

Becoming a Web Designer

By Scott Faranello / Webanello Inc.

Thinking about becoming a web designer? Not too long ago the term Web Designer conjured up visions almost synonymous with Rock Star. Everybody wanted in and it seemed that becoming a web designer meant riches beyond your wildest dreams, paid by companies just dying to get online.

Well, as we have all witnessed very recently, those days have passed. The economy has come back down to normal levels, and as the dust settles and the smoke clears on the internet industry, those left standing need to rethink their position and look towards the future with more realistic eyes and goals. So, after all that has happened, you still want to be a web designer?

If you answered a resounding and confident YES! Then this article is for you. Becoming a web designer can be a very exciting and rewarding career choice. But before you quit your current job and buy the latest copy of Dreamweaver or Front Page there are some important things you need to know. So read on.

The role of web designer is a big responsibility, or at least it should be. You are taking on the role of designer, architect, businessperson, communicator and advertiser. The web is overwhelmed with millions of websites and quite a few are pretty ugly. But there is much more to design than just putting pictures and text on the screen. Imagine for a moment the failure companies would face if T.V. or print advertisers had the same quality control as on the web. Many commercials would have nothing more than some text flying across the screen, a few poor quality images and some terrible color schemes that would make most of us change the channel to protect our eyes.

To be a truly successful and respected as a web artist, just leaning HTML won't cut it anymore. But don't misunderstand, you must learn HTML and learn it well. Don't be tempted by the ease of use promised with "do-it-yourself" programs like Dreamweaver, Front Page or Go-Live. Sure they can make websites, but no serious and in the long term successful and respected designers would even think of using these programs. Learn HTML, then once you have it expertly under your belt look at the other software and web skills that will become invaluable to your career.

Here is a short list of some of the most popular and valuable skills you will need to know:

- Photoshop (v. 5.5 or higher)
- Image Ready (v. 2.0 or higher)
- HTML
- XHTML (the latest version of HTML incorporates these new standards)
- CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)
- JavaScript
- ASP or PHP knowledge would also be helpful

And the list goes on, but don't let this scare you or overwhelm you. A successful web career can begin with solid HTML hand coding skills, a basic understanding of JavaScript, CSS and the ability to find your way around in Photoshop. Ok. Sounds good, but where do you start? There are many HTML tutorials available to help you get started. Another article I wrote called HTML 101 offers links to some very useful HTML tutorials. And you can get started with nothing more than a web browser and a free program called Notepad for the PC or SimpleText if you are using a Mac.

Photoshop is an expensive program, but vital to serious designers the world over. The learning curve is high, but with some time and alot of interest you can begin to understand its workings. The best way to learn is to start with a project in mind then find a book easy enough to understand so you can quickly find out how to accomplish any task.

There are hundreds of books written about Photoshop. Find one that speaks directly to your learning ability.

A great title to check out is:

- [Photoshop: Visual QuickStart Guide](#)

I think that is enough to keep you busy for a little while. Remember, with a strong desire and focus web design is a skill worth learning and if you are truly interested you will be up and running before you know it. So get started today!

I'll leave you now with some more great titles to check out that I personally found to be invaluable and are guaranteed not to disappoint:

- [Web Pages That Suck](#)
- [Don't Make Me Think](#)
- [Designing Web Graphics](#)
- [Coloring Web Graphics](#)
- [HTML: Visual QuickStart Guide](#)

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