

Web Design Principles

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Web Design Principles ranked (R) in order by how many times (#) they were mentioned in Web development literature.

R	#	Principle
1	76	The site must be focussed on the target users
2	48	The screen should contain functional areas such as grouping navigation in a predictable location
3	41	The site layout should remain consistent to allow users to find what they want, confirm they are still on the site, and add polish to the site.
4	40	Keep navigation and design simple
5	39	Content must be easy to find.
6	39	Aim to have all pages load quickly, preferably less than 10 seconds. At most they should load in 30 seconds.
7	37	Edit graphics to get the best balance of quality for size. Crop, translate and resize to end up with all the images on a page adding up to less than 20 to 30Kb.
8	34	The navigation scheme must remain constant throughout the site.
9	32	Make it interesting, keep users engaged.
10	30	Information needs to be broken up into manageable, concise chunks
11	29	All content must be of a high quality
12	28	Avoid unnecessary animations, they can be a distraction for users
13	27	At all times users should know - where they are in the site, where they can go to and how they can get there.
14	27	The future of the Web is "one-to-one" Web sites.
15	26	Make sure the major search engines can find you
16	25	Logo, graphics and layout convey the brand image. Everything should have a purpose and fit with the brand, to create a unique and distinctive look.
17	25	A site must make a good first impression (within the first 4 to 10 seconds)
18	24	Only include graphics that add value and meaning to the site message.
19	23	Pages need to be able to work on a range of browsers, even if this means having an alternative version for some browsers.
20	23	Good headings simplify finding information on a page.
21	23	Many people print pages so keep the page width within normal print boundaries.
22	23	The site must be usable - in other words the site must assist the user to accomplish the tasks that they set out to complete.
23	22	Content must be kept current and updated regularly
24	22	Wherever possible links should be annotated, particularly when linking to large files or special content
25	22	A shallow (less than 3) but broad (8 to 9 choice) hierarchy provides the best navigation.
26	22	All navigation links should be descriptively labelled, clearly visible and understandable.
27	22	Avoid horizontal scrolling and minimise vertical scrolling
28	22	There must be a high colour contrast between text and background
29	22	Give the user control. Do not have anything that cannot be controlled by the user.
30	21	All graphics should have a meaningful ALT tag
31	20	User testing is essential
32	19	Maintain external consistency by adhering to uniform conventions for link colours, layout, navigation, formatting, typefaces, labelling, etc.
33	19	General appearance of a site should be clean, uncluttered and professional
34	18	Colours should be appropriate and carefully selected. Avoid having too many colours. Avoid using very strong colours.
35	18	Concise contact information should be readily available.
36	18	Site content must add value.
37	18	Make sure the site is reliable, free of bugs and breaks and broken links
38	17	Avoid requiring registration to enter the site. If information is required, only ask for what is essential; explain why it is needed and how secure the information will be.
39	16	Maintain internal consistency of style within a page and between pages.
40	16	Use chunking, headings and layout to increase text skimability
41	15	Every page should have a link to your home page.
42	15	Navigation should be obvious. Avoid using underlined text or buttony images that are not links.
43	15	Although scripting can help make a site more dynamic, currently scripting creates more problems than it solves.

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44	15	If you ask for personal information, give an assurance that you will not abuse the information, or let it fall into the wrong hands.
45	14	All important pages should be accessible for users with disabilities.
46	13	Identify or highlight new or recently changed content.
47	13	Pages should include revision dates
48	13	Make sure there is plenty of white space on the page.
49	13	An effective metaphor adds familiarity to a web site
50	13	Make full (but appropriate) use of META tags
51	13	Make use of the special strength of hypertext.
52	13	Use free give aways as a promotion option
53	13	Web pages must communicate visually
54	12	DO NOT use all capital letters
55	12	Text must be readable (big and clear enough)
56	11	A text version, perhaps on an alternate layout, is needed where meaning is encoded in graphics or audio.
57	11	Animation can be used for highlighting important functional areas
58	11	Provide a table of contents as a navigation option
59	11	All navigation should have a text alternative
60	11	Each page should be free of spelling and grammatical errors
61	11	Careful use of audio can be used to provide atmosphere or to add another sensory channel for the user
62	10	Light backgrounds are better than dark backgrounds
63	10	Users must be able to have control of any multimedia on the site. They should also be able to choose whether they want too view it or not.
64	10	The homepage should clearly indicate the purpose of the site
65	10	All pages should have a carefully written title that matches the page contents and preferably contains company name and clear definition for bookmarking.
66	10	Offer Navigational options/alternatives
67	10	Only use fonts likely to be installed on the users computers and preferably the default font.
68	9	There are 216 colours that look good on a variety of platforms and monitors, called web safe colours.
69	9	Pages should not contain jargon
70	9	Original content is important.
71	9	If image maps are used they should fit on one screen, have clearly defined areas that support navigation and load quickly
72	9	Provide a search function on the web site
73	9	Users should be able to find what they are looking for in your site within three clicks
74	9	Provide adequate support within the system as well as a helpdesk.
75	9	Line length should be less than 450pixels / 9 to 15 words per line / 40 to 60 characters
76	9	Make sure the site can be viewed on several platforms
77	8	Author information should appear on all content pages
78	8	Use small video (multimedia) content and then only when it provides extra value to a site.
79	7	Navigation options should be grouped together on the left or top of the page.
80	7	Use quickloading thumbnail images linked to larger images, giving the user the opportunity to view the larger image if required.
81	7	Avoid using frames
82	7	Use frames only when they provide a distinct advantage such as high change content or to keep content and navigation separate
83	7	Pages should use only 2 to 3 type styles, avoid italics and do not use all bold text.
84	6	Pages need to be formatted to allow screen readers to read them
85	6	A mission statement is a good idea but it should be something that can be linked to so visitors can decide for themselves whether they want to read it.
86	6	Promote the site offline and online
87	6	Ensure product pricing is accessible.
88	6	Don't use Under Construction signs
89	6	Encourage user feedback
90	6	Site analysis (site statistics, site rating) should be used to improve effectiveness.
91	5	Animation can be used for illustration and explanation
92	5	Avoid textured backgrounds
93	5	Make sure products are simple to find and compare
94	5	Contact information should include a physical address
95	5	Each page must be self contained.
96	5	All graphics should have height and width tags

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97	5	Provide a site map as a navigation option
98	5	Use testimonials as a promotion option
99	5	Optimise HTML
100	5	Include the home URL so printed pages identify the source
101	5	Avoid numerous columns but use columns to keep text no wider than a reader's comfortable eye span.
102	4	If a site requires extra software, it should be clearly explained and links and download instructions should be available for download.
103	4	A site should look good and be functional on a low resolution monitor with 256 colours.
104	4	Scripting requires a recent browser.
105	4	A web site must be constantly changing
106	4	Copyright statements should appear on every page
107	4	Error messages should be in clear and offer solutions.
108	4	Use external links rather than duplicating information
109	4	Long web pages require a link to the top of the page
110	4	Use contests as a promotion option
111	4	Users click on the first link that seems worth following, rather than looking through the whole page and making an informed choice
112	4	Make sure the first page loads quickly
113	4	The site should still be functional for users with 14.4 and 28.8 modems
114	4	Splash screens should load quickly, and establish the visual design and identify the purpose of the site.
115	4	Allow for international differences with money, date formats and time, and be consistent.
116	4	The home URL should be the root domain of all pages. It should be easy to remember and find.
117	3	Banner advertising gives the impression of focussing on sales.
118	3	Background images should be small, around 100,00 square pixels.
119	3	Include a FAQ section (frequently asked questions)
120	3	Pages should have a link to the main topic pages on the site.
121	3	Style sheets simplify site modification
122	3	Align text to the left and use centred text only it's needed.
123	3	A site must be convenient to use
124	2	Users quickly learn to ignore advertising on a web page.
125	2	Use discussion lists as a promotion option
126	2	Avoid using sound files
127	2	Make sure your site is linked to from many places
128	2	The quality of the site infrastructure is as important as the content
129	2	Do not use "borrowed" content
130	1	If the website collects or holds sensitive information, the site should be secure.