

The Simplify Company

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DESIGNING WEBSITES THAT WORK

A Guidelines Checklist

CONTENT

- The content of the web site provides value to the user.
- The writing supports the reader's task.
- The user is not required to read or navigate through irrelevant material to reach relevant material.
- The text includes a call to action.
- The reader interacts with the text as much as possible.
- The information is accurate, authoritative, and up to date.
- The information will be easy to maintain.
- Items that need to be regularly updated have been documented.

READABILITY

- The text is comprehensible and targeted at the right reading level.
- Sentences are short, direct, concrete, and active.
- New information is grounded in known information.
- Text is in lay language, avoiding jargon, insider references, and obscure humor.

LEGIBILITY

- The typeface is legible and the font size is sufficient.
- Italics are avoided except at large sizes.
- Boldface and all caps are only used for short pieces of text. (Boldface is preferred over all caps.)
- Text has sufficient contrast with the background color and is not placed over a conflicting pattern.

SCANNABILITY

- Emphasis is provided with appropriate headings, lead-ins, and pull quotes.
- Opening sentences and paragraphs summarize the content.
- Text is short, simple, and concise.
- Text is specific and objective.
- Text is broken into useful chunks and bulleted lists.

ORIENTATION

- Page titles provide useful orienting clues. Headings match the reader's goals.
- Readers know where they are and what each page is about.

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PAGINATION

- The text is divided between pages based on user tasks (i.e., pages are divided so users can skip portions irrelevant to them).
- If scrolling is required, the user has appropriate cues within the text that more material is present, and horizontal rules are avoided
- Pages are self-explanatory: each page stands on its own.

TECHNIQUE

- Fundamentals are sound: grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Tone is natural and accessible
- Style is consistent.
- Terminology is unambiguous
- Active sentences are used.

LINKS

- Static text is never blue or underlined.
- Text links are left in the default color.
- Different types of links are distinguished graphically (e.g., audio clips vs. video clips).
- Link text is descriptive and specific.
- Email links explicitly show the email address.
- Links don't cross punctuation or line breaks.

FORMS

- The order of steps through the form is clear.
- Submit buttons are clearly labeled with descriptive text.
- Reset buttons are avoided.
- Required fields are clearly labeled.

META TEXT

- Metatag description and keywords are provided for each page.
- Non-body text is specific and consistent: titles, ALT text, captions, headings, and buttons.

WRITING FOR SCREEN READERS

- Text is concise.
- The top of the page contains meaningful, page-specific information.
- Link names are self-explanatory.

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FORMAT

- The layout does not depend on a specific typeface or font size.
- The specified typeface works well on all platforms.
- The default font size of the browser is used.
- Semantic tags, rather than format tags, are used wherever possible.
- Text aligns with graphics on the page and with other text blocks.
- All centered text on the page is centered around one axis of symmetry.
- Related text doesn't appear in multiple columns.
- Headings are closer to their body text than to other text on the screen.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- The copyright notice is present and in the correct format.
- Trademarks and service marks follow corporate standards.
- Company branding is strictly adhered to.
- No information is confidential or sensitive.