

# ***The Structure Behind the Pizzazz: Web and Online Document Usability***

## ***Objectives***

- Understand how to organize material for ease of use
- Explore the role of graphics, animation, sound, and other non-document enhancement to text-based material
- Understand what makes a “good” site
- Understand current standards, and how these are evolving
- Define and measure usability online
- Review the latest in usability research for online materials

## ***Online Usability: The Problems***

- A screen is not a book
- The wealth of methodologies, tools, and products can be overwhelming
- Sizing and budgeting can be overwhelming
- Poor online systems are harder to use than poor manuals

## ***What Works***

- Providing products
- Providing useful, easy-to-find information (product lists and prices, job listings, directions, reference information)
- Providing education (tutorials, product walkthroughs, reference material)
- Providing services (frequently asked questions, product releases, troubleshooting)
- Providing entertainment

## ***What Doesn't***

- Text, text, text (except for search & print capability)
- Tables & complex technical documents
- Abstract information
- Information that requires physical or personal context
- Requirements too high-end for the average viewer

## ***Useable Design is Key***

- Logical sequence of information
- Easy access to information (“wide” rather than “deep” design)
- Multiple paths to information
- Clear, consistent screen design
- Simple, consistent navigation techniques
- Short, readable screens



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- Consistent context, palette, and metaphor
- Effective, appropriate graphics
- Effective use of visual effects, animation, and sound

## *A Usable Site Should...*

- Seem intuitive
- Use common metaphors appropriately
- Use common tools in an expected manner
- Make users feel smart
- Give users a sense of control
- Dare to be dull

## *Testing the Site*

- Designing tasks for usability testing
  - can users go right to what they want?
  - can users dig out the facts from the depths of the site?
  - can they use your links effectively?
- Designing tasks for image success
  - how do users perceive the site?
  - how often do they come back?

## *The Ultimate Test*

- The great usability lab: [www.your.site.com](http://www.your.site.com)
- Tracking your users
  - sales
  - inquiries
  - repeat visits
  - increased visits
  - requests for help
- Direct feedback from users

## *Further Research*

<http://www.extempo.com/> intelligent agent engine

<http://www.hotbot.com/> articles & info

<http://www.intuit.com/> site for Quicken

<http://www.media.mit.edu/ttt/> Things That Think project



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## Standards

Use white space to emphasize and organize material.

Use color, spatial orientation, and highlighting to create consistent patterns for text, feedback, user entry, and important points.

Avoid use of red and green together, as color-blind individuals cannot differentiate between them.

Use upper and lower case letters, and standard punctuation.

Keep font size between 12 and 18 point for maximum readability.

Keep line length consistent within a screen and limit lines to 40-50 characters per line where possible.

Organize your screens to contain logical chunks of information. Try to minimize scrolling.

Use visual images wherever possible.

Use examples wherever possible.

Keep navigation aids visible as much as possible.

Provide ability to link to relevant material whenever possible.

Layer information to make the most information available with the fewest jumps.

Keep numbers of steps to a minimum.

Provide consistent guideposts for the user.

Break rules when necessary.



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## *Writing for Online Applications*

Use short, clear sentences and paragraphs.

Use present tense, active voice.

Avoid multiple adjectives.

Use dynamic verbs.

Avoid redundancy.

Use transitional phrases to move to new subjects.

Write crisp, active, engaging sentences.

Use consistent terms.

Eschew jargon.

Explain, don't ramble.

Be aware of internationalization issues: length of sentences, idiomatic usage.

Write functionally: To do x, use the y key.

List menu selections in order: From the File menu, select Open.

Avoid quotes, using bold, caps, or italics instead:

From the **File** menu, select **Open**.

Use bold, caps, and italics consistently.



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## *Using Color, Sound, Animation, Video*

### Color can:

- Provide a pleasant environment.
- Give instant content recognition.
- Make an environment easy to use.

### Sound can:

- Add the sense of “real life” activity.
- Focus the user’s attention.
- Add dimension.
- Serve as a cue to perform or revise an action.
- Add positive reinforcement.

### Animation & Video can:

- Demonstrate how to perform a task.
- Show how something works.
- Add positive reinforcement.
- Clarify a complex sequence.
- Add visual interest.

***Remember: Less is more!***



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