43-Point Usability Checklist

SITE IDENTITY:

1. Show your company name and logo in the upper left hand corner/upper banner area.
2. Include a tagline that summarizes the main benefit or promise your organization offers customers (such as, "You're in good hands with Allstate.").
3. Include a solution-oriented headline that emphasizes your unique value and the promise you offer from the visitor's point of view, with words your visitor would use.

COMPANY INFORMATION:

4. Include an "About Us" page with company information. Photos are great here.
5. Organize your information into standard/expected categories, such as:
   a. Our Staff
   b. Press Room
   c. Customer Service
6. Present a unified face/brand to your audiences. All web pages and related marketing materials include your brand's look and "voice."
7. Include a "Contact Us" button that goes to a page with all contact information: email, phone and physical address (for credibility), as well as live chat or other contact features.
8. Include a footer on every page of the website to make visitors comfortable, with:
   a. Company name
   b. Address
   c. Phone
   d. Live link to email
9. If your site gathers customer information, include a "Privacy Policy" page.

CONTENT STRENGTH:

10. Use customer-focused language that explains the unique benefits of your products and services.
11. Incorporate keywords into content in ethical, well-crafted messages.
12. Use "benefit-rich" bullets and short paragraphs to make the content easy to scan.
13. Use uppercase letters (caps) sparingly for easier reading.

LINKS:

14. Differentiate links and make them stand out through bold and/or underline format.

15. Don't use generic instructions, such as "Click here" or "Learn more" as a link name. Use specific beneficial action words instead, such as "Download your free *Cat Diabetes Guide* now."
16. Allow link colors to indicate visited and unvisited status, so visitors remember where they clicked.
17. If a link goes to a non-webpage item such as a PDF, video clip, audio clip, email window, etc. add an icon/short caption indicating this so there are no surprises for the visitor. For example: **Adobe PDF**.

NAVIGATION:
18. Make sure your primary navigation runs across the top of the page or down the left side, never on the right. (The right is reserved for special promotions, news, ads and credibility factors.)
19. Group similar items together within navigation sections and subsections.
20. Use standard naming conventions: Home, About Us, Contact Us. Don't use made-up or "clever" words for button names.
21. If you have a shopping cart, place its buttons in the upper right-hand side, such as:
    • Your account
    • Shopping Cart
    • Check out
22. Add a site map, which helps visitors and search engines know what's on your site.

SEARCH WITHIN YOUR SITE: If you offer a search function on your site…
23. Give users a SEARCH box on the home page so they can quickly find what they're looking for; don't send them to a separate search page.
24. Use a "search" or "go" button to the right of the box.
25. Don't offer a "search the Web" feature. Why send people away from your site?

GRAPHICS and ANIMATION:
26. Optimize graphics to web-appropriate sizes. Large files slow down page viewing and annoy visitors.
27. Use photos that relate to the content, not just as decorations or irrelevant entertainment.
28. Let users choose to see an animated intro to your site! Don't make it the default and force people to wait. Many people won't. In fact, it's one of the most hated web marketing techniques.
29. Video and audio should be in the off position. Give the users the option of turning them on with a clear PLAY button. Even better, offer a MUTE button for the sound.

GRAPHIC DESIGN:
30. Limit font styles to 2 or 3 maximum per site. Over-designing the site can be distracting.
31. Use black type on a white background for easy reading … especially body text with lots of copy.
32. Avoid forcing visitors to do horizontal (side to side) scrolling at 800x600 screen size.

33. The most critical page elements should be visible "above the fold" – on the first screen visitors see when they land on your web pages.
34. Make sure pages rarely force the visitor to scroll more than 2.2 times (exception: sales-letter pages).
35. Avoid using pop-up windows. Most web visitors find them to be distracting and annoying.

COMMUNICATIN UNFINISHED PAGES:
36. Provide a "Go live" date. "Under construction" pages have just a 12% chance of revisits.

SEO ESSENTIALS: Make sure every page of your site includes:
37. Title tag with keywords/keyphrases (<70 characters/spaces maximum; real sentences are best)
38. Header tags with keywords/keyphrases. (Headline = H1 Tag, subhead = H2 tag)
39. Meta description using keywords/keyphrases (Often displayed in Google; 160 characters/spaces)
40. Meta keywords: Up to 10 keyphrases maximum is best
41. Alt tags (to describe charts, photos and other graphics that aren't text) using keywords/keyphrases

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS:
42. Place your social media buttons/links prominently at the top of each page or in the top-right margin.
43. Include a prominent invitation to subscribe to your blog by email and RSS feed, and to share posts.