

Web Page Design Checklist

Designing your site

Create a storyboard that will help organize the information to be included on the Web site. A storyboard is a visual map sorting the information to be placed in various areas; it helps you avoid the cumbersome rewriting of links. It is better to develop the content before you design: the design should fit the content to be covered.

After you have decided on the content, you can begin the layout.

Content

- State your objective. Ask yourself what is the purpose or goal of the site and is it worth publishing?
- Be as brief and focused as possible.
- Give the name of your Web site.
- Identify your school, where you are located, and your URL. This will allow users who print a Web page to have your URL for reference so they can return to your site.
- If someone bookmarks your site, the site's title appears on that person's bookmark list. Be sure that the subject is easy to recognize based on the title selected.
- State the purpose or goal of the Web site. Provide an introductory overview of the site as well as a "hook" to entice the reader to investigate the site.
- Divide up the subject. Put different subjects on different pages and provide links to them.
- Do you want feedback or is the site simply informative? If you want feedback, be sure to provide an area to post messages or to request specific information.
- Choose a voice that reflects the audience you want to attract.
- People using the Web tend to move quickly through the material; use headlines that are eye-catching, short, and to the point.
- Use subtitles that will direct the reader's eye to the information you are presenting (perhaps on subsequent pages) and that will summarize key points in a long passage.
- If you are going to include items to be downloaded, provide a description of the file's size so the user can gauge how long the download process will take.
- Check all spelling and punctuation.

Layout and navigation

- Design the Web site so that users can easily navigate through it.
- If you have more than four or five pages, provide a table of contents. Build links that let the user see both the content and the relationship of your pages to each other.
- Balance the content depth and breadth. Users should be able to get to the information they want within three mouse clicks.
- Assume a screen size of 640 x 480 pixels. Many people do not realize they can scroll down a page, and others just don't do it. Place the critical information within the default window width.
- If a page must be long, provide internal links to facilitate navigation through its content. Links do not always have to be buttons. Highlight keywords in the text to aid with navigation. "Click here" buttons get tiresome. What happens when the user clicks on a link should be apparent from the link's title or the highlighted content.
- Arrange the buttons or links in an appealing layout.
- A well-organized Web site provides links at the bottom of the page that take the reader back to the top of the page, and always back to the home page. You may also want to provide a link to the table of contents, the previous page, and the next page, as well as to other sections. Good Web sites also have links to an e-mail address where readers can contact you.
- Be sure to include some empty or "white" space on your page. White space provides relief while drawing attention to aspects of the page design.
- Don't type in all capital letters. This is referred to as SHOUTING on the Internet. Instead, use initial cap style (the first letter of a phrase is capitalized) or the caps/lowercase style for headings.

Graphics

- How much content is graphic compared to textual?
- Are the graphics relevant to the goal? Too many graphics can take away from the main idea and slow down the time it takes to load a page.
- Do you need permission from the current copyright owner to use the graphics?
- If the graphics are from a CD or application program, check the license agreement and restrictions on the package. If a graphic has been downloaded from the Internet, you must first seek permission from the artist who created the image to use it on a Web page. To request permission, send an e-mail to the Web master, author, or artist. Usually this information is at the bottom of the site's home page. Inform the contact that you would like permission to place the picture on a school Web site. If there is no address to write for permission, or no response from the e-mail, do not use the picture: it is illegal to take a graphic image from the Internet without permission.
- Both JPEG and GIF files can be read by most browsers. However, JPEG compression causes some of the original image to be lost. GIFs do not lose quality. GIF images are generally better for line drawings and solid-colored graphics.

- If you use an icon or button on your home page, keep it simple. Don't use a lot of different styles and sizes. If you use an image as a button or link, it should also have a textual link accompanying it. Put headings across from or under a graphic or photo. Headings get lost above the photo or graphic.
- Arrange the buttons or links in an appealing layout.
- Be sure your text is readable. Try not to mix fonts and point sizes.
- Choose neutral background colors. Use a sharp contrast between the text color and the background color.
- Keep your site up-to-date and fresh. Check your site often and update the information regularly. Readers like to find new information when they return to a site.

Web design resources

- **HTML Goodies**

<http://www.htmlgoodies.com/tutors/mythoughts.html>

- **How to build a Web page**

<http://www.projectcool.com/>

- **Ten mistakes of Web design**

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/990530.html>

- **Info & resources to build a Web site**

<http://www.websitetips.com/>

- **Web Page Design for Designers**

<http://www.wpdfd.com>