

Round 1/5: A text-based eLearning unit

This report (form) is a re-mix taken from <http://www.f4.htw-berlin.de/~weberwu/didaktics/Report-form.shtml> and the one from the Moodle forum.

At a glance

Round	1/5 - a text-based eLearning unit
Tester	Alexander Kluge
View Date	06.11.2011
Name of unit	More Meaningful Typography
Who offers the unit?	A List Apart
Producer	Tim Brown
URL	http://www.alistapart.com/articles/more-meaningful-typography/
Stated learning goals	Learning to apply modular scales to help me create more balanced web designs with CSS.
Overall rating (1-10, 10 best)	9
Minutes needed	30 (+60min further reading, +90min writing the report.)

Overall summary of the unit

The unit is a text-based eLearning unit about modular scales in relation to web typography. They relate to each other in meaningful ways, such as the golden ratio (1:1.618) and are applied with the help of simple math, CSS and a hands-on example - while the author recommends not to apply them in a dogmatic manner, as it does not always fit. Improvisation and intuition are the keywords here.

Detailed Experience

Did the given time suffice?

Since it's a blog article or essay - and definitely not typical eLearning unit - there are no times given in order to complete it. I needed about 30 minutes for the pure reading. I spent some time on some of the links and material the author provided, which took about 1 hour.

Short synopsis of the unit

To sum it up, Tim Brown tries to convey the message that dealing with typesetting, visual harmony and balance, type density («typographic color»), legibility, and at least a bit of math. Not in the focus but very important to take down is the fact that Brown sees text, typography and the content in general as the best starting point for a web site to be designed appropriately.

Reflection on your personal learning experience

I found it really helpful and appropriate to start with the golden ratio when talking about balanced typography. Almost instantly after having explained the general idea of a modular scales he dives directly into an example.

It was a comprehensible step by step guide starting with creating a so-called »web font specimen« which comprises downloading the specimen, adding a typeface and checking how the type is rendered in your browser; and continuing »double-stranded modular scale«, i.e. choosing two modular scales which was calculated by a little tool. The third and last step was to apply the modular scale we already have in web design, i.e. plain and simple CSS.

That's the point where Brown talks about density of paragraphs, type rendering, optimizing legibility and the pain of choosing the right type face.

The unit helps me understand how easy you can forget about weighed CSS designs which almost is due to time restrictions or lazyness.

Did you achieve the stated learning goals?

I can't say that I achieved my stated learning goals. It'd be more honest to say that I created a (look and) feel for this issue and refined it compared to my existing knowledge about web typography.

Comment on the design - what was good, what could be made better?

The beginning is almost ideal:

- Introduce the perennial (immer wiederkehrend) keyword - which is not the subject itself.
- Define the subject itself in general.
- Introduce an example and stick to it throughout the process.

The middle part starts the step-by-step hands-on process:

- Transfer the subject to the domain in question by applying it in the example.
- Give the reader extra information about the importance of what they're doing.
- Provide the reader with examples to further enhance the example applied.

In the end a discussion is started:

- How does that technique / thinking / paradigm fit into the existing world and work?
- In how far is it probably not new?
- Conclude / What do we learn from that?
- Further reading / dive deeper into the topic!

I don't see a better way for designing the unit better as comparison is missing. In my world this is a reference unit on how to deal with engaging web designers to create "more meaningful typography" just as the title says.

Conclusion / Positive and negative aspects of the unit

Finally, I would say that the uni is a very good starting point to awake awareness about the issue and importance of beautiful typography, especially with regard to the user's experience.

It's a really good point to start content-oriented in contrast to canvas-oriented as the canvas is so diverse these days (from 1920*1080+ to 320*240 pixels) that your ideal one-fits-it-all world is no longer up-to-date.

What I didn't see was the difference between the (modularly) scaled and non-scaled version - at first glance. But after my second glance I saw the subtle difference. It really looked less bulk and "hammer like".