



<http://www.CognitiveHorizons.com>

Web Basics—Good Design

While every web site is different, there are some guidelines everyone should follow to ensure a minimal level of good design. These basics are not dependent on the quality of your artwork or your skill as an artist. Checking these items off as you complete your pages will ensure you are creating a professional-looking web site that is clean and legible.

General Rules

- Create a thumbnail (or layout or sketch) of your main pages BEFORE you turn on the computer.
- Maintain a consistent look throughout your site.
- Stay organized!** Make it a point to NOT name ANY files with CAPITAL LETTERS, spaces, odd characters, etc. If you want a space in the file name, use the UNDERSCORE _ (shift hyphen).
- Always give EVERY file and image the proper extension: .htm, .gif, .jpg, .txt, .pdf. If you don't, your site may render incorrectly (or not at all).

Good organizational tip: Within your site folder create an **assets folder** and an **images folder**. The assets folder should hold all original artwork, and text files. The images folder holds only compressed/optimized images, the .gifs and .jpps you create from the original artwork. The images file goes up to the Internet server. The assets folder stays on your hard drive.

Graphics/Images (PhotoShop/ImageReady Rules)

- Use the correct file format--GIFs for solid shapes and simple colors, JPEGs for photographs or things with shading.
- Keep the image sizes small--compress, compress, compress.
- Reuse images to save the user time.
- Don't scale images in HTML.
- Use animated GIFs only when necessary.
- DON'T have things blink!
- No mailboxes that open and shut!
- No letters with wings!
- No moving rainbow horizontal rules!

Dreamweaver Rules

- Design with a grid in mind. Create the most simple table possible.
- The background should be light (white) and copy should be dark (black) subtle doesn't work and is hard on the eyes.

- Use the default link colors (or shades in the same family).
- Every page should have a title, the company logo (which should link back to the home page, an e-mail link and the web address).
- Every page should have validity--author name, company name, copyright information, privacy statement (if gathering info) and a revision date.
- Don't design web sites for only one browser, platform, or plug-in.
- Don't say "This site designed for..." The site is designed for your user--whatever platform or browser he is using.
- Avoid excessive graphics, navigation, banners and other distractions that unnecessary and annoying.

Create universally accessible web pages.

- Use the <ALT> tag to describe images on a site.
- Name nonessential graphical element " " (a spacebar press in the ALT window in Dreamweaver) so screen readers will skip reading them.
- Style Sheets: Use them. Because they are good and because you should (and they make your life 1000 times easier).
- Don't have any links that say "click here".

Not everyone has a 21" monitor

- Keep you pages short if material is designed to be read online.
- Keep your pages narrow (no wider than 535 pixels) for material that may be printed.
- Keep your most important information "above the fold" (in the first 295 pixels).

And...

- Proofread and spell-check every page.
- Keep pages under 34K (this page is 21K).

Contact me: learn@CognitiveHorizons.com

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