

Content standards to consider

- Good News
 - Student achievements, teacher, classified of the year, community
- Calendar
- Upcoming Events
- Newsfeed
 - School, region, district
- Location and directions
- Contact Info levels and type (phone/email)
 - All staff
 - Departments/clubs/program contacts
 - Front office
- Visuals
 - Quality of photos logo
 - Type of visuals and privacy policies
- Leadership message
 - School, district
- Social media signups
- Programs and clubs
- Curriculum
 - Standards, examples
 - Online tutoring
 - How to assist your child
- Supports
 - Homeless services, bullying, counseling, other social services
- Weather
- Mandated school accountability reports
- Links
 - Partnerships, advertising
- Emergency area
 - “Quiet” until needed

Doing Your Research

Your site search results: Most web site log analysis tools enable you to see the terms your web site visitors are searching for on your site. You can receive a listing (ranked in order of number of times each term is searched for) for content that is either missing from your web site, or too hard to find.

Front desk calls: Talk with the staff that work in the front office and/or answer phone calls for the site or department. If they don't already know, ask them to track the top questions. When you place that content on the site, you cut down on their workload.

Usability testing: Should be iterative throughout the development of a site and periodically to ensure the site is still meeting the needs of stakeholders and keeping up with industry standards. Can be as formal as a focus group or as informal as self-reporting of ability to complete tasks and how long it takes.

Card sorting: Allow your stakeholders to show you a different perspective. Create cards with the content that you believe should be included on the newly re-designed site. Allow them to create navigational "titles" and group the content in a way that makes sense to them.

Homepage Tips

- Create a positive first impression – easy on the eyes
- Show major options
- Communicate the site's value and purpose
- Consider it a customer service tool
- Limit text and length – shoot for no scrolling
- Announce changes, especially internally as may staff members may be referring to certain pages
- Pay attention to panel width, flexibility with different sized screens
- Homepage space is valuable, fresh content is invaluable

General Layout Tips

- Research-based design & usability
- Consistency in placement of important content
- Important items "above the fold" and centered - size and placement reflect level of importance
- White space is your friend - appropriate line lengths
- Use chunking and subheads
- It is okay to repeat information in multiple places – different audiences think of different ways to reach the same information

What We Know

- Eye-tracking study conducted by Nielsen (2012) suggests that users pay "close attention to photos and other images that contain relevant information"
- Study found users also ignore certain images, particularly stock photos merely included as decorative artwork
- Another eye-tracking study reported a 34% increase in memory retention when unnecessary images were removed in conjunction with other content revisions
- Studies show that in a best-case scenario, we only read 28% of the text on a web page
- We read in a non-linear fashion (i.e. we skip around a webpage instead of reading it from top to bottom)
- Nielsen study claims a 58% increase in usability can be achieved simply by cutting roughly half the words
- Many popular readability measurement formulas use the length of sentences and words as factors that influence ease of reading and comprehension
- We swipe our eyes from left to right, then continue on down the page in an F-shaped pattern, skipping a lot of text in between
- Eye-tracking study by ClickTale - users fixate longer on bulleted lists and text formatting (such as bolding and italics)
- Test using readability formulas -Readability Test Tool allows you to plug in a URL, then gives you scores based on popular readability formulas such as the Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease

Resources

- www.usability.gov
- <http://guidelines.usability.gov/> -Searchable database of Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines
- <http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/62/whitespace.htm> (margins and whitespace)
- <http://www.usefulusability.com/8-free-tools-for-good-information-architecture-and-usability/>
- Usability in Government Systems: User Experience Design for Citizens and Public Servants by Elizabeth Buie and Dianne Murray (2012)
- Government Online Site exit disclaimer report (2010) conducted by PEW
- How Americans Get in Touch with Government Site exit disclaimer survey (2003) conducted by PEW
- Usability for Government: Improving Service Delivery Site exit disclaimer by Ruth Ellison and Adrian Newton