

Essential Skills in Web Development

PV219, spring 2023

Interface and User Experience

- Browsers implement standards inconsistently, make sure your site works reasonably well across all major browsers.
- At a minimum test against a recent [Gecko](#) engine ([Firefox](#)), a WebKit engine ([Safari](#) and some mobile browsers), [Chrome](#) (= [Opera](#) / [Edge](#)), and your [IE browsers](#) (discontinued in Feb 2023).
- Also consider how [browsers render your site](#) in different operating systems.

Interface and User Experience

- Consider how people might use the site other than from the major browsers: *cell phones*, *screen readers* and *search engines*, for example.
- Some accessibility info: [WAI](#) and [Section508](#).
- It should be a [legal requirement](#). Utilize: [WAI-ARIA](#) and [WCAG 2](#) .

Interface and User Experience

- Don't display unfriendly errors directly to the user.
- Add the attribute *rel="nofollow"* to user-generated links [to avoid spam](#).
- [Build well-considered limits into your site](#) - This also belongs under Security.

Interface and User Experience

- Learn how to do [progressive enhancement](#) or [graceful degradation](#).
- [Redirect after a POST](#) if that POST was successful, to prevent a refresh from submitting again.
- [Don't make me think](#) (be Steve Krug)

Performance

- Implement caching if necessary, understand and use [HTTP caching](#) properly as well as Web [HTML5 Cache Manifest](#) (deprecated in 2021).
- Optimize images – i.e. don't use a 200 Kb image for a repeating background.
- Learn how to [gzip/deflate content](#) ([deflate is better](#)).

Performance

- Combine / concatenate multiple stylesheets or multiple script files to reduce number of browser connections and improve gzip ability to compress duplications between files.
- Use [CSS Image Sprites](#) for small related images like toolbars (because of next point)
- Minimize the total number of HTTP requests required for a browser to render the page.

Performance

- [Yahoo Exceptional Performance](#) – lots of great guidelines, including improving front-end performance and their [YSlow](#) tool (requires Firefox, Safari, Chrome or Opera).
- [Google page speed](#) (use with [browser extension](#)) – a tool for performance profiling, and it optimizes your images too.

Performance

- Utilize [Google Closure Compiler](#) for JavaScript and [other minification tools](#).
- Make sure there's a *favicon.ico* file in the root of the site, i.e. /favicon.ico. [Browsers will automatically request it](#), even if the icon isn't mentioned in the HTML at all.
- If you don't have a /favicon.ico, this will result in a lot of 404s, draining your server's bandwidth.

Technology

- Understand [HTTP](#) and things like GET, POST, sessions, cookies, and what it means to be "stateless".
- Write your [HTML](#) and [CSS](#) according to the [W3C specifications](#) and make sure they [validate](#).
- Understand how JavaScript is processed in the browser.

Technology

- Understand how the JavaScript sandbox works, especially if you intend to use iframes.
- JavaScript can and will be disabled, and that AJAX is therefore an extension, not a baseline.
- [NoScript](#) is becoming more popular, mobile devices may not work as expected, and Google won't run most of your JavaScript when indexing the site.

Technology

- Learn the [difference between 301 and 302 redirects](#) (this is also an SEO issue).
- Consider using a [Reset Style Sheet](#) or [normalize.css](#).
- Consider using a service such as the [Google Libraries API](#) to load frameworks (or any another suitable CDN).

Bug fixing

- Understand you'll spend 20 % of your time coding and 80 % of it maintaining, so code accordingly.
- Set up a good error reporting solution.
- Have a system for people to contact you with suggestions and criticisms (always accept feedback).

Bug fixing

- Document how the application works for future support staff and people performing maintenance.
- Make frequent backups! (And make sure those [backups are functional](#)).
- Have a restore strategy, not just a backup strategy.

Bug fixing

- Use a version control system to store your files, such as [Subversion](#), [Mercurial](#) or [Git](#).
- Don't forget to do your Acceptance Testing.
- Frameworks like [Selenium](#) can help. There are also many alternatives: [Robot Framework](#), [PhantomJS](#), [Cypress.io](#) or [BrowserSync](#).

Bug fixing

- Make sure you have sufficient logging in place using frameworks such as [log4j](#), [log4net](#) or [log4r](#).
- If something goes wrong on your live site, you'll need a way of finding out what.
- When logging make sure you capture both handled exceptions, and unhandled exceptions. Report / analyze the log output, as it'll show you where the key issues are in your site.