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## [Why we skip Photoshop](#) Jason F. Jun 03 2008

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When designing a UI we usually go right from a quick paper sketch to HTML/CSS. We skip the static Photoshop mockup.

Here are a few reasons why we skip photoshop:

1. You can't click a Photoshop mockup. This is probably the number one reason we skip static mockups. They aren't real. Paper isn't real either, but paper doesn't have that expectation. A Photoshop mockup is on your screen. *If it's on your screen it should work.* You can't pull down menus in a Photoshop mockup, you can't enter text into a field in a Photoshop mockup, you can't click a link in a Photoshop mockup. HTML/CSS, on the other hand, is the real experience.
2. Photoshop gives you too many tools to focus on the details. When you use Photoshop you can't help but pay attention to the details. The alignment, the specific colors, the exact shapes, the little details that may matter eventually but they certainly don't matter now. The start is about the substance, not about the details. [Details are for later.](#)
3. The text in Photoshop is not the text on the web. Once you're looking at a static Photoshop mockup you can't quickly change the text without going back into Photoshop, changing the text, saving the file, exporting it as a gif/png/jpg, etc. You can't post it online and tell someone to "reload in 5 seconds" like you can when you quickly edit HTML. You have to say "Give me a few minutes...". Also, type in Photoshop never seems to be the right size as type in HTML. It just never seems to feel the same. It doesn't wrap the same, it doesn't space out the same.
4. Photoshop puts the focus on production, not productivity. Photoshop is about building something to look at, but about building something you can use. When you're just worried about how it's going to look, you spend too much time on production value. HTML/CSS lets you be productive. You're constantly moving forward towards something more and more real with every change.
5. Photoshop is repeating yourself. Ok, so you've spent 3 days on a mockup in Photoshop. Now what? Now I have to make it all over again in HTML/CSS. Wasted time. Just build it in HTML/CSS and spend that extra time iterating, not rebuilding. If you're not fast enough in HTML/CSS, then spend the time learning how to create in HTML/CSS faster. It's time well spent.
6. Photoshop isn't collaboration friendly. I sorta touched on this before, but let me hit this point again: HTML/CSS lets you make a change, save, and reload. That's our collaboration flow. "Here, let me change this. Reload." These changes take seconds. "Here, let me float this left instead of right. Reload." Seconds. No selecting a tool, changing a few items around manually, saving, exporting,

uploading, giving people the new file name, etc. HTML/CSS is build for rapid iterative prototyping while Photoshop... isn't.

7. Photoshop is awkward. You can't help but know your way around Photoshop after working in it for 10 years, but I still find it awkward to get simple things done. Working with a pen feels so much more natural to me than going back to the toolbar over and over. A pen can draw anything, but in Photoshop you need to use the text tool to type, the shape tool to draw a shape, the menu bar to adjust this or that, etc.

None of this is to say we think Photoshop is bad or a waste of money or time, but for us we've found that going straight into HTML/CSS affords us the best iterative and creative experience. HTML/CSS is real in a way Photoshop will never be.



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## 205 comments so far

### GeelWonder 03 Jun 08

Couldn't agree more, especially the repeated stuff and the 'details' points. The great thing about using e.g. a sharpie on a small pad is you can layout the important stuff without spending too much time on the stuff that matters less and is quick to change with CSS anyways. Photoshop also tends to lead to a lack of negative space, in my experience anyways.

Quick question re: "The text on the web" (sorry if this is off-topic)—is the way some of your fonts (e.g. the SvN ones) look in Opera a conscious design decision?

### [Robert Gaal](#) 03 Jun 08

So I just wonder, how do you create little graphical elements like shades or rounded corners? In paint? ;)

### John 03 Jun 08

I skip the paper sketch and go straight to Photoshop. It's much better suited to the task at hand in my opinion. I do, however, treat the Photoshop mockup as a sketch and do not expect the final outcome to resemble it in any meaningful way.

### [Walker Hamilton](#) 03 Jun 08

do not expect the final outcome to resemble it in any meaningful way

Then why bother?

### [Henry Balanon](#) 03 Jun 08

How do you share paper sketches with the people outside of Chicago?

### Eric Epps 03 Jun 08