

Graphic design

Tips for non-designers!

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CarbonOrange

Typography

White space

Contrast

Balance

Images

Colour

Layout

Shape

Line





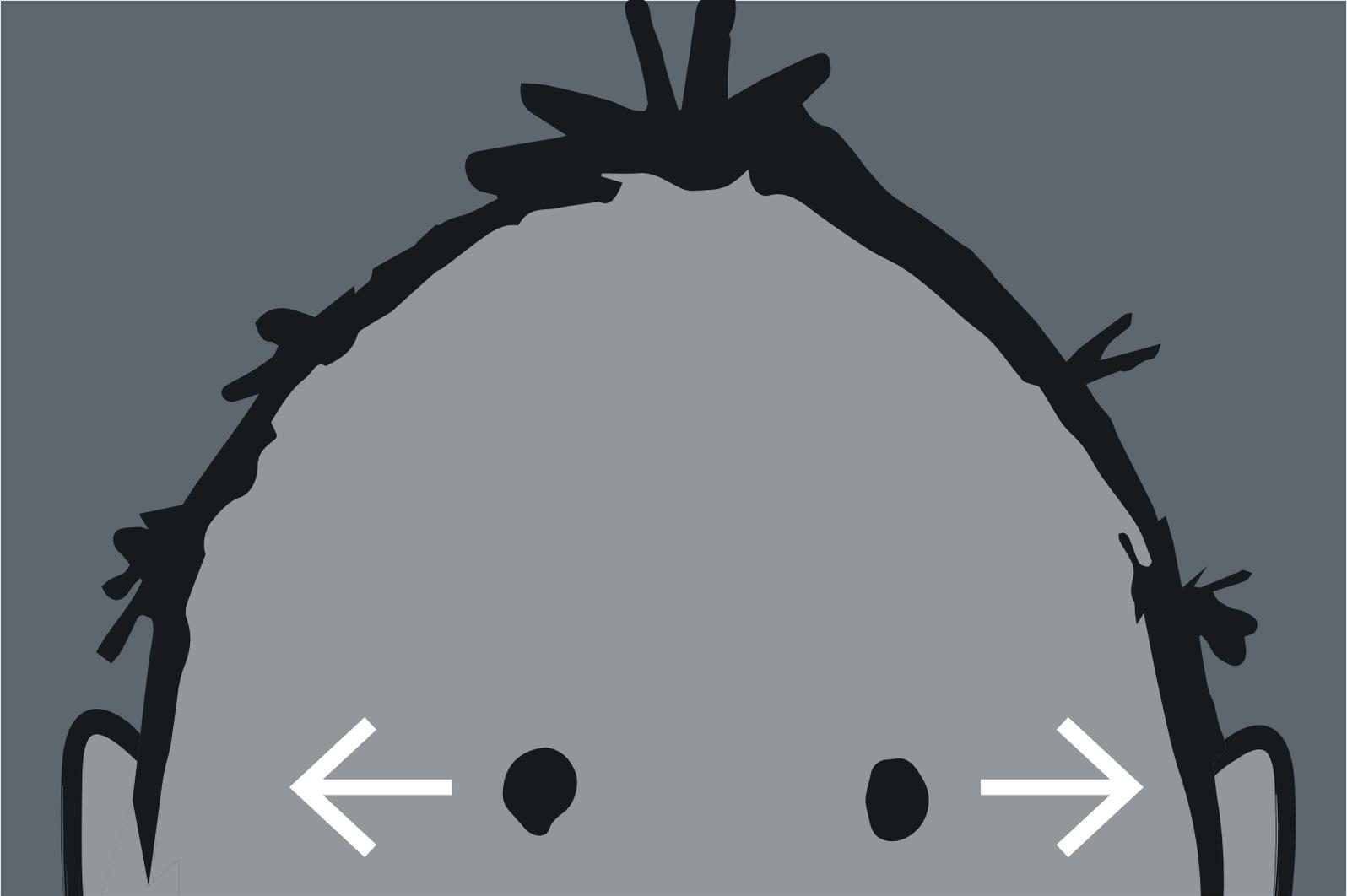
The goal to good design is firstly and most importantly **clear communication**, drawing attention, informing and giving a clear call to action, so someone arriving on a website for example, is finding out... What is this? What can I learn about this? Where can I find out more?

Think about the hierarchy and flow of information.

And then secondly, if the design is impactful, this can evoke a positive response in what we are seeing and **create a good impression**.

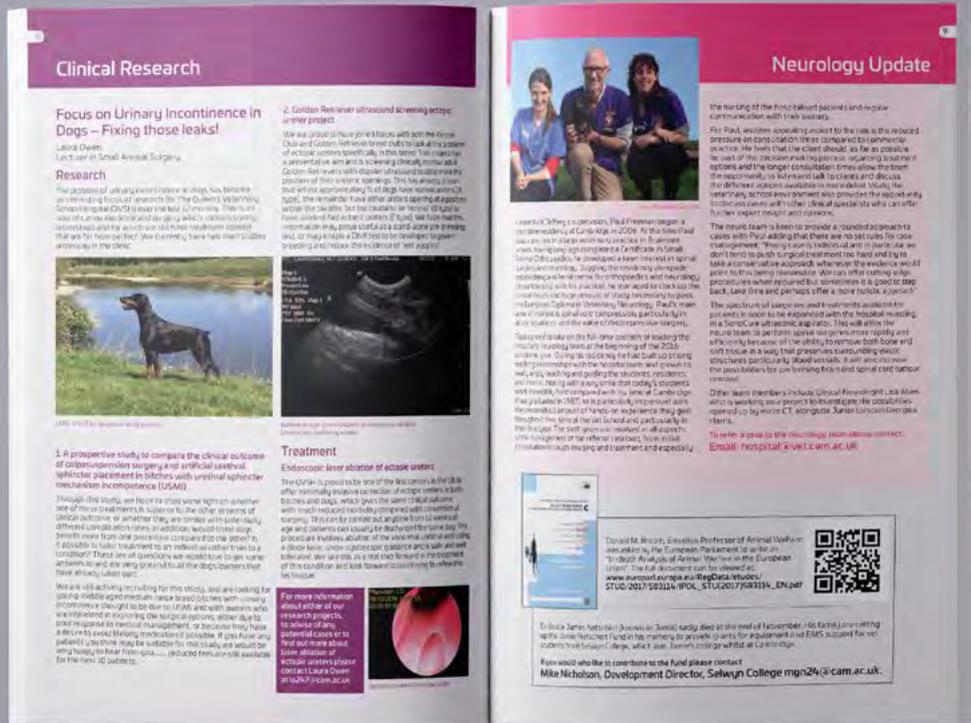
Layout





In terms of clear communication, the layout is part of what is going to help guide the eye around the page to the areas you want the viewer to see.

There are certain patterns to how the eye travels across and down a web page which you might be aware of, and having a clean layout can help that journey and in turn help us to absorb the messages.



Example: Carbon Orange newsletter design for Cambridge University

This example shows how the same grid is used differently – running the text into two columns. That's not to say a grid can't be broken. A moment of disruption, used carefully can add interest and focus, as shown by the call to action on the bottom of the right hand page here. By breaking the grid in this way, the area has more space around it which helps draw the eye to it. This is something to be done sparingly.

The screenshot displays a grid of program recommendations on the BBC iPlayer website. The grid is organized into two rows of three columns each. Each program card features a play button icon, a title, a genre, and a brief description. The first row includes 'Strike - The Cuckoo's Calling' (Crime Drama), 'People Just Do Nothing' (Comedy), and 'Diana: The Last Princess of Wales' (History). The second row includes 'Top of the Lake' (Resume), 'This Country' (Resume), and 'Drugs Map of Britain' (Resume). A 'You have been watching...' section is visible on the left side of the grid.

NEW SERIES

CRIME DRAMA
Strike - The Cuckoo's Calling
1/3 Meet JK Rowling's PI

COMEDY
People Just Do Nothing
3/6 War. Kurlupt FM is under siege

HISTORY
Diana: The Last Princess of Wales
Rare films, personal stories

FULL SERIES

RESUME | 43 mins left
Top of the Lake
China Girl; 6. The Battle of the Mothers

FULL SERIES

RESUME | 15 mins left
This Country
1. Scarecrow

RESUME | 18 mins left
Drugs Map of Britain
7. Alcohol: Britain's Most Harmful Drug

You have been watching...

The easy way to pick up where you left off

[Manage full list](#)

The **BBC website** uses a twelve column grid to great effect, lining up the horizontals and using the columns in different ways so the blocks of text and image vary in width.

So from page to page although there are different themes there is consistency in the layout and the space used helps to set the hierarchy.

Leverage agile frameworks to provide a robust synopsis for high level overviews. Iterative approaches to corporate strategy foster collaborative thinking to further the overall value proposition. Organically grow the holistic worldview of disruptive innovation via workplace diversity and empowerment. Bring to the table win-win survival strategies to ensure proactive domination. At the end of the day, going forward, a new normal that has evolved from generation X is on the runway heading towards a streamlined cloud solution. User generated content in real-time will have multiple touchpoints for offshoring.

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If you have a lot of text, consider the width of your columns, for ease of reading.

A long paragraph set in a narrow column doesn't feel natural to read.

If you have a lot of text set at long line lengths, you can find that your eye goes back to the start of the line you have just read instead of naturally finding the next line.

It is hard to give a hard and fast rule as it depends on the text – for example, a passage of technical text might have a lot of long words so might get away with longer lines.

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How to set your text; left or right aligned, centred or justified.

For long paragraphs of text, right or centre aligned aren't ideal as the eye has to track to a different point to find the beginning of the next line, so you will be looking at left aligned or justified text.

Just be a bit aware if you choose justified text – while it might be tempting to use as you have these nice neat right hand margins, you can end up with awkward white spaces which can look ugly, and if you have a lot of text you can end up with rivers of space running through. This can be controlled when working in print, but can be tricky on sites.

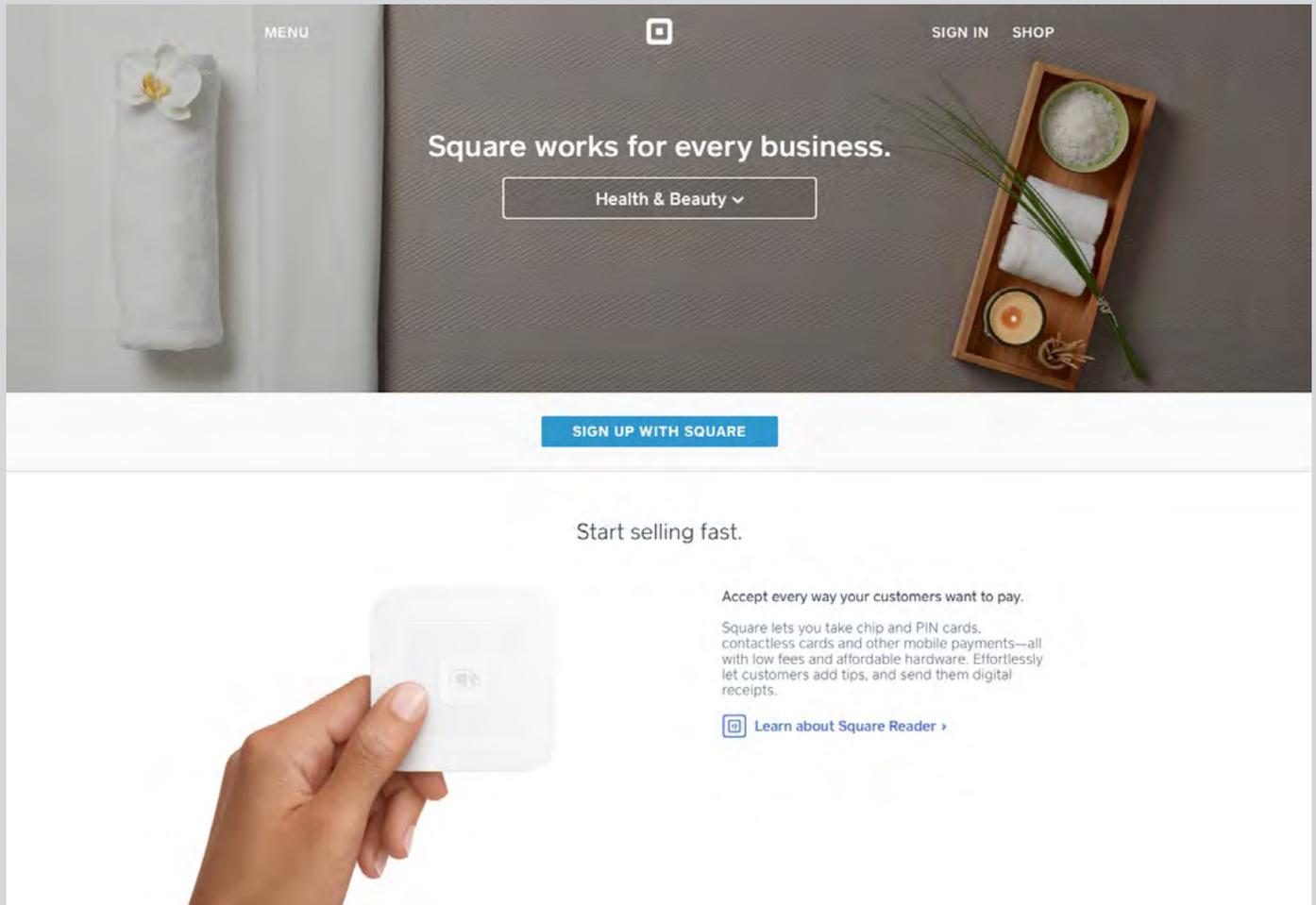


Example: Carbon Orange book design for photographer Kerstin Hacker

White space is an important part of design.

When I say white space, it doesn't necessarily have to be white, your site might have a coloured background, it's the area not taken up with text or images. It can even be an area within an image as in the front cover above. On the back, the white margins give the dramatic image room to breathe.

Some people can be a bit afraid of white space, I have had clients in panic before when all the space in a design isn't filled, as though it's a waste of space, but we need areas of calm, to help to direct focus.



This is an example I found of a website – squareup.com – that uses white space to really draw the eye to the hero product image, and make it very clear where to look, and where to go next.

Over **95%** of smartphones are ARM-based

90% of processors that power infotainment are ARM-based

ARM is the **#1** processor for motion control in robotics

www.arm.com

Over **90%** of home UHD devices are ARM-based

More than **5 billion** ARM-based embedded chips shipped in 2015

www.arm.com

The screenshot shows the hexus.net website layout. At the top, there is a navigation bar with categories: HOME, TECH, GAMING, BUSINESS, CONSUMER, MOBILE, HEXUS.TV, TRUST, COMPETITIONS, FORUMS. Below this is a 'LATEST REVIEWS' section featuring an article about the ASUS ZenBook Pro UX550VD. To the right, there are promotional banners for ASUS routers and AMD Ryzen processors. The main content area is a grid of article teasers, each with a title, date, and a small image. A 'MOST VIEWED' sidebar is on the right. At the bottom, there are more article teasers.

This example – hexus.net – uses a grid with very little white space. The catalogue style probably appeals to technical types, but for some sites this approach could be confusing as they might need a clearer hierarchy.

We were asked to create the wallpaper graphic that goes around the page and so we used the blue to tie it in to the page.

Images





Photograph by Carbon Orange

When creating or choosing images for site, one useful thing to bear in mind is the rule of thirds, something we commonly hear about in photography but can also be applied in design. The reason it works is because if you have the focus of an image square in the centre, the eye doesn't travel. With the rule of thirds, the eye gets drawn around the image, and it can help with a sense of movement and life.

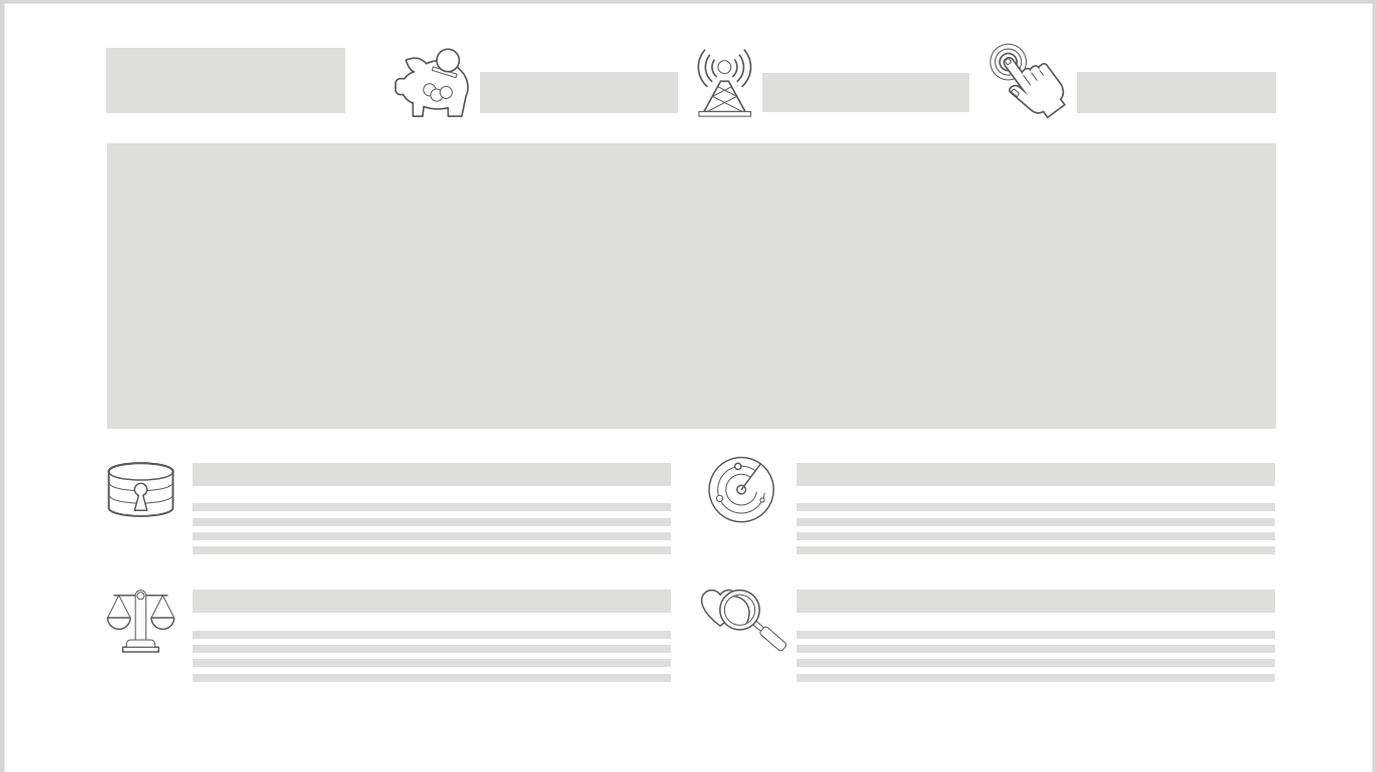
With a portrait of a person, the subject will probably be in the middle so avoid the image being flat and uninteresting by using depth of field. You can position the eyes on top third line.

Contact us if you would like bespoke photography or illustration for your site!



Example: Carbon Orange book design for photographer Kerstin Hacker

If your site has multiple photographs on one page it can help tie everything together if you can pick up on one colour or tonal range and have that continued through the images.



Example: Carbon Orange icon designs for technology company

Icons can help the user navigate your website.

They stand out amongst all the text and other detailed imagery around them to signpost where to look.

Make sure they are consistent and on brand so they all fit with your site.

You could commission a designer to create bespoke icons for you – carbonorange.com?

Or if you buy icons online, make sure you get a really big set so you know if your needs change then any new icons you use will match.



Example: Banner designs done whilst at Arm

Banner graphics are a way of signposting your pages and creating distinction, these should all follow a similar theme.

These examples also show how we can use masked areas on images to create space for text.

Type





It is a fairly widely held belief that serif typefaces are better for print where there are large passages to read. Certainly novels tend to use serif typefaces, the little serif strokes helping lead the eye along.

Mind you, there is an argument that we read serifs better because that's what we read most of. On screens we tend to use more sans serifs, in part because old screen resolutions had problems rendering the serifs.



Within the serif typefaces are the main families of Old Style, Transitional or Modern, with variations in the contrast of the stroke weights, and the shape of the serifs. The main sans serif families are Geometric and Humanist. Pretty much as they sound really, one has consistent weights of stroke and letters based on geometric forms, the other has a softer more human look often with some variety in the stroke weight and are generally more easy to read.

Then each typeface has its own personality. I like to think of Cooper Black for example as a bit of a cheeky chap, friendly and approachable. Helvetica is cool and efficient. Comic Sans is an annoying joker!

**STRETFORD AND HEEP
FUNERAL CARE**

RAINBOW PLAY CENTRE

Rufty Tufty
Workboots



Stretford and Heep
Funeral Care

Rainbow Play Centre

Rufty Tufty
Workboots



Who is going to be reading it? For young children, a sans serif will be easier to read, as the forms are more simple and easier to recognise for them.

Are you marketing to a hipster crowd, or maybe designing a site for a funeral home? What works for one could very well not work for the other!

These examples are all set at 20 points

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These examples are all set at 21 points

These examples are all set at 20 points

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Consider size per typeface – some will look bigger than other at the same point size. These examples are chosen for illustration not necessarily beauty.

Limit use of decorative typefaces, think of them as garnish.

Monotypes eg. Courier are hard to read in big chunks of text as the letters each fill the same amount of space so it doesn't flow. They can look cool in small amounts.

Make the size comfortable to read.

Limit use of different sizes, and limit use of uppercase – it can look as though you are SHOUTING at the viewer!

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If you are reversing your text out of a darker colour, this will effect how it appears, be particularly careful with light typefaces.

Colour _____

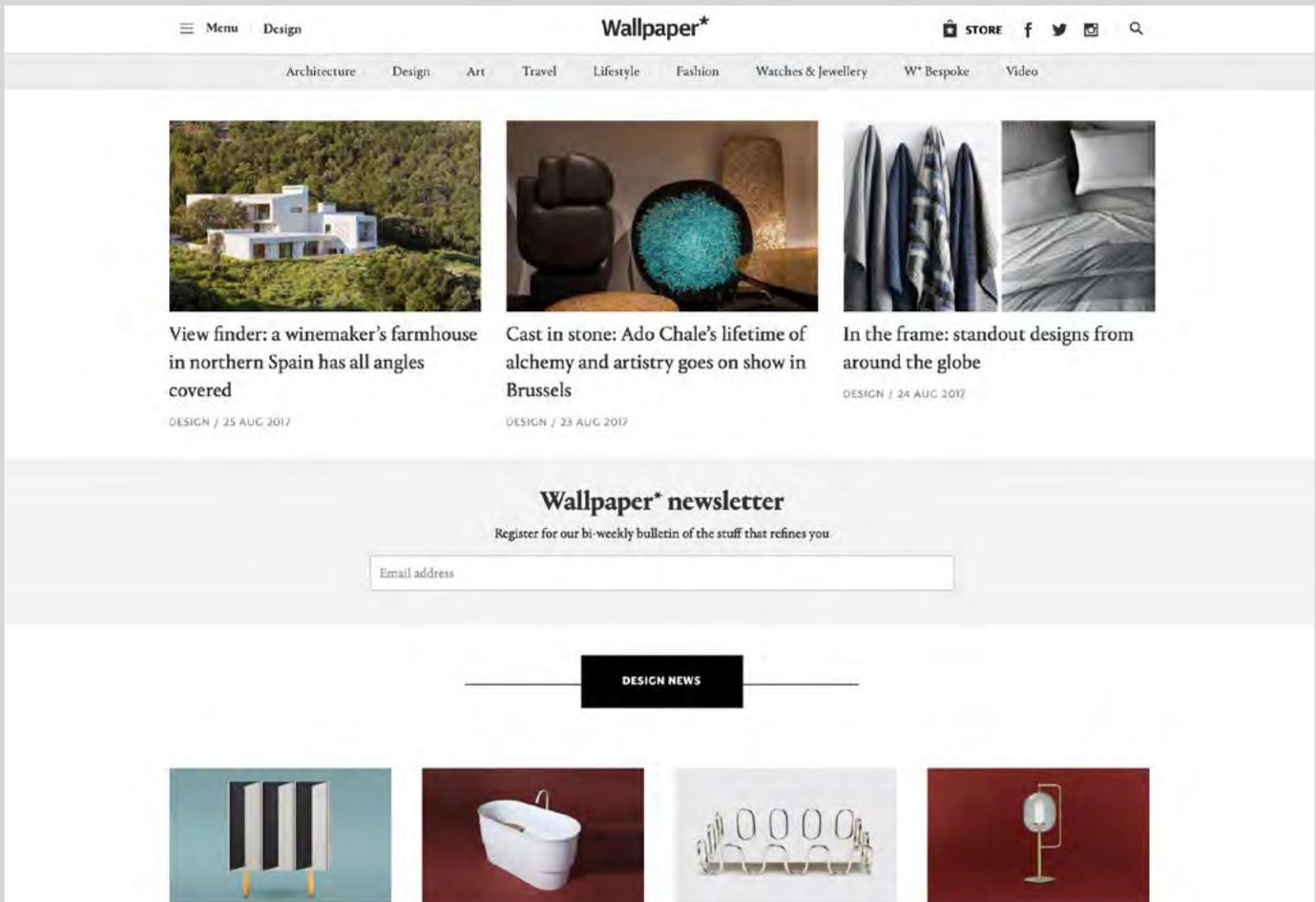




Within each colour there are many shades and levels of vibrancy which in turn will change the mood that the colour conveys. For example, while certain shades of blue are seen as reliable and corporate (eg. the Ford logo), a lighter more vibrant shade offers a more modern fresh angle (eg. Skype logo).

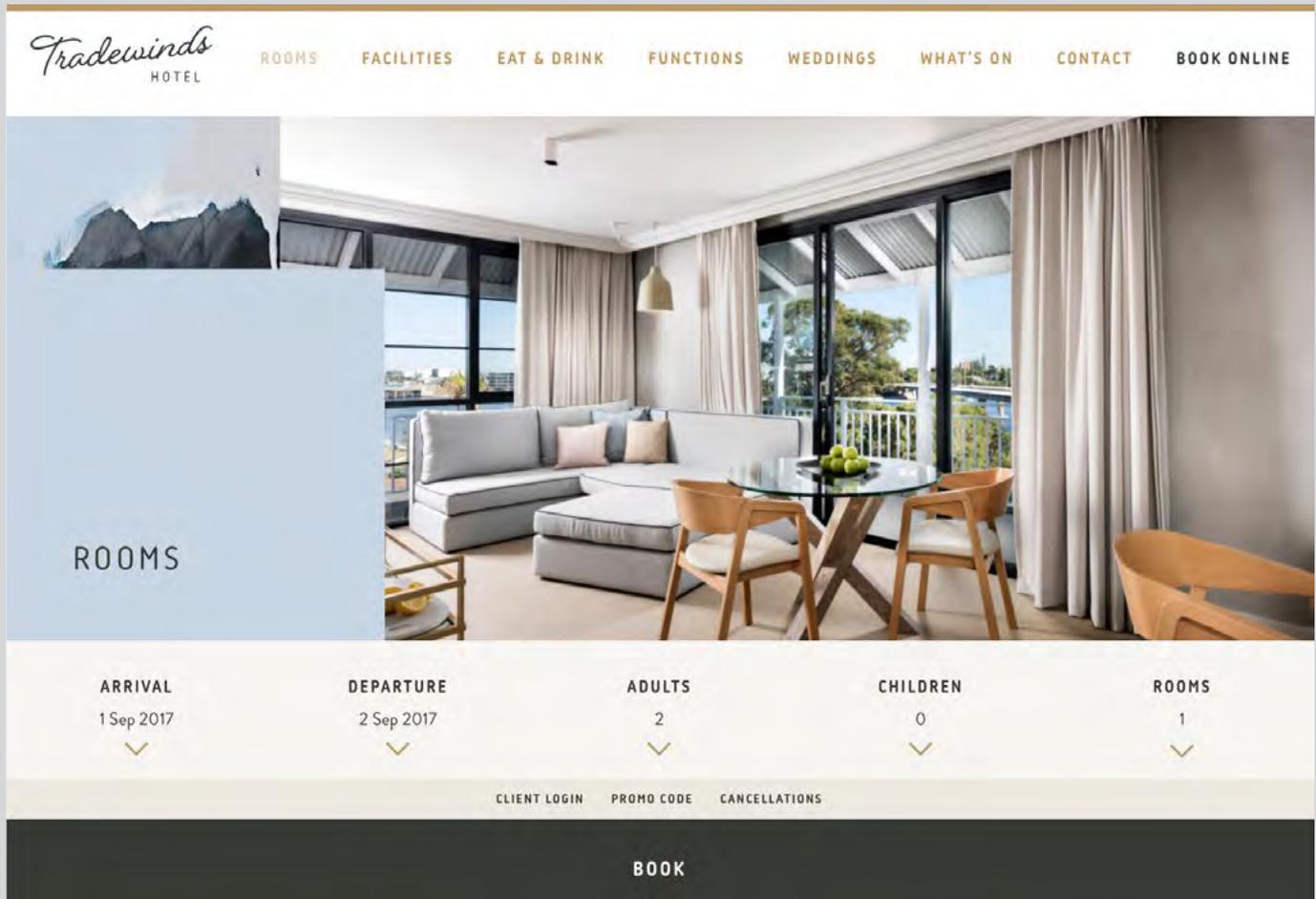
When choosing colours for your design bear the audience in mind.

If you are designing for a client who has a corporate palette, it might be a case of selecting 2 or 3 colours, and defining a hierarchy – perhaps one main colour and then one or two secondary colours to highlight and maybe a tertiary for occasional use eg. for a call to action.



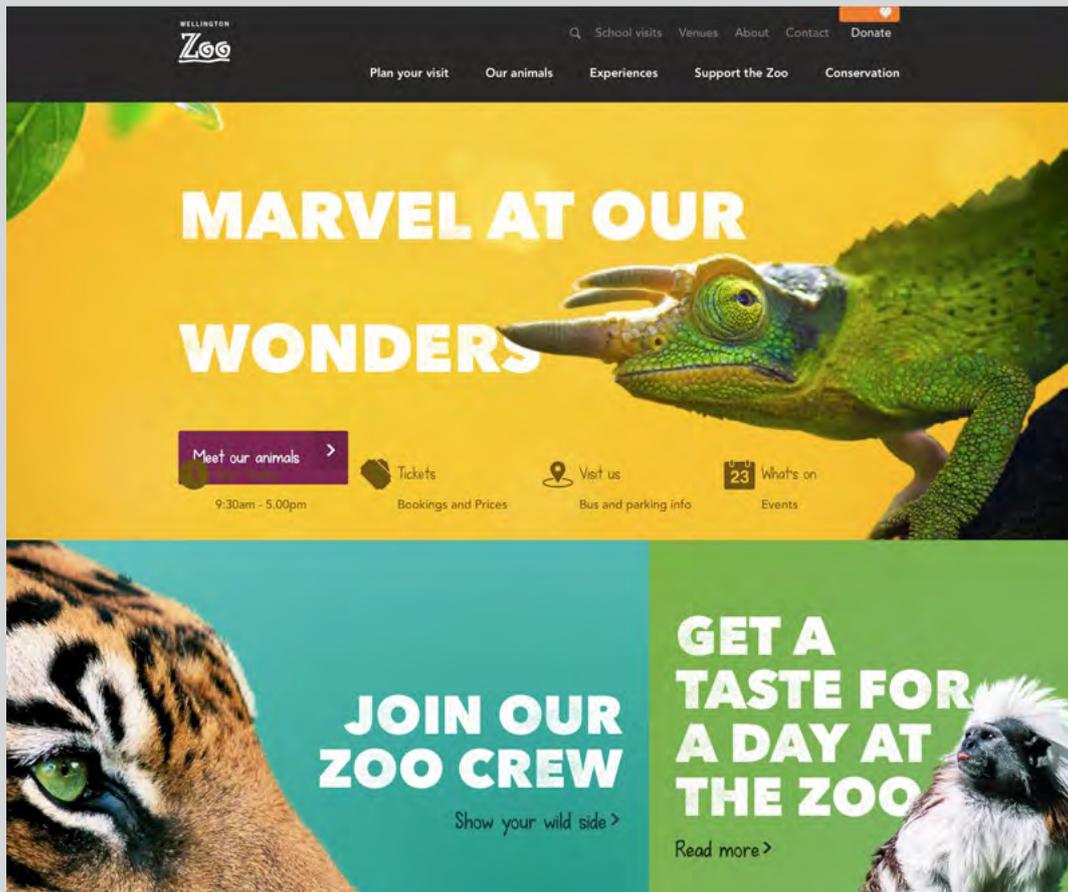
Many websites use very little colour, or just black and white or greys, particularly if it's a very visual product so there are going to be a lot of photographs which provide the colour, as in this example of [wallpaper.com](https://www.wallpaper.com)

But if you are starting from scratch with a new palette there are some things you can bear in mind...



Palettes will suggest different moods or emotions so what works for one client and audience might not work for another. This example tradewindshotel.com.au suggests a relaxing tranquil sophisticated experience.

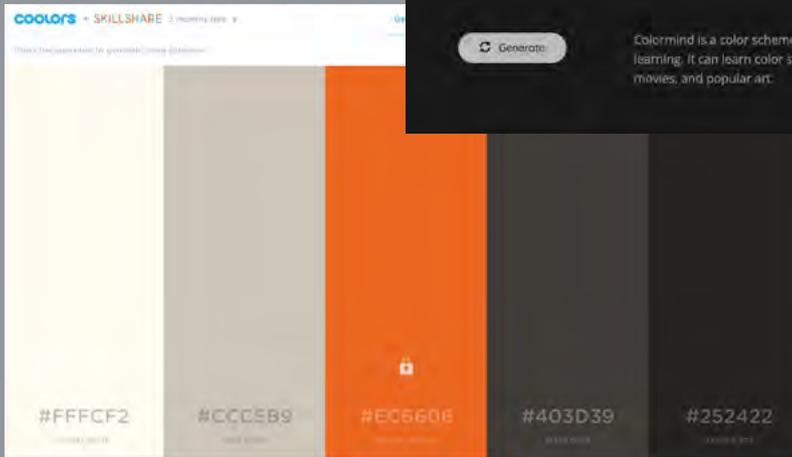
Limit the number of colours on a page – have one main, a secondary then one highlight that is used sparingly.



When using colours in combination or creating a new corporate palette, think about what mood they convey. A muted palette might be beautiful and sophisticated, but consider where it will be used, maybe it needs to stand out more to get noticed? Or you love bright colours, but actually your brand needs to be subtler, classier.

Bright colours inspired by nature make the wellingtonzoo.com website look fresh and vibrant.

colors.co



colormind.io

There are many tools to put together colour palettes online.

Start with your main colour and use the different options to find a palette that will work.



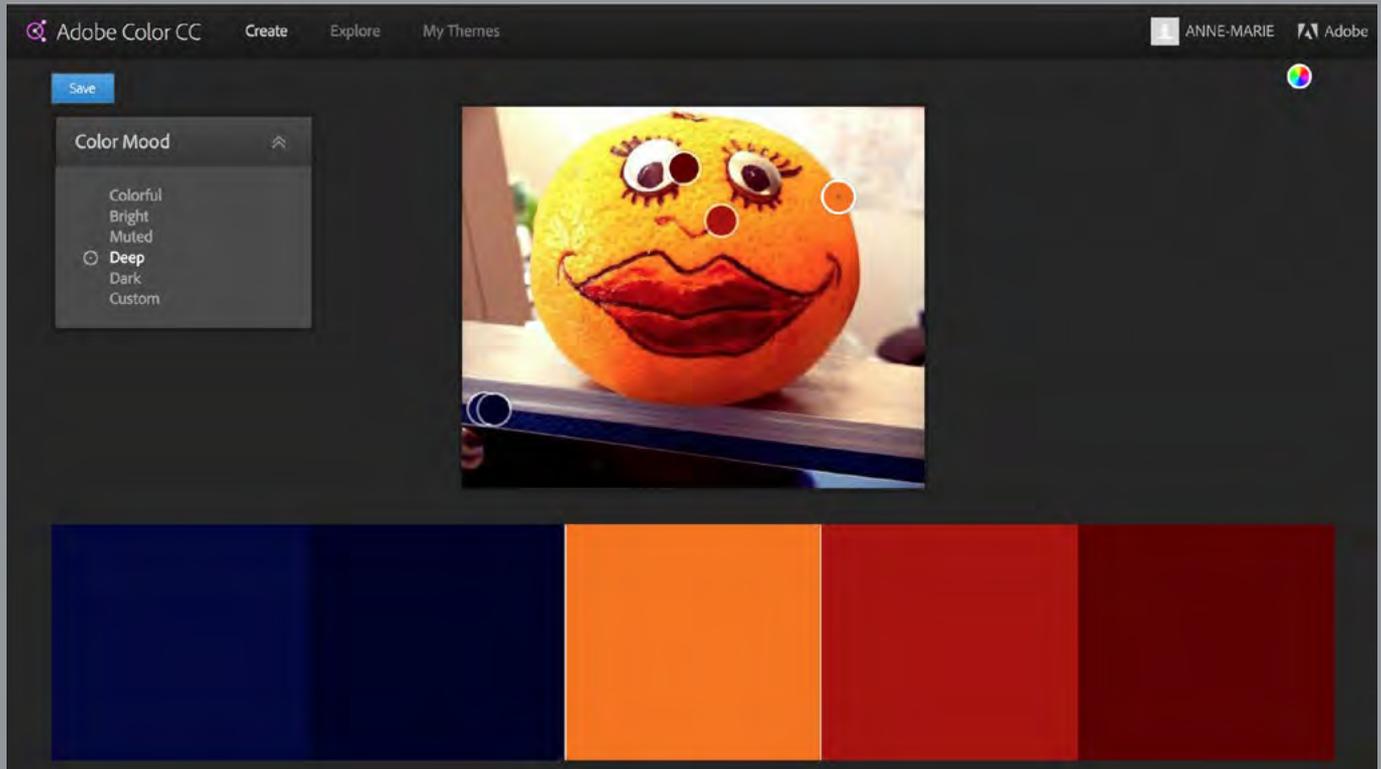
Analogous palettes pick adjacent colours on the colour wheel, creating calming, sophisticated and harmonious combinations.



Complementary palettes use colours from opposite sides of the wheel, giving a more dynamic combination.



Triadic, as it sounds, from three points of the wheel give a contrasting lively combination, you could have one main colour, a secondary colour for interest and the third to highlight the call to action for example.



Or if you have a photograph to use as your hero image at the top of your site, you can use some of these apps to upload your image to, and they will generate palettes to match.

This is a picture of me from a few years ago!

In summary:

- Define the hierarchy of information
- Consider the audience
- Get aligned
- Limit the number of typefaces – one or two
- Give your elements some space
- Be consistent

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