

## **Ten things you need to consider to get your website navigation right**

The colours and images you use are important to the look of your website, but don't forget the whole point of the site is to enable your visitors to successfully find what they are looking for, so they return again and again. It doesn't matter if you are selling goods or services, or even giving away stuff, they have to find what they want to close the deal. You may have the best content imaginable, but if your visitors can't find it, it may as well not be there.

The following relate directly to the choices you make on your navigation, but some can equally apply to the site in general.

1. Make sure the navigation is obvious. You might be very proud of your artistic graphical rollovers, but if it's not clear how to navigate around the site, visitors won't spend time working it out, they'll simply go somewhere else.
2. Be consistent, so if you have a horizontal menu at the top of your page, don't go to a vertical one on another page unless you have very good design reasons to do so. Visitors want to find what they are looking for without having to work out how to get there.
3. Keep it uncluttered by only putting what you need to in your main navigation. Use text links at the bottom of the page for terms & conditions, privacy statements, contact pages, etc.
4. Always provide text links for at least your main categories at for instance the bottom of the page if you have graphic links for your main navigation. It not only helps unsighted visitors, but it also helps Google!
5. More than anything else the colours you choose will have an immediate impact when your visitors land on your site. Visitors will immediately come to a conclusion about your site based not only on the colours, but on the mix of colours. Think what sort of impression you want when deciding on what colours you use.
6. If you have your navigation in or just below the top banner, don't make it so busy that the navigation becomes harder to see.

7. Make sure the titles used in your navigation relate to the name of the page you are linking to. It will help what is called internal 'link integrity' one of the things that counts with the search engines.
8. If you use Flash or a JavaScript slideshow to draw attention to something on your site, make sure that you provide an alternative means of navigating to the same place which is not script based.
9. Make sure that your visitors don't have to click too many times to find what they want. Three clicks and they're out!
10. If you have a big website, consider providing a search facility and/or site map. In fact such facilities will enhance any site, they're just not so necessary on smaller sites.

Try and look at your site as if you had just arrived for the first time rather than looking fondly at your 'baby'. You may then see what others see and decide that some of the above points need addressing!