

# DecorPaint

Major Project | Final Report



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# 1. Concept

## Twitter Description

A beginner's DIY site dedicated to painting. A one stop site that guides users through each step. From choosing a new colour palette to rolling on the paint. [157 characters]

## Elevator Pitch

General information and video tutorials on how to do something are normally only a click away these days. This holds true for DIY painting and decorating. One can find numerous articles scattered about the web that centre around how to pick a new colour scheme or how to paint something for example. The issue is that users must sift through vast amounts of existing content from a variety of sites before they have gathered enough knowledge to get started. In addition to this, some of the content assumes prior knowledge or experience, which is frustrating for the user who is a total beginner. Although useful, most existing content is presented in the form of long articles- something which quickly begins to feel like an information overload for the total beginner. What appears to be missing is a one stop site that provides all of this information on a single platform. There are several DIY sites that cover a broad range of DIY activities, but none that focus specifically on DIY painting and decorating. DecorPaint aims to focus on this. It will take users on a journey - from choosing a colour scheme, right up to rolling on the paint. The content will be both beginner and learner friendly, as well as engaging.

## The Problem Explained

There are several issues with pre-existing content. Upon carrying out some research on popular home DIY sites, below are the main issues that I encountered:

- In general, there is a lack of organization and categorization of the content across most sites. What seems to be common is that you must select a link from a drop-down menu which seems relevant to the information that you are looking for, only to be presented with a gallery of random articles that are loosely associated with the topic. You must scroll through all of them until you find one which may hopefully help you. This wastes time and provides the user with no structure. A beginner would not know where to begin, so presenting them with several articles would be unhelpful.
- The content is presented in the form of articles. This quickly becomes a heavy read, and the information is difficult to consume. I found myself getting bored and distracted while trying to absorb the information.
- The websites lack in personality and any visual interest. The majority seem like that have been made with a commercial purpose. The creators are clearly publishing the content with the aim of making a profit. Minimum styling has been applied to these articles. The wide paragraphs, large images and lack of colour or personality make it very difficult for the user to stay engaged.

## The Value Proposition

DecorPaint will be a site that provides a solution to the problems previously mentioned. I want to create a site that will take the user through each stage with a structured approach. My users therefore won't have to wonder about where to get started or what information they need to search for next. I want the site to be beginner friendly and helpful to people who are trying to learn. I would like to do this in a way that is engaging and provides a pleasant experience to my users.

## The Unique Selling Point

DecorPaint will fill the gap for a DIY painting and decorating site in the current market. As well as this, it will provide a pleasant user experience throughout. Unlike the sites that feel as though they have been made for commercial purpose, I want DecorPaint to feel friendly and inviting. I would like to use a friendly tone throughout my content and use colour and illustrations to create a sense of warmth and invite. Rather than using a lot of stock images, I hope to create or source illustrations myself in order to establish an identity for my website. DecorPaint will provide something refreshing to the home DIY online market.

## 2. Business & Cultural Context

### Cultural context

There has been an interest in home DIY long before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. English writer, Joseph Moxon is considered the grandfather of home DIY books and manuals. Between 1663 and 1665 he published a book titled *Mechanic- exercises of the doctrine or handy work*. The book was a practical guide on how to make simple and useful objects that we are surrounded by today. ([Science Museum,2020](#))

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the UK's baby boom meant that parents had to get creative in order to provide their children with toys. This was difficult for parents of larger families since toys were so expensive. They had no other option than to invent some toys themselves. This became a new trend. In the 20s and 30s, the economic disaster resulted in less disposable income, so people started to learn how to do things around their homes by themselves. ([Science Museum,2020](#))

Throughout WWII, the severe lack of skilled people and essential goods and services elevated people's interest and capabilities in home DIY. The government of the time encouraged people to become self-sufficient in many ways – from growing their own food, to repairing old clothes. Many magazines that demonstrated how to do these tasks were circulating at the time. ([Science Museum,2020](#))

In the 1950's the economy improved, and people had access to visual media via television. Barry Bucknell was a popular household name throughout this time. His weekly home DIY show taught viewers how to carry out home improvements themselves, and it further enforced the nations interest in DIY. ([Science Museum,2020](#))

The opening of B & Q in 1969 was a massive leap for DIY. Anyone had access to the necessary resources and tools required to do things around their home. Previously, only tradesmen could access these things. Home DIY has certainly become easier over

the years. IKEA for example produces beautiful furniture that is ready to be used. ([Science Museum,2020](#))

## Business context

Home DIY remains popular in 2022. There is no doubt that the Covid 19 pandemic also impacted people's interest in it. The Farnsworth Group did some interesting research on people's interest in home DIY throughout the pandemic. While it was clear that the pandemic influenced the motivators for carrying out home DIY, it was interesting to note that an average of 63% of people said that they would have carried out the DIY improvements anyways, despite the pandemic (The Farnsworth Group, no date).

Home DIY inspiration videos and "how to." guides are readily available if you go on YouTube. Some popular home DIY enthusiasts such as [Lone Fox](#) have millions of subscribers. If you are interested in home DIY and are active on social media, you will quite often come across Instagram or Facebook reels which are short videos that show you how to do simple home DIY projects. As well as stumbling upon such videos, there are some home DIY enthusiast groups which you can join. Groups like these give you inspiration for interesting projects that you can do around your home while on a budget. With people being exposed to social media on a daily basis, such content reaches a younger demographic and perhaps has shifted the stereotype of DIY being a masculine activity since some of the content creators are in fact female.



## SWOT analysis

### *Strengths*

- One-stop site with practical information in one place
- Easy to navigate and takes the user through a logical journey
- Easily digestible content
- Have experience in interior painting so can write the bulk of the content myself
- I was once a beginner to interior painting so understand the struggles of my users

### *Weaknesses*

- No experience in creating such a large site
- Need practice in writing web content
- A lot of time will be required to read through existing articles and extract relevant information for the site in some areas I am not knowledgeable in. Validating the information will also take time
- Few monetary opportunities will arise
- Will need to improve my Adobe illustrator skills and improve JS if this is a technology that I will be using to build the site. Unfamiliar with WordPress also.

### *Opportunities*

- Lack of competition due to there being no sites that focus exclusively on painting
- Opportunity to promote home DIY amongst both genders and not be seen as “macho.” Opportunity for people to see that it isn’t as difficult as they think
- Can promote site and generate interest via social media
- Possibility of the site being able to expand into different DIY areas in the future if the site is a success

## Threats

- When you search something like “home DIY painting” “how to paint” – the search results are usually not what you would expect. It returns painter/decorator websites, online courses on how to do artistic painting, websites that sell paint etc... For this reason, I would need to develop a good keyword strategy and make effective use of my page descriptions in order for my site to appear in searches.
- I will have to try to upload new content on a regular basis to the inspiration page. This is the only part of my site that could be updated on a regular basis. I would have to use this well to my advantage for SEO. Once the rest of the content has been written, there isn't much of an opportunity for new things to be added to it.

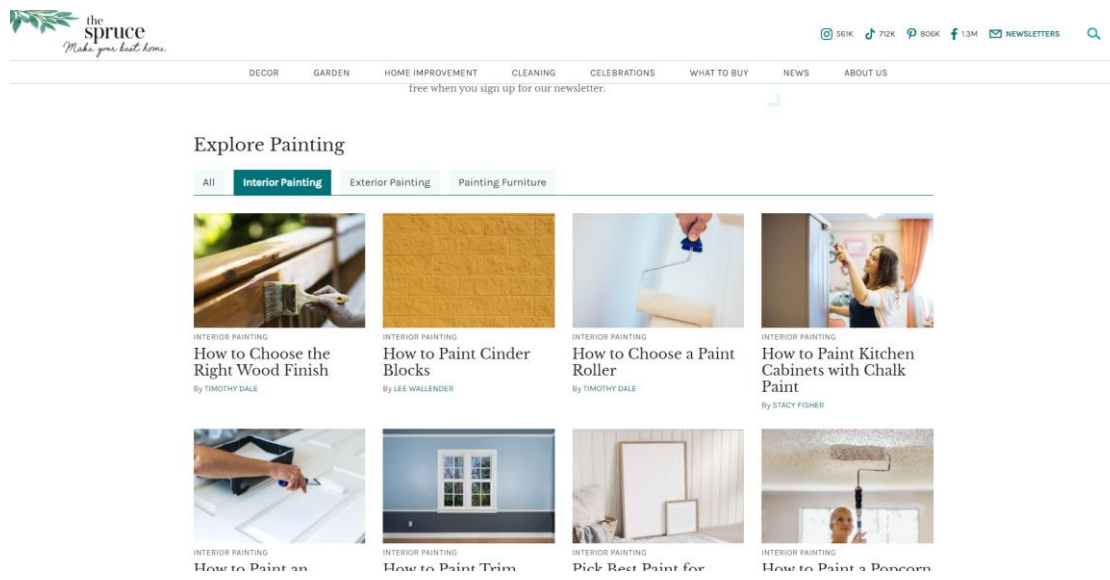
## Revenue

The site is going to be a free source of information for people, and it seems likely that it will remain that way. If the traffic to the site were to increase, perhaps a user donation page could be set up. This would depend on whether there would be enough people visiting the site to make it worthwhile, however. Another option (in the event of increased traffic) would be to use advertisement as a way to generate income from the site. At the moment, I will continue to monitor site visitors and act accordingly.

## Competitor analysis

I decided to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of two cognate sites and two non-cognate sites.

### The Spruce



This is a home improvement site that covers home DIY very broadly. Not only does the site offer articles on how to improve the interior of your home, but it also provides information on gardening, cleaning and planning events for a celebration. All of the content is posted as an article.

#### Strength

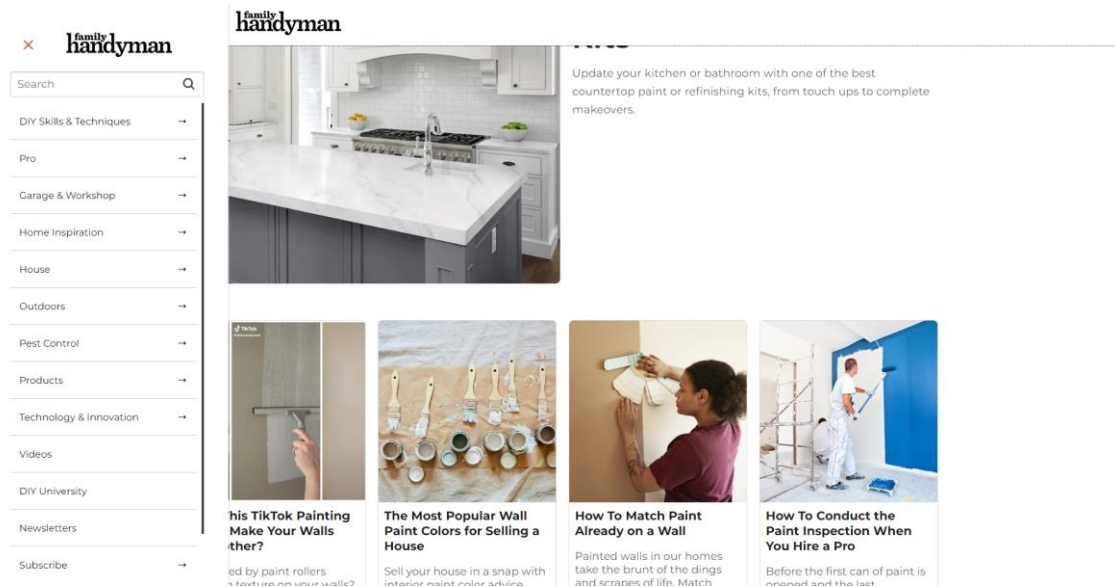
- There is an option for users to sign up to a newsletter which keeps users returning to the site
- Good social media following
- Content updated on a regular basis

#### Weakness

- Poor brand identity. A lot of white and only small pops of aqua green present throughout.

- Overload of content being presented to you when you reach the homepage. No space to absorb what you are looking at.

### Family Handyman



This site is very similar to the previous site. It fully focuses on home improvements and even offers an online academy to take classes if you want to learn new skills. This must be paid for, however.

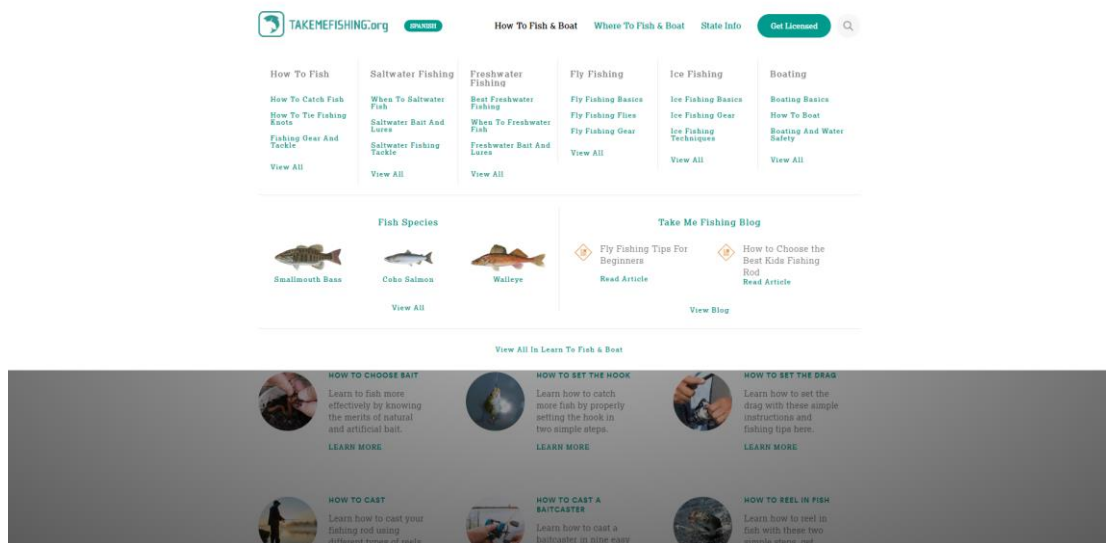
#### *Strength*

- Has a YouTube channel that supplements some of its content with videos.
- Has a section specific to DIY skills and has categorized them into different sections which is more helpful than some other sites.
- Active on social media – posted recently.

#### *Weakness*

- Almost no brand identity
- The main navigation is hidden. You must toggle the hamburger menu. There is another navigation on screen that doesn't link to the site's main content – this could result in a high drop off rate if users cannot find what they are looking for.

## Take Me Fishing



This site teaches people how to fish and provides useful information about the hobby.

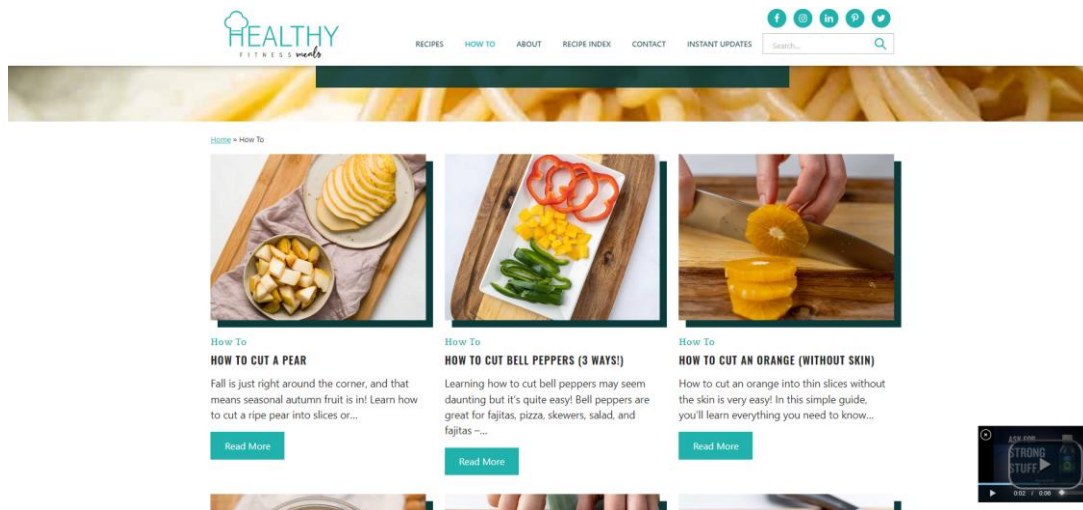
### Strength

- Content well categorized in the navigation
- Available in Spanish so can reach a wider audience.
- Videos that supplement content

### Weakness

- Navigation links that open larger navigation become easily lost on the background image
- Inconsistent typography throughout site

## Healthy Fitness Meals



This is a site that offers healthy recipes.

### Strength

- Incentive to sign up to the newsletter.
- Search bar that enables you to search site content
- Content well categorized and you can filter what appears on screen
- Regularly updated content

### Weakness

- Pages are very long due to large images. Printable recipe without all the images becomes available at the end of the page. Would be better if this was at the start to save all the scrolling. The printable recipe is more to the point also.

## 3. Research

### User research

#### Target audience

To begin, I established who my target audience would be and came to the following conclusions:

- Males and females between 16 and 45
- People interested in learning interior painting who are totally inexperienced
- People who are seeking guidance and inspiration in choosing a new colour palette for the room(s) they are decorating

#### Samples

I carried out some qualitative research for this project. Since this is a small project and I didn't have the time or the resources to carry out extensive user research, the sample number was small. I managed to gather six people and their demographics were as follows –

- Three males and three females.
- Age range: 25 - 42
- Three living in Ireland three living in the UK
- All inexperienced in interior painting and decorating
- All agreed that painting and decorating would be a skill that they would be interested in learning
- Unfamiliar with any home DIY websites

## Qualitative research

The first stage of the research involved a usability test. I choose three of the most popular home DIY sites according to their rankings on Google. [The Spruce](#), [Family Handyman](#) and [Apartment Therapy](#). I asked my samples to carry out some open-ended tasks on these sites while I observed their actions and behaviour while doing so. The reason I choose opened ended tasks was because I wanted to see where the starting point would be for a total beginner and what kind of things they would need to research. If I gave specific instructions, I would not have been able to gain insight into this. Examples of open-ended tasks included-

- Use Family Handyman to find out how to paint a ceiling
- Use Apartment therapy to learn how to paint a bedside locker
- Use The Spruce to help you choose a new colour scheme for your bedroom

After the usability test, I conducted a short interview with my samples to gain insight into their experiences on these sites and how capable they felt they would be to carry out the DIY activity after using them.

## Findings

Upon analysing my notes taken throughout the usability testing and the post-usability test interview, a few main issues came forward –

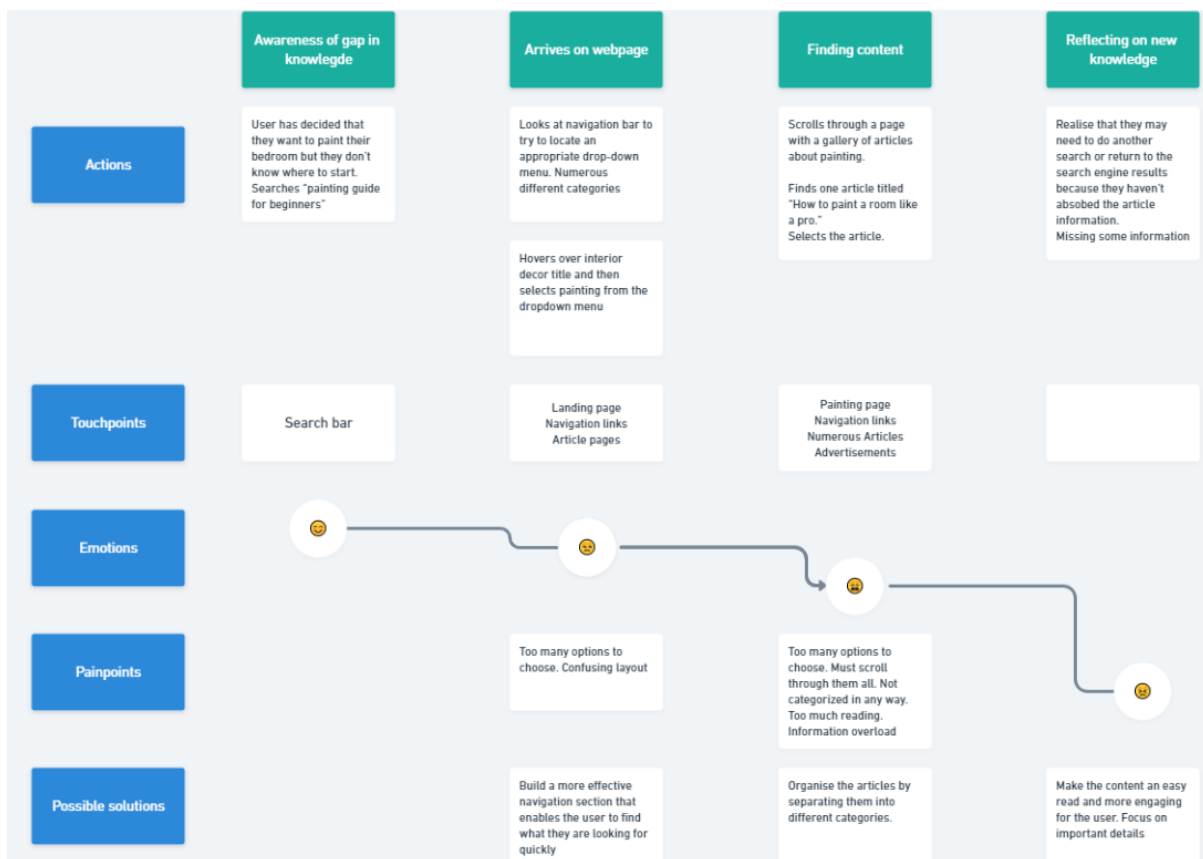
- Nobody felt fully capable of being able to carry out the DIY task if they were asked to do it. They would have needed more time to search for information
- It took most samples longer than expected to gather the information that they were looking for
- Some information was missing in the articles. For examples – when reading an article on how to paint wood– it was assumed that the reader would know what paint to use on this surface. The reader first had to go elsewhere to find out what paint to buy.



- They found the sites very boring to look at. While some people did not mind the long articles, others felt a more concise explanations would have been more beneficial to them.

## User journey

I then created a common user journey that the samples went on while using these sites. This was observed throughout usability testing. It gave me a clearer insight into their pain points, how they felt at the time and ideas for possible solutions to their frustrations.



## User personas

Using my findings and having done some reading on how to create user personas, I created three user personas for DecorPaint.



### Scott

- 25-year-old postgraduate student
- A hands-on individual that likes to learn new things
- Interested in learning a new skill for employment purpose. Needs a part time job that enables him to pick his own hours while he works around a busy university schedule

**Wants:** Clear and concise information that doesn't take him a long time to source. Since he already spends a lot of time looking at a screen each day, the site would need to be engaging for him to not lose focus.

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### Maria

- 42-year-old HR manager
- Interested in interior décor but always finds it difficult to choose new colours and style her space
- Planning on choosing a new colour scheme for her home. Hasn't been updated in years.

**Wants:** Looking for some help when it comes to choosing a new colour palette. Would like to experiment with some courageous ideas so open to some inspiration. Looking for some good content to put her on the right path.



## Violet

- 33-year-old stay at home mother
- New homeowner
- Recently encountered structural problems in the new home that she and her partner are renovating and their budget for decorating has been reduced.

**Wants:** Since Violet's circumstances leave her with no other option than to DIY the decorating of her home, she desperately needs access to information that is to the point, well organized and easy to absorb. She is too busy to have to read through numerous articles while she has children to look after and a house to repair.

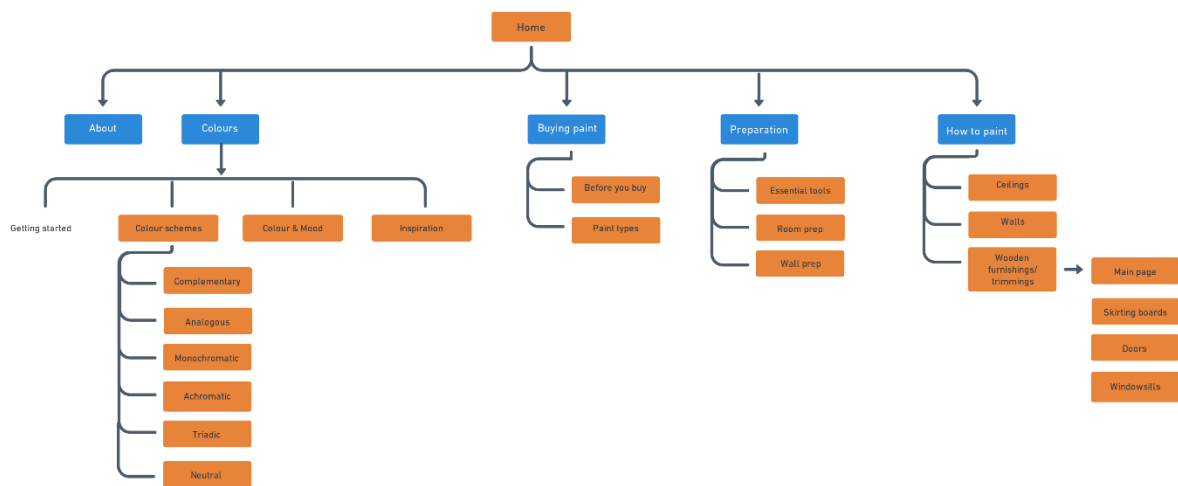
## Information architecture

From the research that was carried out, it is evident that well-structured content is a key requirement for users. Keeping in mind that the users are inexperienced, I thought that it would be helpful to group sections of information together in a logical manner that takes them through stages. I thought about achieving this through creating a few main navigation links that act as stages which branch into secondary pages with more specific information for each stage.

In order to establish what the main navigation links would be, I kept in mind the struggles that my users have and considered the steps people normally go through when they are planning on painting a room. Typically, people decide on a colour scheme, purchase the paint and then the actual painting takes place. Throughout these steps, people gather information that informs them on their decisions. For this reason- I decided to structure the layout of my content in a similar way. The site will have four sections

- A section dedicated to choosing colours. This will explore colour schemes, how colour impacts your mood, and it will also contain an inspiration gallery for those who are looking to do something courageous with some paint.
- A section about buying paint. This section will detail any information that the user should know before going to the store. It will also inform them on the different kinds of paint finishes so that they know which paint to purchase for the surface that they are painting.
- A section that helps the user to prepare themselves for the painting. There will be a page that lists the essential tools which the user should invest in, a page that explains how to prepare the room before painting and a page that details how to prepare cracks/damages on the walls.

- Finally, the last section is dedicated to how to carry out the actual painting. I decided to dedicate pages to different parts of a room – the ceilings, the wall, wooden trimmings/furnishings. The secondary pages dedicated to wood trimmings/furnishings cover skirting boards, windowsills, doors and any wooden furnishings in the room that the user may want to paint.



The information architecture of DecorPaint

## Content Creation

### Writing

All the content on the website will be written by myself. I will be using my own experience and some online research to generate it. Since most pre-existing websites seem to be an overload of information, I really want to break down the content for my users. This is so that they don't feel overwhelmed and have difficulty in absorbing what they are reading. The tone of the content will be relatively informal and friendly, but also be professional and guiding. Using a very formal and authoritative tone would make it difficult for the users to maintain their interest in the site. It could also sound unintentionally patronising. I would need to find a good balance between a friendly and instructive tone. I want the content to be well written and strive to explain things in simple ways. In the event of me using terms that a beginner may not be familiar with - I aim to define them for them through creating tip/definition boxes.

### Image

Originally, I had thought that I would mostly use stock images throughout my website. Having reconsidered this choice, I realized that it would be difficult to find images of the same style and it would therefore inhibit me from establishing any consistency throughout my site. I am also not into photography, so it wasn't possible for me to create images by myself. For this reason, I decided that I would mostly rely on illustrations to establish consistency throughout my website and aid me in creating a brand identity.

### Illustrations

Since I am not highly skilled in the use of Adobe Illustrator, I plan on creating some of the illustrations by myself and sourcing some online also. My tutor told me about an art software online called Krita. This seemed like an excellent tool for the type of project that I am working on. I will discuss the illustration/drawing software that I used in more detail in the implementation section of this report.

## 4. Site Plan

### Site Name

Initially I had no idea what name I was going to choose for the website. It was difficult to think of something creative and memorable. I began brainstorming words that came to mind when I thought about painting and the concept of my project. I then used these words to help me to invent possible domain names for the website. I narrowed down my ideas and forced myself to pick between simplydecor8.com or decorpaint.org. I began to imagine how I may style a logo for my site with the names that I had in mind. I concluded that decorpaint.org may be easier to incorporate into a site logo. Longer domain names may be difficult to style. More popular domain extensions were unavailable. I did some research online to learn that .org is usually used for non-profit organizations. My site will be a non-profit site so I decided that this extension would be the most suitable out of those available. I purchased my domain name on Namecheap.

### Hosting

Clook was originally the server that I was going to use to host the website. I then began to compare it to other servers and noticed that Bluehost seems to be relatively popular. Upon analysing the membership plans that it has to offer, I noticed that the storage space (50GB) is better value in comparison to Clook. Bluehost's basic package is £26.00 per year (excluding vat). Clook's basic package is £30.00 per year and provides 200MB storage. Since the site will be non-profitable, keeping the cost to a minimum will be important throughout the initial stages of its development. Having watched some tutorials on YouTube, Bluehost seems to make it easy to set up your site. It's also easy to install WordPress and offers a free SSL certificate and CDN. I checked the average loading speed for sites that are hosted on both servers and noted that the average loading speed of Bluehost hosted sites is slightly quicker than those hosted on Clook. I recognised that this could impact a user's decision to stay on the

website or not. Bearing in mind the storage space and average loading speed- I decided to choose Bluehost.

## Front-End-Technologies

### HTML

Having spent the past year learning about HTML and given that it is the standard markup language for everything on the web, I decided to use this as one of my front-end technologies to build my website. I aimed to make effective use of HTML tags in order to code accessibility into my website. I also supplemented some markup with landmark roles in circumstances in which the HTML would not aid a screen reader in conveying to the user what type of content they were listening to. I tried my best to keep the use of classes and IDs to a minimum throughout my documents in order to create dry code. I effectively targeted HTML elements using CSS. No inline styling was applied in the HTML file or any outdated methods of styling elements within the HTML.

### CSS

The website was styled using CSS. The CSS was stored in a separate file and linked to the HTML in the head of the document. This is a language that we spent a lot of time learning over the past year. While I was happy with the progress that I had made in learning this language, I saw this project as an opportunity to fully get to grips the language. I used CSS variables for commonly reoccurring elements within my HTML files and used them to style the elements on my site that characterise it—headings/body fonts, font colours, background colours etc. For the greater part of the styling however, I ended up using plain CSS.

### JavaScript and PHP

I anticipated that I would need to use JavaScript to achieve some of the features that are on my website. JavaScript seems to be an essential skill for front-end developers. Prior to beginning this degree, I only understood the core fundamentals of the language. The DOM scripting covered throughout the term seemed very powerful, so I



was interested in practicing the use of this throughout the website. It would certainly be beneficial to know this language for career opportunities. Although, since my knowledge of the language was very limited, it was going to require me to invest some time in studying it alongside planning for the project. If I were to use a content management system, PHP would certainly be a language that I would need to get to grips with a bit more. My only experience with server side includes was from the small business project redesign.

### **SVGs**

In order to use illustrations on my website, I knew that I would have to make some of them by myself. At the start of the year, I had not even heard about Adobe Illustrator and didn't even realize that being capable of using such a software would be so important in web work. Apprehensive about having to learn this new skill along with everything else, I completed part of an online courses on Adobe illustrator to understand the basics of it. In the second term I began to experiment with it more through creating illustrations for the film promotion site. This made me gain confidence in the hope that I would be able to make some of my own illustrations for the major project. Given time constraints and the fact that I would still be learning how to use Adobe illustrator while making these illustrations, I decided that I would realistically have to source some illustrations online to speed up the design process of my website. My tutor mentioned Krita as a useful tool for the kind of website that I was about to make. Upon exploring what this was, I was excited to explore the possibilities of using it to create some nice drawings on my website. In the end, this wasn't a tool that I ended up using but I will explain why in the implementation section.

## Backend Technologies/CMS

I was unsure about whether I should use a content management for my website for a long time. DecorPaint does not rely on dynamic content that much. Once the content has been written and uploaded, that is pretty much it. I had no experience with using WordPress and was still very confused about it at the end of the term. I decided that I would begin working on the project and see what progress I was making. I already was trying to get to grips with illustrator and JS so I wasn't sure if there would really be time to learn how to put all of my content onto a CMS also. After assessing the progress that I had made, I decided that I would use a CMS after all. The CMS that I decided to use was WordPress. I had thought about using Drupal, but upon researching employment opportunities, I realized that it wasn't that popular and that WordPress themed developers seemed to be the most in demand. Incorporating WordPress into my website would be an opportunity for me to learn a whole new skill set and it would also force me to become more familiar with PHP. When I started to use it, I realized that it was helpful for my site in some ways. Some pages were similar (colour scheme pages for example), so uploading one template meant that I could make these pages much quicker than if I hard coded all of them.

## 5. Delight

### Competitors

I looked at some of the main cognate sites to get an idea of what I was up against when it came to styling DecorPaint and making it stand out. The sites that I looked at all had similar traits:

- All of them had a large banner image under the navigation upon arriving on the homepage
- White is the dominant colour. Pops of aqua and blue are used throughout these sites but the of colour is very limited
- Surprisingly, they are all using a serif font to present the content
- All logos are mostly text based

Having analysed these sites, I realized that they gave me the scope to do something unique with DecorPaint and not follow the same trend. Personally, I found these sites very bland to look at so I was enthusiastic to start creating ideas for how my website would look.

## Colour Scheme

Since the website is about painting and decorating, colour was the first thing that came to mind when I started to consider the colour scheme of my site. I wanted the site to have a slightly playful feel to it and to feel friendly. I began researching colours that inspire creativity and positivity. I noted how orange is a colour that symbolises creativity and that yellow symbolises positivity. These were emotions that I wanted my users to feel upon arriving on my website.

According to an article written on [shiftelearning.com](https://shiftelearning.com), blue is often used in challenging learning situations and aids in reading comprehension. Light blue is seen as friendly (Shiftelearning, no date). I therefore decided that navy blue and light blue would be a good colour to use on my site along with the other colours.

Blue was applied to all text on my website. It reminded me of blue ink written on a piece of paper. I thought that this was well suited to the nature of the site since it is a DIY website. I didn't want the site to appear as serious as the cognate sites. Blue on white reminded me of notes scribbled in a scrapbook and I wanted my users to not feel intimidated by the content or by the author – I wanted them to feel as though it was a learning environment and that even the author of the website wasn't claiming to be an expert, but rather just sharing what they knew.



Left are some colour schemes that I was considering and the colour scheme on the right is the one that I decided to use. Since the colour scheme is very bright, I needed to be cautious about my use of colour. Using too much of all of these colours at once would be straining on the eyes and result in a gaudy looking site. I received feedback about this when I presented a style tile during the delight presentation. For this reason, I decided to use white as the background colour of all my content. I introduced the colour scheme through illustrations.

Since the colours are very strong, I wanted to use a more muted colour for the header and footer background, as well as for tip boxes which appear frequently throughout my website. I did not want them to be white as it would be difficult for the user to distinguish between the start of the page, the page content and where the page ends. That is why I introduced the soft pink colour. I felt that it complemented the other colours nicely and wasn't too bold to use as a backdrop in some sections.

## Illustrations/images

As previously mentioned, illustrations were used to carry the colour scheme throughout the website. I tried to carefully consider the colours being used in each illustration so that their colours would work in harmony with the colours of the other illustrations being used on the page. Due to the time constraints of the project, I decided to use a plugin on Figma called Storeyset. The plugin provides free illustrations. You can easily update the colours being used in each illustration to suit the colour scheme of your website. This aided me massively in the design process. I did however have to make some of the illustrations by myself since the plugin did not provide everything that I would have needed. For example – the illustrations on the how to guides.

In order to capture the DIY aesthetic and to make the site content feel as though it had been created by an amateur, I used the paintbrushes on illustrator to outline certain objects or to fill the colour inside them. This made them look hand drawn and I felt like it attributed to the DIY feel of the website (See colour wheel and pie chart below). Rugged, brushed on edges are seen in the header, footer, containers and tip boxes throughout the site. I did this to create the illusion of that they had been roughly painted over with a brush. These rugged background SVGs were useful in creating a visual separation between content on some of the pages. They also provided a bit of relief from a plain white background.

I wanted to use images very sparingly across the website but in some cases the use of images was necessary. I originally had planned to use illustrations on the essential tools page, but I soon realized that it would make more sense for the users to have real images of items so that they could refer to them while shopping for them. Images are closer to the real-life object than an illustration. Obviously real images would have to have been used on the inspiration page.

### Complementary

A complementary colour scheme consists of two colours that are opposite one another on the colour wheel. Although this colour scheme is very bold, some beautiful combinations can be created if the colours are used wisely.

Since the colours are warm and cold – it is important to balance the use of these colours harmoniously. Decide on making one of the colours the dominant one, and then use the other as an accent. Never use both colours in equal parts. It is also important to dilute the colour palette with neutral colours such as white/cream/grey.



### Preparing Walls

Painting is 75% preparation and 25% painting. I get it...wanting to roller those walls as soon as possible is often an urge that is hard to resist ...but if you can hold out just a little longer, I promise that the preparations are worth it in the long run.

If you want a professional looking finish, walls should be as smooth as possible before you begin any painting. Minor cracks and general wear and tear will need some attention. Unfortunately, painting over a blemish won't hide it.



### Newly plastered walls?

If a wall has been newly plastered, make sure that it is fully dried before applying anything to it. You will know that it is fully dry when there aren't any dark patches left. It is also important to apply primer to the surface before applying any paint. A primer will provide optimum adhesion for the paint when you apply it to the wall. If you don't apply a primer, you will need to apply several coats of paint before you are happy with the finish.

### Find a suitable brand

Find a paint brand that offers variations of the colours that you are interested in. Most brands have colour charts available within stores, and you can even look at colours online. Some brands even have colour visualiser apps that you can download on your phone.



## Typography

For the heading fonts of the site, I wanted to use something that appeared handwritten and playful. Below are some examples of the fonts that I was considering. The first two have a playful feel to them and the last two look handwritten. I wanted something that looked handwritten so that it would match the hand drawn style of some of my illustrations. I did not feel like any of them were striking a balance between the style that I was looking for, however. I paired rock salt with a sans serif font when showing a style tile during the delight presentation. Upon getting feedback, I was told that the font just became a bit lost amongst the content and the images. For this reason, I spent some time searching for a new font. I eventually found one that matched what I was looking for and I thought that it suited the style and content of my site perfectly. The font that I finally settled on was Fredericka the Great. A Google font.

Aclonica — Regular 400

**DecorPaint**

Bubblegum Sans — Regular 400

**DecorPaint**

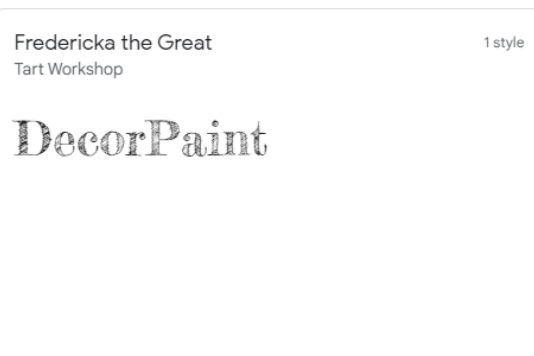
Love Ya Like A Sister — Regular 400

**DecorPaint**

Rock Salt — Regular 400

**DECORPAINT**

Fonts that I was considering



The chosen font

For body text, I wanted to use a sans serif font to ease readability for my users. I also thought that a serif font would not pair well with the heading font. The two styles would be distracting. After some consideration, I decided to use Sarabun by Google.



## Logo

I originally had planned on using an illustration-based logo for the website and I started to sketch out some ideas.



These were presented during the delight presentation. While the feedback was positive, my tutor pointed out to me that the first two make you think of exterior house painting and the final one is like the Air B and B logo. I was advised to try making something less literal or else make an abstract logo. Upon considering this feedback, I put forward the below logo in the final presentation at the end of term.



The feedback on this logo remained much the same and a friend pointed out that the logo could cause users to mistake the site for a real estate website. Someone asked me about the future of the site and whether it would be possible that DecorPaint could expand into other areas of home DIY. This was something that I had not previously thought about. I realized that there could be a potential for the website to grow into other areas of DIY decorating activities in the future if it were to be successful. With this in mind, I decided that a text-based logo would perhaps be the best solution. It would not restrict me in the future if I were to expand the website. As well as this,

when I started to plan my site navigation, I decided that I would include icons beside each primary link of the website. I think if I had decided to use an illustration-based logo after all, my navigation would have looked cramped and too busy.

I decided to use my heading font as the font for the site logo. Originally, the logo was written in all lower-case letters. There was no way to distinguish between the two words Décor (from decorate) and paint. I capitalized the p in paint in order to achieve this. Since orange is a theme colour throughout my site, I tried making the “paint” orange. This may have worked out if my navigation did not have a pale pink background. I checked the contrast of the orange on the pink, and it unsurprisingly failed. This would have been an issue for readability, so I decided to leave all of the text the same colour.

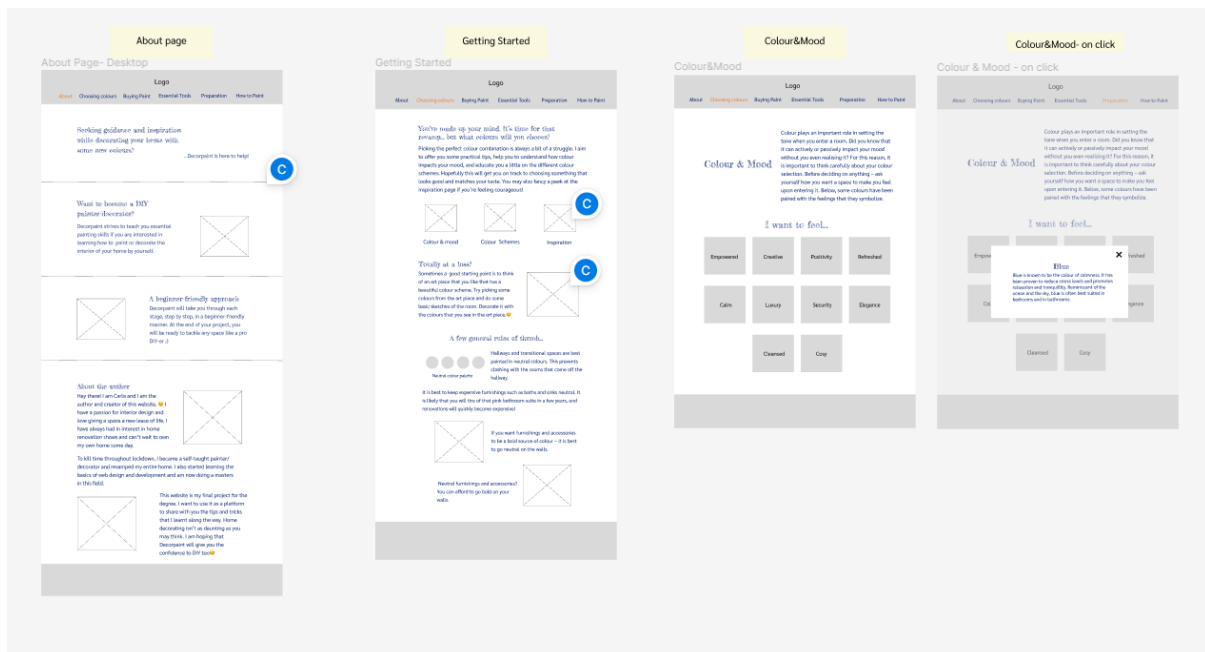
Decorpaint

DecorPaint

DecorPaint

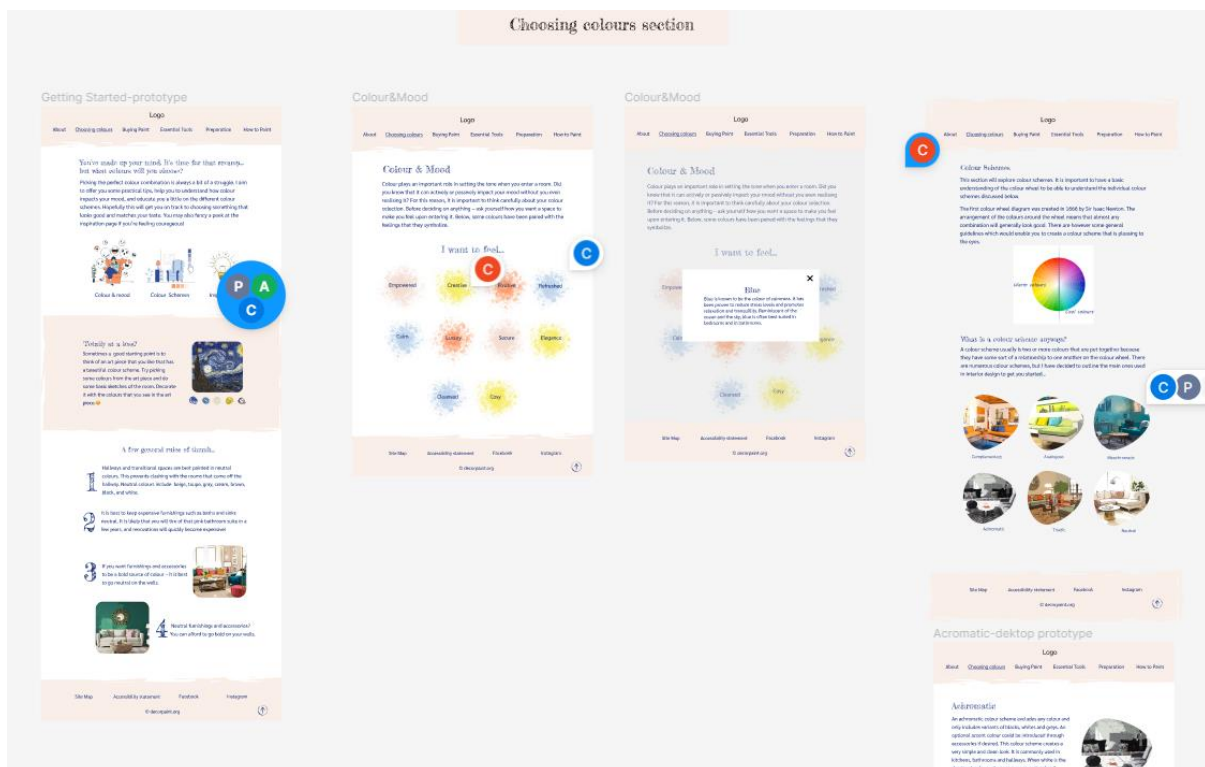
# Wireframes

Once I had written all my content, I started to plan how my site would look by creating some basic wireframes. This enabled me to envision the layout of my website and what kind of form it was going to take. I designed wireframes for mobile, tablet and desktop. Creating the wireframes made me realize how having real content to input into a layout can really change how you thought things may look. Creating the wireframes was valuable for me as it enabled me to see what images and illustrations, I needed to start sourcing for the prototyping stage. [Link to wireframes](#)



# Prototypes

Once I had gathered some illustrations and images, I began making the prototypes for the site. While making the prototypes, I was simultaneously sourcing illustrations and images so that I could work ahead of myself a little and not be making the prototype for a page without any illustrations. The prototyping stage gave me a clearer vision of how some of the wireframing layouts looked when they were fully completed. I found this to be a valuable part of the process as it made me reconsider some of my layout ideas and saved me the time of having to code them and then start fresh. I only managed to get prototyping done for desktop. It turned out to be a lot more time consuming than I had anticipated. Although, once I had the wireframes to guide me for the tablet and mobile layouts, I did not encounter many issues in the actual site build. [Link to prototypes](#)



## 6. Implementation and Promotion

### Content organization & image/SVG optimization

Before having started any coding, I ensured that all my content was written for the website. I organized folders into the same layout as my site's information architecture and saved files in the relevant ones. After completing the wireframing stage, I started to gather images and illustrations and added them to the relevant folders also. Each time that I saved an image, I optimised it in order to reduce the file size and make it more suitable for the web. Upon converting illustrations to SVGs, I used a site called SVG OMG to remove excessive lines in the code and to reduce the file size also.

I originally had planned to use Krita to help me to create some PNGs for the site. I had thought that it would be a useful software since there are a vast number of different brushes that can be used to create some beautiful pieces of work. I became more familiar with illustrator while working on illustrations and realized that illustrator also offers brushes for creating illustrations. Since I already had enough things to learn, I decided to make use of the brushes on illustrator to achieve the same effect that I was hoping I achieve through using Krita.

## Site development and CMS incorporation

Once it was time to start developing the front end of the website, all my content was organized and ready to be used. Prototypes were ready to be used as a point of reference while developing the entire site. Since it had been a while since I had done any coding, I decided to make a couple of static pages using HTML and CSS to refresh myself.

I then decided that it was time to start educating myself on how I was going to incorporate WordPress into the site development. I was nervous about doing so, but after having an online session with Prisca in July – WordPress did not seem as daunting as I had originally thought. I had watched a few YouTube tutorials and came across a helpful plugin called Advanced Custom Fields. I decided that I was going to use the ACF plugin to make my content dynamic. Luckily there was a lot of documentation available online that explained how to achieve things with ACF, as well as PHP template code that you could copy and paste into your own PHP files.

It took me some time develop a system. I still liked to develop the pages statically before I would convert them to WordPress pages. This enabled me to update the CSS and not have to upload the new file each time I wanted to see how something would look on WordPress. I then created the page on WordPress and set up the fields for the page on the ACF plugin. After this, I set up the PHP version of the page in my theme folder and pasted in the <main> from the static html file. I then substituted the content with PHP code. This was the method that I used for all my pages.

Although time consuming, I found that I learnt a lot from doing this. My site didn't experience all the benefits of using a CMS as the content didn't really need to be dynamic. I did however recognise the value of using a CMS for sites that would require one.

## Plugins installed on WordPress

- YOAST SEO
- Cookie YES
- Advanced Custom Fields
- Jetpack – enables you to view site analytics on WordPress

I tried my best to comment on my code throughout developing the whole site. This was so that I would be able to understand something that I did if I returned to it after a long period of time. I also organized my CSS well. I designated sections of the file to code specific to certain pages.

## A mobile first approach

I started the development of my site with the mobile first approach. The smallest screen size that I started to design for was 320px. As the screen became larger, I used CSS media queries to update the layout and fix any errors. I gave the <main> tag a maximum width within each media query in order to control the width of the content. I designed the site up to a width of 1650px. Once the <main> reaches this width, it stops growing.

## Accessibility

While marking up the content, accessibility was an issue that I always tried to keep in forefront of my mind. I ensured that I gave all my images alt tags and tried to mark things up in the most semantically correct way possible so that screen readers would not have any issues. On the wall prep, how to paint ceilings and how to paint walls pages, this became difficult at times. These pages set out a list of instructions to be carried out. To those who don't struggle with visual impairment, it is clear from looking at the screen that the content is a list of instructions. It would have made sense to mark the steps up with an ordered list. This was however not possible due to the fact that the lists were not completely straight forward. Content needed to be inputted between list items (divs that contained tip boxes for examples). In order to find a solution to this issue, I used a landmark role. I gave each step a role of list item so that screen readers would be able to understand this. I included an accessibility statement on my site and gave users the opportunity to get in touch if they felt that some things needed to be improved on my website. A site map was also created and I was careful to check colour contrasts while planning the site's colour scheme.



## SEO strategy

To improve the site's SEO, I decided to develop a good keyword strategy. Some of headings on each page would be useless for SEO. For this reason, I decided to mark them up using a <h2> tag, and I created a <h1> with more effective content for SEO. The <h1> was moved off of the page with CSS but still remained within the html document so that crawlers would detect it. Page descriptions were added to each page to improve the site's SEO also. A WordPress plugin called YOST SEO was installed on the site to enable me to add page descriptions via the WordPress dashboard. The descriptions tags will hopefully improve the site's SEO. Another useful feature of this plugin is that generates Twitter cards that tell people a bit of information about the site before going on it.

## Site Promotion

I decided to create a Facebook page to promote my website on social media. I only created it recently, so it doesn't have many likes yet. I am hoping that by sharing it with friends and uploading some regular content, it may become more popular amongst people which would hopefully increase the traffic to the site.

## Cookies and privacy policy

I originally had not expected to be required to use cookies on my site, but I decided to add a contact form which meant that this would be necessary. I installed a plugin called CookieYes on WordPress which enabled me to quickly set this up. It generated a privacy policy for me which I linked in the footer of my site.

## Challenges and changes

### Changes

Surprisingly, I managed to achieve most things on my site without the use of any JS. I had anticipated that I would need to use JavaScript in order to make a drop-down navigation and for the accordions used on the colour and mood and paint types page. I managed to achieve all of this with CSS.

On the colour and mood page, I originally had planned for the user to click on an emotion and the colour that symbolises the emotion would appear in a modal box on the screen. In order to spare myself some time as the deadline approached, I decided to recycle the CSS used to make the accordions on the paint types page. I adopted this layout on the colour and mood page instead.

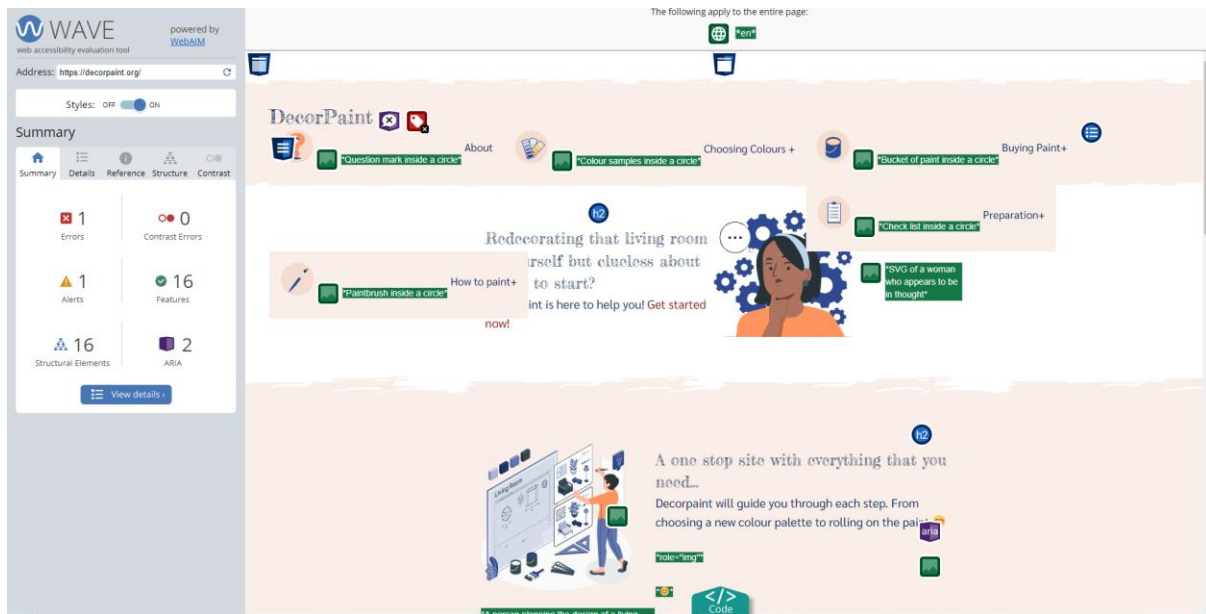
### Challenges

I found it difficult to not repeat myself in my CSS code. Some styling was repeated on the same pages but there were some small differences between them. It is best practice to group things together when you can in order to create clean code, but this caused much confusion for me. I spent a lot longer than usual debugging issues. For this reason, I decided that it was better to repeat myself a bit then mix up the CSS of different pages.

The background image of the header, footer and tip boxes took me a long time to figure out. When I set the size to cover, the rugged edges of the SVG would disappear as the screen became larger. I did not know what was causing this. I then tried setting the repeat property to repeat x and the size to contain. This caused the image to repeat itself instead of shrinking, and thus resolved the issue that I was having.

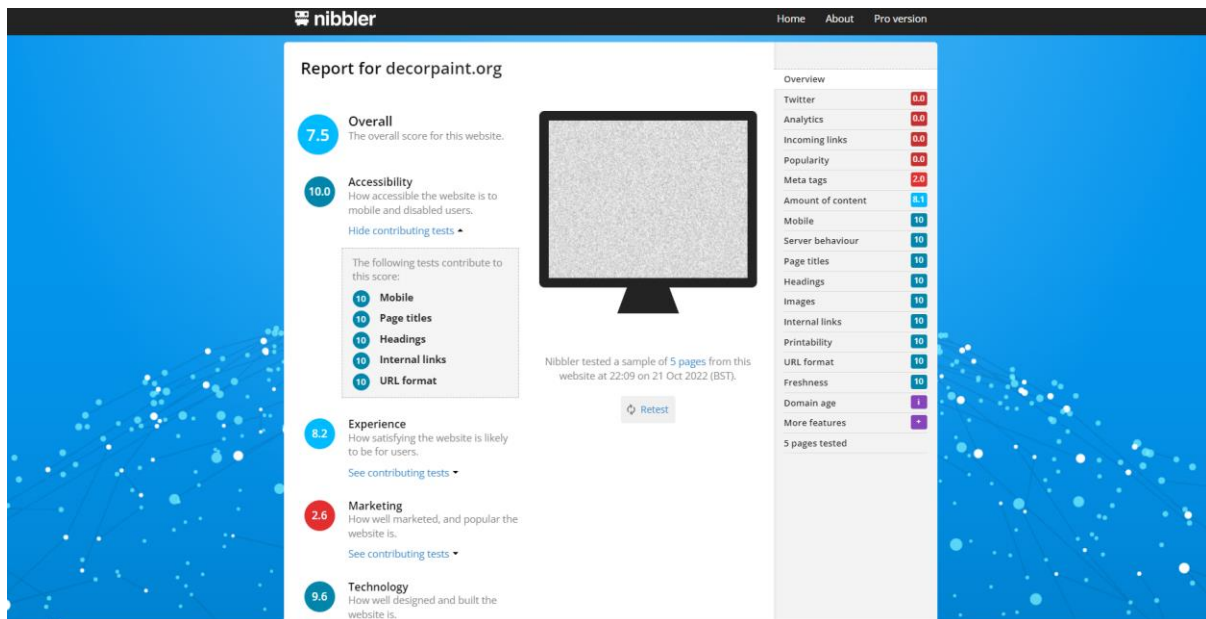
## 7.Site analysis

### Accessibility



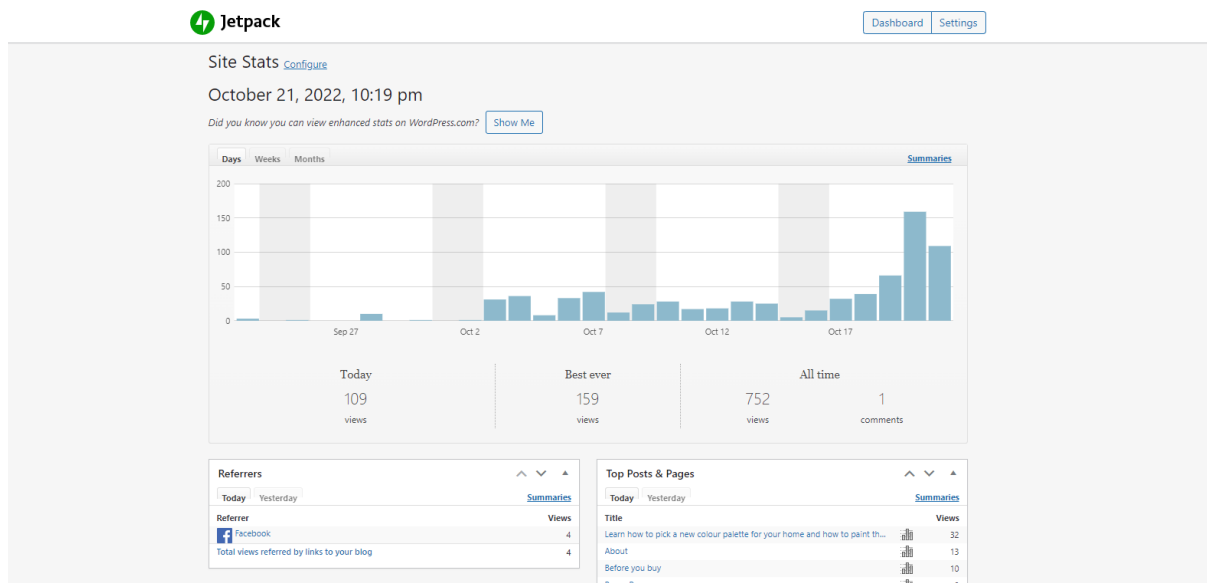
I used webaim.org to check for any accessibility issues on my site. I was relieved to see that there was only one error. I am aware of what is causing this. There is a hidden form submission in my navigation that is missing a label. I will be able to correct this error easily.

## Site Speed



I used Nibbler to check the speed of my website. The site has an overall speed of 7.5 which I am happy enough with. I could possibly improve this if I double checked some of the file sizes of my images. I will need to work on promoting the website on social media in order to improve the marketing score.

## Analytics



I used the Jetpack WordPress plugin to gather some analytical data about the number of site visitors that I have had over the past month. Since the site has only reached completion recently, I have not had much of an opportunity to promote it properly on social media. I am surprised to see that I received four views from Facebook. I will aim to promote the site more and keep a close eye on the number of site users. I also aim to set up an account on Google analytics for a more in dept insight into my site visitors.

## 8. Conclusion

### Future plans

- Due to time limitations, I had not managed to make illustrations that demonstrate the different steps in the “how to paint a ceiling” and “how to paint your walls” pages. This is something that I would like to do. At the moment, images are being used to demonstrate the steps. The images are lacking in consistency and don’t fit the overall style of the website. I want to create illustrations similar to those shown on the wall preparation page. I will replace the images with these illustrations.
- The section of the site that details how to paint wooden furnishings and trimmings needs to be built. This is certainly something that I hope to complete in the near future.
- I plan on updating the inspiration gallery with new images so that my users will have some fresh inspiration now and then.
- I aim to promote the site more on social media in order to increase the volume of site visitors.
- As of yet, the popularity of DecorPaint.org remains uncertain. While monitoring website traffic, I will consider if the possibility of expanding the site into other areas of home décor would be a good idea. This is something that I would like to see happen in the distant future.

## Reflections

This MA has been a challenging year for me. However, with these challenges came a tremendous amount of growth. Coming from a totally different background, I never knew it would be possible for me to achieve what I have achieved this year. Creating DecorPaint has equipped me with a variety of new skills that I hope I can continue to develop in a professional career. I am happy with the outcome of the project, and I feel like I managed to meet the goal of creating a platform where people can access organized information that has been delivered in a unique and pleasing way.

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