

WEB SITE CHECKLIST

On this page, we've collected the key Web design principles presented in this chapter. Use this checklist to evaluate the online newspapers you encounter — or, more importantly, to critique your own.

LAYOUT & DESIGN

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the home page attractive, inviting and well-organized? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can readers easily differentiate between promos, ads and live news? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a clear hierarchy of news content on the home page?
In other words, is it instantly obvious which stories are most important? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do the headlines and design of the top stories on the home page show creativity or flair (rather than being predictably pre-formatted)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site's design style match the personalities of its readers? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do pages use attractive, appropriate and consistent colors? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site avoid unnecessary blinky-floaty-glowy animated effects? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the text on most pages avoid becoming too wide and wordy? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site use consistent styles for the basics: headlines, bylines, subheads, etc.? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site use consistent styles for the extras: graphics, liftout quotes, sidebars, etc.? |

USER-FRIENDLINESS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the home page download quickly? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site offer a "Sunday Brunch"-style menu of stories, visuals, reader forums and multimedia options (audio, video, animated graphics, etc.)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site provide services, stories and sidebars not available in the print newspaper? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are users always a single click away from the home page or main section fronts? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is a concise index constantly viewable, from any page in the site? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the flag appear atop every page, to remind users where they are? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are all images necessary? Tightly cropped? Compressed into GIF or JPEG formats? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site function successfully with all images turned off in the browser? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | If someone visits this site looking for a specific piece of information, will it be easy to find? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | When reading the text of stories, do users find helpful links that expand/explain topics? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can users search the newspaper's back issues? Are the archives reasonably complete? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site provide helpful links to related resources <i>outside</i> the newspaper? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is it easy to send e-mail feedback, news tips or letters to the editor? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Most importantly: Will visitors tend to bookmark this site and visit it again? |

SITE MANAGEMENT

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site design feel current? (Has it been upgraded within the past year?) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are all stories time-stamped (or, at the very least, dated)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are all stories and headlines well-edited? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do all pages share a well-coordinated system of navigation controls, typography and color style throughout the site? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there annoying technical glitches (temperamental graphics, expired links, pages "under construction") that might frustrate users? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the site provide newsroom phone numbers and addresses, for those who need to do more than send e-mail? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the publication name, Web address, date and copyright notice posted on every page (and do they appear on all printouts of stories)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does anything on this site violate someone else's copyright? |