

Design tips

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Design tips

Thinking ahead

Before opening PhotoShop, GIMP or any other graphic editor, you should sit at a desk with a pen and a sheet paper, and think of the your shop's sitemap, making it as flexible as possible (not all shops have the same amount of categories, or of products per category).

A complete PrestaShop theme requires at least 30 pages or page sections:

- Home page
- Category page
- Product page
- Product comparison page
- Search results page
- "My Account" and its inner pages:
 - My vouchers
 - Orders history
 - Personal information
- "My Cart"
- Authentication page
- Account creation
- Checkout pages:
 - Addresses list
 - Shipping costs
 - Payment choice (check, bank transfer)
 - One page checkout
- Address creation
- Delivery page
- Maintenance page
- Manufacturers list and single manufacturer page
- Suppliers list and single supplier page
- The 404 page ("Page not found")
- "Best sales" page
- "New products" page
- "Current promotions" page
- "Forgotten password" page
- Legal notice
- Sitemap
- Stores page
- Contact form

Please do take all these into account, so as to not forget any of them. Failing to take some page into account may result in an incomplete theme, and thus a bad experience for your users.

To get a better sense of the page you should take into account, dive into the

Once you feel good about your sitemap, make a few sketches of the interface, in order to get a feel of where the various elements will be placed: new products, promotions, pictures, text, etc.). Also, include the important details, such as the various mentions on the product's page: on sale, promotion, new product, stricken price...).

Of course, these are just general tips; some professional might prefer to do it all directly in PhotoShop, then jump right into PHP, HTML and CSS.

Technical recommendations

In order to ensure that you can easily share your creation with others (designer, integrators, client), we advise you to save them as a PhotoShop file (RGB, 72 dpi, non-flattened).

You should work with the 980px width resolution in mind.

Layer arrangement

You can use several methods, depending on your preferences:

- A folder for every text layers, so that integrators can easily access the design itself.
- A folder for each design block (New products, Best sales, etc.)

Colors

Do not use the CMYK color model, as it is only adapted to printing. Always use the RVB color model.

Fonts

Do not use atypical fonts! Keep it readable at all times!

Standard text (title, sub-title, regular text) should be limited to the followed fonts, in order to insure that all visitors can see the same thing:

- Arial
- Verdana
- Helvetica
- Georgia
- Tahoma
- Times News Roman

Keep the number of fonts to the bare minimum, for fear of making your website confusing and unreadable.

Units

When designing for the Web, the basic unit of measurement is the pixel. Do not measure in picas, points or centimeters.

Text size

Always keep in mind that the user has the final say on the text size, as modern browser can expand or reduce it at will. As a matter of fact, you should test your website with various browser variations, see how easy it is break your design... and therefore rework your design in order to avoid such easy breakage.

That being said, you may start off with a handful of basic text sizes:

- 10 to 12px for regular text
- 14px for sub-titles
- 18px for titles
- etc.

Transparency

Transparent images do not work well with older browsers, particularly with Internet Explorer, so you should stay away from 24-bits PNG images. As for GIF images with transparency, use the over a plain background to ensure they work properly. Avoid 50% opacity by using the same matte color as the website's background color.

Misc.

- Test your theme with all of PrestaShop's options activated, so as to see how the theme reacts.
- Edit a product in order to see how the various options influence your design... if does at all.
- Make sure to have an homogeneous style for your shop.

Usability

We won't delve into complex human-computer interaction theories here, but rather try to make sure that your shop is accessible to as many potential customers as possible. Your ultimate goal should be to have visitors trust your shop enough so that they start buying.

Every time a visitor stumble upon a usability problem, your site loses their trust. Ultimately, if the trust reaches a low point, frustration comes and the visitors leaves your site, without buying anything of course. Such is the importance of usability in the e-commerce world.

When design your shop's theme, keep in mind that its mission (in addition to selling goods, of course) is to show your visitors that your website is managed by serious and competent people.

The home page

This is **the** most important page of your shop, the one where it is "hit or miss". This is the page where the visitor will get a general opinion of your shop, and decide if she should trust your with her money.

You should make sure to make your shop easily recognizable, and have your catalog be the first thing people see.

The website's header is where you will be able to put the most recognizable details: logo, name, unique image... It should be not be higher than 250px, so that your visitors can reach your catalog without resorting to scrolling down the page. In other words, your main content should never be [below the fold](#).

The visual aspect of your website is of course very important (hence our "Thinking ahead" section above): you must find way to put your products forward with overloading the page. Moreover, you should use homogeneous colors and layout within a page and between pages. For instance, if a button has an interaction effect on one page, make sure to apply that effect to all other pages on the site.

The search engine must be easy to find. Visitors often know what they came for, and don't want to browse through categories and sub-categories in search for it.

Still, when building your website's content, think of the user who browse categories, and make them simple and intuitive.

You can reinforce the perceived trust by displaying logos or mentions of your partners (banks, carriers), and your rating from a known e-commerce institution, such as FIA-NET in France.

Do display your contact details, such as phone number or chat system, if available. It will show you are real, and that can make a huge difference.

Of course, do not use your personal phone number: they need to feel they are calling a company's support team, not disturbing you while you cook.

Clearly display your Return Merchandise conditions, your general T&C and other applicable laws that you respect.

The product page

A visitor only comes to the product page if she's interested by said product, and wants more details. There should therefore be plenty of those.

Make the "Add to Cart" button clear and visible. It must distinguish itself from the rest of the layout, by both its size and color – but do keep a homogeneous design: if the button is too far off from the general design, the visitor can just as easily not see it, in the same way people have trained themselves not to see ads on the Internet.

Make sure to display all the relevant labels: "New product", "Promotion", "Voucher", etc. Also, do not forget to add the delivery delays.

The conversion funnel: "My Account" and related pages

The [conversion funnel](#) is where your visitors become client (hence the use of "conversion", or sometimes "transformation"). If these page are badly designed or structured, this can mean the loss of many potential clients, and therefore all the order they would have made on your site.

Account creation / "My Account"

The default PrestaShop theme comes with an account form that gives a very good transformation percentage. But it might still not suit your own site's needs. Hence, here are a few tips to follow if you intend to update the form.

- Be basic, keep the essential only. The visitor must concentrate on the account creation, and the purchase. See how Amazon does it.
- Reduce the number of steps. The user must know how many steps she still has to go through before she can actually finalize her purchase.
- Clearly display any mistake the user makes, right next to form field. Errors should be displayed in a distinct color (red is a favorite), and mandatory fields should indicated (with an asterisk *, for instance).

Payment

The visitor has created her client account, great! But it's still not over yet, she must now go through the purchase itself.

Same as for the account creation form:

- Reduce the number of steps (delivery address, payment page).
- Display the errors in a distinct color.
- Payment page:
 - if the visitor uses a credit card, warn them that they will be redirected to your bank's secure server. For instance, add a little padlock icon, with an explanation
 - if she chooses to pay by check (or any other offline payment method), clearly mention what to do next: amount, address, etc.

All these usability tips are just part of the whole story, but they can bring you a solid ground on which building your theme, in order to improve your shop.