



Knowledge to lead

Improving the usability of a website

Step by Step

1. Explain visitors the purpose of your website, either on your homepage or on an "About" page.
2. Delete big graphics and flash movies, as they make download time longer.
3. Create a sitemap, which visitors can use to quickly find the page of their interest, and also to get an overall idea of the website.
4. Make your website easy to read. Be aware that reading from the computer screen tires the eyes. Hence, it is crucial to keep the font size big enough, and to make colors contrast nicely. Use clear and simple language and limit paragraph length.
5. Make navigation consistent, as well from page to page as from section to section.
6. Test your website using different browsers and making sure that all links you added work properly. To test your website you might also ask some representative users, such as employees for an intranet or students for a university site, to perform some tasks. Crucial is to test users on an individual basis and to let them solve problems on their own, without helping them. Watching what they do, and checking if they can find the right page quickly is more useful than asking their opinion on the website.
7. Start testing your website early in the design process. If you are about to start a new design for your website, test the old one, whose good parts you might keep. Make paper prototypes of new design ideas and test them. Once you have implemented the new design, test it again, as subtle usability problems may have arisen during implementation.



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