Crash Course in Design

A little bit of graphic design, ready for Web Developers
Good Design ... 

- is Invisible
- uses Structure
- uses Contrast
- is Simple
The Process of Design

Ways to refine your design
Using thumbnails

- Create 10-20 thumbnails
- No detail, spend 10-30 seconds on each at most
- Choose the top five
Refining the thumbnails

• Take the top five thumbnails
• Work on larger paper
• Still no extreme detail - abstract representation of elements
• Going for concept, not perfection
Quick rules for comping

- Focus on interior pages first, then homepage
- Take top 2 to 3 drawings, create flat image in image editing program of choice
- Program needs to be able to place Guides
Sticky Notes!

- Instead of thumbnails/roughs, use large paper and sticky notes
- Work out 5-10 different options
- Take top 2-3 into image editor
- More useful for revamping an existing design
A quick note about usability

- Logo in upper left
- Search on right (upper left, or right beneath any header images)
- Navigation can be left, right or top
- Users are already interacting with the scrollbar, which is on the right
- No navigation images!
More usability

- Users start in upper left
- Zig-zag down the page, scanning content, or in F-Pattern
- Prioritize content
Where am I?

- Tell visitors where they are
- Most are coming from search engines
- Place indicators on home page too
Grids
Give me structure and hierarchy!

- Grids establish structure
- Grids establish clarity
- Grids ensure consistency
Department of Computer Science
College of Science
The University of Arizona

Featured

Computer Science Plays Critical Role in Plant Collaborative

Our department has a distinguished record of influential publications and software distributions, and has been ranked best of its size among public universities by the National Research Council. See more.

Research

Undergraduate Info

Our undergraduate study ways to design computer networking protocols, create and distribute innovative software, develop wireless and mobile computing, create novel programming languages, develop computer graphics, and push the limits of high-performance computing. See more.

Graduate Info

Our dynamic program of graduate study integrates quality research and teaching. Our alumni include researchers at AT&T Labs, HP Labs, and IBM Almaden, and faculty at Davis, Purdue, and Virginia. See more.

Events & News

Thursday: Richard Jorgensen

View more Events & News

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Employment Opportunities

Department Head Faculty Position

Research

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HTML, conveniently, interprets everything as a box. This makes grid-building easier.
The space between columns is known as a “gutter” and can be built using margin and padding in CSS.
• Make sure all major elements line up with something else

• Columns don’t have to be blatant

• Keep it less than 4 columns

Line it up
Pixels to ems

- Don’t forget to translate from pixel measurements to em-based measurements
- 16px = 1em
- Width/16px = size in ems
Typography
• Type when done right will be invisible
• Don’t use more than 2 fonts
• Best: use 1, and vary size and weight
• Logos count too!
Variation

• Serifs (Georgia, Times New Roman) are good for headlines (h1, h2, h3, etc)

• Sans-serif (Helvetica, Verdana, Arial, Lucida Sans/Lucida Grande) are good for content

• Georgia, Helvetica, Verdana all work with Friz Quadrata (UA logo type)
I’ve got rhythm...

- The pattern of type on whitespace is called “rhythm”
- Rhythm is created by the line-height selector (known as “leading”)
- Establish a paragraph rhythm, then set the headings within that
Setting the line-height

• Formula: font-size x 150%
• Thus, 10px (0.625em) font-size gets a line-height of 15px (0.75em).
• Some recommend 120% line-height, but that seems to close
• Too big a gap makes it hard to read
• Use either xScope or omnidea to ensure proper rhythm, or create a background image with the proper spacing on it to verify the rhythm
• Headings and images need to fit in the rhythm
• Images should line up the top edge with the top of the line of type they’re nearest
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur elit.
Proin est quam, tempor iaculis, tristique a, quis, felis. Curabitur nisl quam, viverra id, pulvinar et, condimentum nec, tellus.
Don’ts

- Don’t set everything in tiny type
- Browser defaults are 16px
- Recommended: no smaller than 0.85em (approx. 14px)
Color & Imagery
Contrast!

- Color is an easy way to establish contrast
- Also, it’s easy to lose proper text-based contrast so be careful!
- Ideal contrast: type at #333333 (dark gray) and background at #ffffff (white)
Color inspiration

- Existing logos (UA, College/School, etc)
- Photos
- Keep a balance of warm (reds, oranges, yellows, etc) and cool (blues, blacks, purples)
About the U of A Colors

- The University’s colors are a good pair for each other, but make using additional colors tricky.

- UA Cardinal Red is a very dominating color - good for borders, underlines, and generally as an accenting color (bad for type - it turns pink in a hurry).

- UA Navy Blue is good for backgrounds, type colors, basically as a primary.
Images and Photos

• Consistency is key

• Theme the photos - only students doing activities, etc.

• Images of people are best - visitors will associate quickest with another person
In conclusion...

- Design is planned
- Start with structure
- Be consistent, clear, and simple
- Large type paired with whitespace will emphasize your message