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Kristen Williams

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# Beginner's Tips for Website Design

By Kristen Williams



With so much taking place online, effectively designing and marketing websites are important skills; but acquiring those skills can be difficult.

The problem? Apart from taking a Digital Publishing course, there are millions of places to look for advice, but what advice is actually helpful?

I turned to UAB Digital Media for guidance, interviewing Courtney Lassiter, a Media Fellow. Her job involves producing creative content for the University, as well as editing and building websites. And pursuing a career in graphic design means offering tips on design and marketing is in her wheelhouse.

## DEVELOPING YOUR LAYOUT

Courtney joked about her habit of analyzing every menu she encounters, but stressed that it's because of the important role layout plays in any visual medium. It's a major part of marketing.

"How you lay out the content completely changes the meaning," she said, "if you have something that's poorly laid out it's not going to convey what you want to say effectively."

Creating a "wireframe" sketch for your site's layout on paper is a great starting point. Then, a program like Sketch (which she recommended), can help you transition those ideas into your website. "Sketch is cool because it allows you to see the differences between various screen sizes, like desktop, tablets and phones," Courtney said.

Sketch is only compatible with Mac and does charge you yearly, so you might want to check out some alternatives depending on your budget.

For designing visual content for your site, Canva offers helpful design templates, works on Windows and Mac, and has a free option.

## USING LINKS EFFECTIVELY

With this tip, Courtney discussed that when linking to other sites you never want to send your audience away completely. That is: you don't want your audience to leave your site for another within the same tab.

Courtney explained that if you link to another site like this "[your audience is] going go there, and they're going to stay there, and they'll never come back."

Instead of leaving your site for another, have links open in a new tab. She stated, "that way they'll have to at least come back and exit out of [your site]. Always make them come back to you."

## BE MINDFUL OF ACCESSIBILITY

This, she claimed, is "the most important part of designing a website." Courtney said: "if you have a glass hamburger, it's nice to look at, but you can't eat it."

That's a similar problem for a website that's visually appealing, but lacks accessibility.

Some ways to check your website's accessibility are: assess who it might be alienating, ensure content is functional and, again, examine the layout.

Her parting advice: "It's never going to be perfect." However, following these tips can put a beginner on track to generating a high-quality website.