



BALSAMIQ MOCKUPS

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About the Tutorial

Balsamiq Mockups is an effective tool for presenting the software requirements in the form of wireframes. This helps the software development team to visualize how the software project will look like in the very early stages of development.

This is a small tutorial where we will cover all the basic steps needed to start with Balsamiq Mockups.

Audience

This tutorial is prepared for Wireframing enthusiasts, aspiring business analysts and UX analysts. This tutorial will provide all the basic groundwork required to get started in the world of Wireframing.

On completing this tutorial, you will get a glimpse of the features of Balsamiq Mockups and their applications.

Prerequisites

Before starting with this tutorial, you should have a basic understanding of computer operations such as resizing, drag and drop, etc.

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Table of Contents

About the Tutorial	i
Audience.....	i
Prerequisites.....	i
Copyright and Disclaimer	i
Table of Contents	ii
1. Balsamiq – Wireframing Basics	1
Why Wireframing?	1
Balsamiq as a Wireframing Tool.....	1
2. Balsamiq – Introduction.....	2
Installing Balsamiq.....	2
User Interface	2
UI Library	3
3. Balsamiq – First Project.....	5
4. Balsamiq – Wireframing in Action.....	6
Designing the Home Page.....	6
Design the Products and Services Page	12
Designing the About Us Page	14
Designing the Contact Us Page.....	17
5. Balsamiq – Navigation	19
6. Balsamiq – Exporting the Mockups	21

1. Balsamiq – Wireframing Basics

When it comes to software development, it is more than important to know how the actual software will look, way before the actual development starts. This is a critical activity, as it serves as a guideline for all the stakeholders in the software project.

Traditionally, paragraphs of text have been used to describe or elicit the software requirement. However, when it comes to comprehension of these texts, every individual will have their own way of visualizing the requirement. This leads to a mix-up in the software development teams and the ultimate cost is in terms of wasted efforts, money and time.

Wireframing can be defined as an activity to visualize the layout of a given screen (mobile or web). In the recent years, there has been an increasing demand on Wireframing the screens/pages in order to gauge its acceptability.

Why Wireframing?

Wireframing is required in order to save on time invested in understanding a software requirement. As they say, a picture is worth more than a thousand words, Wireframing provides a glimpse at the requirement of any feature/page by effectively visualizing the screen layout and elements. In the end, it also helps the development teams to be oriented towards the common end goal.

The owner of the Wireframing activity is usually a Business Analyst / User Interface Designer / Interaction Designer. This team member is required to collaborate with the team before, after and during the Wireframing process.

Balsamiq as a Wireframing Tool

For a professional assigned with a Wireframing activity, it makes sense to save time by using a tool. One of the most effective tools to do Wireframing is to use a simple pen and pencil! This requires no investment at all! However, when it comes to communicating it to the teams, we need a look-and-feel similar to a pen and pencil, but with added features such as sharing over email or similar mediums.

Balsamiq serves as an excellent tool, fulfilling all the requirements of Wireframing, collaboration and creativity. Its unique set of features enables the team member to do rapid Wireframing, get a consensus on the feature to be developed. This will eventually have the team aligned with functionality in terms of the layouts.

It also enables collaboration over different teams, so that a team member can collaborate with different co-located or remotely located teams. Its ability to export the wireframes in PDF/PNG formats allows for a flexibility, while sharing the wireframes with the teams.

We now know how Balsamiq is efficient for creating the wireframes on-the-fly. If we utilize this time early during the software development to set the expectations of the stakeholder, there will be a higher satisfaction among the stakeholders considering the minimal amount of time required to create the wireframe. This is the primary reason why Balsamiq is used by majority of the product organizations, where meeting customer/stakeholder relations are crucial.

For a Product Manager / UX Analyst, Balsamiq Mockups provide a platform to add value early in the development. By using its rich toolset, Product Manager / UX Analyst can drive the product seamlessly towards its success.

2. Balsamiq – Introduction

Installing Balsamiq

To install Balsamiq, please ensure that you have the following requirements.

For running Balsamiq on your computer, Adobe Air 2.6 needs to run. It works fine on most computers and operating systems. The minimum system requirements for Adobe Air 2.6 are given below:

For Windows

- A 2.33GHz or faster x86-compatible processor, or Intel Atom™ 1.6GHz or faster processor for netbook class devices.
- Microsoft® Windows Server 2008, Windows 7, Windows 8 Classic or Windows 10.
- A minimum 512MB of RAM (1GB recommended).
- AIR SDK Development Supports Microsoft® Windows 7 and above, 64-bit only.

For Mac

- Intel® Core™ Duo 1.83GHz or faster processor.
- Mac OS X v10.7, and above.
- A minimum 512MB of RAM (1GB recommended).
- AIR SDK Development supports Mac OS 10.9 and above, 64bit only.

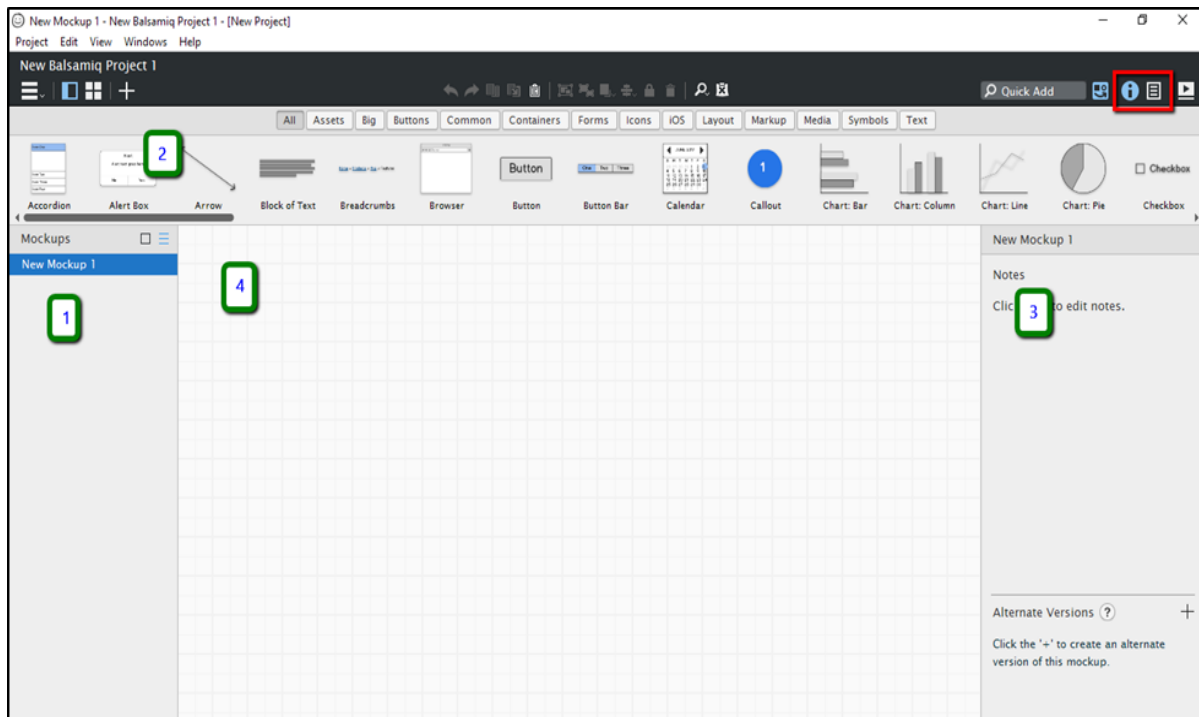
Reference link: [Balsamiq System Requirements](#)

Downloading Balsamiq

We can download Balsamiq from the following link – [Balsamiq Mockups for Desktop](#). Balsamiq is available on Windows and Mac OS.

User Interface

Once the installation goes through, we should be able to open Balsamiq from our computer. We will see the following screen for the first time when we run Balsamiq.



As shown in the above screenshot, the user interface for Balsamiq is divided in the four following parts.

- Navigator
- UI Library
- Inspector
- Wireframe space/Area

In the screenshot, the section highlighted in red is the toggle for the sections Inspector / Project Information. Based on the selection, we should be able to see either the Inspector / the project information section (3).

UI Library

As shown in the following screenshot, the UI Library is categorized as per different screen elements. You can scroll horizontally on "All" section and get an idea about the screen elements available in Balsamiq.



Let us get acquainted to the different basic screen elements categories available in Balsamiq.

- **All:** This covers all the UI elements present in Balsamiq. You can scroll horizontally to view/use them.
- **Assets:** For the purpose of introduction, these are the custom assets as uploaded by the user.
- **Big:** This category includes the screen elements, which are reasonably high in size/appearance. You can see the elements such as placeholders, browser window, iPad, iPhone in this category.
- **Buttons:** It includes all the button controls used in mobile/web wireframes. A typical example will be action button, checkbox, etc.
- **Common:** These are different shapes/controls used to denote the most common interactions.
- **Containers:** As the name suggests, it is inclusive of the Window, Field Set, Browsers, etc.
- **Forms:** All the UI controls related to a form are present in this category.
- **Icons:** At any given point, you might need to denote a particular operation by an icon. For instance, in the recent past, we have the floppy icon with the Save button. This category of controls will provide you with the icons required for this operation. Balsamiq has a huge collection of icons; feel free to check them!
- **iOS:** The UI controls, specific to Apple iOS mobile operating system, are available under this category.
- **Layout:** When representing a basic page/feature, it becomes important to represent the basic layout. The category layout includes most of them, such as Accordion, Horizontal/Vertical Tabs, etc.
- **Markup:** Suppose you want to add a comment on a particular control in the wireframe. The comment box is available in the markup. In addition, callouts are used to show interconnectivity in many of the scenarios. It is available under the Markup Category.
- **Media:** When it comes to showing an image/sound in our wireframe, related UI controls are available under the Media category.
- **Symbols:** The symbols are reusable components, which can reduce the time to create the most common elements.
- **Text:** As the name goes, all the UI controls related to text or paragraphs, such as Link Bar, Block of Text, Combo Box is available under this category.

In the next chapter, we will make the first project in Balsamiq.

End of ebook preview

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