



# Useful Usability Findings

Web Liaisons Group  
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Guidelines for  
improving:

1. Testing
2. Content
3. Forms
4. Design

Review website  
design patterns

## Useful Usability Findings

Overview

# Testing

Framing questions, formats for response

## Any testing is better than none

**The biggest gains are achieved when going from zero test users to one**

- Just five users reveal about 85% of all problems with your website
- Responses given after only 5 seconds are the same as those after 10 minutes
- Survey respondents prefer the left-side of the rating scale
- Suggest scenarios rather than direct tasks

# Content

Scrolling, scanning, photo choice

# Plan for text scanning

Users often read Web pages in an F-shaped pattern: two horizontal stripes followed by a vertical stripe

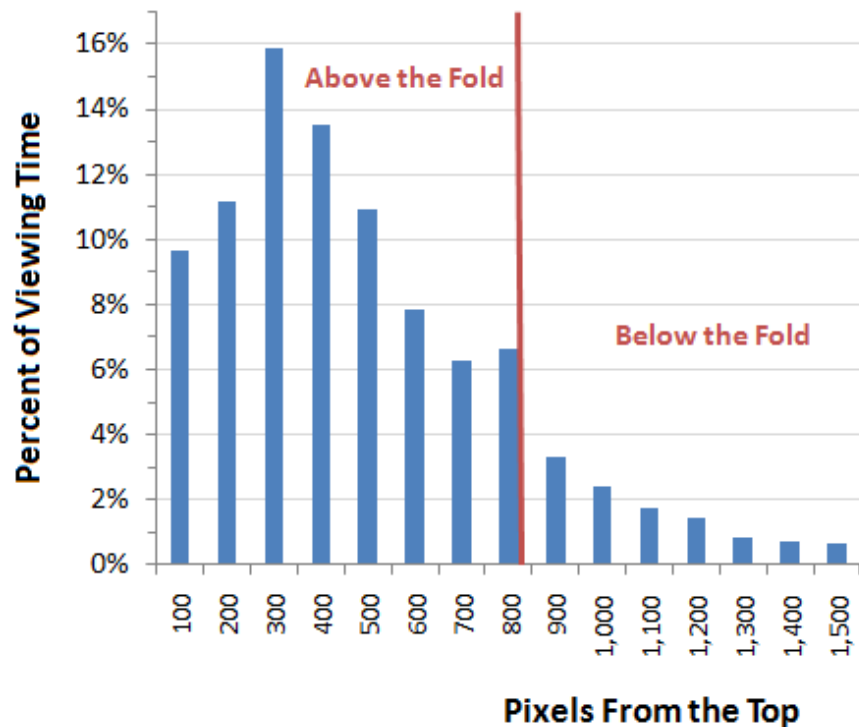
- The first two paragraphs must state the most important information
- Start subheads, paragraphs, and bullet points with information-carrying words
- Smaller type encourages focused viewing behavior....  
larger type promotes scanning



# Focus above the fold

77% of visitors won't scroll; they'll just view the content above the fold

- Users have a limited attention span
- The most important information should be above the fold
- Scrolling beats paging



# Encourage visitors to scroll

Sometimes users do read down an entire page

People will scroll down a page if

- the layout encourages scanning

and

- the information visible at the top makes them believe that it will be worth their time to scroll





# Use photos with purpose

Users pay close attention to photos and other images that contain relevant information but ignore fluffy pictures used to "jazz up" Web pages

- Avoid using photos as pure filler
- Users spend 10% more time viewing portrait photos than reading biographies
- Use photography of "real" people over stock photos when possible

The image shows a screenshot of the Yale School of Management website. The header includes the Yale School of Management logo and the tagline "Educating leaders for business and society". A navigation menu lists various programs and services. The main content area is titled "How To Apply" and features a network diagram overlay consisting of blue circles connected by lines. The diagram is overlaid on a photograph of students sitting in a classroom or lecture hall, some using laptops. The text on the page is organized into steps:

**Step 1 – Choose a Deadline**

**Step 2 – Review the Requirements**

To apply to the Yale School of Management, in addition to the completed online application form, applicants are required to provide transcripts, two recommendations, a GMAT score report, a TOEFL or IELTS score (if applicable), and an application fee.

**Step 3 – Apply Online**

Your application will be considered complete and ready for review once we have received your online application, payment, and all supplemental materials.

Online updates

You can track the status of your application at any time on your online status page. Please be aware that it may take up to four (4) weeks following an application deadline for materials that were submitted separately to appear as having been received.

## Forms

Labels, search fields

## Put form labels above fields

Users scan downward when filling out a form, not right to left

A diagram illustrating a form layout where labels are positioned above the input fields. The form includes fields for Name, Surname, Age, Sex, and City, along with a Submit button. Blue circles with numbers (1-22) are overlaid on the form, connected by lines to various parts of the form, likely representing user eye-tracking or scanning patterns. The labels are positioned above the fields, and the fields are arranged vertically from top to bottom.

A screenshot of a sign-up form for Tumblr. The form is titled "See 21 reasons why you'll love Tumblr →" and includes the following fields: Email address, Password, and URL (with the text "(you can change this at any time)"). The URL field is pre-filled with ".tumblr.com". A "Sign up and start posting!" button is located at the bottom of the form.

## Use the ideal search box width

The average search box is 18-characters wide. Data shows that 27% of queries are too long to fit into it

- 27 characters accommodates 90% of queries
- In general, search boxes are better too wide than too short
- Padding in the input field can also improve user experience



**Search boxes are too short**

## Design

Layout, link color, buttons, banners

## Use faces to direct attention

### Stuck on the face

s-01.jpg  
1/20/07 10:00:06.033  
ec5



Extra gentle for the most sensitive skin.

So gentle for sensitive skin, add the chemicals and moisture to help you have diaper rash.

Baby's unique high-absorbency natural-blend cotton provides cotton-soft, extra thick, gel-free protection for your baby's sensitive skin. The chlorine-free materials and absorbent polymers is non-toxic and non-irritating. Clinically tested and pediatrician recommended for babies with allergic and sensitive skin.



by

If you are not satisfied with the baby leakage protection, you will get your money back. Read more about our leakfree guarantee at [www.baby.com](http://www.baby.com)

### Following the gaze

er All  
ec5



Extra gentle for the most sensitive skin.

So gentle for sensitive skin, add the chemicals and moisture to help you have diaper rash.

Baby's unique high-absorbency natural-blend cotton provides cotton-soft, extra thick, gel-free protection for your baby's sensitive skin. The chlorine-free materials and absorbent polymers is non-toxic and non-irritating. Clinically tested and pediatrician recommended for babies with allergic and sensitive skin.



TM

If you are not satisfied with the baby leakage protection, you will get your money back. Read more about our leakfree guarantee at [www.baby.com](http://www.baby.com)

# Choose your link color wisely

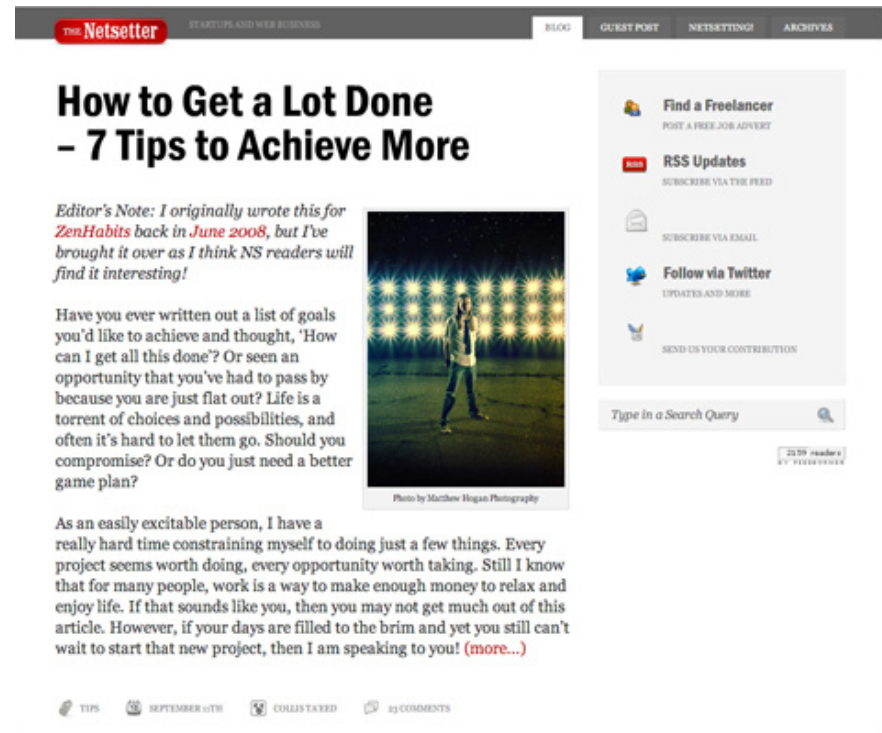
Consider the following:

- Level of contrast with the background color
- Level of contrast with the rest of the text
- The browser's default link color is blue, so it is familiar to most users



# Value your white space

- White space between paragraphs and in the left and right margins **increases comprehension by almost 20%**
- Layout on a web page may not measurably influence performance, but *it does influence satisfaction*



The screenshot shows a blog post on 'The Netsetter' website. The header includes the site name 'The Netsetter' and navigation links for 'BLOG', 'GUEST POST', 'NETSETTING!', and 'ARCHIVES'. The main title is 'How to Get a Lot Done - 7 Tips to Achieve More'. Below the title is an 'Editor's Note' and a photograph of a person standing in front of a wall of lights. The article text begins with 'Have you ever written out a list of goals...'. On the right side, there are several utility links: 'Find a Freelancer', 'RSS Updates', 'Follow via Twitter', and 'Send us your contribution'. At the bottom, there is a search bar and a '2179 readers' badge.

**The Netsetter** STARTUPS AND WEB BUSINESS

BLOG GUEST POST NETSETTING! ARCHIVES

## How to Get a Lot Done - 7 Tips to Achieve More

*Editor's Note: I originally wrote this for ZenHabits back in June 2008, but I've brought it over as I think NS readers will find it interesting!*

Have you ever written out a list of goals you'd like to achieve and thought, 'How can I get all this done?' Or seen an opportunity that you've had to pass by because you are just flat out? Life is a torrent of choices and possibilities, and often it's hard to let them go. Should you compromise? Or do you just need a better game plan?

As an easily excitable person, I have a really hard time constraining myself to doing just a few things. Every project seems worth doing, every opportunity worth taking. Still I know that for many people, work is a way to make enough money to relax and enjoy life. If that sounds like you, then you may not get much out of this article. However, if your days are filled to the brim and yet you still can't wait to start that new project, then I am speaking to you! ([more...](#))

TIPS SEPTEMBER 10TH COLLECTED 21 COMMENTS

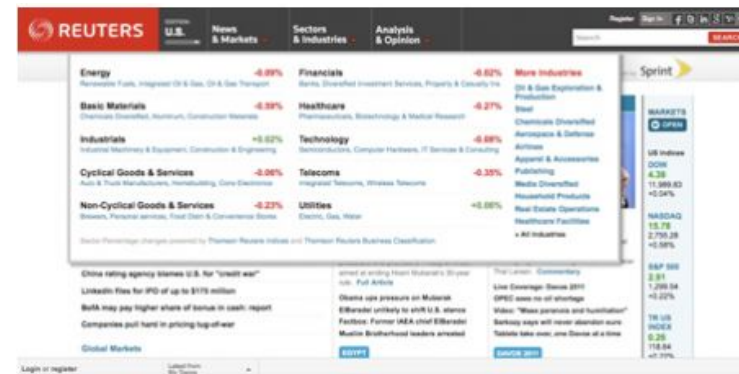
2179 readers



# Build usable navigation

Menu-driven interfaces are perceived as easier to use. Icon-based interfaces are perceived as more useful.

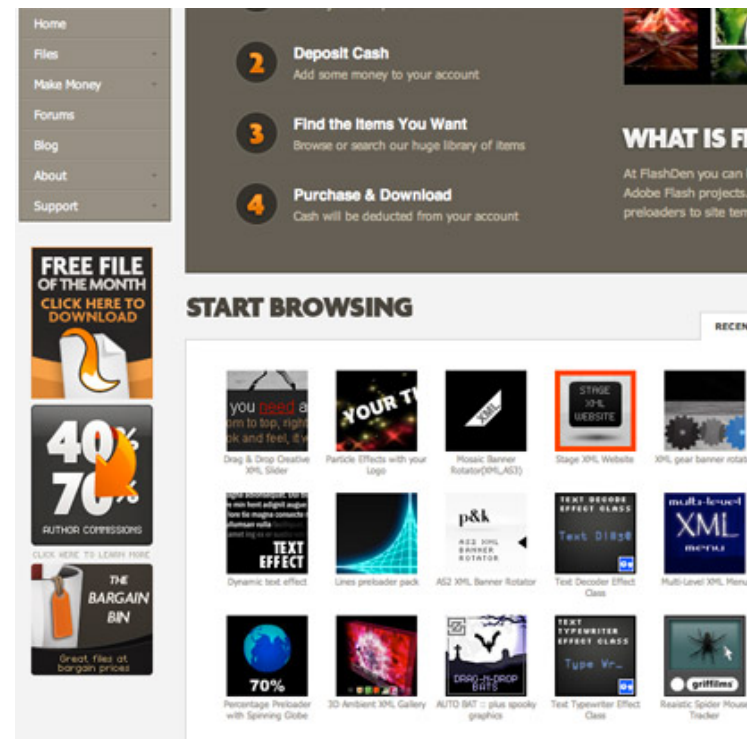
- First time users prefer text links over icons
- On sites with clear labels and prominent navigation options, users tend to browse rather than search



# Be cautious of banner blindness

Users don't fixate on design elements that resemble ads, even if they aren't an ad

- Most users are blind to ad banners
- Be careful with heavily styled navigation items that may look like banners
- The more an image looks like a native site component, the more users will look at it



## Website patterns

Typography, layout, forms

All measurements are in pixels.

- Line height ÷ body copy font size = 1.48
- Line length ÷ line height = 27.8
- Space between paragraphs ÷ line height = 0.754
- Optimal number of characters per line is 55 to 75, but between 75 and 85 characters per line is more popular in practice

- 92% of layouts have a fixed width (pixel-based)
- 94% of layouts are centered
- The width of fixed layouts varies between 950 and 1000 pixels
- 58% of a website's overall layout is used to display the main content
- Most layouts have a large horizontal navigation menu
- Contact pages contain driving directions, phone number, email address, postal address, vCard and online form

- The registration link is titled “sign up” (40%) and is placed in the upper-right corner
- Sign-up forms have simple layouts, to avoid distracting users (61%)
- Titles of input fields are bolded (62%), and fields are vertically arranged more than they are horizontally arranged (86%)
- Designers tend to include few mandatory fields and few optional fields
- Email confirmation is not given (82%), but password confirmation is (72%)
- The “Submit” button is either left-aligned (56%) or centered (26%)

# References

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