Links

Linking means that users will select and click on

a hypertext link on a starting page (usually the homepage), which then causes a new page to load. Users continue toward their goal by finding and clicking on subsequent links.

To ensure that links are effectively used, designers should use meaningful link labels (making sure that link names are consistent with their targets), provide consistent clickability cues (avoiding misleading cues), and designate when links have been clicked.

Whenever possible, designers should use text for links rather than graphics. Text links usually provide much better information about the target than do graphics.

10:1 Use Meaningful Link Labels

Guideline: Use link labels and concepts that are meaningful, understandable, and easily differentiated by users rather than designers.

Relative Importance:

12345
Strength of Evidence:

Comments: To avoid user confusion, use link labels that clearly differentiate one link from another. Users should be able to look at each link and learn something about the link's destination. Using terms like 'Click Here' can be counterproductive.

Clear labeling is especially important as users navigate down through the available links. The more decisions that users are required to make concerning links, the more opportunities they have to make a wrong decision.

Sources: Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Coney and Steehouder, 2000; Evans, 1998; Farkas and Farkas, 2000; IEEE; Larson and Czerwinski, 1998; Miller and Remington, 2000; Mobrand and Spyridakis, 2002; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Spool, et al., 1997; Spyridakis, 2000.

Example:

'COOL' refers to an application that allows users to search for all jobs within the Department of Commerce (not just the Census Bureau.) This link does a poor job in explaining itself. The other circled links aren't as descriptive as they could be.



10:2 Link to Related Content

Guideline: Provide links to other pages in the Web site with related content.

1234() Strength of Evidence:

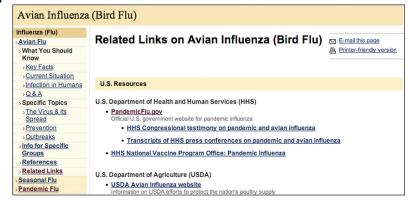
Relative Importance:

Comments: Users expect designers to know their

Web sites well enough to provide a full list of options to related content.

Sources: Koyani and Nall, 1999.

Example:



Related Government Agencies & International Organizations

- European Copyright User Platform
- Federal Communications Commission
- Government Printing Office Access
- U.S. Patent & Trademark Office
- WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization)

The cloud of Iraq

Rove repeated later in the ques

war was having a widespread d Home | Contact Us | Legal Notices | Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) | Library of Congress

"The war looms on all political U.S. Copyright Office 101 Independence Ave. S.E. Washington, D.C. 20559-6000 (202) 707-3000

circumstances are good; they're are.... They're worried about the long haul," he added, and specifically they're worried about globalization and Social Security.

CLICK FOR RELATED STORIES

- · Curry: What would a Democratic majority do?
- · Fineman: Rove revamps the Republican strategy

Evidence of voter happiness, according to Rove: the University of Michigan's consumer confidence survey has relatively high readings. He cited a study from some political scientists (whom he didn't

See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales

12340

10:3 Match Link Names with Their Destination Pages

Guideline: Make the link text consistent with the title or headings on the destination (i.e., target) page.

Comments: Closely matched links and destination targets help provide the necessary feedback to users that they have reached the intended page.

Relative Importance:

12340

Strength of Evidence:

12340

If users will have to click more than once to get to a specific target destination, avoid repeating the exact same link wording over and over because users can be confused if the links at each level are identical or even very similar. In one study, after users clicked on a link entitled 'First Aid,' the next page had three options. One of them was again titled 'First Aid.' The two 'First Aid' links went to different places. Users tended to click on another option on the second page because they thought that they had already reached 'First Aid.'

Sources: Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Levine, 1996; Mobrand and Spyridakis, 2002.

Example: Link text in the left navigation panel is identical to the headings found on the destination page.



See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales

10:4 Avoid Misleading Cues to Click

Guideline: Ensure that items that are not clickable do not have characteristics that suggest that they are clickable.

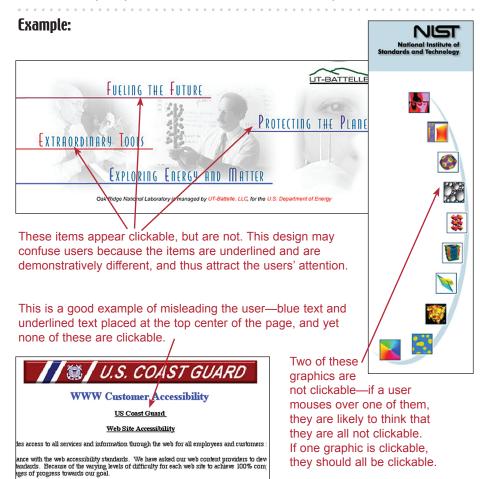
Relative Importance:

1264
Strength of Evidence:

Comments: Symbols usually must be combined with at least one other cue that suggests clickability. In one study, users were observed to click on a major heading with some link characteristics, but the heading was not actually a link.

However, to some users bullets and arrows may suggest clickability, even when they contain no other clickability cues (underlining, blue coloration, etc.). This slows users as they debate whether the items are links.

Sources: Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Evans, 1998; Spool, et al., 1997.



10:5 Repeat Important Links

Guideline: Ensure that important content can be accessed from more than one link.

Relative Importance:

12340

Strength of Evidence:



What You Need To Know About™ Cancer Index Information about detection, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of many

Comments: Establishing more than one way to access

the same information can help some users find what they need. When certain information is critical to the success of the Web site, provide more than one link to the information. Different users may try different ways to find information, depending on their own interpretations of a problem and the layout of a page. Some users find important links easily when they have a certain label, while others may recognize the link best with an alternative name.

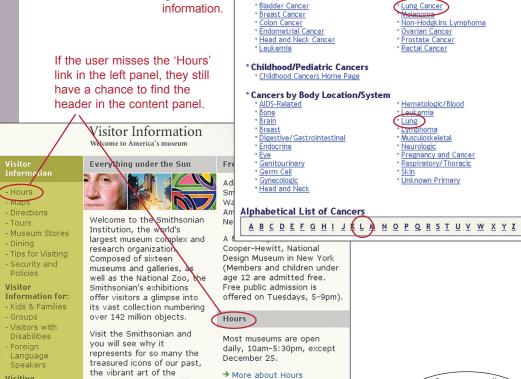
Sources: Bernard, Hull and Drake, 2001; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Ivory, Sinha and Hearst, 2000; Ivory, Sinha and Hearst, 2001; Levine, 1996; Nall, Koyani and Lafond, 2001; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Spain, 1999; Spool, Klee and Schroeder, 2000.

Types of Cancer

* Common Cancers

Example:

Multiple links provide users with alternative routes for finding the same information.



Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines

See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales



10:6 Use Text for Links

Guideline: Use text links rather than image links.

Relative Importance:

1234
Strength of Evidence:
1234

Comments: In general, text links are more easily recognized as clickable. Text links usually download faster, are preferred by users, and should change colors after being selected. It is usually easier to convey a link's destination in text, rather than with the use of an image.

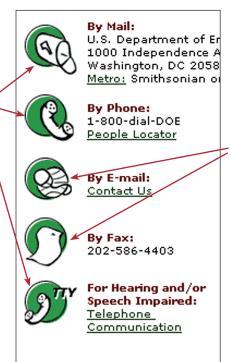
In one study, users showed considerable confusion regarding whether or not certain images were clickable. This was true even for images that contained words. Users could not tell if the images were clickable without placing their cursor over them ('minesweeping'). Requiring users to 'minesweep' to determine what is clickable slows them down.

Another benefit to using text links is that users with text-only and deactivated graphical browsers can see the navigation options.

Sources: Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Farkas and Farkas, 2000; Koyani and Nall, 1999; Mobrand and Spyridakis, 2002; Nielsen, 2000; Spool, et al., 1997; Zimmerman, et al., 2002.

Example:

The meaning of these three images are fairly clear, even if the accompanying text was not present.



The meanings of these two image links are not obvious at first glance.

10:7 Designate Used Links

Guideline: Use color changes to indicate to users when a link has been visited.

Relative Importance:

Strength of Evidence:

Comments: Generally, it is best to use the default text link colors (blue as an unvisited location/link and purple as a visited location/link). Link colors help users understand which parts of a Web site they have visited. In one study, providing this type of feedback was the only variable found to improve the user's speed of finding information. If a user selects one link, and there are other links to the same target, make sure all links to that target change color.

One 2003 study indicated a compliance rate of only thirty-three percent for this guideline; a 2002 study showed a compliance rate of thirty-five percent.

Sources: Evans, 1998; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Nielsen, 1996a; Nielsen, 1999b; Nielsen, 1999c; Nielsen, 2003; Spool, et al., 2001, Tullis 2001.

Example:

Opportunities

- Access America for Seniors
- Government Benefits
- Nonprofit Gateway
- Procurement
- Small Business Opportunities
- . Technology Transfer
- USDA /1890 National Scholars Program
- <u>USDA Debarment and Suspension</u> Contacts
- . U.S. State and Local Gateway

Employment:

- USDA
- Intern Programs
- All Federal Government
- USDA Telework Center
- Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program

A good design choice—unvisited links are shown in blue, and visited links are shown in purple. Note the conventional use of colors for visited and unvisited links.

A poor design choice. Unvisited links are in green, whereas visited links are in blue—users expect blue to denote an unvisited link.

Schools / IMSOs -- Air Force

Advanced Airlift Tactics Training Center, St Josep Air Command & Staff College, Maxwell AFB AL Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson Air University, Maxwell AFB AL Air War College, Maxwell AFB AL

<u>Air War College</u>, Maxwell AFB AL <u>Altus AFB OK</u>

College for Enlisted Professional Military Education
Columbus AFB MS

Fairchild AFB WA

Goodfellow AFB TX

Inter-American Air Forces Academy, Lackland AFI Joint Special Operations University, Hurlburt Field Keesler AFB MS

Lackland AFB TX

Little Rock AFB AR Luke AFB AZ

Randolph AFB TX School of Aerospace Medicine, Brooks AFB TX

Sheppard AFB TX, IMSO

Squadron Officer School, Maxwell AFB AL Tyndall AFB FL

Vance AFB OK

Wright-Patterson AFB OH

10:8 Provide Consistent Clickability Cues

Guideline: Provide sufficient cues to clearly indicate to users that an item is clickable.

Comments: Users should not be expected to move the cursor around a Web site ('minesweeping') to determine what is clickable. Using the eyes

Relative Importance:



Strength of Evidence:



to quickly survey the options is much faster than 'minesweeping.' Similarly, relying on mouseovers to designate links can confuse newer users, and slow all users as they are uncertain about which items are links.

Be consistent in your use of underlining, bullets, arrows, and other symbols such that they always indicate clickability or never suggest clickability. For example, using images as both links and as decoration slows users as it forces them to study the image to discern its clickability.

Items that are in the top center of the page, or left and right panels have a high probability of being considered links. This is particularly true if the linked element looks like a real-world tab or push button.

Sources: Bailey, 2000b; Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Farkas and Farkas, 2000; Lynch and Horton, 2002; Nielsen, 1990; Tullis, 2001.

Example:

A bulleted list of blue, underlined text. These are very strong clickability cues for users.

With at least seven non-traditional colors for links, the clickability cues for users might lead to confusion as to which links have been visited or not.

Chemical Engineering

- Analytical Chemistry
- Basic and Applied Sciences
- Batteries
- Environment, Safety and Hea
- Fuel Cells
- Nuclear Technology
- Process Chemistry and Engi



See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales

02340

10:9 Ensure that Embedded Links are Descriptive

Guideline: When using embedded links, the link text should accurately describe the link's destination.

Comments: Users tend to ignore the text that surrounds each embedded link; therefore, do not create embedded links that use the surrounding text to add clues about the link's destination.

Relative Importance:

Strength of Evidence:

11234(

Sources: Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Bernard and Hull, 2002; Card, et al., 2001; Chi, Pirolli and Pitkow, 2000; Evans, 1998; Farkas and Farkas, 2000; Mobrand and Spyridakis, 2002; Sawyer and Schroeder, 2000; Spool, et al., 1997.

Example:

These embedded links are well designed—because the entire organization name is a link, the user does not have to read the surrounding text to understand the destination of the embedded link.

the Intelligence Community and exercises the powers of the Director when the Director's position is vacant or in the Director's absence or disability.

The Associate Director of Central Intelligence for Homeland Security, Office of the Director of Central Intelligence, ensures the flow of intelligence in support of homeland defense. The current director is Winston P. Wiley.

The Executive Director of the Central Intelligence Agency is A.B. Krongard. Assisted by an Executive Board that counts among its membership five mission centers with duties that enable the Agency to carry out its mission-Chief Financial Officer, Chief Information Officer, Script, Human Resources and Global Support the XVIII. Propagate the CIA on a day to day the size. Officer, Security, Human Resources and Global Supp

The Directorate of Intelligence, the analytical branch intelligence analysis on key foreign issues. The currer

The Directorate of Science and Technology creates a mission. The current director is Donald M. Kerr.

The Directorate of Operations is responsible for the cla Pavitt

The Directorate of Intelligence, the analytical bra intelligence analysis on key foreign issues. The Jami A. Misek.

The Directorate of Science and Technology crea mission. The current director is Donald M. Kerr.

The Center for the Study of Intelligence maintains the legitimate and serious discipline. The current director is Paul Johnson.

In this example, the user must read the surrounding text to gain clues as to the link's destination. In many cases, users will not read that text.

the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the federal government through financial audits, program reviews and evaluations, analyses, legal opinions, investigations, and other services. GAO's activities are designed to ensure the executive branch's accountability to the Congress under the Constitution and the government's accountability to the American people. GAO is dedicated to good government through its commitment to the core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

GAO's Performance and Accountability Report 2002, <u>Highlights</u>, and <u>related materials</u> including the Strategic Plar 2002-2007

Updated daily. "Today's Reports," <u>Highlights</u>, Special Collections including <u>Desert Shield and Desert Storm Reports and Testimonies: 1991-1993, <u>Homeland Security</u>.</u>

restigations, and other services. GAO's acti From the Comptroller General
David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United State
tion and the government's accountability to t
Selected Speeches, Writings, and Press Statements. GAO
of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

> appropriations, and the procests, and major rederatagency rul GAO's Bid Protest Docket-Information about current and recently closed bid protests, GAO Policy and Procedures Manual for Guidance to Federal Agencies

Federal Agency Issues Highlighting GAO products specifically

10:10 Use 'Pointing-and-Clicking'

Guideline: 'Pointing-and-clicking,' rather than mousing over, is preferred when selecting menu items from a cascading menu structure.

Relative Importance:

123

Strength of Evidence:

123

Comments: One study found that when compared with the mouseover method, the 'point-and-click' method takes eighteen percent less time, elicits fewer errors, and is preferred by users.

Sources: Chaparro, Minnaert and Phipps, 2000.

Example:

The below site relies on users to mouse over the main links to reveal the sub-menu links (shown extending to the right in purple and black). The use of these mouseover methods is slower than 'pointing-and-clicking.'



10:11 Use Appropriate Text Link Lengths

Guideline: Make text links long enough to be understood, but short enough to minimize wrapping.

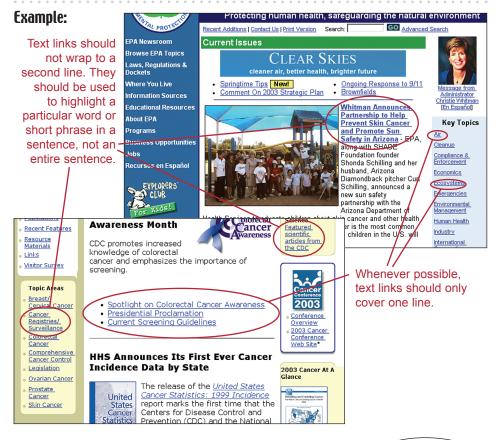
Relative Importance:

Comments: A single word text link may not give enough information about the link's destination. A link that is several words may be difficult to read

Strength of Evidence:

quickly, particularly if it wraps to another line. Generally, it is best if text links do not extend more than one line. However, one study found that when users scan prose text, links of nine to ten words elicit better performance than shorter or longer links. Keep in mind that it is not always possible to control how links will look to all users because browser settings and screen resolutions can vary.

Sources: Card, et al., 2001; Chi, Pirolli and Pitkow, 2000; Evans, 1998; Levine, 1996; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Nielsen, 2000; Sawyer and Schroeder, 2000; Spool, et al., 1997.



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10:12 Indicate Internal vs. External Links

Guideline: Indicate to users when a link will move them to a different location on the same page or to a new page on a different Web site.

Relative Importance:

12300

Strength of Evidence:



Comments: One study showed that users tend to assume that links will take them to another

page within the same Web site. When this assumption is not true, users can become confused. Designers should try to notify users when they are simply moving down a page, or leaving the site altogether.

Sources: Nall, Koyani and Lafond, 2001; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Spool, et al., 1997.

Example:

Add URL
addresses below
links to help
users determine
where they are
going. By seeing
.gov and .com
the user is also
alerted to the
type of site they
will visit.

Web Site Guidelines

Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines http://usability.gov/juidelines

- Provides guidelines for improving Web design, navigation, functionality
- Includes findings from Web design and usability literature identified by the National Cancer Institute and provides references

Web Design Guidelines: Design in Action http://www-3.ibm/com/bm/easy/eou_ext.nsf/Publish/572

- Provides guidelines on Web site planning, design, production, and maintenance
- . Offers guidelines on e-commerce

Web Publishing Oside
http://www.ieee.org//yeb/developers/style/

Acid Rain Sourcebook

This site is a student's first source book including activities, in about acid rain.

Become an IPM Super Sleuth EXIT disclaimer ➤

Created with support from EPA and the National Foundation fo can teach you about Integrated Pest Management using word

site.

Best Management Practices for Soil Erosion software

This downloadable program provid worldwide, including what causes

sign, including planning, rmance

'Exit disclaimer' graphic informs user that the link will take them to a new Web site.

Clicking an outside link leads to this 'interim' page that warns users of their imminent transfer to a non-whitehouse.gov Web Thank you for visiting our site.

You will now access http://www.achp.gov/

You are exiting the White House Web Server

We hope your visit was informative and enjoyable.

To comment on this service, send feedback to the Web Development Team

10:13 Clarify Clickable Regions of Images

Guideline: If any part of an image is clickable, ensure that the entire image is clickable or that the clickable sections are obvious.

Relative Importance:

12300

Comments: Users should not be required to use the mouse pointer to discover clickable areas of images. For example, in a map of the United States,

Strength of Evidence:

images. For example, in a map of the United States, if individual states are clickable, sufficient cues should be given to indicate the

Sources: Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Levine, 1996; Lim and Wogalter, 2000.

Example:

clickable states.

Dramatically different colors delineate clickable regions.





The use of white space between clickable regions in this image map define the boundaries of each individual 'hot' area.

See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales

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10:14 Link to Supportive Information Relative Importance:

Guideline: Provide links to supportive information.

12300

Strength of Evidence:



Comments: Use links to provide definitions and descriptions to clarify technical concepts or jargon, so that less knowledgeable users can successfully use the Web site. For example, provide links to a dictionary, glossary definitions, and sections dedicated to providing more information.

Sources: Farkas and Farkas, 2000; Levine, 1996; Morrell, et al., 2002; Zimmerman and Prickett, 2000.

Example:

Tests that examine the breasts are used to detect (find) and diagnose breast cancer.

If an abnormality is found, one or all of the following tests may be used:

- <u>Ultrasound</u>: A test that uses sound waves to create images of areas inside the body. I sound waves are bounced off internal <u>tissues</u> and organs. The echoes are changed internal <u>called sonograms</u>. The doctor can identify <u>tumors</u> by looking at the sonogram.
- Mammogram: A special x-ray of the breast that may find tumors that are too small to mammogram can be performed with little risk to the <u>fetus</u>. Mammograms in pregnan appear negative even though cancer is present.

Biopsy: The removal of cells, tissues disease.

sonogram (SON-o-gram):

A computer picture of areas inside the body created by bouncing high-energy sound waves (ultrasound) off internal tissues or organs. Also called an ultrasonogram.

Definition

Dictionary

Print this page

Clicking on a highlighted word brings up a 'pop-up' box which provides the user with the definition of the selected word.

The highlighted links below direct the user to a page with a definition of the word.

Today's featured picture



The International Space Station is located in a low Earth orbit, approximately 360 km (220 miles) high. The station has a capacity for a crew of three and there have always been at least two people on board. It has been visited by astronauts from a large number of countries and was also the destination of the first three space tourists.

Photo credit: NASA Archive - More featured pictures...