

# Responsive Web Design

With more people accessing the web on multiple devices we now have even more design considerations:

**Physical considerations**

resolution, screen size

**Contextual considerations**

where a person is using this website  
e.g on the road, at home, at night.

The first way designers tried to deal with this diversity was to silo user experiences into separate, optimized sites.



The problem, is that then there can up 2, 3, or even 4 sites that need to be updated.

Instead, we need to embrace the flexibility of the web!

In May 2010, Ethan Marcotte wrote an article for *A List Apart* titled “Responsive Web Design.” The approach he described was both simple and revolutionary.

He used three existing tools— **fluid layouts**, **media queries**, and **scalable images**—to create a site that displayed beautifully at multiple resolutions. Marcotte demonstrated that it was possible to deliver a great experience to a variety of devices, not by ignoring their differences and trying to impose control, but by letting go and embracing the fluidity of the web.

– *Implementing Responsive Web Design*

To be clear, responsive is no more a mobile site than it is a desktop site, or a tablet site.

It is a “device-agnostic” concept.

Executing responsive design is no simple feat. It requires a complete overhaul of the way we approach the web...

Does it make sense for the desktop to be the default experience?

How do we prevent losing a sense of coherence between different device experiences?

How do we adjust the design process to accommodate designing for many different devices and screen sizes?

## Planning

Have a firm understanding of the structure and types of content.

Identify the most common devices and platforms being used to access your site.

Decide how a responsive layout can add to the interactivity of your website.

## Desktop-first vs. Mobile-first

Originating your website as a desktop layout is still the most common, but there is a major argument for designing your website with a mobile layout first:

1. Mobile has an extremely fast-growing user base.
2. The lack of space requires you to focus on the most essential elements, content, and structure.
3. Mobile devices have a lot of useful tools built-in (e.g. calendar, photos, etc.) that allows you to create a rich content experience.