

Visual Organization and Website Design

Unit 5 (no CSS)

September 19

Visual Organization

- Good design is more than just “good colors”
- Good visual organization can make your webpage more effective
 - Users can find links and information quickly
 - Layout is pleasing to the eye
- 4 principles of visual organization
 - Proximity
 - Alignment
 - Consistency
 - Contrast

Proximity

- “Put related items close together”
- Items closed to each other are perceived to be related
 - If you don’t want people to think that, move them apart
- It’s okay to use white space to separate items on a web page
- For assignment 1, you may want to group the links that discuss design separately from those used to navigate the rest of your pages

Example of Proximity

- www.gateway.com
- www.orbitz.com
- www.bestbuy.ca

Alignment

- Alignment will create vertical and horizontal lines for the user
 - Not an actual, physical black line
 - Virtual line created by the placement on items on the page
- Items of equal importance should be aligned
- Items which are less important could be indented

Types of Alignment

- Familiar from creating text documents
- Left aligned: text all begins at the same virtual line on left hand side of document
- Right aligned: text is formatted so that all the text ends at the same vertical line on the right hand side
- Justified: text is aligned on both the right and left hand side of the document
 - Not good for web pages
- Centered: often used for headings or titles
 - Do not center all the text on a page
 - This does not create a strong visual line
 - If you do use it, make sure the text has very, very different line lengths, otherwise it looks sloppy

Alignment Example

- [BBC News](#)
 - Very strong alignment
- www.travelocity.com
 - Alignment is different, but it works well

Consistency (Repetition)

- Great tool for helping users to navigate your site
- Basic principle is to repeat elements of the design throughout and across pages
- Color is a simple way to use repetition
- Can also use things such as:
 - Repeating alignment scheme
 - Placing navigation tools, like site links, in the same position
 - Using the same style bullets, font, etc.

Consistency Example

- [BBC News \(again!\)](#)
 - Navigation is consistent throughout
 - Pages with articles are consistently laid out
- <http://www.cosefini.com>
 - Also has good navigation!
- www.invisionpower.com
 - Changes colors, but still consistent

Contrast

- If two items are different, “make them really, *really* different”
- By making items different, helps user to pick out organization
- Examples:
 - Headings should be much larger than main body text
 - Links should look like links and the rest of the text should not
 - Different fonts, colors, etc. can help to distinguish not only things like headings and regular text, but also different sections of your site

Contrast Example

- www.orbitz.com
 - Uses contrasting colors for different parts of the site
- www.travelocity.com
 - Also uses color, but much more subtle
- www.w3c.org
 - Huge difference between heading and text sizes

Fonts

- Most important thing with fonts is that they are readable
- Don't make fonts too small
 - Regular text should never be smaller than the default size
 - Smaller text may be used for things such as captions, but not necessary
- *Decorative fonts like this should be used sparingly, and only for small amounts of large text*
 - *Remember that not every person will have the same fonts installed*
 - *Really hard to read lots of text written in strange fonts*
- Best fonts are simple serif or sans-serif fonts (like this one)

Color

- You have the basic ideas behind color schemes
- The colors you choose should also reflect your intended audience
 - All pinks might not be best for a electronics website
 - Might be okay for a romantic gift store
 - Dark colors may not be suitable for children's websites
 - Pastels not most appropriate for sports sites
 - Etc.

Usability

- Whole purpose (again) of a website is to convey information
- Your webpage should be unique and individual, but still follow standard webpage conventions
- This falls into user expectations

User Expectations

- Websites which are like other websites are easy to navigate, so users will actually view them
- If your site meets their expectations, they won't have to learn to navigate your site
- Some things to keep in mind:
 - Don't change colors too much
 - Links should look like links (text never should look like a link)
 - Don't change the back button
 - Don't open links in new windows
 - Users can do that themselves
 - Don't use frames
 - The URL of the page is not the page you're viewing
 - Causes problems for bookmarking

Designing for a Broad Range of Users

- This is not just for users with browsers without images enabled or visually handicapped users
- People have different browsers, different screen sizes, and different programs installed
- JavaScript and flash can enhance a site, but they should never be required to view your information
 - If using flash as an intro always allow the user to skip it
 - Do not use JavaScript to overwrite the message bar on the bottom of the browser
 - It actually conveys real information to users
 - They don't care about what you put there
- Check your page in different browser sizes
 - Is it still readable (even if it looks odd)

Don't be Annoying

- Don't use background images
 - Not even watermarked ones
- Animation and movement, just like bright colors, attract our attention
 - It's distracting when someone is trying to read your site
 - Often they'll assume its an advertisement
 - No good reason to use them in this course, or ever for that matter
- Keep files small
 - Huge images should be on their own page and linked to from a thumbnail so users don't have to get the image unless they are interested
 - Don't cram too much on your page when a few pages would work just as well
 - Don't put a ton of images on a page (unless you're selling them)

Don't be Annoying, Part 2

- Don't make your pages too long or too wide
 - No one wants to scroll to horizontally to read the site if possible
 - Vertical scrolling is good, but should not be too long
- Don't move your pages if you can help it
 - People bookmark pages
 - Other sites will link to your site
 - If you move the page, the link will be broken
 - Can cause trouble for search engines to find your site

Having a “Good” Page

- Each page should have enough information to “stand alone”
 - No one should have to go through each page of your site to figure out what you’re talking about
- Should have enough information so that anyone can understand where you’re coming from
 - Don’t start in the middle of a topic

Good Website Practices

- Information about you, the author
 - Either the page is yours, like a homepage
 - You are writing about something
 - How can they trust the information you present if they don't "know" you
- No dead-end links
 - All pages should navigate to other pages in your site
 - Navigation should be clear and the site laid out logically
- It's a good idea to put the date you last updated your site
 - Not always necessary, but a useful tool if someone is trying to figure out if your information is up-to-date

Questions