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Don't Make Me Think Chapter 1

The first law of usability when it comes to building a website is "don't make me think!". The web page should be obvious and self-explanatory so that anyone can look at it and know what it is. The user should be able to easily navigate the website without asking many questions and stopping to think.

There are many things on a web page that can make us stop and think unnecessarily. For examples, names and terminology can be the difference between obvious and obscure. If one were to head to a website to look for a job, the terms can make a big difference. The term "Jobs" is easy to understand, while "Employment Opportunities" is a little harder to understand. Finally, something like "Job-o-Rama" is obscure and can be missed.

Another example is the visual element of a button. It shouldn't even take a second of thought as to whether something is clickable. It should be clean and precise and not make the user think at all.

The final example is with the navigation, or search tool. The user should not have to think about *how* they have to search for a particular item. Most bookstore websites have a quick search with an additional drop down menu. This causes a second of thinking, whether the user should have to use the drop down menu as well. Then they interact with the menu and see that there are options such as, "Title", "Author", and "Keyword". All of this can seem like a simple process, but it adds up to many question marks and makes the user think.

An example of a good interface is Amazon, which supplies a simple search bar, and does not make the user think about *how* to search. They just start typing and search, without thinking - similar to a Google search.

In conclusion, a website should be self-evident, and if it is complicated, should at least be self-explanatory. It should not make us confused on things that don't matter - which wastes our time and energy. Most people will not spend as much time looking at web pages, and so, they must be understandable at a glance.