

WEBSITE USABILITY

Web usability means designing for users instead of the agency itself. A site that conforms to user expectations makes users more comfortable and more apt to visit again and to recommend the site to others. Good usability is critical to the site's success. A good navigation system should answer the following: Where am I? Where have I been? Where can I go? Rating system: 1 not usable to 10 highly usable

Navigation	Rating	Explanation for Rating
Current location within the site is shown clearly		
Link to the site's main page is clearly identified		
Headings navigable by levels (Level 1 - main categories, Level 2 - subcategories, Level 3 - article titles, etc.)		
Major / important parts of the site are directly accessible from the main page		
Text-based Site map is provided for a large, complex site, and every page has a text link to this site map		
Easy to use Search function is provided, as needed, and covers all of the site (not the Web)		
Text inside links is used so that users know exactly where the link is going		
Basic text links are found on every page that connect with all major sections of the site		
Home page link is included inside the main navigation system		
Site logo links to Home Page		
Functionality	Rating	Explanation for Rating
Site accommodates novice to expert users		
Functions are clearly labeled		
Essential functions are available without leaving the site		
Plug-ins are used only if they add value		
User Control	Rating	Explanation for Rating

Site reflects user's workflow		
User can cancel any operation		
Clear exit point is provided on every page		
Per-page size is less than 50K to accommodate slow connections		
All appropriate browsers are supported		
Language and Content		Explanation for Rating
Content is clear and simple, and the most important content and tasks are high on the page		
Related information or tasks are grouped: on the same page or menu		
Related information or tasks are grouped: in the same area within a page		
Language is simple, without jargon		
Paragraphs are brief		
Links are concise, expressive, and visible -- not buried in text		
Terms are defined		
Online Help and User Guides		Explanation for Rating
Site is designed to require minimal help and instructions		
Help and instructions, if needed, are easily accessible		
System and User Feedback		Explanation for Rating
It is always clear what is happening on the site -- visual hints, etc.		
Users can send email feedback if necessary		
Feedback forms are accessible, short and clearly note which information is required to successfully submit them		
Complete contact information is available - business		

number, postal and/or street address		
Users can give feedback via email or a feedback form		
There is incentive to return after the first visit (breadth and depth of the site as well as information updates)		
Confirmation screen is provided for form submittal		
All system feedback is timely		
Users are informed if a plug-in or browser version is required		
Each page includes a "last updated" date		
Web Accessibility W3C's Tools, Checklist, and Guidelines		Explanation for Rating
Site follows current web standards; HTML 4.0, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS1). Cascading Style Sheets are used for layout and style where possible		
Images and animations: The attribute ALT= is used for images, animations, and other objects		
Image maps: Site uses client-side map and text for hotspots		
Multimedia: Site provides captioning and transcripts of audio and descriptions of video		
Web versions of PDF documents are provided		
Link labels make sense when read out of context; site avoids such link names as "click here"		
Page organization: Accomplished with headings, lists, and consistent structure		
Graphs and charts: Summaries are provided for graphs and charts, or the LONGDESC attribute is used		
Scripts, applets, & plug-ins: Alternative content is provided for scripts, applets, and plug-ins in case these active features are inaccessible or unsupported		
Frames: For frames pages, site includes NOFRAMES		

option and meaningful titles		
Tables: Line-by-line reading of tables is sensible, and summaries are included where possible		
Validation: Site has been validated using the W3C's HTML Validation Service and the Bobby Accessibility Checker		
Site has been tested on a variety of platforms (UNIX, Windows, Mac) and browsers (Netscape 6, 7; IE 7 lynx)		
Consistency		Explanation for Rating
The same word or phrase is used consistently to describe an item / parts of the Site		
Link reflects the title of the page to which it refers		
Browser page title is informative and reflects the main page heading		
Consistent navigation system is found in the same place and in the same format on every page		
Colors and typefaces are consistent		
Text and font styles remain readable visually when color schemes are changed (colors are not hard-coded - CSS used)		
Layout remains accessible and usable when custom CSS is used (provide example of layout used)		
Page layout is consistent		
A memorable "tagline" is found on every page for ease of recognition		
Error Prevention and Correction		Explanation for Rating
Users can rely on recognition, not memory, for successful use of the site		
Site tolerates a reasonable variety of user actions		
Site provides concise instructions for user actions,		

including entry format		
Error messages are visible and audible, not hidden		
Custom error pages are consistent with other site pages, have useful links to access the correct one(s)		
Error messages are in plain language		
Error messages describe actions to remedy a problem		
Error messages provide a clear exit point		
Error messages provide contact details for assistance		
Architectural and Visual Clarity		Explanation for Rating
Site is organized from the user's perspective		
Site is easily scanned for content, organization and meaning		
Site design and layout are straightforward and concise		
Site design and layout are redundant only when required for user productivity		
White space is sufficient; pages are not too dense		
Unnecessary animation is avoided		
Colors used for visited and unvisited links are easily seen and understood		
Text inside images is nonexistent		
ALT and TITLE attributes are added to all images, especially those that are also links to other pages, for quick access to the page of interest		
Background images and colors do not obscure text		
Bold and italic text is used as appropriate for the purpose of the website		