CSS Frameworks for Rapid Prototyping

Josh Nichols
Web Communications
University of Missouri

Twitter: @MrBlank
Email: nicholsjc@missouri.edu
What is a CSS framework?
A CSS framework is a set of CSS rules, conventions, and best practices that attempt to abstract routine tasks into generic modules that can be reused.

Pros
- Increased productivity
- Consistent code
- Easier collaboration
- Fewer browser bugs
- Standards-based

Cons
- Learning curve
- Excess code
- Non-semantic
CSS frameworks

Prerequisites
A working knowledge of CSS and XHTML is required to begin using a CSS framework.

No framework will contain every rule needed. They will require editing and additions specific to the site. Even with the help of a framework, browser bugs still appear requiring the ability to troubleshoot and correct them.
CSS frameworks

Use what you need

Be selective in what CSS rules you use. Some sites may only need a few reset rules while another may benefit from a modular grid system.

Research what’s available. Mix and match rules with your own and only use what you need.
CSS frameworks

Some CSS frameworks

Blueprint CSS
http://www.blueprintcss.org/

960 Grid System
http://960.gs/

Fluid 960
http://www.designinfluences.com/fluid960gs/

YUI Grids CSS
http://developer.yahoo.com/yui/grid/

Reset Reloaded by Eric Meyer
http://meyerweb.com/eric/thoughts/2007/05/01/reset-reloaded/
Site prototyping

The grey box method
A site prototype is an interactive wireframe to represent the structure, content and functionality of a website.

It’s a grayscale mock-up that focus on content and does not include graphical elements or imagery.
MU Web Communications’ workflow
We design from the content out.

1. Define goals
2. Content inventory
3. Information architecture
4. Wireframes
5. Prototype
6. Design
7. Production

Wireframes, prototyping and design come after content organization.
Prototype example

Example site
MU Biochemistry prototype
http://webcom.missouri.edu/presentations/css-frameworks/biochem/

Benefits

• No need to create all new CSS rules for each site
• Fast development — Dreamweaver templates and library items created in less than an hour
• Changes to the templates are easier and faster
• Information architect can create pages from templates
• Writers can format content as XHTML for placement in the final site
Prototyping demo

Example framework
Blueprint CSS
http://www.blueprintcss.org/

• Reset rules that eliminates the discrepancies across browsers.
• A flexible grid that can support complex layouts.
• Every XHTML tag already has a style rule.
CSS framework resources

5 Popular CSS Frameworks + Tutorials & Tools for Getting Started

A Closer Look At the Blueprint CSS Framework

A Detailed Look at the 960 CSS Framework
Thanks!

Josh Nichols  
Web Communications  
University of Missouri

Twitter: @MrBlank  
Email: nicholsjc@missouri.edu