealistic to easily integrate a bespoke tablet experience with your current design, remember: it's possible to launch a fully adaptive tablet website without making any changes to your existing desktop website.

In this second part, you'll find 13 key tablet web design best practices that explore what a truly tablet-optimized experience looks like. What you'll uncover is that a tablet is a much more focused, concentrated user interface – and to succeed in building a positive experience it requires a fundamentally different design approach.



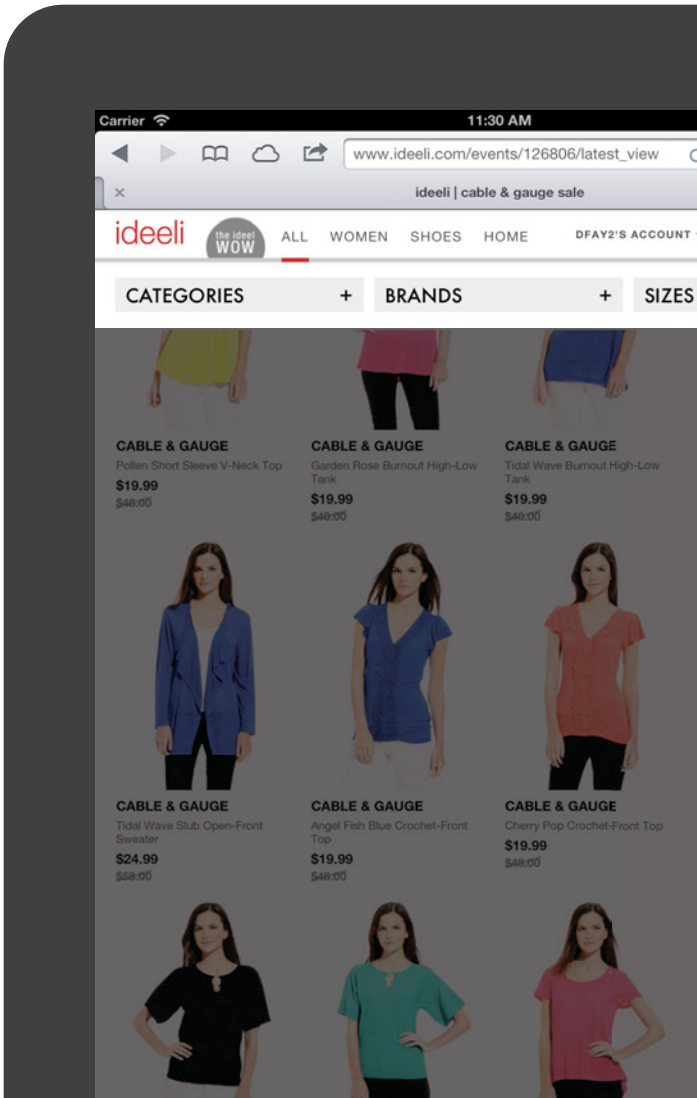
Disable ‘pinch to zoom’ on pages, but not on images

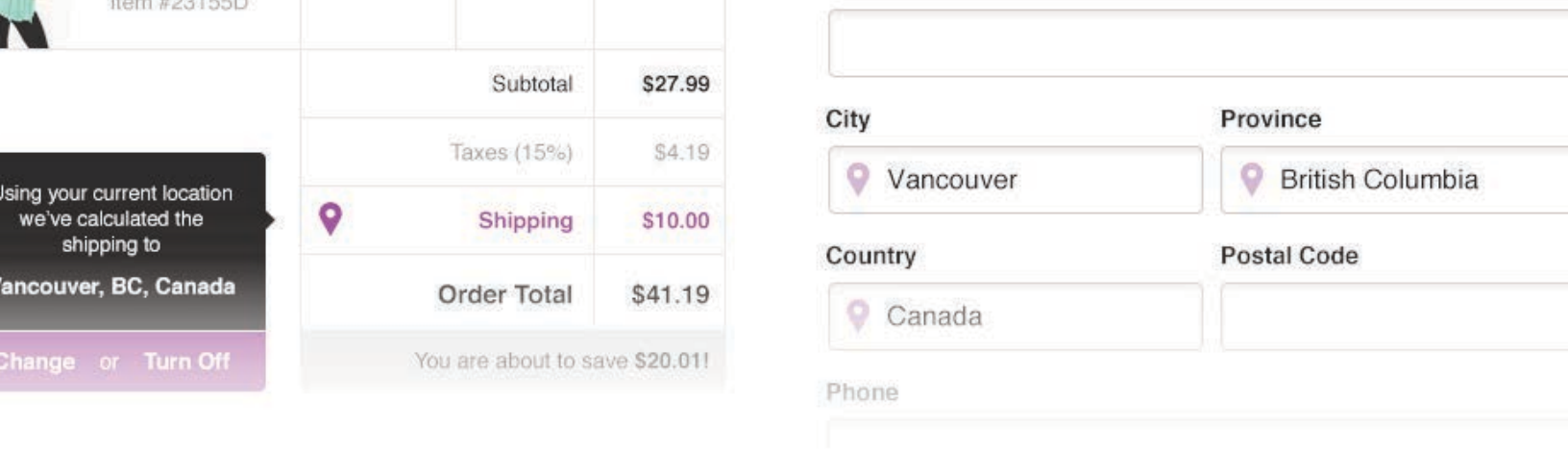
If your website has been formatted correctly for tablets, users won’t need to zoom in to read or engage with content. However, if you have high-resolution images available, you should definitely show them off. Providing a way of pinching and zooming an image without needing to change the size of the page page gives users the best of both worlds.

Sticky navigation is a loyal friend

Sticky navigation has a mixed reputation – when implemented poorly it can provide a distracting user experience. However, recent studies have shown that users really appreciate the accessibility of a persistent navigation, as it can make browsing a site up to 22% faster. Sticky navigation can provide a really effective way of helping tablet users move easily around your website, especially if they typically jump from page to page (or product to product).

ideeli use a sticky navigation on their site. It provides users with a great structure for quickly moving between products and collections.





Use location services to help with shipping

In a previous example, we identified that using a software keyboard to input data is not a whole lot of fun for users. Establish a better experience by finding ways to automatically populate data in text fields.

Use Google location services, some reverse geocoding and a little JavaScript know-how to provide accurate shipping estimations – without the user needing to input additional data.

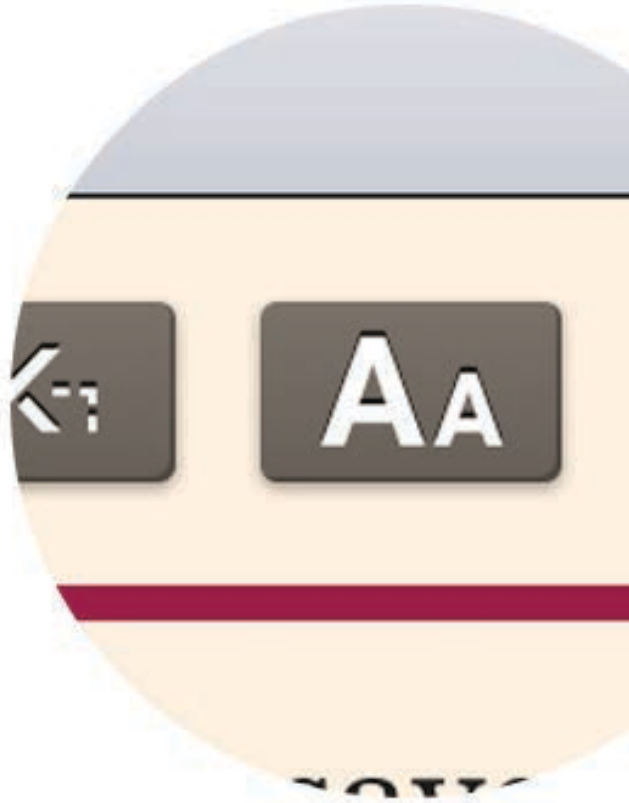
Teach

The interaction patterns of a tablet are distinct from those of a desktop and smartphone. If you go beyond the navigation and content structures that exist on your desktop site, or introduce new interaction patterns and design elements, you might need to show users how they work.

When first visiting the site, Google News displays a little contextual arrow to show users that additional content can be swiped in from the right. After the first swipe, the graphic disappears.

Choose your own font size

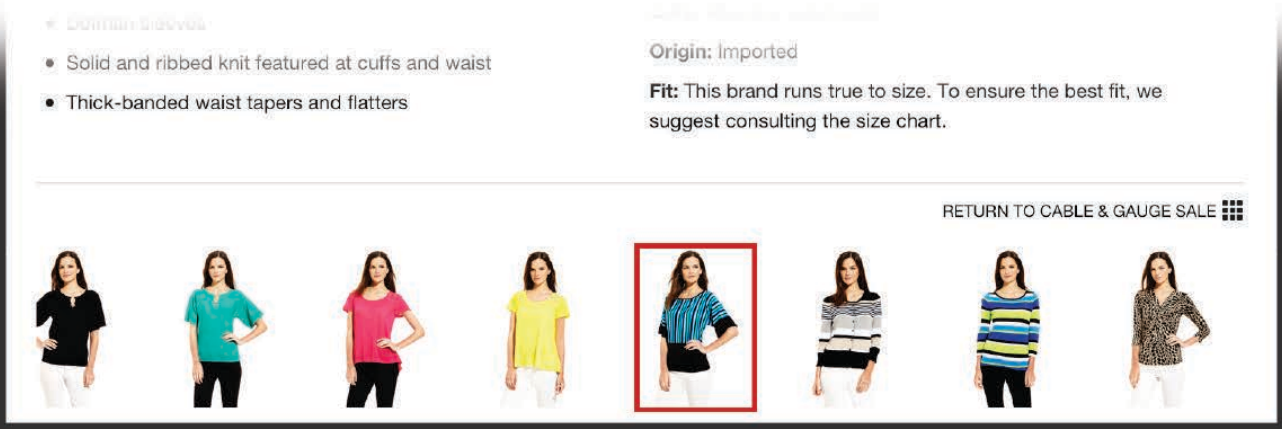
There is no right or wrong way to hold a tablet. Since users hold their tablets in a variety of different positions, let them be the judge on which font size works best. This is especially appropriate for content-heavy websites featuring articles or blog posts.



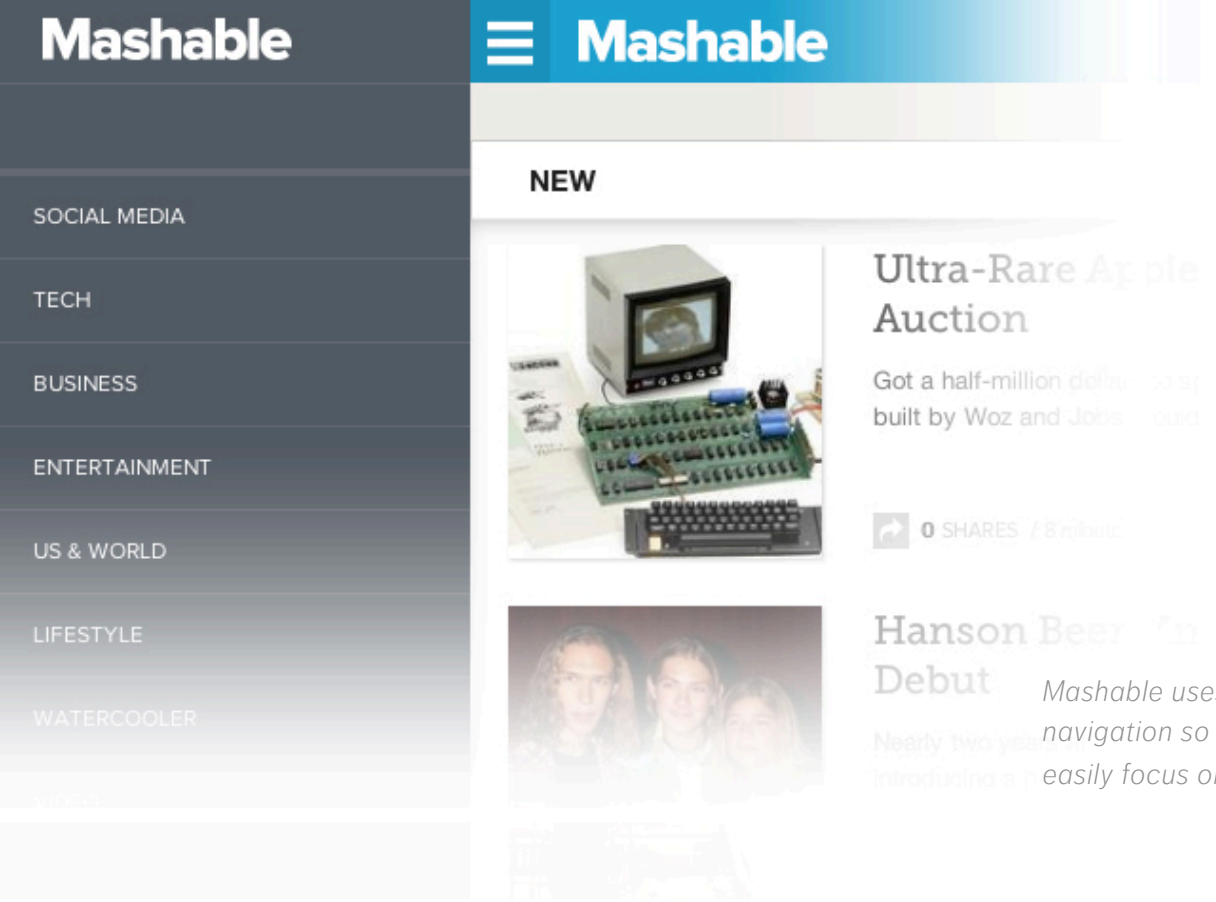
You can scale the size of fonts using a little JavaScript and rem (root em). Changing the base font size of the body (or a specific content element) is as easy as altering the rem unit for that element.

Reimagine content navigation

Using adaptive web techniques, it's possible to completely remix content for different device families. Image galleries, related content, calls to action – all of them can be transformed for different use cases.



ideeli reimagined the mechanics of 'related content' on tablets. Additional products are shown using a snappy, image-rich carousel.



Mashable uses a panel to hide the navigation so that users can more easily focus on the page content.

Panels: so hot right now

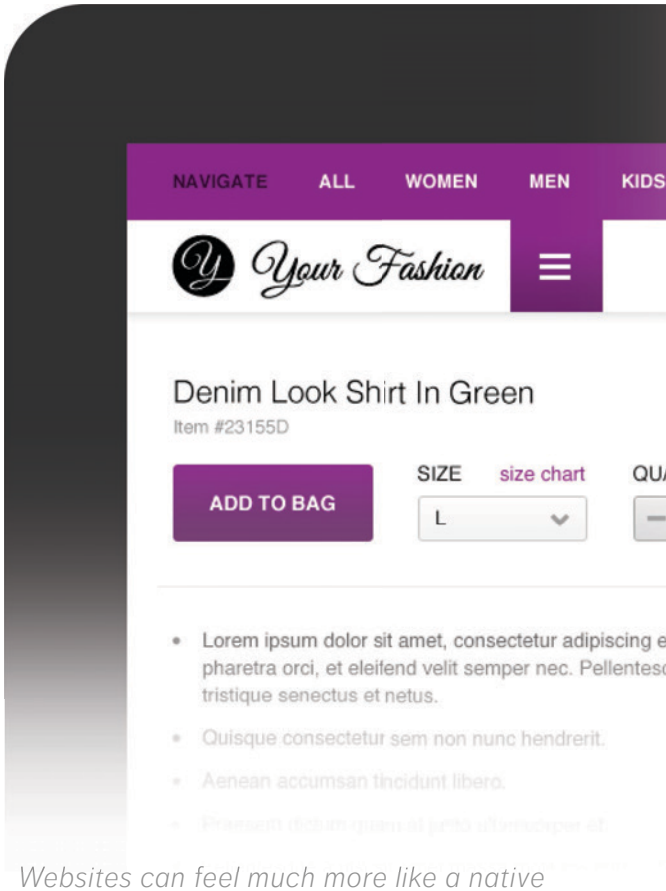
Panels are like large accordions that are attached to the edge of the viewport. They provide a great way of keeping the user focused on page content, while providing a persistent and accessible way of navigating to another location.

Slick transitions feel more 'appy'

One of the things that makes apps feel powerful, polished and user-friendly is that they include a variety of transitions for when users move between tasks. Using clever CSS and JavaScript techniques, it's possible to create transitions such as fading in and out, slides, and animating swiped content that will make your website feel as polished as a native app.

Reclaim space by hiding the URL bar

On a tablet, every bit of screen space counts. Hiding the URL bar gives you more room to play with, and helps the user to forget that they're simply browsing the web (rather than using an app). Use `<meta name="apple-mobile-web-app-capable" content="yes"/>` to hide Safari user interface components on a site / page.



Websites can feel much more like a native web app without the URL bar.

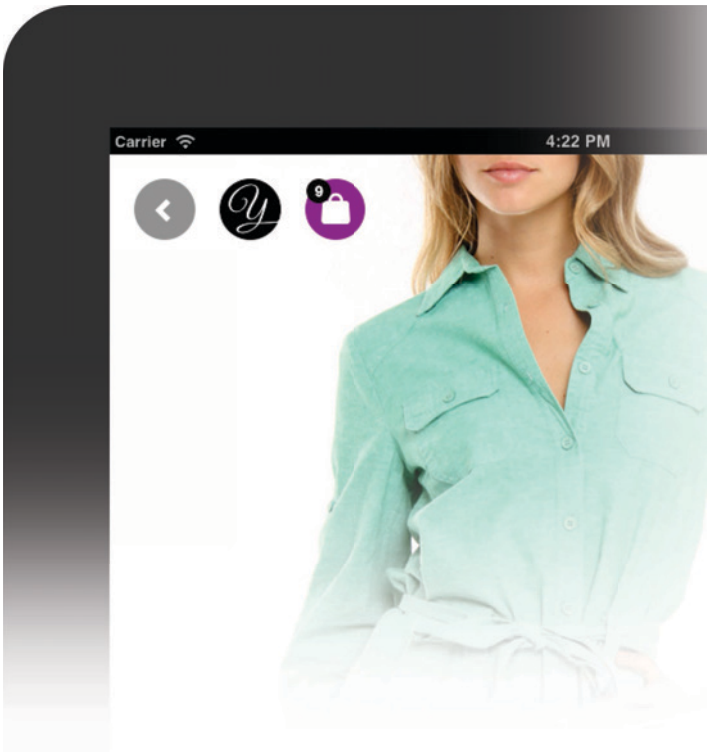
Include a home screen icon

In the event that a user wants to add your website to their home screen, you'll need to have a custom icon that sticks out among potentially hundreds of other apps on a device. Simply create an icon and follow Apple's instructions for site specific or page specific icons.

Create totally tabletized navigation

Rather than simply forcing existing site navigation into a new layout, try and make it as simple and as compelling as possible for tablet users. This might mean throwing away what you have and starting again!

The navigation of this mock up gives maximum breathing room to the product images. It has also been distilled down to only focus on three core user actions: go back, go home, or go to the shopping cart.



Make actions easier

Take advantage of common touch 'hot zones' by making actions easier to reach. Place key interactions like menus, add to cart and purchase buttons in these easily accessible areas.

The lower left and lower right corners are within the easiest range of reach for tablet users.

Give images their 1000 words

Images are incredibly powerful. They have a huge effect on conversion rates and user engagement across the board. When you have images that are worth a thousand words, make sure you give them as much screen real-estate as possible. Text such as editorial, metadata and product copy can be inserted into panels where they can be swiped in as required.

Thanks for reading!

If you have any comments, questions, or would just like to learn more about how to launch a tablet-optimized website, please feel free to reach out to us and say hello.

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Making the web an amazing experience on all devices.