# Choosing a Web Designer

*So you want to hire a person to build your company's web site? Here are some suggested interview questions.*

## Questions to ask:

1. What assumptions do you make about screen size? About window size? Why?
2. Do you feel hamstrung by the non-dithering color palette? If yes, why? If no, why not?
3. How do you determine when to use frames? What <noframes> content do you put in a frames document?
4. What attributes do you always include in your image tags? Why are they important?
5. *(Trick question)* Do you use Numeric Character References such as —? What are your reasons?
6. How do you ensure that your HTML is valid?
7. Do/would you use Java applets? What do/would you use them for? What do/would you not? Why?
8. Do you use JavaScript? What do you use it for? What do you not use it for? Why?
9. Compare server-side and client-side scripting. Pros and cons of each?
10. What is CSS?
11. Do you use background images? If so, do you specify a background color as well? Why?
12. How do you break a long URL to fit into a narrow space?
13. *(Philosophy question)* What is the purpose of a web page?
14. *(Trick question)* For mass market penetration, what browsers do you design for?
15. Do Windows 95 and NT support the full .html filename extension?
16. *(History question)* Who is Tim Berners-Lee?
17. To what extent do you use graphic images? To how many K do you limit the total graphics on a page?
18. *(Philosophy question)* How do you aid navigation?
19. How are your spelling and grammar? Are your pages grammatically correct?

### Good Answers

**1**. None; screen size is irrelevant. A window might be 1000 pixels wide or it might be 400 pixels wide. Every user has his or her own preferences, and HTML was designed to be device independent.
**2**. No, although it is lacking in the ‘shades of grey’ department. Even so, as Frank Lloyd Wright said, “Limitations are an architect's best friend,” and I can make 216 colors look good.
**3**. I only use frames if the content requires it, and only for a small section of a site. I include <noframes> content to allow Lynx users full and easy access.
**4**. I always include height, width, and alt attributes; height/width is needed for reading text while images are loading, and alt text is needed for Lynx and for when images have not [yet] loaded.
**5**. I never use NCRs in the #127-159 range, because they are invalid and do not exist. RFC 1866 defines 127-159 as unused.
**6** a. I proofread the source code myself. b. I run it through the webtechs validator or gerald's kgv and edit as needed. c. My editor validates it using an HTML DTD.
**7**. I would use Java for its strengths, such as database access.
**8**. I only use it for non-functional enhancements, since many browsers either don't support it or users have disabled it for various reasons.
**9**. Client-side scripting is faster but is unreliable and has many incompatibilities. Server-side scripting is slower although it is reliable and browser-independent.
**10**. Cascading Style Sheets allow greater control of visual appearance while retaining functional compatibility with non-CSS browsers.
**11**. Rarely; and when I do, I always use a background color closely matching the average color of the image, so that text will be readable before the image loads.
**12**. Surround the URL with <nobr> and </nobr>, and use <wbr> at acceptable break points within it.
**13** a. To provide and/or receive information and data. b. To facilitate communication. c. Customer service. d. Point of sale. e. All of the above.
**14**. Any and all browsers. My pages are fully functional in Lynx, and still take advantage of GUI niceties.
**15**. Yes; both 95 and NT allow extensions longer than 3 characters.
**16**. Inventor of the World-Wide Web; he built the prototype using NeXT technology.
**17**. Mostly just title graphics and navigation icons. I try to stay below 15K so they will load quickly even on 9600 baud modems. Time is money for users too.
**18** a. Text-based site maps. b. HotSauce fly-throughs. c. “You are here” indicators. d. All of the above.
**19**. I manually proofread my pages for both spelling and grammar, so yes.

### Bad Answers

**1**. 800x600 (or 640x480). Maximized. That's how Windows users see things; other platforms will soon disappear anyway.
**2** a. No, cuz I don't know what it is. b. No, because I don't care about that; people should just upgrade their systems. c. Yes, because 216 colors are ugly and just not enough to help me pad my portfolio.
**3**. I use frames when I think it would be convenient. For <noframes> I put “Upgrade your browser.”
**4**. What are attributes? I just drop the images into PageMill.
**5**. Sure — gotta have em dashes! Looks fine in Windows.
**6**. I preview the page in Netscape.
**7**. Tickertape applets really spice up a page, I think.
**8** a. I use it for highlighting artwork. b. I use it for providing site navigation.
**9**. Client-side scripting is faster. What else matters?
**10**. Oh, that's how you can make cool visual effects.
**11**. All the time cuz they look neat. I even make them high contrast so they're more noticeable under the text. Background color isn't needed when using an image cuz the image takes its place.
**12**. Put a <br> at the places you want it to break.
**13** a. To advertise. b. To win awards. c. To out-dazzle other pages.
**14**. Both of them.
**15**. Uhh, FrontPage defaults to “.htm” so I just use that.
**16**. Some British guy in Switzerland.
**17**. I use images everywhere — headings, subheads, bullets, etc. I only go to 100K per page, cuz some people are still using ancient 28.8 modems.
**18**. I just make a big imagemap of the site.
**19**. I use a good spellcheck program, sew yes.


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