

## Lists

### **Lists are commonly found on Web sites.**

These may be lists of, for example, people, drugs, theaters, or restaurants. Each list should be clearly introduced and have a descriptive title. A list should be formatted so that it can be easily scanned. The order of items in the list should be done to maximize user performance, which usually means that the most important items are placed toward the top of the list. If a numbered list is used, start the numbering at 'one,' not 'zero.' Generally only the first letter of the first word is capitalized, unless a word that is usually capitalized is shown in the list.

# 12:1 Order Elements to Maximize User Performance

**Guideline:** Arrange lists and tasks in an order that best facilitates efficient and successful user performance.

**Relative Importance:**



**Strength of Evidence:**



**Comments:** Designers should determine if there is an order for items that will facilitate use of the Web site. If there is, ensure that the site is formatted to support that order, and that all pages follow the same order. For example, ensure that lists of items, sets of links, and a series of tabs are in a meaningful order.

Where no obvious order applies, organize lists alphabetically or numerically. Keep in mind that it is the user's logic that should prevail rather than the designer's logic.

**Sources:** Bransford and Johnson, 1972; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Engel and Granda, 1975; Evans, 1998; Flower, Hayes and Swarts, 1983; Halgren and Cooke, 1993; Morkes and Nielsen, 1998; Nygren and Allard, 1996; Ozok and Salvendy, 2000; Redish, Felker and Rose, 1981; Smith and Mosier, 1986; Spyridakis, 2000.

**Example:**

Ordering list by region and then alphabetically by country allows users to rapidly find desired information.



If most of your users will be looking for the same item, then place it at the top of your list.

Region/Country
<b>North America</b>
Canada
Mexico
United States
Other
<b>Total</b>
<b>Central &amp; South America</b>
Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica

This list should be ordered to read down columns, not across rows.

<a href="#">Alabama</a>	<a href="#">Alaska</a>	<a href="#">Arizona</a>	<a href="#">Arkansas</a>
<a href="#">California</a>	<a href="#">Colorado</a>	<a href="#">Connecticut</a>	<a href="#">Delaware</a>
<a href="#">District of Columbia</a>	<a href="#">Florida</a>	<a href="#">Georgia</a>	<a href="#">Hawaii</a>
<a href="#">Idaho</a>	<a href="#">Illinois</a>	<a href="#">Indiana</a>	<a href="#">Iowa</a>
<a href="#">Kansas</a>	<a href="#">Kentucky</a>	<a href="#">Louisiana</a>	<a href="#">Maine</a>
<a href="#">Maryland</a>	<a href="#">Massachusetts</a>	<a href="#">Michigan</a>	<a href="#">Minnesota</a>
<a href="#">Mississippi</a>	<a href="#">Missouri</a>	<a href="#">Montana</a>	<a href="#">Nebraska</a>
<a href="#">Nevada</a>	<a href="#">New Hampshire</a>	<a href="#">New Jersey</a>	<a href="#">New Mexico</a>
<a href="#">New York</a>	<a href="#">North Carolina</a>	<a href="#">North Dakota</a>	<a href="#">Ohio</a>
<a href="#">Oklahoma</a>	<a href="#">Oregon</a>	<a href="#">Pennsylvania</a>	<a href="#">Rhode Island</a>

## 12:2 Place Important Items at Top of the List

**Guideline:** Place a list's most important items at the top.

**Comments:** Experienced users usually look first at the top item in a menu or list, and almost always look at one of the top three items before looking at those farther down the list. Research indicates that users tend to stop scanning a list as soon as they see something relevant, thus illustrating the reason to place important items at the beginning of lists.

**Sources:** Byrne, et al., 1999; Carroll, 1990; Evans, 1998; Faraday, 2001; Isakson and Spyridakis, 1999; Lewenstein, et al., 2000; Nielsen, 1996a; Nielsen, 1999b; Nielsen, 1999c; Spyridakis, 2000.

### Example:

This listing assists users by breaking out the top ten requests in a separate link. The entire collection is then listed next. This tactic can save users time when searching for popular items or topics.

**Publications & Products** \* You are here: Home > Publications & Products > Most Requested

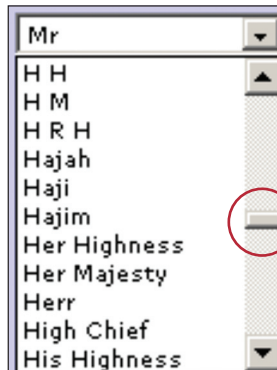
[Publications & Products Search](#) **Publications/Products**

[Top Requests](#)

[View Entire Collection](#) **Top Ten Requested Publications & Products**

**General Information** The publications and products in this collection are comprised of NC 1968 to the present. Included are materials published in scientific journal proceedings, and NOAA Technical Memoranda, Special and Technical non peer reviewed publications. Some of these materials may be available at [NCCOS](#) or the Centers. You may also contact the publishers, the [NOAA Central Library](#) and other libraries that provide science information.

- [Top Ten Publications](#)
- [View Entire Collection](#)
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This extensive list of titles contains the most commonly used titles at the top of the list and also in their alphabetically-correct position further down the list. This avoids the need for users to scroll through titles such as 'His Highness.'

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for detailed descriptions  
of the rating scales

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## 12:3 Format Lists to Ease Scanning

**Guideline:** Make lists easy to scan and understand.


**Comments:** The use of meaningful labels, effective background colors, borders, and white space allow users to identify a set of items as a discrete list.

**Sources:** Chaparro and Bernard, 2001; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Levine, 1996; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Nygren and Allard, 1996; Spyridakis, 2000; Treisman, 1982.

### Example:


These Web sites use background colors and thin white lines between information groups to make these lists easy to scan.

#### Video Highlights



- ▶ [Preview 'Brotherhood' episode](#)
- ▶ [Hasselhoff's hilarious ad](#)
- ▶ [Perfect grilled salmon](#)
- ▶ [Science of the ultimate tsunami](#)
- ▶ [All eyes on Danica](#)

#### Entertainment



**Photos: Oprah, Lohan & more**

- 'Miami Vice' sinks 'Pirates' at box office
- Willie: Dixie Chicks got a 'raw deal'
- Gossip: Madonna's toilet needs
- Report: Swank loves to thrill
- Promising model ID'd as crash victim
- Fire erupts on James Bond set
- Photos: Liz Taylor through the years
- Anderson, Kid Rock marry in St. Tropez
- Will Ferrell & wife expecting

Find movies, actors and actresses

#### Popular Searches

<p><b>People Search</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robert Charles Browne</li> <li>Jada Pinkett Smith</li> <li>Tony Blair</li> <li>Reggie Bush</li> <li>Colin Farrell</li> </ul>	<p><b>Suggested Searches</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landis doping</li> <li>Israel-Lebanon border</li> <li>NORAD</li> <li>Pakistan Taliban</li> <li>Minimum wage bill</li> </ul>
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**Relative Importance:**

1 2 3 4 0

**Strength of Evidence:**

1 2 3 4 0

#### INSIDE EDUCATION

For Teachers  
 For Students  
 For University Students & Scholars  
 Plan a Group Visit  
 Beyond Our Walls: State Profiles on Holocaust Education

#### INSIDE RESEARCH

Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies  
 Collections and Archives  
 Library  
 Academic Publications  
 Web Links  
 Public Programs Multimedia Archive  
 Survivors Registry Names Research  
 Holocaust-Era Assets  
 Task Force for International Cooperation

#### INSIDE REMEMBRANCE

Days of Remembrance 2006  
 Holocaust Remembrance Day 2006-15  
 Organizing a Remembrance Day  
 Planning a Military Observance  
 Survivors Registry  
 Office of Survivor Affairs

## 12:4 Display Related Items in Lists

**Guideline:** Display a series of related items in a vertical list rather than as continuous text.

Relative Importance:

1 2 3 4 ○

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 3 4 ○

**Comments:** A well-organized list format tends to facilitate rapid and accurate scanning. One study indicated that users scan vertical lists more rapidly than horizontal lists. Scanning a horizontal list takes users twenty percent longer than scanning a vertical list.

**Sources:** Mayhew, 1992; Nygren and Allard, 1996; Smith and Mosier, 1986; Tullis, 1984; Wright, 1977.

### Example:

The Office of Data makes available for download:

- [Annual Production Statistics](#)
- [Monthly Production Statistics](#)
- [Weekly Production Statistics](#)
- [Quarterly Consumption Projections](#)

Bulleted lists are easier to scan and understand.

The Office of Data makes available for download [Annual Production Statistics](#), [Monthly Production Statistics](#), [Weekly Production Statistics](#), and [Quarterly Consumption Projections](#).

Horizontal lists are more difficult to scan and understand.

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for detailed descriptions  
of the rating scales

1 2 3 4 ○

## 12:5 Introduce Each List

**Guideline:** Provide an introductory heading (i.e., word or phrase) at the top of each list.

**Comments:** Providing a descriptive heading allows users to readily understand the reason for having a list of items, and how the items relate to each other. The heading helps to inform users how items are categorized, or any prevailing principle or theme. Users are able to use lists better when they include headings.

**Sources:** Bransford and Johnson, 1972; Bransford and Johnson, 1973; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Engel and Granda, 1975; Levine, 1996; Redish, 1993; Smith and Goodman, 1984; Smith and Mosier, 1986.

**Example:**

Relative Importance:

12300

Strength of Evidence:

12340


In The News
2:23

- [Live - Pentagon briefing on Iraq war](#)
- [Bloody street battles fought near Baghdad](#)
- [Purported Saddam message calls for jihad](#)
- [U.S.: No proof of attack on 'human shield'](#)
- [Rumsfeld war plan criticized on battlefield](#)
- [Basra civilians say pressured by Baath party](#)
- [Jordan foils two alleged Iraqi terror plots](#)
- [Hong Kong to move SARS victims to camp](#)
- [PayPal accused of violating Patriot Act](#)
- [Markets: S&P 500 ↑ 1.4% · Nasdaq](#)

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Free CD-RW or DVD with select Dell PCs. Expires 12/31/02. [Details here](#)

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- [1-800-Flowers - Get 20 Tulips free, when you buy 20 Tulips - \\$29.99](#)
- [New Burberry at Neiman Marcus](#) - Check out the new styles

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Entertainment

- [50 Cent & Eminem Performance](#)



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- [Y! Sports Fantasy Baseball](#) - [Sign up now](#)

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**MARKETS** May 17; 2:45 p.m. ET

DJIA	11,195.05	▼ -224.84
NASDAQ	2,197.38	▼ -31.75
S&P 500	1,269.97	▼ -22.11

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- [A Look at McCarrick's Tenure](#)

## 12:6 Use Static Menus

**Guideline:** Use static menus to elicit the fastest possible speed when accessing menu items.

Relative Importance:

12300

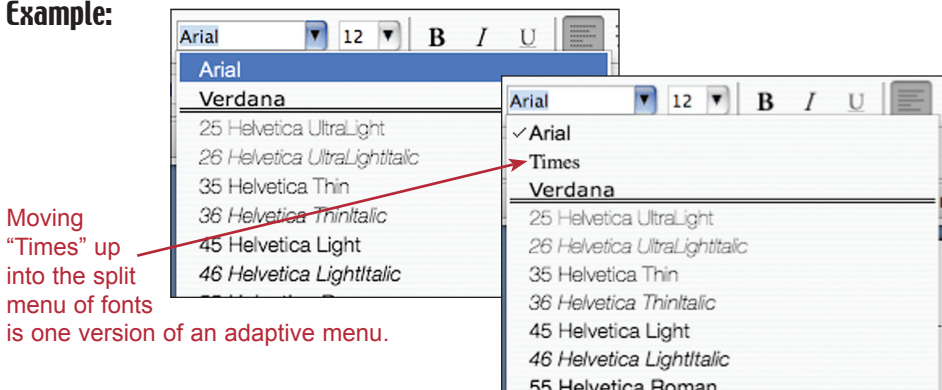
Strength of Evidence:

12300

**Comments:** To elicit the fastest possible human performance, designers should put the most frequently used menu items in the first few positions of a menu. Designers should determine the location of items within a menu based on the frequency of use of each item. Adaptable menus, where users are allowed to change the order of menu items, elicits reasonably fast performance as well. The slowest performance is achieved when an adaptive menu, where the computer automatically changes the position of menu items, is used. One study found that users prefer having static menus, rather than adaptive menus.

**Sources:** Findlater and McGrenere, 2004; McGrenere, Baecker and Booth, 2002.

**Example:**



## 12:7 Start Numbered Items at One

**Guideline:** When items are numbered, start the numbering sequence at 'one' rather than 'zero.'

Relative Importance:

12000

Strength of Evidence:

12000

**Comments:** Do not start the numbering with a 'zero.' When counting, people start with 'one,' not 'zero.'

**Sources:** Engel and Granda, 1975; Smith and Mosier, 1986.

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## 12:8 Use Appropriate List Style

Relative Importance:

1 2 3 4

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 3 4

**Guideline:** Use bullet lists to present items of equal status or value, and numbered lists if a particular order to the items is warranted.

**Comments:** Bullet lists work best when the items do not contain an inherent sequence, order, or rank. Numbered lists assign each item in the list an ascending number, making the numerical order readily apparent. Numbered lists are especially important when giving instructions.

**Sources:** Coney and Steehouder, 2000; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Lorch and Chen, 1986; Narveson, 2001; Spyridakis, 2000.

### Example:

Use bullets if your list items are of equal value, or if they have no discernable order.

#### Agencies

- A-Z Index
- Federal Branches
- State, Local & Tribal
- International

#### Contact Government

- e-Mail
- Phone
- In-Person
- More

#### Reference

- News Releases
- Federal Forms
- Laws & Regulations
- Questions About Government?
- More

#### Zeitgeist This Week

Gaining Search Queries: Week Ending April 24, 2006

- |                                |                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. <a href="#">420</a>         | 9. <a href="#">mothers day</a>       |
| 2. <a href="#">nick lachey</a> | 10. <a href="#">denise richards</a>  |
| 3. <a href="#">silent hill</a> | 11. <a href="#">opie and anthony</a> |
| 4. <a href="#">nepal</a>       | 12. <a href="#">pyramid head</a>     |
| 5. <a href="#">miss usa</a>    | 13. <a href="#">david lee roth</a>   |
| 6. <a href="#">chernobyl</a>   | 14. <a href="#">aresanob</a>         |
| 7. <a href="#">gas prices</a>  | 15. <a href="#">cinco de</a>         |
| 8. <a href="#">reggie bush</a> |                                      |

Using numbered lists is appropriate when items are in a proscribed order, such as this list of 'Top 10' searches.

#### Top Searches in 2005 - News

1. Janet Jackson
2. Hurricane Katrina
3. tsunami
4. xbox 360
5. Brad Pitt
6. Michael Jackson
7. American Idol
8. Britney Spears
9. Angelina Jolie
10. Harry Potter

#### Top Searches in 2005 - Products

1. ipod
2. digital camera
3. mp3 player
4. ipod mini
5. psp
6. laptop
7. xbox
8. ipod shuffle
9. computer desk
10. ipod nano



## 12:9 Capitalize First Letter of First Word in Lists

**Guideline:** Capitalize the first letter of only the first word of a list item, a list box item, check box labels, and radio button labels.

**Comments:** Only the first letter of the first word should be capitalized unless the item contains another word that would normally be capitalized.

**Sources:** Bailey, 1996; Fowler, 1998; Marcus, Smilonich and Thompson, 1995; Microsoft, 1992.

**Example:**

The example shows three overlapping list boxes. The top box, titled 'Services', has a relative importance of 1 and a strength of evidence of 2. The middle box, titled 'Events & off...', has a relative importance of 1 and a strength of evidence of 2. The bottom box, titled 'Information', has a relative importance of 1 and a strength of evidence of 2. The 'Smithsonian Research' box is also visible, with a relative importance of 1 and a strength of evidence of 2.

Category	Relative Importance	Strength of Evidence
Services	1	2
Events & off...	1	2
Information	1	2
Smithsonian Research	1	2

**Relative Importance:**



**Strength of Evidence:**



### Information by Topic »

- **Benefits and Grants**  
Loans, money, funding, financial aid...
- **Consumer Guides**  
Consumer credit, better business, recalls, fraud, debt, scams...
- **Defense and International**  
Military, international affairs, trade, embassies, visas, immigration...
- **Environment, Energy and Agriculture**  
Farms, food production, natural resources, conservation, weather...
- **Family, Home and Community**  
Housing, human services, community development...
- **Health and Nutrition**  
Medical, health care, insurance, diet, fitness, public health...
- **History, Arts, and Culture**  
Museums, libraries, genealogy, ethnic traditions...

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