[Morse code beeps] [Whoosh]

[Helicopter rotor]

Hi, my name is Annika Thomas and I'm a Fellow with the AeroAstro Communication Lab at MIT, and today we'll be talking about designing personal websites and portfolios.

The goals of this lesson include that you should be able to identify the purpose and intended audience of a personal website and tailor that content accordingly.

You should be able to design a clear, organized structure for a personal or professional website, and you'll begin drafting a website that effectively communicates your work skills and potentially interests.

Some criteria for success for a personal website include that it should be purpose driven having a clear goal.

It should be audience focused.

So the content and tone are designed for the intended reader.

It should be well organized.

Information is logically structured and scannable.

It should be informative.

So the projects and experience included effectively communicate what you did, why it mattered, and what skills or tools were involved.

And your website should be maintainable.

The site is a living document that can evolve over time.

There are quite a few different types of personal websites.

Some of them include a resume website, which is a single page overview.

It's a fast, scannable snapshot of your experience that complements a traditional resume.

You could have a portfolio site.

With portfolio sites, we usually use them when your work is best communicated through projects, visuals, or artifacts, as opposed to bullet points.

You could have a project or paper landing page.

So this is a focused page that explains a specific project, publication, or piece of research.

You could have a demo or a technical site.

These demonstrate technical skills through interactive tools, code, or live examples.

Or you could have a personal home page or a blog.

This is a space to share ideas, writing, or interests alongside your professional work.

So we're going to start with an activity to identify your web site type.

So go ahead and take about five minutes and follow the instructions outlined in the activity to identify your web site type.

Write down your primary website goal and which type best supports that goal right now.

[Alien spaceship beeps]

So your website should really be tailored to a specific intended audience.

Some common audiences include potential employers or recruiters, professional collaborators, advisors or peers, a broader public or online community.

Some different audiences will scan the content differently.

They'll care about different details on your website and spend different amounts of time on your site.

So design primarily for one audience in mind, not for everyone equally.

You want your website to have a specific purpose, and a big piece of that is your intended audience.

So what content belongs on your website?

Well, some common sections include having an about or bio section, including projects or research, publications or writing, teaching or service, media press or outreach, code repositories or demos, and including a blog or recent news.

So we're going to take a little bit of time to do an activity where you outline the content of your website.

Take about 20 minutes on this activity and use a text editor on your computer to outline the content that you'd like to include on your website.

Focus during this activity on the information itself, as opposed to the format or website style.

[Alien spaceship beeps]

Now that you've completed an outline of the information that you want to include on your website, we'll take a little bit of time to look at potential organizations or structures of website.

A couple of common examples include an engineering portfolio site map example, which can have a tree structure like we see on the left here.

And another is a project page layout example, which we see on the right.

There's a balance between the descriptions and the visuals that we want to include in order to communicate what was done during that project.

So we'll take a little bit of time to look at some examples of different personal websites that I've completed over the years.

The first of which I did using Google sites.

And you can see I start off with an About Me section, include recent news, some select projects, talks, press.

And I designed this website to be a bit more like a portfolio with a list of all of the projects that I had completed at this time.

Now, this was the first website that I put together, and I decided later that I wanted some more customization, so this is the website that I use currently.

It's hosted using a GitHub repository, so I've written all of this in HTML.

So there's a bit more of an involved process in creating this, but I have more ability to customize the different material.

So you can see I have an about section with some of my research interests, some recent news and select publications, as well as ways to contact me on the website.

And across the top I have different sections that correspond to the parts that I want to include on my website, my publications, a couple projects.

I have a section with my CV and some press and talks that I've given.

And a good thing about a format like this is we can include links to different videos or different publications in your personal website.

Now we'll spend a little bit of time talking about website accessibility, which is something you should be thinking about while building your websites.

Some good practices include having alt text for your images, linking descriptive text.

So hyperlink text, avoiding using long URLs or saying click here and linking the here.

You want to include high contrast text and avoid distracting backgrounds.

When designing your website, you don't want to rely on color to communicate information or messages.

So make sure you're using a colorblind checker to ensure that everything's still readable.

You want to be consistent with your heading levels.

Use headers in the order that they're designed.

This is the way in which screen readers navigate websites so that people are able to skip different sections and go to different parts, so make sure those headings are consistent.

And for some more information on accessibility, check out the Aero Astro com Lab Accessibility Guide.

Now we'll talk a little bit about domain names.

If you're creating a website using something like Squarespace, or Wix or, Google sites, then usually that domain name is going to be included in the website.

But if you want your website name to be, for example, your first and last name.com, then you want to create a domain name.

And a domain name is basically your website's human readable address on the internet.

You have a domain name server, which is effectively the internet's phone book.

This maps your domain name into a server IP address.

That's what the browser uses to connect to.

And so when you're looking at websites, you have a domain name that's typed into a browser, DNS lookup, it finds the server IP, and then the website loads.

Now, if you wanted to get your own domain name, these are leased annually.

Some standard ones like .com .net or .org cost about 10 to $20 a year.

But new or specialty domain names like .AI or .tech are going to be a bit more expensive.

Some popular providers for domain names include Wix, GoDaddy, and Namecheap.

Now, by the end of this website, you should be able to identify the purpose and intended audience of a personal website.

You should be able to design a clear, organized structure for a website, and you began drafting a website that effectively communicates your work.

[Alien spaceship beeps]