# Web Design vs Web Development: Who Does What, and When You Need Each

Programming and design · https://www.hyyat.com/en/knowledgebase/web-design-vs-web-development/

**In shortDesign** decides how the website looks and how visitors move through it: layout, colours, fonts and buttons. **Development** makes that design actually work: pages, forms, databases, payments and the admin panel. The designer answers "what does the visitor see?" and the developer answers "how does it work?". Most projects need both in different proportions.

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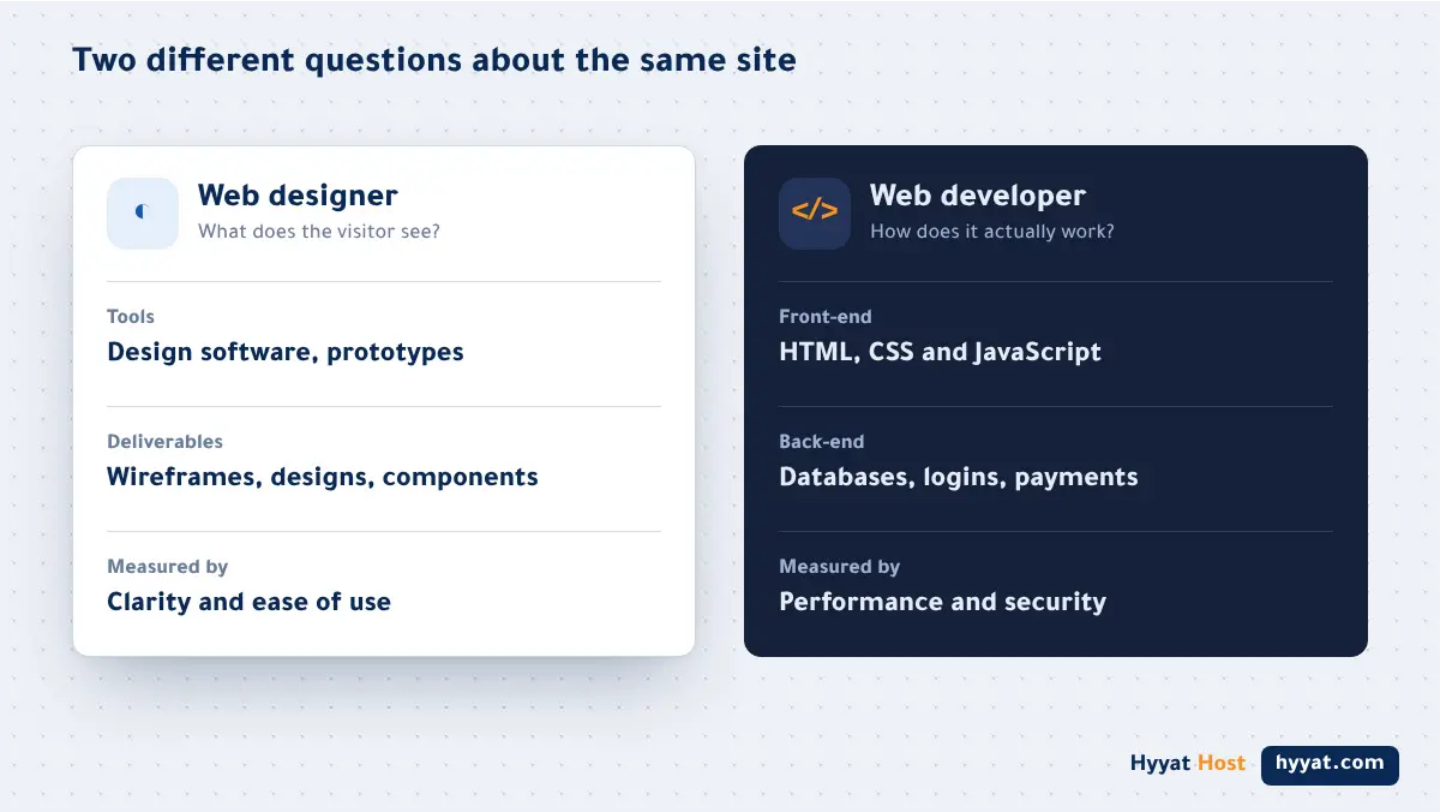
"Web design" and "web development" are often used as if they meant the same thing, and clients often ask for a "designer" when they need a developer, or the other way round. Understanding the difference helps you describe what you want accurately, read quotes properly, and see why a company brochure site costs differently from a booking platform.



## What is web design?

Web design is deciding **how the site looks and how it is used**. The designer decides where every element goes, which colours and fonts to use, what buttons look like, and how a visitor moves from page to page to reach their goal. Their tools are design software and interactive prototypes, and their deliverables are page designs and prototypes, not a working site.

Design has two sides: **user interface** (UI), which is the look, and **user experience** (UX), which is ease of use and reaching the goal. We cover the difference in UI vs UX.

## What is web development?

Development turns the design into **a real, working website** in the browser and adds everything that happens behind the screen. It has two parts:

| Part | What it covers | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Front-end | What is shown in the visitor's browser and responds to them. | HTML, CSS and JavaScript, mobile menus, animations and form validation. |
| Back-end | What runs on the server, out of the visitor's sight. | Databases, logins, saving orders, payments, the admin panel and integrations with other systems. |

A simple company website usually relies on the front-end plus a content management system such as WordPress. A booking platform, a membership system or an internal company tool needs real back-end development.

## Quick comparison

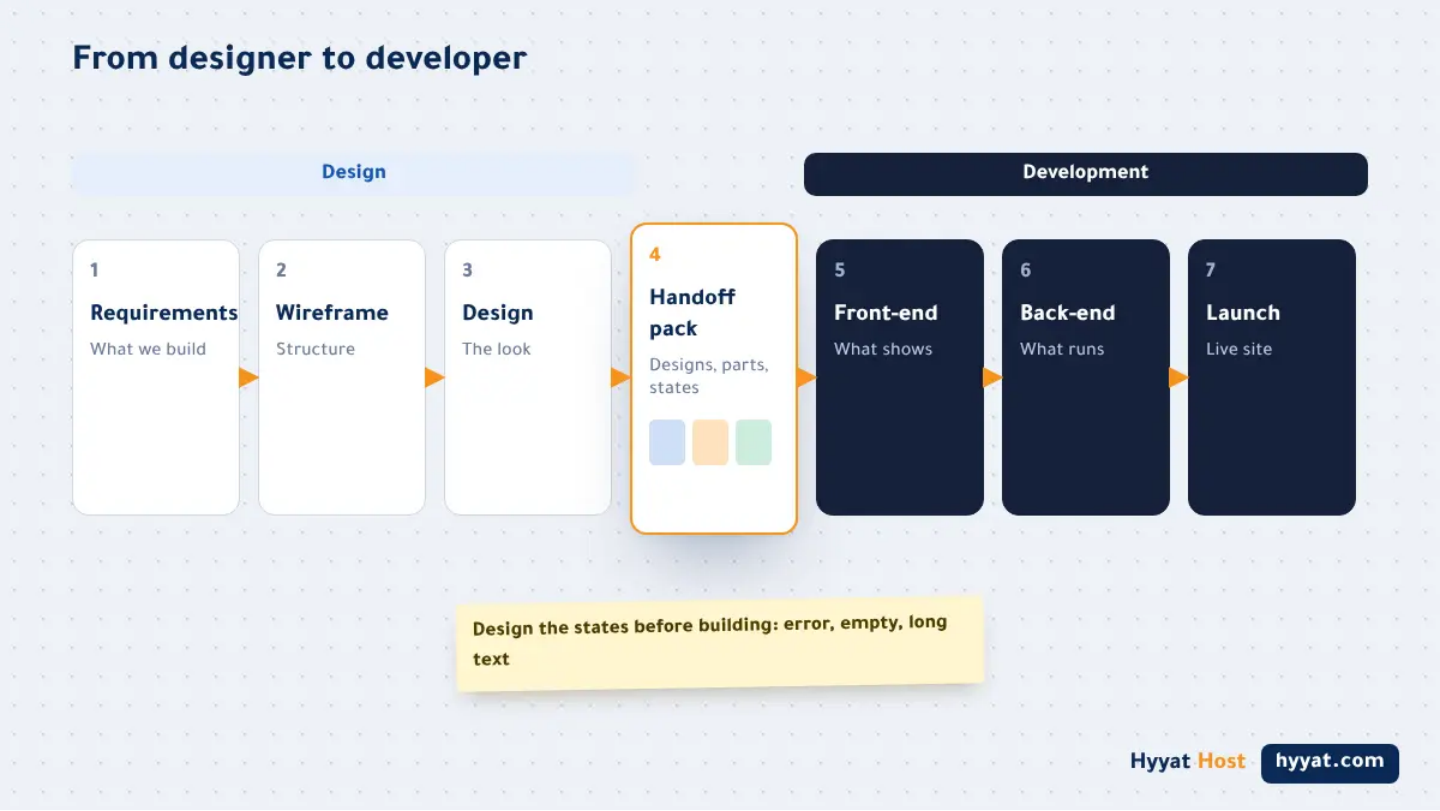
| | Design | Development |
|---|---|---|
| Question it answers | What does the visitor see, and how do they move around? | How does what they see actually work? |
| Deliverables | Wireframes, page designs and a component guide. | A working site, code and a database. |

| | Design | Development |
|---|---|---|
| Measured by | Clarity, ease of use and brand consistency. | Performance, security and correct processes. |
| Its mistakes show as | A visitor who cannot find what they need. | A form that does not send, a slow page or a vulnerability. |

## How a developer receives the design

In a well-run project, the designer does not send an image and disappear. The handover includes **a clear package**:

- Designs for every page on desktop and mobile.
- A component guide: colours, fonts, buttons and spacing.
- Element states: a button on hover, a field with an error, an empty page.
- Images and icons exported in web-ready formats.



**From the design desk:** The most common argument between designers and developers comes from "a state nobody designed": what appears if a product name is very long, or a search returns nothing? Ask for these states to be designed before development, not improvised during it.

## Can a designer also be a developer?

Yes. Many company brochure sites are delivered by one person who handles both the design and the WordPress build. But the bigger the project, the more specialisation matters: a designer focused on experience and look, and a developer focused on performance, security and processes. What matters is knowing who is responsible for what in your project.

## When do you need a designer, a developer, or both?

**Mainly design**A company brochure site, a campaign landing page, or redesigning an existing site without changing what it does.
**Design and development**An online store, a site with bookings or memberships, or integration with accounting or shipping systems.
⚙**Mainly development**An internal system, an admin dashboard or a web application, where the design is simple and functional.
If your project needs development, start by writing down what you want clearly, as in how to write a software requirements document, and decide on the platform with WordPress or custom development .

**Example:** A training company asked for "a website design". After the first session it became clear they wanted trainee registration, fee payment and certificate issuing. That is a design and back-end development project together, and identifying it at the start changed how it was planned and priced.

## Terms you will hear in your project

| Term | What it means |
|---|---|
| Wireframe | A black-and-white layout of a page, from the design stage. |
| Prototype | A clickable version of the design you can tap through, but not a real website. |

| Term | What it means |
|---|---|
| Design system | A guide to repeated elements: colours, fonts, buttons and spacing. |
| Front-end | Code for what appears in the browser. |
| Back-end | Code that runs on the server, such as databases and orders. |
| CMS | A content management system such as WordPress, for editing text and images without code. |
| Staging | A test copy of the site where changes are checked before going live. |
| API | A way to connect your site to another system, such as a payment gateway or a courier. |

You do not need to memorise these, but knowing them helps you read quotes and reports and ask about the right item at the right time. To check the quality of development work before accepting it, see testing development work.

## How design and development run together in your project

On projects that combine both, the designer and developer do not work in isolation. The developer reviews the wireframe early to flag anything that may be complex to build, and the designer reviews the site after development to make sure what was built matches what was approved. On our development projects, work is delivered in stages, so you see each part working before moving to the next instead of waiting until the end to see everything at once.

## Summary

- Design is the look and the experience. Development is how it runs.
- The front-end is what the visitor sees; the back-end runs on the server.
- Describe what you need precisely to know which skills your project requires.

We offer both: website design from SAR 1,500, and web development with a fixed price, staged delivery, an NDA and a 3-month warranty.

## Frequently asked questions

What is the difference between web design and web development in short?
Design sets how the site looks and how it is used. Development makes it work, including forms, databases, payments and the admin panel.

What is the difference between front-end and back-end?
The front-end is what appears in the visitor's browser and responds to them. The back-end runs on the server, such as databases, logins and orders.

Does a WordPress site need a developer?
A brochure site usually does not need custom code. Features not available in ready-made plugins, or integrations with other systems, need a developer.

Which costs more, design or development?
It depends on the project. Complex back-end work usually takes longer, and the cost is set by the amount of work, not the label.

Should I start with design or development?
Start with requirements, then design, then build on an approved design. Building before the design is settled usually leads to rework.

**Related guides**

- UI vs UX: User Interface and User Experience Explained With Company Website Examples
- The Company Website Design Process: From the First Meeting to Launch
- WordPress or Custom Development? When Your Website Needs Each One
- How to Write a Requirements Document for Your Software Project: A Practical Guide with a Template
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