

Focus your presentation

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We continue to be impressed—blown away is more like it—by the focus of Apple's design. Its new iPhone site, in particular, is so direct and clear that it makes the iPhone obvious to even a casual viewer. Yet because the iPhone is so *different*, the potential for misunderstanding is high. How do they do it?

The site designers have plenty they could say. They could gush (truthfully) about the technical innovations, the 200 patents, the coolness of it all. Instead, they confidently show you the phone as a friend would, put it in your hand, explain how it works. They present the phone from your point of view, calmly, lightly, naturally. Result: You understand it, and you like it.

Understanding is our goal, too, when we present our idea/product/program to others. We want our audience to *get it*. Let's see what Apple can teach us.



It's just you and the iPhone and nothing else. This keyboard page shows how the absence of distractions is important to a clear presentation. Note what's here: a plain typeface, blank background, neutral colors, nothing flashes or blinks, no frames or gingerbread. And another thing—very few words. Result? You're focused on the product, relaxed and ready to learn.



The basic structure

The site is designed as a presentation stage. It has a large main field for stills and video, and four small links beneath. All five fields look alike, a visual tie.







Activation & Sync. Watch video ▶













Five fields comprise the page. Five is enough; more, and attention would be dissipated by choices. Two visual contrasts are at work: scale the main field is huge compared to the links and value; one's black, and the others are white. Result: The similarities tie the page together, while the differences keep parts distinct.



Type and photos work together

Each field has one headline and one photo. There are no "text only" sections nor any "photo only" sections. One topic, one photo, every time.





Note alignments. Because the four links are the same kind of thing, repetitive layout adds clarity and comprehension speed; the viewer "processes" one design, not four.



Keep them apart. Each field is divided in half, type on the left, photo on the right. The type is minimal—just a word or two—and aligned left; each photo is simple (one object, no background) and dark. Note in the main field (left, top) that the white headline ties to the white phone face, while in the link fields the ties are black.





One typeface

One clear typeface is used throughout. One is all you need. Type is for support, not pizzazz. You want it to release its information quickly and not draw attention.



Spacious simplicity The presentation is minimal and spacious—just the iPhone and a couple choices alone in a whole screen. Result? Note how easy it is to "read" instantly.





Dimension

Flat fields are given life by subtle gradients that mimic the sheen of aluminum and the ambience of real light. Reflections and angles convey surface and depth.



Gradients mimic reality. Look around at your desk and office walls. You'll see that light plays off all surfaces, so no surface is truly monotone. Reflections are everywhere. By mimicking this ambience with gradients, the site feels real and warm while at the same time remaining neutral.



Angled objects appear more lifelike than flat ones. Note that some face this way and others that, some are viewed from above and others at table level, yet all are basically the same size. Each pose was chosen for expressive impact and clarity.





Natural presentation, no distractions

The heart of the site is video; the iPhone is explained in a natural, conversational way. Even in motion, the design remains focused; every detail contributes to clarity.

No barriers Video presentation is more natural than reading, and usually more effective. But its design is just as important. Note here that the narrator is centered in the screen, the strongest position (think of a target). He never drops eye contact (he's talking to you). And nothing visual comes between you and his presentation—not his looks, not his clothes, not his voice, not his surroundings. The design is deliberately (even relentlessly) pleasant but neutral so that all the emotional hooks come from the iPhone. The result is easy on the eyes and incredibly easy to understand.







One ... thought ... at ... a ... time ...

When the narrator shows an iPhone function, the screen changes to a closeup with voiceover. The iPhone appears, then the action, one at a time, clear as a bell.







Centered, centered. For a closeup, the iPhone replaces the narrator in the center of the black field. A finger appears and touches the glass. Note that only one element is onscreen at a time. Because in the closeup the finger is the key "actor," it too was chosen for its neutral qualities—adult male, but smooth, not hairy, wrinkly, bumpy, spotted, tattooed, glossed or anything else that would draw attention away. Note, too, that phone and finger are perfectly lit and cast no shadows. Is this attention to detail worth it? Absolutely.



Quick tours, bite-size information

Efficient *Features* section splits the screen in two and adds text; this requires reading, but it's quicker than pure video for those who want the Cliff's Notes version.



Four icons represent four main features. Color is brilliant against the gray. Nav triangle is tiny but is all it takes on the clean page.

Short headline and description give a brief summary. Flash demo on the far left shows the feature in action. Your eyes follow the animated dot. No sounds, no blinky lights.

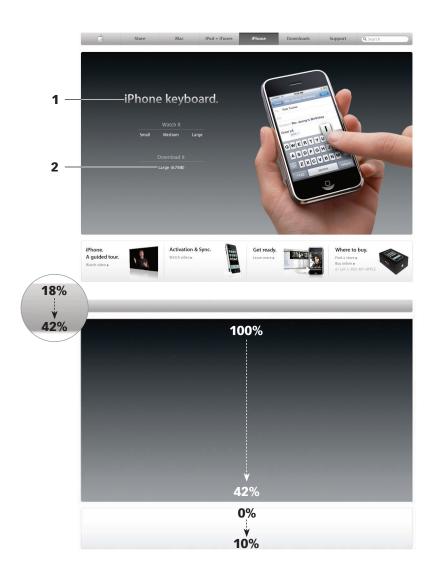
Visual chapters Each of the four categories are broken down into short demos. Note the icons are simply small versions of the big demo window (left); black indicates active. The white triangle points to a short description, which is set in smaller type with tighter leading to differentiate it from the main description above. Nice.

Keep them apart

Visual on the left, narrative on the right. Note the visual's black, the text white.



Article resources



Typefaces

- 1) Myriad (Apple uses a customized version called Apple Myriad that's minutely different.)
- 2) Lucida Grande (Lucida Grande is a screen version of Lucida Sans.)

Gradients

(Bottom, left) Values shown are for print. The actual RGB gradients are minutely different.



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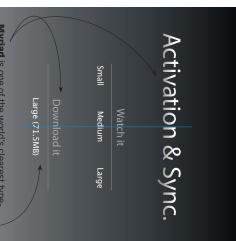
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Myriad is one of the world's clearest type-faces. It's open and minimal with no fine detail, ideal for low-res use. Because Myriad is not universally available as a system font, Lucida Grande, a lookalike, is substituted for small html text. When using two similar faces, you can differentiate the two using scale (big-small) and value (dark-light). Note above that the smallest type is also the lightest.

Dimension

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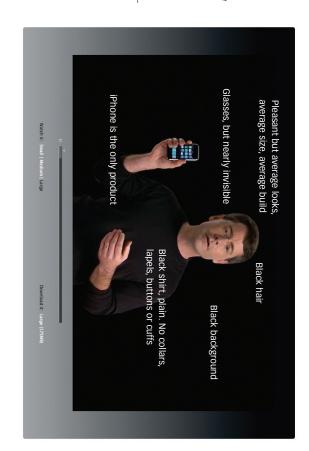


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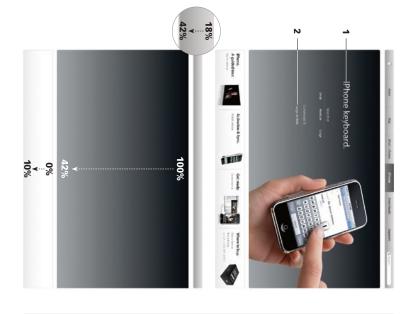
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