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web design

WEBSITE PLANNING GUIDE

Design elements to consider when planning your new web site!

INTRODUCTION

What this guide is all about.

Your website is an important part of your business - if not the most important! It's more than just a pretty place online. It's your #1 sales tool. For that reason, it doesn't make sense to just throw up a few pages and a photo, and then hope people will want to stick around, let alone hire you or buy your product.

Planning. It's important.

The first step in planning a captivating web presence is understanding the different aspects of a website and how they each work towards your main goal.

This guide walks you through the main design & layout elements of any website. Taking the time to read it (and then mull a bit) will help you get clear on how you want your website to look.

Building your website is a collaborative process that requires input on both sides. The more you can tell me about your ideas, and the more research you can do on your side to figure out what you want, the closer I can get to creating a website you AND your visitors will love. You'll be using this guide to help answer the questions in the Website Questionnaire.

PAGE LAYOUT

When having a website custom designed, you'll want to have a good understanding of page layout. There are 3 main types of page layouts, and a strategy behind why one layout works better than another on a specific page.

Home Page
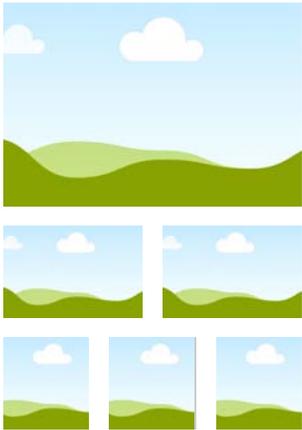
The homepage is the most important page to plan when it comes to working towards your main website goal. If your main goal is blogging , put that front and center on your homepage. If you have several different services, you may want to have large buttons or icons linking to those service pages. If you want to build your newsletter list and have a great optin freebie, you may want that to be the focus. Think clearly about the first thing you'd like your visitor to do when they land on the homepage and make sure that is the most prominant thing. The image to the left is a custom layout.

Standard Inner Page

Your inner pages should put the emphasis on the content for that page, but also make it easy for a user to continue on to other pages. That's why it's common to have an inner page with a sidebar. This allows you the space to put your content and also buttons along the side directing your visitor to other places. There could be buttons to other pages, other services, a booking form, an optin form or social media feeds. The image to the right is main - sidebar layout.
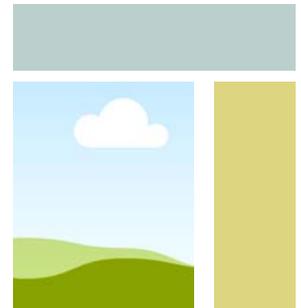
Sales/Landing Page
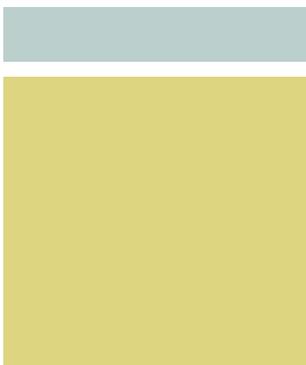
A sales page is when there is no sidebar. This is extremely effective because it allows your user to focus on only the most important content. A landing page uses the same layout, but is used to get users to take a specific action. This is commonly used for a newsletter or free webinar optin, where you are giving something away in exchange for an email address. You want your visitor to do something specific, so you give them only that. The image to the left is a no-sidebar landing page.

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HEADER DESIGN

The header is the first thing someone will see when they land on your website. What impression do you want to give them? If you have an awesome logo, keep it simple and stick to just that. If you don't have a logo, no worries, your name and tagline as a pretty graphic will do just the trick. Or maybe you want to have your photo, or an image that represents your brand. It can be full-width (going completely across the page, or simple the same size of your content. You can make it thin and simple, so that the visitor can easily see what's underneath without having to scroll. Or you can make it big and bold and take up the whole page before scrolling. I recommend looking at some of your favorite websites and taking note of the type of header they have. Why are you drawn to it? What feeling does it give you? These insights will help your designer make the perfect choice for you and your business. Here are some examples of header layouts:

Centered name , menu below

FOODIE PRO

Centered logo, menu above

Creative

Logo centered in menu

the MODERN studio

Logo & tagline left, menu right

DIVINE

Logo, tagline left, lots of stuff right

JESSICA WOO

FREE SHIPPING!

menu top, photo, name, tagline below

EXPOSE THEME

Large header, name left, menu right, centered tagline

CENTRIC

Be the Center of Attention and Demand Focus

Large header, logo centered vertically & horizontally

CAFÉ PRO
RESTAURANT THEME

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COLORS

Color plays a HUGE part in setting the overall tone of your web site. Your visitors will have an immediate reaction to the feeling that your colors portray.
You'll want to choose 3- 5 colors MAX.

1-2 MAIN COLORS: These will be used as the primary colors to set the tone.

1-2 ACCENT COLORS: These will be used in strategic areas where you really want to draw attention (i.e. buy buttons, headlines, etc).

1-2 BASE COLORS: These are nuetral colors, typically black, grey or beige tones used to break up white space and create background elements.

COLOR PALETTES THAT CONVEY MOOD

Urban

Exotic

Youthful

Fun

Natural

Retro

Calming

Minimalist

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FONTS

TYPES OF FONTS:

Serif fonts: You can tell a font is serif because of all the little "tails" that come off the ends of the letters. (This is a classic, Times font)

Sans-serif: Doesn't have the tails. Or feet. (This is Open Sans Light)

Handwriting/Script: Well I don't think I need to describe what that means. (This one is called Sacramento)

DISPLAY: THE FANCY UNIQUE STUFF. (THIS IS LIMELIGHT)

HOW FONTS SHOULD BE USED:

Main Font: The key with the main font is readability. In areas where there is mutliple lines of text, you want to make it as easy as possible to read. This is not the area to get funky & bold. Our eyes get tired without really knowing it. And what to we do when that happens? We skim. Or worse, stop reading. Stick to a serif or sans serif, always.

Headlines: This is where you can show your personality a bit. Are you a bit fancy? Choose a script font. Are you modern & bold? Choose a uppercase-only sans-serif. Are you homey & handmade? Choose a handwriting font. Don't forget however, that you still want your visitors to understand your headlines- so don't get too crazy.

Site Title/Taglines/Graphics: Can't wait to use a really unique font? This is where you can get more out there. Have fun with display fonts, this is where you can do it.
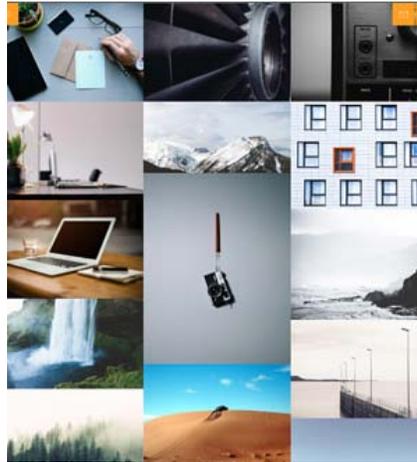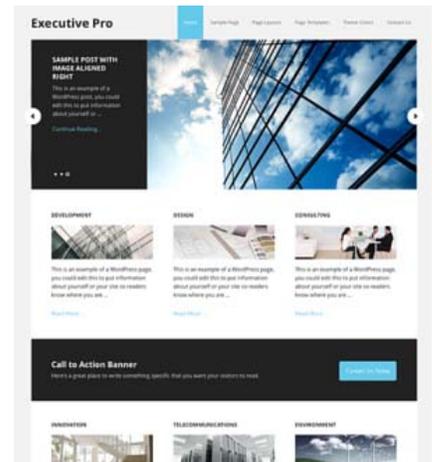
OVERALL LOOK AND FEEL

Minimalist
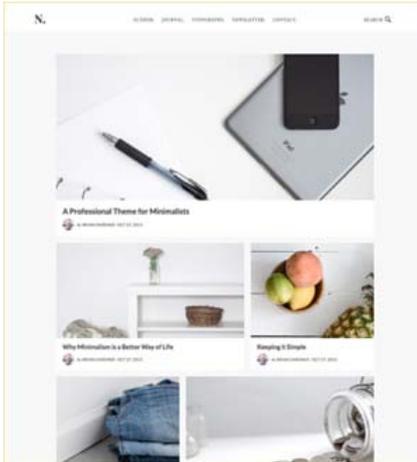
Portfolio
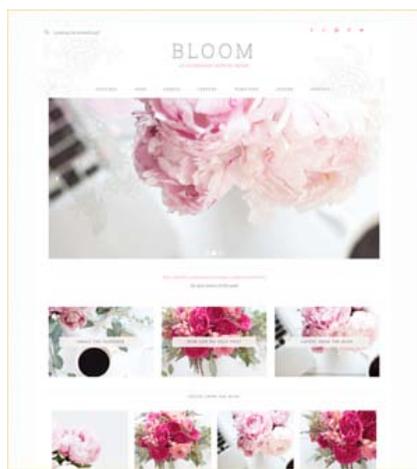

Corporate

Illustrative

Textured

Magazine

Rock & Roll

Feminine

Shop

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RESOURCES
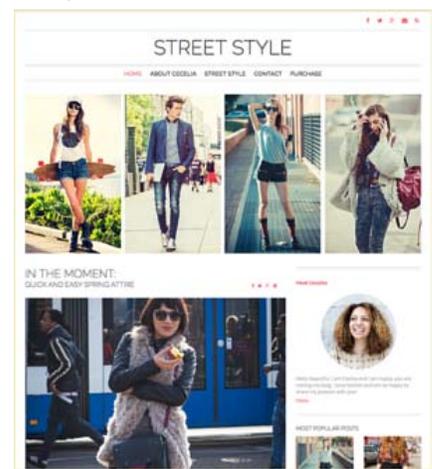
FONTS

http://www.google.com/fonts/ - Free web-safe fonts for your headings & main text that look great on all computers

http://www.fontsquirrel.com - For the fancy fonts to use in your header or graphics

http://andreasweis.com/webfontblender/ - To test out font combinations on a live website.

COLOR

http://www.design-seeds.com - for great color palette ideas

http://www.colourlovers.com - more color palettes!

WEBSITE PLANNING

I recommend starting by gathering images online- whether on a Pinterest board or in a folder on your desktop. Take screenshots of layout, fonts & colors you love to be as prepared as possible to start your website.

LINK TO OUR ONLINE WEBSITE QUESTIONNAIRE

All the important things I need to know to start your project. The link below will lead you to out Website Questionnaire. It asks important questions related to your current site, necessary logins, and your new websites functionality and design. Keep this planning guide handy while filling out the Website Questionnaire.

Website Questionnaire