

Gracefully Responsive Web Design

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Responsive design allows a website to work on a desktop computer as well as on mobile phones and tablets of all sizes – a necessity for today’s multi-device world. Responsive websites query the browser for window size and deliver optimized content for varying screen dimensions, but there is an inherent difficulty...

The big design challenge

How can your web pages look good and function well on a tiny mobile phone and also on a huge desktop monitor, not to mention all the device shapes and sizes in-between?

Check out a Responsive website on a desktop computer and observe as you shrink your browser window all the way down – you’ll likely see things abruptly jump around, change size and position, even disappear entirely as the layout transforms to accommodate the diminishing real estate.

Enter *Gracefully Responsive* design

Gracefully Responsive web design smooths out the lumps and inconsistencies for a more refined and harmonious viewing experience no matter how someone chooses to engage with your content. To be sure, this endeavor involves some creative thinking, forethought and effort. But we like what Ross Perot says:

“You can always find ten ways to prove something can’t be done. The trick is finding one way it can be done.”

Three ways it can be done

Following, are notions to consider as a start toward more *Gracefully Responsive* web design.

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1. Gracefully Responsive navigation

To see how today's top Responsive sites handle navigation, you can Google "Best Responsive websites." A quick inspection reveals that navigation links for mobile viewing are often mismatched when compared to the same links on a desktop. For example, the mobile links might use white type on a dark-colored background whereas the desktop links use differently-styled black type on a light-colored background.

Since your website navigation scheme is the main portal through which visitors find and experience your content, why would you ever want it to unexpectedly change in look and style?

The example below shows navigation design that is coordinated. The links in a collapsible drop-down menu for mobile (left and center) look the same as when they transform into an expanded view for larger screens (right).



In addition, the above uses animation for an extra graceful transition between vertical and horizontal navigation modes (feel free to see how it works at toddlerneradvertising.com). This brings us to our next point...

2. Gracefully Responsive touches of animation

In Responsive design, things often vanish and re-materialize elsewhere. This doesn't merely occur as a desktop screen resizes – it can also happen when someone turns their mobile phone or tablet from portrait to landscape and back again. Touches of animation as things relocate can turn a disconcerting negative into an eye-rewarding positive.

Below is an example where three page elements (left) slide from a horizontal layout into a mobile-friendly and scrollable vertical format (center and right).



The above animation is fun to watch (you can [see it here](#)), but it also exemplifies the very spirit of Responsive design. If this action could speak it would say: “Resize your desktop screen ... rotate your phone or tablet... I’ll happily and gracefully adapt to your viewing preferences.”

There are many instances where touches of animation can soften the herky-jerkyness of a Responsive web page. Type can animate as it changes in size, for instance. And objects removed as a layout contracts can gently fade away rather than unexpectedly blip out of existence.

3. *Gracefully* Responsive overall simplicity

If the following makes sense to you, then the virtue of simplicity in Responsive design becomes evident:

- a. Your website needs to work well on a small mobile screen
- b. Simpler design fits better on a small screen
- c. It’s good if your site looks similar on all devices small and large

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So with the above in mind, instead of starting with a desktop-size website and attempting to cram everything down to the space of a tiny mobile screen, it seems best to begin with a less complex mobile-friendly design. From there you can better scale things up in an agreeable manner.

To save space, perhaps some detailing can be subordinated and accessed hierarchically. Your material doesn't necessarily need to be overly stark, but a discerning attempt at simplicity can go a long way toward achieving more *Gracefully Responsive* web pages.

And don't forget that leaner web pages can load faster, which is especially appreciated on slower mobile connections.

A scenario

The following isn't hard to imagine: A prospect finds your website using her desktop computer ... her screen is sized up and down as she multitasks on other projects ... later in the day while on the move she accesses your site from a mobile phone ... in the evening she's hanging out on the sofa and shows it to her husband using a tablet.

Now in all of the above situations, don't you want your brand communication to be predictably consistent? As elegant and appealing as possible?

Yes, we are talking about escalating the complexity of a task that is already tricky – but aiming for *Gracefully Responsive* design can reward you with a website possessing a more integrated and flowing seductiveness.