Planning and designing your splash page

As you design your splash page you will need to make many decisions. For example:

How big will your splash page be?
To maximise its impact, design your splash page to display on a computer screen without scrolling. Most users won’t scroll unless they feel they have to.

You may want to design your page to fit the screen of a NSW DER laptop (current laptop: 1280 x 768 pixels; earlier model: 1024 x 576 pixels).

Allow at least 100 pixels for window elements such as menus and toolbars at the top of the screen and reduce the width by about 50 pixels.

For now, sketch and design your page using rough visual or ruler measurements of the screen. Later you will set the pixel resolution in your Fireworks document.

What links will you include?
You might have one ‘enter’ link or several links to different sections of your site; you might include links to information such as copyright, technical requirements or other help files.

What will the links look like?
You could include text links or use graphics such as buttons or other images. Links should be obvious so users will see them and understand what they link to.

What text will you include? What fonts and other text formats will you use?
You will probably include a title, text for links and perhaps explain what your site is about. Draft the text and consider fonts, font sizes and colours. Remember, the text should be easy to read.

How will your page relate to or reflect your website?
Your splash page should ‘connect’ with the rest of your site. This might be through using common graphics, colours or other design elements. Don’t forget to decide on a background colour.

What other design elements will you include?
Explore graphic elements that might be part of your design. Draw elements and/or incorporate existing graphics, photographs, scanned objects and images, and objects available in Fireworks.

How will you layout the splash page elements?
Consider where you will place your design elements (text, links and graphics) on the page. Users tend to scan around a page from the top left corner and ending in the bottom left corner. Where you place elements will contribute to the impact your splash page has and how quickly users understand it and whether they interact with it easily. Check out the tips on the next page.
Tips for designing your webpage

Where you place elements on your splash page will contribute to its impact and success. Read these tips to help design an effective splash page.

**Simplicity**

A simple design can be more attractive to users than an overly complex one. You can simplify a design by:

- using common design elements, for example for links
- grouping content by vertically and/or horizontally aligning elements
- limiting the number of alignments
- restricting the width and height of the design so it doesn’t scroll
- allowing space on the page so the design isn’t cramped or overcrowded
- using one or maybe two fonts and limited font sizes and colours.

**Balance**

Give your design balance by distributing the content across the page. Balance can be assisted by having a larger left margin, using centre alignment, or placing some elements such as links on the right or in a row towards the bottom of the page.

**Links**

Make sure links are easy to find, large enough for users to click easily and spaced apart so users don’t accidentally click the wrong one.

**Focus**

Give your splash page a focus (the place where users should look first). This is usually in the top half of the window and often in the top left corner. The focus should be something important such as the title of your website. Create a focus by giving the element greatest visual emphasis, for example, in the case of text, by using a larger font size and/or a different font.

**Flow**

Guide users around your splash page by giving it a natural flow. This is often from left to right and top to bottom. Arrange links to your website together, in an order that reflects the structure of your site. Place them above secondary links to copyright or technical information.

**Alignment**

Align elements on the page to make it easier to scan. You can align vertically (left or right) or horizontally (top or bottom). For example, align links along their left edge.