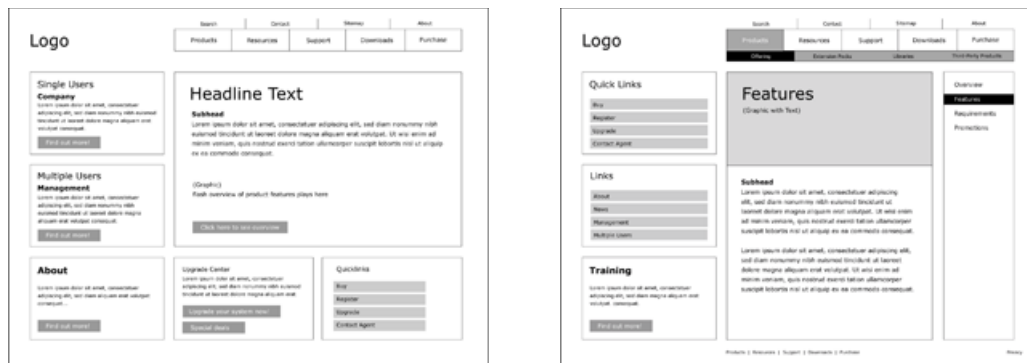# Creating a wireframe

The key to successful web design is planning. Creating a wireframe can be part of this process.

In web design, a wireframe is a diagrammatic representation of a web page. The purpose of a wireframe is to determine the structure and content for a web page. It displays the elements for a web page in outline. It its strict sense, a wireframe does not use colour or stylistic design features.

Creating a wireframe is an initial part of the design process. In can be created by hand and or with a computer programme such as Photoshop or Illustrator.

The design process

A typical design process would start with creating initial sketches by hand. These can be thumbnail size or larger as required. They help to develop ideas for content and layout. Next is creating a wireframe, in order to organize the elements and structure of the page. Next stage would then be to develop the design visually, adding form and colour to the elements, by using a computer programme or detailed drawing. Finally, the build phase where the design is built in code to become a web page.

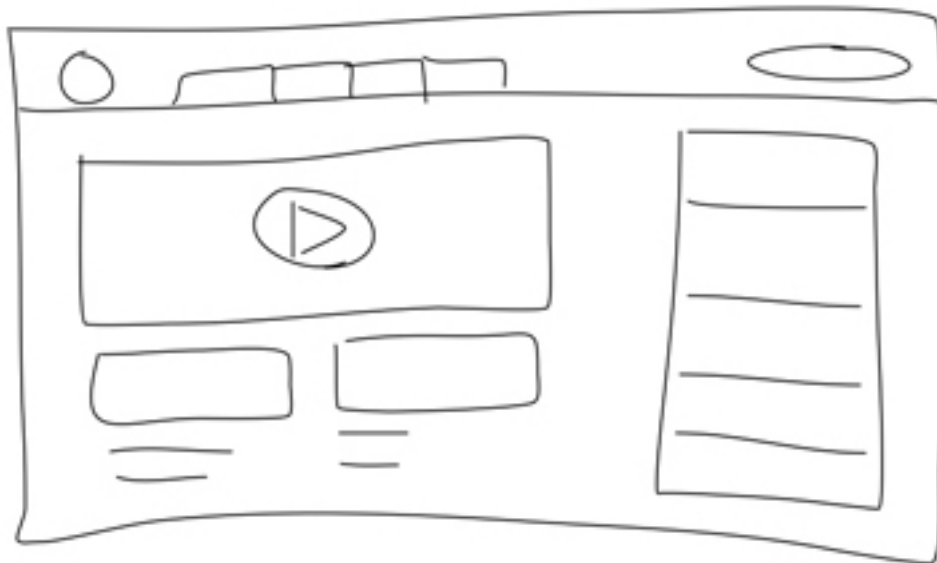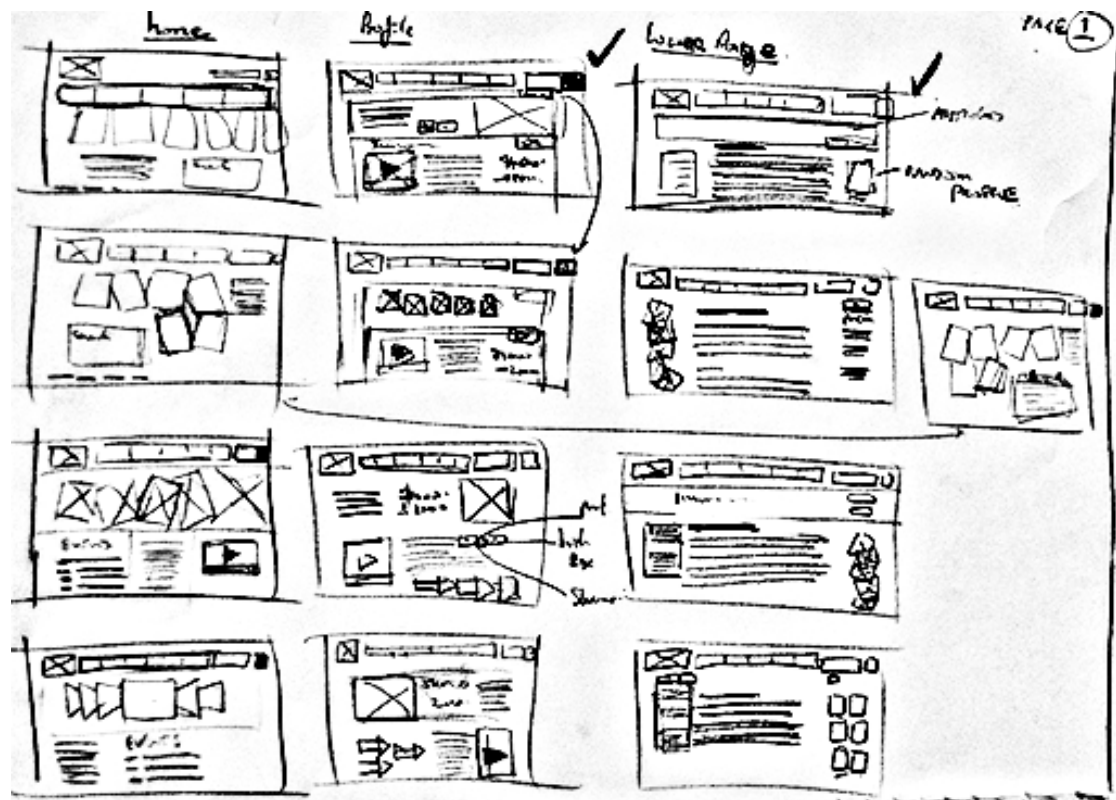The design process can be expressed thus:
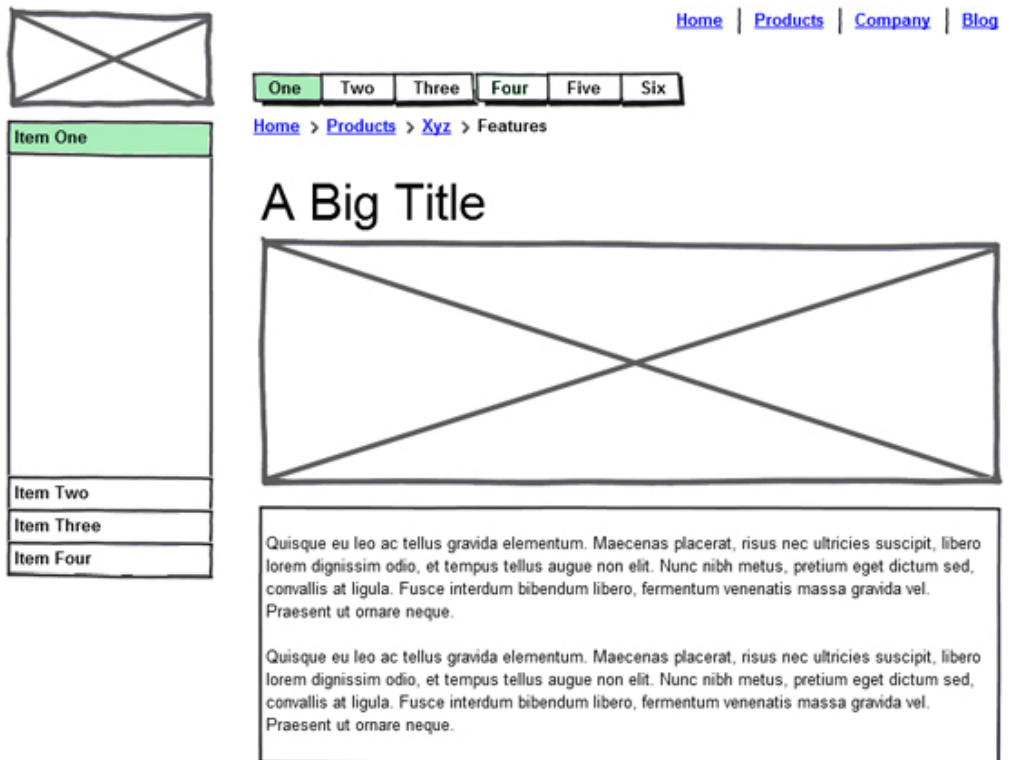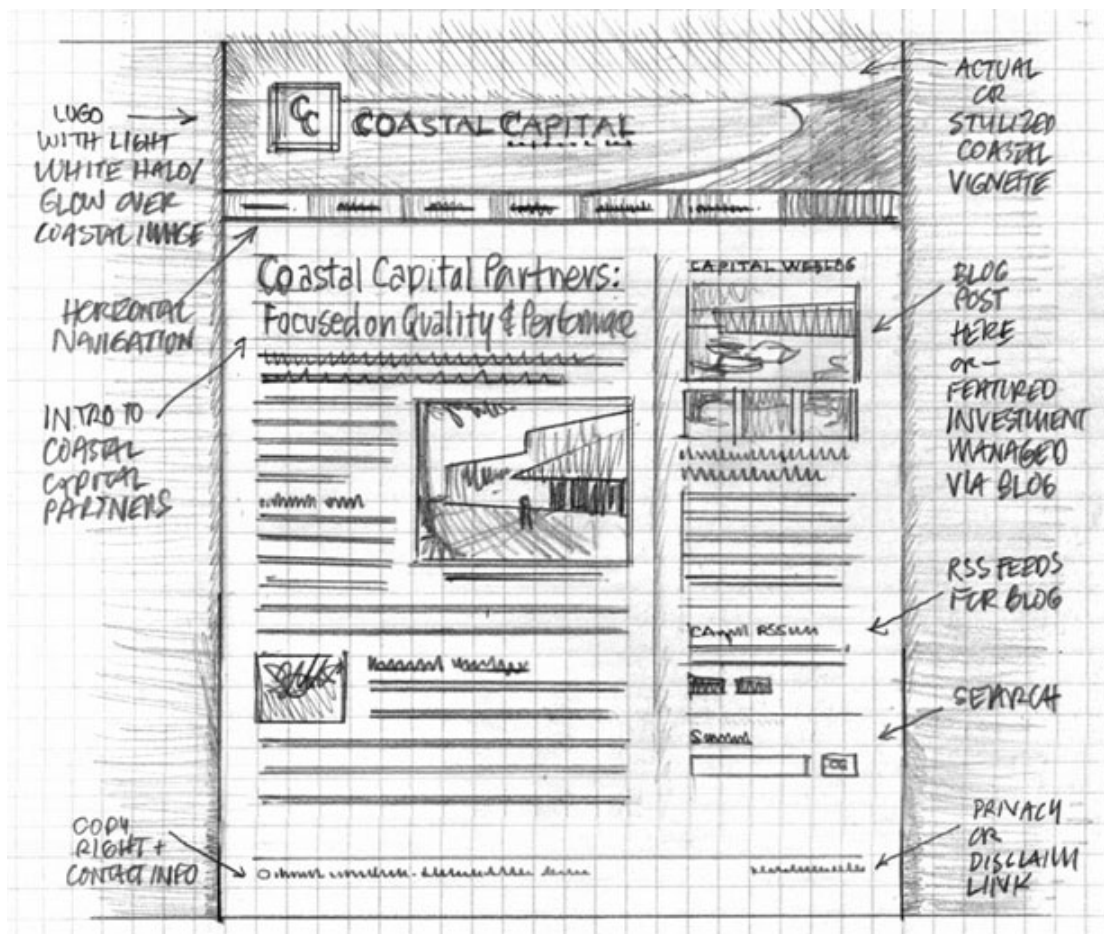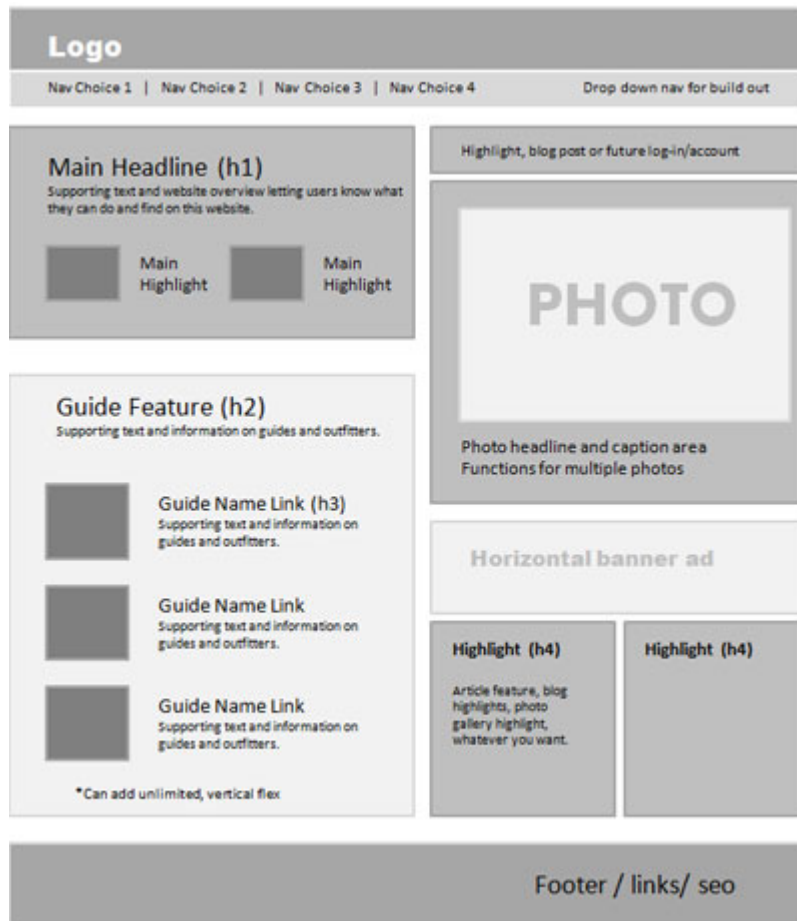
sketch

▼

wireframe

▼

graphic visual

▼

code

Some examples of initial sketches:

Some examples of wireframes:

Creating wireframes with Photoshop and Illustrator

Create a new document that is wider than the width of your proposed page content e.g. if the content is 960px then make the document 1100px or more. This will give you room to work in and, if needed, make notes. Height is not important as long as it is deep enough for the content. Set resolution to 72ppi.

If you wish, use guides to define the content area and other elements for the layout. Pull guides out from the Rulers.
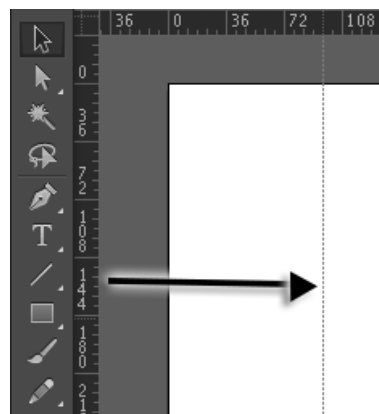
Alternatively, you could use a grid for aligning content to. In PS and Ai, the grid can be accessed via the *View* menu. The size of the divisions for a grid can be set from the application preferences.
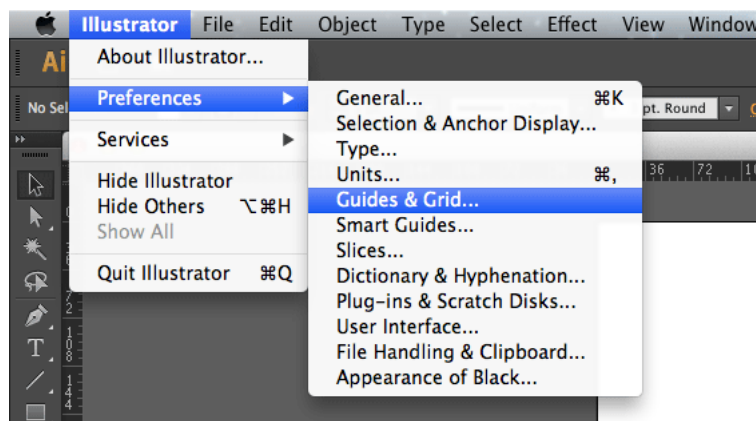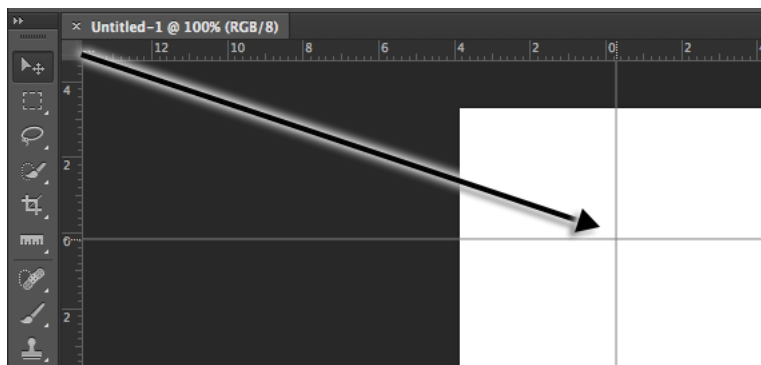

Placement of the grid lines can be positioned from the XY axis. Do this by pulling out the XY axis from the top left corner of the rulers and placing it on the document.

**Creating an image placeholder Shape with Photoshop**

Photoshop allows you to create your own shapes and save them as Custom Shapes. These then become available in the Custom Shapes library for repeated use.
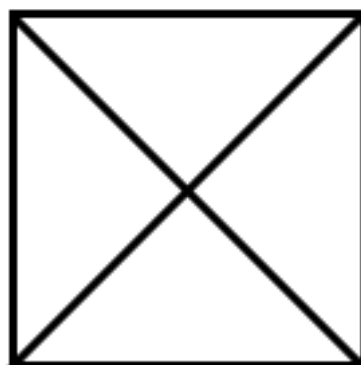

Wireframe representation for an image

Custom shapes can be created from one shape or a combination of shapes. For a Custom Shape to be created from a combination of Shapes they must be all combined on one layer.

An image placeholder symbol can be created from a combination of lines drawn with the Line tool. The simplest way to do this is to draw the lines in alignment with a grid: *View > Show > Grid.*
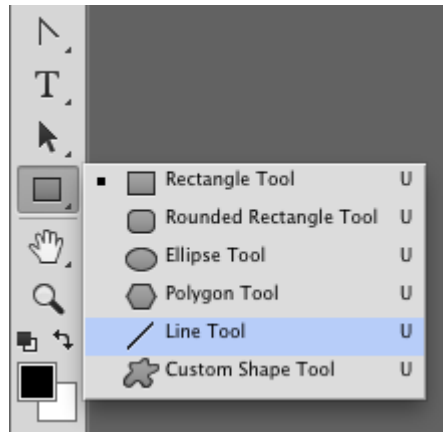
The process is to make the edges of the box with four lines and then do two diagonal lines across the centre of the box. To begin, draw a line along one of the grid lines to form one edge of the box. Set the weight of the line, in the Shape Options, to around 3-5 px. Before drawing a second edge, ensure that Combine Shapes is selected from the Shape Options at the top of the workspace.
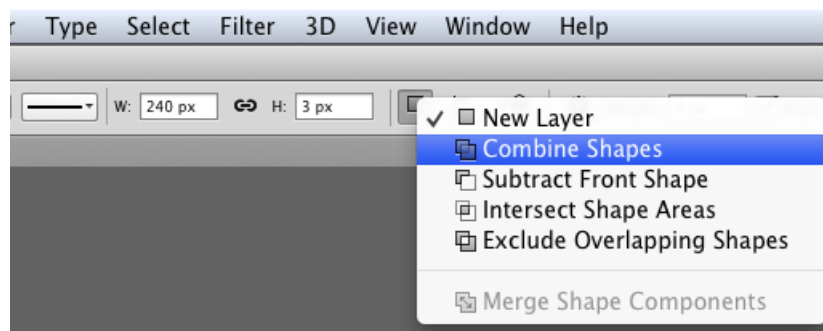
On completion, all the Shapes should be combined on one layer.
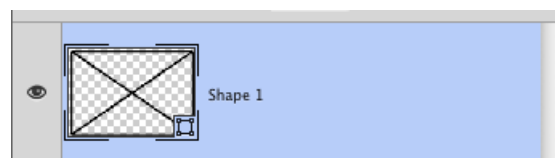
When the symbol is complete convert it to a Custom Shape. Do this by going to *Edit > Define Custom Shape…*

In the dialogue box that follows, give the shape a name and click OK.

The Custom Shape will now become available for use. Choose the Custom Shape tool from the Tools panel and in the Shape Options click on *Shape:*
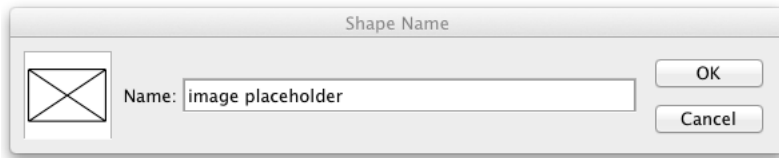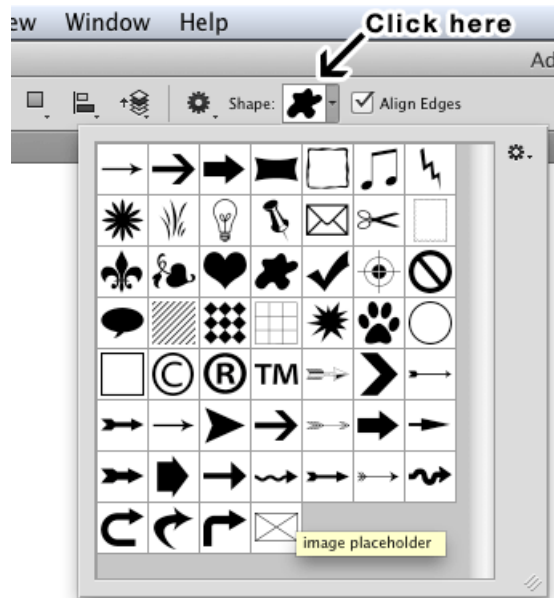
Creating an image placeholder Symbol with Illustrator

Illustrator allows you to create Symbols and save them into a library. These are graphic elements that you can create and re-use. You can do this to create a wireframe symbol for an image.

To create an image symbol in with Illustrator, draw a box with the rectangular shape tool. Holding the *Shift* key will make it a perfect square.
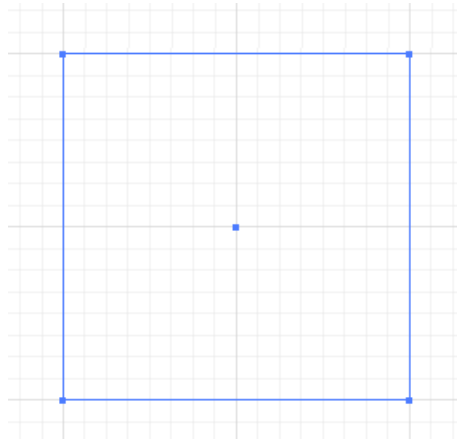
Set a black *stroke* for the box and make or leave the fill as none. The Stroke panel can be found on the right of the workspace. It can also be found under the *Window* menu.
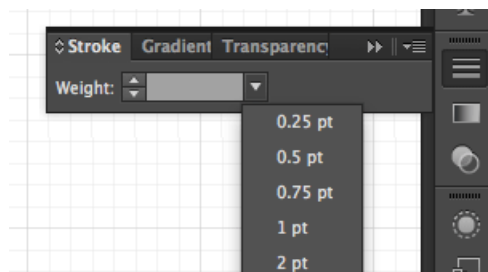
With the Line tool draw two diagonal lines, corner to corner.
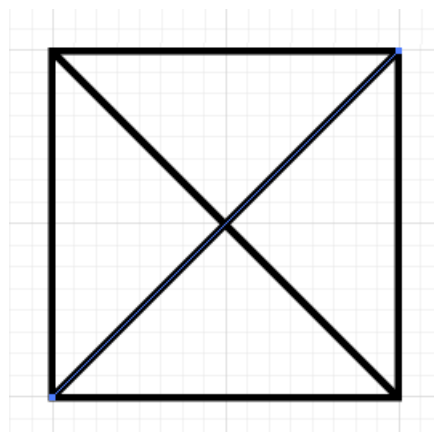
Select the image by drawing a marquee around it with the Selection tool.
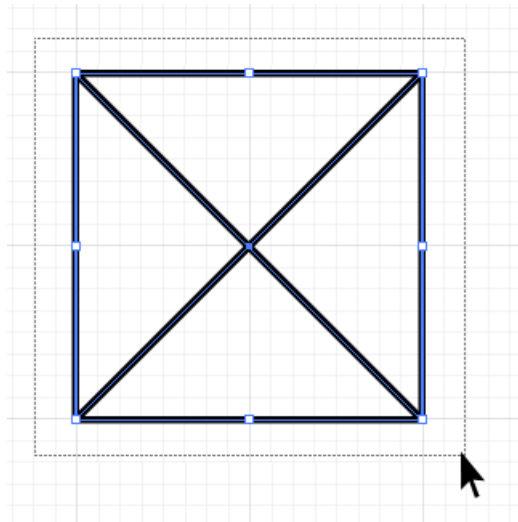
Open the Symbols panel. The Symbols panel can be found on the right of the workspace. It can also be found under the *Window* menu.
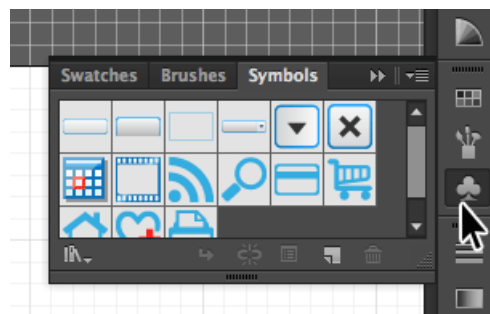
Click on the fly-out menu for the panel and choose New Symbol…
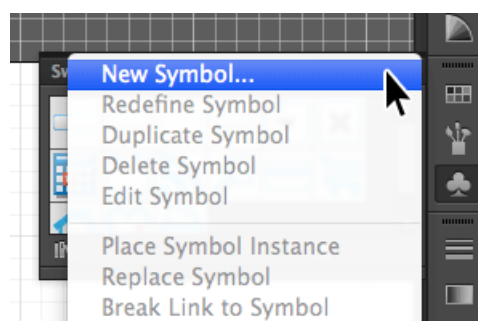
In the Symbols Options dialogue, give the symbol a name and click OK.
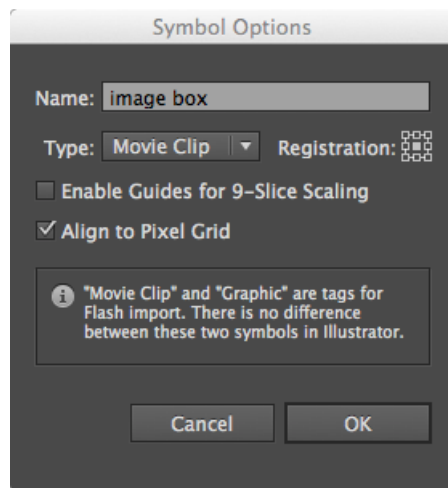
Your drawing is now available as a symbol in the Symbols panel. To use the symbol, simply drag it from the Symbols panel onto the document. Position and resize as required.

how to read a wireframe

Whether a client, stakeholder, or new to the wireframe world,
here's a quick rundown of how to make sense of it all.

fuzzy math

Image

Video

1 Notes...

2 Notes...

3 Notes...

1 Visual vocabulary
Familiarize yourself with certain
wireframe standards such as those for
images, video, and drawing attention
to certain areas.

2 Logos & Branding
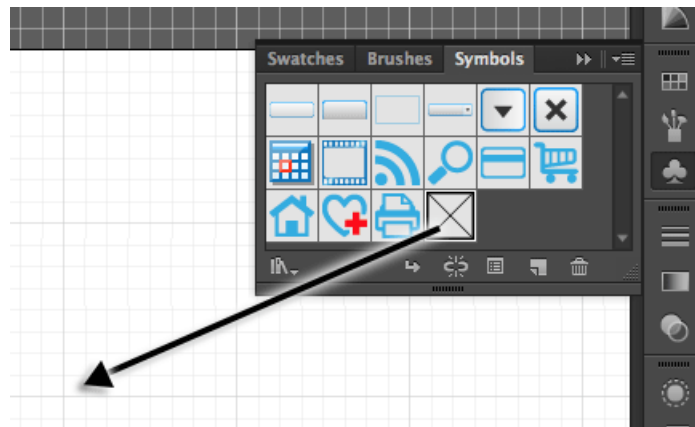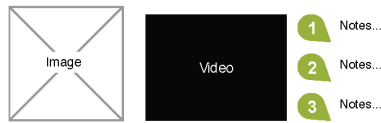Logos will usually be represented the same
way as images, a box with a "X" through it,
and a text description inside. Grayscale or
low fidelity logos may be placed in the
wireframe for certain situations.

Color 3
Other than links possibly being
colored differently, most color and
visual design elements are left for
the later visual design stage.

Logo   Services   Work   Clients   About   Products

We make user experiences better.

We listen to you, we listen to your customers, and then we put our experience to
work; creating attractive, interactive user experiences that get results.

Screenshot

UX Design Research

Short description of the client,
what they do, and what they
are all about. Also, a brief
explanation of the main issue at
hand for the client, that we
addressed with our work.

Short description talking about
how we were called in to take a
look at what was going on, and
asked to try and figure out why.

View the case study

4 Hierarchy
The importance or
hierarchy of the
information on the page
is created by using
headings, most often
bold or heavier weighted
text, of different sizes and
location.

Other clients

Logo   Logo   Logo   Logo   Logo   Logo

See the rest

Take note

**User Experience Site
Reviews**

User Experience Site Reviews
help your site convert like it
should. Using criteria focusing on
page design, trust, navigation,
interaction, and forms, we will
review your site or app and
provide you with a summary and
suggestions of what neeeds to be
fixed, and how to do it.

5 Links
Links are represented
most often as blue,
underlined text. Links
may also be a different
color, keeping in line
with a particular visual
design direction.

Learn more

From the blog

**How to read and understand
a wireframe**
Joe I May 24th, 2010
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet,
consectetur adipiscing elit. Duis
ullamcorper ultricies rhoncus.
Nulla non est elit. Vestibulum
quis interdum quam. Praesent in
semper arcu. Etiam id ipsum
tortor. Curabitur tincidunt dui sed
felis euismod vehicula. Morbi
fermentum, quam eget placerat
pulvinar, enim mi blandit.

Read more

Recently on the Twitter

"Whoa, this is like totally a Twitter
feed on our website, man!"
@Twitter_John

"The Cubs lost again. I am not
amused."
@Twitter_Joe

"I like cats."
@Twitter_Jim

Layout 7
All of the elements listed above,
keeping in mind whitepace, readbility,
and hierarchy, collectively make up
the overall page layout.

Text 6
Text in the wireframe will either
be represented by actual copy,
or by placeholder text such as
Lorem ipsum, sometimes
referred to as "greeking".