



A graphic designer's guide to

Designing websites for mobile



Introduction

Graphic designers tend to have beautiful portfolios, but they often don't include website design as a service for their business. That's why we created this free book. It focuses on best practice website design layouts to give designers confidence in creating websites for their clients.

This book is one section of our eight-part paid Rocketspark Academy Professional Web Design course. This particular section is a guide to help you maximise creative flair while fitting the parameters of what makes best practice website design. With years of web design experience and extensive research, we crafted this book to give you a stepping stone to start designing websites. Happy designing! We hope this book becomes a helpful resource.



Meet the writers



Jeremy Johnson

**Head of Product
Rocketspark**

Jeremy has two decades of experience designing websites, both as a graphic designer and as the founder of Rocketspark. In his current role as Head of Product, he researches web design trends and best practices. He's passionate about giving graphic designers the flexibility to design websites without getting bogged down in coding and tech-tinkering.



Tyron Noble

**Graphic & Digital Designer
Rocketspark**

With 10 years experience as a graphic designer, Tyron has worked with clients like Cardrona, Mt Ruapehu, Torpedo7 and Volkswagen. Tyron was a graphic designer first, web designer second so is able to approach his writing to help graphic designers feel confident with code-free web design.

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Brought to you by the design team at Rocketspark

Spend less time trouble-shooting and more time designing as you create beautiful websites for your clients.


www.rocketspark.com/become-a-partner/

Written by: Tyron Noble & Jeremy Johnson
Design and illustrations by: Tyron Noble

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Mobile website checklist

10 things to do when optimising a website for mobile:

- Create desktop and mobile design mockups so you're thinking about how the website will display on both devices before you get to the build stage.
 - Check the mobile site in a browser on your phone. Sometimes the mobile preview displays slightly different to what actually appears on a phone screen.
 - Check the size of your headers and paragraph text - does it look too small or large on the mobile?
 - If customising font sizes for the mobile website, check all the headings and paragraphs are still consistent in size.
 - Adjust any two column text layouts to single column layouts on mobile.
 - Check margins around text aren't too wide or narrow for mobile.
 - Check the order of your columns on mobile, has anything shuffled around?
 - Remove any stack backgrounds that are interfering with content on the mobile site.
 - Check the images are crisp and displaying full width on mobile.
 - Remove any large spacing gaps, as large amounts of negative space on mobile is less effective and can look like a mistake.
- 

Designing for mobile

Smartphones are like an extension of the human body now that take them everywhere we go. Whether it's making a call, texting, getting directions, checking social media, watching youtube or searching for anything on google, smart phones are our constant companions. [A 2022 study of American mobile users revealed that on average they check their phones 344 times a day.](#) That's once every 4 minutes!

Since smartphones are now so prominent in our everyday lives, effective mobile web design is critical. On mobile the limited screen real estate can reduce the impact for visitors, so the experience has to be faultless.

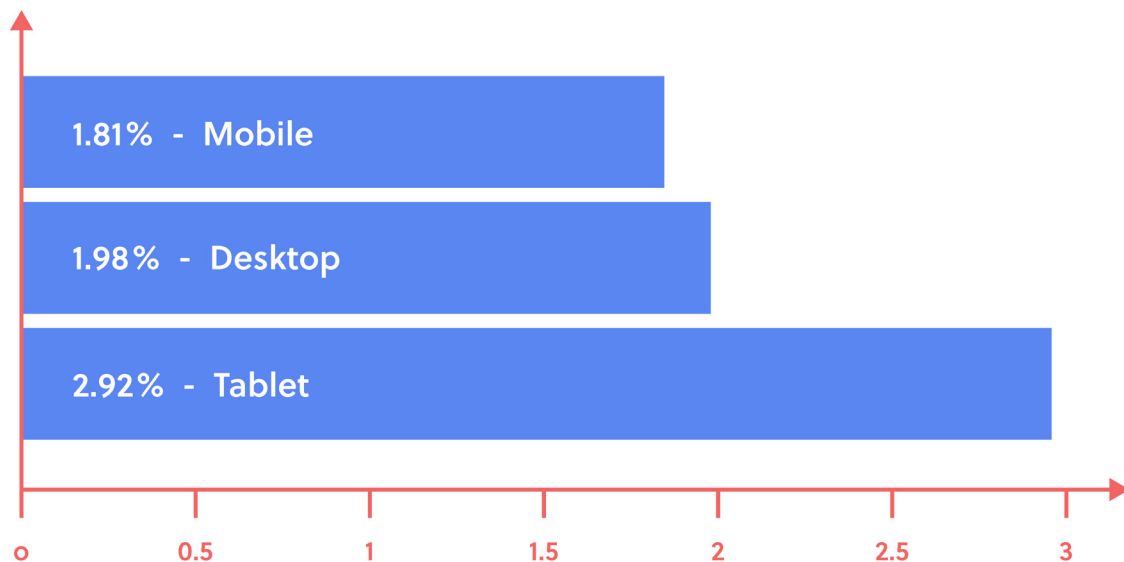
Throughout this ebook, learn best practice mobile design and why you should consider it at the start of the design process.



Why is mobile so important?

When designing a website, it's easy to focus on how the website will look on a desktop computer or laptop, but the website is more likely to be viewed on a mobile device in many industries. And the number of mobile device views is only going to continue to increase as time goes on. [It's estimated that nearly 75% of internet users will access the internet from their mobile devices by 2025](#)—showing the importance of a well designed website for any mobile device. Due to the high percentage of mobile traffic on most websites, designing both desktop and mobile views should be given equal importance. Another consideration is that people feel comfortable browsing on their mobile devices, but when it comes to making ecommerce purchases (especially on higher priced items) [people generally feel more confident going through the checkout process on desktop](#) (SaleCycle).

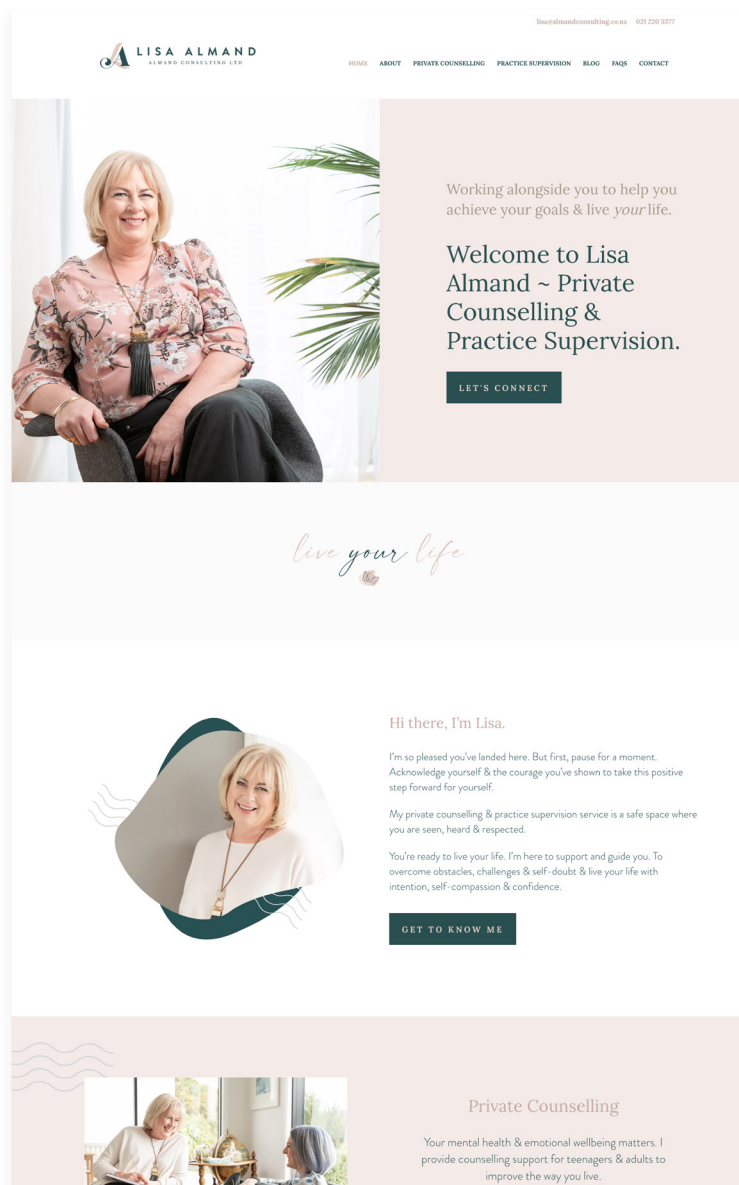
Conversion rates by device 2020



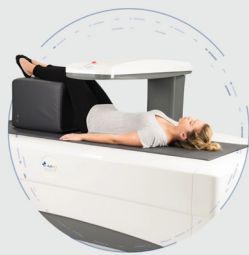
Source: SaleCycle Data

How is designing for mobile different?

Designing a website for mobile is often left as an afterthought when the desktop design has been completed. But in fact, there are some key design considerations to think about to make the website highly effective for both desktop and mobile. For example, there is a lot less horizontal screen real estate to use on mobile, so what might look beautiful on desktop, doesn't always translate as well to mobile. Designing for the two different screen sizes at the start of the project allows you to start thinking about how the website will look on both desktop and mobile at an early stage of the project. Also a risk of only presenting a desktop design to a client before knowing how it'll look on mobile might result in some back peddling later in the process if you need to adjust the desktop site to better suit mobile.



Knowing the website builder platform that you're designing for and knowing the characteristics of how the website scales from desktop to mobile will be a huge advantage to your design decisions. On Rocketspark's website builder, the mobile view stacks desktop columns from left to right in a vertical order which allows the users to scroll down through the content, but this order can be adjusted on a section by section basis on mobile. Having the ability to change the order of columns on mobile allows you to avoid the issue of having an image, text, text, image order situation. Instead, you can correct the order so text and images alternate. For example, the new order could be image, text, image, text instead. Knowing your mobile layout options in advance and how to apply them can help you make better design decisions that cater for both mobile and desktop in the best possible way. This means you won't be left with any mobile surprises or functionality issues you weren't expecting to see.



Bone Mineral Density Scan

Bones naturally become weaker with age. Early detection of low bone density can help prevent osteoporosis, reduce risk of fractures and slow bone loss. Find out your risk of fracturing a bone or monitor your Osteoporosis with a DEXA bone density scan.

Body Composition Scan

Manage your health and wellbeing goals with an accurate DEXA body composition scan. Results can be used to track changes in weight and muscle mass, as well as provide visceral fat readings to help indicate chronic disease risk.



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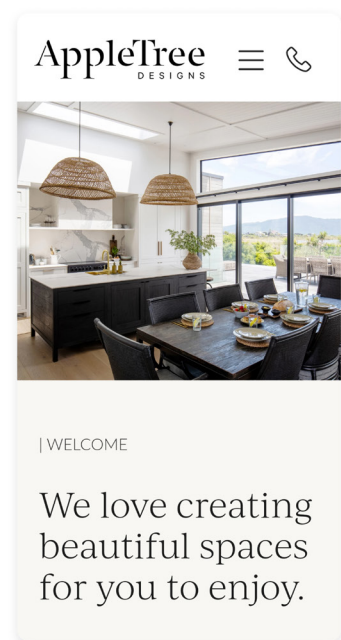
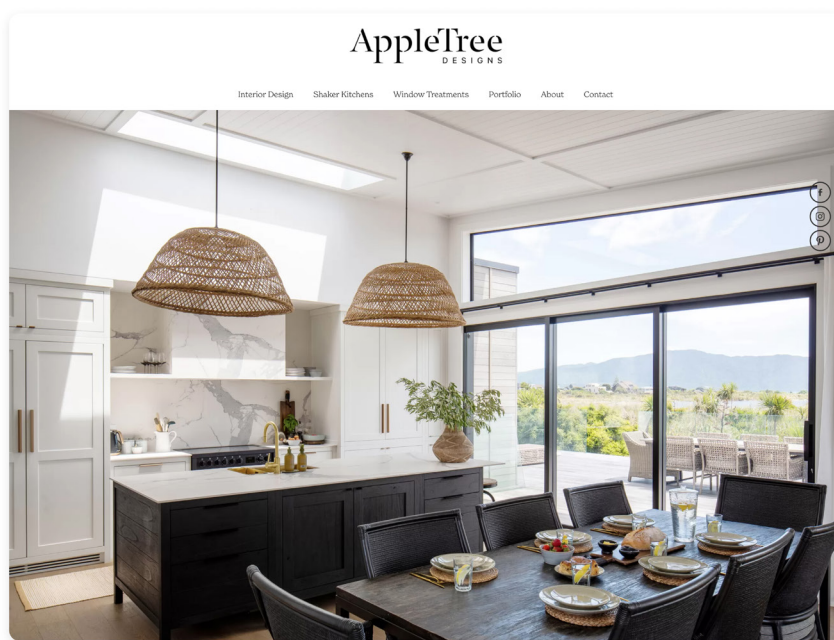
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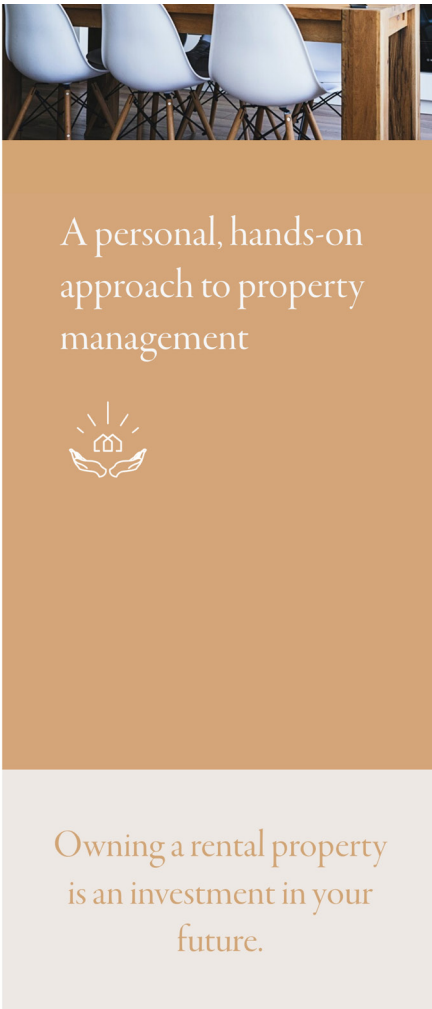
Images are less impactful on mobile

Big, bold and powerful images with text overlaid are less impactful on mobile, and this is purely down to the screen size available. Desktop allows the design to cater for large amounts of negative space on images to create a big impact for content, but unfortunately there isn't that same luxury on mobile design. Mobile design is much more effective when the design is simple, the content is clear and flows well and is easy for the user to navigate through the site.




Negative space is less effective on mobile than desktop

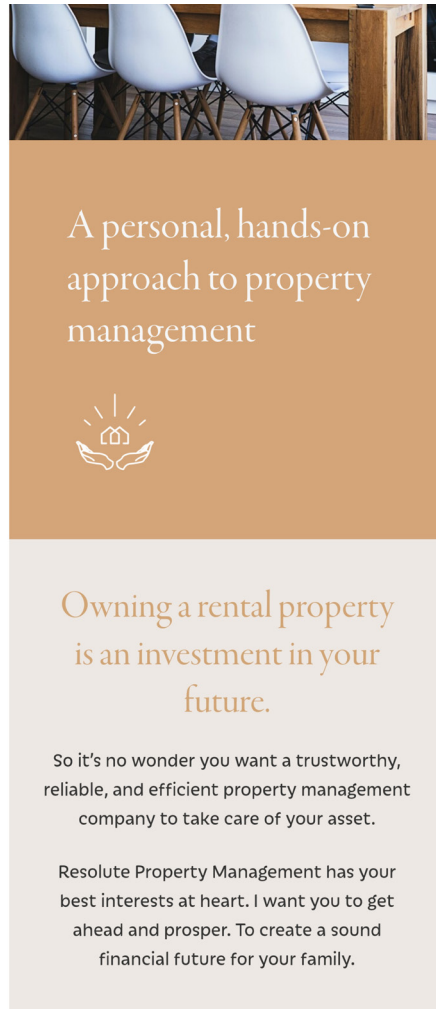
Negative space (or whitespace) falls into the same category of being less effective on mobile. On desktop, negative space can be used as a visual aid to create a higher impact on a particular piece of content. However, this doesn't work so well on mobile due to the limited amount of screen space available. Large amounts of negative space on mobile websites can often look like a design mistake instead of creating a higher impact on content. This is because large gaps of negative space can make the content look disjointed as the view of a website on mobile is so small and limited.




A personal, hands-on approach to property management



Owning a rental property is an investment in your future.



A personal, hands-on approach to property management



Owning a rental property is an investment in your future.

So it's no wonder you want a trustworthy, reliable, and efficient property management company to take care of your asset.

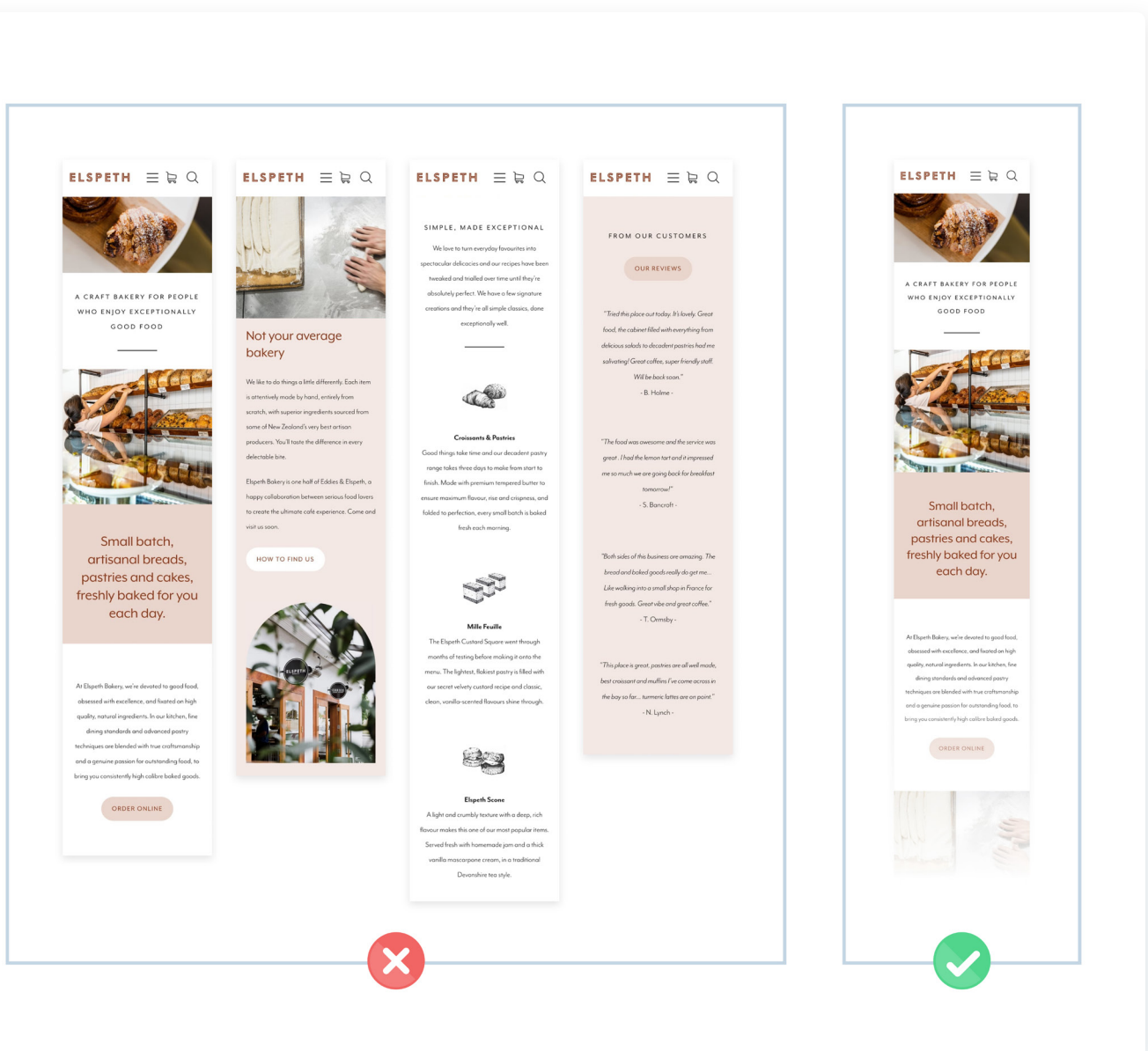
Resolute Property Management has your best interests at heart. I want you to get ahead and prosper. To create a sound financial future for your family.



Scrolling is natural on a phone

Scrolling on a mobile device has become second nature to us. We are constantly scrolling through the endless timelines on social media, skimming through articles and browsing websites. Since that action is already expected and established, it's now about knowing how to engage a user with good mobile content.

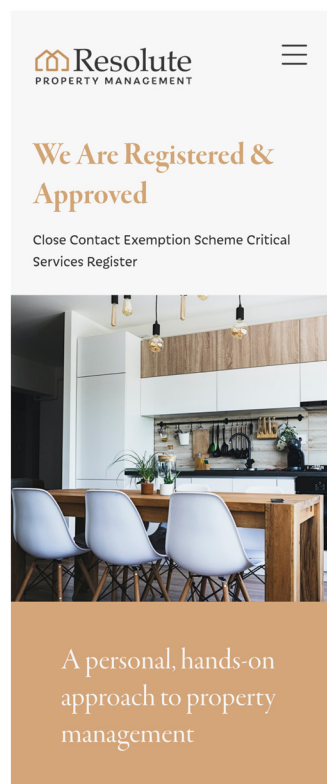
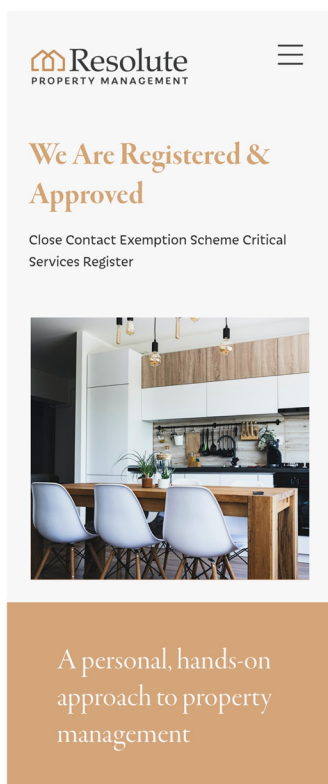
When designing the mobile view of a website, don't be alarmed by how long a page is. What's more important is, the mobile experience needs to feel faultless regardless of page length. If the page is laid out well, the content is engaging and the page flows well, people will scroll down the page further than what's above the fold. In fact, it is more effective to put all relevant content on a single page on mobile than it is to break up content into separate pages, as that can make content frustrating and tedious to navigate through.



Another key reason not to compromise or reduce content on a mobile site is the negative impact it will have on SEO. As of 2016, Google announced it would be favouring mobile sites in Google search results (searchenginejournal) over desktop sites regardless if the user was searching from a mobile device or desktop computer. This is because the amount of people using their mobile devices has exponentially increased over the past 6-8 years, and as a result mobile sites have now become the priority in search results. Using Rocketspark, you won't be faced with this issue, as it is a responsive platform, meaning all desktop content will be reflected on the mobile site. However, it is a reminder not to remove any desktop content to reduce page lengths on mobile.

Maximise the width of images

Considering most phone screen widths are quite narrow, it's really important to make the most of all the screen real estate available for the highest impact. For example, if you look at some of the most popular websites or apps viewed on mobile, Facebook, Instagram and youtube, all images and videos are hard up against the edges of the screen. As a side note, this spacing should only be applied to images and videos, but not text content. We'll talk about mobile text spacing in the next section.



Adding small amounts of padding to the left and right of images so it looks like the background flows behind the images has less benefit to your mobile design—it is only making the image smaller and less impactful, as the image has already been reduced in size on a mobile device.

An exception to this rule might be icons or profile head shots of people or if you want to reveal some illustrated background element behind the image.



Spacing text content and font sizes for mobile

Spacing and size of text is just as important on mobile as it is on desktop. There are some simple guidelines to consider to make text content easier to read and more engaging. A safe zone for paragraph text size on mobile is between 16-18px. This is not strictly the only size that should be used, but it is a practical size that can be used for most typefaces. This can be adjusted by one or two point sizes bigger or smaller depending on the typeface that is being used and how readable it is on mobile.

You can normally find a visual sweet spot with text content when the paragraph text size, character spacing, line height and left and right margins all effortlessly work together to make the most enjoyable reading experience.

- If the font size is too small, then paragraph text naturally becomes more difficult to read causing reader fatigued, ultimately leading to loss of engagement.

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- Line height and character spacing should be predetermined from the desktop paragraph text settings. But it is crucial to have paragraph text spaced correctly for mobile, as the screen is smaller and the user is likely to be faced with a full screen of text in paragraph sections of the website.

Letter spacing and line height too large

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- Left and right hand screen margins for text need to feel comfortable to make the content feel easy to read. If there is no margin spacing, the reading experience will be negatively impacted as it'll feel like there is no visual breathing room around the text. Also if the characters that are hard up against the screen edge it will become increasingly more difficult to read the content. If the left and right margins are too wide, this will make the text column very narrow, increasing the difficulty to read content, it will look aesthetically attractive and will make the body of text look unnecessary longer than it actually is.

Margins too narrow

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Creating hierarchy with headings on mobile

Creating visual hierarchy on mobile is just as important on desktop. However, due to the reduced screen real estate on mobile it can lose some of its effect. On desktop there is the ability to have large headings that span the full width on the page that have high impact. Whereas it's much harder to create that same visual impact on mobile. That's why on mobile it's better to focus on function over form. H1 through to paragraph text can still be a decreasing order of size and font weights, but the size of headings are much more sensitive on mobile. If heading sizes are too large on mobile, there is the risk of longer words being broken on to two lines and headings could feel disjointed from the content it is relating to. It's much more effective to have subtle heading size increases on mobile that still clearly establish the differentiation between sections without losing the flow of the page.



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Supportive practice supervision for clinical health professionals to develop & maintain a safe & sustainable work practice.



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Be careful about reducing main display headings down in size to replicate the number of lines on desktop. If a heading is on a single line on desktop, trying to size that heading down to fit on one line on mobile will be far too small and it'll lose its impact. Finding a balance where the heading maybe wraps to 2-3 lines is fine. Because of the portrait (as opposed to landscape) shape of a mobile phone screen you have some allowances for these headings to go slightly longer on mobile but if the size is too large you could end up with an excessively long heading of 4-6 lines so there is a size balance here.

WHAT CAN I HELP WITH?

all your graphic design + website needs

Good design is your businesses personal sidekick, one that works 24/7, building credibility, showing off your services at a professional level and increasing your brand recognition by the second. Let's help your business stand-out with a valuable brand that you're proud of.



WHAT CAN I HELP WITH?

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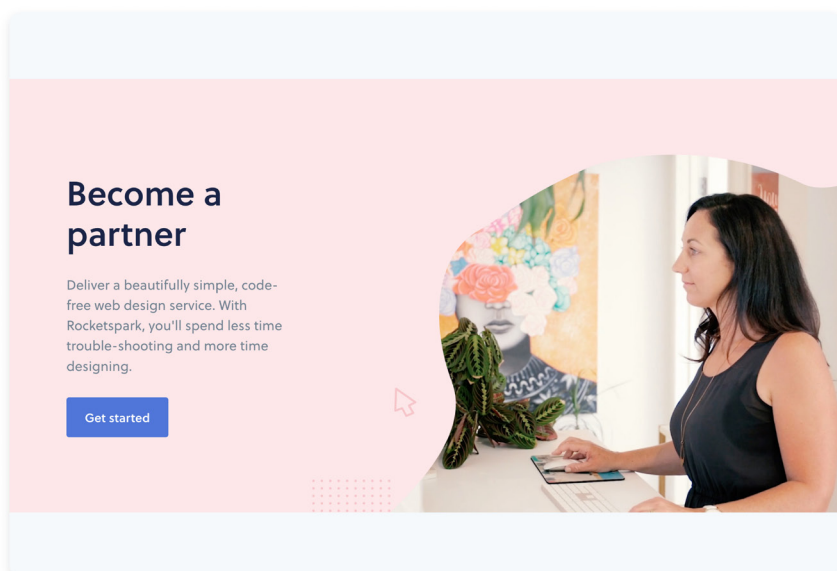
Good design is your businesses personal sidekick, one that works 24/7, building credibility, showing off your services at a professional level and increasing your brand recognition by the second. Let's help your business stand-out with a valuable brand that you're proud of.



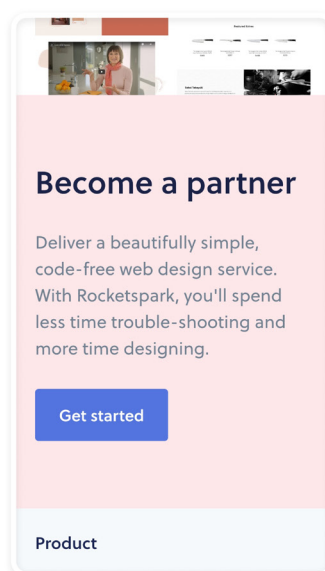
Hiding stack backgrounds on mobile

On desktop, creating stack backgrounds is a great way to create variation, give hierarchy to information and help visually separate sections on a page. However stack backgrounds don't necessarily translate that well to mobile if they have content overlaying them. In fact some stack backgrounds on mobile can have a negative impact on the page, making content more difficult to view and read. Therefore, don't be afraid to bend the rules of the visual unity between the desktop and mobile site. Just because there is the use of a stack background on the desktop site, don't feel guilty for hiding the background on the mobile site if it is going to visually enhance the other content in that stack.

Desktop



Mobile



Subtle illustrated backgrounds are typically fine on mobile as exactly which part of the illustration is displayed and what's out of frame isn't necessarily critical.

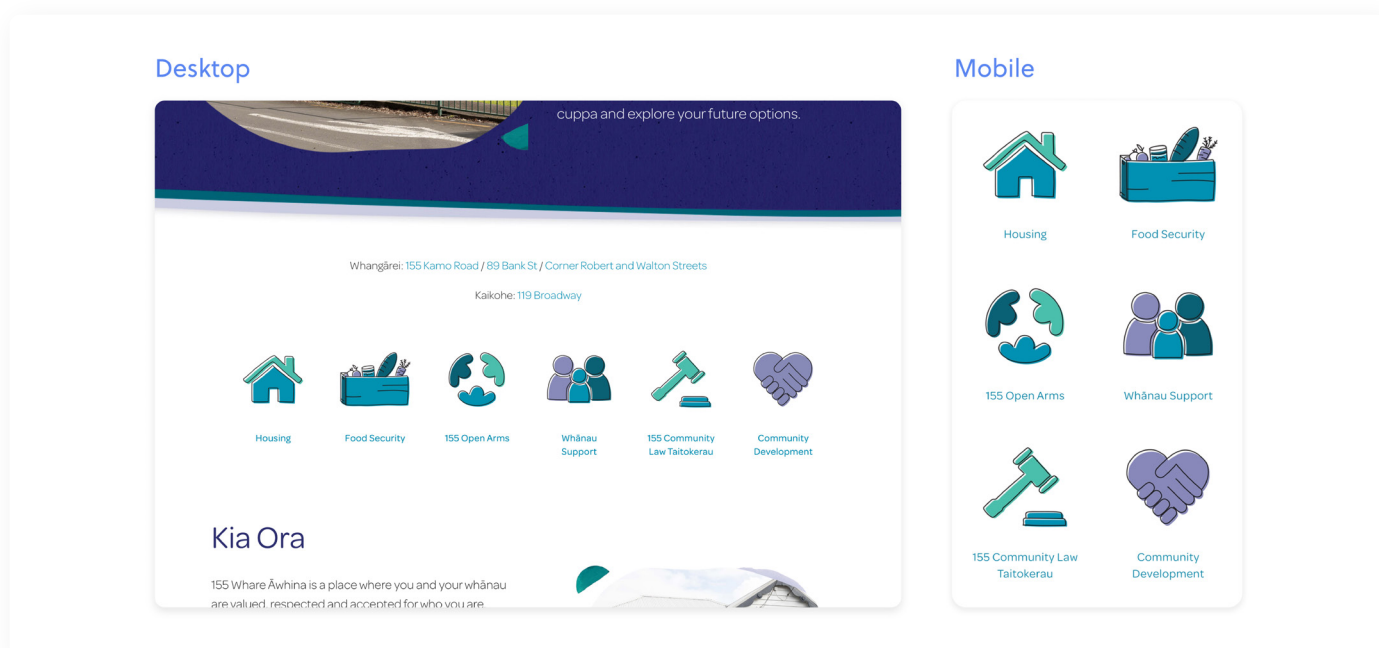
If you've got a stack that is just a photographic background with no other blocks of content, this can look really nice on mobile but you may need to increase the height of it with a taller aspect ratio otherwise it'll look like a letterbox slot and have no visual impact. Increasing the height by increasing the internal spacing would crop some of the left and right edge off the image but so long as the focal point of the image is still within frame, that's fine.

Using two column layouts on mobile

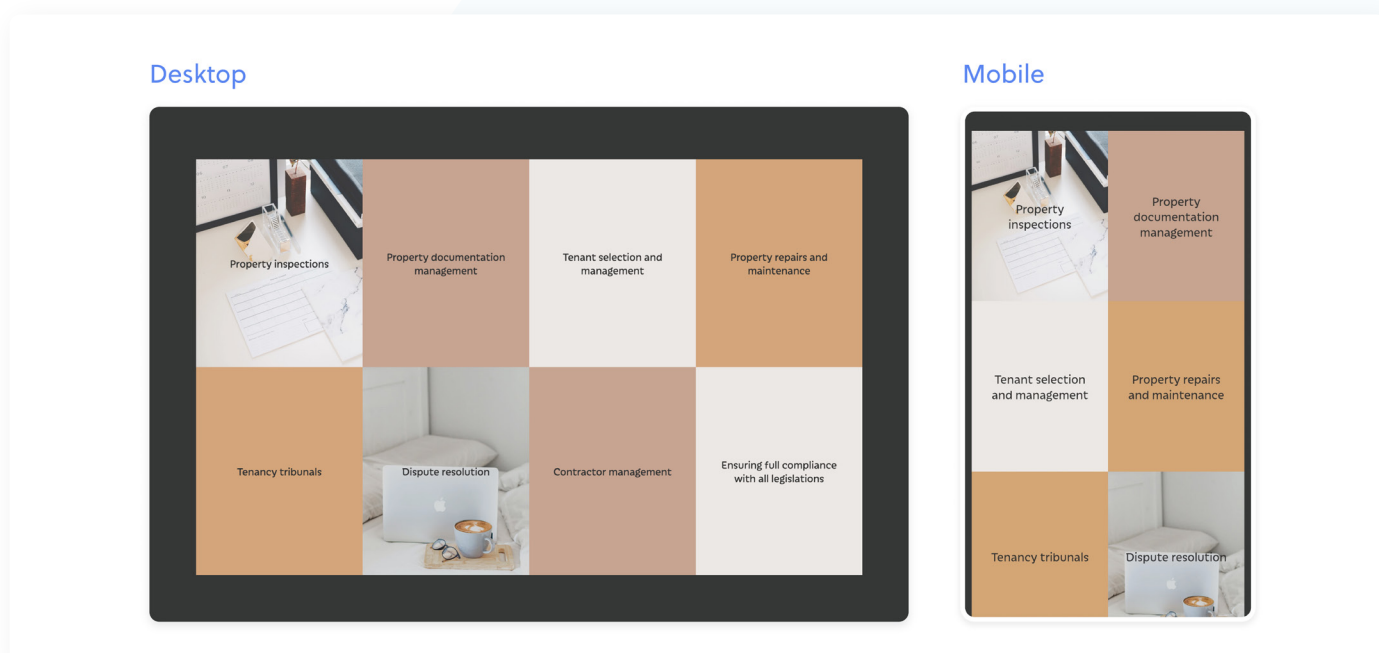
Using two column layouts should be treated with care on a mobile website design. There are a few do's and don'ts that can guide the design, be more functional and look more professional.

The do's

- List of icons can benefit from being placed in a two column layout to keep the scale of icons relative to the rest of the content on the page, but also to decrease the amount of unnecessary scrolling screen real estate they take up.

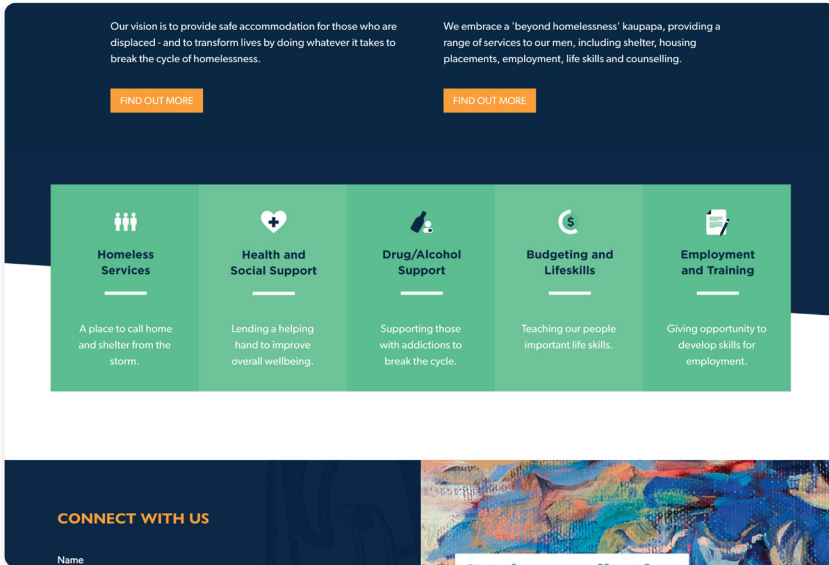


- Using Rocketspark grid gallery can be an effective way to split smaller images / icons into a two column layout on mobile.

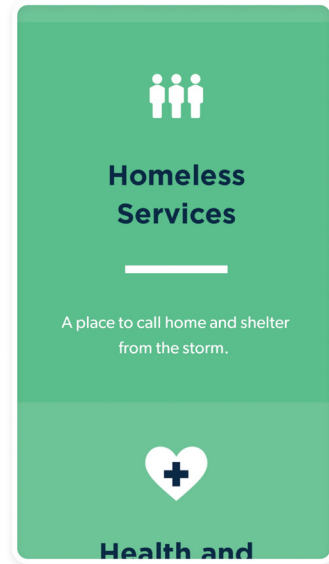


- Use two column grids sparingly on mobile design. Most of the time a single column layout will be the best solution.

Desktop



Mobile



- Adjust the size of any associated text small enough to look appropriate within a 50% wide column. The text needs to be very short in order for this to work (either 1-4 words or at most 1-2 lines at a small font size).



The don'ts

- Don't split paragraphs of text content into two columns on mobile. There isn't a sufficient amount of space on a mobile screen width to achieve this look.
- Don't use a 2 column layout for putting an image and text side by side on mobile as the image will be too small and there won't be enough space for text.



The need grows

Sarah and Sonya were already connected through the industry, and both could see there was a need for more female support, particularly for business owners where they are often the silent achievers keeping things running smoothly behind the scenes.

So, Sarah took the reins and organised the first Women in

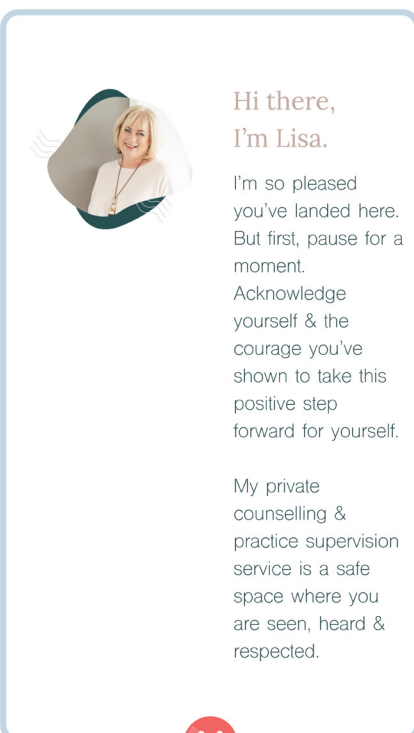
Forestry event, held in Rotorua in 2017, with about 30 women in attendance. Kim Godfrey then stepped in to help Sarah Davidson coordinate the network with day to day operations, and a follow up event in Napier held in 2018 attracted similar numbers, and the group discussed future plans including how we could stay connected.



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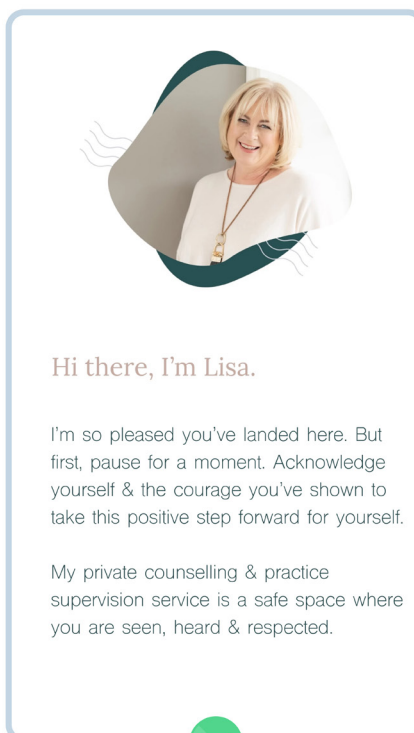
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Hi there, I'm Lisa.

I'm so pleased you've landed here. But first, pause for a moment. Acknowledge yourself & the courage you've shown to take this positive step forward for yourself.

My private counselling & practice supervision service is a safe space where you are seen, heard & respected.



Hi there, I'm Lisa.

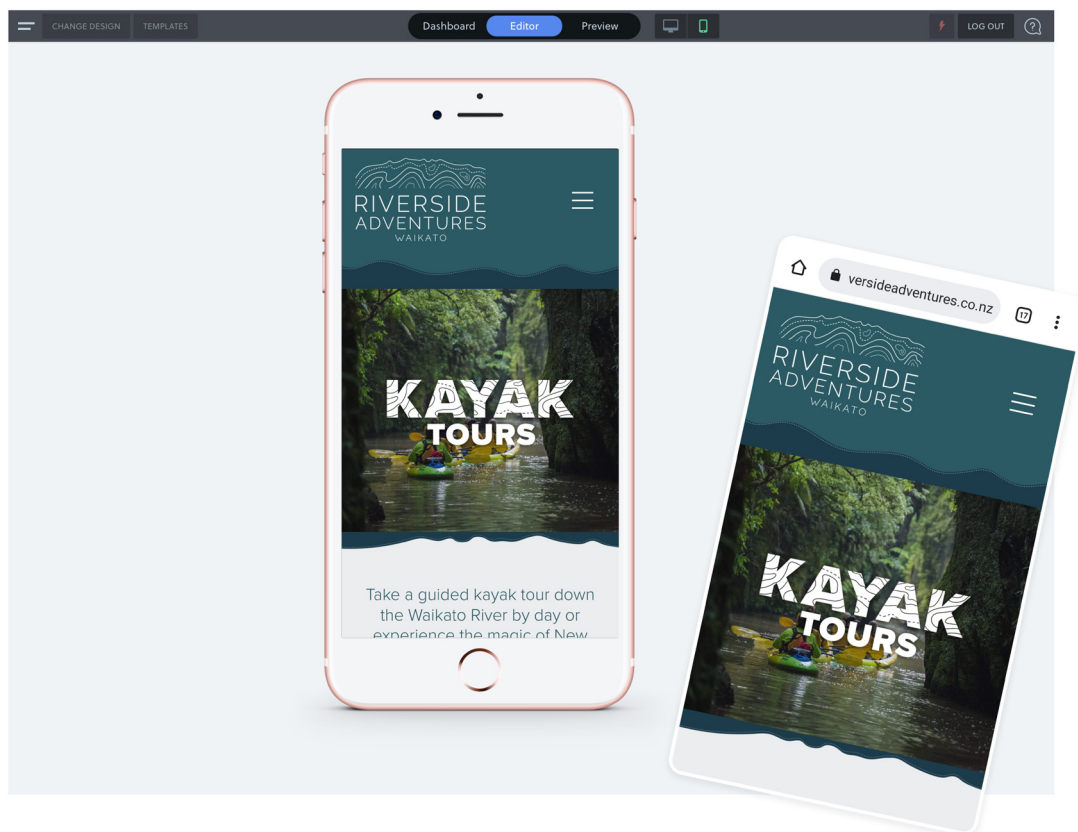
I'm so pleased you've landed here. But first, pause for a moment. Acknowledge yourself & the courage you've shown to take this positive step forward for yourself.

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Preview your website on mobile when building in Rocketspark

Once both desktop and mobile designs are finalised and you begin the build process, don't always entirely rely on the visual preview you see in the website builder. When building a website in Rocketspark, the preview you see is a simulation of what you'll see on a phone, but to get the most accurate preview of a site and especially with mobile, it's always best practice to preview it on your own mobile device. Mobile phone screen sizes are typically higher resolution than desktop screen resolutions so this is a key factor in the design feeling different between the simulated preview and an actual phone. From here it's really easy to make adjustments on the website builder and then refresh the page on the mobile design to see the live updates. Rinse and repeat these steps until the live site looks seamless and thoughtfully spaced on a mobile device.



Another great reason to preview the website on a mobile is to get a real life perspective as to how the content feels to physically scroll through it with your thumb as opposed to a mouse scroll. This is a great way to also test the entire functionality on the site, check how easy it is to navigate, click links, read the text and view images etc.

Try using Rocketspark preset stacks for pre-optimised layouts and spacing

Rocketspark preset stacks are a great way to introduce beautiful layouts for both desktop and mobile which have already been optimised for good mobile text sizes and spacing. We still recommend checking every stack on an actual phone but typically the preset stacks look great straight out of the box, speeding up your workflow.

The image illustrates the Rocketspark 'Add a stack' interface. On the left, a panel titled 'Add a stack' shows options for 'Preset', 'Blank', and 'My Stacks'. Below this, there's a search bar and a 'Popular' dropdown menu. Several preset stack options are displayed, including 'What we offer', 'What is unique to your business?' (highlighted with a blue border), 'Get in touch with us today for more', 'Heading about picture background', and 'About a person or team'. A 'Service 1' button is also visible. On the right, a desktop preview shows a stack titled 'What is unique to your business?' with a description: 'This section could be used for any information about your business. You could use this section to introduce a key service and link to a specific page on your website about that service. Both helping visitors know you offer what they're after but also showing Google you're relevant to searches.' A blue '+ ADD STACK' button is overlaid on the desktop preview. Below the desktop preview, a mobile phone preview shows the same stack adapted for a smaller screen, with the text 'What is unique to your business?' and the same descriptive text, demonstrating responsive design.



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Creative Launchpad Facebook Group

This group is for brand designers and graphic designers who want to create better design businesses with more time for creativity, by getting more business confidence.

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Our Rocketspark Partner Programme is aimed at graphic designers that want to design websites for their clients. We provide an easy to use and powerful platform.

[Find out more](#)



Rocketspark Academy

Learn to run your dream design business. Take your design business to the next level with business and design best practice in small-cohort part-time live training.

[Find out more](#)