

Ten Website Usability Principles to Embrace

1. **Keep the design simple and uncluttered**

Learn from Picasso's observation "It took me all my life to learn to paint like a child". Leave plenty of white space and err on the side of functionality rather than looks. Do not place too many elements on any one page and avoid distracting users with flashing signs and rotating banners unless you know that's what they want.

2. **Use headings and words your target audience will understand**

Organise the contents of the website so it is logical to your target audience – not just you. Make section names and headings meaningful to them. Use the words and terms your clients and customers use when asking about your information, products or services.

3. **Make text legible and easy on the eye**

Use as large a font size as you reasonably can and use one that's easy to read. Keep each line of text a comfortable length so the eye can easily pick up each new line. Avoid using any background colours, shading or effect that could be distracting.

4. **Ensure users can find information fast**

Don't overwhelm users with menu choices and make it easy for them to see and remember what's behind each menu item. Keep the number of mouse clicks to any information to three or less. Don't have a splash page or open with animations. Avoid using high resolution images and large mastheads on pages. Provide a site search and a sitemap.

5. **Make important features easy to see**

Position features or headings that users want to see and/or you want them to see in the most obvious place on the page and make sure they stand out on the page. Don't make users scroll on the home page (screen resolution 1024x768). Don't rely on icons or graphic features as the key to navigation – your users may not know what they are or remember what they stand for.

6. **Always let users know where they are in the site**

Give each page a clear heading and make the hierarchy of headings clear. Show them the path they took to get where they are and allow them to retrace their steps. Provide a Home button and a link to the sitemap on every page.

7. **Make sure interactive features are easy to use**

If providing videos, audio or animations make sure they are easy to use and avoid making users download plug-ins. Make sure any forms, PDFs, hyperlinks, e-commerce provisions, subscription features are easy for your target audience to use and have adequate instructions.

8. **Make your site accessible to everyone**

Consider providing a text-only version of the site if most of your target audience have slow connections. Test the site with browsers other than Internet Explorer and make sure it complies as far as practicable with disability guidelines as set by the World Wide Web Consortium – see www.w3c.org

9. **Be consistent - beware the dog's breakfast!**

Keep a consistent look and feel for font styles and heading styles, page layout and colour schemes and forms. Make sure terms used, descriptions and headings are the same throughout the site. Keep navigation menus and key elements (eg the site search) in the same place on every page.



10. **If nothing else, always put yourself in the shoes of the user.**

Put yourself in the shoes of the users of your website: think like them; look at every aspect of your website from their perspective; ask users what they want on your website and how they want to interact with you online. If your users love your website, so will you. The reverse is rarely true.

Let us evaluate your website using our WebCollie test –
the expert, independent round up of your website

Visit our website for more about WebCollie and the website advice, workshops and assistance we provide.

www.unitedfocus.com.au

stevensmith@unitedfocus.com.au

amandajarman@unitedfocus.com.au