



Web Site

Planning, Evaluation,
Development and Design

For

Kairos Prison Ministry

State Chapter Committees, Area Committees
and Advisory Councils

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WEBSITE Planning

Define your users goals.

Questions:

What information do you expect users to want before they find your site?

What additional information do you expect users will want after they enter your site?

WEBSITE Planning and Evaluation Questions

1. Does the landing page(s) provide evidence that the specified user goals can be completed?
2. Is the content that's required to support the specified user goals available where needed?
3. Is the functionality that's required to support the specified user goals available where needed?
4. Are menu category and subcategory names clear and mutually exclusive?
5. Are content and functionality classified logically?
6. Is the wording in hyperlinks and controls clear and informative?
7. Are task flows for the specified user goals efficient?
8. Does site content use language that's easy to understand?
9. Does the site use graphics, icons, and symbols that are easy to understand?
10. Is text legible?
11. Do text formatting and layout support easy scanning?
12. Do layouts use space effectively?
13. Are form fields and interactive elements placed logically in the display?
14. Are interactive elements easily recognizable?
15. Do interactive elements behave as expected?
16. Does the site accommodate users' range of hand-eye coordination?
17. Does the site present privacy and security policies in context?
18. Do location cues orient users?
19. Does site functionality provide clear feedback in response to users' actions?
20. Does the site allow users to reverse completed actions?
21. Is contextual help available where needed?
22. Does the site perform well?

Website Development

1. Define your user's goals as a first step for having a website
 - Advertising
 - Recruiting
 - Volunteer Support
 - Information
 - All of the Above
2. Provide compelling content - provide intuitive reasons for your visitors to return to your site.
3. Make sure each page in your website has something *valuable* to offer.

Website Design

1. **Avoid Cheesy Elements** - Don't distract your visitors with blinking or scrolling text, animated pictures, or auto-loading sound.

- Animation and sounds are distracting.

- Another problem with scrolling text is that the reader can't read it at their own pace.

2. **Don't annoy your visitors with pop-up windows.** **Nobody likes popups!**

3. **Don't use image backgrounds.**

- Image backgrounds scream "amateur", because it's mostly amateurish sites that use them.

- One reason that backgrounds scream "low quality" is because sites that use them are often user-hostile in many other ways as well.

- Image backgrounds take longer to load.

4. **Make it Easy to Find Stuff**

- Put some thought into organization.

- Minimize clicking! Put as few clicks between your visitor and your information as possible. The more you force your visitors to click around your site the more likely they'll abandon it. Even if they don't leave they might get annoyed, or not view as much of your content -- either of which is bad for you.

Bad Example: Is your home page a splash page (a page with no meaningful information on it, that simply "welcomes" visitors to the site, along with an "Enter Site" link)? If so, get rid of it. After someone takes the effort to visit your site, give them your site right away! Don't make them knock on two different doors.

- Along with minimizing clicking, minimize scrolling, too.

5. **Limit page length to 2 screenfuls, or 6-7 screenfuls for articles.**

6. **Include a way to get back to the home page, on every page.**

- When users get lost they like to start over from square one. Make it easy for them to do so. If you're including a clickable logo on the top of every page, make sure to also include text that says something like "Home", because some users don't realize that logos take you back to the home page.

- A well-designed webpage will enable users to get anywhere, from anywhere in 2 clicks.

7. **Include a menu on every page.**

- While you should provide a way for users to get back to your home page quickly, you shouldn't force them to go home before they can go somewhere else. Include a menu on the left or the top of each page.

- Don't put navigation links only at the bottom of pages, because then users will have to scroll down to the bottom to get to them (unless your pages are very short).

8. **Don't use frames.**

- You might be tempted to use frames because it makes it easy to have the same header or menus appear throughout the site. Usability studies do show that users find sites with frames "Easy to Comprehend", "Easy to Navigate", and "Easy to Find Info". But there are two serious downsides to frames: First, the address bar doesn't change as you go from page to page. That makes it impossible for anyone to bookmark or link to a specific page in your site, or to share that page with a friend by emailing them the link. Second, when a page within your site other than the frameset shows up in a search engine, a visitor clicking over to that page will see just that subpage without the surrounding frame.

9. **Don't bog your website down**

- Compress your image files. Nothing is more annoying to readers than waiting for a 200k graphic to load when it should be only 20k instead. As mentioned earlier, don't bog your site down with auto-playing sound files, either.

Bad Example: How many times has someone sent you a picture in an e-mail and when you got it all you could see was the top left corner without scrolling. This picture was huge when it didn't need to be.

- Don't let flashy multimedia ruin your site. Flashy graphics and multimedia controls may look nice, but they're bad when they make it hard for visitors to get the information they want from your site.

10. **Make your website easily readable.**

- No line of text should be more than about 600 pixels wide. The reason that newspapers and magazines are printed in columns is to make the lines short, so after you read one line, it's easy to find the start of next one.

- Don't make your page too wide. Most users have 1024x768 monitors, so pages should be completely visible at 1000 pixels wide without horizontal scrolling. As of 2009, about 10% of users have a screen that's 800x600 pixels or less, so many designers make their pages work at sizes as small as 770 pixels wide. The tradeoff is that if you design for 770 pixels, you're wasting the space available to the other 90% of your visitors. You could use a "fluid" design that's wide as the user's window, whatever that may be, but it's hard to make fluid designs that look good at any resolution.

- Use contrasting colors or simple backgrounds to make your text easy to read. It's hard to read light text on a light background, or dark text on a dark background. There are also some color combinations that don't work.

11. **Make the text large enough to read.**

This should be obvious to even the most casual observer but it's not.

12. **Don't type more than a few words in ALL CAPS.**

- Words that are in ALL CAPS draw attention to themselves because they seem different from the small letters around them. But if you type everything in all caps, then you completely lose the effect, since everything looks the same, so none of it looks important. If you want to draw readers' attention to something, make the headline stand out -- bold, bright color, maybe a little larger -- but keep the text that follows it normal. When everything is important, nothing is important.

13. **Never use more than one exclamation point!**

- Typing several (or worse, a gazillion) exclamation points do not make your text seem any more important than just one. In fact, rather than conveying urgency, what multiple exclamation marks really scream is "Amateurish!" Actually, what they really scream is "Desperate!" The writer is desperate to get the reader to believe something. But think about it: Do exclamation marks really impress you when you read them? Are you more likely to believe something because it has a screaming mark at the end? It's probably the opposite: You're used to desperate marketers trying to sell you something with their exclamation marks, so when you see lots of them you sense that desperation and tend to discount what they're trying to convince you of.

14. **Use a spelling checker.**

- Yes, people who spell poorly may not notice or care that your site is badly misspelled, but literate people may notice and care and they're in the majority.

15. **Use links properly.**

- Don't underline words if they're not links. On the web, something that's underlined is supposed to be a link. If you underline gratuitously, readers will be annoyed when they try to click those underlined words only to discover that they're not really links. If you want to emphasize something, use italics instead (or boldface, or another color).

- Make links blue or underlined, or both. Users expect links in body copy to be blue and underlined; because that's the way they appear on 99% of other websites. What's really wrong is doing neither -- having links that aren't blue and aren't underlined. How are users supposed to know what's a link at that point? Links in menus don't have to be blue or underlined, as long as they're clearly menu items. The blue/underlined tip is for links that are in the middle of the page.

- Explain what you're linking to. When you're able to provide more information about what a link points to, do so. For example, if your site has a Links page, include a short description of each site you link to, say 1-5 sentences. That way visitors have an idea of what's on those sites, which will help them make their decision on whether to visit those sites, and help them find what they're looking for, while avoiding what they're not looking for.

- Use descriptive link text. The text of a link should describe what's being linked to. You should never, ever use words like "link" or "here" or "click here" as the link text. Readers prefer to scan web pages rather than read every word, and you make that impossible if you use generic, non-descriptive words as the link text. Compare the following:

Right way

Check out our [product specials](#), [best sellers](#), and [gift ideas](#).

Wrong way

For product specials click [here](#). For best sellers click [here](#). For gift ideas click [here](#).

16. Be Accessible

- Put your contact info, or a link to it, on the top and/or bottom of every page.
- If you're not printing your phone and/or email anywhere because you don't have the resources to handle inquiries, then do your readers the courtesy of letting them know that, so they don't spend forever hunting in vain for contact info that doesn't exist.
- Unfortunately you can't link up your email address with a simple mailto: link, unless you want lots of spam. That's because SPAM bots are good at stealing such addresses from web pages. There is some really small code that will hide your address from SPAM bots.

17. Make sure it works, and that it keeps working

- Test your links. Make sure your site works! Load your site in a browser from the Internet (not from your hard disk), make sure all the images appear correctly, and click on all the links. This may seem obvious, but if it's so obvious, then why do I constantly find sites whose images and internal links don't work right?
- Remove dead external links periodically. If you link to any external sites, some of those links will almost certainly stop working at some point as the sites move or become extinct. Don't waste your readers' time by forcing them to follow broken links. Check your links at least once every few months.
- Include a "Last Modified" date on the top or bottom of your pages. If your site contains information that could become outdated, then do your visitors the courtesy of letting them know when the information they're reading was written. That way, visitors won't have to wonder whether the info was written last week or five years ago.

18. **Don't steal content.** It's not acceptable to copy text from another site and place it on your own, unless you get permission from the site owner. It's not legal to do so, either. Just because it's easy to do doesn't mean it's not sleazy or against the law. Copying content is also a good way to get the search engines to make your page or site rank a whole lot lower.

19. **Don't hotlink to other sites' images or MP3's.** Any image you link to should be on your own server. That is, your code should look like `` and not ``. Embedding images into your pages from other sites is called hot linking, and is considered a theft of bandwidth from the other site (and possibly a violation of copyright). It also screws up the other site's visitor stats, because every time someone visits your page with a hot linked image, which counts as a visit to the other site,

although there was no actual visit to the other site. Hot linking images can also come back to bite you, if the webmaster of the other site changes the image you hot linked to be something very offensive (like pornography, or a message specifically insulting you).

20. **Don't ask for "permission" to link to a site.** I don't know how anyone got the idea that you have to ask another site owner whether you can link to their site, but it's not just unnecessary, it's annoying. If the thousands of people who linked to my pages had asked permission first then I'd be drowning in an avalanche of email.

21. **Don't ask to exchange links with other sites.**

A Very Simple Web Page

Here is a small bit of HTML code that will produce a web page.

```
<html>
<head>

<title>Basic HTML page</title>
</head>

<body>
<h1>Basic HTML Page</h1>
<p>This is a line of regular text.</p>
<hr>
<p>This is a line of regular text below a horizontal rule.</p>

</body>
</html>
```

Basic Commands

Only some very basic commands are listed here. Check out the links on the main course page for a more thorough list.

One annoying aspect of HTML is that the newlines you put in your text with the "Enter" key are not displayed by the browser. You need to use `<p>` and `
` to move to a new line. However, newlines do appear in the source code, and make it much more readable. So, make sure the source code of your HTML is easy to read, with plenty of white space, even though it won't appear in the browser.

The best ways to learn HTML are to try out the various tags on your own web page, and to view the source code of any interesting page you run across. It is very hard to completely mess up an HTML page--by far the most likely result of miscoding something is just some odd-looking stuff being displayed. So, experiment!

Document Structure

```
<html> </html>
```

HTML documents begin at the first tag and end at the second. These tags tell the browser that what lies between is

<head> </head>

<body> </body>

<h3> </h3>

<p>

 or

<i> </i>

<u> </u>

<tt> </tt>

<hr>

<pre> </pre>

coded in HTML.

Header information goes between these tags. The <title> tags are used to create a title that appears at the top of the browser window. The <meta> tag can be used to help webcrawlers index your site.

The contents of the main page are displayed between these tags. You can set various attributes within this tag, including background images and colors and colors for text and links.

Body tags

Medium-sized header line

H1 gives the biggest, h6 gives the smallest. Try them out to see which suits any given application. Within this tag, the attribute align= can be set to left, center, or right. For example: <h3 align="center"> </h3> centers the header.

Starts a new paragraph: a blank line followed by a new line. You should use the </p> tag to end the paragraph, but it isn't necessary.

Starts a new line without a blank line in between.

Bold face any text between the tags.

Italic face any text between the tags.

Underline any text between the tags. Not widely used, because most underlined text on HTML pages is hyperlinks
Superscript any text between the tags.

Subscript any text between the tags.

Any text between the tags is uniformly spaced: good for aligning columns.

Draws a horizontal line. The attribute size="50%" (any percent will do) draws a line of that percentage of the screen width. The attribute align= can be used to move the line to left, center, or right.

Text between these tags is "preformatted". Spaces and line breaks appear as you entered them.

Image, Link, and Comment tags

Insert the image file: .jpg, .gif, or .png files are supported by nearly all browsers. The title attribute is displayed by the "tool tips" function of the browser: when you run the mouse over the image.

<h1 align="center"></h1>

A little trick to get a centered image: enclose the image inside headline tags, with the align="center" attribute.

 [Highlighted text](#)

Creates a link to the listed file. This can be a path to a file located on the server, or it can be a link to a file on another computer. In the latter case, the file name should start out

with "http://". Instead of the text you can put an `` to get a clickable image as a link. This is a common way to putting in buttons.

```
<a href="filename"
target="_blank"> Highlighted text
</a>
```

The `target="_blank"` attribute creates a NEW browser window containing the linked HTML file. Note that the default behavior of an `` tag, if you don't include a `"target="` attribute, is to replace the current web page with the new one.

```
<a href="mailto:you@yahoo.com">
Send an e-mail</a>
```

The `mailto:` (followed by your e-mail address) inside the `href` value will turn on the e-mail program and set up a message that you can send. It usually works, but I recommend also writing your e-mail address somewhere that is visible, in case this bit of automation fails.

```
<!-- -->
```

Comment tags: anything between these two tags is considered a comment and is not displayed by the browser. However, it is visible to anyone who views the source code through the browser. You can comment out large portions of your page if you like.

Character Entities

```
&nbsp;
```

Non-break space. This entity allows you to put spaces into the display. Normal spaces like " " are collapsed to a single space by the browser. Using this entity allows you to put in as many spaces as you like. Also useful for blank cells in tables and (used as `<p> </p>`) for extra blank lines.

Lists and Tables

```
<ul> </ul>
```

Begin and end an un-numbered list. Each individual item on the list begins with `` and ends with ``. Each item appears as a bullet point.

```
<ol> </ol>
```

Begin and end a numbered list. Each individual item on the list begins with `` and ends with ``. Each item appears as a numbered point on a separate line.

```
<table> </table>
```

Begin and end a table. Tables are built row-by-row, with each row starting with `<tr>` and ending with `</tr>`. Within the rows, individual cells start with `<td>` and end with `</td>`. You can put anything you want in the cells: text, images, links, forms, etc. Tables are the way that most positioning of items on web pages is done. There are many attributes available to modify tables; see the links for complete lists of HTML tags. It is worth noting that browsers before version 4.0 (IE or NetScape) didn't support tables.

```
<table border> </table>
```

Begin and end a table that is surrounded by a border. This is the way to get a table that looks like an actual table. If you don't use the `"border"` attribute, you get a table with no obvious borders. That is a good way to place images on the page, but it doesn't help if you need to see which cell something is in.