

Finding and Using Design Inspiration

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Introduction

Design inspiration is a crucial part of improving your web design skills. By design inspiration, I mean any nice-looking design that you see online. In general, it is crucial to collect and catalog good design inspiration always.

It is important for two reasons:

1. You can analyze it to get better.
2. You can refer to it whenever you have a specific design problem. You can look through your saved inspirations and see if any of them solve the problem you are having.

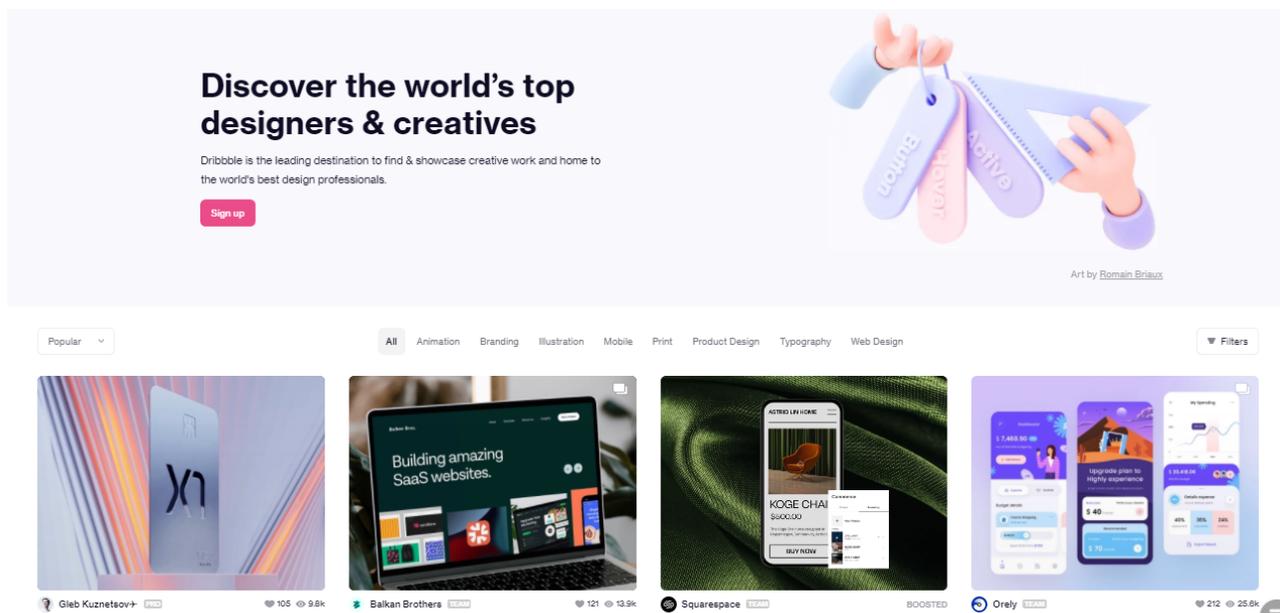
This lesson is divided into two parts.

First, you'll learn where you can find great design inspiration and then, I'm going to tell you what to do with it. I'll show you my simplest, go-to ways of cataloging it, but you are welcome to use whatever system works best for you. The end goal is that you never just click by a good-looking site without cataloging it in some way or storing it so that your future self can refer to it when you're stuck on a design issue.

Where to find design inspiration?

Dribbble

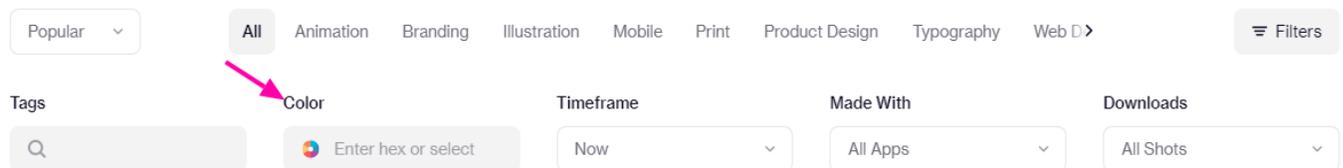
Probably one of the most popular sites to collect design inspiration is [Dribbble](#). It's a website where designers post finished work - or sometimes their works in progress.



Here, you can follow different designers or different design studios. Follow enough designers, and you'll get this stream of incredible design inspiration - a constant stream of new ideas. You don't even need to follow anyone. You can just filter for the popular outcomes to see the current trends.

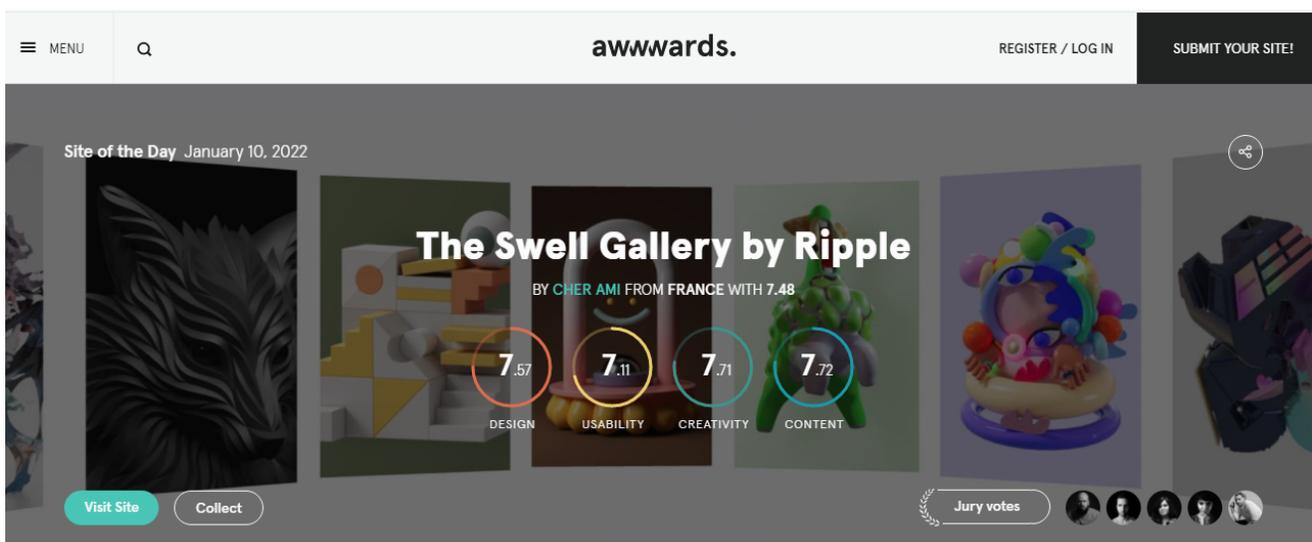
The overall quality of the work shared here is very good.

And from an inspiration perspective, the nice feature of Dribbble is the fact that you can search by color: literally any HEX code.



Awwwards

Next website, [Awwwards](#), you probably know already. It is pretty much the gold standard when it comes to acknowledging the highest-quality web design produced today.

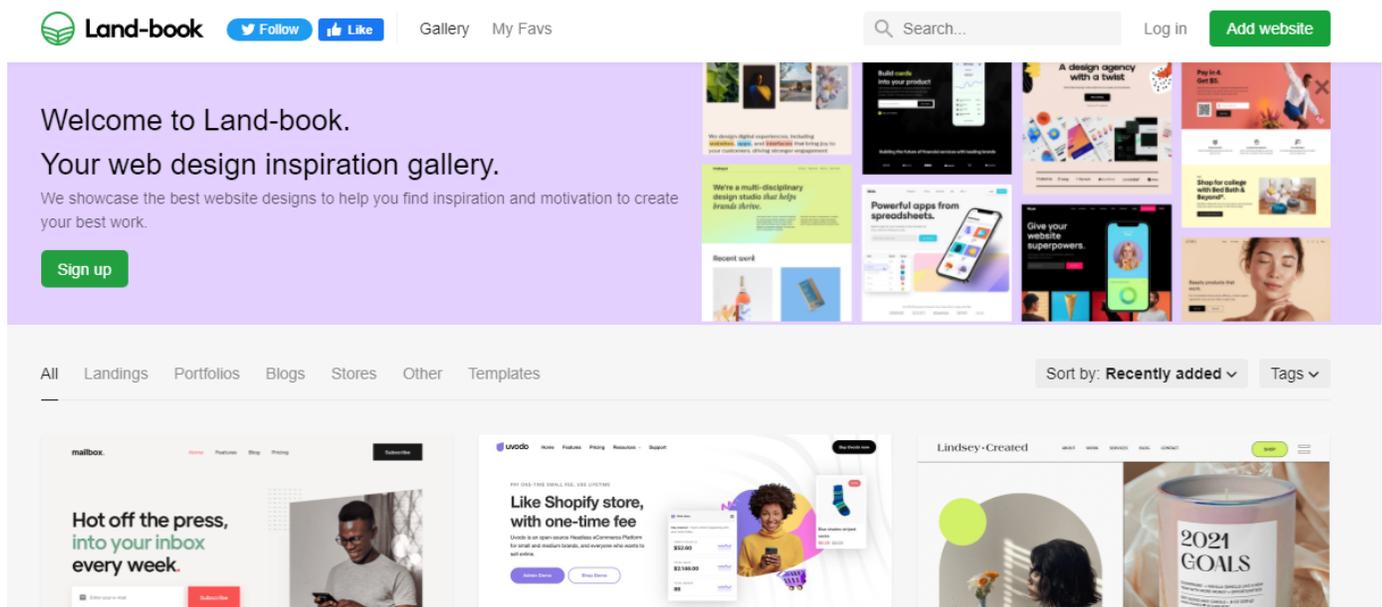


Awwwards has a hand-picked jury of web experts to weigh in on each submitted site.

And they don't just evaluate a site based on how good it looks: instead, they consider each site's design, usability, creativity, and content, give each dimension a score, then calculate a total score.

Land-book

Land-book is marketed as having "the finest hand-picked website inspirations", and with good reason. Land-book offers a wide showcase of landing pages from various industries. Here, you'll find a wide range of design inspiration, from SaaS landing pages, agency websites, portfolios, and all the way to ecommerce stores.

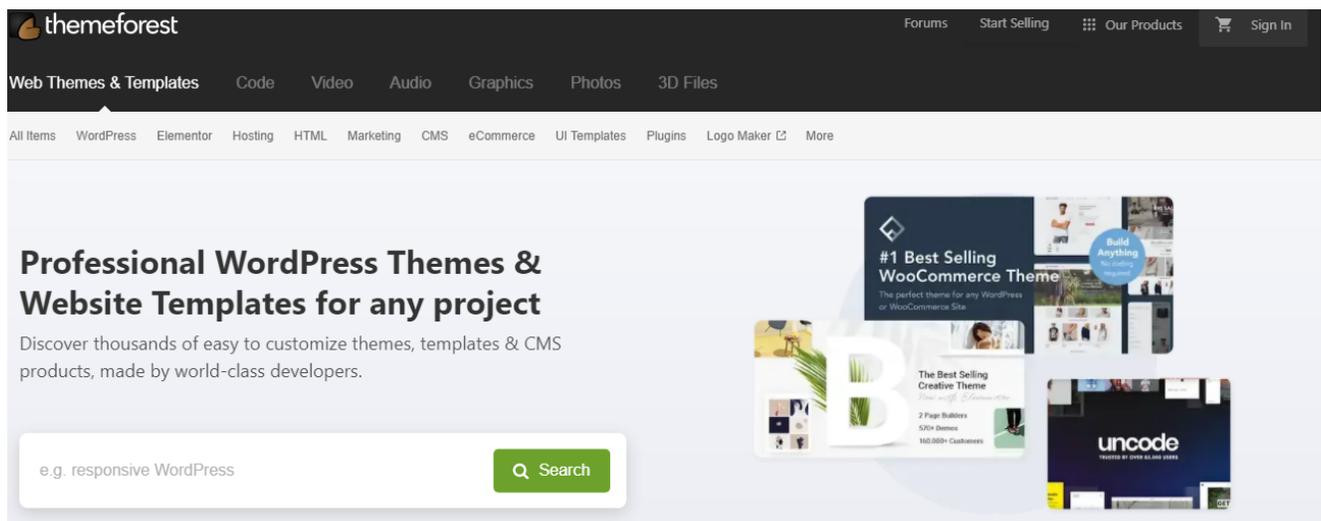


You can even make an account on their website and save a collection of the website designs you'd like to reference later. Whether you're looking for retro designs, inspiration for social media, looking to do a redesign, or working on user interfaces, Land-book is a good place to get inspired.

Theme shops

A theme shop might not be the first place you think of when you're looking for creative inspiration. After all, the designs tend to be on the more generic side of the visual spectrum. However, websites like [Theme Forest](#) or [Template Monster](#) can be really effective places to jump off from since quality themes tend to have really good architecture and often pay close attention to best practices.

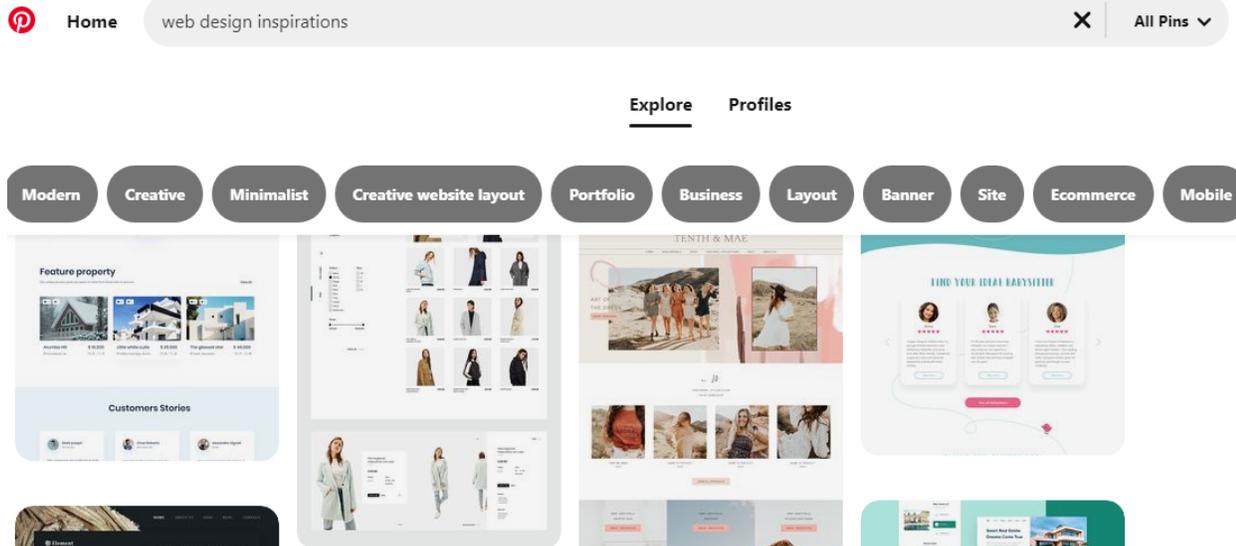
It's a good idea to look at what theme shops have on offer when you need to create a specific project, for example a restaurant website. Looking at the themes, you can quickly identify what elements such a website should have.



Pinterest

The last website I often check when searching for inspiration is [Pinterest](#).

If you search for “web design inspiration” on Pinterest, you’ll see all the users who pinned their favorite web design content for others to see. You can also set up an account and create your own boards full of inspiration.



Be on the lookout

The final way of finding good design inspiration is just your normal Web browsing. Anytime you see a nice-looking page, take a moment to get inspired. The nice thing about looking at the live site is that it's going to come with different animations, hover effects, which aren't easy to capture in the static screenshots that you usually see on Dribbble.

Another thing that's good about collecting actual URLs of great websites is that you can go to where you know there's good design and you can analyze the responsive design patterns. You can see how the design behaves when you shrink your browser window, or how the mobile version looks.

Useful Chrome extensions

There are two useful Chrome extensions I'd like to mention here. One is called [Awesome Screenshot & Screen Recorder](#) and I use it to easily download full page screenshots. It

doesn't work perfectly every time, especially when there is a lot of animation going on, but it is useful.

Thanks to this extension, you don't need to take multiple screenshots and manually piece it together in Photoshop to get the full page layout as an image.

The other extension is called [WhatFont](#), and you can use it to easily check out the fonts on any live website. So if you have this extension installed - and you should - you can just hover over any text on the site and see what font they're using.

What to do with your inspiration?

Now, the big question is: what do you do once you have found some design inspiration?

Save it

Well, it depends on where you found it. For websites like Dribbble or Pinterest, you can set up an account and create collections (or boards) with your favorite designs. For other websites, it's great to keep screenshots in a folder, just as simple as that. You can also simply bookmark nice websites and keep a folder of bookmarks with links to great websites.

Analyze it

OK, so you have a bunch of designs saved and you might be wondering: how is that helpful? The main thing you should do is take the time to analyze your inspirations - look at them in detail and notice the similarities between the sites you like.

Take screenshots and actually write down what exactly you like about a website. Try to be as specific as you can. If you find yourself always saying "nice colors" "awesome fonts" - dig deeper.

A good observation is something like "everything is aligned with something else", "the buttons look interesting because they use subtle gradients". Once you do that many times, you'll start noticing the same things you like across different websites.

Some of you might be worried that you don't have an eye for design. I often hear comments like "I know that my sites don't look good but I don't know why". Analyzing good designs will help you make the important connections, notice similar patterns, and eventually improve your own work.

Recreate it

Another great exercise for beginners is trying to recreate the page or just a part of the page pixel by pixel, just for practice. I don't necessarily mean the functionality because it is going to be difficult recreating any site in Divi if you are a beginner. Recreate the website in a graphic software if you are a designer, for example.

I want you to try to recreate the design itself, the alignment, font sizes, colors etc. When it all soaks in, you'll start noticing the tiny but important details, for example how many pixels a border radius is or the color of the box shadow, and so on.

The fun part is that you shouldn't use the browser inspector. Simply try to recreate the website by eye, just by looking at it. This way, you'll force yourself to look into the design in more detail. And of course, this exercise is just for practice. You'd never want to copy someone else's design pixel by pixel!

Be original

And that takes us to my next point. I just want to take a second to address the elephant in the room, which is plagiarism.

I talked a lot about finding other designers' work and how you should draw inspiration from others. But obviously, you don't want to be plagiarizing other people's designs, you just want to be inspired by the best of what's out there. So here are a couple ideas you should consider to avoid plagiarism.

First of all, the best idea is to draw inspiration from multiple sources. Then, it is not plagiarism but recombination. So if I go and get a font from a particular site that I like, I might use that font. I wouldn't use the same color palette of that same site. I might draw inspiration for a similar set of colors from a different site. And for the imagery, maybe my inspiration will be from yet another site and I may end up using some sort of motif or do something similar to what they do.

So that's one thing: never focus on one site only.

But there's another fantastic way to avoid copying off of someone (because in some cases you might do that inadvertently). When you do any sort of inspiration-gathering, commit one day to finding your inspiration and analyzing it, but then stop for a moment and take some time away from the project. Better yet, sleep on it.

On the next day, do your design work without looking at the original. This way, you'll remember what your thoughts and impressions were, but you'll be trying to do things on your own from there. This will help to prevent your designs becoming too similar to the ones you were drawing inspiration from.

To sum it up: the more sources you draw inspiration from, and the more time you put in between getting inspired and designing, the better.

Resources

GET INSPIRED:

[Dribbble](#)

[Awwwards](#)

[Land-book](#)

[Theme Forest](#)

[Template Monster](#)

[Pinterest](#)

ANALYZE LIVE WEBSITES:

[Awesome Screenshot](#)

[WhatFont](#)

Action Items

- Set up an account on two of the websites mentioned above (if you don't have one yet). Spend 15 minutes looking through examples and add/pin/save to a collection something for inspiration.
- Install the WhatFont browser extension and inspect fonts on a couple of different websites.
- Create a folder on your desktop (or somewhere easily accessible) for capturing screenshots of sites you like. Add screenshots from 3 sites to get things started.
- Find 3-5 sites with great interface design. Write out what you believe makes each of these great, along with some screenshots of each.
- Post your finished analysis in the Facebook Group. Don't be afraid to "take over" the group with your posts – it's there for everyone to post homework and get feedback! There are more than enough overly-negative designer communities online; this is not one of them!