

Website Usability Checklist

1. Adequate text-to-background contrast

Eyes and monitors vary widely so we should try to use colors that produce enough contrast to enhance readability.

Can you read this?

How about this?

This is a lot better.

2. Font size/spacing

Font should be very easy to read; space between letters and words can make a huge difference in the readability of your page. Both of the fonts below are acceptable for this.

This sentence is written in Verdana.

This sentence is written in Arial.

3. Images have appropriate alt tags

Alt tags are used by sight-impaired visitors in addition to search engines in order to understand your website. Alt tags provide an alternative way of displaying information for non-text media. The alternative explanation should be descriptive and related to the media it portrays.

4. Home-page is easily digestible

A visitor should be able to figure out what your website is about fairly quickly. If your website's message is unclear, it will take much more time and a user will be likely to leave.

5. Clear path to company information (about)

Users should be able to easily find out about your organization and its purposes. This means that the "About" link should be obvious to the user. Also, the content in the about section should contain information that reflects organization values and clarifies any misconceptions.

6. Clear path to contact information

Users will have questions or comments; there is no getting around this. Contact information should always be readily available and not difficult to find. If your organization is only available during certain hours, make that information known. Also, keep multiple mediums of communication possible (email, comments, etc.).

7. Main navigation is easy to identify

The main navigation needs to be easy to find, read, and use. Users rely on the navigation to browse websites; if it isn't clear, a user can't find what they need and will go somewhere else.

8. Navigation labels are clear/concise

Navigation links don't need to be very long to convey a point. "Contact Us" is a great substitute for "Reach Out to us Online".

9. Number of buttons/links is reasonable

People can only process so much information at a time. In fact, the rule of 7 plus/minus 3 states that people will remember at least 4 things and up to at most 10 things regarding a particular topic they are viewing. It is best practice to have around 4-6 items in a list. Too many buttons/links can create noise on the page and take away from the overall message.

10. Company logo links to home page

Most users expect logos to link to the home page. When you link your logo to the home page it ensures a consistent web experience. It also enables users to navigate your website easier by allowing them an easy method to start over.

11. Links are consistent/easy to identify

A good practice for links is to make them blue and underlined. Most users expect links to follow this format (it's the way the web has worked for decades). If links are one style on a page but another style on a different page, it may lead to confusion for the user.

12. Major headings are clear and descriptive

Studies have shown that users don't read webpages; they actually skim more often than not. When your major headings are clear and descriptive a user can scan a page for useful information more quickly. Information should be chunked in ways that makes sense and is consistent.

13. Critical content above the fold (within initial page view)

The most important information on your webpage should be within the top half of the site. This makes it so that users won't have to scroll down to find information. Also, a user shouldn't have to horizontally scroll to find anything.

14. Styles and colors are consistent

Users can become confused if a website's style changes from page to page. If you use a certain style for headers in one part of the website, that same style should be used for headers in other parts of the website. Sometimes colors are used to express meaning, if this being done, the color's meaning should remain the same throughout the site.

15. URLs are meaningful and user friendly

The URLs on your page should give the user a clue as to what page he or she is going to. Avoid using ambiguous labels such as "Click Here" or

"Check out this link". All URLs should be descriptive and accurate to help users and to enhance search engine rankings.

16.HTML page titles are explanatory

The page title needs to be descriptive of the page itself. An accurate description of your page in the title tag will enable easier retrieval by search engines. People will be more likely to find your page if it is correctly identified and labeled in the title.