

## ... BECAUSE ITS NAVIGATION IS OVERWHELMING

**W**e get it. You have a huge website with lots of pages.

But here's a little known internet fact: there's no law saying your top navigation menu has to contain a link to every single page on your site.

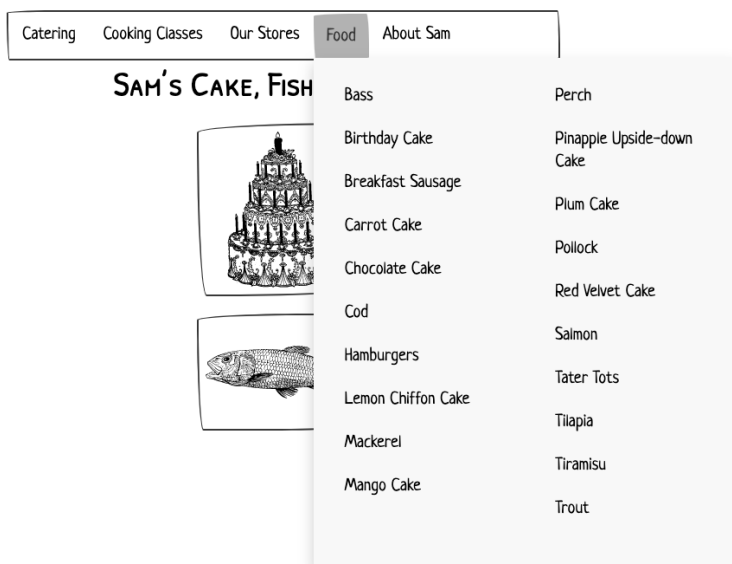
If anything, there's a general principle that says it shouldn't.

I seek out your navigation because I want to get a sense of what's available on your site, or because I already know what I'm looking for and I want to access it.

In either case, the ideal experience is being presented with a handful of options, one of which seems to be what I'm looking for.

If it requires more than one click to reach my destination, that's not a problem—as long as figuring out what to click is easy every step of the way.

A giant list of options, on the other hand, does not inspire confidence. Instead, it elicits confusion and overwhelm. It asks me to work.



I can scan for the exact word I'm looking for, but there's no guarantee that a word on the screen will match the word in my head.

So I might have to scan several times, then start over at the top, reading each option, one by one, to decide if it's relevant to my intention. (This is assuming I even remember what I was looking for after 20 seconds of staring at a screen full of text.)

On a good day, I might have the patience for this task. Or I might opt out of using the navigation bar, but continue to look for what I want using search or on-page links.

But most likely I'll stare for a few seconds, shake my head, and close the tab. Off to pursue less painful endeavors.

### Here's how to fix it

The guiding principle here is "make the next click easy."

If your top-level navigation has 8+ items, eliminate as many as possible. This will make it a lot easier for visitors to figure out which one to click.

If that means using dropdown navigation, that's fine!

But if one of your dropdowns has 8+ items, again: eliminate as many as possible, so it's easier for visitors to figure out which one to click.

If that means linking to category pages, that's fine! Category pages are a great way to organize content-heavy websites. And if you sell a dozen different cakes, ten kinds of fish, and an assortment of other edible items, there's no need to jumble them all together in a dropdown. Just provide links to browse cakes, fish, or other foods.



It might take a few clicks to find the exact page they're looking for, and that's not a problem. Nobody minds a few clicks as long as they feel confident they're headed in the right direction.