

Web Site Design Basics

What is a good website?

“A site that delivers quality content for its intended audience and does so with style and elegance.”

www.devx.com/projectcool/Article/19847/0page/2

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Web Site Design Basics

- Define the purpose
 - Organize the content
 - Design a logical structure
 - Supply common predictable elements
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Web Site Design Basics

Start with 3 questions:

- What does my audience want?
 - What do I want to say?
 - How can I arrange my content to meet my audience's needs?
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Define the Purpose

- Promote your ideas, hobbies or beliefs
- Advertise your company or product
- Provide customer service and support
- Keep your customers informed
- Provide or sell information
- Provide internal information for your company

www.continental.com

Organize Your Information

- Divide content into logical chunks
 - Establish a hierarchy of importance
 - Structure relations between the units
 - Build a site that closely follows your information structure
 - Analyze the functional and aesthetic success of your system
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Chunking

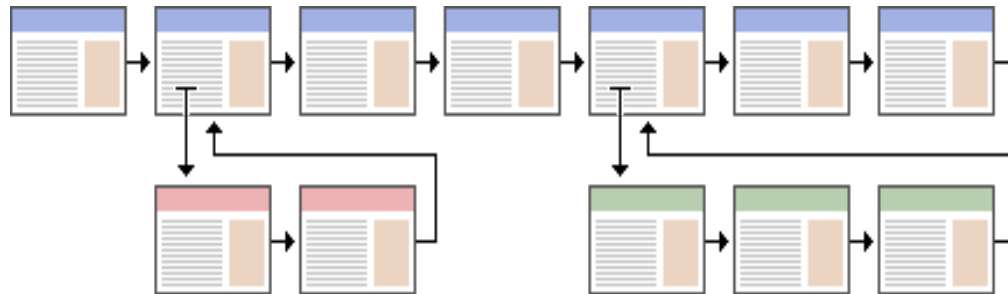
- Past experience predicts how a site is organized
 - Chunking helps organize and present information in a uniform format
 - 1 or 2 pages of text is about maximum size for a chunk
 - Most users save long documents to disk or print for more comfortable reading
 - Chunks “work” on a computer screen with a limited view
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Hierarchy of Importance

- Move from most general overview to more specific submenus and content pages
 - Rank chunks in importance and interrelations
 - Match user's expectations and predictions about how the info is organized
 - Be consistent with your organization
 - 3 clicks and 30 seconds
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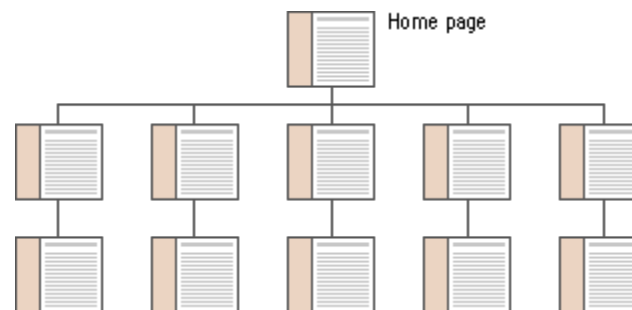
Sequence Structure

- Chronological, from general to specific, or alphabetical
- Most appropriate for educational and training sites
- Used for indexes, encyclopedias, and glossaries



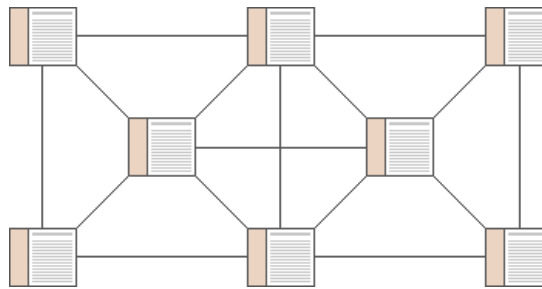
Hierarchical Structure

- Usually organized around a home page
- Suited to web organizations
- Users find it a familiar and predictable organizational structure
- Helps keep content organized



Web Structure

- Allows for associative thought and free flow of ideas, users follow their interests
- Can create confusion, hard for user to understand and predict
- Best for lists of links and experienced users



Site Structure

- Work from a site diagram that evolves with the site
 - Structure details where each piece of content, navigation or link appears
 - Directories (folders) and content files mirror the site diagram
 - Many websites share aspects of all 3 types of structures
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Site Elements: Home Page

- Point of entry into web site
 - All pages should have a direct link to home page
 - 10 seconds to load
 - Top 5 inches of screen is area visible to most users – position matters
 - Put your most important information here – most visited page
 - Menu of links and table of contents or index helpful
 - Test your site on various browsers
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Site Elements: Splash Screens

- A site cover, usually with sophisticated graphics or animations
- Most controversial of site elements
- Takes an additional mouse click to get to home page with content
- Will users be visiting the site several times a day or just once in a while?

<http://www.info.med.yale.edu/caim/hhmi/>

<http://www.cocacola.com>

Site Elements: Graphics or Text

- Use of graphics is a major layout decision for your home page
- Trend is imagemap links - provide alternative text-based links
- Try to keep each page with graphics at 60K or less in file size
- Make your site visually appealing and fast loading
- Many use a graphic banner at the top, followed by text-based links

<http://www.si.edu/>

Site Elements: Master Page Layout Grid

- A strong, logical page layout is more important than the first impression of the home page
 - All internal pages should have a standard consistent layout
 - Carefully consider links, graphics and other elements that are on every page
 - Get feedback from users to avoid misleading or confusing labels and words
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Site Elements: Master Page Layout Grid

- Page grid determines number, location, terminology of all major page links and graphic elements
 - Grid enforces a consistent identity by specifying information on graphics, logos, fonts, positions, colors, and wording
 - Use a variety of graphic images to allow your creativity to show
 - Build the home page after your layout grid so users are introduced to your identity right away
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Site Elements: Menus and Subsites

- A mini-home page for each site section organizes large sites
 - Frequent users can link there directly
 - Include basic links to other sections and main home page
 - Include a page of favorite links to related sites for your users
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Site Elements: Site Guides

- Table of contents and/or keyword index shows site organization and content
- Site index should include most relevant and useful keywords
- Site maps use a graphic diagram or an organized list of links to major pages
- Text-based indexes are more efficient, informative and easier to update

<http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/toolbar/3.0/sitemap/en-us.msp>

Site Elements: What's New?

- A “new” graphic can be inserted next to new info
 - An area or page might be dedicated to new information
 - Include a revision date, especially if users are printing information
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Site Elements: Search Features

- Large sites and sites with long documents need search capability
 - Not a substitute for an organized site structure of menus and links
 - Menu browser and key word search complement each other
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Site Elements: Contact Information

- Provide email and home address, phone and fax numbers
 - If users will travel to your business, provide directions, maps, hotels
 - FAQ pages are useful if staff can handle responses
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Intranet Design

- Useful information logically organized for the institution's users
 - Easily and efficiently accessed
 - Large organizations with many departments need a consistent logical design throughout the entire site
 - Remember the audience: if user is confused, productivity is reduced, or information unavailable, the site is unsuccessful
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Site Design Best Practices

- Design for your audience first
 - Use a logical organizing structure
 - Use small size graphics so pages load quickly
 - Use CSS to format and layout pages consistently
 - Chunk your content
 - Make navigation simple and predictable
 - Design for multiple browsers and test, test, test
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