

# Design Guidelines

**Here is a list of general guidelines that you should follow while designing your site. The guidelines below are widely accepted throughout the website design industry, and will help make your page more attractive, and user friendly.**

- First, your main page (including HTML, graphics, etc.) should be under 80KB in size, and at the maximum should take 20 seconds to download at 56k. "Less is more,"; just take a look at Yahoo! the most popular website on the internet.
- Try and avoid building long pages (ie. The ones you need to scroll waaaaay down to get to the bottom of the page) Keep all of the content visible on one page without having to use the scrollbar (at least for the main page).
- Make sure that your main page tells visitors what your site is about and has something to grab their attention, otherwise they'll leave.
- This is a very common mistake, believe it or not: always put contact information on your site so that people can e-mail you with complaints, suggestions, and compliments. Try to reply to all e-mail within 48 hours. Learn how to effectively manage your email communications.
- The more often you update your site, the more visitors you will get. Change your site at least once a week. You don't have to spend hours modifying the entire site -- just 10-15 min/day will do.
- Content, content, and content. Your site can't be like everyone else's, it can't just be a couple of pictures that you stole off another site and called it "Bob's page." It has to be unique and provide interesting content that you can't find anywhere else.
- Make sure you properly promote your site. Visit sites that have a theme similar to yours; check out how they've made their pages, learn from their mistakes, and offer to exchange links.
- When you search for keywords that describe your site, check out the sites that rank at the top. Look at their sites and source code to see how they have achieved that ranking. You might also e-mail the webmasters and offer to exchange links.

- On the web, it's not "Build it and they will come." It's "Promote it and they will come, and keep promoting it, and they will keep on coming." Once you stop promoting your site and updating it with fresh content, people will stop visiting.
- Test your site with different browsers, screen resolutions and color settings. Build your site so as many as possible are able to view it.
- Make sure all the links on your webpage work. There are very few things as annoying as "Error 404 file not found."
- Make sure all the images on your site work. It gives your visitors a poor first impression if images don't load, and they will often leave. One common mistake is that the path to the images looks like this: ``. For people visiting your site the images won't load, but for you they will.
- Check and recheck your spelling, especially if you're trying to run a business over the Internet. Use a spell checker. Having lots of mistakes makes your site look like it was made by an amateur.
- If you are selling something through your site, state it up front on your main page; don't force people to go down four links before finding out that you are selling something. If you are selling more than a handful of items, create separate pages for each product group or family. Give a picture of the product(s) that you are selling. Tell people why they need it. Assure them that their credit card is secure, and offer an address and phone number.
- Keep your site consistent throughout. Don't have a different background color on every page, or a different navigation scheme. Try to have at least one small icon on every page on your site, somewhere at the top preferably, so that people will know they are still at your site. Keep every thing consistent.
- Make navigation on your site easy. Have navigation links at the top, bottom, left or right side of the page. Use tables instead of frames. Keep the navigation consistent throughout the site.
- Try to keep the number of clicks required to get from your main page to any other page on your site down to three or four. If it's more than that, you may have to re-consider your navigation scheme.

- Do not have sound "autoplay" whenever someone visits your website. None of the Top 100 websites on the internet do it; neither should you. Having music auto-play can even crash some browsers.
- Make sure all the text on your site is easy to read. Avoid "busy" background images that draw the attention of the visitor away from the text.
- In general, use anything outside of a white or black background with caution. White backgrounds are used for sites with a lot of text content, while black backgrounds are usually used to achieve an effect of "coolness."
- Don't get too discouraged early on. Everyone has to start somewhere. Keep working on it, use the resources on this site, and your site will grow and keep growing.