

Creating Mood Boards

How to do it

The easy way



A Creative Guide For SparkleApp

What we're going to create



What you see illustrated here is something called a mood board. It's an indispensable design tool that all web designers should be able to create and present to potential clients before even attempting to create a website. But, what is it?

A mood board is a visual tool used in the design process to convey the overall aesthetic and conceptual direction of a project. It typically consists of a collage of images, colors, textures, typography, and other design elements that represent the desired look and feel. Mood boards help communicate ideas and inspirations clearly and effectively, serving as a reference point for both designers and clients to ensure alignment on the visual and stylistic aspects of the project. They are especially useful in web design to illustrate potential color schemes, typography choices, and overall design themes before moving into more detailed and technical stages of development.

Whilst many will not fully appreciate the need for creating mood boards, they really can up your game when it comes to presenting work for 'paid gigs'. Fortunately, Sparkle has the capability of creating mood boards which can be easily tweaked in terms of color variations, typography styles and the overall look of a web page. It's a much overlooked feature of Sparkle, and is something we should consider creating before embarking on any new website project.

Why Mood Boards

The Importance of Mood Boards in Web Design

In the realm of web design, mood boards play an important role in bridging the gap between conceptual ideas and final execution. These visual tools serve as a pre-design phase that helps designers, clients, and stakeholders align their visions and expectations. Particularly when it comes to displaying different color schemes and typography, mood boards offer several key benefits.

1. Visual Communication of Ideas

Mood boards provide a tangible way to communicate abstract ideas. They enable designers to showcase potential color schemes and typography choices in a cohesive and visually appealing format. This visual representation helps clients understand the designer's vision without needing to imagine how individual elements will come together.

2. Facilitating Client Feedback

One of the big challenges in web design is ensuring that the client's preferences and brand identity are accurately reflected in the final product. Mood boards allow clients to see different color schemes and typography options side by side, making it easier for them to provide constructive feedback. This collaborative process helps in fine-tuning design elements before significant time and resources are invested in detailed design work.

3. Ensuring Consistency and Coherence

Mood boards help establish a consistent visual language early in the design process. By selecting and displaying complementary color palettes and typography styles, designers can ensure that all elements of the website will work harmoniously together. This consistency is key for creating a cohesive and professional-looking website that enhances user experience and reinforces brand identity.

4. Inspiration and Direction

For designers, mood boards are a source of inspiration and a guidepost for the entire project. They help in exploring various aesthetic directions and experimenting with different combinations of colors and fonts. This exploration is essential for finding the perfect balance that will resonate with the target audience and effectively communicate the desired message.

5. Speeding Up the Approval Process

By presenting a well-thought-out mood board, designers can often speed up the approval process. Clients can quickly see and approve the visual direction, reducing the back-and-forth that can occur when trying to describe design concepts verbally or through less visual means. This efficiency not only saves time but also ensures that the project stays on track.

The Sparkle Advantage

Although Sparkle isn't a pure graphics app, it excels in creating websites whose overall aesthetic can be transformed with just a few clicks. By changing the color palette or text style, the entire look and feel of a page can be altered. This functionality is perfect for creating mood boards. Sparkle allows you to create template-like mood boards that can be populated with client-specific information, enabling you to quickly and effectively provide different variations by simply adjusting the color palette and text styles.

The nice thing about using sparkle this way is you can easily output PDFs for client presentations as you create different variations. Simply preview the page in a Safari browser and save it as a PDF - it's that simple (in Safari just select **File/Save as PDF**).

Once your client agrees on a concept, you're all set to go in Sparkle. With your color palette and text styles already set up, all you need to do is clear the page and start laying out your web pages.

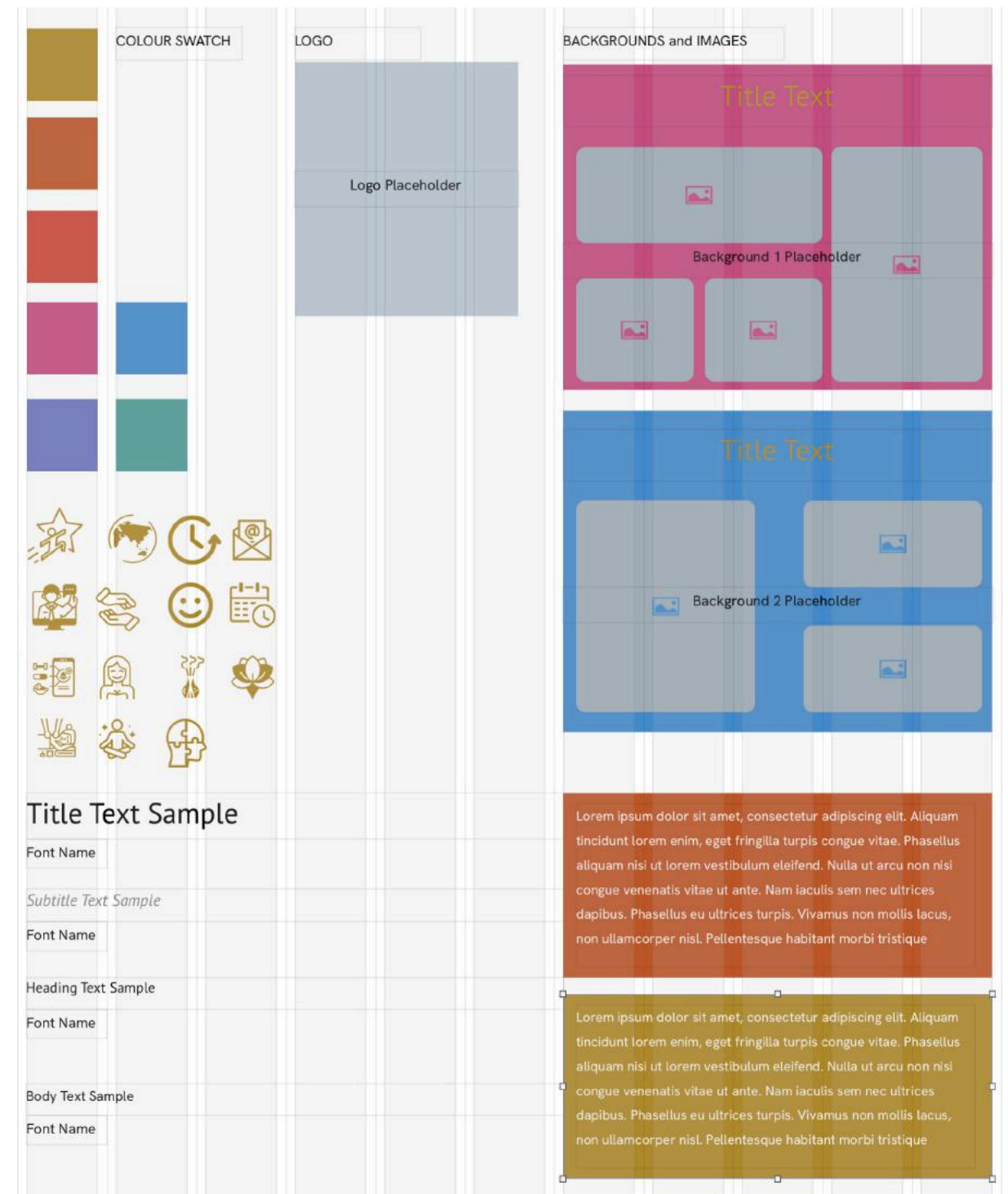
For our example mood board, we created a simple layout of placeholders on the Sparkle canvas and saved it as a 'master file' for use as a starting point in any new project. Initially, the swatches on the page were filled with colors from Sparkle's default palette, and the text samples were styled with Sparkle's default text styles. The boxes on the page have background colors set from the default palette, and a group of icons was created which can be changed on a project-by-project basis, making them relevant to the website's subject matter. To create icons, you can use Sparkle's built-in icon sets by adding them to the page in text boxes with the 'Insert Icon' button in the Style Inspector. Alternatively, you can source relevant SVG icons and add them as individual images to the page.

Additionally, we included image placeholders to insert topic-relevant images into the mood board. This allows us to visualize how color or monochrome images will look within the chosen color scheme.

Use this option to create an icon set



The Final Mood Board Layout



Creating Your First Mood Board

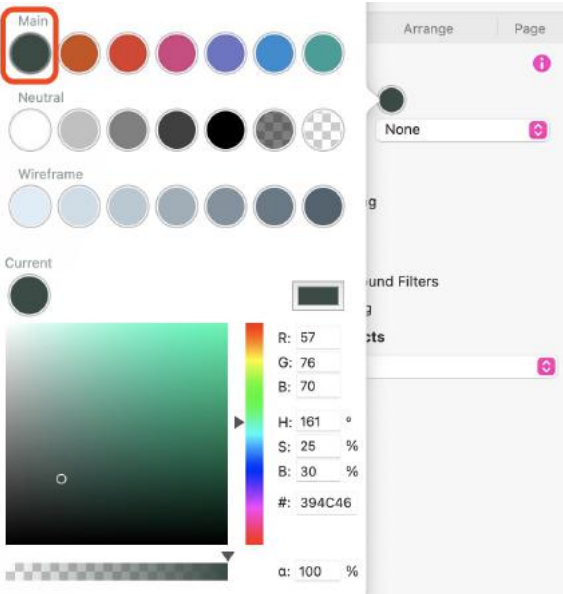
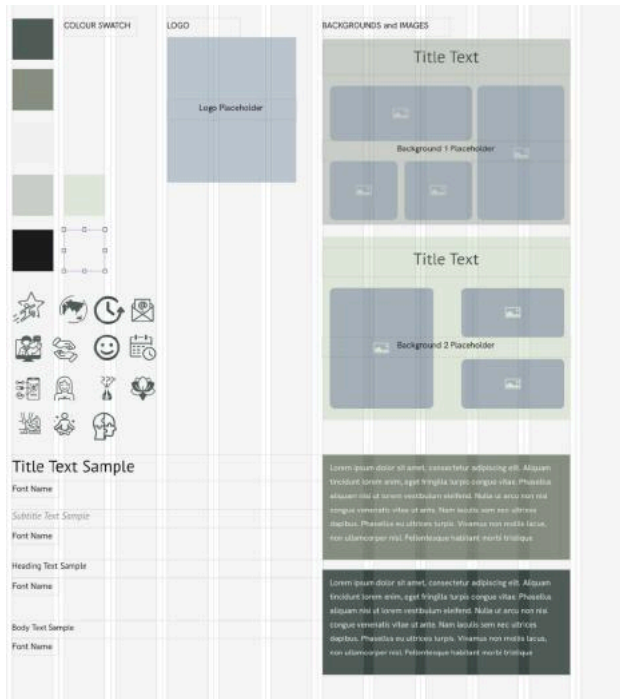
Changing the Colors

As seen on the previous page, our mood board appears overly colorful, but don't worry. This is because we've set it up using Sparkle's default color palette, assigning specific colors to different design elements like background boxes.

Now, we'll open a copy of the mood board master file and save it under a project-specific name to keep the original master file intact for future use.

With the new project file open, we'll start by creating a new color palette. Click on the first color swatch on the page and then click on the fill icon. This opens Sparkle's color selector with the first color selected, ready for editing. Change the color to one you wish to use in your project.

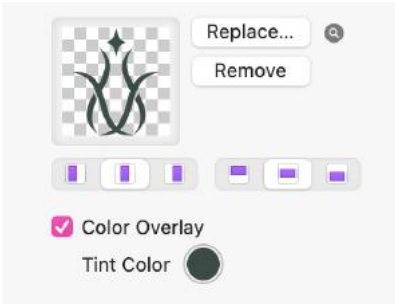
Repeat this process for each of the other color swatches on the page until all the main colors have been updated. Here's how our page looks after changing the colors.



The page now looks more subdued. We've limited the color choice to a few shades of green, along with some tints. Although Sparkle's color picker includes neutral colors like black and white, we've added them to the main palette for convenience.

Adding The Logo And Text Styles

In our example, we've used an SVG logo image so we can adjust its color using Sparkle's built-in color overlay option. **Note:** to use this option, add the SVG file directly onto the page. If you add the SVG as a fill option for a standard box, the color overlay option won't be available. If your logo is a multi-color design or has been supplied as a JPG or PNG file, you won't be able to change its color, so just add it as is. When you're stuck with a logo that already incorporates a brand color, be sure to create a color scheme that works with color of the logo.



Next, let's start changing the text styles. Recall that we added text boxes using some of Sparkle's built-in styles. Select the first text box labeled 'Title Text Sample'. In the Style panel, choose the font and size you wish to use for this style, and then click the 'Update' button in the Style panel. In our example, we used the font 'Cinzel'. Changing this style will apply the font change to all other text boxes on the page with the same style attribute.



Repeat this process for the other text styles. If necessary, add additional text formatting options such as centering directly to the text elements on the page. For text elements placed over background boxes, select the text and change its color to one of the contrasting colors from your main palette. Also, select your icons and assign them a color from the main palette, preferably the main dominant color.

As a final touch, personalize the mood board by replacing the title text with the name of the website. On the next page, you'll see how our mood board is shaping up.

How it's Shaping Up



Adding Images

One of the key components in website design is images. Clearly, when reviewing a website mood board, it's important to see how images interact with the overall 'mood' of the site. Therefore, you should select some images to include in the mood board to help ensure that they work well with the overall color scheme. In our example, we've chosen seven images that reflect the subject matter of the site, and populated our image placeholders to see how they look. This is the result.



Making Variations

This is where the real power of mood boards come into play. Having created an initial design concept, it can be presented to the client. However, if, upon seeing the layout, the customer says they would prefer more 'earthy' colors, or some other color preference - no problem. Just return to the mood board in sparkle and select some alternative colors in the color picker. Hey presto, a completely new mood board. By just changing colors and text styles, you can present your client with multiple choices.

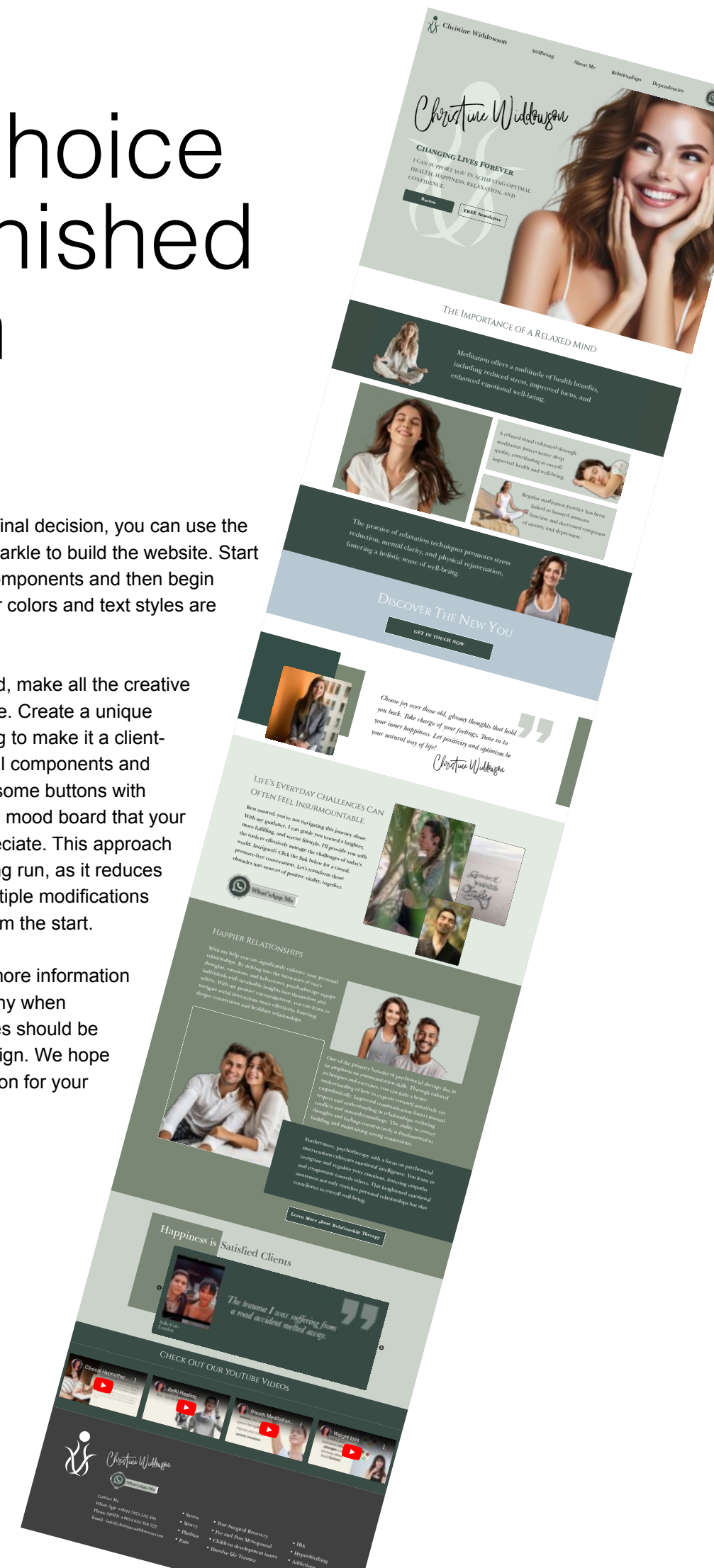


Final Choice And Finished Design

Once your client has made their final decision, you can use the original mood board project in Sparkle to build the website. Start by deleting all the mood board components and then begin laying out your page design. Your colors and text styles are already set.

When designing your mood board, make all the creative choices you would for a web page. Create a unique design, adding your own branding to make it a client-ready proposal. Include additional components and shapes, and consider designing some buttons with variations. The goal is to create a mood board that your clients can understand and appreciate. This approach will save time and effort in the long run, as it reduces the usual back and forth with multiple modifications by providing a clear reference from the start.

In the following pages, we offer more information on choosing colors and typography when planning a website. These choices should be reflected in your mood board design. We hope this provides some extra inspiration for your next Sparkle project.



General Rules for Color Selection and Typography in Web Design Mood Boards

When creating mood boards for web design, it's important to follow some general rules for color selection and typography to ensure a cohesive, professional, and visually appealing outcome. Here are some key guidelines:

Color Selection

Limit the Number of Main Colors:

Primary Palette: Use 3 to 5 main colors. This typically includes a primary color, a secondary color, and an accent color. These should reflect the brand identity and be versatile enough to be used across various design elements.

Neutral Colors: Incorporate neutral colors (such as black, white, and shades of grey) to balance and complement the primary palette. Neutrals are important for backgrounds, text, and other elements where subtlety is required. Fortunately, Sparkle has a whole row of neutral colors built into its color picker as standard.

Color Harmony: Ensure that the chosen colors harmonize well together. Use color theory principles, such as complementary, analogous, or triadic color schemes, to create a balanced and pleasing palette.

Brand Consistency:

Align color choices with the brand's existing color scheme, if applicable. Consistency with the brand's visual identity helps maintain brand recognition and trust.

Accessibility:

Consider color contrast to ensure readability and accessibility. Use tools like WebAIM's color contrast checker to verify that text contrasts sufficiently with its background.

Emotional Impact:

Select colors that evoke the desired emotional response from the audience. Colors can convey different moods and messages (e.g., blue for trust, red for excitement, green for growth).

Typography

Limit the Number of Type Styles:

Primary Font: Choose one main font for headings (e.g., H1, H2, H3) to create a strong visual hierarchy.

Secondary Font: Select one complementary font for body text. This ensures readability and maintains a clean look.

Accent Font: If necessary, a third font can be used for special elements like quotes, buttons, or highlights. However, this should be used sparingly to avoid clutter.

Font Pairing:

Pair fonts that complement each other. Combining a serif with a sans-serif often works well. Ensure that the fonts have contrasting styles yet harmonize together.

Readability:

Prioritize readability, especially for body text. Avoid overly decorative or complex fonts for lengthy text passages.

Consistency:

Maintain consistency in font usage across different sections of the site. Use style guides to ensure that typography is applied uniformly throughout the design.

Brand Alignment:

Ensure typography aligns with the brand's identity. Fonts should reflect the brand's personality and tone (e.g., a modern sans-serif for a tech company, a classic serif for a law firm).

Creating the Mood Board

Visual Balance:

Arrange color swatches and typography samples in a balanced manner on the mood board. This helps in visualizing how they will work together in the final design.

Examples of Usage:

Include examples of how the colors and fonts will be used in different elements like buttons, headers, footers, and body text. This provides a practical perspective on their application.

Feedback and Iteration:

Present the mood board to stakeholders for feedback. Be open to adjustments based on their input to ensure that the final design meets everyone's expectations.

By following these rules, designers can create effective mood boards that not only present a clear visual picture but also ensure a cohesive and user-friendly web design.

Want to learn more about the many 'freeform' design
Features in Sparkle? Check out the definitive guide
To using Sparkle

The Freedom to Design



<https://sparkleapp.com/sparkle/book.html>