

CHAPTER 11 WEB CONTENT CREATION AND MANAGEMENT

Multimedia Communications by Marie Rutherford

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Please visit the web version of Multimedia Communications (<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/multimediacomm/>) to access the complete book, interactive activities and ancillary resources.

Learning Outcomes

- Examine steps for organizing web content
- Review procedures for creating a Google Sites website
- Review protocols for uploading content to the web

Web Sites and Multimedia

Technology and creativity go hand in hand with multimedia. Multimedia elements are critical elements for modern website design. Most web sites aim for the immersion of digital experiences through engaging the user. When a user is engaged it increases the time spend on the web page, while creating a memorable that may lead the user to return to the site again and again.

Strategic planning for a website content is the blueprint for success. Always start with a plan which identifies goals, target audience, and the message of the website. From a professional perspective aim for clean layout, informative content, and related infographics is a solid approach.

The performance of a website is essential. The goal of a website is a seamless experience whereby multimedia components enhance the site without compromising performance.

This chapter explores basic website considerations encompassing creating, organizing, uploading, and hosting web content.

Chapter Organization and Preview

- Web Design Basics
- Content Strategy and Design Interface
- Creating and Organizing Web Content
- Putting Your Website Content Online
- Creating a Website with Google Sites
- Explore, Practice and Apply
- Key Chapter Terms

Attribution & References

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11.1 WEB DESIGN BASICS

As more and more writing goes digital, having a basic understanding of web design is useful. Designing websites is very similar to designing print documents. The basics are essentially the same: you need to understand space and layout, how to handle fonts and colors, and how to put it all together in a way that delivers your message effectively.

Like all effective technical communication, good web design caters to the needs of the **audience**. Will your audience be seeking information, products to purchase, technical assistance or instructions, entertainment, or some kind of interaction? Knowing your purpose and audience will help inform your design choices—each page or part of your website should have a **clear purpose** and work to fulfill a specific need for your audience.

Goals

Before designing a website it is important to set goals. As we noted above, ask yourself what purpose the website is serving. Not all sites serve the same purpose. For example, a retail site will have very different goals than a nonprofit site.

Some common website goals are:

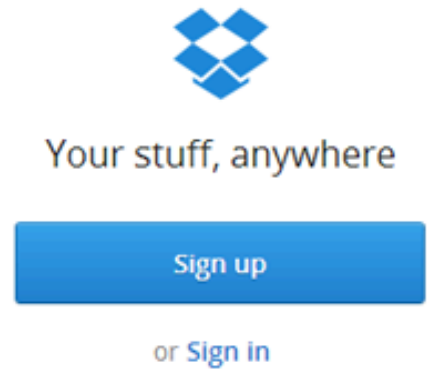
- **Increasing sales**
- **Marketing**
- **Updating information**
- **Generating leads**
- **Distributing information**

Goals, in any setting, are important to business success. By setting goals for one aspect of the business, in this case, the website, it will help in accomplishing other goals of the business, such as:

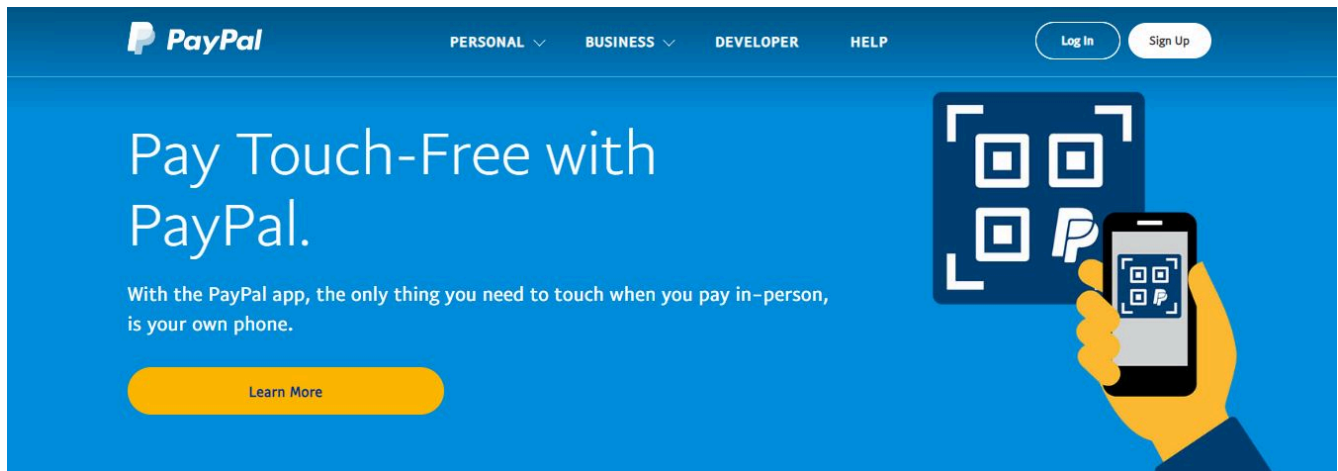
- **Expanding the audience**
- **Connecting other businesses or other parts of the company**
- **General communication**

Design Message

The design message is the image the organization wants to portray to the reader. This can also be called *the brand*. When creating the look of the website you must consider logos, colors, fonts, and images. These must all support the personality of the organization. Note in **Figures 3.6.1** and **3.6.2** below how the companies Dropbox and Paypal make use of their brands:



The dropbox brand/logo is a cardboard box, in blue. In this screenshot, they use the same blue tones to align graphics with branding. **Source:** Screenshot © Dropbox.com, used under Fair Dealing.



In this screenshot, the login page of the PayPal website displays numerous elements that contain the PayPal logo – a double P that overlaps with shading. You see it on the website, in the QR code, and on the phone that the user is holding up to the QR code. Branding colours are repeated in different parts of the image to create unity. **Source:** Screenshot © PayPal.com, used under Fair Dealing.

Giving web pages a consistent look will help define it as a cohesive website and make it easier to navigate. Since many companies build their workplaces around the “theme” or “brand,” the website should as well. In fact, it is necessary for brand identification, thereby helping the company advance and succeed. A consistent brand and image also help build a company’s value and credibility.

Consider: Consistent Branding

Some important points to consider for consistent branding:

- The brand, whether communicated through the website or the customer service, must be consistent
- The brand should be found everywhere—there are no limits to exposure of brands
- Short and simple is almost always the best route
- You are the brand and the brand is you. If your brand does not reflect the values and beliefs of the company, it most certainly should not be on your website.

Audience

Like all technical communication, **knowing your audience** will help you to make better decisions when it comes to deciding how your website should look and function (as well as which browsers to support and which new technologies to endorse). Before designing a new website, it would be helpful to perform an **audience needs assessment** to ascertain users' demographics, their technical knowledge, as well as browser and device preferences. For example, generally speaking, most younger users prefer to access web content on mobile devices, while some older users may favor accessing content via a traditional computer screen.



Tip: Unintended Audience

It's important to note that putting content on the internet exposes that content to a wider audience, perhaps one beyond your intended audience, so the designer must strive for **consistency, clarity,** and **conciseness**.

Purpose

Figuring out how the site will be used is another important step in website design. Most internet users fall into three categories:

- **those seeking information**
- **those seeking products or services**
- **those seeking entertainment**

For the informational sites, you may want to consider the technology of the user and/or use a more general approach to its design. The same can be said for For the sites of those seeking entertainment, more cutting-edge technology can be used to better the experience of the user when they are accessing your site.

As examples, note the differences between these three sites:

- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (<https://www.cdc.gov/>) (geared toward providing information)**
- **SONY (<https://www.sony.com/>) (mainly geared toward entertainment)**

- **Zappos (<http://www.zappos.com>) (retail)**

Content

There are many ways content can be presented, depending on your audience and purpose, but the following are general tips for designing and formatting your web content:

- **Chunking:** The average reader does not want to read long passages of text on a computer screen. Chunking the information can help break up long passages of text into shorter and more digestible bits of information that can be read independently from one other.
- **Using color scheme:** Don't mix a lot of colors. It is best to select only a few colors that either complement each other or are appropriate in representing the group for which the website is written, or appropriate for the audience. Also, colors can call attention to elements of importance.
- **Using images:** Pictures, or video, can sometimes communicate information much more quickly and clearly than text. It is encouraged to include images where appropriate, but the designer shouldn't clutter the page, or use gratuitous images, as this can confuse users.
- **Maintaining consistency:** Visual appearance has a large effect on how users read and value websites, and consistency is a crucial aspect of web design. Information and user interface should be presented in a consistent manner throughout the page and the entire structure of the site. Logos, page titles, headers, and interface elements such as navigation, buttons, and graphics should all to be consistent. This will ensure the users can access the website without error or confusion.

Consider: Content Goals & Audience

As you compose and create your content, think carefully about the following questions:

- What is the goal of the website (its purpose)?
- Who is the website trying to reach (its audience)?
- How much time to people have to spend reading information on the website?

- How did individuals reach this website?
- What is the most important information to the reader?
- What questions might readers have?
- What action is the reader supposed to take after reading the website content?

Another aspect to consider about website content is how it will be searched within different search engines. Key words are needed throughout your website to make sure that the website is found by people who are looking for specific information. It is important to be specific with words, and use them multiple times, so that search engine robots find the word and place it high on the results list.

Creating a Home Page

Your home page will be the most visited page on your website. Your home page may not always have what your viewers are looking for, so you should have something that will draw them in and make them *want* to look further for their information. You have roughly ten seconds to draw your customers into your site, or else they will hit the “back” button and look elsewhere. Your home page should load quickly. The ten seconds you have to draw the customers into your site begins when they click on the link to your site. If it takes five seconds for your site to load, you only have a few seconds left to draw customers in further. Here are some tips to help your site load quicker:

- **Keep media images small**
- **Avoid using ads from external websites on your home page that may slow down the loading time. You cannot control how fast another server will serve its content.**
- **Write your HTML in sections so that when the bottom of the page is still loading, your customers can read the top sections of your home page.**



Tip: Constant Updates

Another important point about home pages is to **never stop modifying them**. Reviewing your log

files once your website is up and working can help you make your home page more user-friendly. Updating the links or the colors may improve the appeal or ease of use to your site. Remember that everything can be changed, and you don't have to settle for something if it's not working.

Understanding a few basic web design concepts and being able to know the difference between good and bad design will give you the confidence and skills to begin designing your own websites or revising existing ones.

Additional Resources

- “Does a Technical Writer Need to Understand Web Design? (<https://idratherbewriting.com/2010/07/06/does-a-technical-writer-need-to-understand-web-design/>)” by Tom Johnson, *Idratherbewriting.com*
- “How to Make a Website: Complete Beginner’s Guide (<https://www.wpkube.com/how-to-make-a-website/>)” by Colin Newcomer, *Wkub.com* (a good starting place for people new to website building)
- “How to Make A Website: The Definitive Guide (<https://www.sitebuilderreport.com/how-to-make-a-website/>)” by Steve Benjamin, *Sitebuilder.com* (a comprehensive overview of website building)
- “Introduction to HTML (<https://softchalkcloud.com/lesson/serve/Gv5hWnx4cipsZN/html>)” by Tiffani Reardon, *Open Technical Communication*

Attribution & References

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11.2 CONTENT STRATEGY & WEBSITE DESIGN INTERFACE

Content Strategy

When creating a website, content strategy is a necessary first step. What will the website say? All websites have a specific audience so finding out about what your audience needs, wants and expects from the business is the key to its success. This means web content, as well as design, must be human-centered.

When we build content with a specific strategy for success it also meets search intent, a key component of search engine optimization. Writing effective content focuses on the *readability* or *usability* so that the target audience is more likely to get the message you want them to receive, and your website is more likely to achieve its intended purpose.

Donal Miller and Dr. J.J. Peterson (2020) identify some key things to *avoid* in their book “Marketing Made Simple”:

- “You are using too much insider language
- You are using too many words in the heading
- The call to action buttons use passive language
- The call to action buttons are not repeated down the page
- The images do not relate to the product or back up the words you’re using on the page
- The language is cute or clever but not clear
- The site does not promote a lead generator
- You’re using a slideshow so the text changes too fast a frustrates potential customers
- The site tells *your* story rather than inviting customers *into* a story.”

A website should clearly indicate the “problem” the business is trying to solve. This includes what happens when the problem is solved, by using or purchasing the service/product and **most importantly** how to go about purchasing it.

Designing a website is like designing anything: it requires a clear purpose. Understanding your target audience, writing content and choosing design features that will best achieve your purpose. In essence, you must understand the **flow** of content and how you can most effectively convey the desired message to that audience.

Search Intent

Interviewing existing customers helps copywriters and business owners better understand what content is expected on the site. Without a direct link to the company's main stakeholders, the customer, and copy editors may miss the purpose as seen by the audience. If the business is new and there are no "users" to interview, then considerable market research should be completed. What are businesses in the same field doing well, where is their space for excelling and differentiating?

While there will probably be many different types of customers, the main target audience is what the content should be directed towards. Finding this data and separating it into themes is often cost prohibitive, both in-terms of time and money. There is an alternative though, and that is through the use of search intent analysis through search data. Google is the king of search engines with more than 90% of the market share worldwide (<https://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share#monthly-201712-201812-bar>).

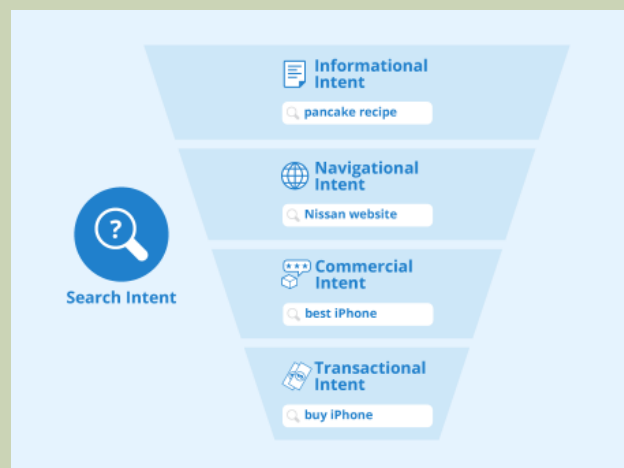
Watch What is Search Intent? Keyword Search Intent Explained For Beginners (7 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/83aDICwmlns>) for a concise outline of search intent and keywords.

Google's 4 Types of Search Intent

Google uses search intent categories to design its Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). When researching which terms and categories you should emphasize on a business website, make sure to note that some searches may fall under multiple categories.

This taxonomy was developed by Andrei Broder, back in 2002 when they were the vice president of research at AltaVista.¹

The categories are summarized below by Rebekah Baggs & Chris Corak, from the book: SEO for Everyone (<https://abookapart.com/products/seo-for-everyone>)



Search Intent examples include informational intent (eg. pancake recipe), Navigational intent (eg. Nissan website), Commercial intent (eg. Best iPhone), Transactional intent (eg. buy iPhone). **Source:** Search Intent by Seobility, CC BY-SA 4.0

“Informational.” The user wants to learn about a topic. Informational searches might look like:

- “is life insurance tax deductible”
- “how long do running shoes last”
- “income tax brackets”
- “fender jaguar vs jazzmaster”

Transactional. The user wants to take action – to make a purchase, say, or download a product manual. Transactional search intent is not always tied to buying something. Transactional searches might look like:

- “life insurance quotes”
- “fugazi in on the kill taker on vinyl”
- “RACI chart template”

Navigational. With this kind of search, someone wants to go to a specific website or find a specific page (perhaps one they’ve visited before). There’s typically only one destination the searcher is trying to get to. Navigational searches look like:

- “amazon.com”
- “powell books”
- “healthline keo diet”

Google has more recently added:

“Visit-in-person.” These searches have local, real-world intent; someone is seeking an in-person experience or a brick-and-mortar interaction. Visit-in-person searches look like:

- “Thai restaurants open now”
- “movie times”
- “barber shops”
- “discount tires near me”

Using a search engine can provide you with lots of great content ideas. Break the results into content topics; and don’t forget to go back to the initial search result in Google to see related search queries.

Website Header Space

When someone lands on your website for the first time they first need to determine if they have found the site

they were expecting. Having your business name and logo front and centre on your website is a must. Below that the next item of content should be a very short description of what the business does; what services or products they offer, ideally in 5-words or less. This is the main sub-heading.

The main sub-heading is undoubtedly the most important content piece on your website. It ensures users that they are on the right site and that you have the solution for a deep-seeded problem of not enough money, time, status, etc. Do not be overly specific with the main sub-heading: Ensure the broad scope of services and products are included while also indicating how it will solve a real problem in the customers life.

Call to Action

Many business websites fail to clearly define how you can purchase their product or service. The solution: have multiple “call-to-action” buttons throughout the site, specifically on the top-right menu or under the main sub-heading. For example: “Book a free consultation” is a great way to funnel leads to your inbox.

Make your target audience part of your story

When writing content for a website it is important to bring the customer into the story. For example, at SupaDesign we know you are the type of customer who wants to be seen and heard. Your voice matters and will be emphasized throughout the design process. When you position your customers at the heart of the business and show them that you truly understand the problem you are solving for them, you will get much better conversions on your content.

Use Testimonials & Stats to Build Authority

Using testimonials on your site helps builds reputation and authority. Interview your customers, or draft a testimonial of a conversation or sentiment they have expressed from you for their approval. Having at least 3 testimonials on your website helps build authority but also shows the humanistic-side of the business.

Statistics have the effect of giving fast authority. For example, 100+ satisfied customers, \$100,000s of dollars saved. Even adding the number of years you have been in business will add authority to the content.

Smart Interface Design

Websites should be unique, content-driven and show a clear business purpose. Coming up with a new solution for design issues can be very time consuming. Smart design patterns allow us to ask the right questions of our website layout to ensure maximum cross-cultural usability.

The guidelines below have been curated through usability sessions, design iterations and A/B testing. Before we dive into patterns, we want our website to be usable by all and that starts with adhering to website accessibility standards.

Website Accessibility Standards

An Introduction to Web Accessibility (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/#context>) outlines patterns you must implement when designing a website to make sure the site works for everyone.

Review the Tips for Getting Started (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/tips/designing/>) and pay close attention to the requirement for alternative text on media, as it is a requirement for all images that are non-decorative. A decorative image does not add value to the content and is seen more as a placeholder on the site to ensure consistent flow of the page layout.

Layout patterns

Navigation

Besides being consistently stylized across all pages on your website, your navigation should also have the following features:

- **Customizing the style of your navigation can dramatically make your website more user-friendly. Add a “home” button/link and set the logo as a link which returns home. On the left-most side of your menu, people will usually look for a way to get back to your homepage. This link is often called “home”, is the businesses logo or the name of the business.**
- **Navigation items look like a button/link. All links in your navigation should look like a link rather than plain text. WordPress.com will stylize your navigation to stand-out, however, using a specific colour pallet will ensure that your navigation links/buttons have sufficient contrast and “pop” when compared to the content on the rest of the page, is a must.**
- **Add a hover effect. People often read the web by moving their cursor over the content. When they go to click on a navigation link with their cursor, as opposed to tapping with a finger/thumb, the link is expected to change to indicate that you will be taken to another page.**

Active White Space

Are there any glaringly large empty spaces on your pages? Are any of the images touching directly next to text?

If so you need to think about “white” space on your page. For example, images should usually have some margin around them to prevent text from touching the side.

Active white space is used to create eye-catching space between components on your web page to make them easy to read and aesthetically appealing.

Too much white space leaves the layout looking plain and empty. Placing a decorative image in that space may enhance the layout and a non-decorative image may add value to the content.

Form layout

Every business website should have a contact form to make it easy for individuals to contact the business.

Forms are tricky but there are a few key patterns to follow:

- **For complex forms, not typically of contact forms, break down the form into *tasks* (i.e. name and personal details, then order of relevant information)**
- **Put the tasks in a sensible order and use verbs to describe them (i.e. Shipping information)**
- **Tell users what they need before they start (i.e. documents, time)**
- **Make the submit button large enough and close enough to the form that it is easy to find.**

Strategy, Usability and Style

In the article *How To Evaluate A Websites Design?* (<https://www.rivmedia.co.uk/how-to-evaluate-a-websites-design/8486>), Hardingham (2020) pays particular attention to the Strategy, Usability and Style, which are relevant to knowing if your website is effective, or not.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this page is adapted from 3.1 KEY CONCEPT: Content Strategy and 3.3 Website Design Interface and Patterns In *Maintaining an Online Presence* by Julia Gray, Camosun College, CC BY 4.0

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Hardingham, A. (2020 August 31). How to evaluate a websites design?. <https://www.rivmedia.co.uk/how-to-evaluate-a-websites-design/8486>

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Notes

1. <https://www.cis.upenn.edu/~nenkova/Courses/cis430/p3-broder.pdf>

11.3 CREATING AND ORGANIZING WEB CONTENT

Options for making websites

Websites are everywhere! In fact, you're on a website right now. The world wide web opened up the internet and for a long time it has been a space where people can create their own content. But how do you go about making a website?

There are many ways in which you can create a website, from learning how to code it from scratch and then getting a domain and hosting, to using a service that allows you to create a website using a simple editor and customisable sections.



Tip

If you want to learn how to code websites, then starting with HTML and CSS (<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/coding/websites>) to understand the structure and style of the web is very useful. If you're looking for other options where you don't need to write any code, then **Google Sites** is good, and there are many other website services like WordPress and Squarespace. Coding Practical Guide: HTML and CSS (<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/coding/websites>) is another great resource for learning about these building blocks.

What makes a good website?

Consider different websites that you've visited recently. Can you think of a good example of a site and outline why you think it's effective?



Structured elements such as headings, easy to read content, bullet points, unique content, related links, including important keywords, links for further reading, correct spelling and punctuation and content that is neither too short nor too long (about 800-2,000 words) all contribute to optimized website content.

Source: Content optimization by Seobility, CC BY-SA 4.0

Features of good websites

Structure

Websites are made up of pages that link to other pages. Think about the “journey” users will take through the site. This may include tables of contents or “back to homepage” buttons.

Navigation

Navigation bars are crucial for allowing people to get around your site.

Icons

Icons communicate things to the user. Use them as short hands for buttons or diagrams.

Branding

Might sound like a horrible term, but it just

means what kind of “vibe” you want to have. Think colours, fonts, styles, images...

Fonts

The font you choose can indicate the style of your website. Choose wisely! Some fonts are more readable than others, especially on screens. Font size and spacing are also important to consider the readability of your website.

Text and hyperlinks

It is very useful and helpful to write your written information (text) as clearly and concisely (and with not too many words) as possible as doing this kind of thing may make it easier or less annoying to read your website and help people to actually understand what on earth you might be saying to them.

Designing for users – Universal design

Whether you're writing code or creating other digital content and applications, you need to think about the users of your program. More importantly, you need to be aware that “users” are not all the same, and design with different needs in mind.

Universal design focuses on designing with everyone in mind from the start, trying to give as many people as possible a good experience with whatever you are creating. It is about using universal design principles to embed flexibility, usability, and reliability into anything digital you create, rather than seeing digital accessibility as an ‘extra’ or something that must be done separately.

From the very start of your design process, you need to be thinking about what the goal of your project is, who it is aimed at, and how they will be using it. You need to get feedback from other people and make sure you take into account other people's experiences.

You can read more about Designing for Users (<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/coding/design>) on the University of York website.

Web code

HTML, or HyperText Markup Language, is the coding language by which the web is structured. These days it is used alongside **CSS** (Cascading Style Sheets), which controls the appearance of the page content.

You will often find guides and tutorials to HTML and CSS together as they work together to display web pages in your web browser.

There's a third part of a web coding trinity in the form of **JavaScript**, which is a scripting language that makes the web interactive. JavaScript interacts with the HTML and CSS on the pages to make websites do things. It is best to know some HTML and CSS before starting with JavaScript.

w3schools (<https://www.w3schools.com/>) is a good place for learning HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, along with other tools for further web development.

Consider: Accessibility and Usability

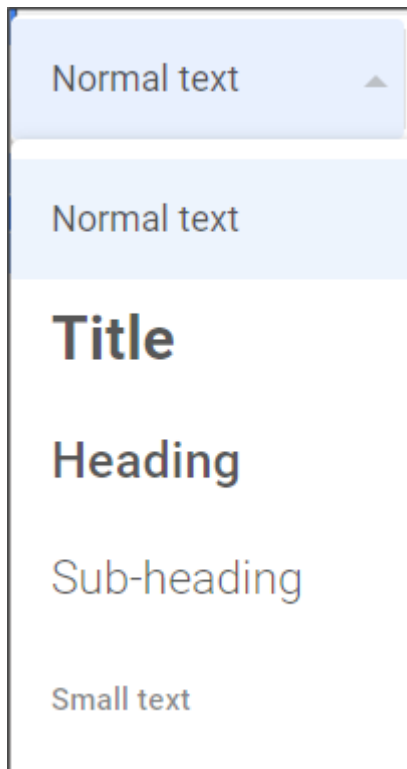
- Have you ever tried to use a website that didn't work for you?
- What prevented you from accessing the content on that page?

- What did you do in this scenario?

Page organization and Accessibility Features

What good is having a Site if not everyone can access it?

Accessibility on your website is crucial for ensuring a smooth experience for all of your audience. Embracing **universal design** principles means creating content accessible to everyone, regardless of abilities or disabilities. By incorporating accessibility, you not only adhere to ethical design practices but also broaden the reach and impact of your content.



Screenshot of Google Site's (<https://sites.google.com/u/0/?pli=1&authuser=0>) dropdown menu for applying heading structure. This menu provides a visual look at how headings will appear in your document.

Source: © Google, used under fair dealing.

Heading styles

Using **heading styles** is a fundamental step in enhancing the accessibility of your webpages and website. These styles help organise and structure your content, making it easier for all users to navigate, including those who rely on screen readers. You can **change your heading styles** when editing text in many HTML editors and Google sites by clicking on the **drop down box** on the formatting toolbar.

Your web document should start with Heading 1 for the title or page name, and then use Heading 2, Heading 3, and so on for subheadings to create a clear hierarchy of information.

Alt text & captions

Adding **alt text** to your images is a critical accessibility feature. Alt text provides a brief, descriptive text that conveys the content and purpose of an image. This text is read aloud by screen readers, making visual content accessible to users who cannot see it. Provide a meaningful but concise description for your image. This practice ensures that everyone can understand and appreciate the visual elements on your site. **Captions** can be added in the same way, but are different to alt text. Instead of being hidden away in the background within the code of your Site, Captions are displayed to everyone. This is important if you need to reference

images or data, or if you need to provide further context to an image beyond its visuals. You can find more guidance from us on how to add alt text and good practice when doing so in this Alt Text Guide. (<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/media/images#s-lg-box-wrapper-18695081>)

Colour contrast

Maintaining proper **colour contrast** is essential to ensure that your site is accessible to individuals with visual impairments. Inadequate contrast levels between your text and background colours can pose significant challenges to many. You can use tools like **WhoCanUse** (<https://www.whocanuse.com/>) to check your site's colours for accessibility. This tool helps you identify colour combinations that might be difficult for some users to distinguish by assigning scores to different font & background colour combinations.

Captions on embedded videos

Including **captions** on embedded videos is another crucial step for accessibility. Captions provide a textual representation of the audio content in videos, allowing individuals with hearing impairments to access the information. Most video hosting platforms, including YouTube, offer tools for adding captions.

Accessible hyperlinks

Creating **accessible hyperlinks** is about providing clear and informative link text. Rather than using generic phrases like “click here” or “read more”, use **descriptive link text** that conveys the purpose or destination of the link. This approach benefits users who rely on screen readers, as they can understand the link's context without having to read surrounding text or a gigantic URL! For instance, instead of “**Click here for more information**”, you could use “**Learn more about our research.**” This makes it much clearer what the link leads to rather than a vague promise of “information.”

Website Creation Tools: HTML vs. Editors

Websites are written in code, usually a combination of coding languages. HTML and CSS often form the structure and styling of webpages. You can write websites from scratch using code, or use friendly editing tools that allow you to add and edit elements without any coding.

Some common website creation & hosting tools include:

- **Google Sites (free with Gmail/Google account)** – see the textbook section on Google sites for a tutorial on how to create a site using this user friendly system, with drag and drop elements
- **WordPress (has a free plan but to have a custom domain or better design tools you have to pay)**

Your college/university or employer may have specific spaces and tools available for website creation and hosting. In order to ensure you can access your website after leaving your college or university, make sure you sign up for your space (such as Google Sites) using a free personal Google account – you may not have access to your college email address indefinitely.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this content is adapted from “Websites: Skills Guide“, “Google Workspace: a Practical Guide“, and “Designing for Users” by University of York, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

11.4 PUTTING YOUR WEBSITE CONTENT ONLINE

Typical Website Components

A webpage is a little bit more complicated than a standalone document, such as a Microsoft Word, Excel or PowerPoint file. Traditional websites are made up of a combination of different files that are linked together using code, and uploaded to a server together.

The foundational languages used to create the front-end design of a website are **HyperText Markup Language (HTML)**, and **Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)**. Take a moment to explore the code that is generating this web page by right-clicking on it, and choosing **Inspect (Element)**. You will see the code, styles, image sources and all the data that is being rendered by the browser. The image below shows the basic building blocks of a website.



Many languages and files can be used to put together a website. HTML and CSS are always parsed and rendered in a browser. **Source:** Components of a website: HTML, CSS, PHP, JS © Julia Grav, used under Fair Dealing.

What are HTML & CSS?

Each page on a website is a unique HTML file. This file contains the content (text and file paths to images stored on the server) that you see on the page. The styles and design of how this content is presented are created in the language CSS. CSS can either be linked to the HTML page from an external CSS file (most efficient), or by having the CSS code contained within each HTML page itself.

Note Knowing HTML and CSS allows you to customize your web pages. They are very powerful yet basic coding languages. Useful definitions, references, and tutorials can be available at W3Schools

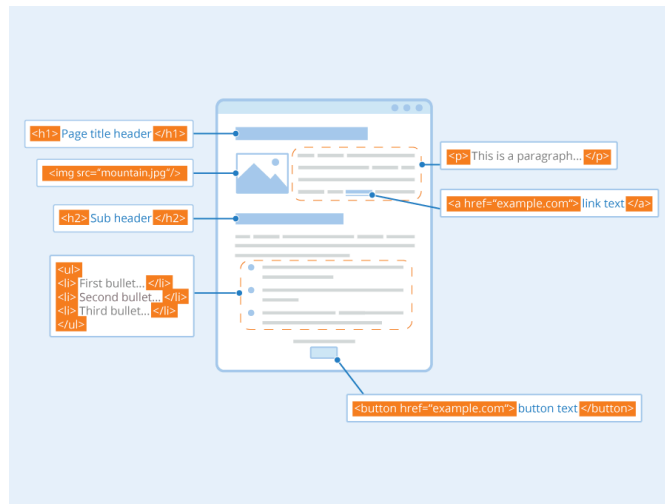


Diagram of a website showing placeholders for elements such as page header, images, subheaders, bullets, paragraphs, links and buttons, along with an example of what the HTML markup looks like for each element. **Source:** Markup Language by Seobility, CC BY-SA 4.0

(<https://www.w3schools.com/>), freeCodeCamp (<https://freecodecamp.org/>) and Codepip.

Uploading your Website to a Web Server

To place pages on the World Wide Web, you will need (1) a domain name and URL and (2) a web server with sufficient space for your files (pages, images, video, audio, and so on).



Tip

Domain names are issued by designated sites such as GoDaddy.com, Domain.com, and numerous others. These sites have a search function where prospective users can see if their desired URL is available. Domain names rent usually annually for \$10 and up. Popular names may cost much more.

The domain provider will offer a “pointer” to connect your URL to the server where the content is located.

If you’re studying web design in a university, high school, or continuing education class, the institution may provide a web server and URLs for students to use during the class.

If you have a URL and service space, you will need a file transfer protocol (FTP) program to upload files to the server and set reader permissions. A multitude of free FTP programs are available for download. At Ryerson University we use FileZilla to place files on a student web server maintained by the Computing and Communication Services department.

File Preparation and Upload

To upload files to a web server, the authors recommend the following steps:

1. **Make a “gold master” folder on your desktop, such as “site,” and place final files in it.**
2. **Place the required .html, .css, and image files for your site into the folder.**
3. **Follow naming conventions for convenience:**
 - **Use all lowercase letters.**
 - **No spaces in file or folder names — use hyphen (-) or underscore (_) to separate words.**
 - **No absolute links to images, .css, .js, or other files (e.g., “file:///MacintoshHD/images/image.jpg”) in your documents.**
4. **Make sure your home page is called “index.html” so the file will load automatically when the folder is entered.**
5. **If placing image, .css, and other files in folders, be sure to cite the folder name in the link. E.g., “images/image1.jpg”**
6. **If placing .html files in a folder, remember you will have to go up one directory level to get to the index file and other folders. Use “../” before the folder name.**
7. **Test the files to make sure all links work.**

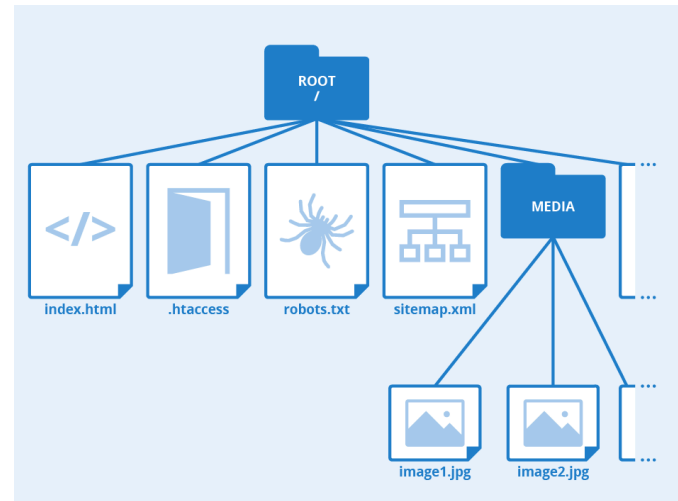


Diagram shows a sample of what folder setup might look like for files being uploaded directly to a web server. A root directory would hold the index.html file, while images and media would be uploaded into a media folder nested within the root directory.

Source: Root Directory by Seobility, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Avoid renaming any files after organizing the folder. The result is to break any links that have been coded since they no longer match to the filename.

Other Types of Websites

Content Management Systems

Businesses may have their own web space as described above, with a traditional website. However, it's becoming more common for websites to be built using a Content Management System (CMS). You have probably heard of at least one of these many popular options: WordPress, Joomla, Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, Shopify, etc. A CMS is an application used to edit and manage a website's content, using a user-friendly Graphical User Interface (GUI) rather than requiring the direct editing of code.

These systems provide a simple way to start up your website, without extensive knowledge of HTML and CSS. They often provide a **What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG)** editor that simplifies the process of adding content and makes web publishing much easier.

A CMS:

- **Provides the background architecture to ensure database and server-side functionality.**
- **Maintains and updates the system architecture.**
- **Gives many template options that are easy to utilize and install.**
- **Allows the focus on content and imagery rather than coding.**
- **Creates the site navigation elements.**
- **Supports database integration.**
- **makes content indexed and searchable.**
- **...and much more**

WordPress

WordPress is one of the most popular CMS. According to W3Techs (<https://w3techs.com/technologies/details/cm-wordpress>) 43% of all websites are built using WordPress. Being an open source platform means that anyone can contribute themes or plugins, help validate code and contribute to the system update. When making a site using plain HTML, each new page must be created manually. A CMS like WordPress simplifies the process of creating and adding content and images to your website.

There are two options versions of WordPress: WordPress.com (<http://wordpress.com/>) and WordPress.org (<http://wordpress.org/>). In both you can install and utilize 1000s of plugins to add features to your site. WordPress.com provides a site with limited access to the CSS and HTML code, with some available themes and offers different plans, starting with a free version and adding features and upgrades for a cost. WordPress.org is a highly customizable version of the same platform, but requires you to complete your own site maintenance, have web development knowledge (PHP, HTML, CSS, JS) and gives you full control over themes and other files and settings.

Blogs

Blogs provide another solution for publishing web content quickly and efficiently. While not always suitable for business purposes, some companies may have a blog in addition to their website, and some may use this format to start their web presence quickly.

- **The term *blog* is an abbreviation for *web log***
- **Blogs often contain an ongoing collection of time-based posts, presented in chronological order**
- **Blogs are often, but not always, written in a journal-style commentary**
- **A website usually contains informational pages, but can also have a blog section**

Blogs can be used to:

- **Drive traffic to your website**
- **Convert that traffic into leads or sales**
- **Establish authority on a topic**
- **Create community**
- **Be creative & have fun**
- **Follow your passion about a particular activity or topic!**

Consider: Types of Websites & Their Applications

There are many different methods for creating a website for personal or business use. Consider your future career path and where you'd like to work.

- What are the benefits of a blog for business purposes?
- Why might a business choose a content management system such as WordPress over a traditional website?

Google Sites

Google Sites is a web-based platform that allows you to create and publish websites with ease. But before we

get into the nitty-gritty of creating your site, let's have a quick overview of what Google Sites is all about. Google Sites are free, and provide many of the benefits discussed in the Content Management System section of this page.

You can think of **Google Sites** as your virtual canvas for presenting information, sharing projects, or even building an e-portfolio. The best part? You don't need to be a coding wizard to make it happen! Google Sites is (relatively) user-friendly and allows you to easily integrate content from other Workspace apps such as Docs and Slides into your site. It's a powerful tool for digital collaboration, and allows you to add a touch of flair when showcasing your academic and personal projects.

How to create a website using Google sites will be discussed in the next section of this OER.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this page is adapted from

- **What is a Website? In Maintaining an Online Presence** by Julia Grav, Camosun College, CC BY 4.0
- **Chapter 11 – Uploading Content to a Web Server In *Web Design Primer*** by Richard Adams and Ahmed Sagarwala, CC BY 4.0
- **“Google Workspace: a Practical Guide”** by University of York, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

11.5 CREATING A WEBSITE WITH GOOGLE SITES

Getting started with Google Sites

Let's take a look at the basics of Google sites to get your first site up and running...

Creating a new Site

Once you have signed into Google, head over to sites.google.com (<https://sites.google.com>) to access the main Google Sites dashboard. Hit the + button or choose the **Blank** template to create a new draft Google site. If you wish to start with a pre-built template, there are several you can use from the **Template Gallery**, but more often than not this just means more work deleting all the things you don't like! You can also create a Google Site directly when in Google Drive by clicking **New +, More**, and then selecting **Sites**.

Now you will be in your draft, unpublished Google Site. But before you get to editing, don't forget to **give your site an appropriate name**. The naming box at the top of the site determines how your Google Site will be named where it is stored in Google Drive, whereas the naming box below it determines the name of your site as it will appear when published.

Watch Getting Started in Google Sites (8 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/1IP0ZJJ4JIY>) for an example of how to create a digital portfolio using Google Sites

Edit Mode vs. Published Version

Understanding the distinction between edit mode and the published version is key when creating your Google Site.

Edit Mode: This is your draft website. It is your creative workspace, hidden from public view. Here you can experiment, refine, and perfect your site without the fear of your changes being seen by others. It will be quite clear when you are in editing mode, but if you are ever unsure, the big purple **Publish** button in the top right hand corner should allay your fears! You can also always tell if you are in edit mode as you will see the three main content editing tabs on the right of your window.

- **Insert, where you can add content to your site.**
- **Pages, where you can choose how people navigate your site.**
- **Themes, where you can start personalising how your site looks through fonts, colours and more.**

You can always get back to edit mode in your website editor by accessing the site file in your Google Drive, through the Google Sites Application, or by pressing the **pencil icon** in the bottom right on any site you have edit rights to.

Published Version: Once your site is all nicely polished and ready for the world to see, simply hit the **Publish** button.

This will make your site go live online, and anyone with the link can access it (depending on your audience settings.) Bear in mind that after publishing, **any edits you make will be immediately visible to your audience.** But don't worry, you can always make updates.

Collaboration and Content Access

Consider: Collaboration

As you plan your Google Site, consider who will need access and what role they play in the creation of the site. This will allow you to add permissions that allow others to contribute to your project.

- Will collaborators review and make suggestions for improvement?
- Will collaborators edit and revise, or be responsible for maintaining aspects of the site once it is created?

Content Access Permissions

Before you dive into adding content to your Google Site, it's essential to remember that when you're including content uploaded from Drive or other Google Workspace apps, the content must be appropriately **shared** to be visible to others. Sharing settings ensure that your content is accessible to your site's visitors. For

example, if you embed a Google Doc and its sharing permissions are **restricted**, this means it will not be visible to any site visitors. **Before adding content, make sure to set the sharing permissions accordingly for your audience.**

Collaborating on a Site

Collaboration is a key feature of Google Sites. You can add **collaborators** to work on your site together in the same way you can on other Workspace apps such as Google Docs, Slides, and so on. It's important to understand that when you add collaborators as **Editors**, you're sharing access to the **Site editor**, not just the published Site, so be careful about who you invite.

To collaborate on a Site, click on the **Share With Others** button located at the top right of your Site editor. You can also do this within **Google Drive** by right clicking the item and selecting **Share**. Enter the email addresses of the individuals or groups you wish to invite and choose whether you want to give them access as an **Editor**, or if you want them to just be able to see the published Site and not the editor, set them as a **Published Viewer**. When adding Editors, you can select **Settings** within the sharing dialogue box to enable or disable the option for **Editors to be able to publish, change permissions and add new people**.

Watch Google Sites 101: Control Access & Share Permissions (2 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/mxOMh4rR4jg>) for more tips on sharing and collaborating on Google sites.

Adding content to your Site

Adding text

Text is the foundation of your website's content, so it's probably just as well it's the easiest thing to add! Here's how to add text to your site:

1. **Using the toolbar:** While in edit mode, navigate to the section where you'd like to add the image or document. Double click on the section of your page where you want to insert text to bring up the toolbar. Use the Text box icon in the centre of the toolbar to create a text box, and start typing your content.
2. **Using the insert tab:** Text boxes can also be added by going to the Insert tab on your edit pane and selecting Text Box.

Once your text box has been added, you can also **format** your text using the provided toolbar options, including headings, lists, and more. You'll follow a similar process to add other types of content.

Watch How to Add Content to a Google Site (6 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/OCVMwH0H8HM>) for an overview of adding other types of content

Choosing how people navigate your Site

Adding **pages** to your Google Site is essential for structuring your content effectively. To **create a new page**, navigate to the **pages** tab in your site editor.

Here, you'll find a + button that allows you to add a new page. Select the appropriate page type based on your content and provide a clear name for the page.

Page types

Google Sites offers a variety of page types to suit your Site's needs:

- **Standard Page:** This is your all-purpose page for adding text, images, videos, and more. It's the most versatile and commonly used page type.
- **New Menu Section:** Use this page type to create collapsible menu sections. It's excellent for organising subpages or grouping content together.
- **Full Page Embed:** If you want to embed external content like Google Docs, Sheets, or Forms and have it occupy the entire page, this is the ideal page type.
- **New Link:** This page type allows you to link to external websites or files, making it useful for directing visitors to other online resources.

Navigation mode

You can control how your site's **navigation** is displayed to your audience. The default setting places the navigation at the **top** of the page, but you have the option to change it. By going into the **Settings** and then the **Navigation** section, you can switch between **top navigation** or **side navigation**, depending on your site's layout and your preferences.

Changing how your website looks

Themes play a crucial role in defining your site's overall appearance. Google Sites offers a selection of **preset themes** to choose from, and you also have the option to create your own **custom theme**. All of this can be found under the **Themes tab** of your Site editor.

Here, you can personalise your site's colours, fonts, and other design elements to create a unique style for your Site.

Watch 2 quick ways to change the colors on Google Sites using themes (with example) (2022) (<https://youtu.be/RCj-EHY3I5E>) for an overview of using themes to customize your site

Brand images

Adding **brand images** to your site is great for branding and recognition. Within **Settings**, you can upload a **logo**, which will be displayed at the top of your site, adding a professional touch. You can also upload a **favicon**, which is the small icon that appears in the browser's tab when users visit your site.

Announcement banner

The **announcement banner** is a useful tool to communicate important updates or messages to your site visitors. It is located at the top of your site and can be easily enabled or disabled within the **Settings** menu. You can convey your message effectively through this banner, ensuring that it catches your audience's attention as soon as they open your Site.



Tip: Previewing Your Site

Before publishing your site, it's a good practice to **preview** it to see how it will appear to your visitors. This allows you to make final adjustments and ensure everything looks as intended. In the edit mode, simply click on the **Preview** button at the top right of the screen. The preview will open, allowing you to review your site's appearance and functionality. You can also try the **preview toggles** at the

bottom to see how your Site will appear on different devices. And when you're done, just hit the **X** to take yourself back to edit mode.

Publishing & sharing your site

There's more than one way to cook an egg, and there's more than one way to share your Google Site! Let's take a look at how you can collaborate on a Google Site, set who can see your Site, and then, at last: taking the plunge and **publishing** your Site to make it **LIVE!**

Storing your Site: Shared Drive vs. My Drive

As with all Google Workspace items, you have two options for storing your Site: **Shared Drive** and **My Drive**. It's crucial to understand the differences:

Shared Drive: Storing your site in a shared drive is recommended for collaborative projects. It allows multiple individuals to access and manage the site. This is ideal for ensuring that the site remains available and under control, even if the original owner leaves the University or organisation.

My Drive: Storing a site in your personal My Drive may lead to complications if you leave the university or if you're the sole owner. Access could be lost, and the site may become unmanageable.

Carefully consider the long-term use and ownership of your site when choosing. If you wish to move a Site from **My Drive** to **Shared Drive**, be aware that the **access permissions** of the Site will **inherit** the permissions of this **Shared Drive**. **For more on how inheritance and ownership works, see our guidance on Managing content in Shared Drives. (<https://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/google/drive?audience=staff#s-lg-box-wrapper-18870581>)**

Version history

Google Sites automatically maintains a **Version History** of your site. This feature allows you to **view and restore older versions** of your Site or specific pages. You can also create **named versions** to keep track of specific iterations of your site. This is a valuable tool for tracking changes, troubleshooting, or simply reverting to a previous design.

To **view your Version History**, go to the **three dot menu** in the top right of your Site editor next to **publish** and select **Version History**. You will be able to see a date stamped list of all the changes you have made to your Site. You can **restore, name, or make a copy** of specific versions by clicking on the **three dot menu** beside each version. To **restore specific pages**, click on a version, select your page, and then click

on **restore this page version** towards the top of your Site editor. If your Site has already been **published**, you will need to **publish** it again to see these changes go live.

Publishing your site

And **at last, we're here!** You've created a wonderful, unique, accessible Google Site and it's time to share the fruits of your labour with your chosen audience! And guess what? To **publish** your Site all you need to do is hit that big beautiful **Publish** button:

When you first publish your Site, you will need to give it a **Web address** which will form the Site's **URL**. You can change this at any point by clicking on the small drop-down arrow next to the publish button and going to **Publish settings**. Though bear in mind, if you have already given the previous URL out to people this will mean the old URL will not work for them and they will need the new one to access the Site, so be careful! This same drop-down arrow next to the publish button is also where you can **Unpublish** your site if you get cold feet or need to take it down.

You are now free to continue editing your Site in the Site editor and your changes will not go live in the published version until you hit publish again.

Attribution & References

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11.6 EXPLORE, PRACTICE AND APPLY

Overview: Explore, Practice and Apply

Activities found on this page are designed to provide opportunities to explore, practice, and apply concepts presented in chapter 11.

Explore

1. Take a look at **Yale University's School of Art's homepage** (<https://www.art.yale.edu/>). What do you notice about its design? What do find appealing? What improvements could be made?
2. Note the homepage below in **Figure 11.6a**: The color combination is problematical—the gray and black interspersed with bright red and white isn't especially easy on the eyes. The page is also too busy by being overcrowded with content, low-resolution pictures, and varying fonts, all of which can be off-putting to users and make the website difficult to navigate. As you look it over, think about what you would change if you were the site's designer.



Figure 11.6a MGBD Parts & Services homepage image

Practice

Try creating a basic webpage using Google Sites (<https://sites.google.com/>). Here are some suggested exercises to start familiarising yourself with Google Sites:

1. **Create a content block:** Use the content block feature to add a cluster of different forms of content: images, videos, & text.
2. **Create a button:** Improve the user experience on your site by creating a button. Try linking this button to another page within your site or an external resource.
3. **Embed a Google Form:** Add interactivity to your site by embedding a Google Form on one of your pages. Experiment with different question types and settings to create a survey, contact form, or feedback form.
4. **Add or change the Theme:** Change the look and feel of your site by selecting a new theme. Customise your site's colours, fonts, and overall design to match your brand or personal preferences.

Apply

Which of the following issues could create accessibility concerns on a website?

1. Text is yellow on white.
2. Specific HTML elements are used to semantically define content.
3. Text is set to 12pt.
4. Images contain header text.
5. A decorative image does not have alternative text.

Attribution & References

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- Explore activities are adapted from 3.6 Web Design Basics In *Technical Writing at LBCC* by Will Fleming, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Practice activity is adapted from “Google Workspace: a Practical Guide” by University of York, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0
- Apply activity adapted from 3.3 Website Design Interface and Patterns In *Maintaining an Online Presence* by Camosun College, CC BY 4.0

11.7 KEY CHAPTER TERMS

Chapter 11 Terms

Downloadable Chapter Key Terms

View or download & print the PDF or Word format of the worksheet shown below.

[Design Chapter Key Terms Worksheet \[Word\]](#)

[Design Chapter Key Terms Worksheet \[PDF\]](#)

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