# Text on XYZ.com

## A HOT Evaluation by YourNameGoesHere

## Links

# Purpose

To determine the extent to which the links on this site do their jobs.

To make links work well for users, though, the authors must follow a dozen strategies, and within those broad approaches, a number of tactics.

These strategies and tactics for links appear here as a set of guidelines based on research and actual experience, documented in books, journal articles, and online styleguides. (References appear at the end of each strategy). Each guideline, then, provides a method for a writer to follow, or a **heuristic**.

In this evaluation we test the text against these guidelines. This, then, is a heuristic evaluation.

# Method

Here's how to perform a Heuristic Online Text (HOT) evaluation of links on your target site.

**1. Save this file with a name that includes**

- ❑ The site you are analyzing
- ❑ The aspect you are evaluating (brevity, in this case)
- ❑ Initials
- ❑ A period
- ❑ A suffix indicating the file type (doc for Word files, htm for HTML files)

**Examples:** ibmbrevityjp.doc, yahoobrevityds.htm

**2. Go to the site, and locate a fairly typical page that has several links, anywhere on the page, outside of menus.**

**3. In this file, type the subject of the page, under Sample #1, below.**

The subject appears in the title bar of the window (not including ads for your browser) or in the major heading at the top of the page. Use whichever best articulates what the page is about.

**4. Copy the page and paste it into this file after the subject.**

**5. Return to the page and copy the URL for that page, then paste that into this file, in the line right after the paragraph.**

> The URL is the address of the page.

**6. Type today's date on the next line, to show when you collected the sample.**

**7. Repeat this process, collecting at least three (3) pages.**

> If possible, find pages with different kinds of content.

> Tip: You may want to print out your samples, so you can look at their text on paper as you write onscreen.

**8. Apply the HOT Evaluation to the samples you have collected, filling out the evaluation form.**

> If a strategy or tactic seems irrelevant, omit it from your evaluation. Note that this will change the total possible points.

# Samples

### *Sample # 1*

Subject:

Page:

URL to the page:

Date investigated:

### *Sample # 2*

Subject:

Page:

URL to the page:

Date investigated:

### *Sample # 3*

Subject:

Page:

URL to the page:

Date investigated:

# Evaluation

## Strategy 1. The linktext makes clear what I will get if I click and go.

### Linktext is fairly short, but descriptive.

#### Test

In each page, I found only one or two links that failed to describe the target, or none.

YES=1, NO=0.

#### Impression

Overall, did the links themselves seem descriptive?

YES=1, NO=0.

#### Example

Which link seemed particularly repetitious (if any)?

#### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

### For each link, the site offers supplementary description of the content on the target page, or the reason to click.

#### Test

Next to each link, I found extra information about the target, in ordinary text, or a label.

YES=1, NO=0.

#### Impression

Overall, the site seemed to offer a lot of information about the link targets, so I could tell where I would be going, before I clicked.

YES=1, NO=0.

#### Example

Which link seemed particularly bad because it lacked an accompanying description?

#### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *Linktext echoed the title or main heading on the target page.*

### Test

With each link, I found that the text of the link contained words or phrasing similar to the text in the title or major heading on the target page.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, the links seemed to echo the titles or major headings.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which link seemed particularly different from the title or headings on the target page?  (Quote the linktext and the title or headings).

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See:** America Online (2001), Apple (1997), Berners-Lee (1998), Bieber et al (1997), Borges et al (1998), Bricklin (1998), IBM (1999), Levine (1997), Microsoft (2000), Nielsen (1995, 1998, 1999e, 1999f), Nielsen & Morkes (1997), Rosenfeld & Morville (1998), Spool (1997), Spyridakiis (2000), Sun (1998), Tchong (1998b), W3C (1999) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 2. In a sentence, the link appears at the end.

## *Linktext forms the emphatic element within a sentence.*

### Test

When a link appears within a sentence, it goes at the end. .

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, the linktext acted as the emphatic element in the sentence or paragraph.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which link appeared, distractingly, at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence? (Quote the whole sentence).

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

### *References*

**See:** Bricklin (1998), IBM (1999), Levine (1997), Nielsen (1997b), Sun (2000) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 3. The text focuses on the subject, not the links.

## *In running text, the linktext makes sense as part of its sentence.*

### Test

In each link within running text, I found the text made sense.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, the linktext seemed to make a meaningful contribution to its sentence.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which link seemed particularly out of touch with its surrounding sentence?

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See:** Arthur (2000), Berners-Lee (1995), Levine (1997), Nielsen (1997b) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 4. The pages offer plentiful links to related information on the site.

## *The pages offer a separate list of links to related information.*

### Test

There is a section of related links, with descriptions of the target info.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, the pages do not refer very often to other pages within the site.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page seemed to need links to related info?  (If any).

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *The page offers links within the running text, pointing to other information on the site .*

### Test

The running text contains pointers to related pages on the site.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, the running text seems thickly related to other content on the site.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which paragraph seemed to need links to related info?  (If any).

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See:** Ameritech (1997), Apple (1997), Berners-Lee (1998), Bricklin (1998), Farkas and Farkas (2000), Gagne & Briggs (1979), Horton (1990), Levine (1997), Microsoft (2000), Nielsen & Morkes (1997), Nielsen (1999f, 2000a), Reigeluth et al (1980), Robinson & Knirk (1984), Sheetz et al (1988), Shneiderman (1998), Sun (2000) in the bibliography at http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 5. The site establishes credibility by offering outbound links.

## *The pages offer a links to other sites.*

### Test

There are links to other sites on every page, or most pages.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, the pages do link to relevant info on other sites.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page seemed to need links to outside sites, but did not offer them? (If any).

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See:** America Online (2001), Berners-Lee (1995), Levine et al (1999), Lynch (2000), NCSA (1996), Nielsen (1999a), Nielsen & Morkes (1997), Spyridakis (2000), Sun (2000) in the bibliography at http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 6. The target page indicates where I am in the overall structure.

## *On arrival, I can tell where the page fits into some larger structure.*

### Test

There are breadcrumbs, highlighting, graphics, or text to show where this page is within the larger structure. The page has a logo or site identifier on it.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, I knew where I was.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page seemed to need some indication of its location within the hierarchy?  (If any).

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See:** Apple (1997), Bricklin (1998), Conklin (1987), Nielsen (1995, 1996, 1997b, 1997d, 2000a), Utting & Yankelovich (1989), Zimmerman (1997) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

## Strategy 7. The page offers meta information.

### *The page tells me about itself.*

#### Test

The page contains at least three of the following: status information, date, phone number, comment link, author name.

YES=1, NO=0.

#### Impression

Overall, I found out what I wanted to know about the page.

YES=1, NO=0.

#### Example

Which page seemed to lack meta information?  (What was missing?).

#### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See:** Apple (1997), Berners-Lee (1995), Cook (1997), IBM (1999), Levine (1997), Lohse & Spiller (1998), Lynch & Horton (1997), Nielsen (1999d), Spyridakis (2000), W3C (1999) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 8. The URLs make sense to a human.

## *The URL lets me grasp the content and location of the page.*

### Test

The URL contains words or text that I can parse, to understand where I am, or what I am looking at.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, I found the URLs made sense.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which URL seemed made up of gibberish, if any?

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See**: IBM (1999), Nielsen (1999f) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 9. The links are accessible.

## *The page considers the special needs of some audiences.*

### Test

When I choose to View the Source of the page, I see that there is alternate text for every image, animation, sound, or video. The headings are conventional H1, H2, H3. The page uses stylesheets, relative font sizes, few or no frames, a single table, if any.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, I found the site made an effort to be accessible.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page, if any, seemed least friendly to people with special needs?

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See**: Nielsen (1999f), W3C (1999) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 10. The site describes any downloadable object.

## *The page answers my questions about the download, before I start downloading.*

### Test

If the page offers a file for downloading, they tell me how large the file is, how long it will take to download at a particular speed, what format it is, and what software I can use to view it.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, I found the site made an effort to help me decide whether or not to download the files.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page, if any, seemed least friendly to people with special needs?

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See**: Nielsen (1999f), W3C (1999) in the bibliography at
http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 11. The site announces the new, and identifies what has changed.

## *Some pages alert me to the new, or the changed.*

### Test

Content that is new, or changed, has some identifying information, to alert me to the fact that the info is new or updated.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, I found the site made clear what was new, and what was old.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page, if any, seemed to need a little more identification of the new or changed items?

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## References

**See**: IBM (1999), Nielsen (1999d), Microsoft (2000), Sun (2000) in the bibliography at http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Strategy 12. The pages contain content and meta information that increases the likelihood that the pages will show up as relevant, in searches.

## *Descriptions and keywords match or echo the title, headings, running text, and links.*

### Test

When I choose to View the Source, I see that the meta tags for Description and Keywords contain words and phrases that reappear in at least two of the following: the title, the major heading, the first sentence on the page, the running text, and the linktexts on the page.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Impression

Overall, I found that each page could convince a spider that its content is relevant to the search terms someone might use to find the page.

YES=1, NO=0.

### Example

Which page, if any, might seem to be fooling a spider, by having keywords and descriptions that do not match the rest of the page content?

### Comments

If this guideline does not seem to apply, indicate that here.

If you have further thoughts, or reflections, about the way the text follows, or ignores, this guideline, please put those observations here.

## *References*

**See**: Belew (2000), IBM (1999), Kilian (1999), Lloyd-Martin and Whalen (2001), Nielsen (1999f), Sun (2000) in the bibliography at http://www.webwritingthatworks.com/HTres2cbiblio.pdf.pdf

# Total Score

Assigning a grade to text is always a bit arbitrary.  But counting up the points for these sample pages, we reach this diagnosis:

**Total Points:**

**Total Possible:**

**Percentage:**

## *Interpretation*

90-100%: Excellent links.

75-89%: Pretty good links, but occasionally confusing.

60-74%: Could use some work.

45-59%: Clumsy.

25-44%: Impenetrable.

0-24: Comic.

# Overall Conclusions

In a few paragraphs, summarize your most important observations—both positive and negative.

# Major Recommendations

List the top five problems with the links, and in a sentence or two, summarize what you would recommend as solutions.