

Not-so-good **Design** *Checklist*

Watch out for the following items--each one is a sign of an amateur designer. Each item can be easily corrected to make the page look so much more professional. Keep in mind that the point of eliminating bad features is not just to make the page prettier, but to communicate more effectively.

Backgrounds

- Gray default background color
- Color combinations of text and background that make the text hard to read
- Busy, distracting backgrounds that make the text hard to read

Text

- Text crowding against the left edge
- Text that stretches all the way across the page
- Centered type over flush left body copy
- Paragraphs of type in all caps
- Paragraphs of type in bold
- Paragraphs of type in italic
- Paragraphs of type in all caps, bold, and italic all at once

Links

- Default blue links
- Blue link borders around graphics
- Links that are not clear about where they will take you to
- Links in body copy that distract readers and lead them off to remote, useless pages
- Text links that are not underlined so you don't know it's a link
- Dead links (links that don't work anymore)

Graphics

- Large graphic files that take forever to download
- Meaningless or useless graphic files
- Thumbnail images that are nearly as large as the full-sized images they link to
- Graphics with "halos" of icky stuff (called anti-aliasing "artifacts") around the edges
- Graphics with no alt labels
- Missing graphics, especially missing graphics with no alt labels
- Graphics that don't fit on the screen

Tables

- Borders turned on in tables
- Tables used as design elements, especially with large (dorky) borders

Blinking and animations

- Anything that blinks, especially text
- Multiple things that blink
- Rainbow rules
- Rainbow rules that blink or animate
- "Under construction" signs, especially of little men working
- Animated "under construction" signs
- Animated pictures for e-mail
- Animations that never stop
- Multiple animations that never stop

Junk

- Counters on pages-- who cares
- Junky advertising
- Having to scroll sideways
- Too many little pictures on the first page of awards that don't mean anything

Navigation

- Unclear navigation; overly complex navigation
- Complicated frames, too many frames, unnecessary scroll bars in frames
- Orphan pages (no links back to where they came from, no identification)
- Useless page titles that don't explain what the page is about

General design

- Entry page or home page that does not fit within the standard browser window (640 x 460 pixels)
- No focal point on the page
- Too many focal points on a page
- Navigation buttons as the only visual interest, especially when they're large (and dorky)
- Cluttered, not enough alignment
- Lack of contrast (in color, text, to create hierarchy of info, etc)
- Pages that look okay in one browser but not in another

So-much-better **Design** *Checklist*

One of the elements of good web design is a lack of the elements that make bad web design. If you stay away from everything on the previous page, you've probably got a pretty nice web site. In addition, keep these concepts in mind:

Text

- Background does not interrupt the text
- Text is big enough to read, but not too big
- The hierarchy of information is perfectly clear
- Columns of text are narrower than in a book to make reading easier on the screen

Navigation

- Navigation buttons and bars are easy to understand and use
- Frames, if used, are not intrusive
- A large site has an index or a site map

Links

- Link colors coordinate with page colors
- Links are underlined so they are instantly clear to the visitor
- The links give the visitor a clue as to where they are, what page they are currently on

Graphics

- Buttons are not big and dorky
- Every graphic has an alt label
- Every graphic link has a matching text link
- Graphics and backgrounds use browser-safe colors
- Animated graphics turn off by themselves

General design

- Pages download quickly
- First page and home page fit into 640 x 460 space
- All other pages have the important stuff in 640x 460
- Good use of graphic elements (photos, subheads, pull quotes) to break up large areas of text
- Every web page in the site looks like it belongs to the same site; there are repetitive elements that carry throughout the pages

Excerpted from **Adobe's The Non-Designer's Guerrilla Marketing CD**

Two of the most important factors in good web design are repetition (consistency) and clarity. A visitor should never have to figure out how to use your navigation system, where they are in the site, or whether they are still in your web site or have jumped somewhere else.

Repetition

Repeat certain visual elements on every page in your web site. This not only lets the visitor know they are still at your site, but also provides unity and continuity, intrinsic features of any good design.

The navigation buttons on your home page are often set up in a way that you can't repeat on other pages, perhaps because the buttons change once you get to sections of the site, or perhaps because the home page has such a different visual arrangement than the content pages. But once you get to content pages, the visitor should find the navigation in the same place, in the same order, with the same graphics. Not only does this make it easy for the visitor to find their way through your site, but it provides a unifying factor to the collection of pages.

Readability

One of the most unreadable places to read text is on a monitor, whether it's television, video, or computer. So we need to make a few adjustments to the text on web pages to make sure it's as easy to read as possible. Use shorter line lengths than you might use on paper. The body copy should never run the entire width of the web page, which means you must put the text in a table (or at least use a block indent, which indents the text from both the left and right sides). But don't use such short line lengths that you break up the phrasing of the sentences too much.

If you are specifying the text to appear in a certain typeface (if you're not, ignore this), typically Helvetica or Arial and Times or Times Roman, please specify Geneva in front of Helvetica, and New York in front of Times. This will make the text on Macintoshes appear much so much cleaner and easier to read. (If you use a Mac, set your default font to New York instead of Times, and you will be amazed at how much easier it is to read web pages. Change it back to Times before you print a page.)

Repeat certain
visual elements
on *every page*
in your web site

One of the most
unreadable
places to read text
is on a monitor

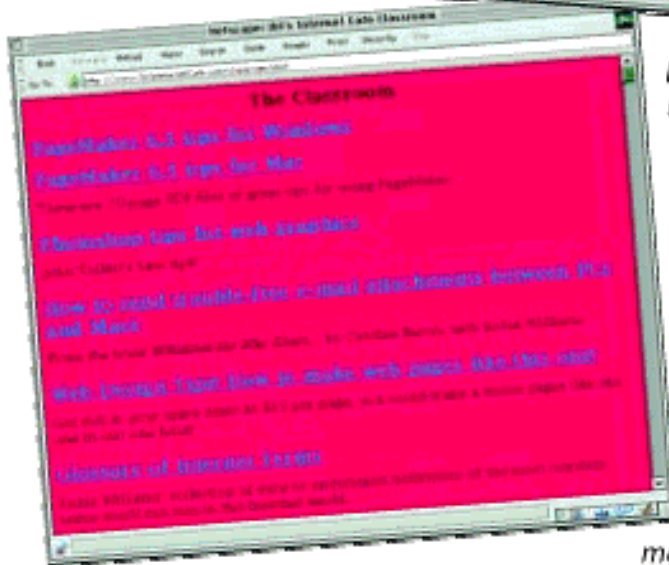
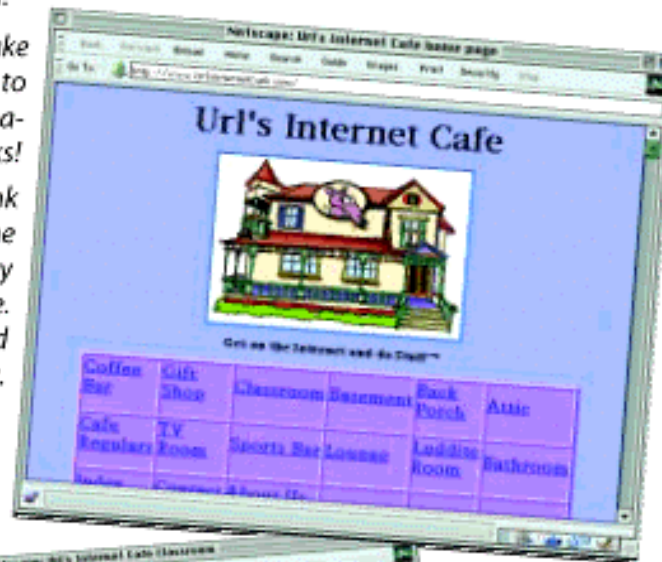
Don't Try This

Don't use the default blue color for your text or graphic links. It's a sure sign of an amateur page.

Don't make text links within big, dorky, table cells with the borders turned on.

Don't make visitors scroll to see the navigation links!

Don't make a link on the home page to every page in your site. Group related pages together.



Don't use a fluorescent background color, especially with fluorescent type!

Don't let text bump up against the left edge of the browser window.

Don't make the visitor scroll sideways!! Keep your page within the 640-pixel width maximum. Especially don't make a table that is wider than 600 pixels or people will be very mad at you when they try to print your page.

