

## **ART 263 Web Site Design**

### **Core Concepts**

Below are some core concepts that you need to understand in order to create effective web sites. This handout should be considered as a companion to the *Basic Guide to Web Site Design*.

### **Technical**

1. Everything is linked: A web site consists of HTML files to which images, style sheets, javascript, video, audio, and other media/files are linked. When you publish or transport a web site all of the linked files need to go along with the HTML files: Though they are linked, they are still separate files.
2. Every file has an extension: A 3-4 letter extension must follow every file name. For example, JPEG files must have the extension .jpg following the file name; HTML files use the extension .htm or html.
3. Space and punctuation is not permitted in filenames. They are also case-sensitive.
4. Only certain types of files can be displayed on web pages. For example, Photoshop (.psd) and TIFF files cannot.
5. Screen dimensions are measured in pixels, not inches. When you are resizing images you need to pay attention to the pixel dimensions.

### **Design**

1. Think mobile first and how a design can be expanded for larger display sizes. Starting with the lowest screen size will streamline the development process.

2. Design and content should go hand-in-hand: Give equal weight to both and let the content (and audience) help inform your design.
3. Your design is implemented through style sheets. In most cases these will be external linked files. A linked style sheet can be applied to every HTML file (i.e. web page) in your site. Using this strategy you can make global changes very easily.
4. Give yourself some rules to adhere to. For example, a limited and consistent color palette.
5. Consider how you are dividing your screen space into logical areas designing to hold certain types of content. Everything should have a home and that home should be consistent in appearance and position.
6. It may help you to work from a grid (in Dreamweaver choose View menu -> Grid -> Show Grid; to adjust the grid choose View menu -> Grid -> Grid Settings...). When working with a grid, think rows and columns.
7. Most web sites consist of a header (or banner), footer, main content area, and navigation.

## **Structure**

1. Your design will dictate how you need to structure your site. Some sites have a very complex structure (blogs often do) while others are much simpler.
2. DIV elements are used to divide your layout up into “boxes” into which you can place content. These boxes are then sized and positioned (and given other properties) using style sheet rules.
3. You may start by simply placing your content sequentially within the BODY of an HTML file and then wrapping DIV tags around that content.
4. If an image is to be embedded within a body of text both text and image would be contained by the same DIV.

5. Navigational elements are best formatted as unordered lists. A list structure provides great flexibility in terms of how navigation is presented and its appearance can be controlled very precisely using style sheet rules.
6. Most HTML tags have a companion closing tag. For example, a DIV is written as follows: `<div> content goes here </div>`.
7. The natural flow of a web page is from top to bottom, i.e., *rows*. If you wish to create columns you must disrupt that natural flow by taking elements and repositioning them via style sheet rules. Elements can be either *floated* or *positioned*.
8. Elements can be floated to the left or right of each other.
9. Central horizontal positioning is achieved using either the *text-align* property set to *center* or by applying equal margins to the left and right of a container. Central vertical positioning is much more complex and requires additional style sheet rules. See the two examples on the class resource web page.