Working with Images

Hello and welcome to the lesson on working with images. In this video I'll share my tips and things to consider when choosing and displaying photography and illustrations on your websites.

Use good photos

So, the first and probably the most obvious advice is to always use the best, highest quality photos. It is a very important aspect, and you shouldn't underestimate the power of imagery. We all love beautiful pictures and as we know finding the perfect one might take surprisingly a lot of our precious time. While building a website, new blog post, or any other creative project we will aim for attractive visuals. Those photos will initiate particular feelings among our viewers and will help to point out the goal behind the design. Photos we choose simply reflect our style, unique voice, and the message behind our brand. Bad photos will ruin any website layout, even if everything else about it looks great. If your website needs photography and you're not a talented photographer, you've basically got two options. You can hire a professional photographer, it is always best to trust a professional. If you are working with clients, you should always recommend they do a professional photo shoot. With a beautiful and consistent set of images, it will be much easier to create something great. I understand that clients are different, and sometimes, you know, it is what it is - they can't provide great photography. You are left with option number two, which is using stock photography. Whenever you're choosing free or

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paid stock photos make sure they look authentic. There is nothing worse than images like this. Instead, try finding the images that look less, well fake.

Free Stock Photography

My two go-to stock photography websites I use are: 'Unsplash' - very popular and one of the biggest collections of free images with a super useful 'collection' feature. Once you create an account here, you'll be able to create your own collections, to easily catalog the images you find. It's great for gathering inspiration when you just add images you like into a collection, and then take a closer look at that collection to actually pick the images you're going to use. Next website is - 'Pixabay' and here we can also find loads of free images, but you can also find video files, which when used sparingly as a background can add a special touch to your design.

Methods for overlaying text on images

Now, speaking of background - I'd like to share a few tips and things to consider when using images with text. You need to make sure text is easy to read and also matches with photos. There are pretty much only a couple of ways you can do that and you should be aware of all these and simply choose one of these methods when you are displaying text on top of an image.

To make sure the text is easy to read you can try adding an overlay. Adding an overlay is a mix of trial and error. It's very important to keep the correct balance to ensure an overlay is transparent enough to be able to show the image however not so transparent to make the text hard to read. You can try experimenting with different overlay colors and blend modes.

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Next option is to colorize the image, and you can do that with a solid color or a gradient. Colorizing images can be used to help make text stand out against an image. For the best results - make sure that the image is desaturated first, so the only color comes from the overlay - it will help to keep the consistent color scheme when using multiple images.

Now, the simplest method to make sure the text is legible and the image is still visible with the original colors - is to use a background colored box behind the text, or to retain the details and main features of a background image there is an effective method of using text shadows.

These methods should be used in a way that casts blur behind the text without offset which enables you to not need to alter the image too much. Now detailed and in-depth images are effective and engaging however they can make it difficult to overlay text. Adding a background blur will draw the attention of the reader to the text as a very clear focal point.

Optimizing your Images

Okay, now, this wouldn't be a very thorough video on working with images on the web if I haven't mentioned optimization. You need to remember to optimize your images and that includes: saving images in the proper color space, RGB and CMYK are the two color spaces that are used within the graphic design. CMYK is the color space for printed materials like business cards, posters, packaging. RGB is the standard for digital products such as website graphics and that is the color space you should use.

You should always keep your image size only as big as it will be displayed to consider page loading speeds and not leaving this task to the browser,

to resize the image for you. You should also use a compression tool before uploading it to a website. There is a popular website online 'Tiny png' which can help you reach surprisingly good quality despite the small image size. There are also WordPress plugins that offer compressing images upon upload, but I would still recommend doing it manually before adding the file to your website.

Now, this might seem obvious, but just to make sure we are on the same page - you need to use the correct file format. There are four major file formats for saving out images in graphics for web: JPEG, PNG, GIF, and SVG. Each file format has its benefits, drawbacks, and intended use case.

To give you a basic overview: JPEG is probably the most commonly used format for raster images. JPEGs are also the smallest in terms of file size. Because of the already small file size if the image is compressed further it can lose quality very easily. JPEGs obviously don't support transparent backgrounds. PNG files unlike JPEG can support transparent backgrounds and also can be compressed without losing much quality. We are likely well aware of what the GIF means in general, they are often used as funny little animations that people send to each other.

They are the different GIFs that can be used for animations, unlike the other formats. This format is limited to 256 colors and it doesn't have an alpha channel like PNG, it can be transparent, but you won't get these smooth transparent edges. One tool I want to recommend here for optimizing, cropping, and resizing GIFs is the 'EZGIF' website. I always create my GIFs by doing a screen recording and then optimize it using this online tool. Last but not least, SVG. This is best suited for vector images meaning you can scale the image infinitely without losing quality. Like JPEG they are also small in size. Because of the scaling ability, the best use for SVG files is logos and icons or illustrations that

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may be required to be displayed in a range of sizes. SVG can be displayed on a website in form of code, instead of the file - allowing us to customize it with CSS.

Consider illustrations and icons

Using SVG takes us to my last point, which is: consider illustrations and icons. Using photos is typically for a specific purpose, to convey a specific feeling or a message and photos aren't always going to be the most effective or appropriate type of image to use. That's why you might want to consider illustrations and icons. They can be used to accompany the text. They are particularly effective at breaking up large pieces of text. You can get nice and free illustrations from these websites: unDraw.com, DrawKit.io, 'Humaaans' come with triple a. What's nice is that you download SVG, and you can use 'Figma' or other design software to edit the image, change the colors, mix the images together. Simply to make sure they fit well with your website content. Because the icons and illustrations you choose have to be consistent in design otherwise, they can look random or messy. Another thing to note when using icons is that you should not scale up icons which were designed to be used in small size, that also includes Divi default icons. Icons that were drawn at 16 to 24 pixels are never going to look very professional when you blow them up three or four times their intended size. They lack detail, and always feel disproportionately "chunky". If small icons are all you've got, try enclosing them inside another shape and giving the shape a background color. This lets you keep the actual icon closer to its intended size, while still filling the larger space.

This is a subtle difference, but as I mentioned many times - all these small details add up and our job is to notice and think about these little things. I hope this lesson will inspire you to pay more attention to your

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imagery choices.

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