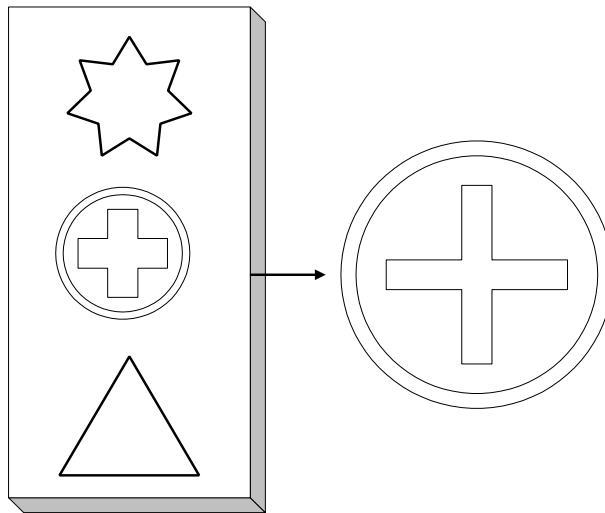# When Users Arrive at the Target, Make Success Obvious

Confirm that the link worked

How often have you clicked a link, gone to a page, and wondered, "Did I click the wrong thing? This doesn't look like what I clicked."

Bait-and-switch links tempt you to click, but dump you onto a page where the title has nothing to do with the linktext.

To defend themselves against this common practice, users scope out the target page before settling in for a good read. They look at:

- The **title** ("Is it the same text as the linktext?")
- Any **headings** at the top of the page ("Same topic?")
- Any **introductory text** ("Is this about what I am after?")
- The **caption** under any prominent picture ("Forget the image. Does the text match my expectation?")

Only after some or all of these confirm that the page is on topic, relevant, and interesting, will the user bother to read any more

The greatest torture in the world for most people is to think.

—Luther Burbank

text—or look at those gorgeous images.

To reassure users and confirm they reached the target page they were after:

- Make the title text match the original link—exactly.
- Make the title as descriptive as possible, moving keywords to the front, and assuming users will not see more than 65 characters.
- Make any headings near the top of the page echo the same theme as the title. Ditto for headers (the text that appears at the top of each page in a section).
- Write introductions to sum up the page accurately, to warn people off if the title itself confused them.
- Consider captions as major content and write for the arriving visitor (who may not have looked at the image), rather than an intrigued fan who has just spent thirty seconds looking at the image.

EXAMPLES

Before

Linktext: <u>Help</u>
Title: Frequently Asked Questions

Linktext: <u>Home Office Supplies</u>
Title: So You Need a Stapler?

Linktext: <u>Gardening Tips</u>
Title: Can You Dig This?

Heading: Shoveling and Hoeing
Caption on nearby image: Sun brings out the robins.

After

Linktext: <u>Help</u>
Title: Help

Linktext: <u>Home Office Supplies</u>
Title: Home Office Supplies

Linktext: <u>Getting a New Garden Shovel</u>
Title: Getting a New Garden Shovel

Heading: Choosing the Best Shovel for Your Soils and Seasons
Caption on nearby image: Sharp-edged and shiny, a new shovel signals the start of a new year of gardening.

Before: Target Not Immediately Visible

Screen

After: Cues Indicate Success

Screen
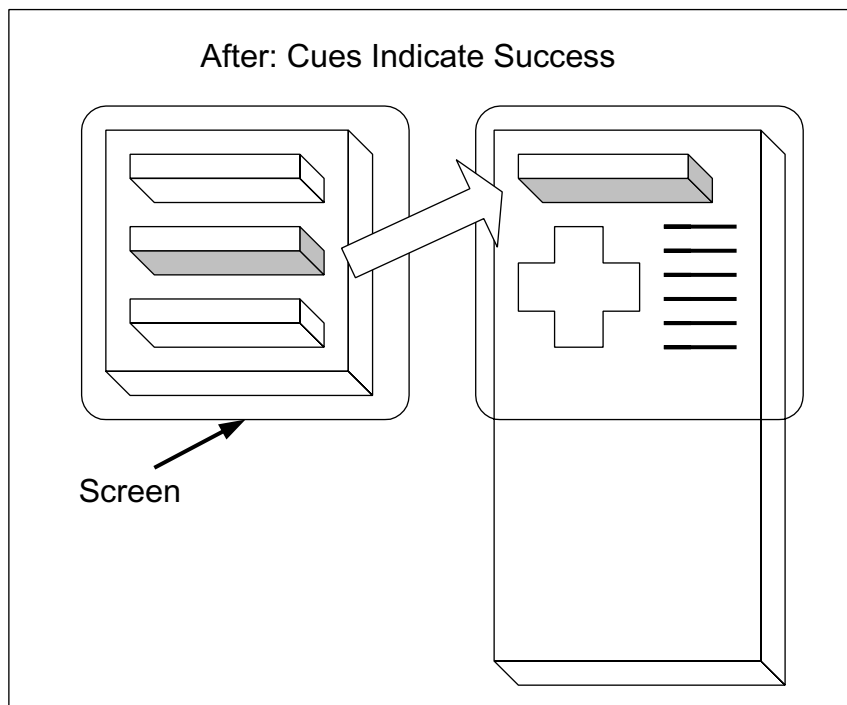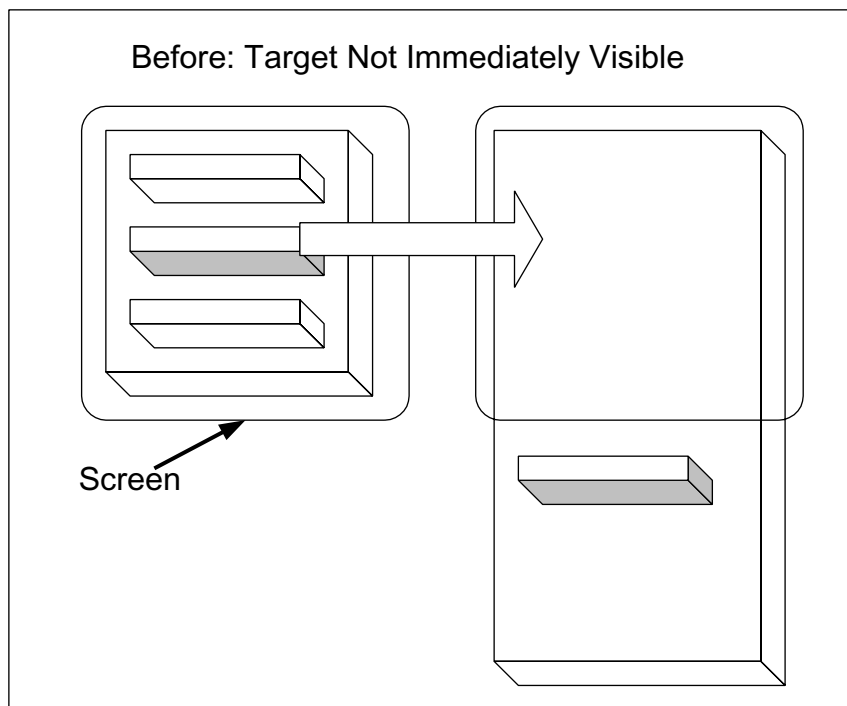
AUDIENCE FIT

If visitors want this...	How well does this guideline apply?
TO HAVE FUN	The misleading link, the confusing title, the heading that's not apropos, a skewed intro, and off-topic captions can be seen as intriguing, if your audience likes solving puzzles. If they just want to have fun, maybe not.
TO LEARN	Confirm arrival, to avoid distracting the learner.
TO ACT	Not following the guideline simply makes the user think and do more than expected, just to find out how to carry out the original task. Not cool.
TO BE AWARE	Be gentle, even if your prose seems plain. Confirm that your guest has arrived. Pour some tea.
TO GET CLOSE TO PEOPLE	Don't get them angry at you with loused-up links and misleading pages.

See: Apple (1999), Berners-Lee (1995), Krug (2000), Lynch and Horton (1999), Microsoft (2000), Nielsen (2000b), Shneiderman (1992).

For your review only.

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