Evaluating Your Website

Web guidelines evaluation tool

Project plan template

Report template



| **Guideline** | **Source** | **Follows the rule?** | **Description of the problem** | **Pages/examples** | **Scope** | **Severity** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Home page** | | | | | | |
| Enable access to the home page | RBWG (5:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Present all major options on the home page | RBWG (5:2) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communicate the website’s value and purpose | RBWG (5:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Limit the amount of prose text on the home page | RBWG (5:5) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure the home page looks like a home page | RBWG (5:6) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Limit homepage length | RBWG (5:7) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use meaningful graphics and images | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Avoid duplicate or redundant links to the same content | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide content and choices that are meaningful for users and their top tasks | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Navigation** | | | | | | |
| Provide navigational options | RBWG (7:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Differentiate and group navigation elements | RBWG (7:2) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use a clickable ‘List of Contents’ on long pages | RBWG (7:3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide feedback on users’ location | RBWG (7:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Place primary navigation menus in the left panel | RBWG (7:5) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use descriptive tab labels | RBWG (7:6) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Present tabs effectively | RBWG (7:7) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Keep navigation-only pages short | RBWG (7:8) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use appropriate menu types | RBWG (7:9) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Breadcrumb navigation | RBWG (7:12) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be consistent with navigational elements | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide support for lateral navigation | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Links** | | | | | | |
| Use meaningful link labels | RBWG (10:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Link to related content | RBWG (10:2) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Match link names with their destination pages | RBWG (10:3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Avoid misleading cues to click | RBWG (10:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use text for links | RBWG (10:6) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Designate used links | RBWG (10:7) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide consistent clickability cues | RBWG (10:8) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure that embedded links are descriptive | RBWG (10:9) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use appropriate text link lengths | RBWG (10:11) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are links clear and easily distinguished from each other? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| If links require additional software (and are not web links) do they let the user know? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Information architecture** | | | | | | |
| Does the structure of the site reflect users' mental models, not the organizational structure of the agency? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the information grouped and labeled meaningfully for users? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the architecture of the site provide a balance of breadth and depth dependent on the needs of the users and the content? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Design and layout** | | | | | | |
| Avoid cluttered displays | RBWG (6:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Place important items at top center | RBWG (6:3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Structure for easy comparison | RBWG (6:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Establish level of importance | RBWG (6:5) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Optimize display density | RBWG (6:6) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Align items on a page | RBWG (6:7) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use fluid layouts | RBWG (6:8) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Choose appropriate line lengths | RBWG (6:12) |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Heading, titles and labels** | | | | | | |
| Use clear category labels | RBWG (9:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide descriptive page titles | RBWG (9:2) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use descriptive headings liberally | RBWG (9:3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use unique and descriptive headings | RBWG (9:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure visual consistency | RBWG (11:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Order elements to maximize user performance | RBWG (12:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Limit the use of images | RBWG (14:9) |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Content and terminology** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Make action sequences clear | RBWG (15:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Avoid jargon | RBWG (15:2) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use familiar words | RBWG (15:3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Define acronyms and abbreviations | RBWG (15:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use abbreviations sparingly | RBWG (15:5) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use active voice | RBWG (15:9) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Write instructions in the affirmative | RBWG (15:10) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Make first sentences descriptive | RBWG (15:11) |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Content organization and display** | | | | | | |
| Organize information clearly | RBWG (16:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Facilitate scanning | RBWG (16:2) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ensure that necessary information is displayed | RBWG (16:3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the site answer users' questions? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the content up to date? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Search** | | | | | | |
| Ensure usable search results | RBWG (17:1) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provide a search option on each page | RBWG (17:4) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Design search around users’ terms | RBWG (17:5) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the search provide meaningful results and answer the questions that users have? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| In search, does the site suggest alternative spellings or choices when the user comes close? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| If the search yields zero results, does the search give users options on what to do next? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Branding** | | | | | | |
| Does the site present a unified look and feel so users can always tell what organization's web site they are on? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the design effectively communicate what the organization offers to users of its web site? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the website provide users with a positive impression and engaging experience? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Can users tell at a glance whose web site it is? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the name (and logo) in an obvious place, such as the upper left corner of the screen? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Help** | | | | | | |
| Does the site provide easy to find and easy to use help? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is there an easy way to contact relevant people or find a physical location when necessary? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are there alternative ways to get information that are clear and easy to find on the site? | Redish |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Technical considerations** | | | | | | |
| Does the site consistently employ styles and follow web standards? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the site meet accessibility requirements? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Do links work? Are they functional? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the site download in a reasonable amount of time over a variety of connections | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the site function correctly over commonly used browsers and platforms? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is the site functional for older browsers and alternate devices? | AT |  |  |  |  |  |

**Sources:**

* **RBWG:** Researched Based Web Guidelines *(http://www.usability.gov/guidelines/)*
* **Redish:** Ginny Redish’s Questions for Evaluating your Website *(recommendations from a usability expert)*
* **AT:** Anthro-Tech Best Practices and Guidelines for Usable Web Sites *(recommendations from usability experts)*

# Web site evaluation report

# Project Name

#### Prepared for: Name and Title

#### Name and Title

#### Prepared by:

#### Author:

## Introduction

This document reports the results of a web site evaluation for Project Name. The purpose of this evaluation is to identify usability problems and make recommendations for how to fix those problems. This report includes the following sections:

* Methodology
* Evaluators
* Guidelines
* Users and scenarios
* Findings
  + Homepage
    - Positive findings
    - Usability problems
  + Navigation
    - Positive findings
    - Usability problems
  + *…and so on….*

## Methodology

*In this section, describe the methodology for the site evaluation. Site relevant literature, like the sources presented in the bibliography.*

## Evaluators

*List who conducted the evaluation and background or qualifications where appropriate.*

## Guidelines

*List the guidelines used in the evaluation or the sources of the guidelines. You can also list a complete selection of guidelines in an appendix.*

## Users and scenarios

*If using scenario based evaluation, list who the users are and the list of scenarios that were used during the evaluation.*

## Globalrecommendations

*List any global recommendations that call for site wide changes, for example redesigning a web site using the user-centered design process*

## Findings

*The findings section makes up the bulk of the report. For each section, listing the positive findings and the usability problems identified during the investigation.*

### Homepage

*Each section should group findings that are related. Consider grouping in a similar way to the findings you used (homepage, navigation, etc.)*

#### Positive findings

* *List where the site successfully follows the guidelines.*

#### Usability problems

* *List where the site does not follow the guidelines by stating the findings and showing evidence and screenshots*

#### Recommendation

* *Make a specific recommendation for each usability problem identified.*

## Appendixes

*Use the appendix section to include supplemental material such as the list of actual guidelines or a findings log that ranks the usability* *problems by scope and severity.*

# Bibliography

The following sources talk in more detail about Web guidelines and the methodology of heuristic evaluation.

De Jong, M. and Van der Geest, T. (2000) "Characterizing Web Heuristics,” *Technical* *Communication*, Third Quarter, pp.311-326.

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Katner, L. and Rosenbaum, S. (1997) “Usability Studies of WWW Sites: Heuristic Evaluation vs. Laboratory Testing “ *SIGDOC 97 Proceedings,* (Salt Lake City, UT), published by Association for Computing Machinery, Inc., 1997.

Levi, M.D. and Conrad, F.G. (1996). “A Heuristic Evaluation of WWW Prototype,” *Interactions*, July/August, pp. 50-61

Nielsen, J. “Ten Usability Heuristics by Nielsen” from useit.com.  
http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic\_list.html

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Nielsen, J. and Molich, R. (1990) “Heuristic Evaluation of User Interfaces”, *Proceedings of ACM CHI* 1990, 249-256.

Quesenbery, W (2003) “Designing a Search People Can Really Use” *Intercom*, December 2003 pp. 18-21.

Spyridakis , J. (2000) “Guidelines for Authoring Comprehensible Web Pages and Evaluating Their Success.” *Technical Communication*, Third Quarter, pp. 359-382.

Williams, T. (2000) “Guidelines For Designing and Evaluating the Display of Information on the Web.” *Technical Communication*, Third Quarter, pp. 383-396.