DESIGN

The Evolution of Cell Phone Design Between 1983 – 2009

By **WDD STAFF**
May 22, 2009



Microsoft Secure March 28, 2023 Learn



Cell phones have evolved immensely since 1983, both in design and function.

Netflix v. GoTV
IPR2023-00757
Netflix Ex. 1014

From the Motorola DynaTAC, that power symbol that Michael Douglas wielded so forcefully in the movie “Wall Street”, to the iPhone 3G, which can take a picture, play a video, or run one of the thousands applications available from the Apple Store.



There are thousands of models of cell phones that have hit the streets between 1983 and now.

We’ve picked a few of the more popular and unusual ones to take you through the history of this device that most of us consider a part of our everyday lives.

We have tried, wherever possible, to include the most popular phones and the phones that were “firsts” for a particular feature, but may have missed out on your favorite phones due to the sheer number of models that are out there.

We invite you to post your faves in the comments section if they are not listed here.

Mobile phones are just now beginning to be as vital to North Americans as they have been to Asians. You can always see what is coming to store shelves in the next six months to a year by looking at the models that are currently available in Japan.

North America also had a spotty 3G network that has only really been revamped recently in order to deal with increasing demands for faster loading speeds from mobile customers, whereas Asia and most of Europe have had proper 3G networks in place for some time.

This has led to a revolution in 3G phones from 2007 until now, with more due to come out in 2009.

The list does not include any phones that were not portable handhelds. Car phones and some handhelds that were the size of a small briefcase were in use in the 1970's and 1980's, but since this is more about design than function we chose not to include them here.

1983

Motorola DynaTAC 8000X

Analog Motorola DynaTAC 8000X Advanced Mobile Phone System mobile phone as of 1983.



1989

Motorola MicroTAC 9800X

The first truly portable phone. Up until its release, most cellular phones were installed as car phones due to the inability to fit them into a jacket pocket.



1992

Motorola International 3200

The first digital hand-size mobile telephone.



Nokia 1011

This was the first mass-produced GSM phone. It was produced until 1994.



1993

BellSouth/IBM Simon Personal Communicator

The IBM Simon was the first PDA/Phone combo.



iPhone Google Tricks



1996

Motorola StarTAC

The first clamshell cellular phone. Also one of the first display screens featured on a cell.



Nokia 8110

Alternately called the “banana phone”, this phone was popularized in the first Matrix movie.





1998

Nokia 9110i

This iteration of Nokia's Communicator series significantly reduced the weight of this precursor to the smartphone.



This cell phone was the most popular consumer model at the time of its release and for some time afterwards.



1999

Nokia 8210

This phone was loved for its customizable design, but hated for its screen fade.

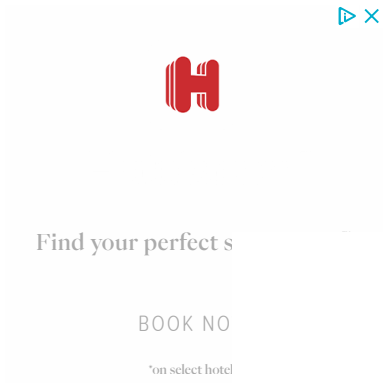


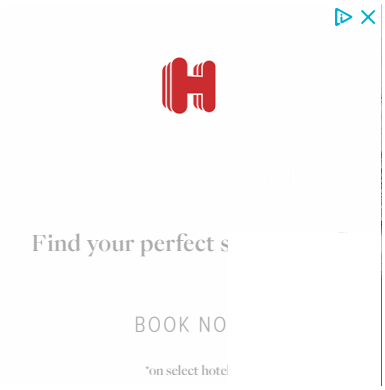
Nokia 7110

The first mobile phone with a WAP browser.



Nokia 5210







Benefon Esc!

This was the first instance of a GPS being integrated into a mobile phone, and was sold mostly in Europe.



Samsung SPH-M100 Uproar

The Uproar was the first cell phone to have MP3 music capabilities.



Nokia 3210

The internal antenna and predictive T9 text messaging sold approximately 160 million of these phones.



2000

Ericsson R380

The R380 featured a black and white touchscreen, partially covered by a flip.



Nokia 3310

This popular phone sold 126 million models, and was particularly popular in Europe.



One of the first phones with a WAP browser. A version of this phone was released in China that allowed Chinese character SMS.



2001

Nokia 5510

This phone featured a full QWERTY keyboard. It could also store up to 64mb of music.



Nokia 8310

This phone contained premium features not normally found on handsets of the time, such as Infrared, a fully functional calendar and a FM Radio.



Ericsson T39

This tiny handset was the first Bluetooth-capable phone.





Ericsson T68

This was Ericsson's first handset with a colour screen.



Siemens's first ever GPRS mobile phone with 360kb of internal memory — high at the time.



2002

Nokia 3510(i)

The first Nokia phone to bring GPRS internet services to the mass market. The 3510i, pictured here, was a more advanced version with a colour screen.



Nokia 7650

This was the first Nokia set to feature a built-in camera and was featured in the movie Minority Report.



Sony Ericsson P800

This smartphone featured a touchscreen and up to 128mb of memory.



Nokia 6100

This model sold from 2002 – 2005. It featured an LCD screen and internet connectivity through GPRS.



Nokia 6310i

The 6310i quickly gained popularity in the corporate world for its simplicity and long battery life.



Sanyo SCP-5300

The first camera phone. Despite the low quality images it produced, it was the first.



Nokia 1100

This extremely popular design has sold over 200 million since its introduction in 2003. This phone is rumoured to have sold for up to $32,000 in online criminal communities due to its ability to intercept one-time banking passwords.



Nokia N-Gage

Nokia's answer to the Game Boy advance, this phone/games system had a couple of award winning titles before it succumbed to its clunky interface design.



PalmOne Treo 600

One of the “it” gadgets from 2003 – 2004 until BlackBerries overtook them in popularity. Three or four days between charges and a successful merger of phone, PDA, and camera made this the business tool of choice.



Nokia 2100

This design was available in a wide range of colours and featured a monochromatic screen.



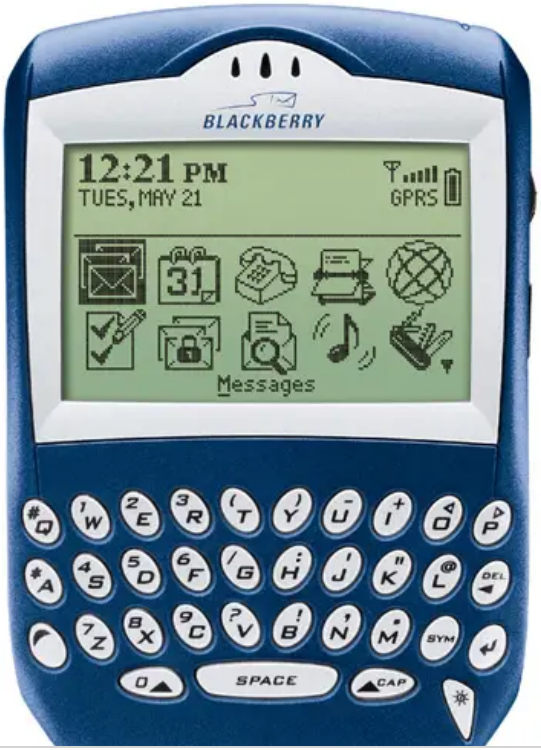
Nokia 6600

Considered very advanced at the time of its introduction due to its Symbian OS-based Nokia Series 60 platform. Released in the US market as the Nokia 6620.



BlackBerry Quark 6210

Research In Motion's first integrated phone/PDA.



BlackBerry 7210

BlackBerry's first colour screen.



Nokia 7600

One of the first 3G smartphones by Nokia, still one of the lightest and smallest.



2004

Motorola Razor V3

When this was introduced it set the standard for sleek design in the industry.





Nokia 7610

Nokia's first smartphone with a 1 megapixel camera.



The first entry-level Nokia phone that offered full internet access.



Nokia 6630

The first cell phone to allow for global roaming.



Nokia 7280

Listed by Fortune Magazine as one of the best products of 2004. Also referred to as the “lipstick” phone.



2005

Nokia 1110

Released as a low-end GSM phone, and widely used in developing countries.



Nokia 6680

One of the first 3G phones, the Nokia 6680 was considered to be high end at the time of its release.



HTC Universal

This was the first 3G Pocket PC phone at HTC and the first to come with Windows Mobile.



Motorola RAZR V3 Magenta

This hot pink phone gave the fashion set something to talk about — and on.



HTC TyTN 100

This model was sold as the Orange SPV M3100 in the UK, keeping with HTC's tradition of private labelling for individual carriers.



Nokia N73

This immensely popular smartphone has sold millions of models worldwide, and is still in wide use as of 2009.



Motorola Q

The “BlackBerry Killer” from Motorola.



The first design-conscious entry from RIM, the Pearl is still being offered on the market today.



KDDI Penck

A fabulous design available only in Japan.



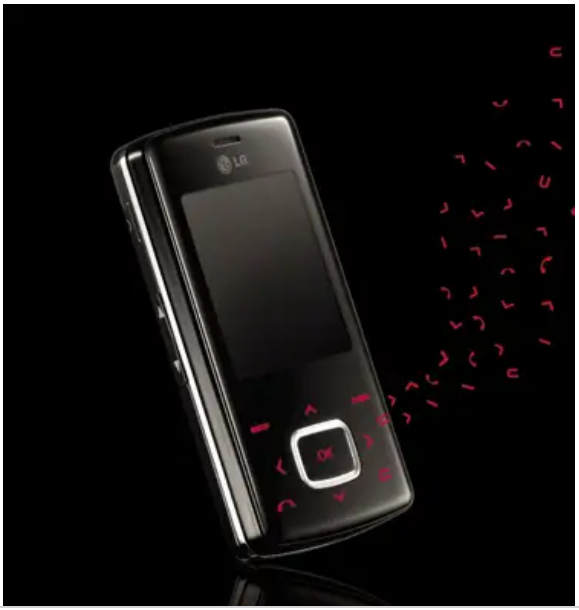
O2 XDA Flame

The XDA Flame is the first dual processor PDA-phone in the O2 line.



LG Chocolate KG800

One of the first well-designed phones made for mass market use.



Samsung i607 BlackJack

Research in Motion sued Samsung over the name of this phone. The lawsuit was settled out of court.



Nokia E62

Originally released to target business users in the European market.



2007

iPhone

The original iPhone was released in June 2007 with an auto-rotate sensor, a multi-touch sensor that allowed multiple inputs while ignoring minor touches, a touch interface that replaced the traditional QWERTY keyboards, and many other features that helped to give Apple an almost instant healthy market share on its release.



LG Prada KE850

Touchscreen phone that took home a Red Dot Design Award for “Best of the Best” in 2007.





HTC Touch

HTC's answer to the iPhone with its own multi-touch interface and a high screen resolution.



Motorola RAZR2 V9

The solid steel hinge and the metal case make this sleek design feel luxurious and durable.



Motorola Q9H

This fine-tuning of the Motorola Q was released in Italy and the US in 2007.



Nokia E90 Communicator

This update of the first smartphone launched the fifth generation of the series.



Nokia N95

Nokia's popular smartphone features a slider to access multimedia buttons and a numeric keypad.



Work on this “ultimate messaging and talking machine” began before Helio was a company.



LG Shine

This phone won another Red Dot for LG in 2007. Also released in Gold and Titanium Black.



Motorola RAZR^2

This phone features the Opera internet browser and CrystalTalk technology.



Palm Treo 755p

The Treo 755p is a smartphone developed by Palm, Inc. It was released on May 14, 2007 as the first CDMA Treo without an aerial antenna.



LG Viewty

A phone firmly focused on visuals. DivX Certified playback and 5 megapixel digital camera with Schneider Kreuznach optics are just a couple of the features of this simply designed phone.



2008

iPhone 3G

The iPhone 3G was made even more desirable by all the apps that could be purchased for it in the AppStore when it was released in July of 2008.



LG Vu

The LG Vu was one in a series of phones that included the LG Prada phone.



T-Mobile G1 Phone

The G1 phone was the first phone to be released with the Android operating system designed by Google. Also known as the HTC Dream. One million devices have sold as of April 2009.



Nokia N96

This GPS-enabled entry in Nokia's smartphone line features a sleek, compact design.



This phone was featured in *The Dark Knight*.



LG Secret

The outside of the LG Secret, a 3G slider phone, is constructed from carbon fiber. Also features the world's slimmest 5.0 megapixel camera on a smartphone.



The Instinct was introduced as the “iPhone killer” from Samsung at a low price of $129.00.



BlackBerry Storm

Designed to be a direct competitor to the iPhone 3G and other 3G smartphones; RIM’s first device to do away with the QWERTY keyboard and incorporate a touchscreen.



Blackberry's "middle ground" solution for those who wanted a 3G phone and a QWERTY keyboard.



Samsung Behold

Cell Fanatic found this entry by Samsung offered superior image quality over the Apple iPhone 3G and the BlackBerry Storm.



Samsung Gravity

The Samsung Gravity is their first to feature a slide-out keyboard that has proved popular in other brands.



The Krave design features a transparent flip that acts as a secondary touch surface to access additional features.



Samsung Omnia

The Samsung Omnia features a simple touchscreen interface and a speaker on the back.



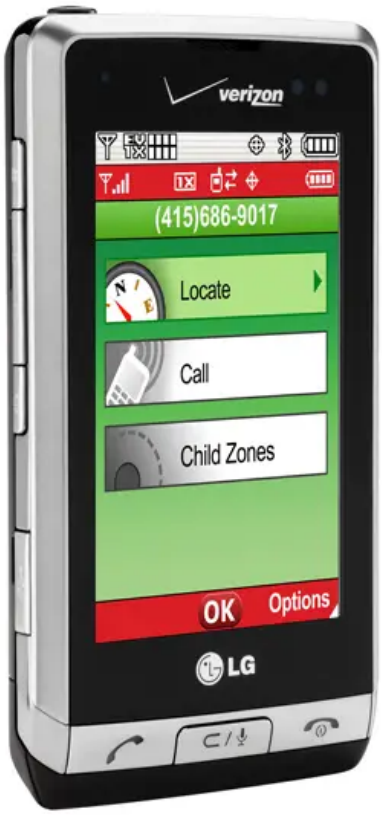
Nokia E63

Billed as the budget business smartphone.



LG Dare

The handwriting recognition and simple touchscreen styling of the Dare is enhanced by the easy-grip back.



Sony Ericsson W760i

Includes the “Sensme” music feature, as well as all of the other features from the Walkman phone brand.



Nokia N79

The Nokia N79 has a Naviwheel, GPS, a 5 megapixel camera with a Carl Zeiss Optics Tessar lens and more.



This attractive smartphone featured a resistive touch screen which is better for Asian character recognition.



LG KC910 Renoir

The LG Renoir has an 8-megapixel camera with xenon flash and Schneider-Kreuznach optics.



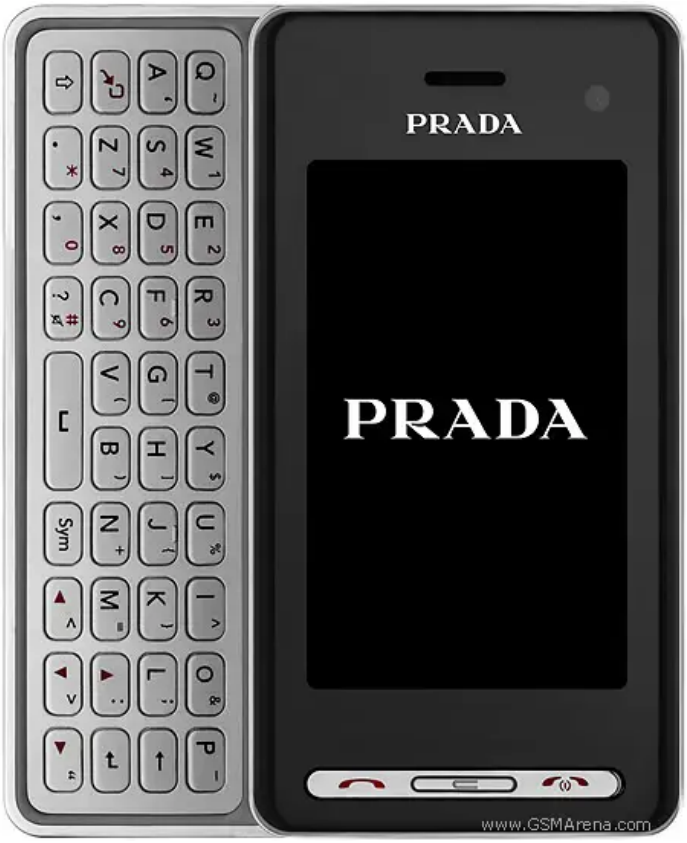
Nokia E71

The steel frame of this sleek smartphone from Nokia fits into your palm.



Prada II or LG KF900

The second iteration of the Prada phone designed by LG. The sliding QWERTY keyboard is new, as is its 3G capability.



LG Arena

The first phone with LG's 3D S-Class user interface. This UI reorients with the rotation of the phone and allows you to scroll film-reel style through available apps.



BlackBerry Curve 8900

Released in February 2009, the Curve features an improved trackball and a higher resolution screen. Still a 2G.



LG Versa

Comes with an attachable QWERTY keyboard and a virtual keyboard on the touch screen.



Sidekick LX 2009

This 3G incarnation of the Sidekick includes improved support for social networking applications.



Samsung Magnet

The Samsung Magnet is a cheap alternative for pricier smartphones with much of the same functionality and a cool design.



Another slide-out QWERTY keyboard and compact design. Comes with AT&T's Navigator, AT&T's turn-by-turn GPS service.



HTC Magic

The next HTC entry to sport Google's Android operating system. No US carriers have yet been confirmed for this model, but T-Mobile has been rumoured to be the carrier of record. Vodafone has exclusive rights to the phone in all markets that they service.



HTC Touch Diamond2

HTC made the LCD display screen as large as they could at 3.2″ for their next incarnation of the Diamond.



Samsung Propel Pro

The sliding QWERTY keyboard and slick design make this an attractive entry by



LG Rumor2

Built for e-mail, the Rumor2 supports Lotus Notes where its predecessor didn't.



Motorola Renew

This eco-friendly phone is the world's first carbon-neutral cell phone. Made with recycled water bottles, cheap, and an abundance of features for the low price.



Coming Soon

Palm Pre

This phone launches June 6 in the US through Sprint. It will feature the ability to keep multiple apps open at once.



Nokia N97

This phone will be available in June of 2009.



Omnia HD/Samsung i8910

This phone promises the first high-definition video recording when it is released July 1st of 2009.



Only Available in Japan

Here's hoping that some of these sleek designs make it across the pond eventually to North America. For more Japanese tech goodness, check KDDI's English page.

Hitachi WOOO Ketai H001 Phone

This phone promises a 3D display. Ubergizmo predicts that it will be a Japan-only handset.



Panasonic P001

3.1″ increased resolution screen, impressive design, global roaming capabilities and one-push open make this an object of desire.



Walkman Phone Premier[3]

This phone opens up to reveal a 3″ screen and a stylish keypad.



Casio 001

This sports model features a touch panel for interactive gaming and music.



S001 Sony Ericsson Cyber-Shot

This phone screams elegance. Oh, and it has the world's first 3.3″ full OLED WVGA display and an 8.1 megapixel camera. Not that we'd want all that fancy stuff in North America.



Toshiba T001



Kyocera K001 Junior Phone

Those of you with children will know how hard it is to put parental restrictions on anything electronic. This phone gives you the ability to track your child with a GPS locator, lock out questionable website addresses, and more.



Resources

If you have half an hour to kill and really want to get into the evolution of the cell phone and its cultural impact, check this full-length documentary from CBC.

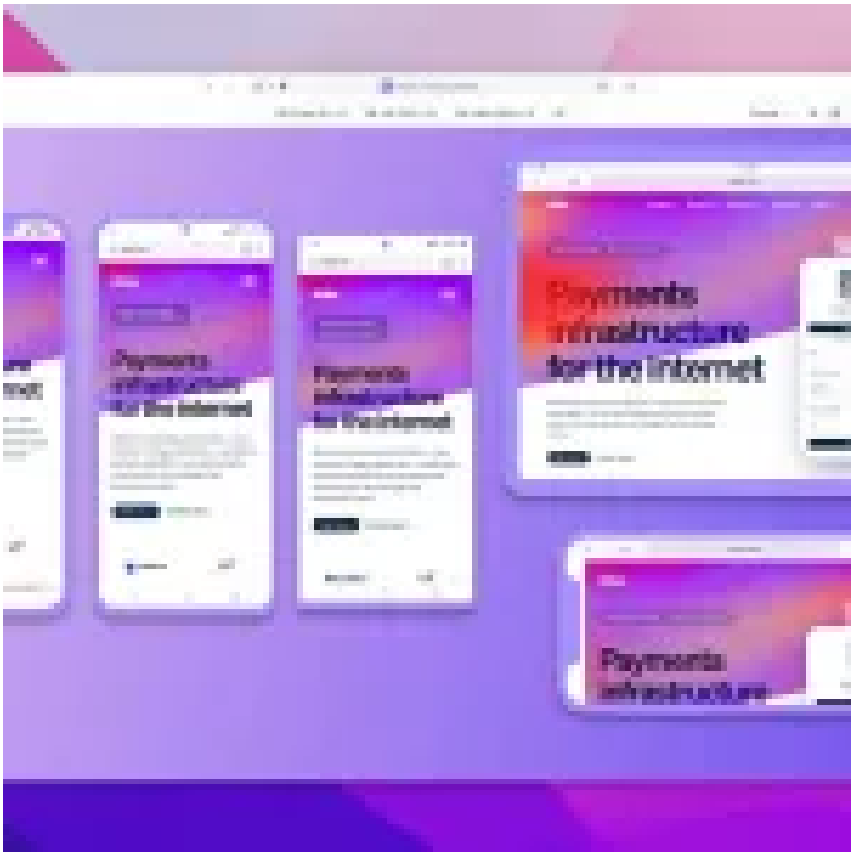
Feature photo by Shutterstock

Please leave us your memories of your cell phones of days gone by and your critiques of what is currently available in our comments section.

WDD staff are proud to be able to bring you this daily blog about web design and development. If there's something you think we should be talking about let us know @DesignerDepot.

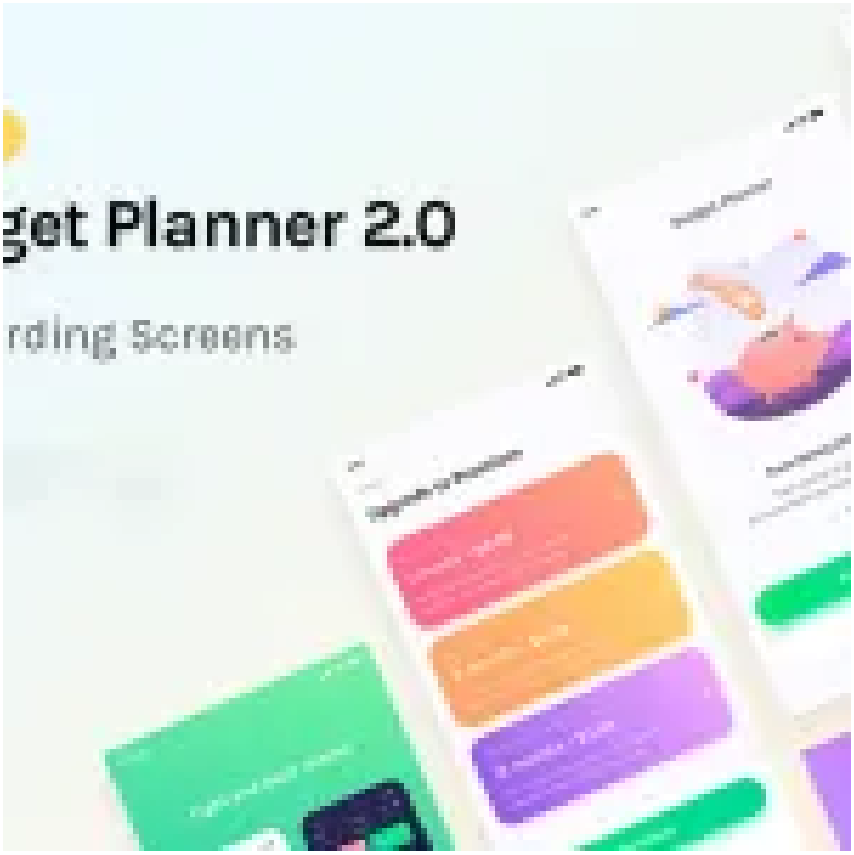
ezoic report this ad

Popular Posts



2

Free Download: Budget Planner UI Kit

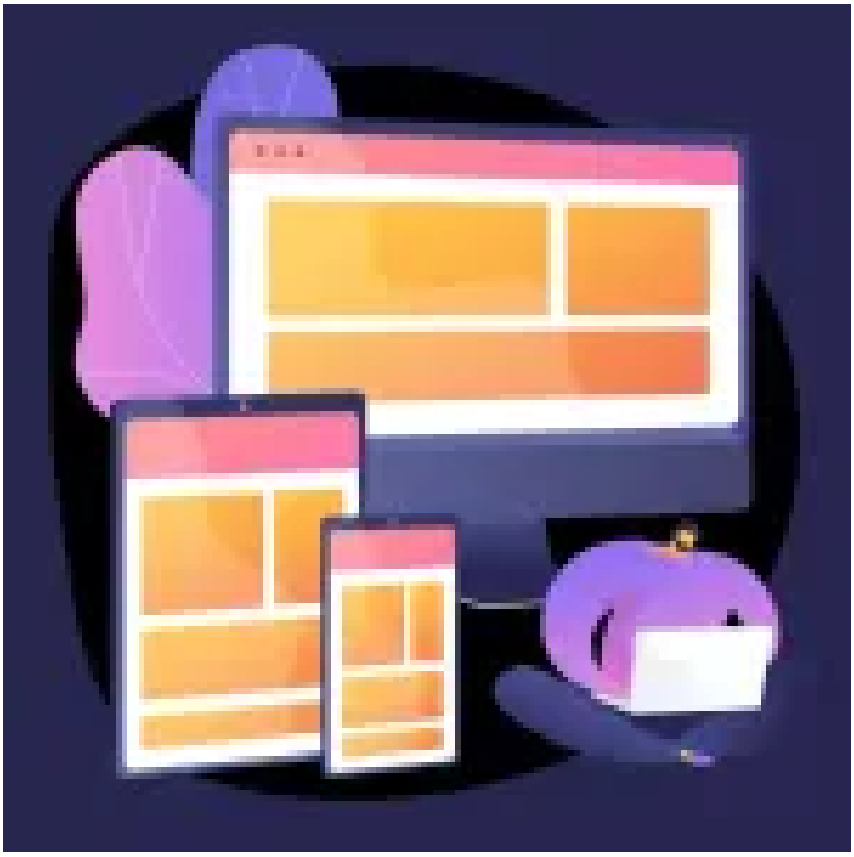


3



4

The Pros and Cons of Responsive Web Design in 2023



5





ezoic report this ad

X

X

X

X

X

X

Read Next



AI Changes Everything and Nothing

The marketing frenzy surrounding the recent flood of AI-powered apps and services has caused some observers to question…

By BEN MOSS



15 Best New Fonts, March 2023

Fonts are one of the most critical tools in any designer's toolbox. With clever use, you can transform a design from bu…

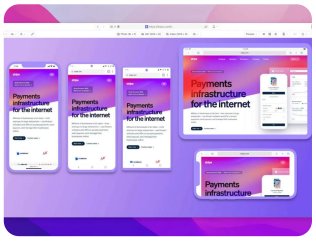
By BEN MOSS



20 Best New Websites, March 2023

We have another exciting collection of the best new sites on the web for you. In this month's episode, there are some re…

By PADDY MACDONNELL



Exciting New Tools for Designers, March 2023

We have invoicing apps and scheduling tools. Some resources will save you the trouble of hiring a designer or developer…

By PADDY MACDONNELL



Free Download: Budget Planner UI Kit

Designing an onboarding process can be tricky; there are so many different options, and if you get it wrong, you could l…

By WDD STAFF



3 Essential Design Trends, February 2023

There's a common theme in this month's collection of website design trends – typography. All three of these trends show

By CARRIE COUSINS



Free Download: Education Icons

Icons are essential for successful web design. They provide an eye-catching, unobtrusive way to communicate important i…

By WDD STAFF



15 Best New Fonts, February 2023

The fonts you embed in your website transform the design and can mean the difference between an extraordinary brand exp…

By BEN MOSS



Unlocking the Power of Design to Help Users Make Smart Decisions

Users are faced with decision-making on websites every day. The decision-making process can be far more complex than it

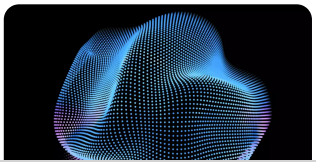
By SIMON STERNE



20 Best New Websites, February 2023

The quality of websites in 2023 has moved up a gear, with designers cherry-picking trends as tools, embracing new ideas,

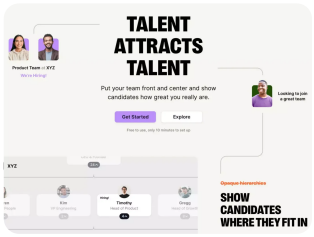
By PADDY MACDONNELL



AI's Impact on the Web Is Growing

Despite the massive strides tech has taken in the last few years, we rarely see a week as tumultuous as this. When your

By BEN MOSS



Exciting New Tools for Designers, February 2023

No matter what you're working on, you can guarantee that there's a cool app, resource, or service that will help you do

By PADDY MACDONNELL

ezoic report this ad

Get exclusive access to freebies and news. We don't spam, rent or sell your email. See our Privacy Policy.

Enter your email address here

Subscribe

© 2010–2023 All Rights Reserved