



Cory Computer Systems

563 Wesley Avenue, Suite A
Oakland, CA 94606 (510) 663-2465

“Web Design with the Small Business in Mind”

What makes a good web design?

Common sense. After all, usability really just means making sure that something works well: that a person of average (or even below average) ability and experience can use the thing---whether it's a Web site, a fighter jet, or a revolving door---for its intended purpose without getting hopelessly frustrated.

Like a lot of common sense, though, it is not necessarily obvious until *after* someone has pointed it out.

What's the most important thing I should do if I want to make sure my Web site is easy to use?

Rule # 1 “Don't make me think!”

Thinks that make us think

<-Obvious

[Jobs]

Just click

[Employment Opportunities]

Hmm, Jobs, Click

Requires Thought>

[Job-o-Rama]

Hmm, Could be job. But it sounds like more than that. Should I click or keep looking?

How we really use the Web

1. We do not read pages. We scan them
2. We do not make optimal choices. We satisfice (we choose the first reasonable option).
3. We do not figure out how things work. We muddle through.

The answer is simple: If your audience is going to act like you are designing billboards, the design great billboards.

Rule #2 “It doesn't matter how many times I have to click, as long as each click is a mindless, unambiguous choice.

Note: Do not use underlined text. This looks like a link to visitors.

What makes a good web design?

Rule #3 “Get rid of half the words on each page, the get rid of half of what’s left

Omit ~~needless~~ words

E.B. White’s seventeenth rule in the *The Elements of Style*: **17. Omit needless words**

Web Usability - What the Public Says

Excerpts from University of California, Davis Extension Course - *Writing for the Web*

"A good print design is usually a lousy Web design"

--- Jakob Nielsen, nationally known usability expert

General Concepts

- Most folks (82 %) use an 800x600 resolution screen
- Most folks (79 %) scan the page only - looking for key words they are seeking

Thoughts about Design

- Design is part of on-line content, inseparable from the words themselves.
- Ideal design uses 50 percent white space!
- Ideal type size on the Web is 12 to 14 points
- Should be a 30K graphic limit per page
- Should take less than 10 seconds to download a page

How Folks Read the Web

There are three types of Web users:

1. Those who would rather be watching TV - look to the Web for entertainment - like game sites and audiovisual "jolts"
2. Those who want information they can apply - searching for something. They are impatient and critical
3. Those who read on the Web - looking for books on line or white papers (rare folks)

Web visitors work in two stages:

- They first SCAN to find what they are looking for, reading mostly headlines, subtitles and links
- Then they READ when they have found the "destination" page with the information they were seeking

Eye tracking shows that readers look at:

- Headlines
- Summaries
- Captions
- Pull quotes

But they ignore graphic elements! (that's what eye tracking says....)

What makes a good web design?

Physiological Facts

- Reading at a computer screen is 25 percent slower than the printed page
- Reading on the Web is physiologically different than reading from a printed page.
- The eye blinks only 5x a minute when reading the screen and 12-20x a minute when reading print.
- Print readers move from left to right on the page
- Web readers see the center first, the left side next, and the right side last

What Folks Hate about the Web

Web visitor pet peeves:

- Too many fonts and colors
- Too much clutter
- Slow downloads
 - Pop-up windows

Writing Tips

- **Have each topic/section cover only one subject**
- **Have each subtopic/subnav cover only one idea**
- **Be cautious of adding too many links within written text.**
- **Links are mental "noise" that cause the reader to stop and think**
- **Readers hate mission statements - they ignore them**
- **Readers hate "corporate speak" but respond to easy, conversational text that uses the active voice**

Fewer Words - How Few?

- Each subject you cover in text should be less than 1,000 words. 700 are ideal.
- A paragraph should have no more than three sentences
- A block of text should be no more than 75 words long
- A line of text - across the screen - should contain eight to 15 words, no more or less.

Breaking Up the Information

- Lists should contain seven items - plus or minus two - anything else confuses the reader
- There are only a few ways to categorize information:
 - Alphabetically
 - By time
 - By category
 - By location
 - By magnitude
- To assist with scanning a page, you can add color or bold to certain key words (even if they are not links).

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Proofreading Your Web Pages

- Proofreading is essential to perception of quality!!!
- When proofreading material for the Web, print it out and proof hard copy
- Look especially at:
 - All headings, subheads and navigation titles
 - All calls to action
 - E-mail subject lines
 - Service descriptions
 - Forms
 - Link titles