Web Design Do's and Don'ts

The look and feel of your website should accurately reflect your brand and support your other marketing materials and channels. All components work together to deliver a consistent brand identity.

Here is a design checklist based on usability studies of millions of Web users by Jakob Nielsen, a user advocate and former Sun Microsystems engineer:

DO'S:

- Include a one-sentence tagline on the home page that summarizes what the business does
- Design to let users resize text and print in portrait format
- Clearly indicate what the user will find at the site and provide proper navigation support
- Provide straightforward headlines and page titles with good use of product photos, when applicable
- Make obvious what's clickable, and use standard links with link text colors that change after user access
- Name pages for search engine visibility and provide search functionality, if the site has more than 100 pages
- Design for consistency and familiarity at every level with name and logo on every page
- Use meaningful graphics only — and sparingly
- Use anchor text to structure content space, and break up long passages into multiple pages
- Group all corporate/contact information prominently in one area and in every form users may want
- Begin link names with the most important keyword

DON'TS

- Don't collect email addresses without a privacy policy
- Don't use too much "Flash" as search engine crawlers cannot read non-text items
- Don't leave outdated information on the site
- Don't do anything that looks like an ad
- Don't do anything that produces overly-long download times
- Don't have a search function that doesn't deliver
- Don't build pages in PDF format or require users to open new browser windows
- Don't require horizontal scrolling or constant vertical scrolling
- Don't break or slow down the "Back" button