UNIT 14

Websites

STARTER

1 What features make a good website? Make a list of the key features you look for. Then compare your list with others in your group.

2 Study these seven points for evaluating websites. What questions would you ask to evaluate a website on each point?

1 Design
2 Navigation
3 Ease of use
4 Accuracy
5 Up to date
6 Helpful graphics
7 Compatibility

READING

3 **Understanding the writer's purpose** Knowing who the writer is, what their purpose is and who they are writing for can help us to understand a text.

Study these extracts from a text. Decide:

1 What special expertise does the author have in this field?
2 Who are the intended readers?
3 What is the author's purpose?

Title:
Help Web-farers find their way.

Source:
Windows Magazine, E-Business section

Subtitle:
Here are nine ways to make it easy for visitors to navigate your website.

Author information:
Matt Micklewicz offers advice and useful links for Webmasters at his Webmaster Resources site (www. webmaster-resources. com).

First paragraph:
Your website may be chock full of information about your company and its products, but if visitors to the site can't easily find their way around its pages they may never return. Besides content, the most important aspect of a website is its navigation scheme. Unfortunately, that may also be the most commonly neglected design consideration. These nine site-design pointers will help you build an effective navigation system.

4 Work in groups of 3, A, B and C. Summarise the advice in each text you read in one sentence.

Student A Read texts 1 to 3
Student B Read texts 4 to 6
Student C Read texts 7 to 9

1 Trust Text

It's tempting to spice up pages with graphics — but sometimes even a little is too much. If possible your navigation system should be based on text links, rather than image maps or graphical buttons. Studies have shown that visitors will look at and try text links before clicking on graphical buttons.

2 Next Best AlTernative

If you must use a graphical navigation system, include descriptive ALT text captions. The ALT text will make it possible for visitors who use text browsers such as Lynx or who browse with graphics turned off, to find their way around. In addition to the graphical navigation buttons, be sure to include text links at the bottom of every page that provide a clear route to the main areas of your site.

3 Map It

A site map offers a good overview of your site and will provide additional orientation for visitors. It should be in outline form and include all the major sections of your site with key subpages listed beneath those sections. For example, you may group your FAQ, Contact and Troubleshooting pages so they're all accessible from a Support page. It's a good idea to visit a few larger sites to get some ideas on designing an effective site map.

4 Forego Frames

Avoid frames wherever possible. Most veteran browsers dislike them and they can be confusing for visitors who are suddenly presented with multiple scrollbars. If you're committed to using frames on your site, you'd better commit yourself to some extra work too, because you'll have to create a no-frames version of your site for visitors whose browsers don't support frames.

5 Consistency Counts

Don't change the location of your navigation elements, or the color of visited and not-visited links from page to page. And don't get clever with links and buttons that appear and disappear: turning things on and off is usually done as an attempt to let visitors know where they are at a site but more often than not it ends up confusing them.

6 Just a Click Away

Keep content close at hand. Every page on your site should be accessible from every other one within four clicks. You should regularly reexamine your page structure and links, and make necessary adjustments. People come to your site to find information — don't make them dig for it.

7 Shun Search

Most sites have a search function, but try to discourage its use as much as possible. Even the best search engines turn up irrelevant matches, and visitors may not know how to use yours effectively. Logical, clearly placed links are more likely to help visitors find what they want.

8 Passing Lanes

Provide multiple paths through your site so visitors aren't restricted to one style of browsing. For most sites, a pull-down navigation menu is an easy addition that offers an alternative route through your pages, without wasting space.

9 Overwhelming Options

Don't overwhelm visitors by presenting dozens of places that they can go. A large number of choices is not necessarily a good thing.

Finally, if you feel like curling up with a good book, I recommend Jennifer Fleming's *Web Navigation: Designing the User Experience* from O'Reilly & Associates.

5 Now exchange information orally to complete this table summarising the whole text.

Text	Advice	Text	Advice
1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5			

LANGUAGEWORK Giving advice

Study these examples of advice from the texts you read in Task 4.

You can use the modal verb *should:*

1 Your navigation system *should* be based on text links.

You can use an imperative:

2 *Avoid* frames wherever possible.
3 *Don't change* the location of your navigation elements.

Note that *avoid* is followed by the *-ing* form. For example:

4 Avoid *using* frames.

Had better is for advice which is close to a warning. It indicates something unpleasant will happen if the advice is not taken:

5 If you're committed to using frames on your site, you'd *better* commit yourself to some extra work too.

Other ways to give advice are:

6 *I recommend* Jennifer Fleming's *Web Navigation.*
7 *It's a good idea to* visit a few larger sites.

To make advice more persuasive, you can add the reason for your advice. For example:

It's a good idea to visit a few larger sites [advice] to get some ideas on designing an effective site map [reason].

PROBLEM-SOLVING **6** Evaluate any one of these sites using the seven points listed in Task 2 and any of the advice given on website design in this unit.

www.environment-agency.gov.uk
www.compaq.com
www.abcissa.force9.co.uk/birds
news.bbc.co.uk
www.orange.co.uk

7 With. the help of the texts summarised in Task 5, give advice on these aspects of navigation design. Use a variety of ways. Add reasons for your advice where possible.

1 text links
2 graphical buttons
3 ALT text captions
4 site map
5 frames
6 position of navigation elements
7 logical links
8 search function
9 number of links on a page

8 With the help of Unit 12, Task 6, give advice on these features of free Internet Service Providers.

1 Sign up software on CD-ROM
2 Local call rates for online time
3 National call rates for online time
4 Initial set-up fee
5 Web-based mail
6 POP3 email
7 Free Web space
8 Access to newsgroups
9 Customer support
10 Reliable service
11 Multiple ISP accounts

SPEAKING **9** Work in pairs, A and B. Complete your website flowchart with the help of your partner. Do not show your section of the flowchart to your partner but do answer any questions your partner asks. Make sure all links are included in your completed chart.

Student A Your section of the flowchart is on page 186.
Student B Your section of the flowchart is on page 192.

WRITING **10** Write an evaluation of one of the websites listed in Task 6 or a website of your choice.

SPECIALIST READING

A **Find the answers to these questions in the following text.**

1 What languages were derived from SGML?
2 What type of language is used to structure and format elements of a document?
3 Name two metalanguages.
4 What elements of data is XML (but not HTML) concerned with?
5 What is meant by the term 'extensible'?
6 What makes XML a more intelligent language than HTML?
7 What does the HTML markup tag <p> indicate?
8 Why are search engines able to do a better job with XML documents?
9 What type of website is particularly likely to benefit from XML?

XML Takes on HTML

Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) is the language that spawned both HTML (HyperText Markup Language) and XML (extensible Markup Language). SGML is not a true language, it is a metalanguage, which is a language from which you can create other languages. In this case, it is the creation of a markup language (a system of encoded instructions for structuring and formatting electronic document elements).

HTML is an application-specific derivation of SGML. It is a set of codes, generally used for webpages, that creates electronic documents according to rules established by SGML. HTML is a language that is all about the presentation of your information, not what the actual data is. You can, therefore, say that HTML is a presentation language.

XML is a subset of SGML, but it is also, like SGML, a metalanguage. XML defines a specific method for creating text formats for data so that files are program independent, platform independent, and support internationalisation (able to read different languages, etc.) In fact, because XML is an extensible language, you don't even have to have a browser to interpret the page. Applications can parse the XML document and read the information without any human intervention.

XML, unlike HTML, is concerned with the identity, meaning and structure of data. XML is extensible because it lets website developers create their own set of customised tags for documents. This ability to define your own tags is the main feature of XML, and it is what gives developers more flexibility.

By defining your own markup tags, you can explicitly define the content in the document. This makes XML a more intelligent markup language than HTML. For example, in HTML, you could have a paragraph tag <p> preceding a paragraph about baseball. Your Web browser sees this tag and knows to present the following text as a paragraph. All your browser knows about the text, however, is that it is text; it doesn't know that it is specifically about baseball. In an XML document, you could define a <BASEBALL> tag to refer specifically to the text in the paragraph in your document. This way, when your XML browser examines the document, the document knows what data it contains, and that makes the content more

XML - INFORMATION ABOUT INFORMATION

How the same information is marked up for HTML and XML web pages. ***Source: IBM***

Rendering HTML

```
<p> <b>Mrs. Mary McGoony</b>
<br>
1401 Main Street
<br>
Anytown, NC 34829</p>
```

HTML tags describe how the data will appear on screen.

Rendering XML

```
<address>
<name>
<title>Mrs.</title>
<first-name>Mary</first-name>
<last-name>McGoony</last-name>
</name>
<street>1401 Main
Street</street>
<city>Anytown</city>
<state>NC</state>
<zipcode>34829</zipcode>
...
</address>
```

XML tags contain information about what the data is.

intelligent. Search engines that make use of XML data can do a better job of finding the pages you are looking for because of the intelligent nature of XML content.

XML, by design, does not deal with how the data is displayed to the end user. Because HTML is a presentation language, XML documents use HTML tags to help handle the visual formatting of the document. Also, you can use XML in your HTML documents to provide metadata, which is data about data in the document.

XML will do to the Web and e-commerce what HTML originally did to the Internet. XML and its associated applications have the potential to blow the roof off the Internet and how we do business.

[Adapted from 'XML Takes On HTML', Smart Computing Guide Series Volume 8 Issue 1, January 2000. Graphic from 'Web learns new language', Guardian Online, Thursday November 25 1999]

B Re-read the text to find the answers to these questions.

1 Mark the following statements as True or False:

a HTML is no longer useful for creating webpages.
b SGML is more complex than XML
c XML files can only be used on Unix systems.
d XML files can only be read by browser programs.
e HTML is a markup language.
f Internet searches will be better with XML files.

2 Match the terms in Table A with the statements in Table B.

Table A

a Metadata
b Metalanguage
c HTML
d XML
e Markup language

Table B

i Extensible markup language
ii A coding system used for structuring and formatting documents
iii Data about data
iv An example of a page presentation language
v A language from which you can create other languages