

Your Website Design:
6 Tips to Make You
**Look Like
a Pro**

Written & designed by Pamela Wilson



Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



The days of websites that were impossible — or expensive — to edit yourself are long gone, thankfully. With self-hosted WordPress sites and a good premium theme, you have all the tools you need to create beautiful, effective websites to represent your business on the Internet.

And with these two tools in hand, you don't have to have a design degree to make a great-looking site.

But *with great power comes great responsibility*, as the saying goes. In order to get the most out of your premium theme, keep these design and usability tips in mind:

1. Create clarity, not confusion.

Every website is a little different, but over time website conventions have arisen. These create expectations your visitors have when they arrive at your site for the first time.

A. Show the way

Visitors expect to find things in certain places, on your website, like:

- A website header image along the top that tells them the name of your site, and a tagline that explains what it offers.
- Navigation menus that point to what they can find on your site. They expect to see the navigation menu above or below the header image, or along the left side of your site.
- A main content area that starts on the left side and occupies the majority of the space on the page
- Standard pages like Home; About; Contact Us. They may also look for pages like FAQ; Products or Services; or News.

Your visitors expect to find things in certain places when they arrive at your site for the first time.

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro

Web users have come to expect these standard conventions, so don't fight them. Work with their expectations by presenting your information within a structure they're familiar with.

B. Use logical names to label your navigation menu items

When it comes to the labels on your navigation, use words that will clearly explain what the visitor will find when they click on them. Your visitor will thank you if you avoid anything tricky, confusing or obscure.

C. Spell it out

When writing text, make your subheads informational so readers understand what they'll learn if they read the whole article. Use plain English and avoid jargon. This makes even long articles easy to scan, and this characteristic attracts people and makes them want to linger on your page.

2. Custom headers set the tone: invest in one or create it yourself.

When you use a premium WordPress theme with design controls, you can easily insert custom header artwork at the top of your site. Many people avoid this step because they don't feel like they're capable of putting together a website header that will look good.

That's a mistake.

Your website header is the very first impression visitors have of your site. It should include your site name, so people know they've arrived at the right place, and a tagline that promises what they'll find there.

It's also where you can establish your brand. Your site colors, textures, logo, and images set the tone and communicate what your business represents.

Your website header is the very first impression visitors have of your site.

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



If this sounds complicated, don't worry. [Site Setup Kit](#) offers an entire lesson that shows you how to create a custom site header for your website. We'll walk you through a step-by-step process that will result in a beautiful, unique site header you'll be proud of.

Even people with no "artistic talent" have created professional-looking website headers using the method we share, and they've saved themselves hundreds of dollars in the process.

3. Set your site up with a cohesive color palette and use it on every page. Consistency builds trust.

The color you use on your site sends a message, and establishes your visual brand. To be sure you're sending a clear message, minimize the number of colors you use on your site, and choose an accent color to direct their eyes to your most important information. Read on to find out how.

Your colors send a message and establish your brand in the mind of your site visitor.

A. Pick two main colors

The two main colors you use for your site can come from your logo or other existing marketing materials. You don't need to count black or dark grey text as one of the two colors, and you can leave out the white background you use behind your text, too.

If you're starting from scratch and don't have any colors picked out, visit the page below for information and tools for choosing two main colors for your site:

Which Colors Are Best for Your Business? <http://www.bigbrandsystem.com/color/>

B. Use an accent color for conversion

Once you've set up your site with two main colors and used them consistently on every page, you can choose an accent color that will help you emphasize any area of your site you want to draw attention to.

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



Your accent color is sometimes called a “conversion color.” That’s because many people use this third color to emphasize their “call to action,” which is text or an image that directs the visitor to take some kind of action.

The action might be:

- opting in to your email list in exchange for free information
- clicking on a link to your sales page
- visiting your online shop

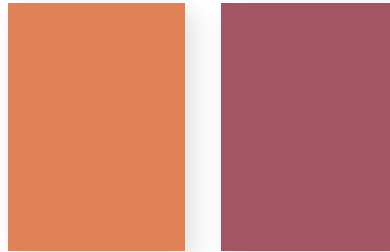
For more information on calls to action, see Tip 6.

Your accent color should stand out and be different from your two main colors. It should be brighter, bolder, and in a different color range. For example:

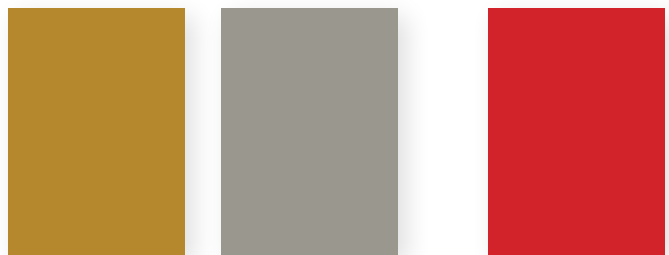
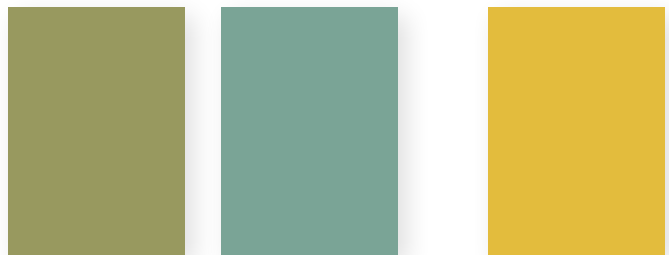
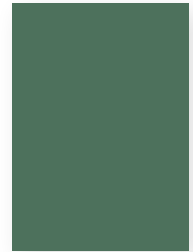
- If your two main colors are dark, your accent color should be light and bright.
- If your two main colors are cool (blues, greens, purples) then your accent color should be warm (red, orange, yellow).

Use this accent color on any important buttons, opt-in forms, headlines, subheads or ads you’d like your visitor to notice first.

MAIN COLORS



ACCENT COLORS





4. Use clear, easy-to-read fonts.

Your font choices will affect not only the perception of your brand, but also the basic readability of your information. This is a crucial step — visitors won't linger on a site that's unreadable.

They won't stay on one that looks disorganized, either. That's why you should limit the fonts you use to two.

Don't worry about fonts you might have used in your logo or website header artwork. If you can use those on your site and they're readable and look good, great. Otherwise, you don't need to count them among the two fonts you limit yourself to.

For more information about **choosing fonts**, read this post:

<http://www.bigbrandsystem.com/design-101-7-typographic-resources-and-1-type-joke/>

For information on **combining fonts on the web**, read this post:

<http://www.bigbrandsystem.com/typeface-combinations-that-work-on-the-web/>

To check **how the fonts you'd like to use look together**, try this site:

<http://font-combinator.com/>

Your font choices affect brand perception and the readability of your information.

5. Use images to draw people in.

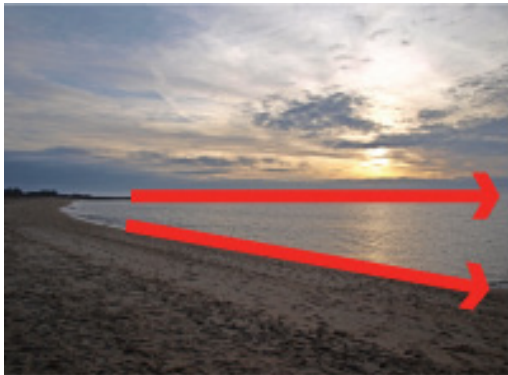
People love pictures. If you've got a lot of information to convey, let images carry some of the burden. Your pages will look more appealing, and you'll communicate via two different "channels," the visual and the verbal.

A. Sight lines

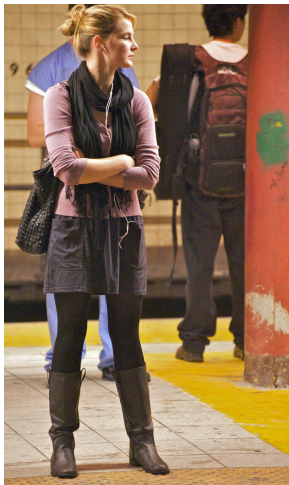
When using images on your page, keep in mind that most images have "sight lines" that will direct your viewer's eyes. Look at the examples on the next page:

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



Use sight lines to send your viewers eyes directly toward the text or image you want them to look at.



B. Crop to improve your images

An easy way to improve the quality of an image is to crop in on it, deleting all the parts that aren't crucial. You can also crop your images in ways that make sight lines more obvious.

To quickly crop images, you can use a free online photo tool like iPiccy.com. You upload your image, crop out the boring parts, and download your finalized photo. iPiccy has retouching tools, too.

C. Where to find good images

My favorite sites for good quality stock images are istockphoto.com and bigstockphoto.com. They have a vast, searchable collection and the images are priced reasonably.

Here's how to make the most out of stock photo sites:

- Add the word “concept” or “abstract” to your search term for out-of-the-ordinary results
- Avoid purchasing “hot” or “popular” images so you don't use an image that has been used in many other places

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



- Spend the time to “dig deep” and go beyond the search results on the first page or two

You can find lots of free photos on the Internet, too. Don’t just grab anything you see: that’s not only unethical, it may be illegal.

Instead, visit sites that are set up for image sharing. My favorite resource is the Creative Commons images at Flickr.com

The easiest way to search the Flickr Creative Commons collection is to use a search tool that was designed for the task, **Compfight.com**: <http://compfight.com>

In the left column, be sure to select “Commercial” after you do your image search.

This will give you photos that people have freely shared on Flickr. You’re allowed to crop, add filters, combine and otherwise modify the images you find in this group.

You’re asked to give credit to the photographer, so if you decide to use one of these images, be sure to find a place on your page where you add the photographer’s name, mention the photo is from Flickr, and add a link back to the photo on the Flickr website.

Write your photo credit like this: **Photo by (NAME) on Flickr** (make the word Flickr a link back to the photo on their site).

6. Every page should have a purpose: make it very clear what you’d like the visitor to do.

Website conventions or not, every site on the web is a little different. The first split second someone is on your site, they’re getting their bearings and starting to look around.

If they like what they see, they’ll spend more time

The first split second, they’re getting their bearings and starting to look around.

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro

on your pages. At this point, you've hooked them. Now it's time to reel them in!

You've piqued their interest, and now your #1 job is to channel them toward an action. *One* action.

Decide what *one* thing you'd like your site visitor to do. Some ideas are:

- Sign up for your email list (in exchange for valuable, free information, naturally)
- Call for a free consultation
- Visit your online store
- Fill out your survey
- Download your free report

Set up your page so that all the design decisions you make channel visitors toward your call to action. Try these techniques:

- Use an accent color to draw attention to your call to action
- Use larger, bolder type where you feature your call to action
- Add an image to represent the benefit of completing the action you'd like them to take. This might be an image of the free report or picture of the results they'll get. Make sure to use sight lines in the image to direct the viewers' eyes to your call to action.

There's one extra tip I'd like to add, and it's important. Read on!

Site Setup Kit makes it easy: our Style Warehouse features a growing library of professionally-designed WordPress styles that install in minutes. They're all built using the versatile platform and design controls of the Prose theme, by StudioPress. [Find out more here.](#)

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



BONUS TIP!

Take baby steps toward your goals

You've read this far and might be feeling overwhelmed. The trick to accomplishing these tasks is to tackle them one at a time. Take small steps toward your ultimate goal, and just keep moving. Use this checklist to keep you motivated.

Website Design Checklist

My navigation menu items will be:

My custom header will consist of these elements:

And I will:

create it myself

contract with _____ to create it

I have researched how to choose colors, and my two main site colors are:

_____ and _____

Your Website Design: 6 Tips to Make You

Look Like a Pro



The fonts I plan to use on my site are:

_____ and _____

I have explored the images on stock photo sites and have downloaded some of the images I'll need.

I've experimented with iPiccy.com and have used it to crop, retouch or apply a filter to my images.

The one main action I want site visitors to take is:

I am going to emphasize my call to action by doing this:

Remember, a polished, professional website will be worth the effort. Follow the tips in this report, and your site will stand out for all the right reasons!

For a free in-depth class that shows you how to set up a polished, professional website you control yourself, sign up for the *free* **Love Your Website online class** that Wendy Cholbi and I teach:

[Click to register for our free Love Your Website online class.](#)



Wendy Cholbi
WendyCholbi.com



Pamela Wilson
BigBrandSystem.com