

Thanks to the Web, sharing your ideas with the rest of the world has never been so easy. HTML expert David Sikk passes on more handy hints and top Web page design tips in the second installment of his six-part tutorial.



This month

Structure, internal and external links, links to other services.

Next month

Adding images, background pictures, animations, text styles, colours, image maps.

Create your own Web site

Part two

Last month, you found out that creating Web pages is easy. So easy, that you may have been tempted to quickly slap up text, images and links in a desperate attempt to keep up with everyone else.

Although this way of producing a Web page is quick, it can often lead to confusion and frustration for your readers. In a fit of pique they may dismiss your site as a bewildering and unpleasant memory and pass on to something more easily accessible. While your poorly put together Web pages will get a reaction, they won't attract much positive

attention, but don't worry there is lots you can do to stop this happening.

It is possible to turn lots of potentially confusing information into a well-structured Web site which will encourage people to visit, browse through and return. All that is needed is some planning (and a bit of imagination).

This month's tutorial aims to help you to bring structure, efficiency and elegance to your own Web pages by keeping in mind the special needs and circumstances of the Web. So dust off your HTML hat and let's find out how to sort out your Web site to create something really dynamic. ●

STRUCTURE

Structure is the overall organisation of information on the Web as seen through a Web browser. Information on the Web is structured differently to the way it is presented in a traditionally printed book.

When you pick up a book to have a look through it, you usually open it at the first page and start reading. Or if you are looking for something specific, you might look at the table of contents and flip to the relevant chapter and skim until you find the information you are after.

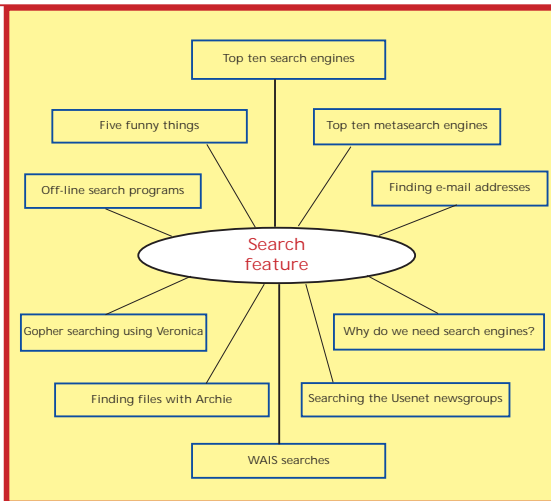
However, this is not the most efficient way of getting information, because the book has not really been designed with this in mind. The author has constructed the information in the order that best presents the point that he or she is trying to make – from start to finish. This kind of publication is called linear.

The Web works differently. It deals with information in a non-linear way. This means that, as long as the pages have been created correctly, the reader can follow any route they want. For example, if you want to learn about playing the zither a single click of your mouse

button can take you to the zither home page. Then, if you want to return to the previous topic, another click can zoom you back to where you came and you can choose to investigate a new subject. Once

you understand this essential difference, you are better prepared to structure your own pages.

A good way to initiate a structure is to create an outline – a simple sketch on paper is fine. This



The structure of your Web site can turn out to be quite intricate, as this plan for a search site demonstrates.

will help organise your pages and determine the links needed to create pages within or going out from your site. If, for example, a part of your document included a large collection of links to sound files, this would be a stand-alone page accessed by a link from other pages in your site. It's a good idea to give each topic its own page. This makes updating the site easier and enables you to refer to the same page over and over from various places within the site.

It's a good strategy to plan your Web site on the basis that the home page will be the first page visitors to the site will read. Make sure that you determine which page is to be your home page early on in your planning. This page will act as the main index page for your site and as the front door from which visitors can move to other pages. Include a home page link on every page of your site and it won't matter where they start reading. If they happen to access your site via a different route, they can always choose to go back to the home page again.