



How to Plan, Design and Create a Web Site to Promote Health

This guide to planning, designing and creating a web site or web page that promotes health present suggestions and tips from a variety of sources, including a guide from [Apple](#), the [National Cancer Institute](#) in the United States and the [Yale Center for Advanced Educational Media](#).

We have adapted those sources and used the outline from the Apple guide as a template for this set of suggestions. This guide has been prepared for our collection of student health webquests. These are student projects that engage students in selected activities that help them learn, use and act upon health information and advice. But this guide can be used for other purposes as well.

In starting this webquest, you should consider how your work could be published on the web. All you need is a web server that will accept your project. This could be your school, local health unit, several free sites on the web and even your own Internet provider. As well, there are several sources of funding that will even help you, including the [SchoolNet Grassroots Program](#), among others. Ask your teacher to help you with this.

Before You Begin

Before beginning you will need to have access to a web site "authoring tool" in which they can create their pages. Many browsers and even word processing programs such as Microsoft Word have their own web page authoring capabilities. You simply create the page and then save it as an html or web page.

Other excellent and relatively inexpensive authoring tools are often found in school computer labs and technology centres. For example, [MS Front Page](#) It is an easy to use software package that can be used for creating and managing websites

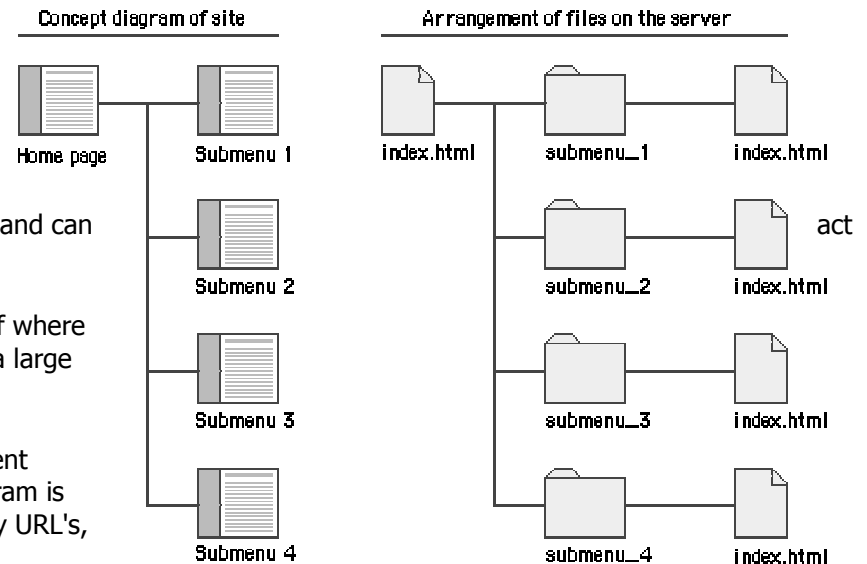
If you don't have access to an authoring tool in those ways, you can simply download [Netscape Navigator](#) that has a built in editor that allows the creation and publishing of web pages. To use this feature, go to the Netscape site, download the free browser and select the "Edit Page" option under the "File" category in the tool bar. You will have to save each page on your web site separately, but you can create a series of pages easily in this manner. As well, students can go to a web site that they like and use its basic structure to begin their work.

Plan Out Your Site in a Story Board/Site Diagram

Your group should use a "story board" or web site diagram to plan out your web site. Site planning with a team is often easier if you use a shared master site diagram that all members of the group can work with. The site diagram should evolve as the plan evolves and can as the core-planning document as changes are proposed and made in the diagram.

Site diagrams are excellent for planning both the broad scope of the site and the details of where each piece of content, navigation, or interactive functionality will appear. You should use a large paper diagram. Use the revised diagram as the official result of the meeting.

The pattern of directories and subdirectories of the site files should mirror the major content divisions and structures as shown on the site diagram: A web site story board or site diagram is complete when it includes all assigned elements, in addition to planned formats, necessary URL's, and resources.



Introduction

This guide has been developed to help students and teachers plan, design and create a web site that promotes health. We have combined good advice about web site design with information about health promotion and disease prevention.

Plan Your Site

Before you start putting up pages on the Web, think about who your audience is, what you want to say, and how you want to say it. Approach the planning of your site from your audience's perspective and ask yourself, as a viewer, "What do I want to get from this site?" Remember, the Web is a communications tool. Most people who visit your Web pages are there in search of useful or entertaining information, not to admire your fancy graphics skills or HTML prowess.

Have a goal or "mission" for your web site

The purpose of this guide and your webquest is to promote the health of children and youth and to prevent diseases and other problems. But you need to try to define a "mission" for your web site that is as specific as possible. For example, one of our webquests asks students to put together a web site that helps young people plan their decisions about their sexual health and has assigned six different topics for investigation prior to creating the pages of the web site. So, obviously, the overall goal of that web site and at least six of the potential pages are already identified.

But the students in that web quest still need to define their audience, decide what type of information they want to emphasize, if they will include interactive elements (quizzes, ask an expert, etc) and entertain (word games, links to other fun web pages etc). For example, the "mission" of a web site produced through that webquest may be to be "the youth consumer report on sexual health information on the web". Or, the mission could be "our school's jump-off point for sexual health information supporting our sex education classes". The first mission would have a global audience and would be looking worldwide for information. The second example would have a local audience and could be tied more directly to your school's sex ed program and local health clinics and services in your community.

You also need to keep in mind the health purposes of your web site. Please read our suggested [Evaluation Criteria for Student Health Web Pages](#). Within those criteria, you will note that it is important that you define the "health and human interest" of your web site and that your content conveys why this is interesting and important for young people. Those criteria also suggest that the "health message" (is what specific things that young people should do or avoid) should be clearly communicated through the web site design and content.

So, you will need to do research and complete the assigned readings in the webquests **before** you decide on the specific mission, goals and objectives for your web site.

Have an Objective for each page

Each of your Web pages should have an objective; whether to inform, educate, entertain, or involve the viewer. If you can't clearly articulate a page's objective, think again about including that page in your site. For example, the sexual health webquest noted above has six topics, so there will likely be at least six pages.

Develop Content Before Design

The design of your Web site should be determined by the information you want to communicate. Define your content before you spend a lot of time on page design. You don't want to invest a lot of time and effort in page layout and navigation design only to later find that your design doesn't work for your content or purpose of your site.

For health web pages, the selection of content should consider these questions:

- What age or types of children and youth are you trying to reach with this health web page?
- What is the most interesting, powerful, emotional aspect of this issue that can be used to capture the attention of the web reader?
- What are the facts about this health topic? Why is each fact important to youth?
- Which facts are more important?
- What things can youth or other do to prevent this health problem or promote the overall health of youth relative to this topic?
- What exactly can youth do individually in their every day lives to avoid or alleviate this problem?
- Where can they go for help and support about this problem?
- What can or should they expect from their schools in helping them with this problem? Their parents? Their doctor? The local health clinic? Others?
- Are there other articles or web sites that can help youth to learn more about this problem
- Where can youth go for immediate help about this problem if they think that they are experiencing this problem?

Add Value

What makes a Web page useful is the unique information on that page. Avoid creating pages that are just a collection of links to other pages, unless you provide some additional value by organizing links into logical groups or adding informative descriptions. Each page can summarize information and then provide the links to additional readings, quizzes, places to visit or call for more information etc. You can also add brief descriptions of the links.

For student health web sites, you will need to be careful when you summarize the information that you have gathered in the assigned readings. You need to be accurate, factual and respectful of different opinions and people's feelings. Medically correct terms are important so you might want to use [our workbook](#) we have developed for webquests when they discuss and define health terms. This will help you be accurate and clear when you use these terms in your web pages.

As well, for student web sites, you can provide links (with explanatory notes) on good, interesting web sites that have quizzes, video and audio clips, puzzles, and other interesting features. You can also go to web sites that sponsor youth email discussions, summarize those discussions and then provide a link so your visitors can go there and participate in the email discussion.

Provide the Basic Identifying Information

There is some basic information you should include on your Web site to help users know who created the content and provide feedback to you.

Provide Author or Contact Person Information

In order to let people know who is responsible for the information contained on your Web site, provide that information somewhere on your site. It's not necessary to list it on each page. Include the following information about your site on the home page and on other pages if it makes sense: For this project, because you are students, you should only provide your teacher and school contact information. However, you can provide the names of the students who worked on the web site.

Identify Your School or Institution

If your page is sponsored by an official body such as an educational institution or an organization that has a recognizable identity, include that on your pages.

Include Your URL on the Home Page

You might want to list the URL (uniform resource locator) of your site. A good place to put this is on your home page. That way if users print the page, they can figure out how to get back to your Web site.

Let People Know How Current the Site Is

If your site features time-sensitive information, provide the date on which the information was last updated. This technique helps people know what's new on your site since the last time they visited. On the other hand, if you don't update your site regularly, don't include a date since that makes it look like you aren't maintaining your site.

Communicate Effectively

Getting your message across effectively makes users more likely to gain knowledge from your site and to visit it repeatedly. Using standard language, formatting, and style help to create a useful, clear message.

Keep Pages Short

Short pages are better than long pages. People are more likely to read a short passage of text than a long one, especially if they have to make an extra effort, like scrolling, to do it. Onscreen text is more difficult and time consuming to read than hardcopy text, which makes people even less likely to thoroughly read long sections of text on a computer.

Use Formatting Wisely

Keep your pages inviting and easy to read by using short paragraphs and by limiting the use of text formatting such as bold and italic style. You can use bulleted or numbered lists where appropriate and techniques such as indented paragraphs of text (block quoted) or centered text to set off key ideas.

Summarize Information

Emphasize key points in long passages of text with headings.

Use Specific Link References

It's more efficient to highlight keywords in your text, rather than using words like "this" or "click here" as links to other pages. It's generally more efficient to embed a link within a sentence than to provide a description of a link with a click here link. Keyword links are also more explicit about where the link is taking the user.

Define a Language Style (or Use an Existing Style)

Use a consistent writing voice and keep your sentences brief and to the point. Remember people tend to scan, rather than read web pages.

Use Familiar Terminology

It's very tempting to use the words that you're familiar with when you're developing Web pages or elements on the screen. However, it's best to use terms that your users are familiar with and that are consistent. For example, don't use technical jargon or computer science terminology unless that's your intended audience.

Label Human Interface Elements Clearly

Make labels for interface elements easy to understand. When you write labels for screen elements, speak in the user's language. Be as specific as possible in your labels or names for forms such as radio buttons, push buttons, and checkboxes. It can be difficult to name a particular action or option in a word or two, but it's important to be concise and clear. In any case, don't sacrifice clarity for space.

Use Book Title Capitalization for Human Interface Elements

In labels or names for elements such as menu items, checkboxes, radio buttons, and push buttons, use book title capitalization style. In general, this means that you capitalize every word except articles (a, an, the), coordinating conjunctions (for example, and, or), and prepositions of three or fewer letters (except when a preposition is part of a verb phrase).

Write Useful and Clear Error Messages

It is your responsibility to make sure that the user can understand what is going on when you can't be there to explain. All communication with the user, such as error messages and status messages, should be descriptive rather than evaluative. When you're writing messages, try to put yourself in the place of your users and imagine how they will feel when confronted with your message. A good error message says what went wrong, why it went wrong, and what the user can do about it. Try to express everything in the user's vocabulary.

Here's an example of an error message that provides little information and doesn't suggest to the user what is really going on

"Error 404: File not found."

You could improve this message by describing the problem in the user's vocabulary. For example, you could say something like this:

"The page you requested is no longer at this location."

To really make this error message useful to the user, you need to provide some suggestion about what the user can do to get out of the current situation. In this example, you could suggest clicking the Back button so that the user can return to where they came from. For more information on writing messages to the user, see the article [Guidelines for Effective Alerts](#).

Help Users Find Their Way

Design your site so that users can easily navigate through it. Try to create a site where users can form a mental model of the site and its contents. There is much you can do to help foster a sense of the entirety of your site and how to get around in it.

Take Advantage of Keywords

Use the same keywords in a web page's title, head, and body text. These elements are indexed by search engines. Search engines rank their results based on the frequency of keywords in each document they find. Therefore, using the same keyword in different parts of your page can increase the likelihood that your page will be found by people looking for that keyword. Meta tags are often used by search engines to get more indexing information for a site. For more information on using meta tags, see [Dr. Clue's HTML Guide](#).

Provide a Directory of Your Site

If you have more than a few pages, a table of contents page is helpful to the reader. This page has links to all your pages and shows the relationships of your pages to each other.

Show Users Where They Are

Provide users with a way to know where they are in the context of your site. One way to do this is to highlight the current location in a table of contents that shows the main levels of your site.

Minimize the Need to Scroll and Resize

Fiddling with scroll bars and window size controls takes time and effort. If possible, design your pages so that all information can be viewed within the default window width, which is approximately 460 pixels.

Use Descriptive Titles

Put a descriptive TITLE tag in your HTML code. When users add a bookmark for your page, the title is used as the title of the user's browser window and as the bookmark. Be sure to use a title that tells where the bookmark leads to on every page of your site.

Choose the Appropriate Depth Versus Breadth for Your Site

Create a balanced site structure that allows users to get to the information they are seeking within three clicks. If your site is well structured, users can form a mental model of it that helps them understand the scope of the site. For more information on this issue, see the [Yale Style manual](#).

Use Appropriate Navigation Buttons

If the material you are creating is linear in nature, follow the book metaphor and create a structure that users can navigate by going from one page to the next using Previous and Next buttons. This way users can be sure that they have covered all of the information in the site. For example, if you are creating a site that contains lots of information about a topic, use Previous and Next buttons to aid users in getting through all of the sections without having to go up and down the hierarchy or your site. When the user gets to the end of a sequence of information, either omit a Next button on the page or disable it.

If there is little carry over from one section to another in your site, use buttons that link to your main page or a logical section. For example, if your site provides representations of art in your museum, you could group the pages by era or artist. The user could then navigate through the site in a random order. Each section would link back to the main page. Each page could link back to the section where it is located.

Avoid Dead Ends

Don't create a situation where the only way to leave a page is by using the browser's Back button. Provide Previous, Next, and Top buttons.

Include Internal Links on Long Pages

If a page must be long, use internal links on the page to aid with navigation through its contents. Remember to use relative links so that the browser doesn't reload the page each time a link is selected (full URLs may cause this behavior). If you include a topics list at the top of the page, it's helpful to include links to a table of contents every so often on the page. You can also include a "Go To Top" link at the bottom of the page so that users can easily return to the beginning of the page.

Include Links to the Key Locations in Your Web Site

Consider providing links to the following places in your site to help your users navigate:

- Home
- Index
- Table of contents
- Previous page and next page
- Other sections (branches of the hierarchy)
- Other pages within the section

Duplicate Navigational Items at the Bottom of Your Pages

Most people read from the top of a page to the bottom, so they want to go somewhere else at the end of a page. Therefore you should provide navigation links at the bottom of your pages, particularly if the page scrolls, so that users can easily get from one place to another. Be sure not to include too many links throughout the page.

Be Consistent in the Placement of Navigation Links

If your site has navigation links at the top and at the bottom of one page, include them on all pages throughout your site. Providing navigation links in standard places helps people to develop a perception of stability in your site and makes navigation easier.

Use Cross References

Include a table of contents on your page to cross-reference the pages on the same level of the section. You can also provide links to sources and related items such as abstracts, references cited, and related items of interest. You can include cross-references to topics with a synonym for a name. For example, "For information on windoids, see Utility Windows." You can include cross-references to similar information. For example, "For additional information on elephants, check out African Animals."

Provide a Search Mechanism

If your site is large or complex, help users find what they want by providing a local search mechanism. Doing so mitigates any navigation problems that may arise due to a deep content structure.

Tell Users What to Expect

It's nice to let users know what to expect before they click one of your links. For example, will the link take them to another page, download a sound file, or display a mailto window? Using clear and specific words for your links lets users know what to expect.

Provide an Introduction

A brief introduction at the top of a page helps users know what information they can expect to find there.

Help Orient Users

When users first arrive at your site, help orient them by providing an overview of your site. Use titles that accurately summarize the contents of the pages. For large or complex pages, provide a table of contents, an index, or even a search mechanism.

A Link Should Indicate What It Links To

What happens when a user clicks a link should be apparent from the link's name or context. For example, a mailto link could be indicated by an e-mail address. News group links should be the name of the group. FTP links could be identified by the word *download* or the server host name.

Advise Users of File Size Before Downloading

Links that download files should be accompanied by a description of the file's size so the user can gauge how long the process will take. One simple way is to display the file size in parentheses next to the filename.

Design for Efficiency

Different users have different access to the Internet via modems of different speeds, saturated intranets, or sites that don't have enough servers. Problems of access arise when your site becomes the "cool site of the day" and many users try to access it simultaneously; or if users are accessing your site from geographic regions with reduced numbers of connections. Because you can't predict at what speed a particular user is accessing your information, it's important to design with efficiency in mind. This page contains tips on designing for low-bandwidth situations, however they occur.

Don't Bury Information

In organizing the information on your Web site, try to make sure that the user can get to useful information in less than three clicks.

Minimize File Size

Smaller sized files take less time to display. If you have a large amount of text, consider breaking it up and organizing it on multiple pages. One good way to keep an image file small is to use a minimal number of colors. Gradations and three-dimensional effects also tend to bloat the size of image files. In general, try to keep file sizes below 50 KB for both text and image files.

Use Small Images

Limit the physical size of your images for faster performance. Be sure to crop your images as closely as possible.

Use Thumbnail Graphics

If you need to display a large image, consider putting it on a separate page and linking to it via a small thumbnail representation. This lets users decide if they want to take the time to view the image in its large format.

Repeat Images Where Possible

Using the same image in multiple places helps performance since once an image is downloaded, it can be subsequently accessed from the local memory cache. For example, using standard bullet characters, title banners, and separator images enhances performance.

Specify the Width and Height for Graphics

Specifying the WIDTH and HEIGHT attributes for images makes your page appear to download much more quickly since most browsers can determine the page layout before the graphics are downloaded. The browser can display the text portion of a page first and fill in the graphics later. Users can begin to read your page before waiting for all the graphics to download.

Use Interlaced Images

Interlaced images are loaded in multiple passes, with each pass providing more resolution detail. This way users get an idea of what the image looks like before it is completely downloaded. Interlaced images are generally perceived to load faster than non-interlaced images.

Know the Difference Between GIF and JPEG

Today, virtually all popular browsers can read both GIF and JPEG images. Some older browsers, however, cannot display JPEG images. JPEG images typically compress better, are smaller, and load faster. They are particularly efficient for displaying photographic images. However, JPEG compression does cause some of the original image information to be lost. GIFs, on the other hand, do not lose any image data during compression. GIF images are generally better for displaying line drawings and solid colored graphics.

Accommodate Differences

People who access the Web use all types of computers, operating systems, and browsers. The more of these various configurations you accommodate, the greater number of people will have an enjoyable experience at your site.

Provide Alternate Text for Images

Many users turn off automatic image loading for better performance. Others have computer systems that support only text-based browsers. Therefore you should provide text alternatives for all graphic images used in your site. Use the ALT tag to include information about what shows up when a graphic image does not appear. If you use images for navigation, make sure you also provide redundant text links.

Provide Files in Cross-Platform Format

To allow as many people as possible to use files on your Web site, make the files available in a cross-platform format (PDF, for example). Otherwise make files available in a format for each specific platform, such as one for Mac OS, one for the Windows operating system, and one for UNIX systems.

Let Users Decide

Consider providing two different versions of your Web site; an "enhanced" version for those with high bandwidth connections and graphics-capable browsers, and a "light" version for those with slow connections or text-only browsers. Give users a choice of which version to access from your home page.

Make It Look Nice

When designing your Web site, consider graphic design aspects such as layout, composition, and style. You may have different appearances for different levels of pages within your site. However, there should be standard elements throughout the site that users can rely upon to help them know where they are.

Use Appropriate Formatting

HTML is designed to be an abstract language that allows its content to be reformatted based upon the context in which it is viewed. HTML has good defaults, but you may want to look at an HTML reference guide to find alternatives for setting text attributes such as line breaks and the placement of graphics and text. Users choose which fonts they want to use in their browsers; therefore, you can't count on any particular font being present. You can, however, define a proportional relationship between the font sizes in different elements on the page. For example, you could set different font sizes for different levels of headings.

Assume a Screen Size of 640 pixels x 480 Pixels

Most people don't extend their browser windows beyond the 640 pixel width. Therefore you should make your pages no wider than 640 pixels. You can assume that users may have a smaller screen size, but because of the many 13-inch monitors in use, you can never assume that a page can be bigger than 640 pixels by 480 pixels.

Plan to Make Your Web Site Usable Design Process:

- Set and state goals clearly
- Set performance and preference goals
- Share independent design ideas
- Create and evaluate prototypes (Use iterative process i.e. try, test, try again)

Design Considerations

- Establish level of importance
- Reduce users workload
- Be consistent
- Provide feedback to users
- Include Logos
- Limit maximum page size

Content and Organization of Content

- Organize content by level of importance
- Provide useful content
- Put important information at top of site/page
- Use short sentence/paragraph lengths
- Provide printing options

Searching Site

- Consider use of adding a search engine for site
- Indicate search scope of engine
- Enhance scanning rather than adding an unnecessary search engine

Navigation

- Keep navigation aids consistent
- Use text-based navigation aids wherever possible
- Group navigation elements together in a logical way
- Place navigation on right of pages

Links

- Position important links higher
- Show links clearly
- Indicate internal vs. external links
- Use descriptive labels for links
- Use text links
- Avoid mouseovers
- Repeat text links
- Present tabs effectively
- Show used links by having them change colour after use

Software/Hardware

- Consider connection speeds of audience
- Reduce download time
- Consider monitor size
- Consider user's screen resolution
- Design for full or partial screen viewing

Accessibility

- 0 Use colour wisely, some people are colour blind
- 0 Design for device independence for disabled
- 0 Provide alternative formats
- 0 Provide redundant text links
- 0 Provide user-controlled content

Design for Different Page Orientations

Because users can change the size and shape of their web browser windows, you should check your page layout in different configurations to be sure that it works well however the user views it.

Don't Change Link Appearances

Most browsers have a default appearance for unread links and links that the user has already viewed. Because users rely on the consistency of the interface to help them navigate and use the Web, it's best not to override these settings. If you have a compelling reason to override the appearance of links, do so consistently throughout your site.

Use Caps/Lower Case or Initial Cap Style for Headings

Because text in all capital letters is more difficult to read and has a connotation on the Internet of SHOUTING, avoid using it to emphasize headings or text.

Use Empty (White) Space Liberally

Empty space (known in the book design domain as white space) provides relief on a page and draws attention to aspects of the page design. Use white space around headings, graphics, and paragraphs of text to create a sense of balance on the page. By providing relief, white space can neutralize the effect of two competing elements of the same size that draw the eye back and forth across a page. You might want to consult a professional book designer or the current literature regarding page design.

Establish a Layout Grid for Your Site

In order to foster a visual identity for your Web site, create a standard layout that remains the same throughout your pages. You can have different elements that you plug into different locations on different levels of pages, however the grid should be consistent. Your home page may have a separate grid. Each subsequent level of your site should have a consistent identifier such as a title banner or navigation bar that shows users where in the site they currently are.

Use a Consistent Visual Design Language

Treat graphics consistently throughout your site. Use the same style of graphics (photo realistic, flat color, or black and white) throughout your site.

Be consistent—either always embed graphics in text or put them in a standard position on the page. You can design short pages that have small graphics or pages that consist mainly of graphics. Alternatively you can have one long page that incorporates text and graphics. Make the title graphics throughout your site consistent in size and graphic design. Place the navigation tools in the same place on all pages using the same size and design. Use the same alignment for all pages throughout your site—left-aligned, centered, fully justified, or right aligned pages.

Design Your Page Carefully

Titles

- Provide page titles
- Use well-designed headings

Page Length

- Determine appropriate page length
- Determine scrolling vs. paging needs

Page Layout

- Align page elements
- Establish level of importance (most important first)
- Be consistent
- Reduce unused space, but leave lots of white space
- Put important information at top of page
- Format page for efficient viewing, try to make it easy to scan the page

Font/Text size

- Use readable fonts
- Use familiar fonts

Graphics

- Use graphics wisely and sparingly
- Avoid using graphics as links
- Avoid graphics on search pages

Encourage Dialog

Providing users with the opportunity to interact with you or others via your Web site keeps people engaged so that they visit frequently.

Provide Ways for People to Interact With Each Other

Consider including a page on your site where people can post messages or state their opinions. If you use this feature for your health web site, you could invite your teacher, nurse or local health clinic to participate in the discussions. Rather than creating a discussion list on your student web site, you could go to another bigger site, review the discussions about your topic, create a summary on your site and then invite your visitors to go to the other site.

Provide Ways for People to Interact With Well-Known People

Providing access to celebrities or people with expertise in the field addressed by your Web site keeps people interested in your site. You can provide links to web casts or video clips of events such as concerts or conferences that are promoting health (AIDS Concerts is one good example). You can also include audio files that allow people to listen to famous people's speeches.

You might want to provide an area in your Web site to conduct online chats via e-mail. If you do have online chats, you should post a schedule of when a particular topic will be discussed. For health web sites, you also always provide a contact point for someone who is feeling uncomfortable or is worried about their health. Linking with the [Kids Help Phone](#) web site is an easy way to provide this access to help. There may also be help lines in your community or province/territory.

You can also create a link to [AskAnExpert.com](#).

Provide an E-mail Contact

Encourage people to send you feedback via e-mail by providing an address. Make the address a link to a MAILTO form to make it easy for users to send you e-mail. Then be sure to respond to the feedback either by updating your site appropriately or acknowledging the receipt of the information.

Provide a Way for People to Request Specific Information

You can provide a way for people to request information. Again; you can do this by e-mail. You could ask the local health clinic or a teacher, guidance counselor or other expert to receive and reply to these emails. If you get enough similar questions, you could publish a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document as part of your Web site.

You can also visit the [Canadian Health Network](#) (Youth section), select the health experts and information you find most relevant for your topic and then create links to those resources, people or email lists

Make the Interaction Up to date, If You Can

There are several sites, such as [Global/Canwest](#), that offer daily news updates on health issues and you can visit those sites, add the links to the stories that relate to your health topic and therefore have an excellent way to keep your health web site interesting and refreshed. ,

Maintain Your Site

A well-maintained site is a pleasure to visit. Let your users know you care about them by making your Web site work for as many browser, platform, and access configurations as possible, by paying attention to details such as spelling and grammar; and by keeping your site tidy and up-to-date.

Test Your Web Site

Before you make a Web site available to the public, be sure you test it. Testing should be done with a variety of browsers on various platforms. Try accessing your site with a text-only browser or with image loading turned off. If you use a lot of graphics, try accessing it over a slow link, such as through a dial-up telephone line/modem.

Copy Edit Your Pages

Be sure to spell-check and proofread your Web pages carefully. Better yet, have someone else proofread them.

Don't Overuse "Under Construction" Signs

Virtually the entire Web is under construction. If you must use "under construction" notes or graphics, use them sparingly. It is better not to refer to that page until you have completed it.

Check for Broken Links

Make sure you test your links to other sites frequently. You can do this manually or use one of several software utilities available that do this automatically.

Update Your Site Regularly

Regular updates will keep people coming back to your site. If you know that you will be updating a portion or your entire site at regular intervals (for example, weekly or monthly), you could mention that and invite visitors to check out the next update after a specific date. You might also use a What's New link on your home page to provide quick access to added or modified information.

Keep Information Timely

When using your Web page to announce events or activities, make sure you remove the information after the event has passed.

Provide Access to Archived Information

If you are updating your site regularly, you might also want to keep information that is not time critical, such as articles or essays, available to new visitors. Put these in a list on a separate page and provide a Back Issues link.