

## Blog Proposal: 75 points

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to submit an array of assignments/posts to your Wordpress blog. These blog posts will take the form of the following:

- Image/Infographic Design post
- Multimedia Design post
- Listicle post
- Review post
- Interactive Guide post
- Case Study post

This assignment asks you to select a theme on which you could create these posts. In creating a theme, your pieces will cohesively speak to and build upon one another. Carefully conceived, your Wordpress blog should be able to function as an Online portfolio by the end of the semester. As such, the theme you select should reflect not only your interests, but also your professional ambition.

The blog proposal assignment will not only prep you for the semester's work, but will present you with the opportunity to make a proper/formal proposal pitch. As such, this assignment requires the following:

### guidelines.

#### 1. Make a compelling argument for your theme. (25 pts)

Why have you selected this theme? What makes it a worthwhile theme to pursue? What audience will be captivated by this theme and what is your capacity to reach that audience? The argument for your theme for convince the reader of your topic's relevance, timeliness, and ability to engage audience.

#### 2. Address your unique qualifications. (20 pts)

What knowledge do you bring to the table? How much experience do you have with this subject matter? Where and how will you acquire further knowledge and resources as needed? Instill trust in your reader by discussing your resourcefulness and qualifications.

#### 3. Address potential concerns and limitations. (20 pts)

What potential stumbling blocks or limitations might you run into with this theme? Anticipate problems before they arise and reassure your reader that, should these issues arise, you are prepared to deal with them.

#### 4. Consider layout/design elements for flow, readability, & visual appeal. (10 pts)

How will you organize your ideas? What layout and design will highlight your ideas without distracting from the content? Keep in mind that your reader is likely reading multiple proposals, so thinking about design is also thinking about how to make your proposal stand out.

Your blog proposal should be no less the 500 words in length. You must submit your essay to eLearning by **11:00 p.m. on Wednesday September 7, 2016.**

## Style Guide: 75 points

A Style Guide is a document that outlines a set of standards for the writing and design of documents. The intent of a Style Guide is to standardize the rules of writing and design across an array of media, documents, and platform types as a means by which to improve overall communication and enhance brand, persona, and voice.

This assignment asks you to think critically about how you want to or will need to standardize a set of writing and design rules for the content you create on your blog this semester. These rules should be created to accommodate your ideal audience and to enhance their ability to digest the content you create. As you create your Style Guide, you should also think critically about the types of content you will be creating and which design and language conventions will apply to them collectively and individually.

### Requirements

For this assignment you must compose a Style Guide that accounts for both design guidelines and language conventions/grammatical guidelines.

#### Design Guidelines:

In creating design guidelines, account for at LEAST five of the following:

- ❖ Color palette
- ❖ Fonts
  - Headings
  - Subheadings
  - Links
  - Body Content
  - On Images/As Captions
  - Quotations
- ❖ Icons
- ❖ Bullet Points
- ❖ Image Size
- ❖ Image Placement
- ❖ Photography vs. Illustration
- ❖ Video Embedding Size
- ❖ Video Embedding Duration
- ❖ Charts
- ❖ Tables

#### Language Convention Guidelines:

In creating language guidelines, account for at LEAST five of the following:

- ❖ Voice (first-person, second-person, and/or third-person)
- ❖ Tone (professional, casual, humorous, serious, compassionate, etc.)
- ❖ Acceptable lingo, slang, clichés, and swears
- ❖ Abbreviations and Acronyms
- ❖ Gender bias/pronoun usage
- ❖ Numbers (spelled-out, numerals, and/or roman)
- ❖ Oxford commas
- ❖ Quotations
- ❖ Contractions
- ❖ Capitalization

## Format

You have two formatting options for the Style Guide assignment. They are:

### Frontify.Com

With Frontify you can create a highly designed Style Guide. The website is user-friendly and provides a Style Guide template from which you can add and subtract elements as needed. If you are interested in eventually using your Style Guide as a portfolio piece, I would suggest this option as it has design elements built into it already. Keep in mind that a good Style Guide will not only identify style rules, but will also explain the rationale for them. You can access the template here:

<https://frontify.com/styleguide>

### Word Template

You may compose your Style Guide in a word document. If you choose this option, keep in mind that most Style Guides not only outline design and language rules, but they also employ them. In other words, the colors and fonts you identify in your Style Guide should also be the ones you use in writing your Style Guide. Additionally, and as with the Frontify templates, your Style Guide should not only dictate style rules, but should provide the rationale for them.

## Assessment

I will assess your Style Guide based on the following Criteria:

- ❖ Design choices and your rationale for them. **(25 points)**
- ❖ Language choices and your rationale for them. **(25 points)**
- ❖ Employment of your design and language choices in the Style Guide document. **(15 points)**
- ❖ Clarity and concision of the document as a reference tool/guide. **(10 points)**

# Usability Analysis: 100 points

One of the most recurring problems with website design is the ability to use a site effectively. Often times, the search for information in websites can be time consuming and frustrating. If users attempt to use a website to gather information and cannot find what they are looking for quickly and easily, they may never visit the site again. To avoid this and to keep users visiting a site, there are several ways to decrease the opportunities for user frustration. One such way is to test the usability of a site prior to making it public.

The purpose of this assignment is to help you think critically about website usability and to think about how you may improve the usability and design of your own web site.

## Objectives

After completing this assignment, you should be able to;

- ✦ Identify a website for a usability test
- ✦ Describe the intended audience for the web site
- ✦ Utilize a usability checklist to identify usability issues
- ✦ List recommendations for website redesign

## Requirements

To complete this assignment you need to:

- ✦ Identify a web site you wish to test for usability. The URL should be included in the submitted document.
- ✦ Complete the Audience Analysis portion of the assignment.
- ✦ Complete the Usability Guide portion of the assignment.
- ✦ Complete the Recommended Changes portion of the assignment.
- ✦ Document your responses to each of these sections by placing your responses in a word processing document.
- ✦ Submit the document to eLearning.

## Assessment

I will assess your Style Guide based on the following Criteria:

Checklist	Points
✦ Included the web site URL.	10
✦ Complete the Audience Analysis portion of the assignment.	20
✦ Provided a rating for each of the statements listed in the Usability Guide.	20
✦ Provided comments for each of the statements listed in the Usability Guide.	20
✦ Provided a one-page description of your recommended changes.	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

# Assignment Elements

## Audience Analysis

To complete the Audience Analysis portion of this assignment, you need to document the following three questions:

- ✂ Why do you think the company/organization developed the web site?
- ✂ Who do you think is the primary audience for the site?
- ✂ When and why might the audience visit the web site?

## Usability Guide

Use the guide below to assist you in evaluating the site of your choice.

First, you need to evaluate the site by rating each of the statements using the following scale of 1 to 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Second, you need to provide comments discussing how the site either met or did not meet each of the given statements. Provide comments for each item.

<b>Page Titles and Headings were used effectively?</b>	1 2 3 4 5
--------------------------------------------------------	-----------

Comments:

<b>Page Length was appropriate for site?</b>	1 2 3 4 5
----------------------------------------------	-----------

Comments:

<b>Search Capabilities were available on the site?</b>	1 2 3 4 5
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Comments:

**The site used sound navigational principles?**

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

**Graphics were used effectively on the site?**

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

**The use of font was appropriate for the site?**

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

**The site was accessible to multiple audiences with multiple needs?**

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

**The site followed appropriate design principles?**

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

### **Recommended Changes**

To complete this portion of the assignment, you are to provide a 1 page, single spaced document discussing your recommendations for changing the site you tested. This recommendation should be reflective of your rating and comments listed in the “Usability Guide.”

# Infographic: 50 points

An infographic, by its simplest definition is a graphic that displays information of some kind. Of course, by this definition, nearly any image could be considered infographic. For a more precise definition, we will understand infographics as a graphic that blend content with data representation, information design, or visual storytelling.

## Process

This assignment asks you to:

- Think about your blog topic and your blog audience in order to identify an idea that serves a purpose for your reader and distills information graphically.
- Conduct research to find the data or information you would like to blend together and share in your infographic.
- Create an infographic using one of these infographic tools:
  - [Piktochart](#) (free)
  - [Venngage](#) (free)
  - [Canva](#) (free)
  - [Infogr.am](#) (free)
  - Adobe photoshop/Illustrator/InDesign

## Assessment

I will assess your Infographic based on the following Criteria:

Design Elements	Content Elements
Visual elements are used to represent data	Topic translates well to infographic form
White space is used effectively/Data is not cluttered	Content is clearly for blog audience
Where applicable within the free tools, your style guide is used	Content is interesting and engaging. Feels complete.
Length does not exceed 8,000 pixels. Width does not exceed 735 pixels	Strong research
Includes a strong headline/hook	Citations

*Or, consider option 2 below*

## Image Blog: 50 points

If the free resources for infographics are no robust enough to bring your infographic vision to fruition *and* you don't feel savvy enough to use another software program, you may create an image blog, instead.

An Image blog also puts more emphasis on images. The images in these blogs are, therefore, the focal point both visually and in terms of content. Your content will need to reference and discuss the images in some way. In this way, your textual content will redirect your readers' attention to the images and ask them to notice something specific or to think about the images in a specific way. Your image blog should also, much like the infographic, help the reader understand something through visual representation, facts, statistics, and narration.

### Process

This assignment asks you to:

- Think about your blog topic and your blog audience in order to identify an idea that serves a purpose for your reader and depends on image sharing for context.
- Conduct research to find the data or information – as well as the images – you would like to blend together and share in an image blog.

### Assessment

I will assess your Infographic based on the following Criteria:

Design Elements	Content Elements
Includes at least 4 images.	Content is clearly for blog audience.
Images are all a standard size.	Textual content clearly supports and draws attention to the blog images.
Images share a similar aesthetic tone.	Textual content is no less than 500 words.
Images are displayed thoughtfully and with consideration to design aesthetics.	Content represents strong research.
Images include citations/captions where necessary.	Content include citations.

## Animated Gif: 50 points

Last week, you made an infographic. While infographics are a great way to distill information in a visually compelling way, they are a somewhat static medium to use. The media we engage with digitally is becoming increasingly more active: podcasts, snaps, vines, live streams, animated gifs, and videos are all mediums that *do* something while readers/viewers engage with them.

Animated gifs are, perhaps, the simplest of these mediums in terms of audience. Most audience members are willing to forgive poor quality in a gif so long as the content presented is compelling. That said, animated gifs have the ability to maintain both quality in design and quality in content. This week, that's the kind of animated gif you'll be making.

Therefore, this assignment asks you to:

- Think about your blog topic and your blog audience in order to identify an idea that serves a purpose for your reader and would work well as an animated gif. Remember, with animated gifs the idea should be simple. Don't over think it!
- If necessary, gather or create the content you'll need for the animated gif. This could entail taking photos or you own or gathering graphical assets like icons.
- Create an animated gif using one or a combination of these tools:
  - Adobe Photoshop
  - GifX (ios)
  - Spark (ios)
- Upload the animated gif to your blog as a blog post (while I will be grading the gif file, you'll likely also want to include some textual context for your reader).

### Assessment

I will assess your animated gif based on the following criteria:

#### Design Elements

- Animation has a minimum of 7 frames
- Transitions between elements looks smooth
- Where applicable within the free tools, your style guide is used

#### Content Elements

- Topic translates well to animated gif format
- Content is clearly for blog audience

# YouTube Video: 50 points

Last week, you made an infographic. While infographics are a great way to distill information in a visually compelling way, they are a somewhat static medium to use. The media we engage with digitally is becoming increasingly more active: podcasts, snaps, vines, live streams, animated gifs, and videos are all mediums that *do* something while readers/viewers engage with them.

Videos are quickly becoming a dominant media format online. Knowing how to communicate using this format is, therefore, as important and lucrative as being able to communicate in text. Given this, you'll have the opportunity this week to practice using video to communicate with your audience. There is one important caveat: at the free level, WordPress does not permit video uploads, so you'll need to host your video elsewhere. While I am open to you using alternate platforms (such as Vimeo), I will be discussing the tools available within YouTube, exclusively.

Therefore, this assignment asks you to:

- Think about your blog topic and your blog audience in order to identify an idea that serves a purpose for your reader and would work well as an animated gif. Remember, with animated gifs the idea should be simple. Don't over think it!
- If necessary, gather or create the content you'll need for the animated gif. This could entail taking photos or you own or gathering graphical assets like icons.
- Create a video using one or a combination of these tools (or other tools you know and are comfortable using):
  - iMovie
  - Spark
  - Videoshop
  - Your phone's camera
  - A video camera
  - Stop Motion
  - Green Screen
  - Screenium
- Upload your video to YouTube.
- Add at least one button to the video
- Embed the video into a WordPress blog post (while I will be grading the video file, you'll likely also want to include some textual context for your reader).

## Assessment

I will assess your video based on the following criteria:

### Design Elements

- Video has good image and sound quality
- Video is no less than 120 seconds in length
- Video contains at least one linked button

### Content Elements

- Topic translates well to video format
- Content is clearly for blog audience
- Video has a clear beginning, middle, and end

## Listicle: 50 points

This week, you'll be creating a listicle, or list article, for your blog. A listicle is a short-form article on the Internet presented in the form of a numbered list. These types of articles have become increasingly popular as they distill information for readers in a quick and visually streamlined way. Given their popularity, it's important for digital content creators to be familiar with how to create them.

This assignment asks you to:

- Think about your blog topic and your blog audience in order to identify an idea that serves a purpose for your reader and would work well as a listicle.
- Consider which type of listicle will best serve your purpose.
- Choose an interesting angle for your list.
- Conduct research for your list.
- Draft a list and consider the order of the items in your list.
- Select an appropriate number of items for your list so that it is neither too short nor too long.
- Use headings effectively.
- Provide context for and explanation for the inclusion of each list item.
- Use images that complement your textual content.
- Post a well-researched, well-designed, interesting listicle for your blog.

### Assessment

I will assess your listicle on the following criteria:

- Topic is relevant to blog audience
- Listicle has a clear opening and conclusion
- Listicle is well organized and logical
- List items have relevancy and context explained
- The listicle demonstrates the author's understanding of the topic
- Listicle uses headings and subheadings effectively
- Listicle uses imagery to provide visual flow and context
- Listicle is no less than 850 words (though 1,000 is the ideal)
- Listicle uses proper grammar and mechanics
- Citations are included for both research and images

# How-To Guide: 50 points

When you don't know how to do something, where's the first place you look for directions or a tutorial? If you're like countless other people, you turn to the internet. The internet has issued in a new era of DIY (do-it-yourself) culture. Why hire a plumber when YouTube can tell you how to install a new sink? Why hire a tailor when wikiHow can walk you through the process of hemming your pants? Who needs a cook book when the internet serves up Tasty recipes on the daily? How-To guides and tutorials are an essential form of digital media and a key way to engage an audience meaningfully.

## Process

This assignment asks you to:

- Identify a tutorial for your audience that is within the niche of your blog topic.
- Include a detailed and chronological process for how to do something, including not only the process steps but other considerations such as time required, materials, resources and so on.
- Use hyperlinking in such a way that each step is its own page. Set this up by:
  - Starting your tutorial as a blog post. The blog post should account for everything up to the first step.
  - Every subsequent step (step 2 until the final step) should be made into a unique page – one page for every step.
- Make sure that your hyperlinks allow for easy navigation backward and forward through the process steps.

## Assessment

- Topic/tutorial appropriate for blog audience.
- Tutorial has an appropriate, clear, and succinct title. This title is “search friendly.”
- Tutorial contains an introduction that summarizes the tutorial. Introduction should help clarify what the tutorial will help the audience do and what the outcome will be.
- Tutorial includes a list of supplies and/or resources needed to complete the process successfully.
- Tutorial provides a series of logical steps presented in appropriate order.
- Tutorial includes graphics/videos to help illustrate the process.
- Tutorial includes hyperlinks to and from each step in the process but also links to outside sources where necessary.
- Tutorial includes a conclusion that offers any closing and advice and tips that reader may need. This can be offered on the last process step page.
- Tutorial follows proper grammar and mechanics.
- Tutorial includes citations. These should be provided on the last process step page.

# Landing Page

This week, you'll be creating a landing page. A landing page is any page on a website on which a user might land that 1) has a form and 2) exists solely to capture the user's information by incentivizing them to complete that form.

Why would you want users to complete a form? Because it gives you direct access (typically via email) to your users/reader. In the professional sphere, having that direct link to users is an extremely valuable commodity. Once a user completes a form they become what is known in the industry as a "lead." Once a user becomes a lead, they can be marketed to directly and – if all goes to plan – converted into a customer.

How do you incentivize users to complete the form? By offering them something that can't get without completing it! Some common "takeaways" offered on landing pages include:

- Whitepapers
- eBooks
- Tutorials
- Checklists and Scorecards
- Webinars
- Blog subscription with special bonus email content
- Free consultations
- eCourses
- Infographics

Of course, you don't have to think inside the "standard marketing" box. As content creators, game designers, animators, sound designers, fashion designers, etc. What else might you offer? You might consider things like:

- Icon sets
- Photoshop brushes
- InDesign templates
- Sheet music
- Sewing patterns
- Mp3s

Once you know *what* you want to offer, you have to convince the user they need it – *and* that they need it enough to give away their contact information.

To accomplish all these goals, this assignment asks you to:

- Determine what content\* would be useful to your audience
- Determine why your audience would want it
- Develop content for a landing page that clearly communicates what you are offering and tells users what to do to get it. This content should include:
  - A strong and attention-grabbing headline

- A persuasive subhead that communicates value
- Imagery that is indicative of the content you are offering for filling out the form
- An explanation that is benefit-oriented
- A proposition that communicates the value or benefit of what you are offering
- A form for users to fill out. At minimum this should require the user's name and email.

## Assessment

I will assess your landing page on the following:

### Accessibility

- Landing page is part of your Navigation menu.
- You name the landing page something enticing, like "Free Downloads"

### Content

- The content offered in exchange for form complete is logical for the blog's audience
- The headline uses actionable and value-driven words
- The subhead describes the benefit for the offer
- Body copy is concise, scannable, and compelling
- Images are indicative of what users will get if they complete the form
- Form is a proper length

### Design

- Headlines subheads, and imagery work together to establish value
- Page is minimalistic – everything non-essential is removed, including widgets and navigation.

\*\*\*You do not actually have to make the content you offer. For instance, if an icon set would make sense for your user, you do not have to actually create the icon set. I will be grading the content, design, and functionalist of your landing page, not the content you pitch to the user.

# Final Website Design & Content Portfolio

This semester, you have been working to design a website on WordPress. As part of this semester-long project, you have also created an array of digital media assignments to feature on the blog portion of your website. Over the course of the semester, I have provided feedback on every assignment and presented you with opportunities to edit assignments. For your final two grades in the class, I will 1) conduct a usability analysis of your website and 2) review your content and assess its quality.

## WordPress Design and Functionality

In order to assess your website design and functionality, I will conduct the same usability analysis on your site as the one you conducted on a self-selected site earlier in the semester. As such, I will assess your usability analysis on the following:

- All pages (Home, Blog Roll, Individual Blog Pages, About, Landing Page) on the website were viewable and functioning
- Page titles and headings are used effectively
- Page lengths are appropriate for the site
- Search capabilities were available on the site
- The site used sound navigational principles
- Internal and external links on the page were intuitive and logical
- Graphics were used effectively on the site
- The font was appropriate for the site
- The site was accessible to multiple audiences with multiple needs
- The site followed appropriate design principles

## Content Portfolio

In order to assess your content portfolio, I will approach the content pieces on your blog as “final.” In other words, I will no longer approach them as works in progress submitted to a blog, but will view them as published pieces prepared for and presented to an audience. In this capacity, I will review your content pieces with the same scrutiny I would on any website created outside the class. Given this, I will assess your content on the following:

- The blog contains all the content assignments given in class
- The content creator shows personal growth (i.e. – you’ve taken the time to polish your work and apply feedback)
- The content creator clearly adheres to an established style guide (i.e. – you’ve revisited your style guide and corrected it where necessary)
- The content has a clear and well-developed sense of audience that is cultivated and nurtured across all posts and pages
- The content shows craftsmanship and the content creator’s ability to manipulate various media in order to meet audience needs (i.e. – you’ve met the requirements for each individual assignment)
- The content shows originality and creativity within the parameters of the chosen theme (i.e. – you’ve not in any way, whether intentional or not, plagiarized the content of others)
- Content clearly shows consideration for aesthetics and design principles
- The content creator has thought critically about the benefits of hyperlinks and has included internal and external links throughout their content
- The content is polished, follows the rules of grammar and mechanics, and is free of error
- Proper MLA or APA citations are included as footers on content pages