

Easy Design Tips for Non-Designers

Annie Smidt

{durable}

DESIGN FOR THE (MISSION) DRIVEN

@anniesmidt • durablecreative.com

these slides & bonus resources at: durablecreative.com/wc17

Your not a designer. Why should you care, at least a little, about design?

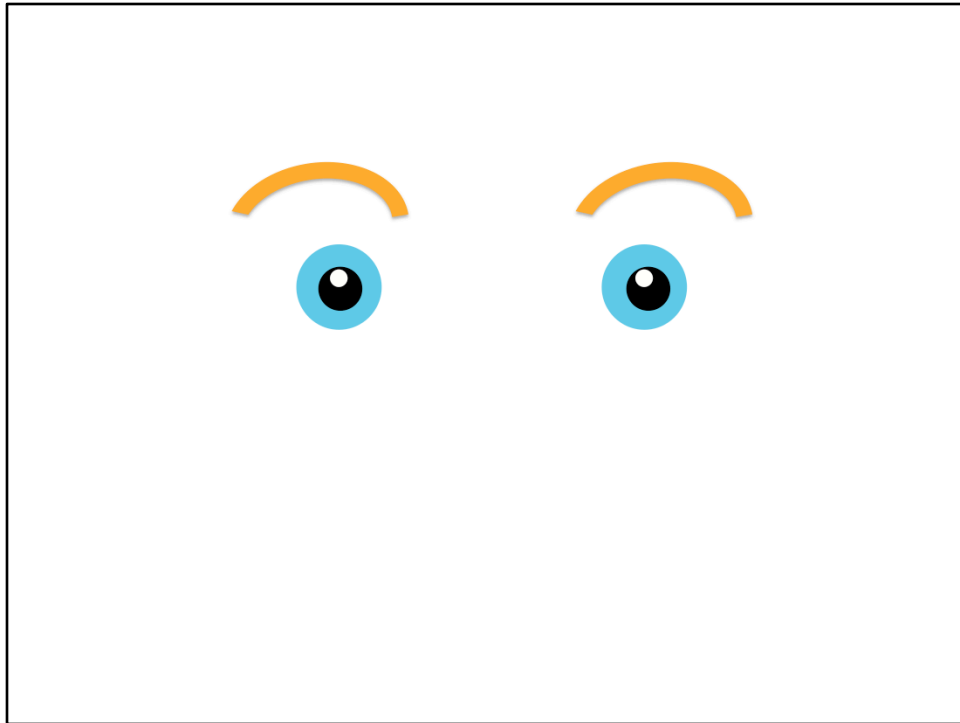
Let's take a huge step back and look at the big picture for a moment. Why do you even have a website?

- Show people your brand is credible
- Sell more widgets
- Convert more leads
- Get your message out
- Help people do some process
- Get more visitors to your brick and mortar establishment

Usually, people think that if you want to accomplish goals like these, your focus needs to be on strategy, content, and SEO.

That's true.

They think of design as a "nice-to-have".



But good design is actually equally important. If people find your site frustrating or unprofessional, or even ugly, it will be much harder to achieve your goals.

In fact, users make a judgment about the credibility and how much they like your site within 50ms of seeing it, based on what they see.

When you blink involuntarily, that's 100ms at the fastest. 50ms is half that.

Studies show that this first impression is so powerful that it can even keep them from disliking or finding fault with your site later, even if they find things they like less.

So, even if you're not a designer, and it's all DIY it's worth your while to tune up your design.

And this talk will give ideas and hacks to do just that.

Design nibbles on today's menu

- 1 HIERARCHY 
- 2 CONSISTENCY 
- 3 COLOR 
- 4 IMAGES 
- 5 TYPE 

A lot of design is the stuff that people appreciate subconsciously if it's good, but notice consciously if it's bad.

In order to help with that, I'm going to talk about some design basics and hacks in 4 areas:

Hierarchy
Consistency
Color
Type

I'm not going to talk about the logistics of exactly how you implement each of these on your site everyone's working with different themes and plugins has different levels of technical savvy and access.

You might be on wp.com or have your own install.

The cool thing is, WordPress is really flexible and can pretty much do anything, so there *should* be a way to implement any ideas you get from this talk. If you want specific advice on how to implement something in your situation, ask me afterwards or visit the happiness bar.

HIERARCHY

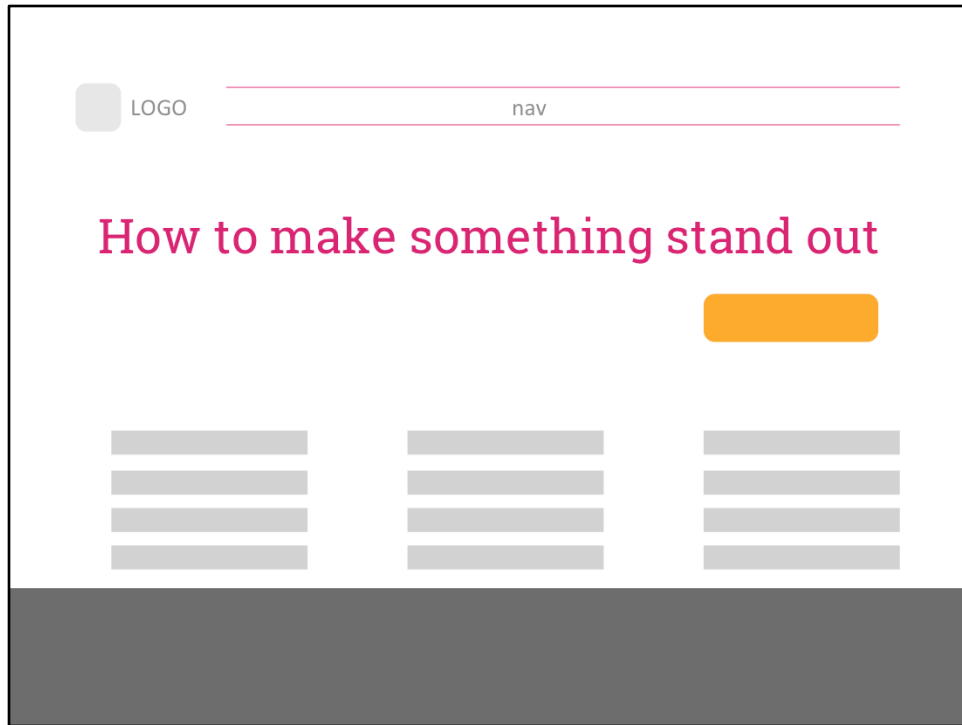
Hierarchy

As a designer, hierarchical is one of my favorite words, even though it's hard to say.

Once you start thinking about hierarchy, so much design falls into place.

Here's what I mean.

On every page, the most important content on your site should be the most visible. The second most important content should be secondmost visible. The thirdmost important thing should be the thirdmost obvious. And so on.



On a page like your home page, you may opt to even stop at one or two important things, to make them blindingly obvious.

Design is what makes the things obvious.

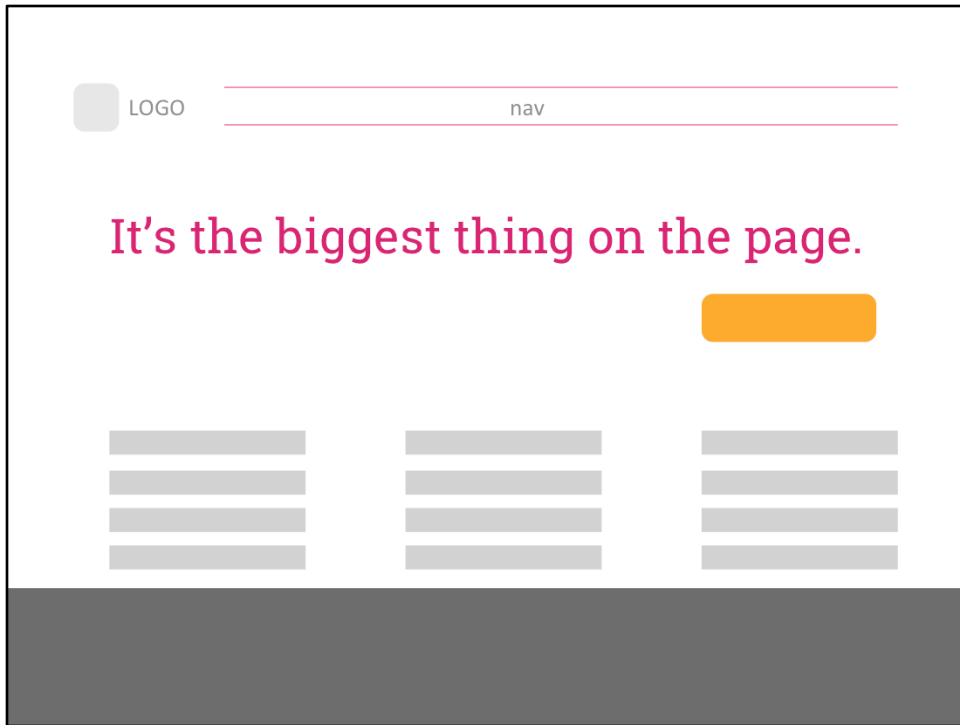
What's the most important thing? Usually, it's very simple content that assures your visitors they're in the right place and offers them a chance to do the thing you want them to do.

It shouldn't compete with other elements.

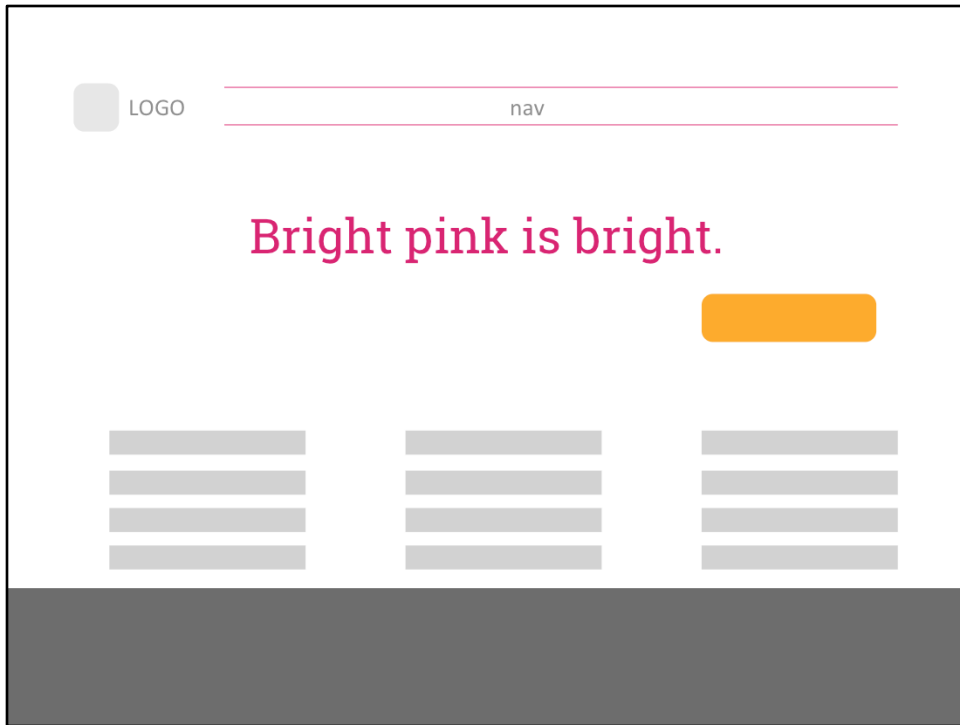
Here are some tactics:



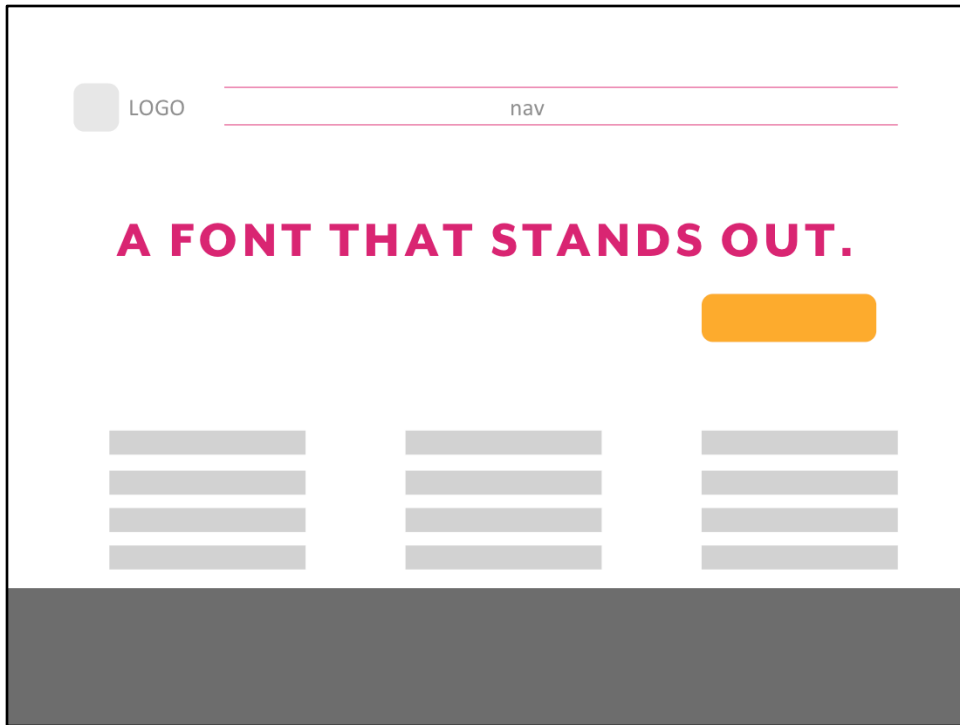
- Put it at the top



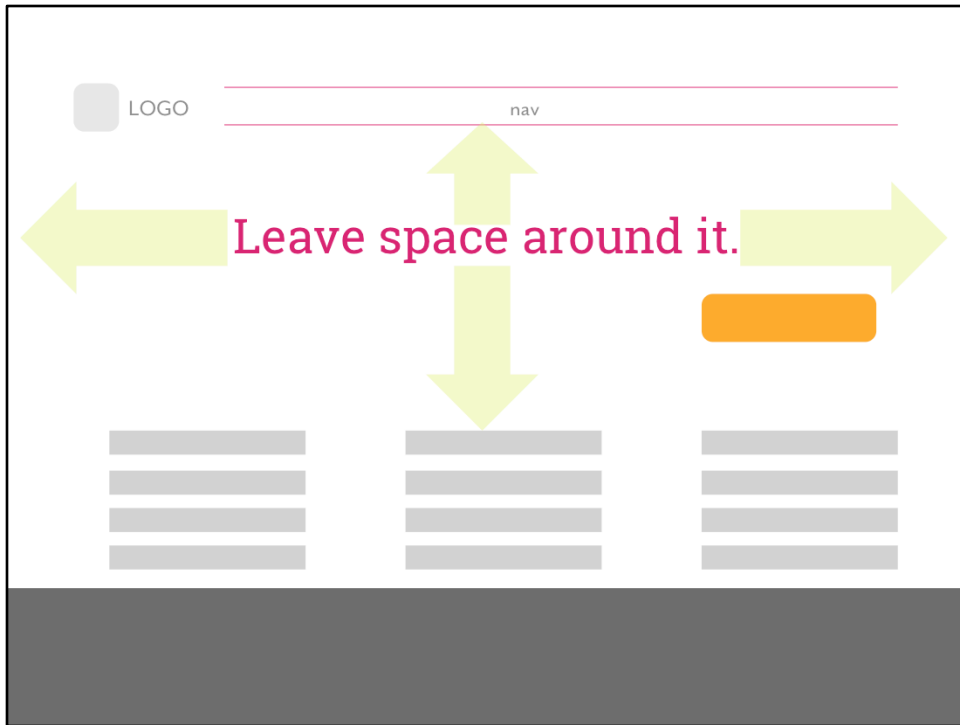
- biggest



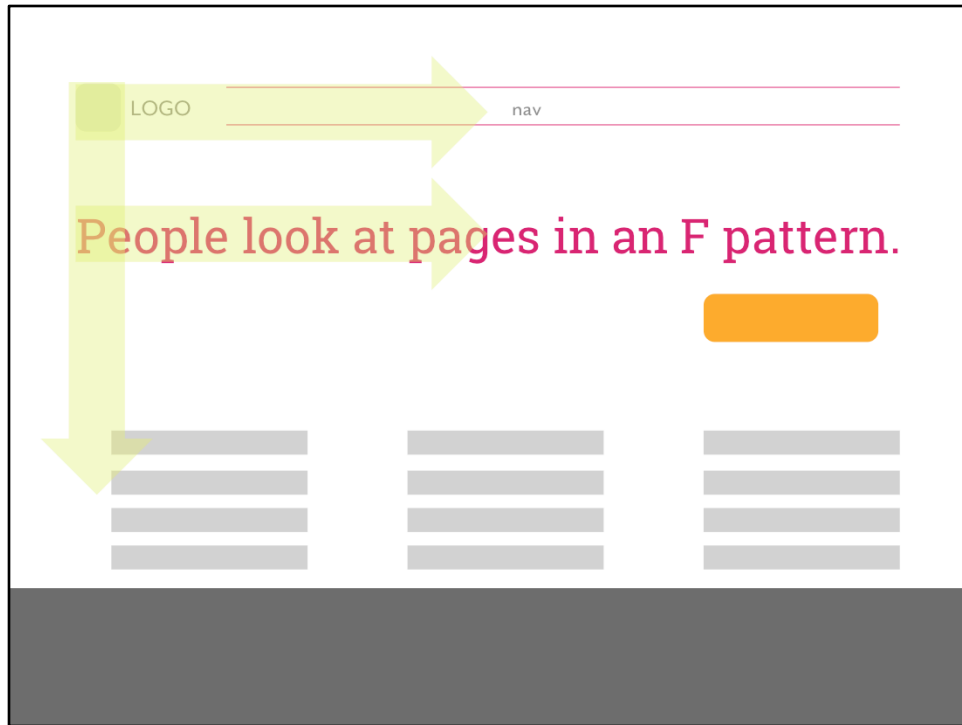
- It's in a color that stands out



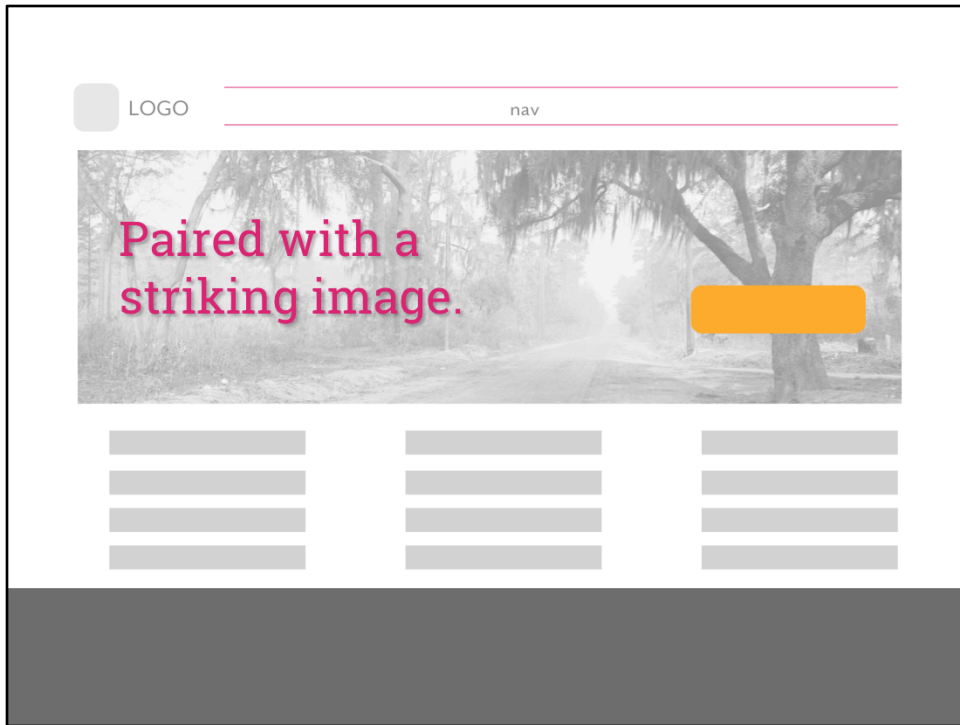
- A font that stands out



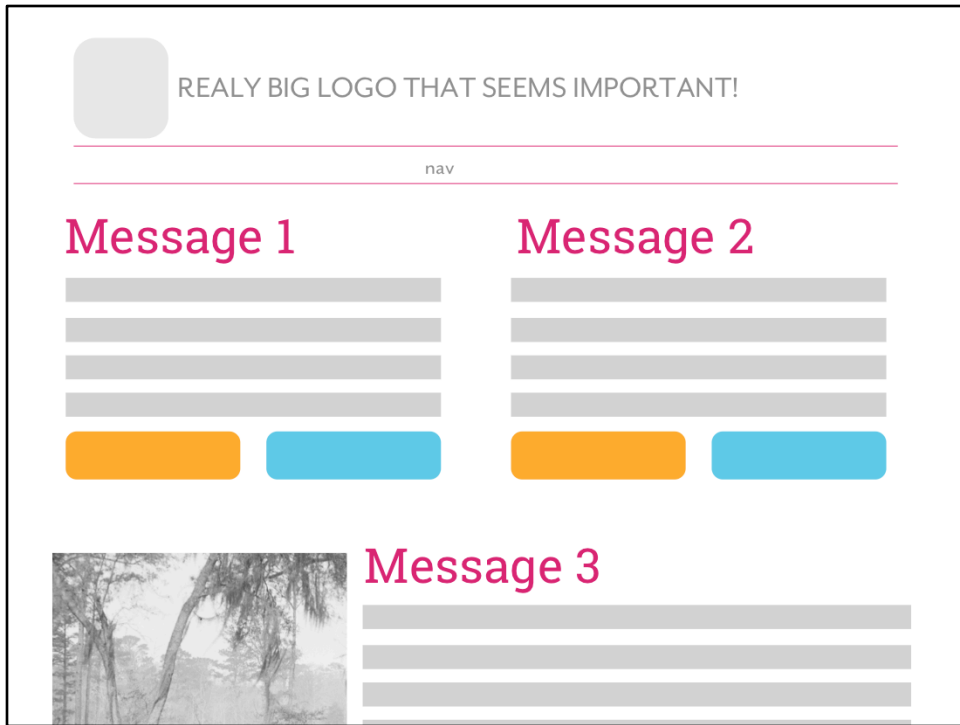
- Leave space around it



- People look at pages in an F pattern.
- Put your content where they'll see it.



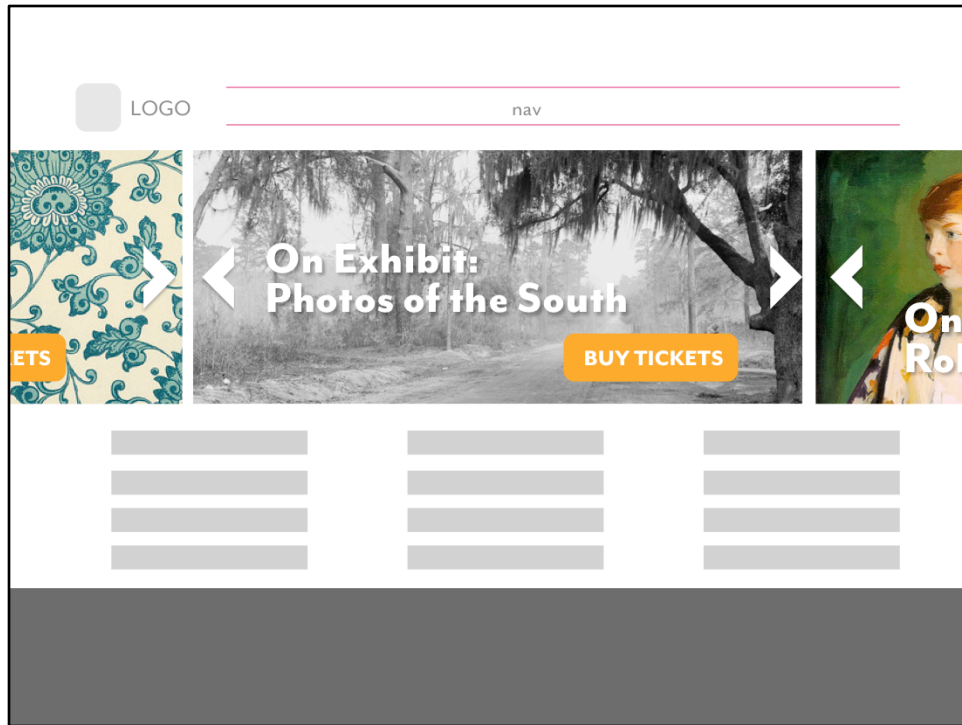
- Grouped with a striking image or pattern



BAD

When there are too many choices that seem equally important, you're not giving you're visitors more information or more options, you're just missing an opportunity to tell them where to look and do what you want them to do.

Humans look for the thing that breaks the pattern or stands out. This kind of layout just makes them sad.



Sometimes your most important message might be more complicated. For museums, for example, you might need to show a range of current exhibits to entice people to visit. That's ok, maybe you need to use a slider, but stay mindful of the hierarchy and don't give people too many competing choices at once.

HEADING 1 IS YOUR PAGE TITLE

Paragraphs use the “paragraph” style, obviously.
Yes, paragraphs use the “paragraph” style. Indeed, paragraphs use the “paragraph” style.

Post titles & Subheads in Text are usually Heading 2

Paragraphs use the “paragraph” style, obviously.
Yes, paragraphs use the “paragraph” style. Indeed, paragraphs use the “paragraph” style.

Sub-subtitles in text and widget titles are H3

Paragraphs use the “paragraph” style, obviously.
Yes, paragraphs use the “paragraph” style. Indeed, paragraphs use the “paragraph” style.

`{Preformatted is for blocks of code}`

The image also shows a dropdown menu for text formatting with the following options:

Paragraph	(^p)
Heading 1	(^h1)
Heading 2	(^h2)
Heading 3	(^h3)
Heading 4	(^h4)
Heading 5	(^h5)
Heading 6	(^h6)
Preformatted	

A simple example of hierarchy is the styles that come built-in to WordPress. Usually, you should be able to define these in your theme options, pagebuilder options or using CSS.

Visually, the way you make these styles look should reflect their importance in the hierarchy.

Heading 1 (or H1) is the most important and is usually used for page titles.

Heading 2 (or H2) is secondmost important and is usually used for post titles and subtitles in your text.

Heading 3 (or H3) is thirdmost important and is used for sub-subheads in text and, by convention, often for the titles of widgets in WordPress.

Try not to change too many characteristics of an element at once. Restraint is considered design more easily than using every style and feature you can. For example:

- My H1 here is big and pink and caps
- H2 is a little smaller, and not caps
- H3 is the same size but the less bold, text font



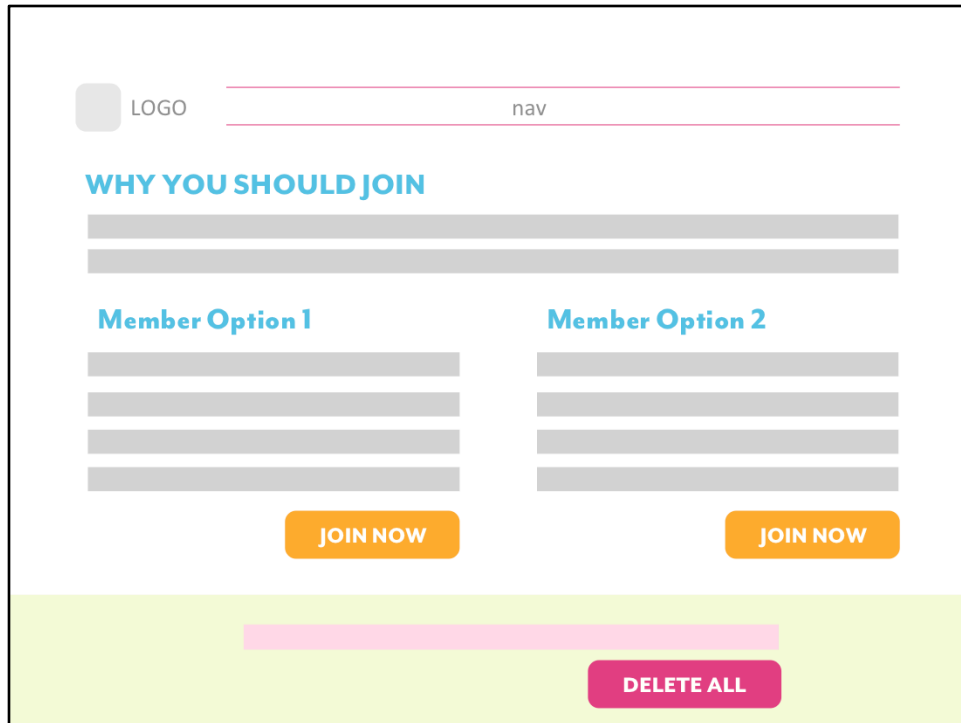
Consistency

Consistency is something we all understand in general. And on the macro-level we know we need to be consistent with our marketing, writing our blog and how our brand presents itself.

But on a micro-level, consistency is up there with hierarchy in terms of big things that can help your design work better and look better.

When in doubt, go for making like things the same rather than adding variety.

Whether you're designing with CSS or choosing options in your premade theme or pagebuilder, here are a bunch of design bits to be consistent about:

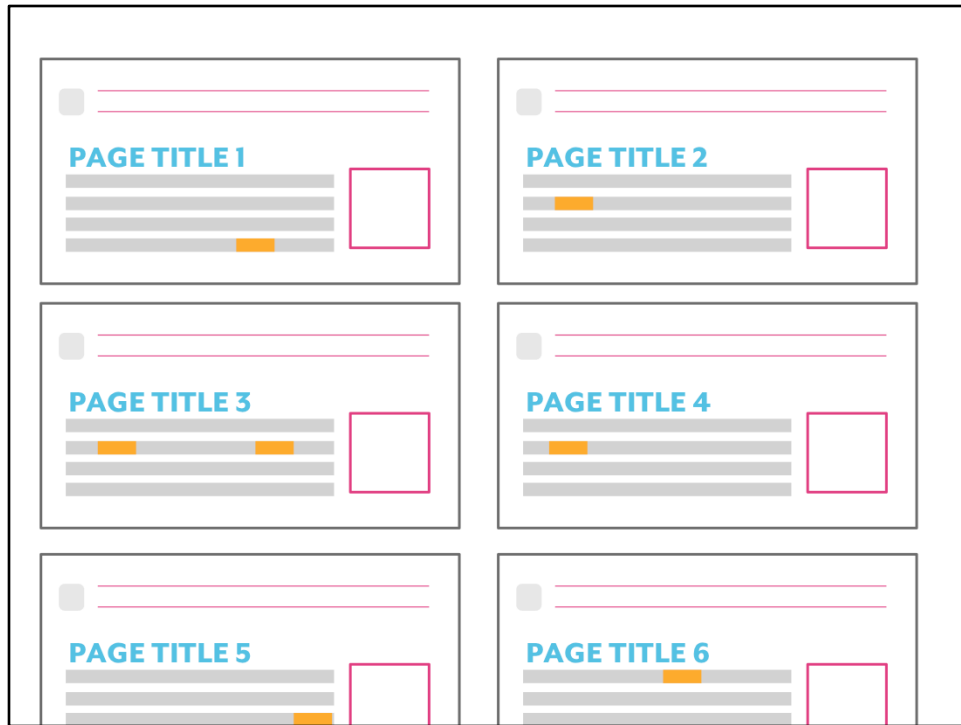


Buttons

If they are for the same or an analogous purpose, make them look the same.

Use the same size, the same font, the same effects, the same hover color and effects, the same padding and margins (aka space around them). Line them up the same way (left, right or center) relative to the text or images near them.

Conversely, if you have a button that conveys something different, and you need it stand out, make it the same as the others but change one obvious aspect. Usually the background color.



COLORS

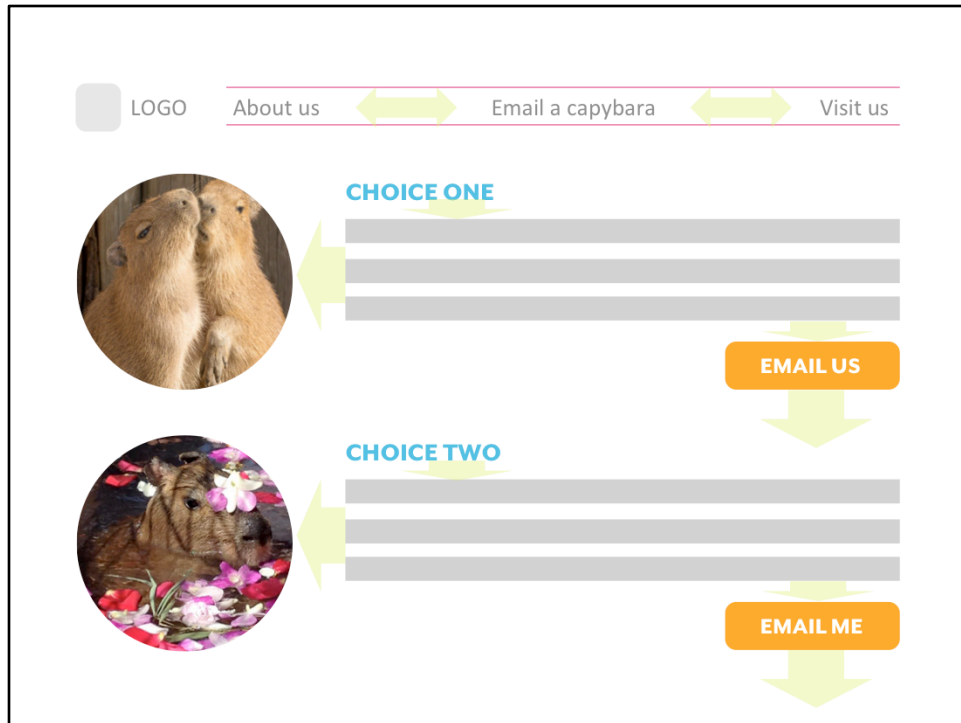
We'll talk more about how to choose colors later, but once you have a palette, use it consistently.

Keep like and analogous items or content the same color throughout your site.

Every site has elements that repeat many times throughout. If you keep the colors of these repeated elements consistent, it helps your visitors to recognize them quickly and not have to think about the interface. Thus saving their brainpower for your content and message.

Examples:

- Page titles are always blue.
- Paragraphs of type are always dark grey.
- Links are always orange — bonus points for keeping the same link style in paragraphs, bullet lists and sidebar widgets!
- Testimonials go in pink boxes.

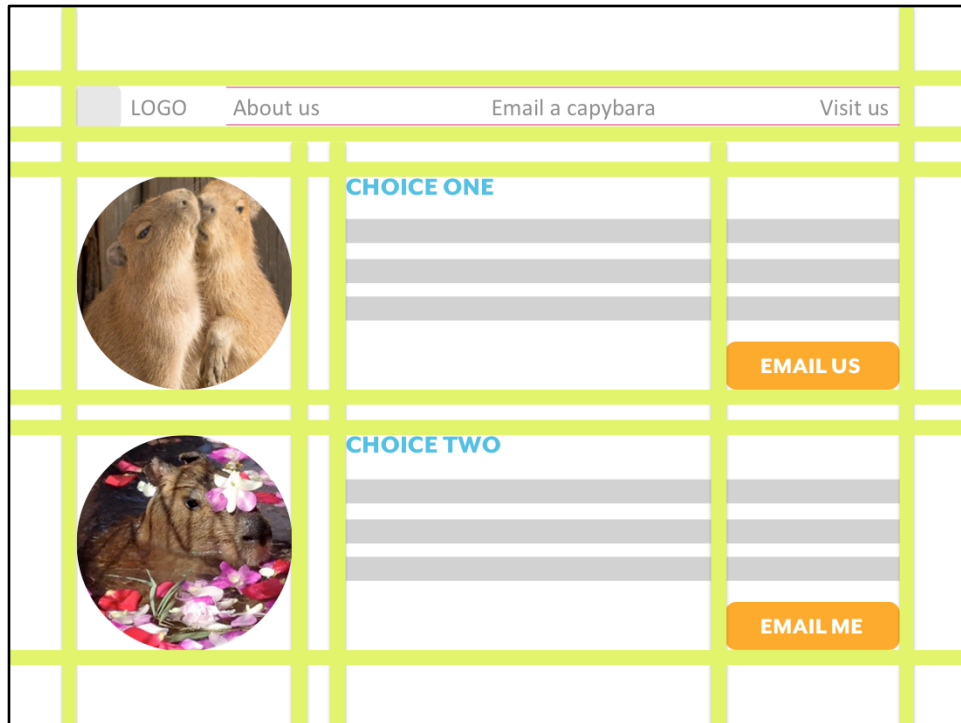


Spacing

You want to make sure the space above, below and to the sides of like elements is the same.

For example:

- Always have the same amount of space between a heading and a paragraph
- Have the same amount of space after each paragraph
- Use the same amount of space around images and have one, or a few, consistent sizes and alignments for displaying images
- If you have a bunch of widgets in a sidebar or footer, make sure they are evenly spaced
- Make sure that items in any menu and submenu are evenly spaced



Alignment

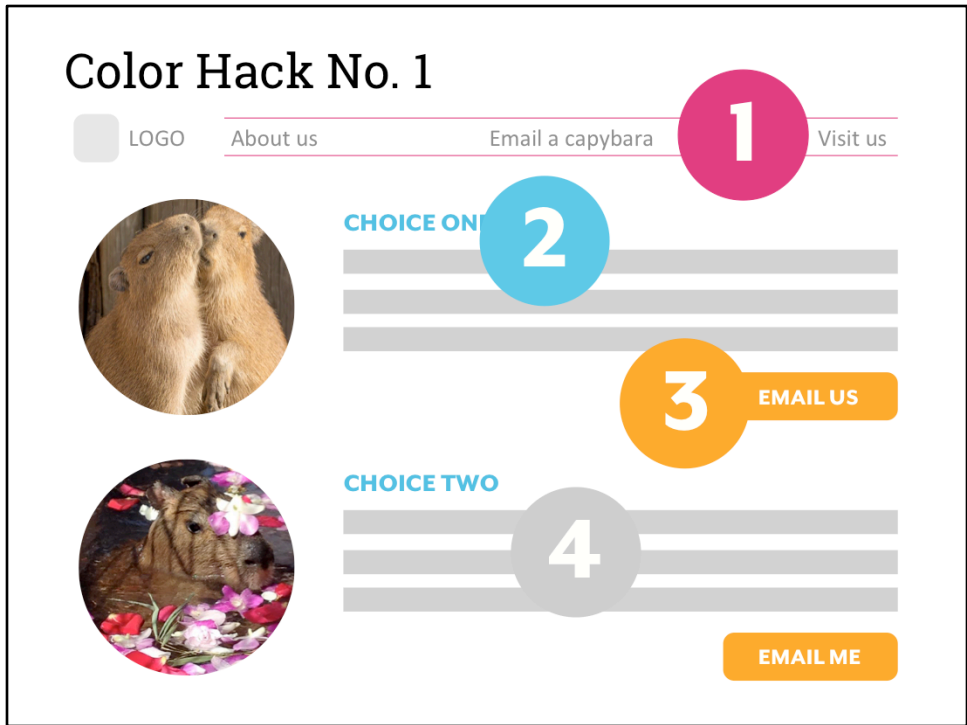
The fewer different alignments on a site, the tidier it is going to look and they easier it will be to understand.

For example:

- Usually, you are going to want all your text to be left-justified. They're maybe occasions where center- or right-alignment is called for but don't go mixing them up to "create interest".
- Whenever possible, think about whether an item is lining up with the things above and below it. For example, your blockquotes and bullet lists are both indented. Perhaps indenting them the same amount would keep things visually simpler.
- Maybe the left indent for all your text is the same as the indent for you logo.
- It doesn't have to be every single element — "breaking the grid" is a valid design technique — but keeping elements lined up will make your design seem purposeful and uncluttered in a way that increases comprehension.

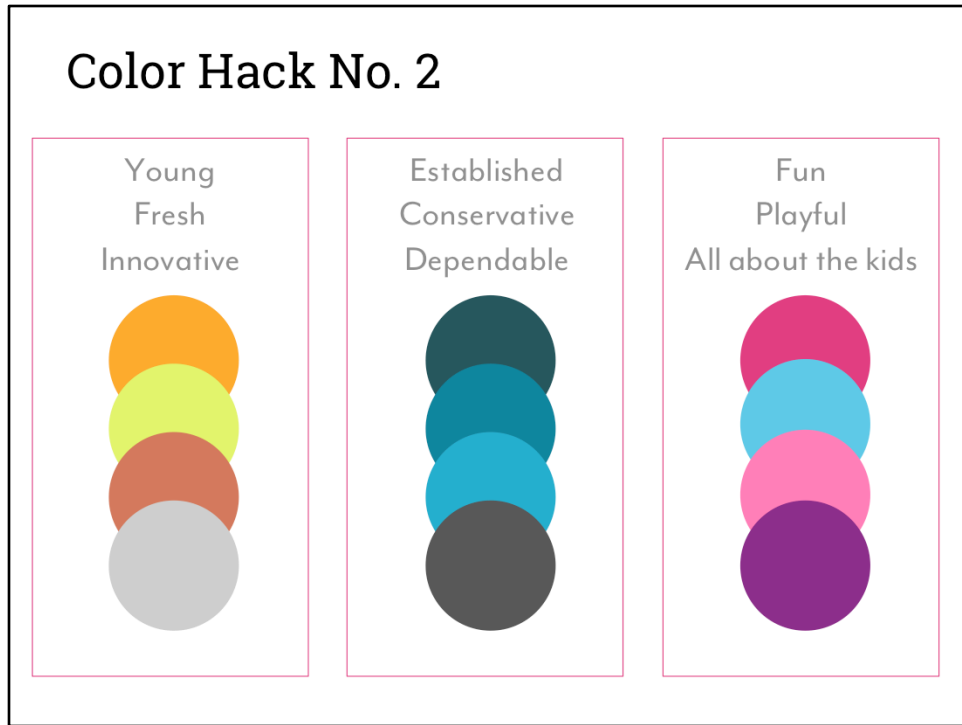


You don't need to know color theory. Here are lots of hacks to get cool colors for your site.



Hack 1: keep it simple

You can make a nice site with only two colors, especially if you're using photos too. I would suggest springing between 2 and 5. The more restrained your palette the easier it will be to make a coherent design.



Hack 2: remember what you're trying to convey

Your color palette should reflect your brand and your audience. If you've gone through the exercise, which I highly recommend, of choosing some brand adjectives or guiding words, these should describe your color palette too.

For example, you've decided your brand is:

Young
Fresh
Innovative

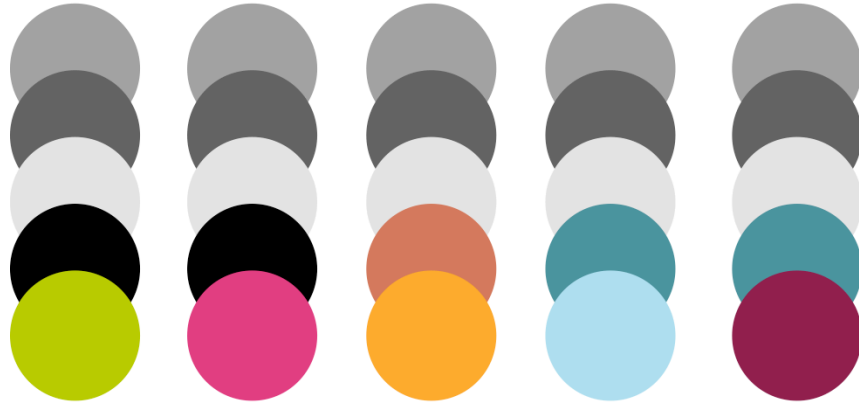
What kind of colors does that suggest to you? There isn't a right answer. There are lots of possible right answers, but there are some probable incongruous, or dare I say, wrong answers.

Or, your brand is:

Established
Conservative
Dependable

What palette does that suggest?

Color Hack No. 3



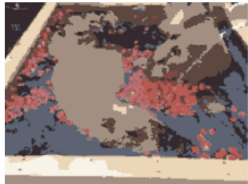


Hack 3: neutrals plus a bright or two



Hack 4: colors from a photo

<http://labs.tineye.com/color/>

Extracted color palette

Color map regions	Proportional palette	Hex color	Area	Closest color name
		#967f6f	34.4 %	Hemp (Brown)
		#4a5060	16.8 %	San Juan (Blue)
		#282025	12.7 %	Nero (Black)
		#4e3830	11.7 %	Cocoa Bean (Brown)
		#eecca7	9.7 %	Dairy Cream (Brown)
		#b1363c	4.7 %	Medium Carmine (Red)
		#f9efe3	3.5 %	Linen (White)
		#90545e	2.8 %	Cannon Pink (Pink)
		#bd5360	2.1 %	Blush (Red)
		#783231	1.6 %	Lusty (Red)

Hack 4: colors from a photo

<http://labs.tineye.com/color/>

Also:

www.pictaculous.com (from photo)

www.degraeve.com/color-palette (from image on web)



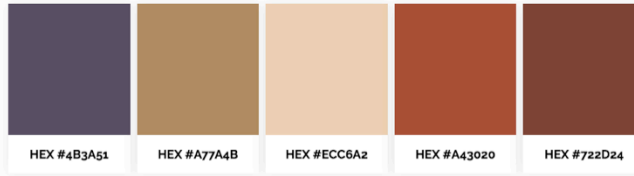
Hack 5: colors from a word

palettr.com/

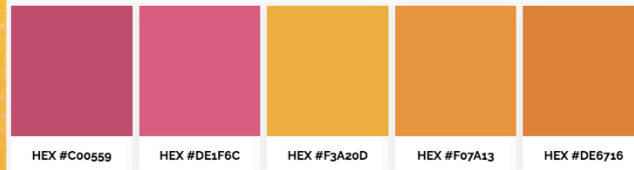
Put in a word (place, feeling, season, animal) get palettes

Color Hack No. 6

👁️ DANCING BAR IN BADEN-BADEN BY MAX BECKMANN



👁️ HOMAGE TO THE SQUARE (LA TEHUANA) BY JOSEF ALBERS



Hack #6

Choose colors from art

www.colorlisa.com (from art)

colorhunt.co and design-seeds.com

Color Hack No. 7

(nature tones) image via: @in_somnia_

COLOR CODES

- #F5F1ED
- #F5EDE0
- #DED2AC
- #D2D5D5
- #633A45
- #DCD9D6

Hack #7

There are lots of sites with premade palettes for you to steal with impunity!
 colorhunt
 Design-seeds.com

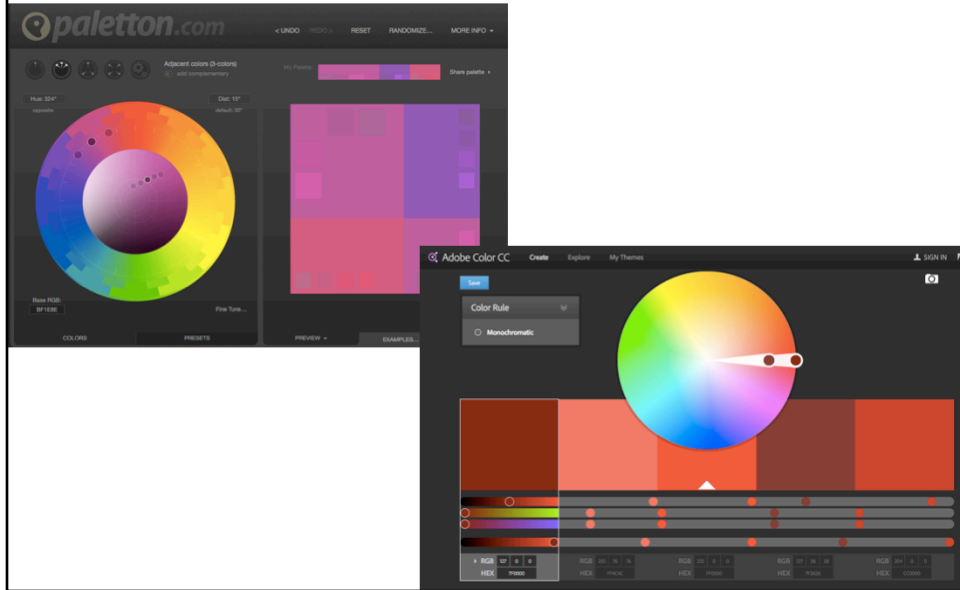


Hack #8

Intuitive, fun Color palette generators
Color.hailpixel.com
colors.co

paletton.com and color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel

Color Hack No. 8.5



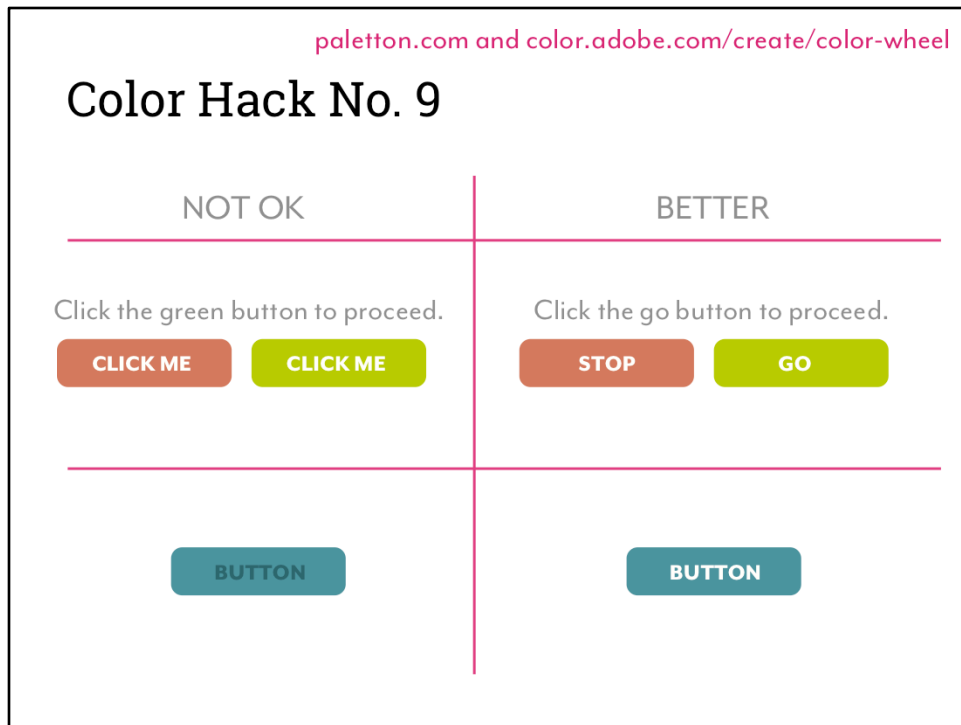
Hack #8.5

Color theory based, robust palette generators

Paletton.com

color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel

Color Hack No. 9



Hack #9

Don't blow off your colorblind and visually impaired audiences.

8% of men and .5% of women have some kind of color blindness.

Red green color blindness is most common.

Don't make color the only indicator.

Keep the contrast high enough.



In a perfect world, we'd all have budgets to commission and art direct original photography for our sites.

But it's not a perfect world, so here are some tips for finding and using images from free and stock sites.



In a really perfect world, we could hire this guy.

Image Hack No. 1

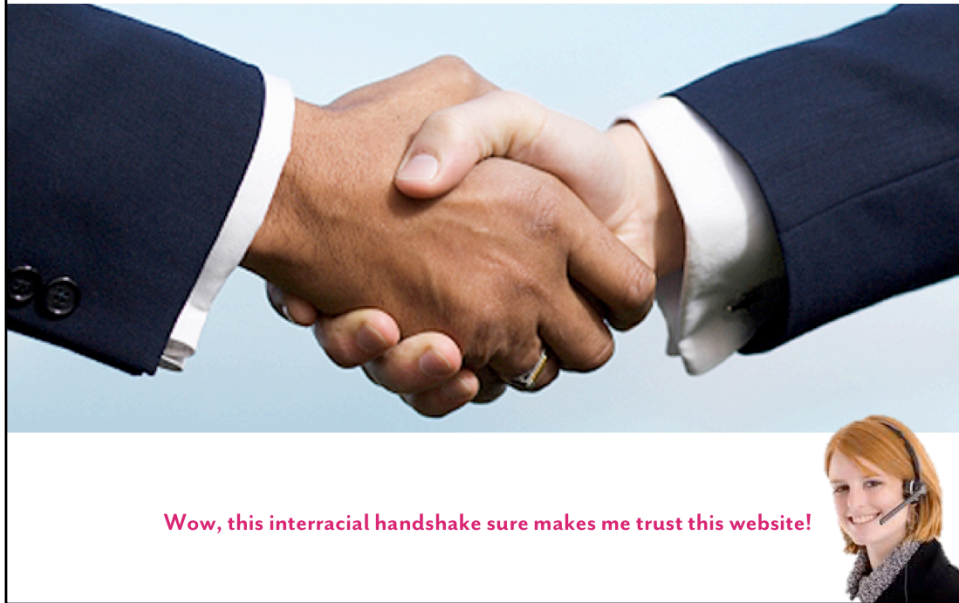


Image Hack 1

Do not use clichéd, hackneyed stock photos. These make you less credible and add nothing.

Do NOT ever use a picture of a handshake, please.

Image Hack No. 2



Paradise.Found

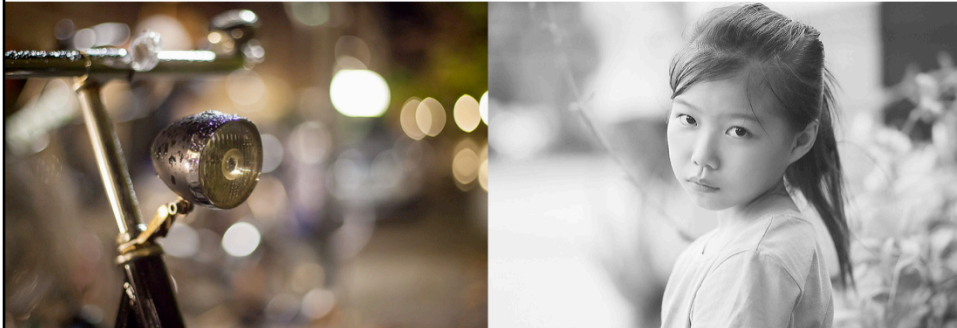


US Army

Image Hack 2

Look for interesting framing and composition. Things that weren't shot the way you've seen them a million times before, or how you'd expect.

Image Hack No. 3



Maarten Takens

Ho JJ

Image Hack 2

Spot good and interesting photography by looking for interesting use of depth of field

Not every photo you choose needs to have it, but it's a good indicator the photographer has some skills

Image Hack No. 4



Patrick Kain



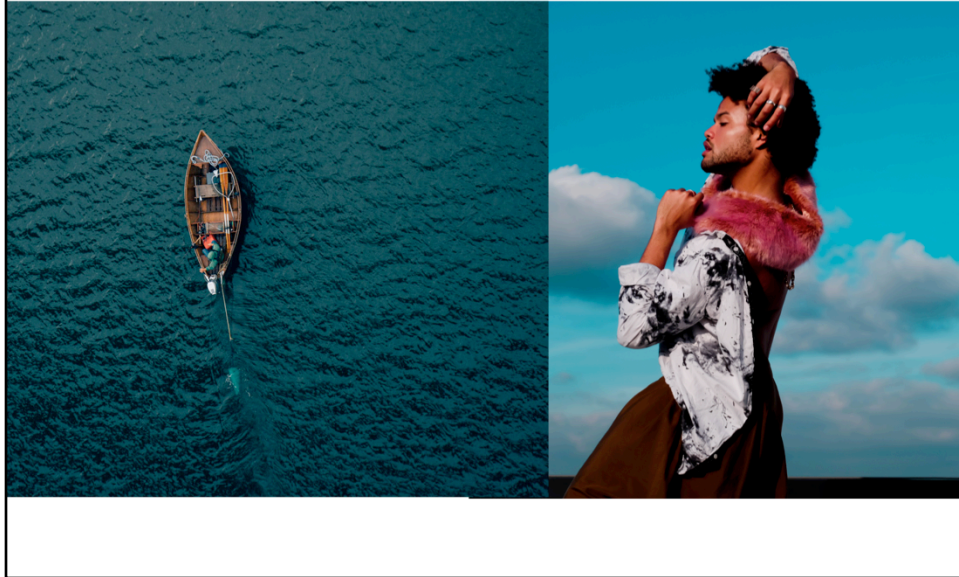
US Army

Image Hack 4

Shake things up with some black and white photography.

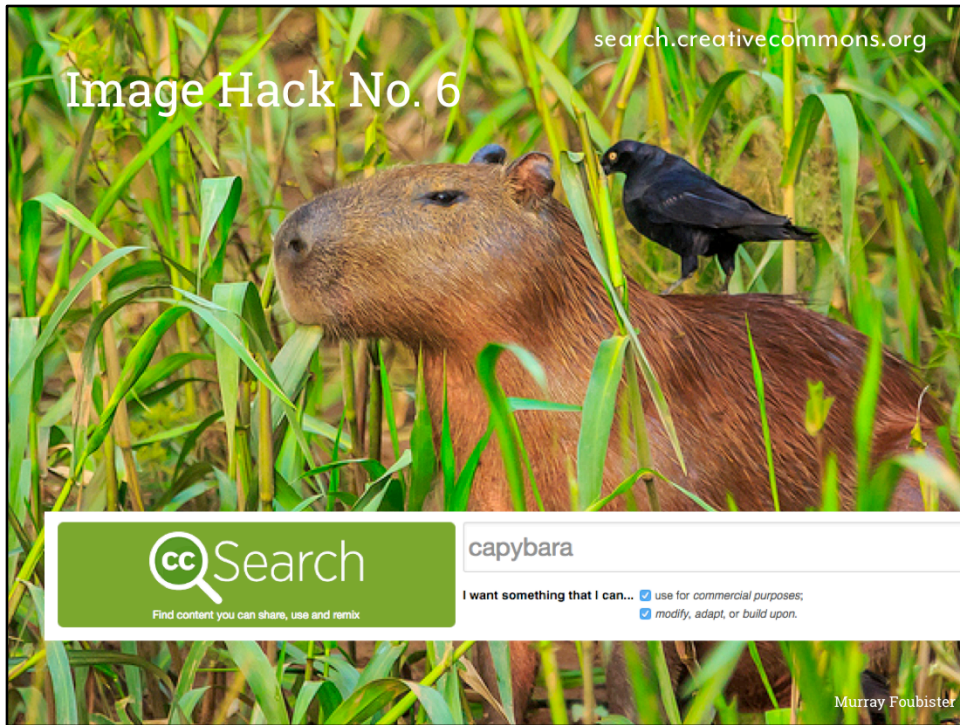
Probably you'll want to keep it consistent though — all featured images or what have you.

Image Hack No. 5



Hack no 5

Try the new breed of stock photo places, which are free!



Hack no 6

Creative Commons is awesome.

Use CC search to search flickr and a number of other sources.

Double check the license and give credit where requested.



Personally, I think typography is the cat's pajamas. In fact a new book entirely about Palatino came out recently that I'm pretty excited to read.

Luckily for you, this is a short talk, so I'm just going to give you some hacks for getting good fonts on your site, stat.

Studies show that good typography puts people in better mood and disposes them to feel more positively about the content. It also increases comprehension of the content.

Type Hack No. 1

LOGO HEADLINE FONT CAN ALSO BE FOR MENUS AND BUTTONS

1 One font for headlines

FONT 1 CAPS

Another font for body copy. Another font for body copy. Another font for body copy. Another font for body copy. Another font for body copy. Another font for body copy.

2

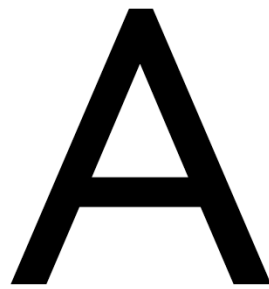
Hack 1: Choose 2 fonts for your whole site

Like colors, a restrained palette of fonts for your site will make it look more professional and make it easier for you to design.

The general advice out there is to keep it simple by using just two fonts on a site One for headlines and one for body copy

Personally, I like to add a third to that, for interface elements, like buttons and widget titles and the like. But that's just me.

Type Hack No. 2



Sans Serif



These
little
brackets
are
serifs

Serif

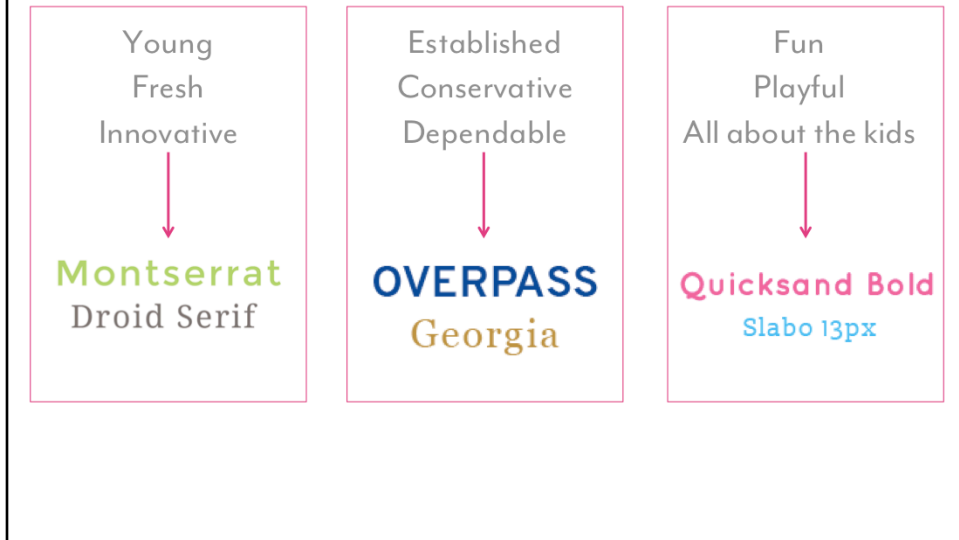
Hack 2: When in doubt, choose one serif and one sans serif.

use a serif for your text, and a sans serif for your headline.

Serif fonts have the little brackets

Sans don't

Type Hack No. 3



Hack 3: Choose fonts that agree with the mood of your brand.

Think of your brand adjectives or your mission or the tone of your content.

Look at the fonts. Do they support that mood? Do they at least NOT contradict it?

[examples]

Type Hack No. 4

NOT OK

Consulting Services

Our History

ABOUT US

CONTACT US

MAYBE OK

pugs like hugs

Toys & Games

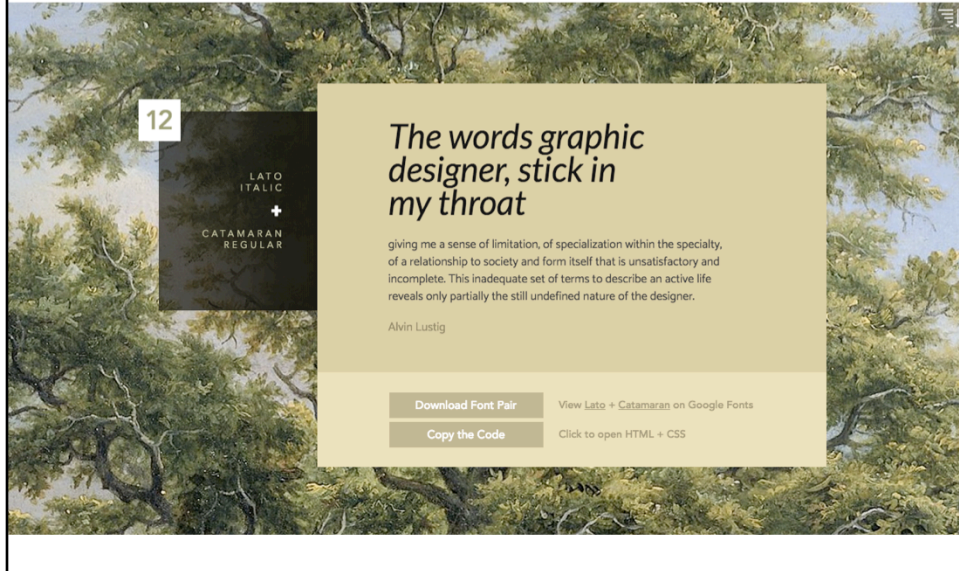
COMIC BOOKS

METAL BANDS

Hack 4

In general, avoid novelty fonts and cheesy handwriting fonts unless you have a legit reason to use them.

Type Hack No. 5



Hack #5

Someone has already chosen fonts that go well together for you.

Sites with pre-made font pairings

reliablepsd.com/ultimate-google-font-pairings

<https://femmebot.github.io/google-type/>

Type Hack No. 6



Hack #6

Don't get stuck with the fonts your theme comes with. You can add fonts from google or other free and paid services with a small addition to your code.

There are also several plugins for adding google fonts to your site without needing to know code at all.

Type Hack No. 7

The spectacle before us
was indeed sublime.

Apparently we had reached a great height in the atmosphere, for the sky was a dead black, and the stars had ceased to twinkle. By the same illusion which lifts the horizon of the sea to the level of the spectator on a hillside, the sable cloud beneath was dish'd out, and the car seemed to float in the middle of an immense dark sphere, whose upper half was strewn with silver. Looking down into the dark gulf below, I could see a ruddy light streaming through a rift in the clouds.

Merriweather
Montserrat

The spectacle before us
was indeed sublime.

Apparently we had reached a great height in the atmosphere, for the sky was a dead black, and the stars had ceased to twinkle. By the same illusion which lifts the horizon of the sea to the level of the spectator on a hillside, the sable cloud beneath was dish'd out, and the car seemed to float in the middle of an immense dark sphere, whose upper half was strewn with silver. Looking down into the dark gulf below, I could see a ruddy light streaming through a rift in the clouds.

Raleway
Lora

The spectacle before us
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Droid Serif
Droid Sans

The spectacle before us
indeed sublime.

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Oswald
Lato

The spectacle before us
was indeed sublime.

Apparently we had reached a great height in the atmosphere, for the sky was a dead black, and the stars had ceased to twinkle. By the same illusion which lifts the horizon of the sea to the level of the spectator on a hillside, the sable cloud beneath was dish'd out, and the car seemed to float in the middle of an immense dark sphere, whose upper half was strewn with silver. Looking down into the dark gulf below, I could see a ruddy light streaming through a rift in the clouds.

Noto Serif
Noto Sans

The spectacle before us
was indeed sublime.

Apparently we had reached a great height in the atmosphere, for the sky was a dead black, and the stars had ceased to twinkle. By the same illusion which lifts the horizon of the sea to the level of the spectator on a hillside, the sable cloud beneath was dish'd out, and the car seemed to float in the middle of an immense dark sphere, whose upper half was strewn with silver. Looking down into the dark gulf below, I could see a ruddy light streaming through a rift in the clouds.

Bitter
Open Sans

Hack #7

Just use one of these combos, they're pretty much always available.

Type Hack No. 8

THIRTY-SIX PIXEL HEADLINE

For paragraph text, try 16px (1em) or larger. This text here is the equivalent of 18px (1.125em), relative to the 36px headline. For paragraph text, try 16px (1em) or larger. This text here is the equivalent of 18px (1.125em), relative to the 36px headline.

Hack #8: size

Don't make your type too small. Being able to read text easily makes people happy.

I like to keep my paragraph text at least 16px and my headings the same or larger.

In less-important areas, like footers or sidebars, you can go smaller — hierarchy of importance.

Type Hack No. 9

THIRTY-SIX PIXEL HEADLINE

→ This text here is the equivalent of 18px (1.125em), with 30px (1.875em) line-height. The term leading (pronounced "leading") is used in print design for the space between lines of text. The concept is the same but the way it is measured is differently than line-height on the web.

Hack 9: Line-height

Err on the side of spacious line-height. It looks more elegant and professional and is easier to read.

For 16px type try 24px line-height.

Type Hack No. 10

This is not a link

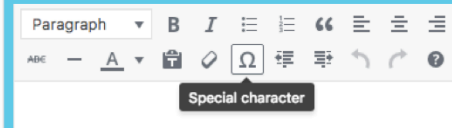
Hack 10: Don't underline

On the web

Because that means it's a link

Type Hack No. 11

- em dash
- en dash
- hyphen
- ... ellipses



Hack #10: Use the correct punctuation characters

WordPress is really good about letting you add special characters (use the key command if you know them, or use that button that looks like an Omega in the tinymce editor).

Using the right ones makes your site more professional and readable. Believe me, there are people out there who will judge.

Use an em dash to set off phrases. (with or without space around both ends, but be consistent)

Use an en dash between number or time ranges.

Use a hyphen for compound words.

Use a real ellipses character instead of three periods.

Type Hack No. 12

One space after. Period.

Hack #11: Do not put two spaces after periods

This one is for us older people.

I know you're 6th grade typing teacher told you it was correct, but that was for typewriters. Digital fonts have the correct spacing built in after a periods and if you're using two spaces, it's way too much and looks unprofessional.

I would be so happy if 2 spaces after periods just went away.

Thank you.

You've been watching...

Easy Design Tips for Non-Designers

Annie Smidt

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If you have questions, look for me at the happiness bar.

Or ask other people there to help with your design happiness.

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