



# The Web Page

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## Develop a reader-friendly site

Successful Web sites require more than flashy graphics and catchy writing. If you want your Web site to succeed, you need to provide information to your prospective buyers in a reader-friendly manner.

“Web site usability” is a fairly new phrase to the Web industry. In the beginning of the Internet, there were no guidelines related to developing user-friendly sites. Today, with the activation of millions of Web pages per year, Web sites are competing for browser time, thus there is a new focus on designing sites that browsers will enjoy visiting.

When designing your site, it is important to know your audience. As an Angus breeder, most of your customers are in rural areas and don't have fast modems or connection speeds.

### Ease of navigation

The organization of your site is important if you want browsers to keep coming back. You want to make it easy for visitors to find what they need.

Your home page should introduce visitors to the navigation of the site. Develop a consistent navigation, or means by which viewers can move to and from the various pages within your site. For example, whether you have the navigation buttons across the top or on the right or left side, keep them there. Don't keep changing how browsers move from page to page. If you use buttons or graphics to jump from page to page, consider text links at the bottom as another option for browsers.

When developing your site, consider the color you choose for your text links. The default link color on most browsers is blue. When you change that, it may take the browser a few minutes to recognize what the colored text represents. With the use of cascading style sheets, you also can have links that are not underlined. Don't do this, as it will confuse browsers. And don't change your link color to black.

### Fast downloads

Be sure to optimize your images and HTML (hypertext markup language). There's no need for big graphics or huge text files on the Web.

Save all graphics at a resolution of 72 dots/inch (dpi). Save in GIF (graphic interchange format, pronounced *jiff* or *giff*; “.gif” file extension) files if the graphic has few colors. Use the JPEG

### Characteristics of a user-friendly site

- Easy, conventional navigation
- Optimized graphics
- Fast download time
- No horizontal scrolling and minimal vertical scrolling
- Contact information on every page
- Absence of large bodies of white or colored text
- Written for the Web — concise, objective and easy to scan
- Updated regularly

(joint photographic experts group, pronounced *jay-peg*; “.jpg” file extension) technique if it has many colors.

When saving in GIF, optimize the palettes to contain only the colors used. That can cut the file size in half. If you use Adobe® Photoshop®, the “Save for Web” option allows maximum optimization and reduces file size more than just “Save As.”

Another way to reduce download time on pages is to provide thumbnails or smaller images and allow the browser to click on the thumbnail to see the bigger image.

Try to keep your HTML files less than 45 kilobytes (kb). If your file gets bigger than that, consider breaking it into smaller files.

### Design basics

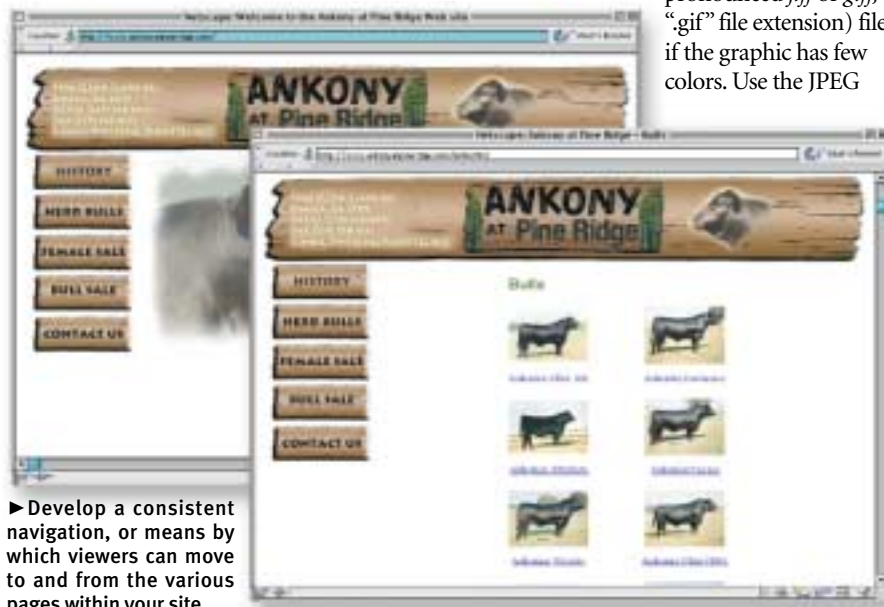
It's important when designing any page of your site to fit what you want the browser to see in the first screen of each page.

Most sites today are designed for monitors set at 800-by-600 resolution. Try to keep the text portion at 640-by-480. This will minimize scrolling. When designing, try to avoid horizontal scrolling and minimize vertical scrolling.

As a service to your potential customers, provide a way for browsers to contact you on each page — e-mail address, postal address and phone numbers. They may not come into your site on the home page, so be sure that — no matter where they are in your site — they know how to contact you.

Consider using Web-safe colors. I realize that a lot of breeders have specific ranch colors, but try to match that color on the Web-safe palette. Web-safe colors display accurately on most computers. If you stray beyond the Web-safe palette, you take the chance that the colors will dither, or display incorrectly.

Don't trade readability for style. Make your backgrounds as light as possible. Remember to use Web-safe, nondithered colors when selecting your background. Also avoid large bodies of white or colored



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text, as this can be hard to read. Most people still prefer black text.

Use ALT tags on graphics. If a browser has the graphics option turned off, this will explain what would be in the image location instead of an empty box. ALT tags load before images, so this also keeps the browser's attention while the graphic is loading.

### Write for the Web

When developing text for your Web site, you want it to be concise, objective and easy to scan.

People "read" Web pages differently than they do the printed page. According to Elizabeth Baker, Internet Publishing Group (IPG) e-commerce manager, there are two kinds of browsers — swoopers and diggers.

Swoopers have only a few minutes to touch your site and grab the information they are looking for. They have 20 minutes on their lunch break to find something; if you don't have easy accessibility to what they want, they will move to the next site.

Diggers take the time to follow links. Time is not as valuable for diggers; they enjoy surfing and finding all the information they can about a certain topic.

At the recent Agricultural Publications Summit (APS), Baker cited a study that said 76% of Internet users scan sites and only 16% actually read word for word the text presented. She suggests making what you would provide in print only half as long on the Web.

Jakob Nielsen, a leading expert on Web usability, says people read 25% fewer words per minute on a computer screen compared to words on paper.



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**Use bulleted lists.** Breaking up copy into bulleted or numbered lists draws the reader's attention. It makes scanning easier and provides a great way to provide links to supplementary information. It's important to avoid long lines of text that extend from edge to edge of the computer screen. They are hard to read and are easily skipped.

**Use good headlines, teasers and subheads.** Subheads encourage readership by breaking up text and make it easy for browsers to locate desired information quickly.

**Spotlight keywords.** As people read on the Web, trying to key in on a specific piece of information, highlighting allows them to scan text quickly to find what they are looking for. You can use italic or bold type to draw attention to specific words.

### Update your site

Keep your site fresh. Unlike printed matter, a Web site is not a one-time project; it's an ongoing one. Test your site regularly,

and avoid "linkrot" (links to other sites that go bad).

Remember these are only guidelines. Personal preference is also important when designing a site to represent your farm or ranch. You want users to have good experiences so they will come back and will tell others about your site. When planning your site, think about what you like or dislike about other sites, and incorporate those insights.

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**Editor's note:** Don't miss the real-time coverage of the National Angus Conference at [www.angusjournal.com/nationalconference](http://www.angusjournal.com/nationalconference) and the North American Super ROV Show and Annual Meeting highlights at [www.angusjournal.com/louisville](http://www.angusjournal.com/louisville).