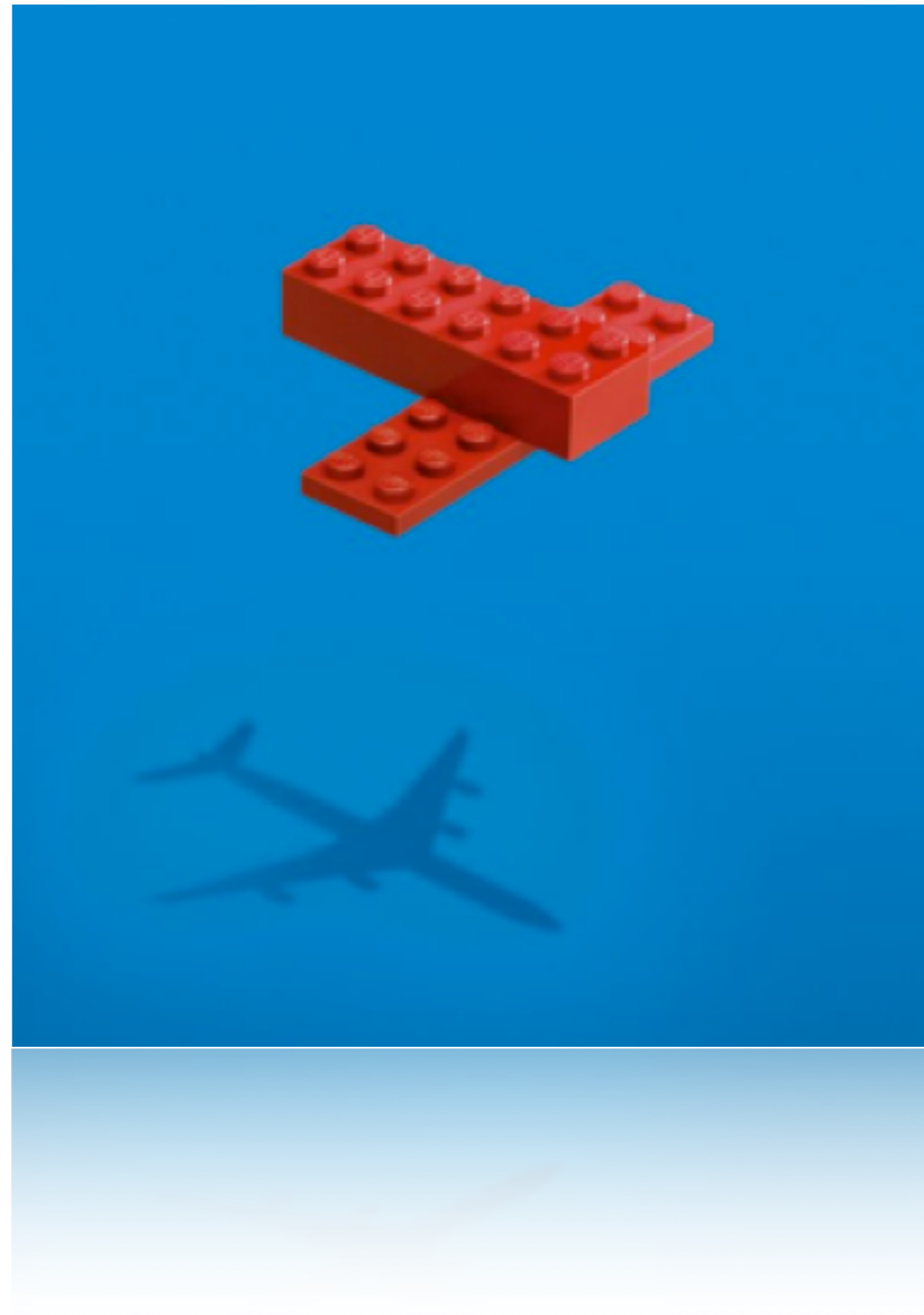


# the visual metaphor



# today's task

Mark loves to travel.

After college, he took a year off to backpack around Japan and experience everything the island nation had to offer, from sushi to samurai.

Now that he's back, he wants to document his experience.

It's up to you to build Mark a great, engaging website detailing his trip to Japan.



# Think before you code

Pre-production is all about getting things right before you dive into writing XHTML and CSS.

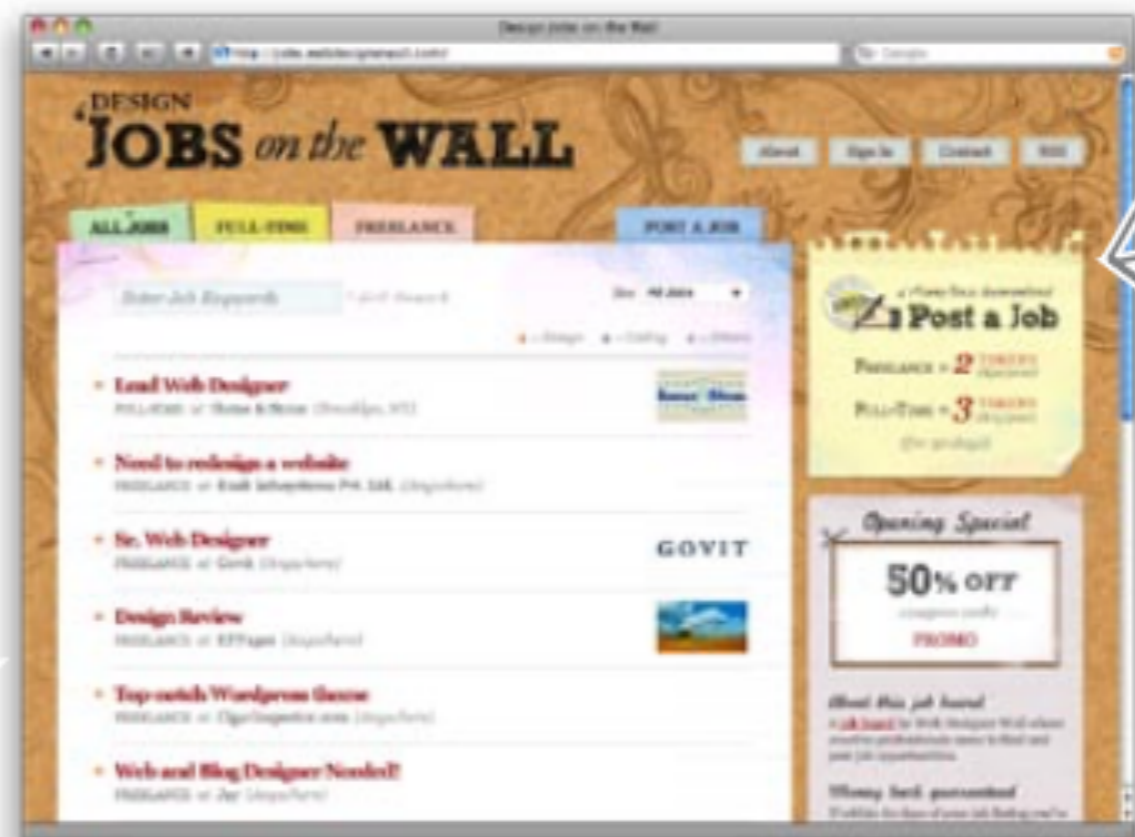
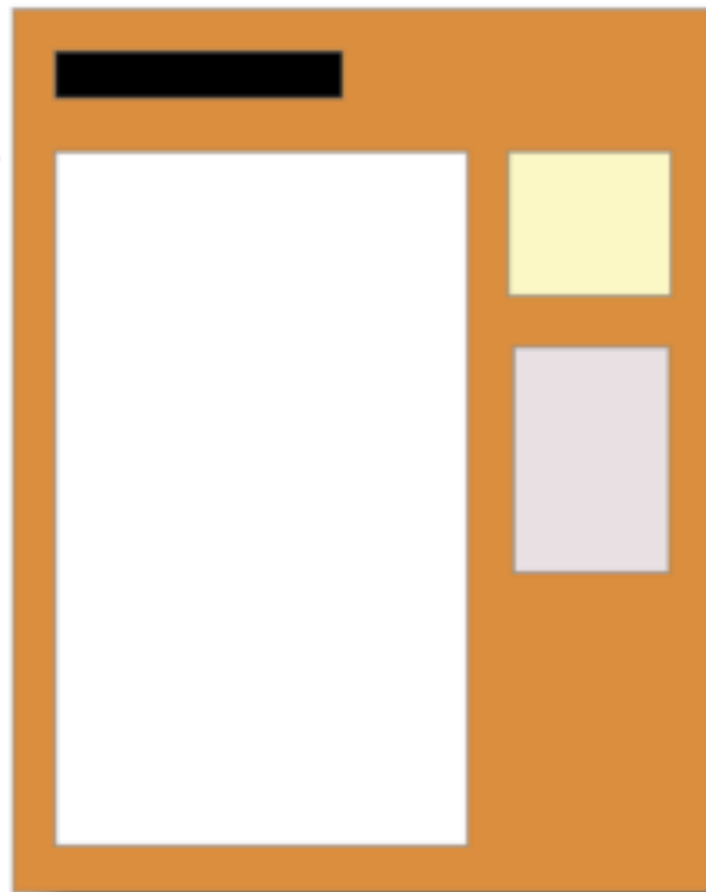
The visual metaphor takes advantage of familiar visual elements (likes images, interface elements, icons, colors, or fonts) and reinforce the site's theme.

A visual metaphor can range from subtle (using colors that give the user an abstract feeling that the designer wants to associate with the site's theme) to direct (using graphics that tie right into the site's name or identity—like using graphics of rocket ships for a site called Rocket Ship Designs).

# The visual metaphor

Jobs on the Wall just needs to be a simple job posting site. One main column is all you need, maybe with some helper information in the sidebar.

The finished site reinforces the "job posting board" metaphor complete with cork board texture and Post-It note navigation.



This site isn't just a virtual bulletin board... it actually looks like a bulletin board.



**sitotis**<sup>®</sup>  
TISKARA KARLUŠIĆ

*Dobrodošli na stranice tvrtke.*

*Osnovna djelatnost tvrtke je tisak na svim materijalima tehnikom sitotiska.*

*Dugogodišnja tradicija garancija je brze i kvalitetne usluge.*

*Nadamo se da ćete nam i Vi pružiti priliku da postanemo Vaš pouzdan partner.*

Bright bold colors and an arctic theme help set the visual metaphor for this site.

Cartoon penguins and comic-book style typography are definitely geared toward a younger audience.



Visual metaphors, themes, what's the difference? And I thought you said I should be designing on paper, anyway?



# The theme

A theme represents your site's purpose and content.

Silverback is an application for performing user testing on websites. Because a Silverback is also a type of animal, the jungle and gorilla theme is used throughout.

Unlike IconBuffet, Silverback's visual metaphor is more apparent. They make the page look like a gorilla's surroundings, complete with jungle color scheme, leaves at the top of the page and an amazing logo/icon of a gorilla with a clipboard. Hence, "Guerrilla Usability Testing."



# Develop a theme and visual metaphor

## 1 Choose some color palettes



Pick colors that work well with the content and support the theme of the site. Use services like <http://kuler.adobe.com> to build palettes and see how different colors will work together.



# Develop a theme and visual metaphor

*Make layout decisions based on content.  
The more columns you have, the more  
space you have to fill. Also remember  
that whitespace is important. You don't  
have to fill every available pixel.*



**8**

## **Design layouts based on content**



# Develop a theme and visual metaphor

The use of imagery, iconography, and text can help reinforce the site's theme by making the site "look like the content."

**3**

**Use visual elements to reinforce the theme**



# page elements shape your visual metaphor



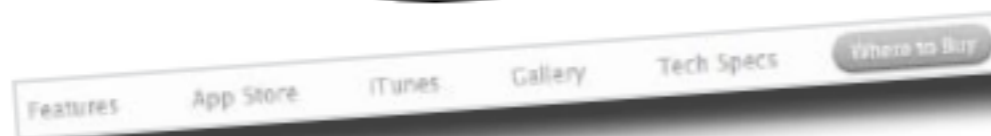
# page elements shape your visual metaphor

**Navigation** is essential for users to get around your site. Design, placement, and the content of this element will help convey your site's theme in different ways.



**Body content** is where all the magic happens. This is where you put the stuff people are coming to see. Whether it's images, a blog post, or a YouTube movie, all that stuff goes in the body.

**Sub Navigation** displays content that lies under a main navigational item. This is usually only needed for larger sites and more complex content.

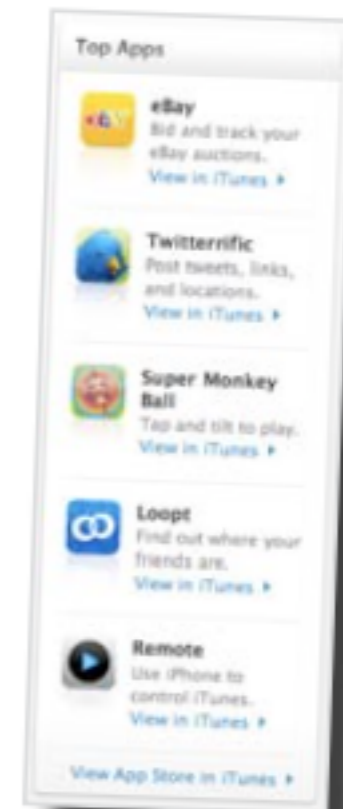


# page elements shape your visual metaphor

**Whitespace** (which is also called negative space) is the area between all the different design elements on your page. Whitespace helps to break up blocks of content, gives the user's eye a little rest, and focuses the user's eye towards content.

**Sidebars** can hold everything from link lists to extra body content. They can also be useful for ancillary navigation and archive links for blogs.

The **footer** portion of your layout can hold anything from copyright information to duplicate navigation links. Users will often look to this section for links or content that can't be located anywhere else on the site.



<http://www.apple.com/imac-with-retina>

# back to Mark



It's ok if you came up with something different. Just make sure your ideas are in the right ballpark for a site on Japanese culture.

## 1 Central Themes

Japan travel diary

A traveler's guide to Japan

Let's emphasize the trip Mark took, and what Japan was really like. This could also turn out to be a great resource for others planning a trip or traveling to Japan.

## 2 Interface Elements

Header with large image

Mark took great pictures. We need to show them off!

Map of Japan

Japan's geography is very unique. That's a place where we can use visuals a lot.

One main navigation

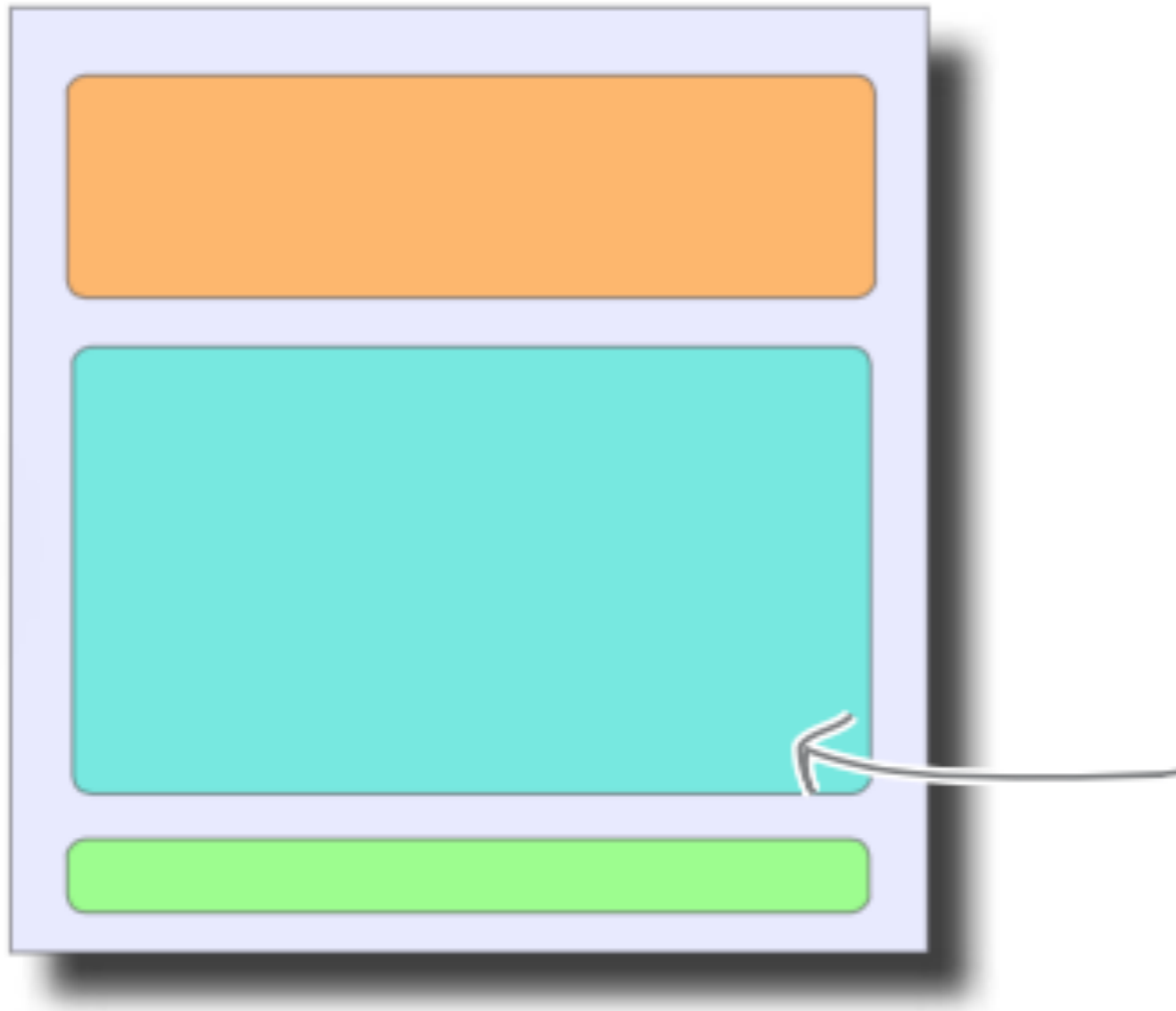
Simplicity is key, and Mark doesn't have tons of trips to record... just the one.

Single sidebar

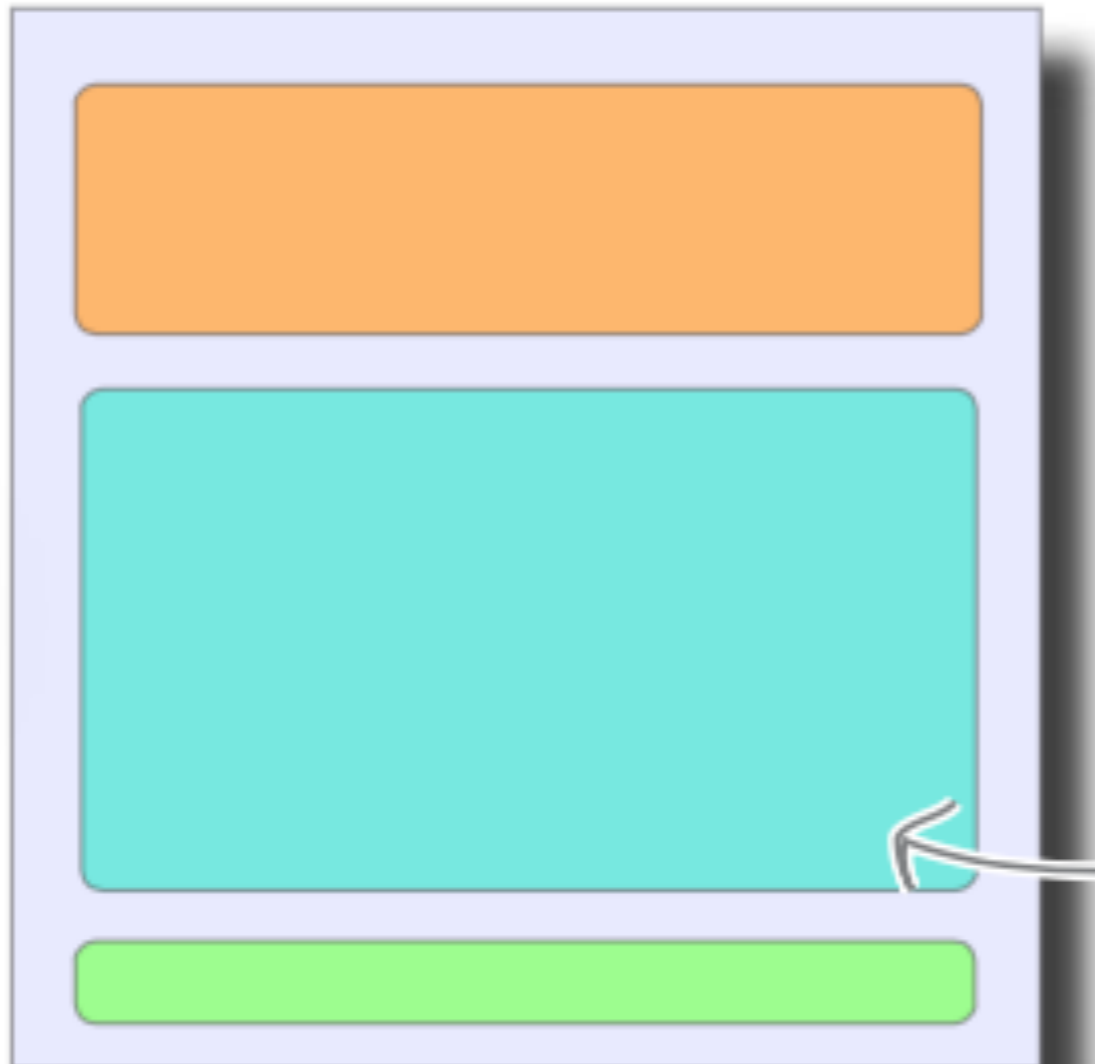
Again, simplicity. We really don't have enough content to fill multiple sidebars.



# choice of layout



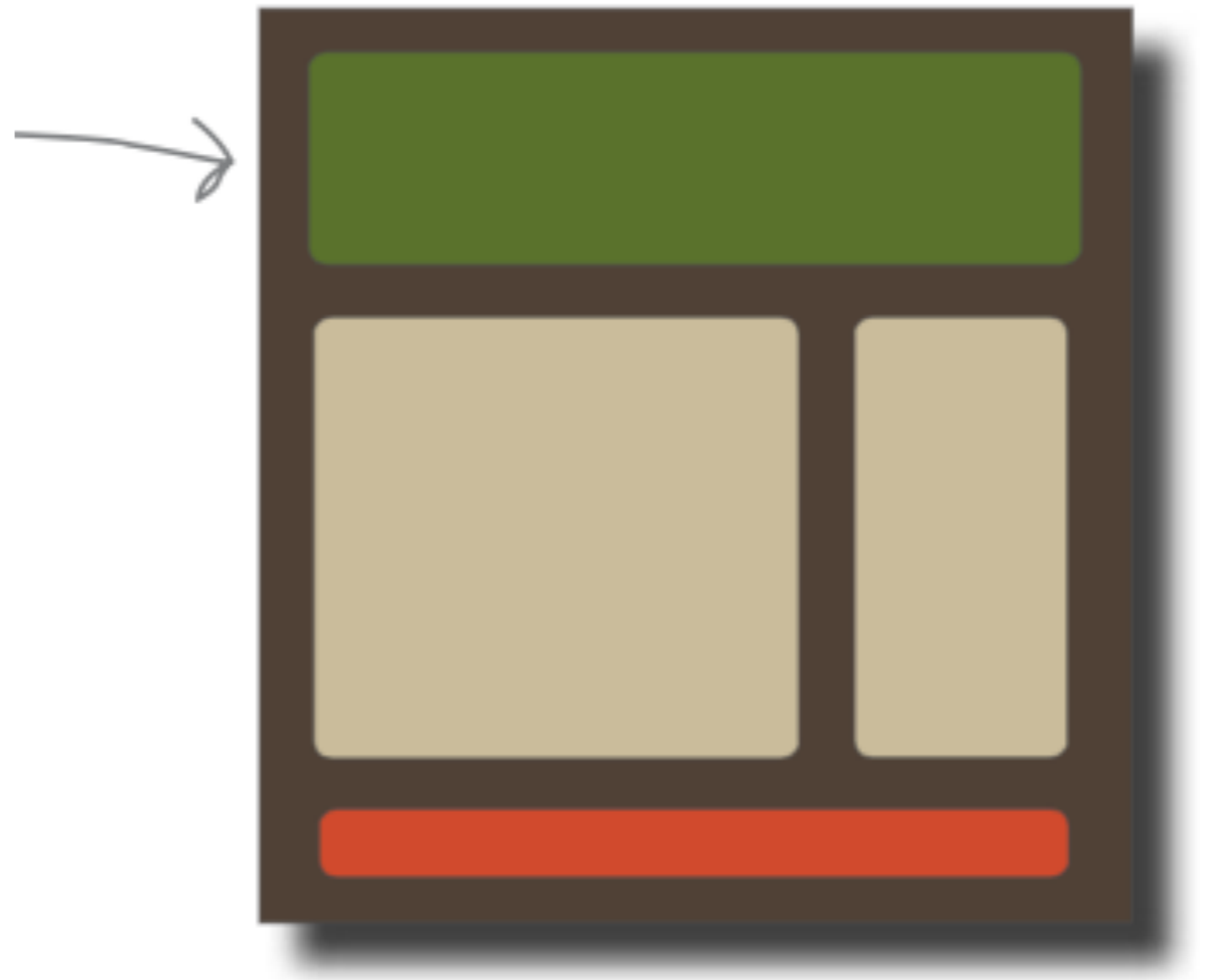
# choice of layout



These colors don't really seem to fit the theme of a Japanese travel site. The light pastels just don't work.

Although single-column sites are simple, this isn't enough space to highlight all the content that Mark has brought back from his trip.

# choice of layout



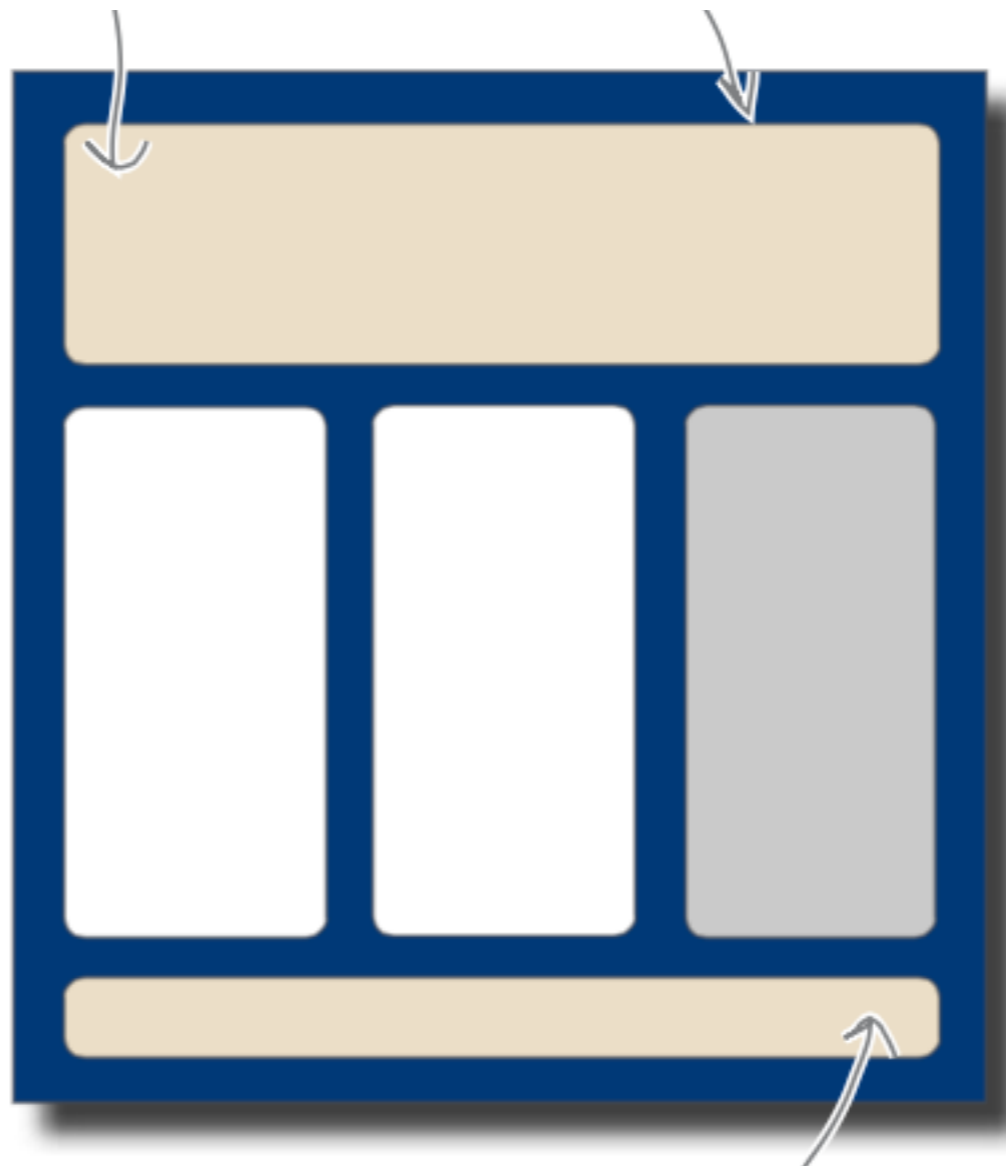
# choice of layout

The two-column layout should give us enough room, but this color pattern still isn't working.



The earth tones are nice, but a little dark for the theme. Japan is an island, so shouldn't we see some blue in there?

# choice of layout

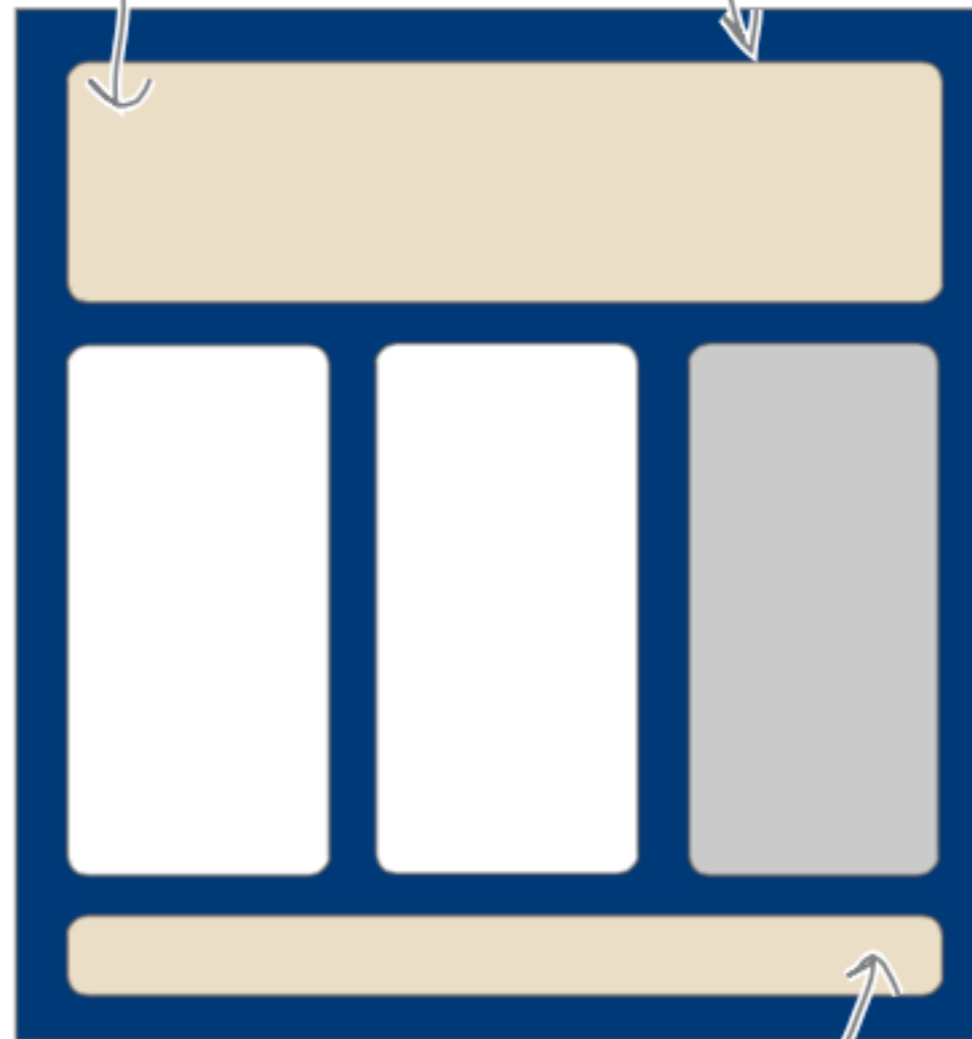


# choice of layout

A large map of Japan would look really good in the header. When a visitor comes to the site, there would be no doubt as to the theme and content of the page.

The blue works well with the theme. The other colors are more neutral and will allow us to be creative when placing visual elements.

This layout/color combination gives us all the room we need to display Mark's content. It uses a simple color palette that emphasizes blue; it's perfect since Japan is an island nation.



Three columns should work well for Mark. Not only is this an interesting look, it will allow him to present lots of information to his users.

# exercise

Build a quick mock-up for Mark

tip: use storyboards to develop ideas and save time without code

