

# Web Site Best Practices Part 2

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# Five Core Questions

1. What is this organization about?
2. What is this web site about?
3. How do I find what I'm looking for?
4. What can I do next?
5. How can I get back to where I was?

# Usability.gov

# Usability.gov guidelines scoring

## Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Current Research-Based Guidelines on Web Design and Usability Issues



[www.usability.gov/pdfs/relscore.html](http://www.usability.gov/pdfs/relscore.html)

[Home: Guidelines](#)

### Guidelines Sorting Tool

Developed in Partnership with AARP's [Older Wiser Wired Initiative](#)

Sort the HHS *Guidelines* by clicking on any of these headers: Chapter, Title, Relative Importance, Strength of Evidence, and Relative Score. To learn more, visit [How to Use the Guidelines Sorting Tool Most Effectively](#).

#### Guidelines by Relative Score

Chapter	Title	Relative Importance	Strength of Evidence	Relative Score
1:2	<a href="#">Use an Iterative Design Approach</a>	●●●●●	●●●●●	25
1:4	<a href="#">Provide Useful Content</a>	●●●●●	●●●●●	25
11:1	<a href="#">Use Black Text on Plain, High-Contrast Backgrounds</a>	●●●●●	●●●●●	25
11:2	<a href="#">Ensure Visual Consistency</a>	●●●●●	●●●●●	25
10:1	<a href="#">Provide Consistent Clickability Cues</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
9:1	<a href="#">Use Clear Category Labels</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
17:2	<a href="#">Ensure Usable Search Results</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
5:2	<a href="#">Ensure the Homepage Looks like a Homepage</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
3:4	<a href="#">Do Not Use Color Alone to Convey Information</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
8:1	<a href="#">Eliminate Horizontal Scrolling</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
17:3	<a href="#">Allow Simple Searches</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
5:1	<a href="#">Create a Positive First Impression of Your Site</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
16:1	<a href="#">Organize Information Clearly</a>	●●●●●	●●●●○	20
2:5	<a href="#">Standardize Task Sequences</a>	●●●●○	●●●●●	20

# #1 Best Practice usability.gov

<b>18:1 Use an Iterative Design Approach</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>Usability Testing</b>
<p><b>Guideline:</b> Develop and test prototypes through an iterative design approach to create the most useful and usable Web site.</p> <p><b>Comments:</b> Iterative design consists of creating paper or computer prototypes, testing the prototypes, and then making changes based on the test results. The 'test and make changes' process is repeated until the Web site meets performance benchmarks (usability goals). When these goals are met, the iterative process ends.</p> <p>The iterative design process helps to substantially improve the usability of Web sites. One recent study found that the improvements made between the original Web site and the redesigned Web site resulted in thirty percent more task completions, twenty-five percent less time to complete the tasks, and sixty-seven percent greater user satisfaction. A second study reported that eight of ten tasks were performed faster on the Web site that had been iteratively designed. Finally, a third study found that forty-six percent of the original set of issues were resolved by making design changes to the interface.</p> <p><b>Sources:</b> Badre, 2002; Bailey, 1993; Bailey and Wolfson, 2005; Bradley and Johnk, 1995; Egan, et al., 1989; Hong, et al., 2001; Jeffries, et al., 1991; Karat, Campbell, and Fiegel, 1992; LeDoux, Connor and Tullis, 2005; Norman and Murphy, 2004; Redish and Dumas, 1993; Tan, et al., 2001.</p>	<p><b>Relative Importance:</b> 1 2 3 4 0</p> <p><b>Strength of Evidence:</b> 1 2 3 4 5</p>	

## 1:1 Provide Useful Content

**Guideline:** Provide content that is engaging, relevant, and appropriate to the audience.

**Comments:** Content is the information provided on a Web site. Do not waste resources providing easy access and good usability to the wrong content. One study found that content is the most critical element of a Web site. Other studies have reported that content is more important than navigation, visual design, functionality, and interactivity.

**Sources:** Asher, 1980; Badre, 2002; Baldwin, Peleg-Bruckner and McClintock, 1985; Celsi and Olson, 1988; Evans, 1998; Levine, 1996; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Nielsen, 1997b; Nielsen, 2000; Rajani and Rosenberg, 1999; Sano, 1996; Sinha, et al., 2001; Spyridakis, 2000; Stevens, 1980.

Relative Importance:

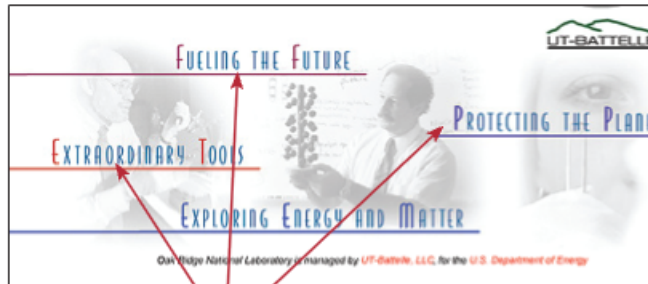
1 2 3 4 5

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 3 4 5

# #5: Consistent clickability cues

Example:

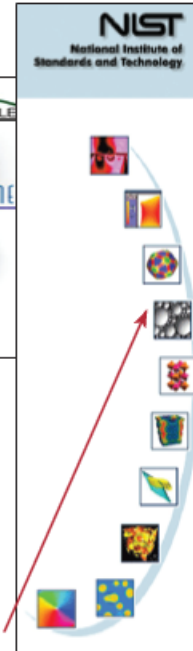


These items appear clickable, but are not. This design may confuse users because the items are underlined and are demonstratively different, and thus attract the users' attention.

This is a good example of misleading the user—blue text and underlined text placed at the top center of the page, and yet none of these are clickable.



Two of these graphics are not clickable—if a user mouses over one of them, they are likely to think that they are all not clickable. If one graphic is clickable, they should all be clickable.



# #9: The use of color

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Accessibility

## 3:3 Do Not Use Color Alone to Convey Information

eg. charts, maps

**Guideline:** Ensure that all information conveyed with color is also available without color.

**Comments:** Never use color as the only indicator for critical activities. About eight percent of males and about one-half of one percent of females have difficulty discriminating colors. Most users with color deficiencies have difficulty seeing colors in the green portion of the spectrum.

To accommodate color-deficient users, designers should:

- Select color combinations that can be discriminated by users with color deficiencies;
- Use tools to see what Web pages will look like when seen by color deficient users;
- Ensure that the lightness contrast between foreground and background colors is high;
- Increase the lightness contrast between colors on either end of the spectrum (e.g., blues and reds); and
- Avoid combining light colors from either end of the spectrum with dark colors from the middle of the spectrum.

**Sources:** Bailey, 1996; Chisholm, Vanderheiden and Jacobs, 1999c; Evans, 1998; Hess, 2000; Levine, 1996; Murch, 1985; Rigden, 1999; Smith and Mosier, 1986; Sullivan and Matson, 2000; Thorell and Smith, 1990; Tullis, 2001; United States Government, 1998; Vischeck, 2003; Wolfmaier, 1999.

Relative Importance: \*

1 2 3 4 5

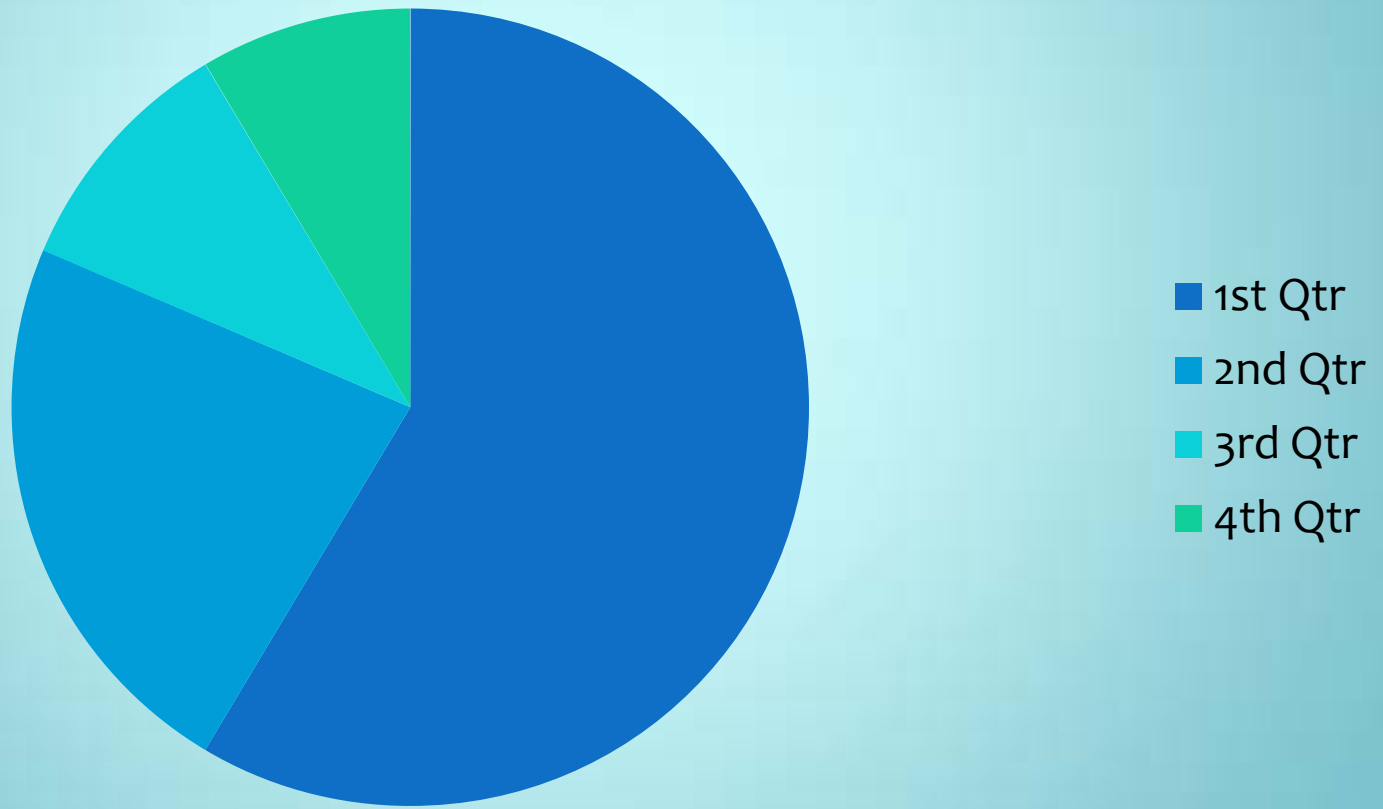
Strength of Evidence:

1 2 3 4 0



# Use of color—DON'T do this

Sales



# Best Practices

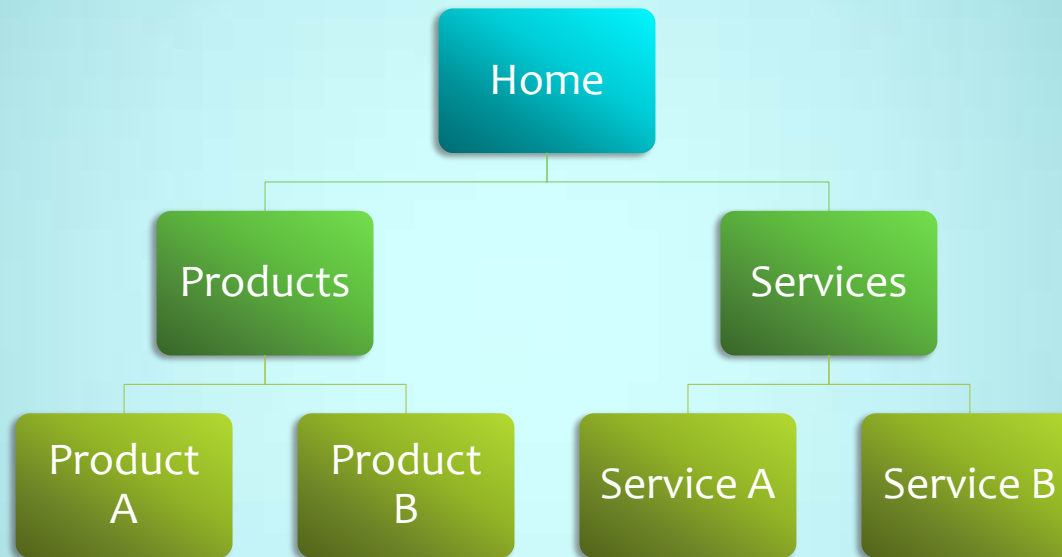
## Strategy

Communicates the purpose of your business and your site

- Tag line that explicitly summarizes what the organization and/or site does
- Value proposition clearly stated
- Name and logo at top / in upper left corner

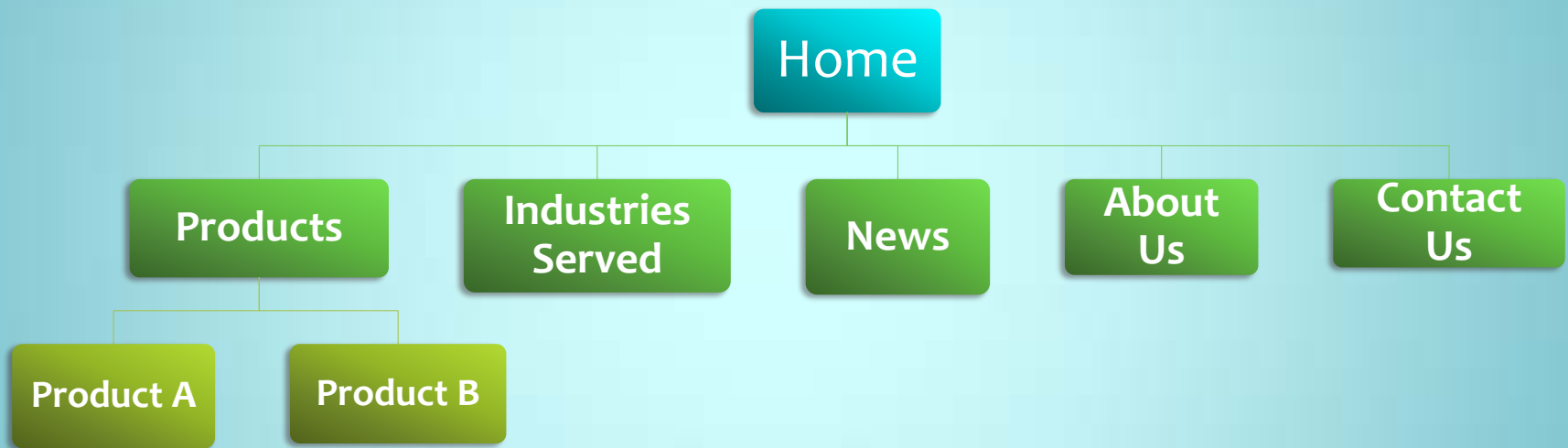
# Best Practices

## Site Structure



**Hierarchy with 2 – 5 levels**

# Typical Site Sections



# Best Practices

## Navigation



**Main navigation *and* local navigation**



**Both are available on every page**



**Deep navigation on home page**

# Best Practices

## Navigation



Navigation links are underlined and in a different color



When you click on a link, you go to content that you expect to see

# Best Practices

## Design

Home page is clearly *different* from other pages, but design is *consistent* throughout site

Looks like a *recent* site, rather than an old, out of date site

Name & logo are in upper left or across top, tagline at top

Site wide navigation across top

Local navigation down left or right side

# Best Practices

## Content

- Subheads
- Bulleted lists
- **Highlighted keywords**
- Short paragraphs
- The inverted pyramid
- A simple writing style
- De-fluffed language devoid of marketese.

--Jakob Nielsen,  
Alertbox



# Measuring Success

Are you achieving your goals?

Is your site easier to use?

Are people spending more time on your site and returning more frequently?

# Resources

Don't Make Me Think, Steve Krug

Jakob Nielsen: [useit.com/alertbox](http://useit.com/alertbox), also numerous books

Usability.gov – covers many best practices for web site usability, with supporting research, (though site needs usability improvements)

Google Analytics: [google.com/analytics](http://google.com/analytics)