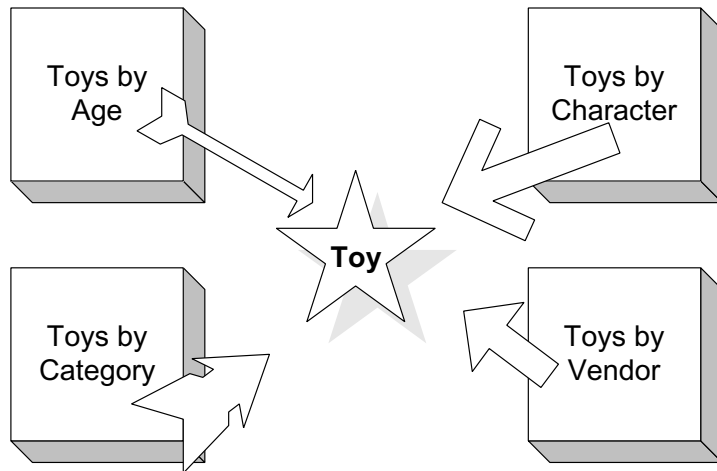


## Offer Multiple Routes to the Same Information



### BACKGROUND |

### 1, 2, 3, many menus

To encourage guests to follow their own trail of association, offer multiple menus leading down to the same low-level items. Reuse the same heading in each of these menus. In an online music site, for example, you might let guests browse menu showing different types of music, new items, imports, customer favorites, and highlighted specials. The same CD—a new rap album that is already popular with customers—might appear at the bottom of several different menu chains.

When people come to your site with different purposes, tasks, and mindsets, you can support them by putting the same heading in multiple menus. In a way, these menus offer different perspectives on your content. Following separate branches of your hierarchy, users converge on a single node, so write the heading and text so they appear to belong to each branch.

Write nodes in converging branches in a modular style so that they fit the context of both branches. (Farkas and Farkas, 2000)

*The more access mechanisms the better.*

—Hoffman, *Enabling Extremely Rapid Navigation in Your Web or Document*

## See Also

Some users come to your page out of desperation, because the heading seemed close to the right topic, even though not exactly right. These guests hope you will point to the right info. For these people for whom your page is close-but-no-cigar, make up shortcut lists and suggestions of See Also links.

Shortcuts minimize the time and effort users spend navigating, allowing users to bypass the site's hierarchy. (IBM, 1999)

## Multiple menus, multiple perspectives

Offering several different menus gives people a chance to follow the paths that make sense to them.

Provide different site paths to facilitate different shopping strategies. (IBM, 1999)

In this way, you are also offering people different representations of the information and different ways to think about it, so they can follow the model that comes closest to their current concern.

The more you personalize information, the more menus get made up on the fly, to match a guest's profile.

You need to stop thinking of your Web pages as static files on a server and more like a collection of scripts and intelligent content that can figure out how to display itself correctly. (Veen, 2001)

## EXAMPLES

### Before

Binary Stars  
Black Holes  
Clusters of Galaxies  
Colliding Galaxies  
Dark Nebulae  
Elliptical Galaxies  
Emission Nebulae  
Galaxies  
Individual Stars  
Milky Way  
Nebulae  
Neutron Stars  
Nurseries  
Open Clusters  
Planetary Nebulae  
Reflection Nebulae  
Spiral Galaxies  
Stars  
Sun  
Supernova Remnants  
White Dwarfs

### Before

#### Two ways to find a music CD:

Browse by genre  
Search

### After

Stars  
Binary Stars  
Black Holes  
Individual Stars  
Neutron Stars  
Nurseries  
Open Clusters  
Sun  
White Dwarfs  
Galaxies  
Colliding Galaxies  
Elliptical Galaxies  
Galaxy Clusters  
Milky Way  
Spiral Galaxies  
Nebulae  
Dark Nebulae  
Emission Nebulae  
Planetary Nebulae  
Reflection Nebulae

### After

#### 10 Ways to find a music CD:

Top 50  
New Releases  
Advance Orders  
Genres  
Artists and Groups  
Composers  
Labels  
Gift Ideas  
Seasonal Sounds  
Search

## AUDIENCE FIT

### If visitors want this...

TO HAVE FUN

### How well does this guideline apply?

Multiple menus offer even more fun.

TO LEARN

Yes, you can tailor menus to different learning styles, backgrounds, and interests.

TO ACT

Good, because not everyone conceives of the task in the same way.

TO BE AWARE

Everyone is on an individual path, no?

TO GET CLOSE TO PEOPLE

Offering multiple menus is like lending your ear. You're listening to your guests.

See: Bushell (1995), Farkas and Farkas (2000), IBM (1999), NCSA (1996), Veen (2001).

For your review only.

Excerpt from *Hot Text: Web Writing that Works*.  
(New Riders).

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[theprices@theprices.com](mailto:theprices@theprices.com)

The Prices  
918 La Senda Lane, NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87107

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