WEBFORLESS · SINCE 2003

Responsive Design Testing Guide

Responsive design is not the act of shrinking a desktop page. It is the planning of content, layout, controls, media and performance so people can complete important tasks across phones, tablets, laptops, large displays and assistive technologies.

Use this guide to:	Clarify priorities, assign ownership, identify risk and verify implementation.
Website:	webforless.ca

Project / website: _____

Owner: _____ Review date: _____

1. Responsive design is a content decision

The strongest responsive work begins before CSS breakpoints. Teams decide what matters most, which actions must remain easy, how content should reflow and what can be progressively disclosed. A clear hierarchy makes the same page useful in a narrow viewport and a wide one.

- ■ Prioritize tasks rather than screen sizes.
- ■ Write headings and labels that survive narrow layouts.
- ■ Avoid hiding essential information only because space is limited.

Notes / evidence:

2. Build fluid systems instead of fixed pages

Modern responsive layouts use flexible grids, relative units, intrinsic sizing and components that adapt to available space. Breakpoints should respond to content pressure, not a list of popular devices that will soon change.

- ■ Use minmax, flexbox and grid thoughtfully.
- ■ Allow text and controls to wrap without collision.
- ■ Test zoom and large text, not only viewport width.

Notes / evidence:

3. Typography must remain readable

Responsive typography balances line length, font size, spacing and hierarchy. Very small text may fit but becomes tiring. Very large text can dominate a phone. Fluid sizing can help, but it needs sensible minimums and maximums.

- ■ Aim for comfortable line lengths.
- ■ Preserve heading order across layouts.
- ■ Give paragraphs and lists enough vertical rhythm.

Notes / evidence:

4. Images and media need responsive delivery

A large desktop image should not automatically be sent to every phone. Responsive images, modern formats, explicit dimensions and appropriate cropping improve speed and stability. Art direction is useful when the subject would be lost in a narrow crop.

- ■ Use srcset or picture where appropriate.
- ■ Reserve image dimensions to reduce layout shift.
- ■ Provide meaningful alternatives for informative media.

Notes / evidence:

5. Navigation and controls must work by touch

Menus, filters, forms and dialogs need more than a compact appearance. Touch targets require space, focus must remain visible, keyboard operation must work and labels must be understandable without hover.

- ■ Avoid hover-only information.
- ■ Keep primary actions reachable and predictable.
- ■ Test menus with keyboard and screen readers.

Notes / evidence:

6. Performance is part of responsive design

Mobile users may have powerful phones but unreliable networks, battery constraints or data limits. Responsive design should reduce unnecessary scripts, avoid oversized media and load the critical experience quickly.

- ■ Measure on slower networks and mid-range devices.
- ■ Defer nonessential code.
- ■ Prioritize the content required for the first task.

Notes / evidence:

7. Testing requires a matrix, not one screenshot

Browser resizing is useful but incomplete. A practical matrix includes narrow and wide viewports, portrait and landscape, touch and keyboard, zoom, text enlargement, slow connections and real devices. Test pages with long names, errors and unexpected content.

- ■ Test component states, not only ideal pages.
- ■ Include forms, tables, modals and navigation.
- ■ Record defects by task and severity.

Notes / evidence:

Launch and follow-up review

Item	Owner	Status / date
Critical journey tested		
Access and ownership documented		
Backups or rollback verified		
Analytics and monitoring confirmed		
Outstanding risks recorded		
30-day review scheduled		

Good websites and software are never finished. They are monitored, maintained and improved as evidence and needs change.