CONSISTENCY EQUALS USABILITY

Usability is extremely important to your user. Your user will want to be able to get around your site and find the information they need easily. To help them do this you should keep to some standards.

NAVIGATION

Make sure your website is organised in much the same way as other websites. i.e. use headings such as "Contact" and "About"; they are not the most exciting headings but they are well recognised by your user and they do not want to be challenged by headings like "Communicate" and "Regarding".

If your website is large you should incorporate a site map and a search facility; learn more about these in the resource, Site Maps and Search Facilities for Larger Websites.

Use the same size colour and font throughout your navigation so that your users will be able to quickly recognize navigational features. You should also keep your navigation in the same position relative to the rest of the site. In larger sites you may need more than just one set of navigation links If this is the case be careful to ensure your users are aware of the secondary navigation links; it is not uncommon for users to miss secondary navigation links especially if they are at the bottom of the page.

HYPERLINKS

It is common for people to set different colour schemes for hyperlinks when used on navigation menus and this is perfectly acceptable. Changing the colours of hypertext links used in normal text is not so readily accepted, so unless there is a very strong reason to change the colour scheme, leave it as is.

Name hyperlinks as logically as possible and use keywords if appropriate. If the hyperlink text refers to a person it should link to information on that person, and not to an email link.

Users expect the contents of the current window to change when they click on a hyperlink, they generally don't expect or appreciate it when a new window is launched.

IMAGES AND CAPTIONS

For the sake of speed you should try to keep the size of images to less than 3KB. But this is not always possible and sometimes you may need to use larger and richer images to assist your users to understand the information you are trying to get across. If this is the case you should try to keep your image placement and size consistent throughout your pages so that your users will be more comfortable using other parts of your web page while they wait for a picture to download.

Again, if the image is slow to load, your caption will let your user know what the image is and they can then make up their own mind about waiting for the image to download or not.

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FIRST PERSON OR THIRD PERSON

Remember to be consistent in how you deliver information. First person or third person, it makes little difference to your user but make sure it's consistent; a mixed delivery is annoying to read and it has the tendency to make your website seem unorganised.

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