

Headings, Titles, and Labels

Most users spend a considerable amount of time

scanning rather than reading information on Web sites. Well-designed headings help to facilitate both scanning and reading written material. Designers should strive to use unique and descriptive headings, and to use as many headings as necessary to enable users to find what they are looking for—it is usually better to use more rather than fewer headings. Headings should be used in their appropriate HTML order, and it is generally a good idea not to skip heading levels.

Designers should ensure that each page has a unique and descriptive page title. When tables are used, designers should make sure that descriptive row and column headings are included that enable users to clearly understand the information in the table. It is occasionally important to highlight certain critical information.

9:1 Use Clear Category Labels

Relative Importance:

1 2 3 4 5

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 3 4 0

Guideline: Ensure that category labels, including links, clearly reflect the information and items contained within the category.

Comments: Category titles must be understood by typical users. Users will likely have difficulty understanding vague, generalized link labels, but will find specific, detailed links, and descriptors easier to use.

Sources: Evans, 1998; Landesman and Schroeder, 2000; Mahajan and Shneiderman, 1997; Marshall, Drapeau and DiSciullo, 2001; Nall, Koyani, and Lafond, 2001; Spyridakis, 2000; Zimmerman, et al., 2002.

Example:

These labels are clear and distinct, allowing users to distinguish paths quickly.

The screenshot shows the NCCAM website with a navigation menu and several content sections. The 'Research' section is highlighted with a red oval. Below it, 'Plans and Priorities' and 'Research--Current and Completed' are also circled in red. The 'Funding Opportunities' section is circled in red. The 'Information for Grantees' section is circled in red. The website header includes the NCCAM logo, navigation links (Home, Health Information, Research, Training, Clinical Trials, News & Events, About NCCAM), and a search bar.

9:2 Provide Descriptive Page Titles

Relative Importance:

1 2 3 4 0

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 0 0 0

Guideline: Put a descriptive, unique, concise, and meaningfully different title on each Web page.

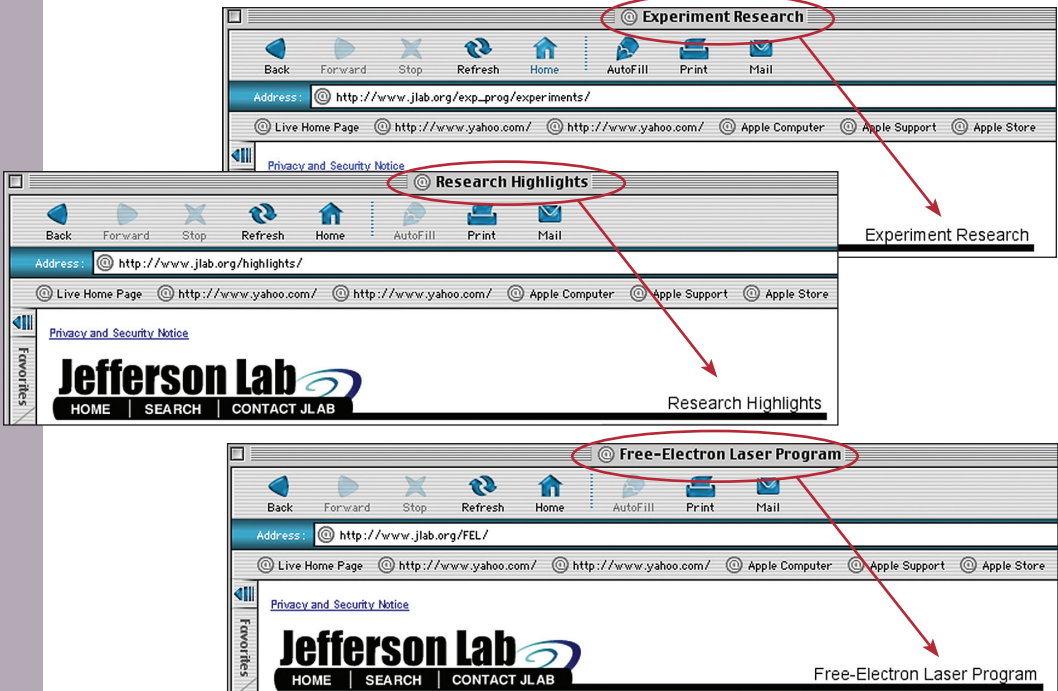
Comments: Title refers to the text that is in the browser title bar (this is the bar found at the very top of the browser screen). Titles are used by search engines to identify pages. If two or more pages have the same title, they cannot be differentiated by users or the Favorites capability of the browser. If users bookmark a page, they should not have to edit the title to meet the characteristics mentioned above.

Remember that some search engines only list the titles in their search results page. Using concise and meaningful titles on all pages can help orient users as they browse a page or scan hot lists and history lists for particular URLs. They can also help others as they compile links to your pages.

To avoid confusing users, make the title that appears in the heading of the browser consistent with the title in the content area of the pages.



Sources: Evans, 1998; Levine, 1996; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Spyridakis, 2000; Williams, 2000.

Example: These titles are unique, concise, and consistent with the titles in the content area.



9:3 Use Descriptive Headings Liberally

Guideline: Use descriptive headings liberally throughout a Web site.

Relative Importance: 
Strength of Evidence: 

Comments: Well-written headings are an important tool for helping users scan quickly. Headings should conceptually relate to the information or functions that follow them.

Headings should provide strong cues that orient users and inform them about page organization and structure. Headings also help classify information on a page. Each heading should be helpful in finding the desired target.

The ability to scan quickly is particularly important for older adults because they tend to stop scanning and start reading more frequently. If headings are not descriptive or plentiful enough, the user may start reading in places that do not offer the information they are seeking, thereby slowing them down unnecessarily.

Sources: Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Evans, 1998; Flower, Hayes and Swarts, 1983; Gerhardt-Powals, 1996; Hartley and Trueman, 1983; Ivory and Hearst, 2002; Ivory, Sinha and Hearst, 2000; Lorch and Lorch, 1995; Mayer, Dyck and Cook, 1984; Meyer, 1984; Morkes and Nielsen, 1998; Morrell, et al., 2002; Murphy and Mitchell, 1986; Nielsen, 1999c; Nielsen, 1999d; Schultz and Spyridakis, 2002; Spyridakis, 1989; Spyridakis, 2000; Zimmerman and Prickett, 2000.

Example:

Spending time during the design process to ensure that the site contains many carefully written headings and sub-headings will save users time as they rapidly locate the information for which they are searching.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common Cancers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bladder Cancer ▪ Breast Cancer ▪ Colon Cancer ▪ Endometrial Cancer ▪ Head and Neck Cancer ▪ Leukemia ▪ Childhood/Pediatric Cancers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Childhood Cancers Home Page ▪ Cancers by Body Location/System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AIDS-Related ▪ Bone ▪ Brain ▪ Breast ▪ Digestive/Gastrointestinal ▪ Endocrine ▪ Eye ▪ Genitourinary ▪ Germ Cell ▪ Gynecologic ▪ Head and Neck
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See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales


9:4 Use Unique and Descriptive Headings

Guideline: Use headings that are unique from one another and conceptually related to the content they describe.

Comments: Using poor headings (mismatches between what users were expecting and what they find) is a common problem with Web sites. Ensure that headings are descriptive and relate to the content they introduce. If headings are too similar to one another, users may have to hesitate and re-read to decipher the difference. Identifying the best headings may require extensive usability testing and other methods.

Sources: Bailey, Koyani and Nall, 2000; Gerhardt-Powals, 1996; Morkes and Nielsen, 1998; Williams, 2000.

Example: These headings are well-designed—they are unique from one another and descriptive of the information to which they link.

Relative Importance:

1 2 3 4 ○

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 3 ○ ○

Alphabetical List of all Topics

Air

[Acid Rain](#), [Global Warming](#), [Emissions...](#)

Cleanup

[Brownfields](#), [Superfund](#), [Corrective Action...](#)

Compliance & Enforcement

[Complaints](#), [Compliance Assistance...](#)

Economics

[Cost Benefit Analysis](#), [Grants](#), [Financing...](#)

Ecosystems

[Wetland](#), [Watersheds](#), [Endangered Species...](#)

Emergencies

[Reporting](#), [Oil Spills](#), [Accidents...](#)

Environmental Management

[Smart Growth](#), [Risk Mgmt](#), [Environmental Indicators...](#)

Human Health

[Children's Health](#), [Exposure](#), [Risk Assessment](#), [Healthy School Environments ...](#)

Industry

[Small Business](#), [Permits](#), [Reporting...](#)

International Cooperation

[Border Issues](#), [Technical Assistance...](#)

Pesticides

[Insecticides](#), [Registration](#), [Food Safety...](#)

Pollutants/Toxics

[Lead](#), [Dioxins](#), [Chemicals](#), [Radiation...](#)

Pollution Prevention

[Recycling](#), [Conservation](#), [Energy...](#)

Research

[Publications](#), [Laboratories](#), [Models...](#)

Treatment & Control

[Treatment Technologies](#), [Pretreatment..](#)

Wastes

[Hazardous Wastes](#), [Landfills](#), [Treatment...](#)

Water

[Wastewater](#), [Drinking Water](#), [Ground Water...](#)

9:5 Highlight Critical Data

Guideline: Visually distinguish (i.e., highlight) important page items that require user attention, particularly when those items are displayed infrequently.

Relative Importance:



Strength of Evidence:



Comments: Items to highlight might include recently changed data, data exceeding acceptable limits, or data failing to meet some other defined criteria. Highlight is used here in its general sense, meaning to emphasize or make prominent. Highlighting is most effective when used sparingly, i.e., highlighting just a few items on a page that is otherwise relatively uniform in appearance.

Sources: Ahlstrom and Longo, 2001; Engel and Granda, 1975; Levine, 1996; Myers, 1985.

Example: Formatting this text in underline, bold, and red draws attention to the most pressing deadline and instructions.

Event Status				
Event Type:	Event Id:	Event Title:	Bidding Opens:	Bids Due:
Internet Auction 269 lots, 1315 items	809	Hawaii & Alaska More Info	03/25/2003	03/27/2003
Sealed Bid 1 lots, 1 items	902	Portable Ofc Trailers Bid Package & Info	02/28/2003	03/28/2003
Internet Auction 1 lots, 1 items	908	Mattresses@St.Julien More Info	03/31/2003	04/02/2003
Internet Auction 401 lots, 5833 items	810	Norfolk & Richmond VA More Info	03/31/2003	04/02/2003
Sealed Bid 224 lots, 684 items	812	Marianas US Naval Guam Bid Package & Info	03/28/2003	04/07/2003

Please confirm that the following information is correct.

After you have reviewed your information, click "**Edit**" to edit the information you entered or "**Submit**" to send your request.

YOUR REQUEST WILL NOT BE SENT UNTIL YOU CLICK "SUBMIT".

Edit **Submit**

9:6 Use Descriptive Row and Column Headings

Guideline: Ensure that data tables have clear, concise, and accurate row and column headings.

Relative Importance:

1234○

Comments: Use row and column headings to indicate unique cell contents. Users require clear and concise table headings in order to make efficient and effective use of table information. Row and column headings will indicate to screen readers how data points should be labeled or identified, so the user can understand the significance of the cell in the overall scheme of the table.

Strength of Evidence:

123○○○

Sources: Bransford and Johnson, 1972; Chisholm, Vanderheiden and Jacobs, 1999d; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Lynch and Horton, 2002; United States Government, 1998; Wright, 1980.

Example: An example of good table heading design. The non-expert user will have no problem understanding these descriptive row and column headers.

Connecticut Business Starts Index 2006												
Click on the 2006 Month/Year Column Header for a Monthly Detailed Report of Starts												
Link --->	Jan-2006 Starts.	Feb-2006 Starts.	Mar-2006 Starts.	Apr-2006 Starts.	May-2006 Starts.	Jun-2006 Starts.	Jul-2006 Starts.	Aug-2006 Starts.	Sep-2006 Starts.	Oct-2006 Starts.	Nov-2006 Starts.	Dec-2006 Starts.
# New Starts	2,836	2,496	3,254									
% Change (M/M)	23.6	-13.6	23.3									
% Change (Y/Y)	3.0	3.2	8.2									

An example of poor table heading design. The non-expert user will have little idea what is meant by 'R', 'J.', and 'Pt.' Unless space constraints dictate otherwise, always use row and column headers that are descriptive enough to be understood by non-expert users.

2005 TERM OPINIONS OF THE COURT					
Slip Opinions, <i>Per Curiam</i> s (PC), and Original Case Decrees (D)					
R-	Date	Docket	Name	J.	Pt.
49	04/26/06	04-1495	Hartman v. Moore	DS	547/1
48	04/26/06	04-1477	Jones v. Flowers	R	547/1
47	04/25/06	04-1324	Day v. McDonough	G	547/1
46	04/25/06	04-1618	Northern Ins. Co. of N. Y. v. Chatham County	T	547/1
45	04/24/06	05-	Salinas v. United States	PC	547/1

9:7 Use Headings in the Appropriate HTML Order

Guideline: Use headings in the appropriate HTML order.

Relative Importance:



Strength of Evidence:



Comments: Using the appropriate HTML heading order helps users get a sense of the hierarchy of information on the page. The appropriate use of H1-H3 heading tags also allows users of assistive technologies to understand the hierarchy of information.

Sources: Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Spool, et al., 1997.

Example:

Best Practices in Funding Extramural Research

Receipt and Review of Investigator-Initiated Applications

- Communicating about Applications Prior to Submission**
 - [Communication between Program Staff and Applicants](#)
 - [Communication between PDS and CSR \(Use of ARA Form\)](#)
 - [Communication between Applicants and CSR Staff](#)
- Assigning Applications to Review Groups within NIH**
 - [Processing Applications in the CSR Division of Receipt and Referral](#)
 - [Notifying Applicants about Assignment to Scientific Review Groups](#)
- Processing Applications Assigned to NCI**
 - [Receiving, Recording, and Storing Applications](#)
 - [Assigning Applications to Program Areas](#)
 - [Accepting Applications](#)
 - [Changing the Status of Applications](#)

```

<td valign="top">
<h1></h1>Receipt and Review of Investigator-Initiated
Applications</h1>
<h2><a href="#1">Communicating about Applications f
<ul class="tight">
<p><a href="#1a">Communication between Program
<a href="#1b"><br>
Communication between PDS and CSR (Use of ARA
Communication between Applicants and CSR Sta
</ul>
<h2><a href="#2">Assigning Applications to Review (
<ul class="tight">
<p><a href="#2a">Processing Applications in the

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See page xxii for detailed descriptions of the rating scales



9:8 Provide Users with Good Ways to Reduce Options

Guideline: Provide users with good ways to reduce their available options as efficiently as possible.

Comments: Users seem willing to reduce their options quickly. Provide all options clearly so that users can focus first on selecting what they consider to be the most important option.

Sources: Bailey, Koyani, and Nall, 2000.

Example: By providing three different options for selecting desired information, users can select the one most important to them.

Relative Importance:

1 2 0 0 0

Strength of Evidence:

1 2 0 0 0

Types of Cancer

[What You Need To Know About™ Cancer Index](#)

Information about detection, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of many types of cancer.

▀ Common Cancers

- ▀ [Bladder Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Breast Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Colon Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Endometrial Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Head and Neck Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Leukemia](#)

- ▀ [Lung Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Melanoma](#)
- ▀ [Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma](#)
- ▀ [Ovarian Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Prostate Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Rectal Cancer](#)

▀ Childhood/Pediatric Cancers

- ▀ [Childhood Cancers Home Page](#)

▀ Cancers by Body Location/System

- ▀ [AIDS-Related](#)
- ▀ [Bone](#)
- ▀ [Brain](#)
- ▀ [Breast](#)
- ▀ [Digestive/Gastrointestinal](#)
- ▀ [Endocrine](#)
- ▀ [Eye](#)
- ▀ [Genitourinary](#)
- ▀ [Germ Cell](#)
- ▀ [Gynecologic](#)
- ▀ [Head and Neck](#)

- ▀ [Hematologic/Blood](#)
- ▀ [Leukemia](#)
- ▀ [Lung](#)
- ▀ [Lymphoma](#)
- ▀ [Musculoskeletal](#)
- ▀ [Neurologic](#)
- ▀ [Pregnancy and Cancer](#)
- ▀ [Respiratory/Thoracic](#)
- ▀ [Skin](#)
- ▀ [Unknown Primary](#)