

DSGN 4020 Design Studio 5: Collaborative Projects – Project 4 Guide

This is an outline of the suggested process for Project 4.

Design Brief (due Friday, Dec. 4)

The Design Brief should be a one-page written description of your objectives and strategies for the project. For this project, you should consider these questions:

- What will I work on? (The suggested project is a web portfolio of your work).
- What requirements should the design satisfy?
- How can I satisfy these requirements in a unique way?
- Who is the target audience?

When considering the target audience for a portfolio website, think about whether you want to focus on appealing to an employer, or if you plan to focus on freelance work, appealing to potential clients. Here is a useful article discussing these different approaches:

- http://www.digital-web.com/articles/the_perfect_portfolio/

Research

If you're working on a web portfolio of your work, find other examples of web portfolios that you like. Why are they effective?

How have you presented your work in the past? How might this translate into a web portfolio?

At this point, you should also determine how you will go about creating the website. In class, we'll look at how to create a basic website using HTML. If you have some web design experience already, you could design your site using a content management system such as Wordpress.

Editing Content

Before designing your site, you should have a clear idea of what material you will be presenting. Don't include everything you've ever worked on in your portfolio. Edit your portfolio to create a focussed presentation of your best and most recent work. A simple gallery of 10 of your best examples can be concise and effective. If you have a diverse portfolio, you can organize your work into categories - communication design, illustration, web design, and so on.

Think about supplementary material as well. You could include a CV, a statement of your design philosophy, a list of services you provide, and so on. Don't forget to include contact information! Here is an article which discusses various components of a portfolio website:

- <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/02/26/10-steps-to-the-perfect-portfolio-website/>

Prototype Your Website

In class, we've looked at prototyping websites using paper prototyping, as well as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. If this is your first time designing a functioning website, the key is to keep it simple. A web portfolio is basically a series of slides, so the website does not need to be overly complex. The focus should be on your work, so avoid distracting backgrounds and overly complex navigation.

Think about how to effectively communicate your experience, skills, and focus as a designer. Do you need a logo? Can you include a tagline that briefly introduces what you have to offer? Are there certain projects you would like to feature prominently, or include more detail about?

Build Your Website

In class, we'll go over how to translate your prototype design into a working website using HTML. Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) can be used to structure the presentation of your website. More complex interactivity can be achieved using Javascript or Flash. You can also use scripts such as Lightbox, which is a simple pop-up image viewer which can be easily added to your site.

While developing your website, it is a good idea to test it using different web browsers (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, and Chrome) and at different screen resolutions. We'll look at some tools that can help when testing a website, such as the Web Developer Toolbar for Firefox.

Publish and Promote Your Website

We'll look at how to get a domain name and web hosting, and how to publish a website using FTP. (For the purposes of this project, you are not required to put your portfolio on the web, but we'll go over this briefly for those who are interested.)

If you are active on Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites, it can be a good idea to link your website to those services. You can also promote your site by asking friends to link to it, leaving comments on blogs, and including your web address in appropriate places such as your business card, your CV, or your e-mail signature.