



WEB DESIGN ESSENTIALS FOR NON-DESIGNERS

Demystifying UI, UX, and IxD



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Who Should Read This Book?



There are dozens of web design tutorials out there so let's make sure this one is right for you. Just like other stuff at [Startup Hub](#), this book caters to site owners and entrepreneurs. It will prove valuable for people who want to get actionable web design tips. Besides, you'll find it useful if you want to familiarize yourself with the key concepts of web design (including UI, UX, and IxD) or need a quick update on the latest trends in the industry.

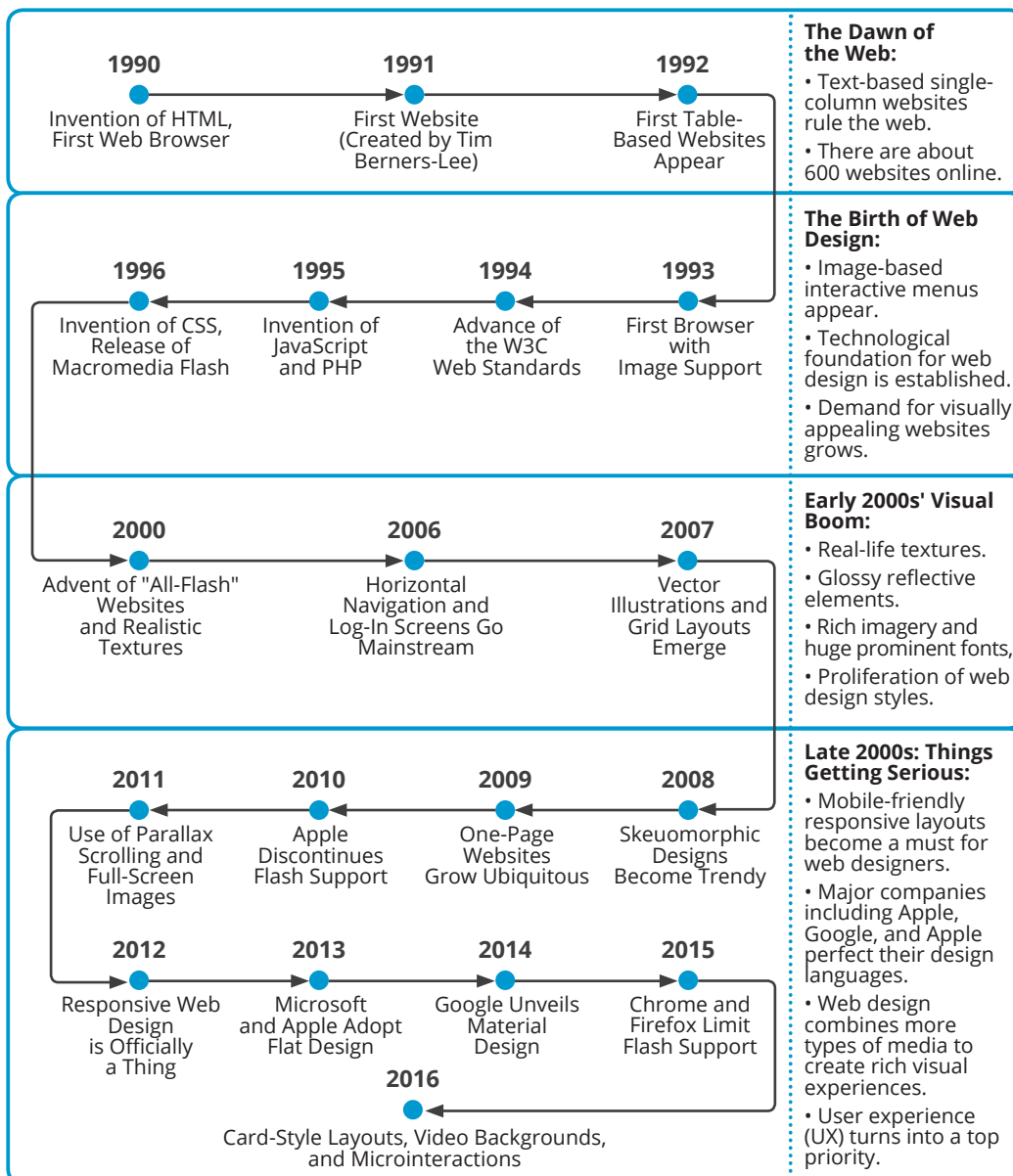
Basically, this book answers the following questions:

- What does website design consist of?
- What design elements and techniques can you use for your website?
- What web design trends will work for your website in 2016?
- What industry roles are available to people willing to start a career in web design?
- How has web design evolved over time?

If you are looking for simple answers to any of these, reading this tutorial will prove a worthy idea. In case you need something more specific, check out [MonsterPost](#), a blog that revolves around web design and web development.

The History of Websites: a 26-Year-Long Journey

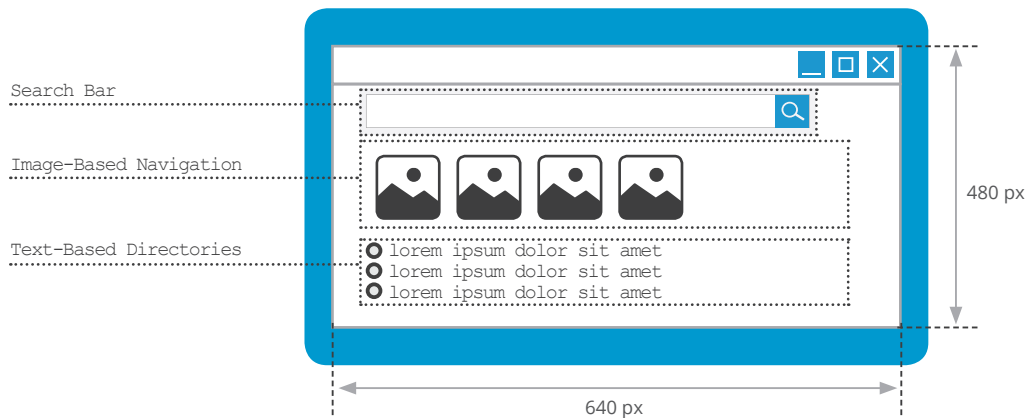
For starters, let's see how the Web has evolved over the years. Web design may seem like a young industry, but it has gone a long way since the release of the first browser in 1990. Have a look at the events that had a major impact on websites, their structure, and their appearance:



How Website Interfaces Changed Over Time

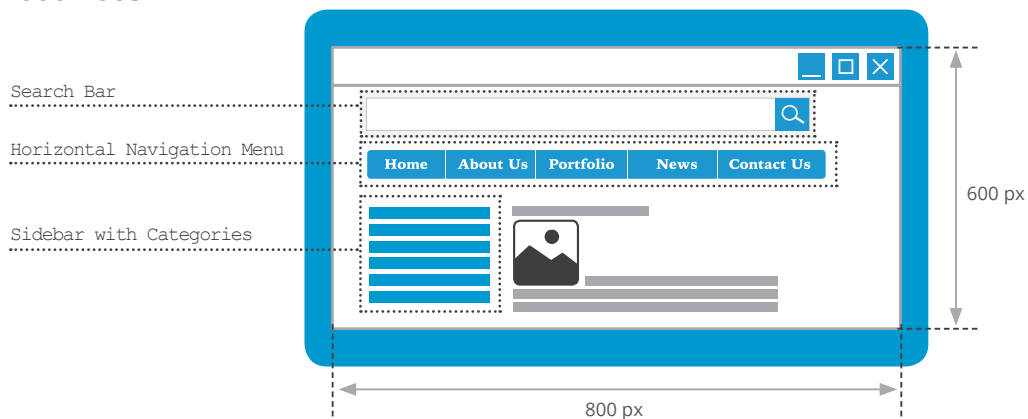
In some ways, web design is similar to fashion industry: a new trend emerges every year. However, the core elements of website interfaces change at a much slower pace. Below are several images that illustrate these changes. We will begin with 1996 because that's when the technologies used to build and style modern-day websites appeared.

1996-1999



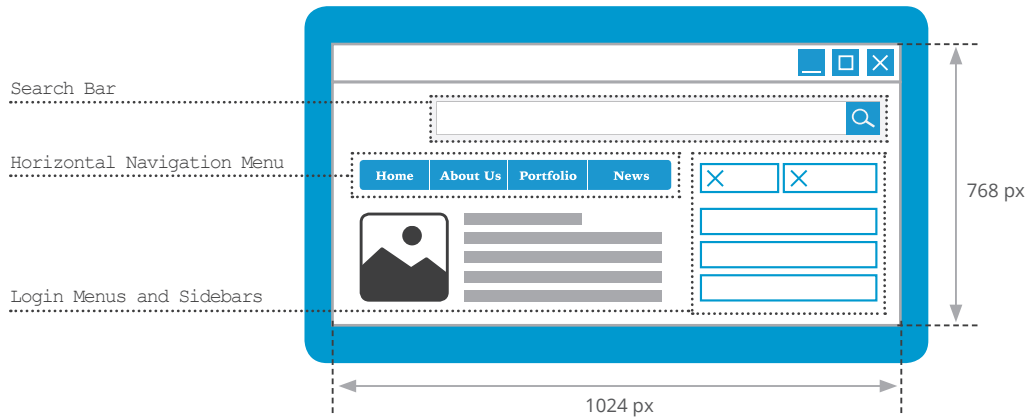
Starting with the early 2000s, the image-based navigation began to give way to subtler horizontal menus. Besides, sidebars with secondary navigation elements gradually ousted text-based directories:

2000-2005



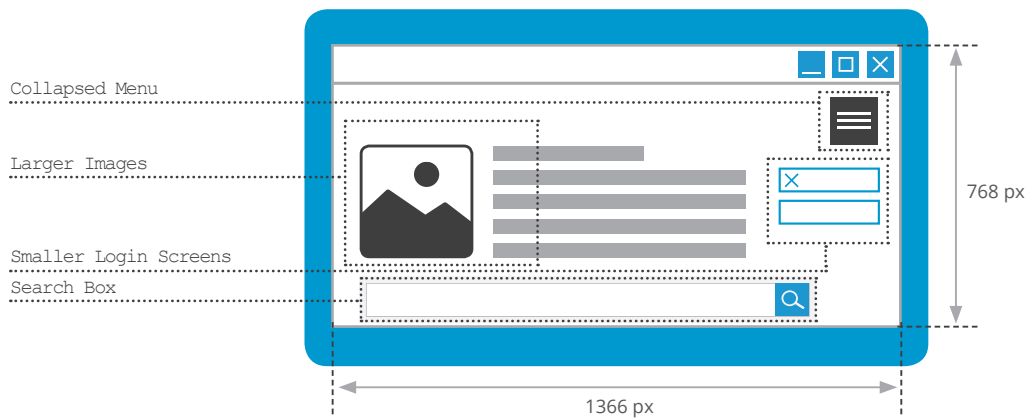
With the advent of Web 2.0, the Internet has evolved into an interactive, user-generated medium. In terms of user interfaces (UI), this led to more prominent registration forms and login menus that prompted people to join the website community:

2006-2012



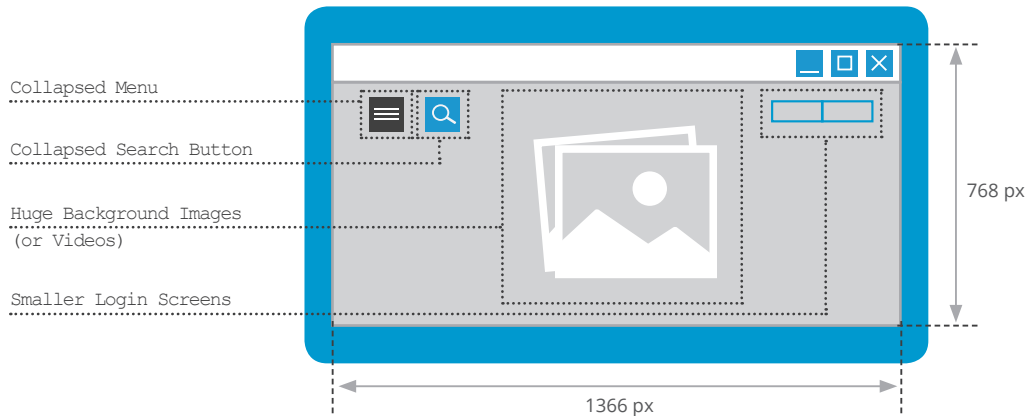
The pursuit of more streamlined user experience (UX) resulted in minimalistic navigation elements that didn't distract users from the content. As a result, menus hidden behind "hamburger" icons grew in popularity:

2013-2014



Faster computers and mobile devices gave web designers an opportunity to experiment with various media, including full-screen hero images and short background videos. Besides, web designers' preferences shifted to simpler navigation elements that occupy less screen space.

2015-2016



Speaking of Visual Trends...



Naturally, other prominent changes took place over the period, with some of the most notable visual tendencies taking over the Web between 2004 and 2015. At that time, you could see websites designed in a variety of styles ranging from ethereal watercolors to grunge.

In case you want to learn more about these visual trends, here's a cool [webgraphic from TemplateMonster](#):



Figuring Out the Key Terms: UI and UX

You've probably noticed the terms user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) in the previous chapters. These terms denote the two major niches in web design, and you'll stumble across them when dealing with anything related to web design. That's why we need to make sure you're familiar with them and know the difference between UI and UX:

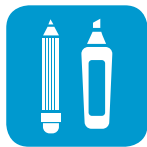
	 UI	 UX
• Definition	User Interface	User Experience
• What does it mean?	The look of websites	The way people use websites (and the way they feel about it)
• How do you describe it with one word?	Visual	Conceptual
• What does it consist of?	Graphics, Layouts, Color, Typography	Usability, Functionality, Psychology, Interaction
• What do UI and UX designers work with?	Imagery and Color Schemes (all visual elements of a website)	Wireframes (simple sketches that demonstrate the position of buttons, columns, etc.)
	Content Layout and Fonts (the way content is grouped and presented)	Customer Personas and User Scenarios (abstract representation of a website's target audience and their behaviour)
	Visual Brand Identity (the way the design of a website aligns with the company's aesthetics)	Navigation Patterns (patterns describing the links between different pages of a website)
	Page Architecture (the structure of the website pages)	Site Maps (lists of website pages)
	Mockups (realistic representations of what the website will look like)	Prototypes (functional, interactive demos of websites)

As you can see, UI and UX imply differing functionalities: while the former is more about visual and creative skills, the latter requires an analytical mindset. In addition to UI and UX, web design incorporates other niches. Read on to learn more about them.

Other Skill Sets Related to Web Design

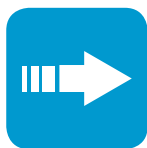
Hopefully, the difference between UI and UX doesn't seem that tricky now. However, you should keep in mind that the distinction between the two turns into a blurred line when it comes to real-life design jobs. Sometimes, it is necessary for a UI designer to have basic UX skills and vice versa.

Moreover, UI and UX design border on other skill sets including visual design, motion design, and interaction design (IxD). Below is a brief description of these design niches:



Visual Design

There are two popular definitions for this one. For some people (including [Adobe's senior UX designer Gradinar Razvan](#)), UI design and visual design are the same things. The only exception is that UI design is a broader term that includes non-digital products. According to another popular opinion, visual designers' job includes logos and other branding elements, in addition to the overall aesthetics of a website.



Motion Design

Motion design encompasses all animations of a website. For instance, [Google uses non-linear animations](#) to simulate the movement of natural objects. Motion designers are the people responsible for this kind of things.



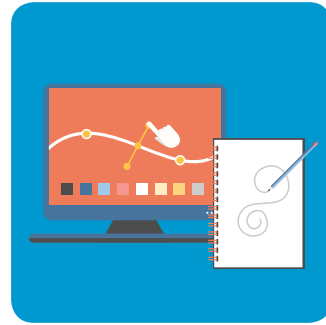
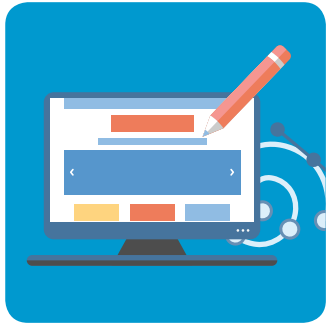
Interaction Design (IxD)

This one is, essentially, a part of UX design. In a nutshell, interactive design covers everything that is clickable or tappable. Interaction designers decide on the size, shape, and "behaviour" of buttons, dropdowns, and similar elements to make websites easy to use.

They say brevity is the soul of wit, so here's a short explanation of every web design niche that has been mentioned so far 😊

- **Visual Design:** What it looks like
- **UI Design:** How it works before I touch it
- **Motion Design:** How it moves
- **Interaction Design:** How it works when I touch it
- **UX Design:** How I feel about using it

5 Web Design Tips that Work in 2016

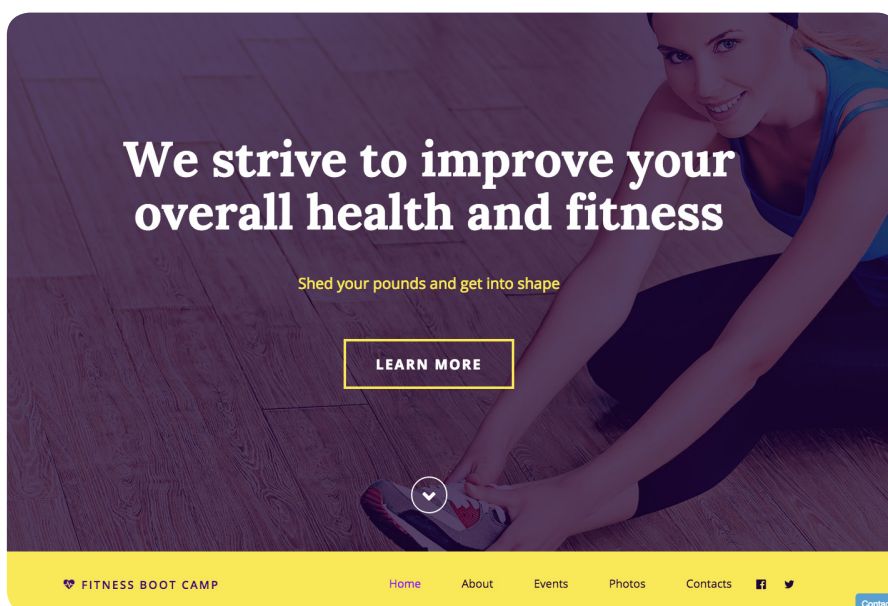


So far, you've familiarized yourself with the key concepts of web design, as well as the industry's history. Now it's time to look into the future. Although 2016 has just begun, designers can already tell what tendencies will be taking over the Web. Besides, some trends from 2015 aren't going anywhere. Below are several tips based on the current web design trends:

1 "Semi-Hidden" Navigation Beats Hamburger Icons

Hamburger icons and collapsed navigation were a mainstream UI practice in 2015. Although hidden navigation helps designers declutter user interfaces, [usability studies](#) have proven that it may also confuse site visitors.

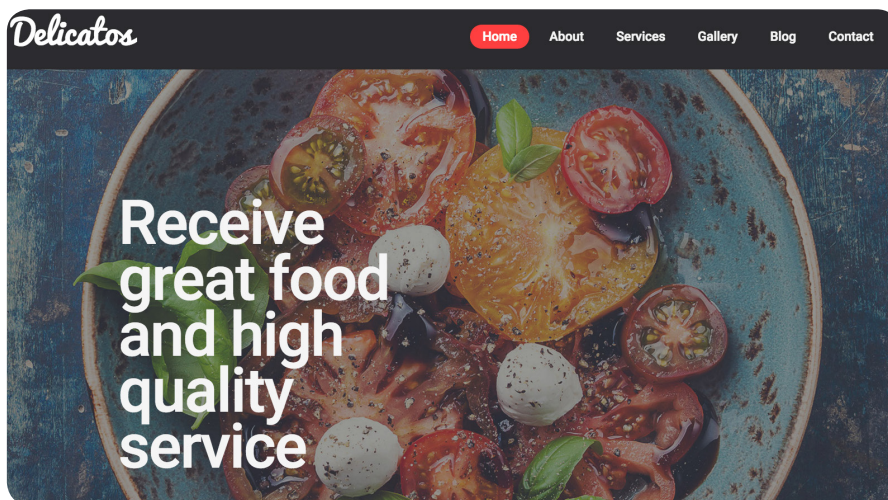
To streamline navigation while keeping the layouts clean and distraction-free, web designers can use below-the-fold horizontal menus that become visible as soon as the user starts scrolling. Have a look at [this website template](#) to see such menus in action:



2 Long Scrolls Are the New Black

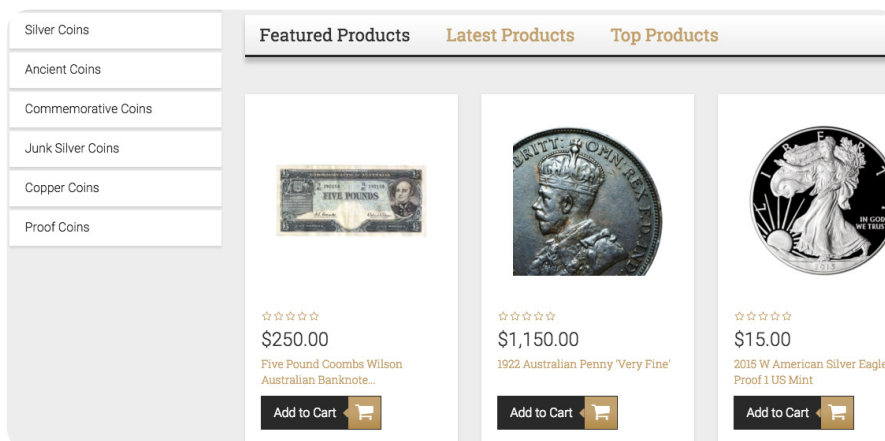
You've probably heard that you must place everything important above the fold. While this may seem like a reasonable approach, it leads to visual clutter. Besides, modern-day users have grown accustomed to scrolling thanks to mobile, and they expect a similar experience from desktop websites.

For these reasons, long scrolls will remain a major trend in 2016. By following it, you can focus on engaging your visitors with stunning hero images, bold copy, and great typography instead of having to cram everything into a single screen. Here's how long scroll layouts can work for restaurant websites that place a strong emphasis on high-quality food photos:



3 Cards, Cards Everywhere!

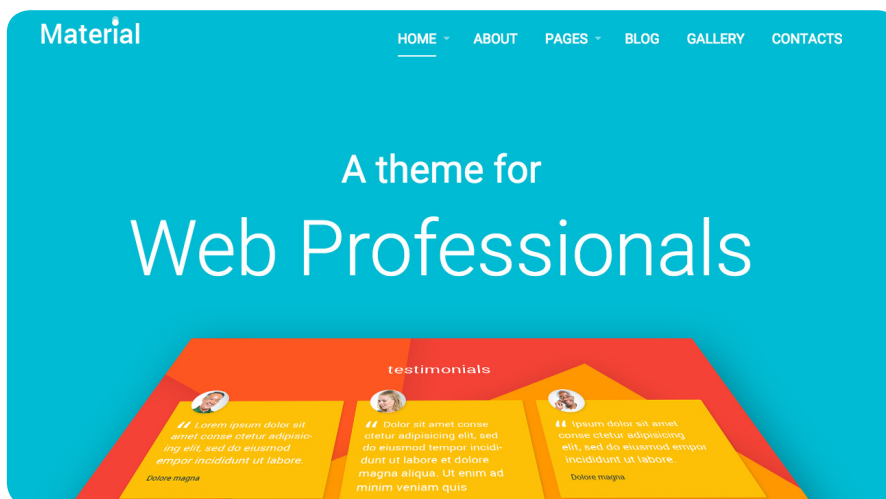
Pinterest owes much of its success to its card-like interface, and Google has been using them since who knows when. When it comes to smaller sites, cards provide a great means of organizing information into a single logical (and visual) entity. Here's an example of how e-store owners can use cards to give their product items a clean look:



4 Material Madness

Unless you live under a rock, you know what Material Design is. Google's vision of flat design is impressive, so don't get too surprised if you'll start seeing more websites resembling Android apps.

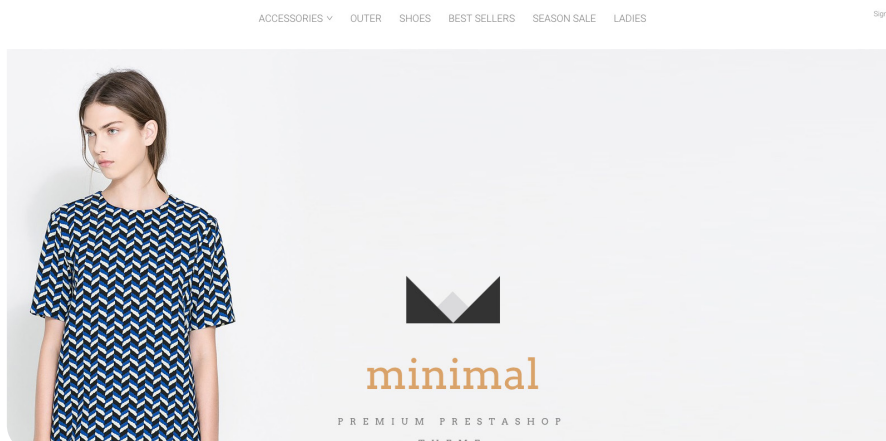
While following good trends is definitely a good thing, success is often about moderation. For this reason, websites that follow Google's design language need to balance between unique features and all that Material goodness. Below is the [TemplateMonster's take on Material Design](#). Note how this theme combines Material Design elements with a number of proprietary features:



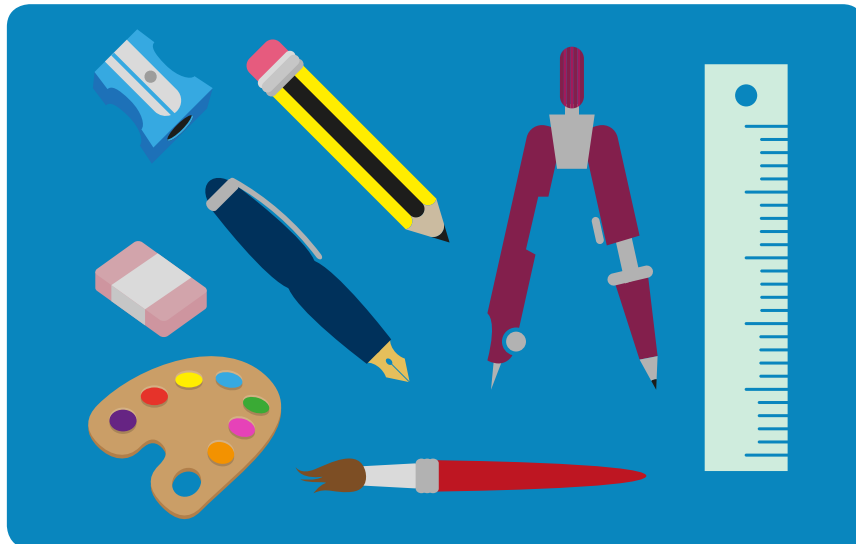
5 Minimalistic E-Stores are the Ones that Sell

Here's a thing that Google's main competitor is really, really good at. Yes, we're talking about Apple and its super minimalistic designs. Go to [Apple.com](#) and you'll notice the contrast between subtle background colors and vibrant, colorful photos of the company's products.

Obviously, you don't need to sell Macs and iPhones to use Apple's design techniques for your own e-store. For instance, minimalistic product-centric color palette would be an excellent choice for an [ecommerce site that sells clothes](#):



Web Design Tools for Non-Designers



Keeping abreast of design trends will help you make informed decisions when choosing a theme for your website or working with a professional designer. However, in some cases you'll want to try your hand at adding minor tweaks to your website's design. In case you like to do everything yourself, here are several design tools tailored to non-designers:



Choose Matching Fonts with Type Genius

Fonts may seem like a trivial thing to a layperson, but real design pros know that typography is, in fact, one of the central components of your website. If you'd like to try matching fonts without hiring a professional designer, [Type Genius](#) is an absolute must-have for you. The service is really easy to use: just pick the main font and this service will provide you with matching types in the blink of an eye.



Paletton - the Ultimate Palette Builder

Combining colors can turn into an arduous task unless you know what you're doing. If you decide to experiment with your site's palette, have a look at [Paletton](#). This web app lets you build palettes, discover new color schemes, and see what they look like when applied to a basic website template.



Image Color Picker: the Colorists' Shazam

When working on your website's design, chances are you'll find yourself looking at some cool color or shade that you've found somewhere on the Internet, yet can't identify. [Image Color Picker](#) is an online tool that helps you resolve the situations of this kind. Just paste the image's or site's URL or upload the image and get the hexadecimal codes of its colors.



Image Editing: Gimp and Pixlr

Readymade websites typically come with high-quality stock images. However, you'd probably want to personalize your site with photos of your own. Besides, you'll need to edit images for your product items and blog posts. If you are looking for a free Photoshop alternative, try [GIMP](#). If tools of this kind seem too difficult, [Pixlr](#) online image editor may turn out a perfect fit for you.



Image Discovery: Death to Stock Photo

[Death to Stock Photo](#) is the name of a subscription-based service that sends you free image packs on a monthly basis. To get more photos, you can sign up for a paid subscription. Besides, you can maximize the range of free photos by using similar services like the [New Old Stock](#) or [Superfamous](#). But wait, there's more! Check out this [post at Medium](#) to view a list of 17 services that offer free images.

Brushing Up on Your Theory (in Less than 30 Minutes)

Even if you're using beginner-friendly design tools and services, you'll still benefit from having a general understanding of certain design principles. For this reason, investing time into learning is definitely a worthy idea. Besides, there are simple instructions that can help you get started with basic tasks related to web design.

Remember we've mentioned Type Genius and Paletton? As you might've guessed, knowing the essentials of coloristics and typography will prove extremely useful when working with tools of this kind. To familiarize yourself with the very basics, have a look at the [Ten Commandments of Color Theory and Typography](#) from DesignMatic.



Thanks for Reading this Book!

Hey there! I hope you enjoyed reading this book. "Web Design Essentials for Non-Designers" is a part of our new series of ebooks for website owners and entrepreneurs. If you're about to start your first website, have a look at our introduction to site-building platforms. Besides, there are other e-books available at Startup Hub. In case there's a topic that you'd like to see covered in a similar format, feel free to contact our team:

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Eli Davis
Copywriter at TemplateMonster

A Couple of Words about TemplateMonster

Startup Hub is a project launched by the TemplateMonster company, the world's leading provider of readymade website templates. The company has been in business since 2004, and it offers more than 26,000 top-notch solutions for blogs, company websites, e-stores, portfolios, and other types of online resources. Visit [TemplateMonster.com](https://www.templatemonster.com) and choose the perfect design for your website:



Sources

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Images

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- <http://www.plainicon.com/>
- <http://www.vecteezy.com/>

