--WEVH Introduction to Web Publishing

Tasks involved in producing a web site

There's a whole variety of things you need to think about when you build a web site, a lot of them aren't just about writing HTML – if you don't plan carefully – you can quickly find that the work involved in designing even a simple site can be overwhelming.

Collect Source Materials
Whether it's you or someone else who has to this it's a time consuming business – if you need to write new materials give yourself enough time to do it.

Identify what materials you need and how long these will take to be collected / produced
Allot timescales to when you should receive information and stick to them
See Web Graphics for preparing image files

Produce Project Structure and Storyboard
See notes on Storyboarding.
Think through this stage carefully as it's the foundation stone of the rest of your project

Design home page and (possibly) a typical page
Depending on how big your site is it's a good idea to plan on screen or paper what one of the pages will look like. It's easier to use a DTP or image processing program than it is to code in HTML.

You may want to think about using one of the following tools
Adobe PhotoShop / Illustrator / PageMaker
Macromedia Fireworks
QuarkExpress
Dreamweaver (WYSIWYG editor)
Quarkxpress
Paintshop Pro
Microsoft Word (if you haven't got anything else)

However when you design for a web page in one of these programs it's vital that you remember the final result – i.e. a web page – you probably won't be abale to use the full features of the program – think of what HTML can and can't do effectively

Here's some basic pointers

- Design to a small monitor – test on a large and small monitor
  620 x 440 pixels
- Tables are the grid structure of every web page – if you can't fit it into a table it won't work
- If you can switch the grids on in the software you are working in and set the units to pixels.
- If you have to design on paper, design on squared graph paper and draw the table structure in the background.
- Remember there is no fixed bottom on a web page – you're home page should fit within the browser window – users will see the bottom edge of the page at a slightly different height according to their monitor specifications.
- Don't make large images that overlap – use separate discreet images that can easily be cut up.

Create a template
Once you've produced your design – code it in HTML and code a typical page. This will be used as a template and can just be copied and renamed for subsequent documents.

Test the template – put it through the mixer – every browser you can get your hands on and hopefully another platform – ask someone else to guess what the navigation system does if they can't guess – redesign.

The more time you spend on the template the easier the rest of the pages will be to build.

Prepare Graphics

- More info on this in the web graphics sessions
- It can take as long to produce graphic files as it does to code HTML
- If you're new to web graphics stick with a text based navigation system and use unedited scans and digital photographs. Or use a simple repeat effect on each image to make them look 'designed'.
- Think about how many images overall you will need, do you need specialist equipment?
- If you do need to work in PhotoShop producing custom graphics allocate time for this seperately.
- Keep uncompressed versions of an graphics files you use.

Create Pages

Using your template put your subsequent pages together.
Ensure all the pages are consistent

Test

Off line
Test every link on every page in every browser you can get your hands on
Test on another machine
Test on a different platform
Test on a different monitor size
Spell Check
Get a friend to test the site – note down any areas they didn't find – reconsider navigation

Online

Test on another machine
Test on a different platform
Test on a different monitor size
Test on different monitor speeds