

WEB DESIGN

RESPONSIVE WEB DESIGN

Mobile-first rules, fluid grids and media queries,
plus a pre-launch test list.



The five golden rules

A responsive site adapts its layout to whatever screen it's opened on: phone, tablet or desktop. These five rules cover the decisions that matter most before a build goes live.

01

Prioritise mobile

Design and build for the smallest screen first, then add complexity as space allows. Most visits arrive on a phone, so treat desktop as the enhancement, not the default.

02

Consistency

Navigation, branding and core actions should behave the same way at every screen size. A menu that works one way on desktop and another on mobile confuses people.

03

Performance

Responsive design is not just layout. Images, fonts and scripts need to be light enough to load quickly on a mobile connection.

04

Accessibility

Text stays legible, tap targets stay at least 44px, and every breakpoint remains reachable by keyboard and screen reader.

05

Test and iterate

Check real devices, not just a resized browser window. Screen sizes keep changing, so testing is ongoing rather than a one-off step before launch.



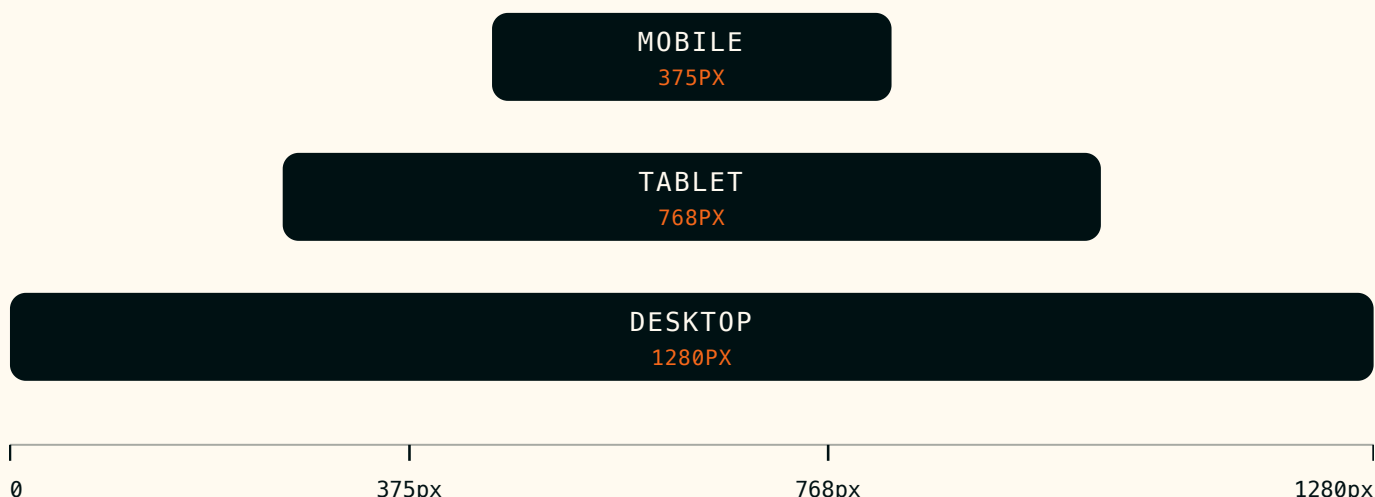
Core techniques

Five building blocks make a layout responsive. The next page shows how a grid reflows as the viewport grows.

Fluid grids	Relative units (percent, fr, rem) instead of fixed pixels, so layout stretches with the viewport.
Media queries	CSS rules that swap styles above or below a set viewport width, called a breakpoint. Common ones are set out on the next two pages.
Scalable images	A max-width of 100% so images resize with their container instead of overflowing it.
Flexbox and grid	CSS layout modes that reflow rows and columns automatically, without a rule for every case.
Mobile-first CSS	Write base styles for the smallest screen, then layer on complexity with min-width queries.

Where the layout changes

Media queries switch styles at a set viewport width. Mobile-first CSS means the base styles apply everywhere, then each breakpoint adds a rule to widen the grid from there onward.

**375PX****Mobile**

The reference phone width. Base styles apply here and below: single column, stacked content, thumb-sized tap targets.

768PX**Tablet**

A min-width query at this width adds a second column. Room for a sidebar or paired cards.

1280PX**Desktop**

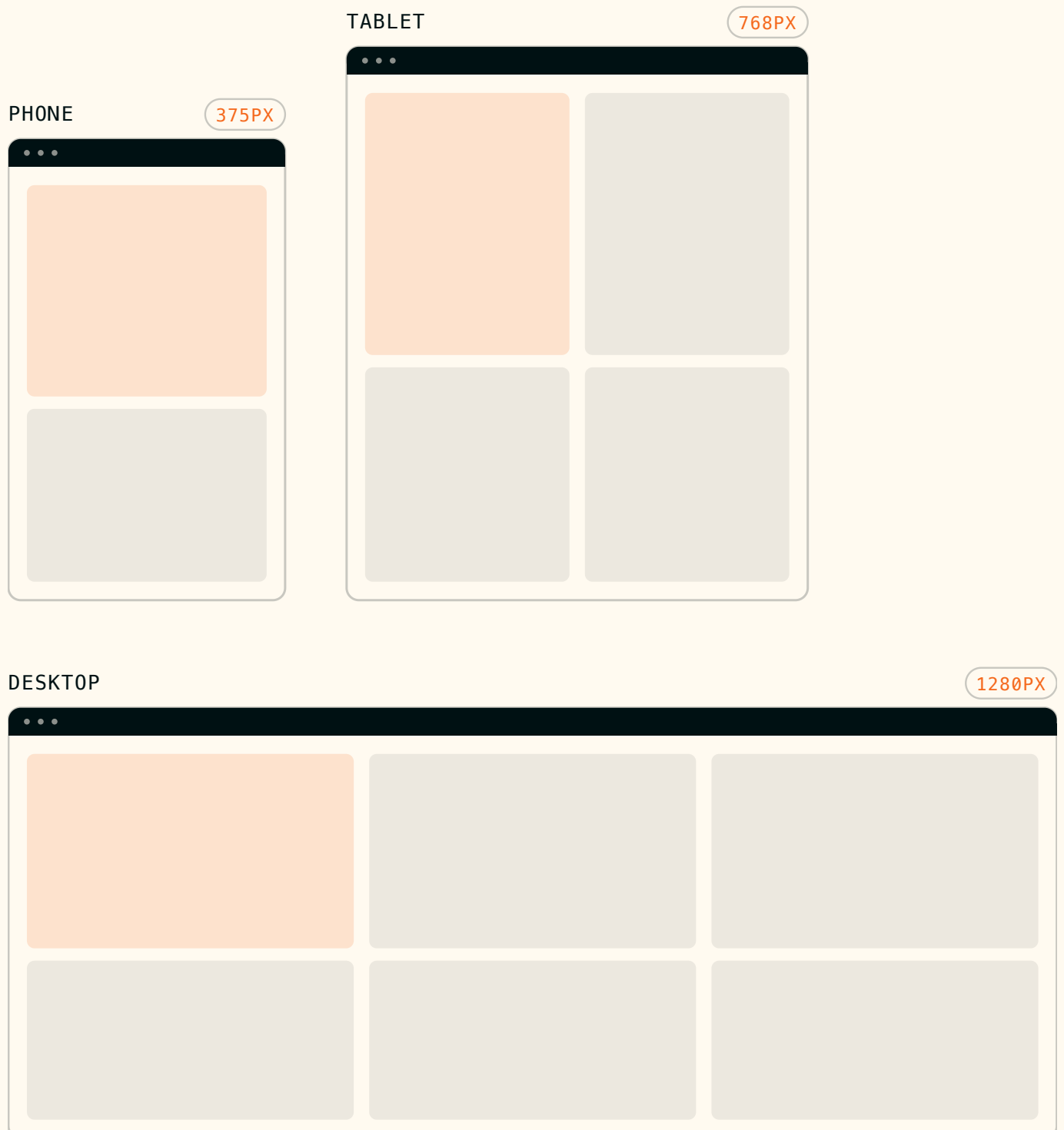
A min-width query at this width adds a third column and wider margins. The layout stops adding columns from here.

These are common defaults, not fixed rules. Set breakpoints where your own content starts to look cramped or sparse, not at a device's exact size.



The same grid, three widths

Illustrative, not to scale. The pixel figures on each frame are the real breakpoint widths. As the viewport widens past one, the grid gains a column rather than just stretching.





Pre-launch checklist

Run through these before the site goes live.

Layout

- ☐ No horizontal scroll or overflow at 320, 375, 768 and 1280px
- ☐ Tap targets at least 44×44px with comfortable spacing
- ☐ Text reflows without zooming; no fixed-width containers trapping content

Performance

- ☐ Images right-sized and compressed; modern formats where supported
- ☐ Critical content loads fast on a throttled mobile connection
- ☐ Caching and lazy-loading in place for below-the-fold media

Quality

- ☐ Passes WCAG basics: contrast, alt text, keyboard navigation
- ☐ Checked on a real phone, tablet and desktop, not just an emulator
- ☐ Consistent look and behaviour across the main browsers

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