

# Top 10 Web Design Mistakes

While content is still the key to an effective and successful Web site, the presentation of that content is a major factor in holding the attention of your visitors and making sales. The look of your site is important, because it says something about your business and presents an image. But Web designers routinely sabotage their efforts by making mistakes in how they present their content. Here are 10 examples of common web design errors and some tips on how to avoid them.

1. **Animation, gimmicks, and Flash.** While most designers understand that Web surfers want to go straight to the content, there are some who still insist on either making you sit through a splash page, while others offer annoying flashing graphics. Studies show that no matter how well-intentioned these splash screens are, their main effect is to drive traffic *away* from the site.
2. **In-your-face advertising.** While standard pop-up ads are annoying, persistent full-screen ads are simply unacceptable. Visitors detest these, and most will leave the site rather than waiting for the ad to go away.
3. **Navigation nightmares.** If your users cannot get where they want to go in two clicks, many will leave. Too many choices, no site map, a "back" button that does not take them to the last page they visited, and other such navigation mistakes will cost you many customers.
4. **Being unreachable.** As concerns about security and identity theft increase, users want to be able to reach the people with whom they are doing business. Providing an email address and a phone number can help assuage your customers' concerns.
5. **No place for feedback, comments, or questions.** Customers appreciate it when they feel you value their feedback. Providing a feedback or comment system is an easy way to start creating this goodwill. And it is also a great way to gain insight into how your customers think and get ideas for improving your site.
6. **Cramming and crowding.** You can have great content, but if it is lost in a sea of words or graphics, people will miss it. A little white space on a page goes a long way. It helps a reader find specific items, differentiate between areas of content and advertisements, and provides a more professional look.
7. **Jargon.** Business-to-business and high-tech sites are usually the worst offenders in packing their content with jargon. When writing any content for your site, keep the user in mind. He or she may not know all the arcana of your business, and may just want the basic facts of what your business is all about and what services or products you provide.
8. **Bad graphics and boring photos.** Bad graphics make your site look amateurish. Make sure the colors and text you use will show up clearly (and fit) on a range of monitors, including handheld devices. When you choose your photos and graphics, choose interesting graphics that say something about your business.
9. **Torturing potential customers.** When a user fills out a form online and needs to either change something or fill in a field which they left blank, they should be able to go back and make that

change. Do not make the user start all over again. Many people will leave the site altogether rather than re-enter all their information.

10. **Presenting products or services in only one way.** Shoppers should be able to look up a product or service by any one of several methods. Assuming that everyone is shopping by the same set of criteria is a mistake, especially when it is very easy to allow people to sort by any of several methods. Make it easy to shop by product type, alphabetically, by size, by gender, by manufacturer, or by any other criteria shoppers are likely to use.