

How to create a design comp

A *comprehensive artwork* (*comp* for short) is a design proposal presented by the designer to the client for approval. Web design comps provide a rough visual draft of the overall user interface (including graphics, interface design elements, navigation system, and main content areas) before specific content is placed (**Figure 1**).

Fireworks provides an ideal prototyping environment, seamlessly converting design comps into real-world widgets, websites, and applications.

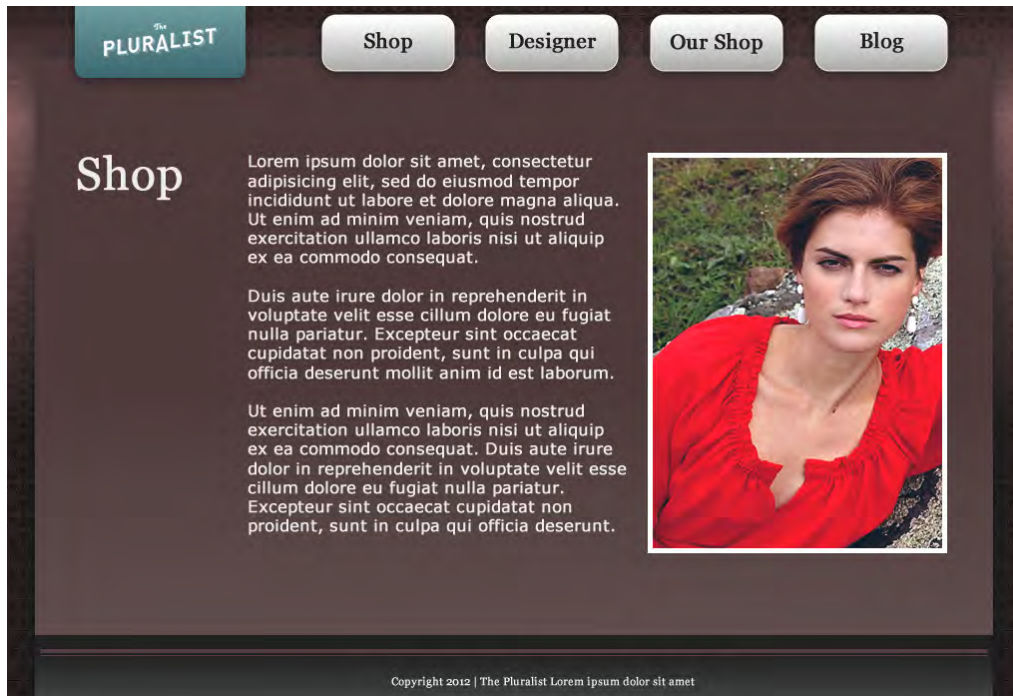


Figure 1 Design comp

The web design process

The typical web design process may be comprised of several stages, including any of the following:

1. *Brief* provides a statement of technical, design, and idea goals for the web project.
2. *Research* involves a range of investigative activities including a review of related web designs, analysis of competitor sites, user flows, personas, market analysis, use cases, and more.
3. *Brainstorming* is a conceptualizing stage based on the brief and research stages in which many ideas are generated in a short amount of time.
4. *Creative solution* follows the brainstorming phase in which briefs, research, and ideas are combined to create a clear design direction. This stage can include technical specifications, information architecture diagrams, functioning wireframes, and design comps. This stage is often *iterative*, a repeating process in which problems are solved, designs are presented to clients for feedback, website functionality is developed and tested, and revisions are made.
5. *Production* fully realizes the web project. Design comps are finalized and integrated into the wireframe prototype, and the web project is scaled up to full production.

As you can see, the design comp is an important piece of the web design process from the creative solution right to the production stage.

Consider the following questions as you plan and build your design comp for a web project.

Organizing content

How you organize content on a page highlights important features and elements of your web project. Important elements might be higher in the page, larger in size, or in stronger colors. Include rough descriptions of navigation, copy layout, graphic allocation, key headers, and other elements that appear on a screen. Identifying common structures between pages helps visitors understand they are in the same site as they navigate from page to page.

- Will your page banner be on each page? If yes, is it in the same place? Is it the same size?
- What font will you use for titles or headings on your content pages?
- What color will you use for titles or headings on your content pages?
- What font will you use for descriptions on your content pages?
- What color will you use for descriptions?

Navigation

For visitors of your website or application to understand the content, you must provide clear navigation. Visitors need to know where they are in a site, where they need to go, and how to get back to where they came from. Having a consistent layout grid helps orient visitors and keeps them from feeling lost. Using consistent buttons, links, and graphics on each page maintains a sense of place. As visitors move from page to page, provide familiar visual cues and navigational aids.

Here are some questions to answer:

- Where will you place the navigation bar on the page?
- What content will be on the navigation bar?
- Will the navigation bar be on every page?
- How will your navigation bar help visitors know which page they are on?

Creating a design comp with Adobe Fireworks CS6

The following steps describe a typical process to follow when using Fireworks to create a design comp. The design comp process described here uses previously-prepared files including a background image, logo, text, and a photographic image.

To create the canvas and import files:

1. Start Fireworks and create a new document using the dimensions for your web project.
2. With Layer 1 selected, choose File > Import.
The Import dialog box (Windows) or Import File dialog box (Mac OS) opens.
3. Navigate to a background image you want to use, and click Import (Windows) or Open (Mac OS).
4. Click in the upper-left corner of the canvas to place the imported background at that location.
The background image is placed on the canvas.

5. In the Properties panel, confirm that the X and Y coordinates are both set to 0 (Figure 2).

6. Choose File > Import.

The Import dialog box (Windows) or Import File dialog box (Mac OS) opens.

7. Navigate to a logo file and click Import (Windows) or Open (Mac OS).

The Import Page dialog box opens (Figure 3).

A single Fireworks PNG file can contain multiple pages. When you insert a PNG file, or page, containing objects from the master layer, the master page is converted to an ordinary layer, and imported.

8. Click the Import button (Windows) or Open button (Mac OS) in the Import Page dialog box.

9. On the canvas, click near the top edge and to the right of the upper-left corner to place the imported logo at that location.

The logo image is placed on the canvas.

10. Choose File > Import.

The Import dialog box (Windows) or Import File dialog box (Mac OS) opens.

11. Navigate to a photograph file and click Import (Windows) or Open (Mac OS).

12. On the canvas, click in the main content area to place the imported logo at that location.

The photograph is placed on the canvas.

13. Select File > Save As and save the file as a PNG.

To use drawing tools, fills, and the alignment panel:

1. From the Tools panel, select the Rectangle tool.

2. In the Properties panel, click the Gradient Fill button.

The Edit Gradient pop-up window opens (Figure 4).

3. Set the gradient type to Linear, if not already selected.

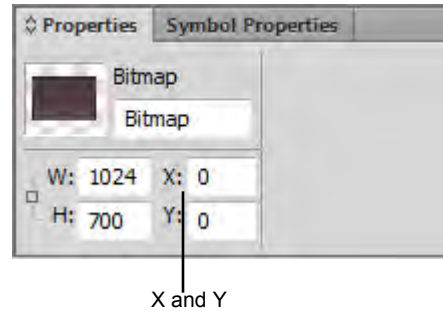


Figure 2 Properties panel, bitmap mode

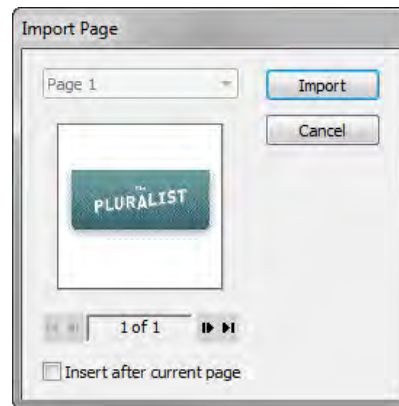


Figure 3 Import Page dialog box

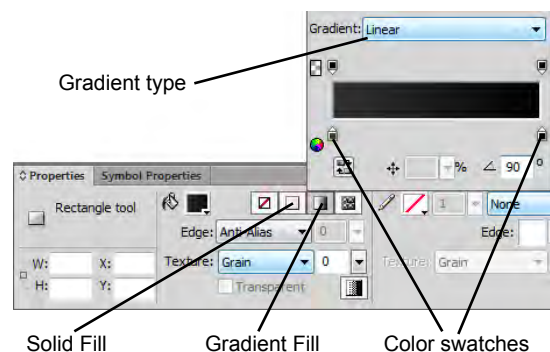


Figure 4 Properties panel, Edit Gradient window

4. Click the color swatch on the left and select a dark-gray color such as HEX value #222222 (**Figure 5**).
5. Click the color swatch on the right and select a slightly lighter gray color such as HEX value #333333.
6. Click the Gradient Fill button again to close the Edit Gradient window.
7. Drag to draw a rectangle shape at the bottom of the canvas.

This rectangle will become the web page footer.

8. Choose Select > Deselect.
9. From the Tools panel, select the Rounded Rectangle tool.
10. In the Properties panel, click the Solid Fill button and choose a light-gray color such as HEX value #CCCCCC.

Note: You could choose instead to add a gradient fill to the rounded rectangle shape.

11. Click the Solid Fill button again to close the color pop-up window.
12. In the Properties panel, set Stroke Color to white (HEX value #FFFFFF), and confirm Tip Size is 1, and Stroke Category is 1-Pixel Soft (**Figure 6**).
13. Make sure Smart Guides are visible and active. If not, select View > Smart Guides, and then select Show Smart Guides and Snap To Smart Guides.
14. Drag on the canvas to draw a rounded rectangle suitable for use as a button.

15. Select the rounded rectangle shape.
16. Select Edit > Duplicate three times to create a total of four buttons.

As you repeat the command, duplicates of the selected object appear in a cascading arrangement from the original. Duplicates appear 10 pixels lower and 10 pixels to the right of the previous duplicate. The most recently duplicated object becomes the selected object.

17. Select the Pointer tool and drag a rounded rectangle over to the right until the Smart Guides appear along the top, and right edge of the object (**Figure 7**).
18. Arrange the remaining shapes in a row between the first and the last rounded rectangle.

Don't worry about the spacing, you'll take care of that in the next few steps.

19. Choose Window > Align to open the Align panel (**Figure 9**).
20. Shift-click the four rounded rectangle shapes, either on the canvas, or in the Layers panel.

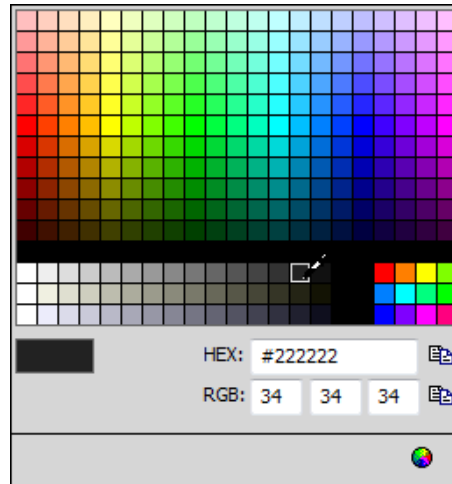
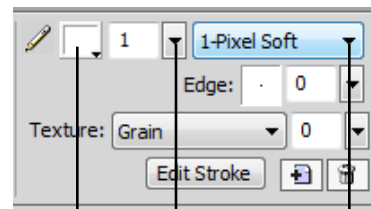


Figure 5 Color pop-up window



Stroke Color Tip Size Stroke Category

Figure 6 Properties panel, shape mode

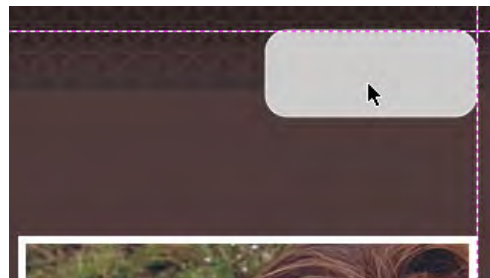


Figure 7 Aligning objects using Smart Guides

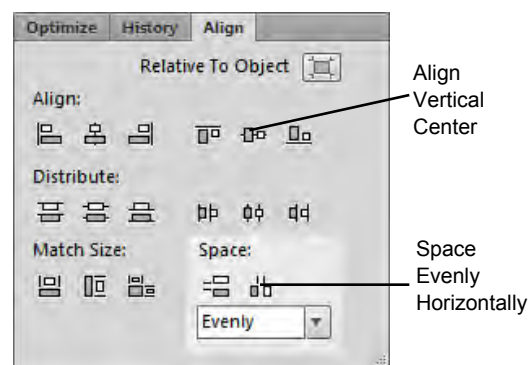


Figure 8 The Align panel

21. In the Align panel, click the Align Vertical Center button and the Space Evenly Horizontally button.

The rounded rectangle shapes are vertically aligned and spaced evenly on the canvas.

22. Select File > Save.

To use text tools:

1. Select the Text tool from the Tools panel.

Text in a Fireworks document appears inside a text block (a rectangle with handles).

2. Set text characteristics in the Properties panel (**Figure 9**):

- Font Family: **Georgia**
- Font Style: **Regular**
- Font Size: **46**
- Font Color: HEX value **#ECECEC**

3. Click on the canvas just below the logo to create an auto-sizing text block.

An *auto-sizing text block* expands horizontally as you type and shrinks when you remove text. Auto-sizing text blocks are created by default when you click on the canvas with the Text tool and start typing.

4. Type **Shop**.
5. Choose Select > Deselect.
6. With the Text tool still selected, change Font Family to Verdana, and Text Size to 16 and confirm the text is left aligned.
7. Drag on the canvas between the Shop title and the photograph to create a fixed-width text block (**Figure 10**).

A *fixed-width text block* allows you to control the width of wrapped text. Fixed-width text blocks are created by default when you drag to draw a text block using the Text tool.

8. Add placeholder text to simulate two or three paragraphs of text.
9. To move the text block, drag it with the Pointer tool. To resize it, drag a resize handle.
10. Choose Select > Deselect.
11. Select the Text tool, and change Font Family to Georgia, Text Size to 21, and Text Color to dark gray (HEX value #222222).

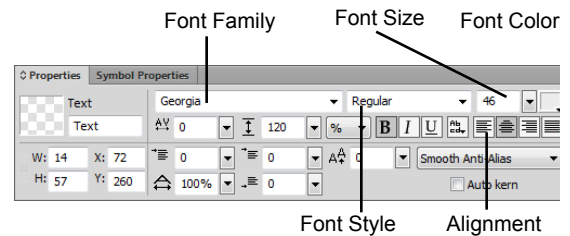


Figure 9 Properties panel, text mode

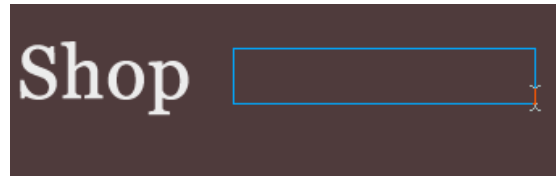


Figure 10 Drag with Text tool to create a fixed-width text block

12. Click on the first rounded rectangle to create an auto-sizing text block.
13. Type **Shop**.
14. Select the Pointer tool and drag the text block until the horizontal and vertical Smart Guides appear so that the text is centered over the rounded rectangle (**Figure 11**).
15. Shift-click the text block and the rounded rectangle and choose **Modify > Group**.
16. Repeat steps 12 to 15 to create three more navigation buttons for **Designer**, **Our Shop**, and **Blog**.
17. Create a text block at the bottom of the page, over the dark-gray footer rectangle and add some footer text.
18. Select **File > Save**.



Figure 11 Use Smart Guides to align text and objects