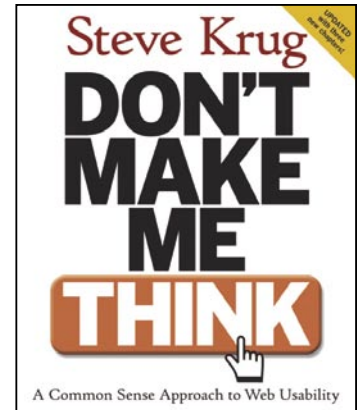




Why Web Sites Shouldn't Make You Think!

It's a fact: People won't use your Web site if they can't find their way around it. Don't let bad design happen to you! If you can't hire a consultant, turn to Steve Krug and his updated "instant classic" on Web usability, *Don't Make Me Think! A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, Second Edition*. This best-selling book helps people in the trenches (like you!)—designers, programmers, webmasters, project managers, marketing people—arrive at both right questions to ask the experts you hire, and practical answers so you can make difficult technical, aesthetic, and structural decisions. Check out this excerpt of the hottest usability tips and don't be surprised if it completely changes the way you think about Web design.



By Steve Krug
0-321-34475-8, \$35.00

Krug's First Law of Usability

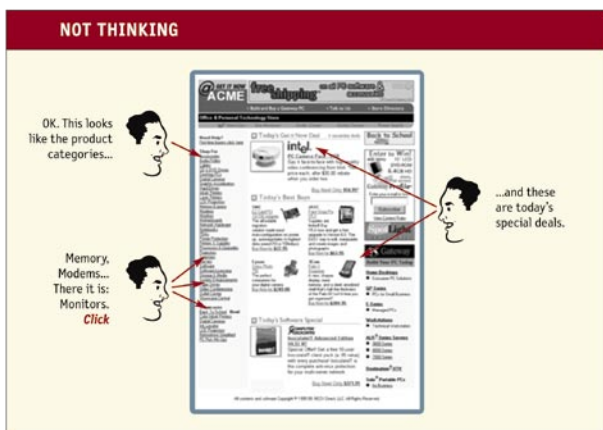
"What's the most important thing I should do if I want to make sure my Web site is easy to use?"

The answer is simple. It's not "Nothing important should ever be more than two clicks away," or "Speak the user's language," or even "Be consistent."

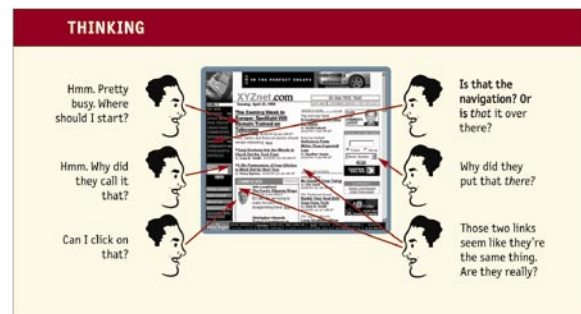
It's... "Don't make me think!" I've been telling people for years that this is my first law of usability. And the more Web pages I look at, the more convinced I become. It's the overriding principle—the ultimate tie breaker when deciding whether something works or doesn't in a Web design. If you have room in your head for only one usability rule, make this the one. It means that as far as is humanly possible, when I look at a Web page it should be self-evident. Obvious. Self-explanatory.

Think of it this way:

When I'm looking at a page that doesn't make me think, all the thought balloons over my head say things like "OK, there's the _____. And that's a _____. And there's the thing that I want."



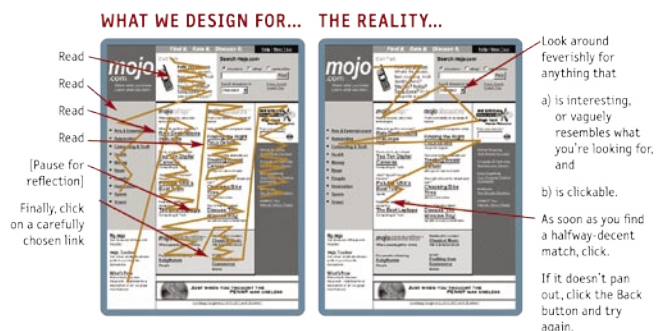
But when I'm looking at a page that makes me think, all the thought balloons over my head have question marks in them. When you're creating a site, your job is to get rid of the question marks.



How We Really Use the Web

When we're creating sites, we act as though people are going to pore over each page, reading our finely crafted text, figuring out how we've organized things, and weighing their options before deciding which link to click.

What they actually do most of the time (if we're lucky) is glance at each new page, scan some of the text, and click on the first link that catches their interest or vaguely resembles the thing they're looking for. There are usually large parts of the page that they don't even look at.



Web Navigation 101

In many ways, you go through the same process when you enter a Web site.

> **You're usually trying to find something.** In the "real" world it might be the emergency room or a can of baked beans. On the Web, it might be the cheapest 4-head VCR with Commercial Advance or the name of the actor in Casablanca who played the headwaiter at Rick's.

> **You decide whether to ask first or browse first.** The difference is that on a Web site there's no one standing around who can tell you where things are. The Web equivalent of asking directions is searching—typing a description of what you're looking for in a search box and getting back a list of links to places where it might be.

> **If you choose to browse, you make your way through a hierarchy, using signs to guide you.** Typically, you'll look around on the Home page for a list of the site's main sections (like the store's department signs) and click on the one that seems right.

> **Eventually, if you can't find what you're looking for, you'll leave.** This is as true on a Web site as it is at Sears. You'll leave when you're convinced they haven't got it, or when you're just too frustrated to keep looking.

Here's how you perform the trunk test:

Step 1 Choose a page anywhere in the site at random,

Step 2 Hold it at arm's length or squint so you can't really

Step 3 As quickly as possible, try to find and circle each (You won't find all of the items on every page.)

Here's one to show you how it's done:



How to Improve Web Accessibility

> **Add appropriate alt text to every image.** Add an alt attribute for images that screen readers should ignore, and add helpful, descriptive text for the rest.

> **Make your forms work with screen readers.** This largely boils down to using the HTML label element to associate the fields with their prompts, so people know what they're supposed to enter.

> **Create a "Skip to Main Content" link at the beginning of each page.** Imagine having to spend 20 seconds (or a minute, or two) listening to the global navigation at the top of every page before you could look at the content, and you'll understand why this is important.

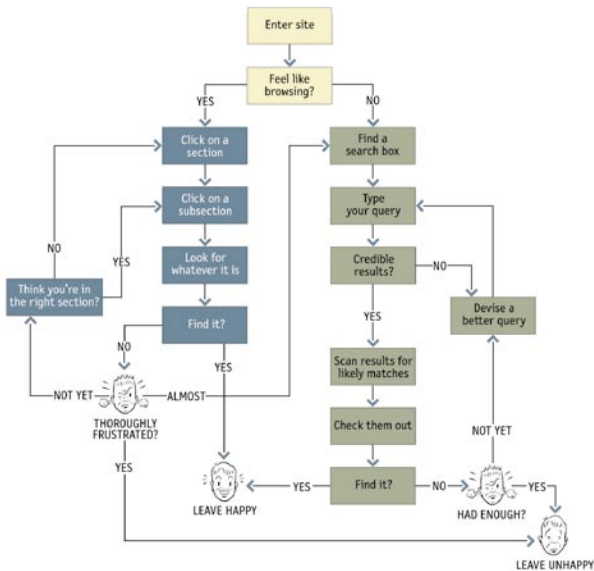
> **Make all content accessible by keyboard.** Remember, not everyone can use a mouse.

> **Don't use JavaScript without a good reason.** Some adaptive technologies don't support it very well yet.

> **Use client-side (not server-side) image maps.** Alt tags don't work with server-side image maps.

Three-Second Web Accessibility Test

You really can't say your site is usable unless it's accessible to everyone. An easy test: increase the size of the type, and see if this makes the site easier to use for someone hard of sight.



The Trunk Test

A fast, acid test for good Web navigation. Here's how it goes:

Imagine that you've been blindfolded and locked in the trunk of a car, then driven around for a while and dumped on a page somewhere deep in the bowels of a Web site. If the page is well designed, when your vision clears you should be able to answer these questions without hesitation:

- > What site is this? (Site ID)
- > What page am I on? (Page name)
- > What are the major sections of this site? (Sections)
- > What are my options at this level? (Local navigation)
- > Where am I in the scheme of things? ("You are here" indicators)
- > How can I search?

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