



How to Design Your Own Website

Creating a Design That Gets Sales

Presented by Lisa Li

A Bit About Me...

Hi, I'm Lisa Li, I've been building websites and designing graphics for over 20 years. I've designed websites for small businesses across the country.

In this class, I'll be teaching you the fundamentals of web design so that you can understand what makes a good web design, what things you need to include, making your website look good across devices, how to use page builders to put together page layouts, and a lot more.



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Class Agenda

- **Lecture Part 1: Website Design Principles & User Experience**
 - We discuss fundamental design principles such as color theory, typography, and layout. Learn what makes a website user-friendly and intuitive, and what elements can help increase sales.
- **10-Minute Break**
 - Grab a drink or snack, take a restroom break, or simply engage in the class live chat
- **Lecture Part 2: Practical Tools & Responsive Design**
 - We talk about tools and resources you can use to design your website, such as Beaver Builder and Elementor. We will also discuss how to make your website accessible and ensuring it looks great across devices.
- **Q&A Session (Optional)**



The Basics of Website Design

Great website design can help improve user experience and boost sales.

- 1. Keep it simple and focused:** If your website is too cluttered or difficult to use, you'll drive away prospective customers.
- 2. Use color theory and white space:** Colors can influence the perception of your website, so use it strategically to communicate subtle messages to your target audience.
- 3. Make content easy to read:** The size, color, spacing, and fonts you choose to use on your website can impact how easy it is to read, especially across devices.
- 4. Use authentic photos and optimize them:** Avoid using too many stock photos on your website and do your best to use real photos of your business, products, staff, and customers whenever possible.
- 5. Use intuitive layouts and user-friendly design:** Try to make your website easy to navigate, use intuitive navigation, and make it as easy as possible to buy.



KISS: Keep It Simple Stupid

Design your website to be simple and focused. Do not overwhelm your visitors with too much content at once or too many visual elements.

- **Clear Purpose:** Every page of your website should have one main goal.
- **Easy Navigation:** Make it simple for people to find what they are looking for. Use clear labels for your navigation menu.
- **Avoid Overloading:** Do not use too many flashy elements, colors, or fonts as these can confuse visitors or simply be too overwhelming and impact the user experience.

Pro Tip: If it takes more than a few seconds to figure out what your business offers or to find information on your website, you need to simplify and focus your design.



Use Color and Spacing Effectively

The colors you use should match your brand, but you should also pay attention to color theory which can subtly influence the perception of your business and marketing.

- **Primary Brand Color:** You should use one main color throughout your website that matches your brand, and use secondary colors that complement it.
- **Call-to-Action (CTA) Colors:** Use contrasting colors for buttons or important actions (ie. “Buy Now” or “Sign Up”) so that they stand out – but make sure it doesn’t overwhelm the page.
- **White Space:** Use space around text, images, and other elements as that can help visitors focus on what’s important without being too overwhelmed.



Color Meanings & Best Uses

- **Blue:** *Trust, Dependability, Calm*
 - Best for: Financial, corporate, and technology websites where trust and professionalism are key (e.g., banks, software companies).
- **Red:** *Passion, Urgency, Energy*
 - Best for: Retail, entertainment, and food websites where excitement or action is needed (e.g., e-commerce sites, restaurant sites, sale promotions).
- **Green:** *Growth, Health, Prosperity*
 - Best for: Health and wellness, environmental, or financial websites (e.g., fitness brands, organic food shops, investment firms).
- **Yellow:** *Optimism, Happiness, Attention-Grabbing*
 - Best for: Creative, children-focused, or product innovation websites (e.g., toy brands, creative agencies).



Color Meanings & Best Uses

- **Orange:** *Friendly, Enthusiastic, Confidence*
 - Best for: Retail, entertainment, and non-profit websites to encourage engagement and action (e.g., volunteer programs, event signups).
- **Purple:** *Luxury, Creativity, Wisdom*
 - Best for: High-end products, beauty, or creative industries (e.g., luxury goods, beauty salons, art galleries).
- **Black:** *Sophistication, Elegance, Power*
 - Best for: Fashion, luxury, and professional services where elegance is key (e.g., high-end fashion brands, design agencies).
- **White:** *Simplicity, Cleanliness, Modernity*
 - Best for: Minimalist, modern websites across various industries (e.g., tech startups, health services, consulting firms).



Use Clear, Readable Typography

The fonts that you use can have a big impact on how your website looks and how easy it is to read.

- **Choose Simple Fonts:** Use simple, clean fonts that are easy to read. Pay attention to how they display on mobile. Fancy fonts may look cool, but some may be hard to read on mobile.
- **Font Size Matters:** You need to make sure the font size is large enough to read. A good rule of thumb is to use 16px for body text and larger sizes for headings.
- **Be Consistent:** Don't use too many fonts throughout your website, choose 2 to 3 fonts and use them consistently for the different elements.
- **Strong Contrast:** Make sure the text is easy to read across devices by using high contrast colors (ie. light text on a dark background, dark text on a light background).



Using Images Effectively

When you choose images to use on your website, you not only need to consider what the images are of, but you need to choose images that are both high quality and optimized for the web.

- **Use Real Photos:** Whenever possible, use real photos of your customers, products, staff, and business. Real photos are easy to spot compared to stock photos. By using real photos, it will come across as more authentic and trustworthy.
- **Real Photos of Customers:** When you use real photos of your customers, you help your visitors imagine themselves using your products or services, increasing your conversion – boosting sales.
- **Optimize for Speed:** Resize large photos to a smaller size (appropriate for where you plan to use it), and use an image compressor like TinyPNG to reduce the file size so that it loads faster when people visit your website.



User-Friendly Layouts

The purpose of your website should be to guide your visitors towards taking some action, whether it's to request an estimate, make a purchase, give you their email address, or something else. To achieve this you need to use:

- **Logical Flow:** Organize content so that it makes sense with what you are presenting. Most websites will have an eye-catching offer, followed by information about products/services, and then a clear call to action (CTA).
- **Few Clicks to Buy:** Make it as easy as possible for people to buy from you. Products should be only 2 to 3 clicks from the landing page. Keep the whole process simple, fast, and easy.
- **Mobile-Friendly Design:** Your website should look good and be easy to browse on mobile devices. The majority of people browsing websites and making purchases are doing so with smartphones.



Using a Call-to-Action (CTA)

Your CTA is what you want your visitors to do next – it may be placing an order, requesting an estimate, signing up for a newsletter, or making a call. Whatever it is, your CTAs should be clear and easy to find.

- **Use Action-Oriented Words:** Use words like “Get Started”, “Buy Now”, etc.
- **Place CTAs Strategically:** Place CTA buttons where they are easy to see, like on landing pages or below product descriptions or other blocks of content.
- **Test CTA Buttons:** Try using different colors, positions, and wording to see what works best for your website. A simple change can sometimes make a big difference.

Pro Tip: Use text CTAs in your content to give your users who read your content a quick way to take the next step without scrolling or searching for a button.



Build Trust with Testimonials

If you have social proof like customer reviews or testimonials, use them on your website as they can increase trust and make them more willing to buy.

- **Use Real Customer Testimonials:** Display quotes from happy customers to show that others have had a positive experience with your business.
- **Highlight Customer Success Stories:** If you have any customers who have had great results, feature their stories on your website.
- **Showcase Press or Partnerships:** If you have partnered with trusted brands or have been featured in the media, be sure to highlight and feature that on your website.

Pro Tip: Use text CTAs in your content to give your users who read your content a quick way to take the next step without scrolling or searching for a button.



User Experience (UX) Design

User Experience (UX) refers to how visitors feel when they interact with your website. You want to make visitors feel confident in your business and have a positive experience so that they return.

- **Is your website easy to navigate?** Your visitors should be able to find what they are looking for quickly and easily. A frustrating experience is likely to cause people to leave and not come back.
- **Are important details easy to find?** Make key information people need to make a decision to follow through on the CTA easy to find and provide enough details that they can feel confident in their decision to move forward.
- **Is the checkout process quick and hassle-free?** It is crucial to make the process to order, sign up, or perform some other action as easy and fast as possible. If something is too difficult, requires too much information, or takes too long to do, it will drive away some people.



UI (User Interface) Design

User Interface (UI) is all about the look and feel of your website – the design elements like buttons, fonts, colors, and images users interact with.

- **Clean, Appealing Design:** Your website design should not be cluttered, it should use space effectively around elements, and look good across devices.
- **Clear, Clickable Buttons:** Buttons and links should be easy to see and find, and they should be designed so it is clear that they can be clicked on.
- **Consistent Design:** Your design should have a consistent and set of styles used across the entire website and across all the pages.



UI and UX Design Keys

- **Simplify Your Navigation:** Use clear labels, limit the number of menu items, and give users a search bar if you have a lot of content.
- **Design for Mobile First:** Your website should have a responsive design, have buttons that are big enough for people to tap with their fingers, and form should be short and easy to fill out on mobile.
- **Clear CTAs:** Use action words, strategic placement, and contrast to make them stand out.
- **Speed It Up:** Compress large images, limit plugins and scripts, and use a fast hosting provider.
- **Readability and Layout:** Use headings to break up content, keep paragraphs short, use fonts and text sizes that are easy to read.
- **Provide Clear Feedback:** Use confirmation messages, error messages, and loading indicators for forms, shopping carts, and other interactive elements.
- **Use Visual Hierarchy:** Use larger text for headlines and key information, highlight key actions, and keep important information near the top of the page (above the fold).



Design Tools & Resources

- **Website Builders:** There are lots of easy-to-use website builders such as Wix and squarespace that can make creating websites quickly and easily. Newer AI-powered tools like ZipWP and Unicorn Platform take it to the next level by automating the design and content creation.
- **Page Builders:** Page builders such as Beaver Builder and Elementor can be installed on WordPress and make it easy to build page layouts and responsive designs.
- **Content Generation:** You can use AI tools like ChatGPT, Jasper AI, and many others to generate content, CTAs, headlines, and other text for your website. ChatGPT can even help you plan it!
- **Images:** You can use stock photo sites or AI image generators for low-cost images to use on your website. You can use free online image editors and tools to resize and optimize images easily.
- **Caching:** Most website platforms offer some kind of caching tools that will help speed up your website. The options and settings available vary, but it can greatly reduce the amount of time it takes for your website to load.



Designing for Accessibility

To make a website accessible means that you make it easier for people with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive impairments to browse and use.

Why It Matters:

- **Reach More Customers:** Roughly 1 in 4 people in the U.S. live with a disability. If your site isn't accessible, you could be missing out on a significant portion of potential customers.
- **Build Trust and Loyalty:** A website that works for everyone shows that your business cares about all customers, helping to build trust and long-term relationships.
- **SEO Benefits:** Search engines like Google favor websites that are well-structured and easy to navigate, and many accessibility features overlap with good SEO practices.
- **Avoid Legal Issues:** In some countries, businesses are legally required to ensure their websites are accessible. Ensuring your website meets accessibility standards can help you avoid potential lawsuits.



Accessibility Best Practices

- **Add Descriptive Alt Text to Images:** Alt text is a written description of an image that helps screen readers describe what's on the page for visually impaired users. It also helps if an image fails to load by showing the text instead.
- **Use High Contrast for Text and Background:** Contrast refers to how much text stands out from the background. Low contrast (e.g., light gray text on a white background) can make it hard for anyone—especially those with visual impairments—to read the content.
- **Ensure Your Website Is Keyboard Accessible:** Some users rely on their keyboard instead of a mouse to navigate websites, often due to motor impairments. A keyboard-accessible site allows users to interact with all features (menus, buttons, forms) using the “Tab” key and other keyboard shortcuts.
- **Provide Captions and Transcripts for Multimedia:** Captions are text versions of spoken content in videos, while transcripts are full-text versions of audio files or videos. These tools help visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as those who prefer to read rather than listen.



Accessibility Best Practices

- **Design Forms with Accessibility in Mind:** Forms are an essential part of many websites—whether for collecting customer information, processing orders, or newsletter signups. An accessible form ensures that all users can easily fill out and submit their information.
- **Use Accessible Fonts and Readable Text Sizes:** Some fonts are difficult to read for people with dyslexia or visual impairments, and small text sizes can make it harder for anyone to read content on your site.
- **Make Sure Your Site Is Responsive:** A responsive website automatically adjusts its layout to fit different screen sizes, whether visitors are using a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Responsive design is essential for accessibility because it ensures that all users, including those who rely on screen readers or mobile devices, can easily navigate your site.
- **Test Your Site for Accessibility:** The best way to ensure your website is accessible is to test it! There are several free tools you can use to check for accessibility issues and get suggestions for improvement, such as WAVE Accessibility Checker and Lighthouse.



Responsive Web Design

Responsive design means that your website automatically adapts to fit the screen it's being viewed on. Whether someone is visiting your site from a large desktop monitor or a small smartphone, a responsive design makes sure that everything looks clean, easy to read, and simple to navigate.

Why It Matters?

- **Improves user experience:** A responsive website ensures that visitors have a smooth experience, no matter what device they're using.
- **Increases conversions:** A well-designed, easy-to-navigate site makes it more likely that visitors will buy from you or contact you.
- **Boosts SEO:** Google favors mobile-friendly, responsive websites, so having one can help your site rank higher in search results.



How to Make a Responsive Website

With modern website builders and AI tools, building a responsive website is easy. You can use tools like ZipWP, Wix, Unicorn Platform, and many other website builders.

How to Ensure Your Website Is Responsive:

- **Use a Responsive Theme:** If you're building your website with WordPress, Wix, or another platform, start by choosing a responsive theme or template.
- **Optimize Images and Text for All Devices:** As your website resizes for different screens, images and text should adjust accordingly. Many website builders allow you to customize how images and text appear on mobile versus desktop.
- **Avoid Fixed Width Elements:** If you're adding custom elements to your website (like buttons, boxes, or other features), avoid setting fixed widths. Fixed-width elements stay the same size no matter what device is being used, which can cause them to look too small or too large on different screens. Instead, use flexible, percentage-based widths that adjust with the screen size.



How to Test Your Website for Responsiveness

Once your website is built, you'll want to test it to make sure it's fully responsive. Here are some easy ways to check if your site works well on different devices:

- **Use Your Own Devices:** Test your website across different devices. Make sure content is readable, images load properly, and it is easy to navigate.
- **Use Online Testing Tools:** You can use tools like Google's mobile-friendly test, Responsinator, and Screenfly to see how your website may look on different devices.
- **Check Page Speed on Mobile:** Use page speed testers like Google PageSpeed Insights to test for how long it takes for it to load. Loading speed varies and depends on numerous factors.
- **Use Browser Developer Tools:** You can use the responsive design mode in your web browser to preview your website on small screens.

Note: Testing your website may generate different results and may not actually reflect how it actually displays for your users. These methods are really more of a guide to help identify things you need to improve or fix.



Best Practices for Responsive Design

- **Design for Mobile First:** Start by designing your site with mobile users in mind, then scale up for larger devices like desktops. Since so much traffic comes from smartphones, this approach ensures your mobile experience is top-notch.
- **Use Large, Clickable Buttons:** On smaller screens, it can be tricky to tap on tiny buttons. Make sure your buttons are large enough for mobile users to easily click.
- **Test Regularly:** As you update your website, make it a habit to regularly check that everything still works well on different devices. New content, images, or design changes can sometimes affect responsiveness.
- **Simplify Your Design:** Keep it simple! On smaller screens, less is more. Remove any unnecessary clutter that could overwhelm visitors and focus on key content, like your products or contact information.



Key Takeaways

Key Design Principles

- **Simplicity:** Clean, uncluttered design and easy navigation.
- **Color Theory:** Use colors that reflect your brand and guide user action.
- **Typography:** Clear, readable fonts and sizes.
- **Image Use:** High-quality, optimized images that tell your story.
- **Layout:** Organize content for easy flow and mobile-friendly design.

User Experience (UX) & User Interface (UI)

- **Simplified Navigation:** Make it easy for visitors to find what they need.
- **Call-to-Action (CTA) Buttons:** Bold, action-oriented CTAs for higher conversions.
- **Optimized Speed:** Fast load times keep users engaged.



Key Takeaways

User Experience (UX) & User Interface (UI)

- **Simplified Navigation:** Make it easy for visitors to find what they need.
- **Call-to-Action (CTA) Buttons:** Bold, action-oriented CTAs for higher conversions.
- **Optimized Speed:** Fast load times keep users engaged.

Accessibility Best Practices

- **Alt Text for Images:** Ensure images are accessible to all users.
- **Contrast:** High contrast for readability.
- **Keyboard Navigation:** Make your site easy to navigate for all.



Key Takeaways

Responsive Design

- **What Is Responsive Design?:** A site that works on all devices (mobile, tablet, desktop).
- **Testing for Responsiveness:** Google Chrome tools, Google Mobile-Friendly Test.
- **Best Practices:** Design for mobile first, use large buttons, and test regularly.

How to Make Your Website Responsive

- **Use a Responsive Theme:** Use an AI website builder or a responsive website theme.
- **Optimize Images and Text for All Devices:** Resize text and images to look good at different screen sizes.
- **Avoid Fixed Width Elements:** Use flexible, percentage-based widths that adjust with the screen size, or use page platform/page builder tools to set different sizes, alignments, and show/hide elements based on screen size.



Q&A



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