

Script: Web Design
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Slide 1:
Title Slide

Slide 2:
When planning your website, consider these four user-centric questions that should be answered in the first few seconds when a user arrives at the site. First, what is this?

Slide 3:
What can I do here?

Slide 4:
What do they have here?

Slide 5:
Why should I be here, and not somewhere else? We'll talk more specifically about the best ways to answer these questions in the next few slides.

Slide 6:
How do you tell users what your site is? When you visit websites, what clues you in?

Slide 7:
Usually, a clear logo...

Slide 8:
...and a tagline tells users what the site is. It is also often clear from the general look and feel what the basic type of a website it is.

Slide 9:
A news site looks different from a retail site.

Slide 10:
A government site looks different from a blog. Think about what you want to communicate to the user by the basic look and feel of the site.

Slide 11:
When a user identifies the basics about the site, they want to know how to interact. Are they shopping or are they reading articles? What should they do next? Give clues about what's clickable. Keep like items together — if you have a list of categories put them all together, don't put half in one box and half in another box. Help the reader decide what they should click first. On a news site,

the most important story is at the top of the page and often has a larger headline or other clues that it is important.

Slide 12:

Users also want to get a sense of what's available on the site. Navigation is key. Make sure that regardless of where a user ends up on the site or starts from that they can find their way back.

Slide 13:

Look for ways to manage things together.

Slide 14:

The homepage should reflect the latest — whether it is news or a sale for a retailer. Put those timely items out on the homepage.

Slide 15:

You'll notice the timestamp on the story on the right says it was published 37 minutes ago. That is a visual cue to the reader that the information is new and fresh.

Slide 16:

Users have plenty of options when it comes to finding information on the Web. A Google search can pull up hundreds of thousands of results. Your website needs to get people to stick around. Think about what you like in a website and what makes you click away from a site. The visual experience can make or break a site, but even if the visual experience is beautiful, users need a reason to stick around — that's where content comes into play. If the user can't quickly find what they need, they will go back to their initial search.

Now that we've looked at ways to answer our users' questions, let's talk more specifically about working with the design and aesthetics of a site.

Slide 17:

White space is a good thing. Allow the elements on your pages to have space and room to breathe.

Slide 18:

There are actually studies that show people comprehend better when there is more white space and less clutter.

Slide 19:

White space also gives elements the chance to stand out.

Slide 20:

Here's an example of how a news website — the Columbia Missourian — allows elements to have room to breathe.

Slide 21:

Photos and art are another way to establish visual interest...

Slide 22:

dominance and hierarchy on pages.

Slide 23:

Be sure to differ sizes and have a clear dominant image to draw in the user. In this example, the photos provide hierarchy for the reader.

Slide 24:

When picking fonts, make sure you know why you are using them and that it helps a user interact with your site and doesn't impede their readability or navigation.

Slide 25:

Google fonts are free, and suggestions are offered for fonts that flow well together.

Slide 26:

A serif font is commonly used for body type, while sans serif fonts can be used for display type or places that need to stand out from body type.

Slide 27:

Having two or three fonts that work well together will provide options but not overwhelm a user.

Slide 28:

Here are a couple of examples of the use of fonts on ColumbiaMissourian.com

Slide 29:

And here's an example where we use the sans serif to label content and then use a serif font for the individual headlines.

Slide 30:

If you are working with editorial content and ads, make sure you are able to differentiate the two. That can be by adding an advertisement label or putting ads in consistent spots.

Slide 31:

If you look at other sites, you see there are some established practices for ads, including billboard ads and the use of side rails.

Slide 32:

You can see here that the Columbia Missourian maintains specific locations for ads but also labels the ads with an advertisement tag.

Slide 33:

Once you design and build your site, you have to test it.

Slide 34:

Test it using all browsers, have outside users test it, just keep testing.

Slide 35:

You will likely continue to find bugs after a launch or a redesign, but hopefully, testing in advance will identify major issues and problems.

Slide 36:

Want to learn more about design techniques – and how to incorporate them at your publication? My colleague, Laura Johnston, has a lesson for you on basic design perfect for your student newspaper.