

20 tips for artists for a good website

Designing a good website seems to require an endless checklist of chores: organize and select the materials, photograph the artwork, write a bio, an artist statement and an updated resume. You need to decide how to display the materials, what color scheme will look best with your art, what fonts will compliment your work... and more!

Don't give up! I have compiled 20 important points that Artists should keep in mind when designing their website. Keep these guidelines as checkpoints during your site creation, or to check and improve an existing site.

1. **Keep it simple.** Don't try and put every piece of information about your career or display every single piece of artwork you ever created. Choose relevant information that will keep the site simple and elegant. Try and include materials that reinforce your site's purpose (is it to sell work? Attract new collectors? Or present a portfolio to galleries?).
2. **Keep your file size low.** People viewing your site don't necessarily have a high speed connection to the internet, so be aware that too many images or too many large files can slow a site down significantly. Remember that a lot of people will not wait for a site to download! Keep your jpgs at 72 dpi, and try not to have images over 540 pixels in any direction. You can also try and minimize the number of large files (music and video are typically very large) in any one page.
3. **Keep your navigation simple.** Do not try and have too many categories or too many layers in your navigation system. Keep the placement of the navigation buttons consistent: if you choose to have your links on the left side, keep them there throughout the site and don't scramble the order of your buttons from page to page!
4. **Have your own domain name.** If your aim is to impress galleries and collectors, make sure they know you take your art seriously: your own domain name looks more professional, can be easier to remember, and can be more search-engine friendly! Registering a domain has become quite affordable: typically between \$10 and \$15 a year with hosting costs between \$5 and \$15 a month.
5. **No under construction page.** If you are not done building a page, don't link it to your site. People's time is precious: don't waste it by announcing a category... then have that category be blank!
6. **Prominent contact info.** Your site is a marketing tool: you can get potential collectors and galleries to discover your work. Make sure they know how to reach you when they fall in love with your art!
7. **Label all artwork.** Images on the internet give no sense of scale or medium; it is therefore extremely important to label each piece of artwork with dimensions and materials used to make the work. Labeling your pieces with their price can be valuable if your aim is to sell online.
8. **Include a brief Art statement and resume.** Keep in mind that text is difficult to read on the screen. As an artist, you must include an art statement and resume (people want to know about you), but keep both brief. A few paragraphs for an art

- statement, and 1 to 2 typed pages for a resume. If you must have a complete resume, give the viewer the option to print the document as a pdf.
9. **Keep your text simple.** Sans serif fonts such as Arial are easier to read on the screen. Don't overuse bold and italics which make text harder to read and can get confusing.
 10. **Avoid underlined text.** Underlined text is usually reserved to indicate a link: avoid using underlined text that is not a link to prevent confusion and frustration.
 11. **Keep your color scheme subdued.** Don't blind your viewers! Avoid a bright yellow background with red text!!! Bright colors can be difficult to look at on a screen, especially for text. Keep your color scheme with low saturation colors
 12. **Avoid background image.** Background images can slow the site down, and unless properly done, will tile and look unprofessional. Background images also tend to make text harder to read.
 13. **Avoid background music.** Although it can be tempting to have music on a site, I have to recommend against it for several reasons: your viewers might not share your taste in music, music files are large and therefore slow to download, and finally, even if your viewers like your music, it may get annoying to hear the same song every visit.
 14. **No cutesy mouse animation.** This one is fairly obvious: it will annoy a large majority of internet users. Your goal is to make people like your site: don't alienate them with annoying gimmicks!
 15. **Don't disable back button.** Some sites try and keep their audience captive by disabling the back button. It's obnoxious! Don't do it!
 16. **Refrain from using frames and flash.** Both of these methods of coding tend to be unfriendly to search-engines, so use them sparingly and embed them with good old fashioned html.
 17. **Make sure your site is compatible in all browsers.** There are no enforceable rules for website coding, only general accepted guidelines, so browsers tend to display the same code in slightly different ways. Therefore it's important to try and look at your site on several different browsers and screens to ensure that your site looks good for most users.
 18. **Check that all your links work.** It's not only annoying to the user, but you may also run the risk of losing your site's ranking with search engines, or worse, not being indexed at all!
 19. **Open all external links in new window.** It's nice to give extra information to your viewers by providing useful links, but make sure your own site stays on their screen by opening all external links in a new browser window.
 20. **Keep an honest relation with your gallery.** Galleries cannot prevent you from selling work on the internet. However, you need to keep a good working relationship with your gallery. Make sure you both understand who gets or doesn't get a commission through internet sales. For example, if your gallery sells work on their site, or you sell work on your site that's currently in their space, they should get the commission.