**Useful Tips for Effective Web Design**

Here are some essential web design tips that every web site should follow. Design your web site by following these tips and I guarantee that visitors will have a great first impression of your site.

1. **Fast Loading web site designs -** This is the number 1 tip that every web designer should follow. Youmight design a web site that looks fantastic but few people are going to see it if it takes a long time to load. Your designs should be optimized for the web and should not take more than 15 seconds to load. Remember, you might have a great design but very few people are going to see it if it takes a long time to load.
2. **Clear Navigation -** Once a visitor has come to your site you need to make them go through your site.To do this you need to have clear navigation. Make sure all your important links are at prominent places. Preferably right on top - that's usually where a visitor first looks. Make use of menus on the right and the left. Try to link to as many pages of your site. Let your information be accessible from all parts of the site. You never know what a visitor may be interested in. Try to also use the footer for your important links.
3. **All Resolutions -** Today, there are computers with all kinds of resolution. They range from 640 x 480to 1024 x 768 and go even higher. Your job is to design your site for all these resolutions. The best way to do this is to design your site in terms of percentage and not pixels.
4. **Browser Compatibility** - Make sure your site is browser compatible. Your web site should look goodin Netscape as well as in Internet Explorer. Don't stop designing your site as soon as you find that it looks great on IE. Usually Netscape gives some problems, especially when you try doing complicated HTML designs. But don't give up too soon; usually with patience these problems can be easily fixed.
5. **Readable and professional looking fonts -** Don't ask me how many times I've clicked out of a site justbecause the font is in Comic Sans and the color is a bright pink or green. Just by looking at the font you feel that the site is not a professional site. Don't use Comic Sans and other fancy fonts that may not be available on most computers. If the font you use is not available in a visitors computer the web site will use the default font of your computer which is much worse. So try to keep to common and professional web fonts. The fonts that I always stick to are Arial and Verdana.
6. **Minimize the use of images -** I believe that sometimes simple designs are the most effective for theweb. Keep your site simple but neat. Don't clutter your page with big, bulky images that take ages to load. Instead use tables creatively and design eye - catching icons that will draw a visitor's attention to a particular section of your site. Tip - Visitors are usually more interested in content than in design.
7. **Use of white space -** Try not to clutter up your page with too many images, backgrounds and colorfulfonts. Again use the Keep It Simple principle by minimizing the use of graphics and using a lot of white space. White space gives a sense of spaciousness and overall neatness to a site. Notice the white space in our site.
8. **Check for broken links -** Always check for broken links within a site before uploading it to your webserver. In Dream weaver you can check for broken links by right clicking on any file in the Site Files Window and then clicking on Check links - Entire Site. If you don't have this facility you need to upload your site and then check it using online tools like Net Mechanic.

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**Tips to Fast loading web site designs**

1. **Minimize the use of images -** The key to a fast loading web site is to minimize the use of images.Images do enhance a page but don't make 80% of your web site only images. Instead break it down as much as possible to simple HTML. Notice the popular sites like Yahoo, Google, EBay, Amazon etc., they have very few images because the load time is more important. Very often simple designs are the best.
2. **Optimize images for the web -** Once you have decided on the images that you need on your site, makesure that it is optimized for the web. They should be in the gif or jpeg format. You can also minimize the size of the image by choosing the number of colors you need, from the color palette. The less the colors you choose, the less the size of the image. You can also use online tools like Gif Wizard to optimize your images or to get a recommendation on how to cut down the size of an image.
3. **Use Tables creatively -** You can get some great looking designs by using tables creatively. Tables loadvery fast because it is just HTML code. Tables can be used in the homepage, menus or anywhere you like. Check out our homepage and our menus to see how we have used tables in our site.
4. **Cut down the use of animated gifs -** Don't use animated gifs unless it is necessary. Animated gifs takea long time to load and can also be very irritating. But since they catch your attention you could use small animated gifs to draw a visitor's attention to a particular section of your site.
5. **Design simple icons** - Instead of using big, bulky images use simple and small icons that add alittle color and draw the attention of a visitor. We have used small icons in our homepage to highlight the main sections of our site.
6. **Use background images** instead of big images whenever possible - Use background images wheneverpossible. This is usually a very useful tip for headers and footers. Instead of using an image of width 580 which is a uniform design you can use just a part of that as a background fill. This reduces the size of the web page as the image is small.
7. **Try out CSS Styles -** Have fun with CSS styles to get some cool text effects. Again, a CSS Style issimple HTML code so it loads very fast. You can create cool rollovers using CSS Styles. Rollover the text on the right menu to see how we have used CSS Styles to get a simple but nice text effect.
8. **Use Flash cautiously -** There seems to be a lot of hype about Flash but I recommend that youminimize the use of

**Flash on a site.** Don't make entire sites using Flash. It may look great but it takes hours to load and canreally put off visitors. If you do want to use Flash use it within an HTML site and make sure it loads fast.

1. **Design most of your site in HTML -** As much as possible try to design your site using HTML. Youcan create great designs by just using HTML code. Use tables, CSS Styles and simple fonts to design your site. Minimize the use of animated gifs, Flash, bulky images etc.
2. **Keep checking your load time -** Last but not least, before you decide on the final design of your website, check its load time.
3. **Effective Navigation Guidelines**

Website navigation is the most important aspect to consider while designing a website. The primary aim for effective navigation is get your visitors to stay in you site and also for visitors to easily find what they are looking for easily and quickly. Designing effective navigation can also entice your visitors to try out the other things you offer on your site. In this article we will look at some of the basic guidelines you need to follow while designing the navigation of a website.

While designing the navigation for your site keep the following points in mind:

**• Organized Links**

Make sure your links are well organized according to the order of importance. Visitors should be easily able to find what they are looking for under different categories. All main links should found on the top. Other interesting links are found on the right of the page. These are common and consistent throughout the site. You can also place the related links to the web page category below the right menu and also at the bottom of the page.

**Note:** Related links are very important as visitors coming to a particular page will probably be interestedin more information you have under the same topic.

**Clear and Prominent**

Once you have decided on your navigation links, you need to think of the best place to put them. Navigation should be clear and consistent. Try to design your navigation on the top or on the left as these are the first places our eyes go to. Also locate the primary links high enough on the page so that they are visible without scrolling. Navigation images should be seamlessly integrated into the site design. Avoid putting navigation links at the bottom of the page as visitors will need to scroll right down to see the links. If you like you could put the important links at the top AND bottom of the page just to make sure your visitors don't miss the link.

**• Consistent**

Navigation should be clear and consistent. The important links of your website should be on every page, in the same location, and in the same sequence. Don't confuse your visitors by putting your navigation links in different places in different pages.

**• Easy to understand**

Make your links easy to understand and to the point. Usually you won't have enough place to have long links so make use of the space wisely. Visitors need to know where they will go on clicking on a particular link, so make sure your links are understandable or nobody is going to click on your links, which will defeat the purpose of designing a good navigation system.

**• DHTML Menus**

If you have a large number of links under categories and sub - categories you could use navigation menus to organize your links. There are many cut 'n' paste scripts available on the Net that you could use to create great navigation systems. You can find tons of useful navigation menus that are very easy to install on your site. Keeping these basic points in mind you can go ahead and design an effective navigation system for your site. Take a look at other sites to get some ideas on good navigation techniques! Another good idea would be to use eye-catching visuals and small chunks of information to draw visitors to click on a link.