

What a Front of the Front End Developer Brings to Your Team

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What will I talk about today?

- Definitions and terminology
 - Front of the front end
 - Back of the front end
 - Full stack
- What makes a front of the front end skillset important?
- A front of the front end developer's collaboration superpowers

**What is a front of the front
end developer?**

A front of the front end developer...

- Keeps up to date with modern CSS
- Focuses on semantic HTML
- Incorporates accessibility best practices from start to end of a project
- Writes presentational JavaScript such as show/hide toggles and animations

**What is a back of the front
end developer?**

A back of the front end developer...

- Focuses on JavaScript frameworks such as React or Vue
- Configures build tools such as Webpack or Vite
- Writes and implements business logic such as routing, state, or caching

**Well, what about full stack
developers?**

A full stack developer...

- Can handle the responsibilities of both a front of the front end developer AND a back of the front end developer!
- Is equally proficient at both back and front end technologies
- Is a magical unicorn that can do it all



In my experience, “full-stack developers”
always translates to “programmers who can do
frontend code because they have to and it’s
‘easy’.” - Brad Frost, “[Full-Stack Developers](#)”

Wait. Doesn't full stack mean something else?

Full stack in Drupal

- In the Drupal community, ‘full stack’ tends to mean a developer who
 - Writes Drupal modules
 - Handles site configuration management
 - Is proficient in PHP, Symfony, and object oriented programming
 - Can handle the front end, but it may or may not be their forte

Why front of the front end skillsets matter

Important skills we offer

- Semantic HTML
- Modern CSS
- Presentational Javascript
- Accessibility knowledge

Semantic HTML

Front of the front end developers know what HTML element to use in each scenario:

- The difference between a button and a link
- `<details>` and `<summary>` elements
- The new Invoker Commands API used with:
 - The Popover API
 - The HTML `<dialog>` element

Buttons vs links

Knowing when to use a button vs a link is very important!

As a rule of thumb:

- Use a button to trigger an action, such as submitting a form or opening and closing site navigation, a popover, or a dialog element
- Use a link when you want to navigate to a different page, either on the same site or externally

<details> and <summary> elements

The `<details>` and `<summary>` elements create a disclosure element using semantic HTML, with show and hide functionality built right into the element.

- Add the `open` attribute to the `<details>` element to display it as open by default.
- Add the `name` attribute to multiple `<details>` elements to ensure only one element can be open at a time.
- The `::marker` pseudo-element can be used to style the open and close indicator.

The Invoker Commands API

A new way to control popovers and modal dialogs without using JavaScript!

- Introduces two new elements to the `<button>` element: `command` and `commandfor`
 - `commandfor` acts as a connector between the button and the element the command acts upon
 - `command` contains the action that should be taken on the element
- Currently the default commands only work on popovers and the `<dialog>` element, but custom commands can be written to support other elements

The Popover API (with invoker commands!)

The Popover API allows a user to create popover content on a page.

- With this API, a user can use either the HTML `popovertarget` attribute to a button show, hide, or toggle the popover, or use JavaScript to add more fine grained control.
- The Invoker Commands API for popovers does essentially the same thing as `popovertarget`, using the `command` and `commandfor` attributes.

[Codepen](#)

The <dialog> element

The HTML `<dialog>` element is used to create a dialog box that can be either modal or non-modal.

- A modal dialog cannot be light dismissed by default, and the rest of the page is disabled while a modal dialog is open.
- A non-modal dialog does not disable the rest of the content on the page and a user can continue interacting with other content on the page.
- The Invoker Commands API currently only supports modal dialogs

[Codepen](#)

Modern CSS

Front of the front end developers keep up with modern CSS, leading to more performant code and smaller file sizes:

- `interpolate-size` instead of the Web Animations API to animate the `<details>` element ([Codepen](#))
- `margin-trim` ([Codepen](#))
- `text-wrap: balance` for prettier headings ([Codepen](#))
- Logical properties for directional styles
- View transitions and scroll driven animations

Presentational JavaScript

Front of the front end developers know how to write presentational JavaScript to enhance a site:

- Implementing accessible modal dialogs ([Codepen](#))
- Using the web animations API to implement transitions and animations that can't be done using CSS... yet! ([Codepen](#))
- Writing vanilla JavaScript to show/hide navigation dropdowns

Accessibility

Front of the front end developers know the best ways to ensure accessibility when building a site:

- Knows when to use or not use ARIA and how to implement it correctly
- Uses color palettes that follow color contrast guidelines
- Tests sites using multiple accessibility tools and runs manual tests with keyboard navigation and screen readers

Accessibility

- The [WHO estimates](#) that 15% of the world population (1.3 billion) live with some form of disability, so it's important to build sites that people with visual, auditory, vestibular disorders, and others can use the sites we build.
- The [WebAIM Million from 2025](#) notes that 94.8% of home pages had detected WCAG 2 failures, most from color contrast issues.
 - ARIA usage has increased 18.5% just in the past year, and home pages with ARIA averaged 50% more detected errors than pages without.

Why accessibility is important

- People with disabilities use the web as much as people without disabilities, so they shouldn't be left out of the website experience. The web is for everyone so it should be built for everyone.
- Not making your site accessible can have a legal impact. Lawsuits against inaccessible websites have been increasing in recent years. This shouldn't be the main reason to make your site accessible, but it's important.¹

1. [“What is digital accessibility?”](#), web.dev

Why accessibility is important

- A front of the front end developer would work to eliminate accessibility issues such as color contrast, empty links, missing form input labels, and other issues as much as possible.
- A front of the front end developer would also know when to use ARIA and when to use semantic HTML to build a component, avoiding extraneous ARIA which might cause more accessibility problems than help.

**To summarize: front of the front end developers
add a LOT to a team. Our skills matter to the
success of a project.**

**Front of the front end
developers' collaboration
superpowers!**

Collaboration with your team

The most important job of a front of the front end developer? Collaboration! Front of the front end developers have many varied skillsets:

- Some have design experience so they can assist designers in building prototypes
- Some have back of the front end development experience so they can step in and help with JavaScript framework tweaks
- Some have back end development experience so they can help implement the design in a way that makes the most sense with the back end

Collaboration with designers

- Having a front of the front end developer work alongside a designer at the start of the project helps the development process later on, with the front end developer catching any discrepancies in the design that might not be possible or doable within a tight deadline.
- On the flip side, designers can bring new ideas to a front of the front end developer, assisting with transitions or animations that would make the website stand out.

Collaboration with back of the front end developers

- Back of the front end developers focus on setting up tooling, writing and configuring APIs, and writing the business logic.
- Front of the front end developers ensure that the HTML the JavaScript framework generates is semantic and accessible, as well as write any styles and add any presentational Javascript that's needed.

Collaboration with back end developers

- In a system such as Drupal, back end developers can build modules and write custom functions for front of the front end developers to pull in and implement in Twig templates.
- On the other hand, front of the front end developers can write the CSS needed in a custom Drupal module, leaving back end developers to focus on writing the PHP code needed for modules and other parts of the site.

Collaboration with project managers

- Front of the front end developers can help with ticket creation, defining the definition of done by ensuring accessibility testing and visual regression testing satisfy the defined criteria.
- Front of the front end developers can also get involved with the project early on if possible, helping with the discovery process before they're brought onto the project.

**In conclusion: front of the front end developers
can be useful at every part of the project,
beginning to end, and collaborate effectively with
every member of the team.**

Wrapping up...

Wrapping up

Front of the front end developers are an important part of every team:

- We have a unique skillset that integrates with the skillsets of other members of the team including CSS, HTML, and accessibility
- We bring value to your team by keeping up with the latest CSS, focusing on accessibility best practices, and writing semantic HTML
- We effectively collaborate with other members of the team including designers, back of the front end developers, back end developers, and project managers

Further reading

- . <https://css-tricks.com/the-great-divide>
- . <https://bradfrost.com/blog/post/front-of-the-front-end-and-back-of-the-front-end-web-development>
- . <https://css-tricks.com/what-makes-a-good-front-end-developer>
- . <https://alistapart.com/article/owning-the-role-of-the-front-end-developer>
- . <https://zellwk.com/blog/good-frontend-developer>
- . <https://www.tempertemper.net/blog/front-of-the-frontend>
- . <https://jeffbridgforth.com/front-of-the-front-end-developer>



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Any Questions?