

What Makes a Good Mobile Website?



Photo courtesy of http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_Web

In an age where everyone has a smart phone and people are constantly on-the-go, it's crucial for websites to make their content easily accessible to mobile users. When all you're looking for is an address or a phone number, dealing with too slow, too small, or too link-heavy web pages that weren't designed for mobile use can be frustrating. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you design a webpage for a mobile device.

Consider the audience

One of the most important things to keep in mind as you plan and design your mobile website is the audience. Your audience will be accessing the site from a smart phone, so they will most likely be on the move. The site needs to present information so that it is easy to locate and understand. Buttons or links should be large enough and far enough apart that users do not accidentally click the wrong link. Links should only lead to pages that will be useful and relevant to the mobile user. Always consider the audience experience when making mobile website design choices.

Reduce the amount of content and maximize white space

Consider the key pieces of information that mobile users are probably seeking. Since you have limited space to work with, steer away from including sideline content, such as links that lead away from the original site or non-essential information that will only add precious seconds to load time. Try to avoid pop-up windows, since navigating between windows on a small screen is tedious and will increase load time. Maximize white space to increase readability and usability; users will grow frustrated if they can't easily click the link they're aiming for.

Avoid Flash or Java

According to Appleinsider.com, "The launch of the iPhone 5s and iPhone 5c helped propel Apple to a market leading 42 percent of smartphones owned in the U.S. in the fourth quarter of 2013." Apple has stated that they do not support Flash and have no intention of doing so. As a mobile website designer, don't alienate nearly half of your audience by using a system that simple won't work for them. Additionally, many smart phones do not support Java, so it is best to steer clear of these systems entirely.

After you've designed the mobile version of your website, it's important to run some simple usability tests to make sure it works the way you intended. Fortunately, a couple of websites allow you to test your site quickly and easily.

Screenfly

Want to know what your website looks like on a variety of different smartphones and tablets? Screenfly is a great website to do just that! Simply head over to quirktools.com/screenfly/, paste in the URL you'd like to look at, and choose from a variety of different mobile phones and tablets to see instantly what that site will look like on the given device.

iPad Peek

If you're looking to test your design primarily on Apple products, iPad Peek might be the best program for you. Paste in the URL, and preview how your site will look on the latest iPad and iPhone on the market.

source: <http://appleinsider.com/articles/14/01/16/apples-iphone-now-represents-42-of-smartphones-owned-in-the-us---npd>
<http://www.webmonkey.com/2011/07/screenfly-the-easy-way-to-test-responsive-web-designs/>
<http://www.ipadpeek.com/>
<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/9-tips-for-optimizing-your-website-for-mobile-users/>

by Lindsey Campbell

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EMD@SH

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The Essentials for Document Design and Layout

We've all been handed a lackluster flyer or encountered a poorly-designed brochure—and we know the result: disinterest. If a document is not appealing, no one will read it. Therefore, understanding the basic principles of design layout is essential. After all, as communicators we want our work to do just that—communicate. No matter how perfect the prose, the overall design can get in the way if not well executed.

Perhaps the most important feature of a good design is the use of a grid. Look at any publication that is aesthetically pleasing. At first glance you may not notice it, but look again. Each element on the page falls into a row or column of some kind, structuring the elements and creating order out of what could have been chaos.

That doesn't mean that your next attempt at a beautiful design should come out looking like an Excel spreadsheet, though. Rules are meant to be broken. Even in simple two- or three-column layouts, one element may span two columns, or the columns will vary in width to provide visual interest.

Other ways to spice up a basic format include placing an element beyond the grid (between columns, for example) or by rotating an element. Either one draws attention and moves away from a more simple design. Diagonals also draw attention by using an

implied line that pulls a reader's eye to the focal points.

In fact, a focal point is another key to strong design. For many, the most displeasing sight is a jumbled page that lacks direction. Oftentimes these documents need a focal point that immediately draws our attention. There needs to be an obvious hierarchy for viewers to follow. The grid can help with this hierarchy, as can strong contrast, bright colors, and use of scale.

With all these fun tricks, it's easy to get carried away. Next thing you know, you have columns and photos, a graphic, a pull quote, and several large headers—and you're nearly back where you started. Many designers cite this crowded look as a classic beginner's mistake, so it's important to leave a little room to breathe. This room is called "whitespace," and it's just as it sounds. A design with a lot of emptiness isn't a sign of laziness. It's quite the opposite—a sign of sophistication. So when you've done all you can, step back and make sure that among all your pieces of visual interest, there's space to rest.

So how do you make these now theoretically-sound designs a reality? We've all heard of InDesign (a part of the Adobe Creative Suite), which certainly does what you need. InDesign

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Photo courtesy of <http://essjay89.deviantart.com/art/Fuse-Magazine-Layout-01-146835417>

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STC's mission is to create and support a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

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A Message from the President



Christine Donovan
2013-2014 JMU STC President

Over the course of the spring semester, JMU STC worked to provide students with opportunities to learn new skills and prepare for job interviews and salary negotiations. It was a pleasure to have Mr. Dave Stoops from JMU Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) join JMU STC for the first time to present on creating effective promotional videos.

In addition to our meetings this past semester, JMU STC organized two fundraisers: Relay for Life and a WRTC t-shirt fundraiser. On behalf of JMU STC, I would like to thank everyone who participated and supported our organization this past year.

It has been a pleasure getting to know everyone and getting to serve as the JMU STC President this past year. I would like to announce our new officers serving as your new JMU STC executive board. President will be Kelly Roden; Emily Hudson

will serve as the new Vice President; Mackenzie Kelley will take on the role as our new Public Relations Manager; Sydney Long will continue as our Secretary; and Emily Kearney will join us as our new Treasurer.

If you have any questions or future meeting suggestions please do not hesitate to contact your new JMU STC President, Kelly Roden at rodenka@dukes.jmu.edu.

Document Layout...

(continued from page 1)

provides the tools to create pieces such as newsletters, flyers, or brochures. Similar programs that work just as well include PagePlus and QuarkXPress.

But you don't need fancy software to create beautiful designs. At their core, these tips help to make any document more appealing—which you can start doing even in a simple Microsoft Word document. Just remember your grid, your focal point, and to leave a little whitespace, and get designing!

source: <http://blogs.4lpi.com/brightideas/2012/04/02/design-tips-how-to-evaluate-and-improve-your-publication-layout/>

<http://www.creativebloq.com/netmag/create-balanced-page-layouts-7-pro-tips-121310009>

http://www.serif.com/appresources/ppx5/tutorials/en-gb/tutorials/design_grid.htm

by *Maya Chandler*



Photo courtesy of Christine Wells

STC Spotlight featuring...

During her time at JMU, Christine Wells involved herself in opportunities both inside and outside of WRTC. She served as Graton Slides Officer of the University Program Board, and wrote for the WRTC Alumni Newsletter and the yearbook. After graduating in 2007 with a major in WRTC and minors in English and Creative Writing, Christine began a job search that eventually led her to Raleigh, North Carolina.

Christine began at North Carolina Farm Bureau Insurance as a Document Control Associate, but soon got promoted to Auto Policy Analyst, where she analyzes policies within the industry. She firmly believes that her involvement in STC

The Principles for Website Layout and Design

Websites are evaluated on both content and layout. In order for a website to be effective, it must strike a balance between concrete content and an appealing layout. If done correctly, this balance will help attract new visitors to the site, as well as maintain your current user base.

Say you have your content packed down and ready to publish. Now, how do you go about designing a professional website?

Here are a few suggestions to consider while creating a layout for a website:

1. Keep it simple. Simplicity will allow the website to appear user friendly, so avoid complex links and large graphics.
2. Use legible font. Avoid extravagant fonts and stick to professional ones, such as Verdana, Helvetica, Arial, and Sans-Serif, while also maintaining a standard font size.
3. Use web-safe, eye-pleasing colors, and avoid colors that do not blend well. While you may be drawn to more vibrant color schemes, keep in mind that web safe colors (colors that appear the same on any browser or computer) are the most suitable options.
4. Limit file size. Keep in mind that smaller page sizes such as the widely renowned Google.com load faster and therefore appeal more to users.
5. Use the whitespace. Whitespace, also known as negative space, is the space between two elements that causes the web design to appear clean and well assembled. Avoid cramping content together; Make sure elements do not touch, almost as to give them their own personal bubble.
6. Allow the content to flow. Arrange it in a way that guides the user through all of the elements while keeping size, alignment, color, and font in mind. If done properly, the audience will leave the website fully understanding what you and the website can do for them.

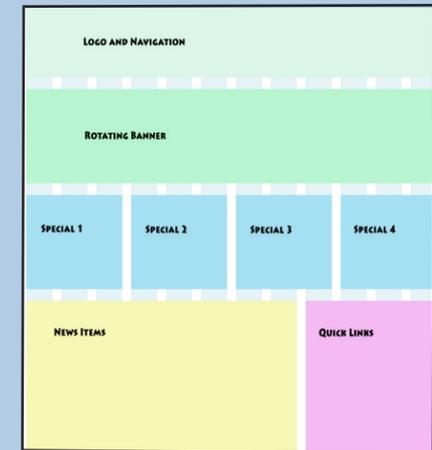


Photo courtesy of http://fc00.deviantart.net/fs70/ff/2014/056/b/4/responsive_grid_layout_template_by_rpharrison-d77xj4c.jpg

Sources: <http://content.websitegear.com/article/layout.htm>

<http://www.websitegear.com/design/html/colorcode.asp>

<http://www.techmodator.com/2013/04/3-tips-for-better-layouts-in-web-design.html>

by *Urvi Patel*

10 Tips for Application Layout

When creating the layout for an application, there's a lot to consider. By following these tips, you can ensure that your app is sleek, professional, and appealing to its users.

1. Decide on an app platform: desktop or mobile.
2. First impressions matter: make the app visually appealing, as it has to compete with other apps in the store.
3. Focus on a product goal: make something that is purposeful, unique, and professional.
4. Make the app quick and simple to use.
5. Make it multifunctional, yet concise: limit the amount of tabs/pages to what's necessary.
6. Decide on a landscape or a portrait orientation, or both, depending on the needs of the app.
7. Choose a navigation style: scrolling, swiping, tabs, or a content sidebar.
8. Decide on free, attention-grabbing preview content for paid apps.
9. Allow confirmation of and responses to actions within the app.
10. Be attentive to detail: the slightest inconsistencies can turn users off from the app.

source: <http://blogs.adobe.com/indesigndocs/2011/02/design-decisions-for-digital-publishing-apps.html>
<http://designyoutrust.com/2013/09/top-10->

by *Sydney Long*

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