

Lecture: Web Design Tips

## Lecture: Web Design Tips

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GIT 542: Usability and User Experience



Text Caption : Lecture: Web Design Tips

Slide Notes:

Welcome to the Web Design Tips lecture. I know not everyone in the course is a web designer, so these are some excellent tips from Vincent Flanders, the curator of Web Sites That Suck. Although it hasn't been updated since 2015, the tips I've pulled from his list have stood the test of time. And the majority of these tips aren't just for websites and web-based applications; they're for anything with a user experience, which is almost every product out there.

## Mortal sins for web design

**Mortal sins for web design**

- It takes the "Man from Mars" more than 4 seconds to figure out what the site is about
- Images/graphics that distract the user
- Site does not have a professional look and feel



Source: <http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/does-my-web-site-suck/>

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## GIT 542: Usability and User Experience



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## Slide Notes:

The name of this checklist is 179 Mortal Sins That Will Send Your Site to Web Design Hell. I love that! Not all 179 are in here but as I just said, the ones that are here are what you should be looking for in your site during your heuristic evaluation.

The first one is "it takes the Man from Mars more than 4 seconds to figure out what the site is about. It's not really the Man from Mars, but it's someone who has never been to the site before. If it takes longer than 4 seconds, they're probably going to be gone and won't come back.

The next is having images or graphics that distract the user. Having unnecessary or distracting design items goes against all sense of user experience. Images need to further the message that the business or organization wants to project. If you are adding an image just to fill space, remove it!

The next is not having a professional look and feel. Credibility and trust are crucial for any business. And many times, the website is the first introduction the user has to the business. If it looks like your 3rd grader designed it in school, your credibility just tanked.

And speaking of the opposite of professional look and feel... Meet Ling's Cars! This site is a beauty. Just about everything in this lecture, it goes against. Now this site started out being really bad and then got even worse because apparently Ling saw the traffic that was coming to the site and thought, "Hey, I'm going to bring in a bit more traffic by making this site even more horrible!"

So even though this design as it is right now is pretty much meant to be a joke, it does illustrate that people come to laugh at it, but are they really going to buy a car from the site? My guess is no.

## Mortal sins for web design

**Mortal sins for web design**

- Home page is too long and/or too busy
- Not having a defined focal point on home page
- Title tag says "New Document" or "Untitled"
- Logo does not link to home page



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**GIT 542: Usability and User Experience**

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**Slide Notes:**

Although users can enter from any page thanks to Google and other search engines, it's still likely that the user will enter from the home page. If that page is too long or too busy, users won't stay. Jacob Nielsen has research to prove this, and Steve Krug mentions it throughout this book: Users don't read; they skim. That is what I call a "sea of gray" -- nothing but paragraphs and paragraphs of text -- is a huge turn-off to users.

On the home page, the user **MUST** know what the most important item on the page is, which is the focal point. Think carefully about what the most important message is that should be conveyed and make it the focal point.

The title tag is, it's an actual tag that you put in the HTML. And this should convey what your business name is at the very, very least. This is used to index with the search engines, which means the search engines pick this up. There are millions and millions of pages that have title tags of New Document or Untitled. It just means that you went into Dreamweaver or whatever kind of WYSIWYG editor or Wix or whatever it is that you're using and you forgot to name the page.

Also, another convention is linking the logo to the home page. Users have gotten used to this. There always needs to be a way back to Home, and the logo is the way to go.

And oh look Ling's Cars is back! You know why? Because this site checks off all four of these mortal sins.

## Mortal sins for web design

**Mortal sins for web design**

- Designing the site for the organization, not the user
- Using color scheme that doesn't match business/organization
- Site looks considerably different in major browsers
- Site not optimized for mobile



Image source: <https://blog.frontrunnerpro.com/how-to-build-one-incredible-funeral-home-website/>

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**Slide Notes:**

So we're going to leave Ling alone for a while.

Business owners want to tell visitors how awesome the business is instead of showing how the business can help users complete tasks. And when that happens, you're designing the site for the organization, not the user.

The color scheme should match the business' message. If the business is a funeral parlor, obviously you're not going to use bright primary colors; you would use more muted colors. So the color scheme needs to match the business or the organization.

The site needs to look relatively similar, but not drastically different, in all major browsers. Right now the major browsers are Chrome, Firefox and Edge. The site should provide a similar user experience for users. And that includes on the mobile device. Obviously, you have a smaller real estate to deal with, but it still should look like the site is from the same company.

According to Google, users are 5 times more likely to leave a site if it's not optimized for mobile. Mobile traffic has surpassed desktop and laptop traffic.

I mentioned earlier about a funeral parlor, and voila -- a site for a funeral parlor! This shows what their site looked like before being optimized for mobile and after. You can see that the navigation is much more friendly for fingers and for eyes because you can actually read it. And it's also more focused on user tasks, and that's an important thing for mobile. I'll get into this later in the semester.

Keep in mind that in 2019, Google now is indexing sites based on mobile first version first before they index the desktop. So that means if the site isn't optimized for mobile, it won't be indexed first, which means it may show up lower on the search results.

Mortal sins for web design

## Mortal sins for web design

- Logo does not look professional
- Logo is not on all pages
- Using graphics for text
- Using graphics for links
- Icons are not intuitive to users



Image source: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/bad-icons/>

Source: <http://www.webpagethatsuck.com/does-my-web-site-suck/>

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## GIT 542: Usability and User Experience



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Slide Notes :

Just like the site needs to look professional, so does the logo. This goes toward credibility and trust.

And I mentioned earlier that users can enter from any page, and that's why it's crucial to have your branding on every page and you also should have your logo. Your logo is your main point of branding.

You don't want to use graphics for text, and don't use them as the primary indication for links, either. Not only will these be less accessible, they won't be indexed by search engines.

Icon usage is prevalent in mobile apps, but it still is.... it also appears on, I guess, desktop width websites. For mobile apps, it makes sense for the smaller amount of real estate. But be careful that the icons are intuitive to users. Will they recognize what that particular icon means? The only way to know this is to test with users.

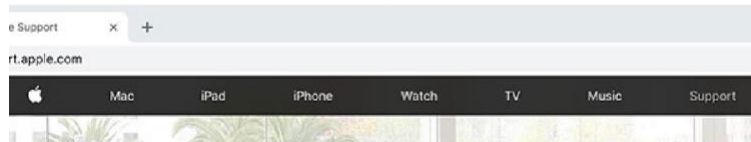


And I just happen to have some icons here. This example is from the Nielsen Norman group's website, and it's a doozy! Look at these icons. What do they mean? Well, the first one probably means Wi-Fi. It's pretty easy. But what about the rest? That second one looks like, I don't know, is that a doctor? I don't even know what that is. The third one is a briefcase. Is it contact your lawyer? I don't know. The fourth one is a library. Are you selling books? And the fifth one? I am completely baffled. Is it a rocking chair talking to me? I don't understand. And if I have to click on it or go, I don't know what that is. Do I really want to click on it? It's not intuitive.

## Mortal sins for web design

**Mortal sins for web design**

- Not designing for those with disabilities
- Images/graphics with no ALT text
- Using flashing graphics that might cause seizures
- Using color to convey meaning
- Not enough contrast between foreground and background colors



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**Slide Notes:**

One of a major issues I see is not designing for those with disabilities. In a future module, one of the viewing items is an introduction to accessibility created by ASU's digital accessibility expert, Kathy Marks. I mention those with disabilities, but also our aging population.

Jeff Johnson from USF gave a talk at the 2019 User Experience Professionals Association Conference in Scottsdale. In this talk, he gave some information that really shocked me: Those over 50 years of age are adopting technology at a huge pace. He had some stats from 2016 so you know, in this year, it's gone up considerably. Those 51-59 are at more than 80%. That means 80% have adopted technology. 60-69 are at about 75%, and those 70-87 is 60%. Why am I mentioning this? Well, as we age -- and I know this waaaay too much -- the body changes. Things like illegible text, confusing navigation wording, icons that don't make sense... these are usability issues.

Images and graphics must have what we call ALT text and this is added in the image tag and it's what is "read" to a user using assistive technology such as a screen reader. It gives someone with low vision or no vision an idea of what is contained in that image.

I see this a lot but not as much since flash kind of went the way of the dinosaurs on the web, but using flashing graphics, believe it or not, can cause seizures. Depending on the frame rate of the graphic or, for example, Flash element if there's are still around, a Flash element, it can cause seizures in some people, especially those with vestibular issues or epilepsy.

Designers love color, and there is a tendency to use it to convey meaning or to draw the user's eye. However, for those who are colorblind, this may not work. In addition, those using a screen reader will not see the emphasis because screen readers ignore things like color.

You need to have enough contrast between the foreground and the background colors. Too little contrast means that text will be difficult to read, and for those who are colorblind, it may be impossible to read. If you have red text on a gray background... let's say on a medium gray background, those who are red-green colorblind are going to see medium gray text on a medium gray background. And guess what? That's not legible.

A good example of this is, believe it or not, from the Apple website. You can see the navigation - Mac, iPad, iPhone, Watch, TV, Music - and they have it on Support page. Support is very, very... it's a very, very, very small difference in, believe it or not, that is gray. So basically we've gone from white to light gray. That's not really enough... first of all, enough contrast for someone with aging eyes to see that they are on the Support page. Also it's a light gray but it's leaning towards medium, and that may be hard for some people to see. And that is an indication of what page you are on, so it's not good... It's not good usability there, Apple. I'm kind of disappointed.

## Mortal sins for web design

**Mortal sins for web design**

- Navigation matches organization's needs, not users' needs
- Mystery meat navigation!
- Navigation labels not intuitive
- Placement of navigation is not intuitive

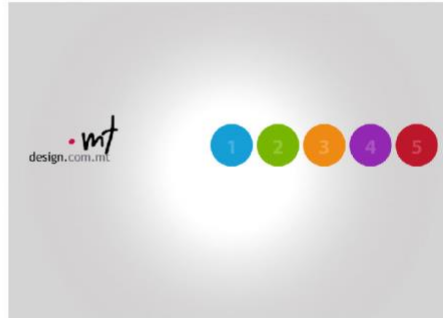


Image source:  
<http://gigi.nullneuron.net/gigilabs/on-mystery-meat-navigation-and-unusability>

Source: <http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/does-my-web-site-suck/>

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**GIT 542: Usability and User Experience**

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**Slide Notes :**

Business owners seem to gravitate to a navigation scheme that makes sense to them, which is normally how the business operates. However, you should never make a user have to know your organizational chart in order to navigate the site. That does not meet the user's needs.

And too many sites out there have mystery meat navigation. This was coined by Vincent Flanders. It's navigation that makes no sense and often employs images. You have no idea what is clickable. And this awesome example shows you mystery meat navigation. There's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. What does that mean? What does 1 stand for? What does 2 stand for? 3, 4, 5? They may have thought they were being cute and different, but how do people know where to click and what to click to? And what does 1 mean? What does 5 mean? The navigation needs to be obvious to the user. What's the name of one of our books? Don't Make Me Think!

Along the lines of mystery meat, the words being used for navigation need to make sense. There's a pizza place in Arizona named Oregano's. They use the phrase on their site "Our Joints" for locations. It's cute and funny, but it's not intuitive. How about just Locations?

Where the navigation is on the screen also has to be intuitive. Normally it's across the top, either above or below what we call the header, which is where the branding is, or along the left side. If you don't place it in an area where the user expect to see it, they may completely miss it.

Mortal sins for web design

## Mortal sins for web design

- Non-link text is underlined
- Dead links!
- Links are not clearly labeled or intuitive

Source: <http://www.webpagethatsuck.com/does-my-web-site-suck/>

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Slide Notes :

Links are another area that can be of concern. You should never underline text that is not a link, and this includes headings. This is what we call a convention; users have learned that when they see underlined text, it must be a link.

You don't want any dead links. That's a big no-no! Check all links before launching a site. And any links going to outside sites also should be checked regularly, as websites come and go all the time.

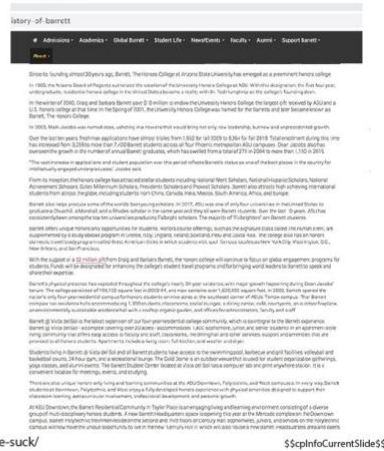
Links should be clearly labeled and intuitive. Several years ago, designers started to not underline links. It's a design decision, and that's fine; however, it needs to be obvious to the user that a word or phrase is a link. And don't rely on color. I mentioned earlier about those who are colorblind may not be able to see subtle color changes.

In addition, the links need to be labeled properly. "Click here," which I see a lot of - "click here" or "read more" - just doesn't do it. You need to see if you're going to use the Read More... "Read more about this article," whatever that article is - "Read more about the mortal sins for web design."

## Mortal sins for web design

## Mortal sins for web design

- More than one idea or topic in paragraph
- No headings to break up "sea of gray"

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Slide Notes:

When we're talking about textual content, so this is just text on the page, each paragraph of text should highlight one topic or idea. If there's more than one topic in a paragraph, it should be split into two.

Also, you want to break up large chunks of text. This is what I call the sea of gray - I think I mentioned it on an earlier slide, it's just where it's text and text and text and text, oh my goodness! - I do not want to read all of this on a screen. If you break up the text with headings, it causes... it has two good effects. Good UX effects. It allows the user to scan the headings and zero on what interests them. It also gives the user's eye a break. White space is your friend!

Mortal sins for web design

## Mortal sins for web design

- Text content is too wide
- Text content is illegible
- Text is full of jargon and/or acronyms
- TOO MUCH TEXT CONTENT IN ALL CAPS



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Text Caption : Image source: <https://uxplanet.org/10-tips-on-typography-in-web-design-13a378f4aa0d>

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Slide Notes:

Continuing on with text: In the age of responsive design, there's a tendency today to design for mobile first, which I completely agree with!

However, there is also a tendency to use the mobile design and then just make it bigger for the desktop design. What happens then is images and text will expand... it will expand to the length of the display. When you're talking about text on a mobile device, that's fine. But if you're looking at it on a 27-inch monitor, if that text goes all the way across the screen, it's a strain on the eyes.

Text needs to be legible. Illegible text can be text that is too small to read or too large. This also includes using fonts that are hard to read, such as decorative fonts. They make look nice on a larger heading, but when you drop them down in font size and use it as body text, users won't be able to read the content easily.

Realize that unless this is an internal site, meaning it's accessed by employees, users aren't going to know the technical jargon or acronyms. ASU is notorious for acronyms. What does FSE



mean to you? You may realize it's Fulton Schools of Engineering, and you may not. Think about prospective students. They'll have no idea what it means.

And just as netiquette says writing in all caps is shouting, when you're sending an email or on social media, it's shouting and really annoying on web pages. It's also distracting and hard to read.

Mortal sins for web design

## Mortal sins for web design

- Content is not organized to enable users to complete tasks
- Content is not engaging or useful
- Content is written as “brochureware”
- Bad grammar or typo's or missssspellings!

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## GIT 542: Usability and User Experience



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### Slide Notes:

I just talked about text but there's more to website content or even print content, brochure content whatever... there's more to it than just text. There's also images on the web. There's also video content. The number one job is to help the users accomplish their tasks. If it is haphazardly organized, this will slow down users and frustrate them and they may end up leaving and not coming back.

Also, just because the business owner thinks certain content needs to be on a page doesn't really mean it really needs to be there. Content should be useful to users.

Also, there's tendency in web design for business owners to hand a web designer their brochure or another print product and tell the designer to put it on the web. Web content is very, very different from content for a brochure or print campaign. Users skim. They do not read. Users read about 20% of the words on a screen. So you need to cull down that content to the most important information.

ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS PROOFREAD CONTENT! YES, That's me using all caps in the slide notes because it's that important! In addition to a professional design, typos and bad grammar can kill credibility. Users will think “if you can't be bothered to proofread your content, what other corners do you cut?”. And don't just use spell check. That can't catch everything.

And one thing I want to point out: I mentioned that content can be text or videos. Many times, that's where typos and misspellings happen. So don't just read the text on the page; read anything that is in the image, read anything that is in a video, read anything that is in a PDF that you are linking to.

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GIT 542: Usability and User Experience

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Text Caption : Lecture: Web Design Tips

Slide Notes:

This concludes the Web Design Tips lecture, but there are many, many more no-no's for websites that we'll cover throughout the rest of the course. These are things that can drastically affect user experience. Keep these tips in mind as you complete your heuristic evaluation assignment.