Key Principles of Web Design according to me

A set of rules and tips on how to create good websites that focus on content rather than appearance. These guidelines have been discussed with several online communities I know, and the consensus is that the tips below are absolutely essential for beginner web developers creating their first websites.

Most of the tips below were written with the so-called internet revival movement in mind, sometimes called Web 2.0 or the indie web. This is a movement that seeks to bring back imperfectly crafted websites created out of passion by people for people.

Question

At the very beginning, we all have questions; we don't know what to do. We don't know how to start or where to begin. Common questions at the very beginning include:

- I have a website, but I'd like to redesign it or build it myself.
- I'm a beginner at web development; I need advice and guidance.
- How can I feel less overwhelmed by all these possibilities and all this knowledge?

Answer

First, take a moment to ask yourself a few questions

If you already have a website, think about what you don't like or what you do like about it, and consider what you want to change. Think about how you want your website to look and what kind of impression you want it to make after the changes.

If you don't have a website yet, ask yourself: What do you want to include on your website? This will give you a clear vision of what your website should really be.

Go browse some websites, search on independent search engines (e.g., Wiby Search) or in communities like Neocities. Look for sites that you like or that inspire you; maybe finding a ready-made template will help.

Personally, I think you might want to consider these few tips as well (note: highly subjective):

- Don't follow trends—this is supposed to be your site that showcases you; don't force yourself to fit into trends.
- It's much easier if you already have some content—your old posts, a collection of notes, photos, artwork, projects, or anything else you've created in the past. Then it doesn't take much effort or energy to turn that into posts on your site.
- Remember, you can have poorly formatted HTML or CSS code, but the site will still have a great vibe and atmosphere

Start with small steps

Start with a simple page, edit one page at a time, work on the details, and publish it online. Don't try to do everything at once or rush through it. Start with simple features—don't jump straight into adding JavaScript to your site; start with HTML and CSS first. Tutorials and guides can help here; after each one, try to build a simple page that demonstrates what you've learned.

If you're rebuilding something that already exists, get to know the technology the site is built on in depth, or ask yourself the questions from the previous section, and consider whether your site is really so big that you need a massive CMS like WordPress .

Most importantly, remember that we all started somewhere, and no one ever built anything right away; everything takes a little time, and through trial and error, you'll achieve the desired result.

Just do it

Once you've learned the basics of HTML and CSS, just start creating something. These days, there are few technologies that let you start creating something right away so easily.

Remember, creating something is always better than doing nothing. Even if a silly idea just popped into your head, try to bring it to life. Remember, technology isn't just a science—it's also a way to express yourself.

Borrow Ideas

Check out the websites you like, ask their creators how they did certain things, and use the `view-source` option in your browser. Copy the code to your own site, modify it, and see how it looks. Alternatively, download a template from the internet and customize it to suit your needs.

My first websites were built by looking at what I liked on other sites and copying those features into my own.

A Sea of Possibilities

You can do anything you want—the possibilities are endless.

A few observations you've probably already figured out yourself:

- There are many rules about web design—read up on them, check them out… and above all, break them 😉
- Do what you feel like doing; there's no single right way to build a website.
- Remember, technology is just a tool to achieve the effect you desire

Final Thoughts

Don't overwork yourself; take breaks; try not to work on the same thing constantly. I've been in situations where sitting on one page and tweaking details burned me out. Remember, the whole idea of the indie web is that your site should be human… and not perfect, just like people—don't try to achieve a perfection that resembles something generated by an LLM.

Don't judge yourself too harshly, and don't compare your sites to others too much. Remember, sites like mine were built over the course of years by a guy who's a little too obsessed with what he does and has way too much free time 🤣.

And one last thing: if your website doesn't display anything without JavaScript, you know you've gone too far…