

# Guidelines

The following is a list of design “do’s and ‘dont’s” to help keep your site looking professional and well managed. We have found that none are more passionate about their product or service than the people providing them, and often there is a tendency to ‘over emphasize’ the points that they are passionate about. Unfortunately, this usually serves as a detriment as this over emphasizing can make the web site look unbalanced, confusing and unappealing... the opposite of what we want a web site to do! Of course, there are always exceptions to every rule, but if you are just starting out, we recommend you stay within these guidelines until you become comfortable with design and function.

**1. Home page information.** The purpose of the front page, or home page, is to welcome your visitors and introduce them to the main benefits of your product or service. This must be accomplished within 10 to 15 seconds, therefore, keep it to the point.

**Do** state clearly what the main benefits of your product or service are with links to other pages describing these benefits in greater detail. Use words in the text that people would type into the search field of Google to find your product or service.

**Don’t** try to tell the visitor everything about your product or service all at once. Give it to them piecemeal with teasers and lead ins to explore further. This will keep the reader far more interested and will make it much easier for them to read and absorb information.

**2. Allocated font sizes.** Each of our sites is designed with a specific size for main headings, subheadings, and text, so that there is sufficient contrast to help the reader distinguish quickly and easily what to look at first and to naturally guide their eye around the page. When these size allocations are changed, your visitor’s can easily become confused and not know where to look first.

**Do** use the allocated sizes for main headers, subheadings and text.

**Don’t** use size allocations anywhere else to ‘make a point’. If you do need to make a point in your text, use bold or italics. This will draw sufficient attention to what you wish to make a point about. Using non-allocated sizes in places not intended for these sizes will only serve to add ‘visual clutter’ to the page and make it clunky and confusing. It may also reduce your rankings in the search engines.

**3. Side menu ‘news’ items.** It is important to remember that the purpose of a side menu news item is to draw the reader’s interest to want to read more about it.... not to read everything all at once.

**Do** keep it very short and sweet with a link to view more. Two to three short lines of well-chosen text will suffice.

**Don’t** try to put everything about the topic in this space. Tease them with a little and draw them in. When too much text is placed in this space, it causes the reader to have to scroll down, which we want to keep to a minimum when possible, and can make the overall page design look off balance.

**4. Links in text.** Text links are powerful tools to keep the reader interested and in some instances, help to keep the visual clutter on a page to a minimum by linking to another page with more in-depth information.

**Do** choose one to 5 words as a link. Keep it short.

**Don't** make a whole paragraph into a link. It looks unappealing and is completely unnecessary.

**5. Paragraph spacing.** Unless designed to do so, changing the spacing in the paragraphs (i.e., from single to double spaced) or adding or taking out spaces between paragraphs, is not advisable.

**Do** keep the spacing originally intended, as the designer has taken this into consideration for the overall design.

**Don't** change the spacing to make a point. Simply using bold or italics will be sufficient to draw attention to the point you wish to make.

**6. Bold and italics.** It is easy to get carried away with making a point when you are so passionate about your product or service. The problem is that when too many points are made, the whole point gets lost.

**Do** use bold and italics to draw attention to a specific item. Keep it short. One or two words, or a sentence is sufficient.

**Don't** get carried away and bold a whole paragraph, or everything on the page because it is 'important'. There must be sufficient contrast for the visitor to follow the text. Only emphasize the bare minimum. Trust me, this will draw far more attention to the point you wish to make.

**7. Using capitals.** As with using bold and italics to emphasize a point, keep it to a minimum. Reading anything with all caps is 30% more difficult to read than upper and lower case. You want to make it as easy as possible for your visitor to read the text.

**Do** use capitals for ONE or TWO words only, or for a short HEADING.

**Don't** use capitals for an entire sentence, paragraph or long heading.

**8. Centered and justified.** Changing the justification is generally not advisable. Most of the time, a site is designed with left justified text as this is the easiest to read and help the eye to flow throughout the page. Sometimes, left and right justification is used if the design warrants it. Rarely is centre justification used, and only for very small amounts of text when it makes sense.

**Do** change the justification to emphasize a small paragraph only in the body of the text.

**Don't** change the justification of an entire page. Left, or left and right justification is the easiest format for your visitors to read.

**9. Photos.** Whenever possible, we will add a function to your web site that will automatically size photos for you. However, this is not a perfect solution. If, for example, you are wanting to fit a vertical picture in a horizontal space, this can dramatically alter the layout of the page. If your web site does not automatically size and/or crop photos for you, you will need a program, such as Photoshop, GIMP, or Irfanview, in which you can alter photos and save them in web format.

**Do** try to stay within the horizontal or vertical format designed into your site. Do use RGB low resolution photographs (72dpi) that have been downsized from a good quality high resolution photo (300dpi) whenever possible. Do, if you are able, crop the photos in advance of uploading them to the site.

**Don't** use poor quality photos. This will decrease the level of professionalism of your site. Don't use high resolution photos as this will increase the time it takes for your page to load, and visitors don't generally like to wait. Don't allow yourself to get frustrated with the whole photography thing... it can be confusing. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask us.

**10. Glitches.** We always endeavour to make sure there are no glitches before we hand the site over to you for management, however, we are dealing with ever-changing technology. If you find a glitch, or suspect something is not quite right...

**Do** call or email us right away and let us know what you have found.

**Don't** try to fix the glitch yourself. NEVER delete code without saving it somewhere else first.

**11. Adding extras.** It is very tempting to add gadgets, links and counters and such to your site. If you are not really familiar with how these things work, or where they are coming from, or who they are linking to...

**Do** call or email us to ask us any questions about adding extras to your site. We would be happy to make sure the addition will not negatively affect your site.

**Don't** add anything without thoroughly researching the item first. Often, we already have options in place that are safe for you to use, such as hidden counters, etc.

**12. Ask! Ask! Ask!** We are here to help you manage your site and keep it looking fresh and professional. Whenever you are in doubt or confused about anything, just call or email us.

**Do** call or email us with ANY questions you might have concerning your site.

**Don't** EVER delete any code without saving it somewhere else first. If too much code is lost, we will need to go back to the coding stage to fix it, and that will cost you.

## Generating traffic to your site.

There are several things you can begin to do right away to generate traffic to your site. Do a bit of reading up on web to learn more about this extensive topic. The following is something I found on the web and is a great place to start.

1 - Search engines rank sites based on quality of content and quality of backlinks (a link back to your site from another site). Make sure you are creating content that is worth reading. The search engines have many ways of identifying the quality of the content. In addition you must get backlinks to your site in order to gain reputability with the search engines. Quality backlinks come from other websites or articles on other websites creating hyperlink references to your material. Try to create backlinks wherever you will find people in your target market. This takes time and effort.

2- Blogs are a great way to generate traffic to your site. A blog keeps your site changing, fresh and up to date. It doesn't have to be called a blog. It can be 'News', or 'Daily Reflection' or anything you like. Being an active blogger and becoming a member of an active blogging community can entice other bloggers to link up to yours and visit your web page. This is dual purpose. It makes other people take a look at your site and it creates quality backlinks.

3- Social networking is another way to generate traffic. If you become a part of a social community, such as on Facebook, or Twitter, you can get a lot of traffic from your friends on the sites. If these types of social networking avenues do not work for your business, search around for networks that are specifically directed toward your target market. The more active you are on the web, the more traffic you generate, the higher the standings in the search engines.

4- Directories can be a great resource. They are tedious to submit to and do not necessarily provide quality links. Many people will search through directories to find information which will in turn get your traffic and diversified backlinks. If you want to try directories, but don't want to spend the time doing all the tedious work, consider hiring someone to submit them to the directories for you. It can be well worth the money.