

DESIGN checklist

I'M NOT A designer but I play one in my class

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO SITE DESIGN
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TEXT

Do you start your page with an introduction?

- I let my users assume that I welcome their visit to my page and I hope they find it useful, and I haven't typed that anywhere.
- I have, and really need to have, an introduction.

Okay but remember, people read just 18% of the text on your site, and they read it in an F pattern. Any introduction better contain life-saving (well, really important) information, or you really *can* skip it.

- Are you using font characteristics consistently?
Make sure your headers are all the same size, style, font, and color; if you want to vary this, just make sure that when you look at the page, they have equal "weight" on the page.
- Have you used simple, direct words and labels?
Don't make them *think* about what you mean; *say* what you mean, especially for links.
- Have you used *italics* or **bold** instead of underlining?
Only underline links and book titles; users will click anything else.
- Have you used CASES effectively?
Uppercase is harder to read, and takes up more space; it is appropriate for short phrases/words, like headers or titles.
- Have you spell- and grammar-checked everything?
Twice?

Are you using a web-safe font?

- Why, of course I am!
- No, I really wanted to use this cool font I found.
No problem; you'll just need to make images out of any text you that want in a special font. See below.

WEB-SAFE FONTS

(All safe to use, but substitutions from PC to Mac are shown.)

THESE FONTS ON A PC:	WILL BE THESE ON A MAC:
Arial	Arial
Comic Sans	Comic Sans
Courier New	Courier New
Georgia	Georgia
Impact	Impact
Lucida Sans	Lucida Grande
Tahoma	Geneva
Times New Roman	Times
Trebuchet	Helvetica
Verdana	Verdana
Webdings (▶ ◀ ☪ ☻ ♥ ⓘ ● ■ ?)	Webdings (▶ ◀ ☪ ☻ ♥ ⓘ ● ■ ?)

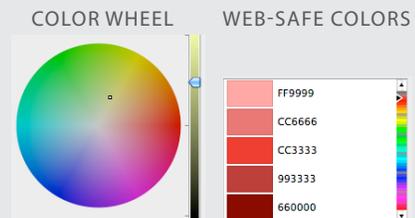
COLOR

Are you using web-safe colors?

- Why, of course I am!
- No, I really wanted to use a cool color I found.
No problem; just be aware that the color may differ for viewers. It usually isn't a big difference.
- Are you using text colors consistently and effectively?
Remember, text color variations matter; they can call your attention, or they can tell you something isn't important at all.
- Are your contrasts big enough?
Don't get caught with unreadable text if you have a background or highlighting, seek big contrasts. Not sure? Try:
<http://blackwidows.co.uk/resources/color-contrast-analyser.php>

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S A WEB-SAFE COLOR?

Web-safe colors are identified in increments that can be translated by today's computer screens. They are labeled with a six-character code (a combination of letters and numbers). If you are picking colors with a wheel, you might get lucky and choose a web-safe color. To be exact, switch to a web-safe color view, and choose from there.



SPACING

plenty o' white space

- Have you given your text all of the white space—that negative, empty space—that it needs to breathe?
Try adding "padding" to the cells of a table, or give some extra "return" lines under paragraphs of text.
- Is your spacing consistent?

MORE ABOUT WHITE SPACE

Remember that white space is negative space; it doesn't have to be white. It is said to give a feeling of luxury; imagine the difference between the front page of a newspaper, and a full-page magazine ad.

nice and roomy

PRECEDENCE

- Have you identified the most important reasons people visit your site?

This might be different from why you visit the site, or from the most beautiful or spiffy parts of your site, but the truly most important parts take precedence.

When you step back and squint, what stands out the most?

- what is supposed to - the most important stuff!
- some things that, truly, aren't that important.
You've got a precedence problem. See below.

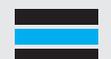
PRECEDENCE PROBLEMS?

Precedence is created by several factors. If you need to call attention, try one (or a combo) of these sure-fire methods.

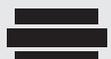
POSITION creates hierarchy. Think outlines; if something is important, move it to the top or to the left to draw it out of the crowd.



COLOR maximizes or minimizes importance. Choose a consistent method: change the color of the important, or dim the not-important.



SIZE gives more or less visual weight to an object. If you vary sizes, like everything else, be consistent!



DESIGN ELEMENTS like arrows or icons grab the eye. Try <http://dryicons.com> for free icons you can use (with citations).



NAVIGATION

- Do you have orientation ("you are here") on every page?
- Is there a way to get "home" or "back"?
Built-in breadcrumb trails count.

Someone else can help you identify navigation to add.

- I took someone through, and they didn't get lost!
Great! Did you give them something specific to look for, or were they just browsing? Did you help them?
- They had a little trouble getting around.
You've got a navigation problem. See below.

NAVIGATION PROBLEMS?

Navigation is about where you *can* go; **orientation** is about where you are *right now* in relation to other places you can go.

As a rule, navigation to everywhere they *can* go doesn't need to be on every page. Navigation to related, or follow-up, activities, and a link "Home", should be (like a breadcrumb trail). Orientation (where they are) should be on every page, too; just by having the name of the page at the top, you're helping a viewer stay oriented.

Before you go making a bunch of extra navigation, identify what tasks a sample viewer can't accomplish. If they don't know *how* to search, or they don't know *how* to hover on a menu, it might be the *user*. If they can't *find* the search page, or *find* your contact information, you haven't left enough clues.

USABILITY

- Is your website *intuitive*? In other words, when you click somewhere, do you get the result you expected?

Little things, like using 3D-looking icons when you don't mean to imply a button, makes a user think something should be there that isn't.

- Have you used words or phrases that clearly describe features or links?

Your class blog might be called "News from North Ridge", but that can appear on the page itself. The link can simply say "Our Class Blog" so a parent or student can identify it easily.

- Have you grouped like things together?
- Have you used jargon or internal codes that won't mean anything to a visitor?

IMAGE & ICON

Are your images: legal? sized correctly?
(loading quickly/instantly?)

- Are your images clear enough to stand without words?

Words should accompany images that are symbolic or obscure. Icons without words may need a reference key.

- Do the images on your page convey the right overall tone, represent the subject matter, and are they suited to the intended audience/visitor?

GRAPHICS YOU CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT > > > >

ACCESSIBILITY

NONE OF THESE SHOULD BE CHECKED!

- Do you require users to distinguish colors?
"Green means updated, red means overdue" is a no-no.

- Have you skipped or left blank the alternate text of your images?

Alternate text will be read by a screen reader, so it should not be skipped, it should make sense, and it should be descriptive.

- Have you used "Click here" or short, non-descript phrases as links?

Some screen readers just jump from link to link, so make sure your links are meaningful. Instead of "Click here to read more," try "Read more about birds."

- Do you have flashing or blinking elements?

Epileptic users must be careful to avoid seeing flickering between 2 and 55 Hz. Skip the glitz; blinking is often assumed to be an ad, and visitors will ignore it anyway.

- Is there necessary instruction or information delivered by sound or video only?

Closed-caption your media at <http://dotsub.com>, or provide a transcript.

<http://dryicons.com> for icons, symbols, buttons, and patterns
<http://pics4learning.com> for images, photos, and illustrations
<http://livebrush.com> for a free, flexible drawing tool (download)
<http://gimp.org> for a Photoshop alternative (free download)
<http://pixlr.com> for a Photoshop alternative (free, web-based)