

TOPTIPS

CREATING A GOOD LOOKING WEBSITE [in my opinion!]

TT05

Ok, so you've made the decision to have a website, good! You've found an inner-ability of web design that you never knew you had. Good. Or maybe you've found someone else who has that ability. Also good. So now you can set about creating a gem of a website, the looks of which would have made the heart of even Van Gough flutter with excitement.

Or at least that was the plan.

Coming up with a website design that is both pleasing on the eye and also simple to use is not as simple as you might think. Or is it?

Naturally, people's interpretation of what constitutes a 'well designed website' can differ wildly. There will be those amongst us that carry the opinion that as long as the website looks good, nothing else matters. Alternatively, there are those that take the opposite stance that as long as you can find useful information, it doesn't matter what it looks like.

My opinion? Well don't shout at me all at once but I'm going to sit on the fence. I think both arguments are valid to a degree. It's vital to have useful information accessible to your visitors, that they can find easily, but at the same time, I find that if I don't like the look of the site, it can influence my desire to stay on that website.

In most cases when you come across a badly designed site, it is generally because there is too much going on. You can find flashing text, loads of different colours, different fonts, lots of 'interesting' clip art, and more, all on the one page. This creates a bad impression for the visitor. You could incorporate the same amount of information, but in a much more attractive way by just addressing a few simple things.

CREATE A TEMPLATE

Create a template and use that on each page. One thing that helps a user around a website is familiarity and this can be done by using the same design style on each page.

DESIGNATE SECTIONS

Create clear sections within your template. Make sure you have areas that are designated for certain aspects of your web page. For instance, have an area which is specifically for your content, an area for you navigation, and so on. This will help form your template, and also give you a consistent look.

COLOUR SCHEME

Think of a colour scheme. This is important, as it almost creates an identity not only for your website, but also for your church. So think carefully about this. The colour scheme also extends to the text. Think about how your links appear, how your headings look etc. You'll notice on the BUGB website (www.baptist.org.uk) there is a very clear colour theme – green and white. Notice how the green is carried over for the sub-headings and links. It helps them to stand out from the main text and they stay within the theme.

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BACKGROUNDS

Keep the background simple. Lots of websites I have seen recently have all sorts of interesting backgrounds, whether they be words, images and so on. While this may seem a good idea at the time, it makes reading text on your screen potentially difficult. Depending on how it is done, it also creates a very 'in your face' look, which can be a bit over-bearing for the reader. For backgrounds its best to stick with one simple plain colour. A colour that can have a contrasting colour on top of it, for the text. This makes the text easily readable. For example, if you have a dark background, you use a light text colour, and vice-versa.

LINKS

When it comes to links it's always a good idea to clearly identify them. As I've mentioned already, this can be done through using a different colour. It's also handy for them to change slightly when the mouse is hovering over them, again to help them stand out and for the user to realise that they are links. A simple change of colour or an underline both work well with text links, and an image change (whether it changes its background colour or something else) works well with image/graphic links. Whatever you choose to do, just keep in mind your colour theme.

FONTS

Use easy to read fonts. Avoid using any fonts that take an effort to read. Reading information from a website should be an easy task, and if you make it too difficult, people will give up. Another point about fonts – don't use loads of different ones! Remember, we are wanting to create continuity throughout the site, so keep the number of fonts to a minimum.

LESS IS MORE

Once you've got your template sorted, it's easy to create more pages. So don't feel the need to cram everything on one or two pages! It's much better to have content spread over a number of pages that to have one really long page! The same can be said for images and graphics. Unless it's an image gallery, don't plaster heaps of images on the same page. It doesn't work too well!

These are just a few ideas to get you started, and by no means are these the only way to design a website!

Like I said at the beginning, different people have different ideas on what looks good!