



# HHS Web Standards

January 5, 2007

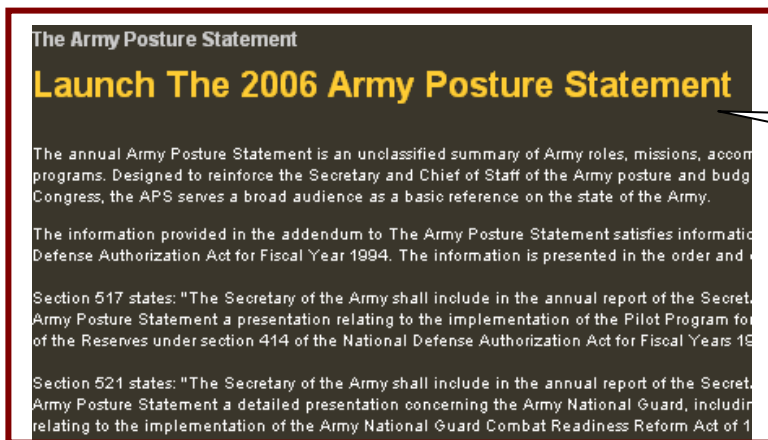
## Use Dark Text on Plain, High-Contrast Backgrounds

### Standard:

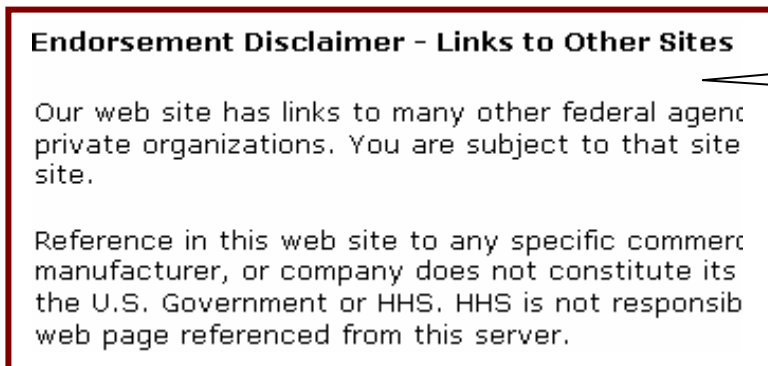
HHS must use black (preferable) or other dark text on a white or off-white background when presenting text information—including headers, captions, and prose text—on Web pages.

### Rationale:

Research studies consistently show that dark text on a plain background elicits reliably faster scanning and reading performance than on a medium-textured background. When compared to scanning or reading light text on a dark background, people read black text on a white background up to thirty-two percent faster. In general, the greater the contrast between the text and background, the easier the information is to scan or read.



This example decreases readability.



This example uses dark text on a white background to improve users' ability to scan choices.

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Boyntoin and Bush, 1956; Bruce and Green, 1990; Cole and Jenkins, 1984; Evans, 1998; Goldsmith, 1987; Gould, et al., 1987a; Gould, et al., 1987b; Jenkins and Cole, 1982; Kosslyn, 1994; Muter and Maurutto, 1991; Muter, 1996; Scharff, Ahumada and Hill, 1999; Snyder, et al., 1990; Spencer, Reynolds and Coe, 1977a; Spencer, Reynolds and Coe, 1977b; Treisman, 1990; Williams, 2000.

## Use Dark Text on Plain, High-Contrast Backgrounds (Continued)

### Exemptions:

Background shades of color may be used in text boxes, panels, tabs, and other elements of a Web page. There must be high contrast, however, between the text (foreground) and the background. You must select color combinations that can be discriminated by users with color deficiencies/color blindness. You may be exempt from this requirement in sites targeted to children, youth, and other groups with demonstrated specific needs and requirements. In using colored backgrounds, though, readability must be maintained, especially for individuals with low vision, via contrast between text and background colors.

You may wish to use these resources:

- [Colour Contrast Check](#) (Jonathan Snook, Snook.ca)  
This tool allows you to specify foreground and background colors to determine if they provide enough contrast.
- [Contrast Checker](#) (Q42)  
The contrast checker tool enables you to compare the contrast in a web page.
- [Making Text Legible: Designing for People with Partial Sight](#) (Lighthouse International)  
Basic guidelines for making effective legibility choices that work for nearly everyone.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:** N/A

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Font Size and Typeface

### Standard:

HHS must use sans serif (such as Verdana or Arial) on Web pages. The selected font must be used consistently throughout the site. In general, usability tests have shown that users perceive sans serif fonts to be more contemporary.

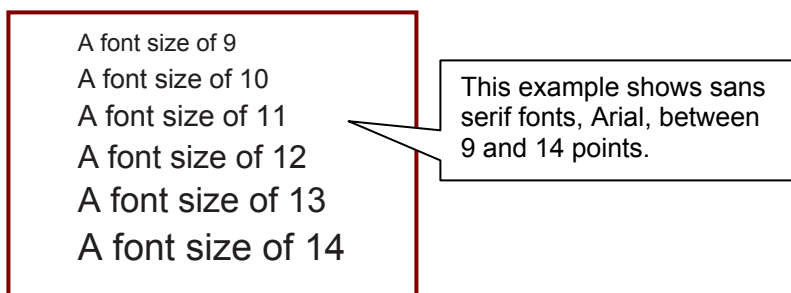
HHS must use Arial or Verdana font and the listed font size (or equivalent) for standard text and links on all Web pages. Use the following scale as a guide to determine size:

If the Font Type Is...	Then You Must Use...
Arial	11 Point Font Size
Verdana	10 Point Font Size

If you have specialized audiences, use the appropriate font size to accommodate them. For example, older adults may require a 12 point font in Verdana to read effectively. Additionally, use “scalable fonts” or fonts that will allow the user to increase and decrease text size using the browser functions (e.g., View > Text Size > Larger).

### Rationale:

Research has shown that fonts smaller than 11 points (Arial) elicit slower reading performance from users.



### Exemption(s):

A font size of one or two points smaller than the approved points above may be used in the following situations (but in no case smaller than an 8-point font):

- In data tables.
- In PDF documents because of their nature and because they are expandable when opened.
- In a navigation bar that presents secondary information such as bread crumb navigation or standard information/links that appear in the “footer” of a page.
- For notices or disclaimers. For example: Documents in PDF format require the [Adobe Acrobat Reader®](#).
- To present information and/or links in the footer of a Web page. For example: This is an official U.S. Government Web site managed by the [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#).

## Font Size and Typeface (Continued)

- To present secondary information that describes a prime link or piece of content. For example:

[Confirmed Human Cases by Country](#)

[Note: Numbers are confirmed by World Health Organization and may not reflect news or country reports.]

- When you provide a “page text sizer” control that allows users to increase or decrease a font size. Examples of a page text sizer include: [A A A](#) and **Text Size:** [SM](#) [MD](#) [LG](#) [XL](#)

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Bailey, 2001; Bernard and Mills, 2000; Bernard, Liao and Mills, 2001a; Bernard, Liao and Mills, 2001b; Bernard, et al., 2002; Ellis and Kurniawan, 2000; Galitz, 2002; Ivory and Hearst, 2002; Tinker, 1963; Tullis, 2001; Tullis, Boynton and Hersh, 1995.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:** N/A

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS’ *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Designing and Employing Check Boxes

### Standard:

HHS must use a check box control to allow users to select one or more items from a list of possible choices. In addition, a control that allows users to clear checked box selections must also be provided.

Also, users should be able to select an option by clicking on either the box itself or its label.

### Rationale:

Users should be able to select each check box independently of all other check boxes. One study showed that for making multiple selections from a list of non-mutually exclusive items, check boxes elicit the fastest performance and are preferred over all other widgets.

By providing users with a larger click zone area that extends to the label and the check box, they are faster at making the selection. This is especially true for older adults.

The image shows a screenshot of a web form with two sections. The top section is titled "Media Type:" and contains a list of options with checkboxes: DVD (checked), CD-ROM 1, CD-ROM 2, CD-ROM 3 (checked), CD-ROM 4, CD-ROM 5 (checked), and 8mm high density tar tape. Below this list is a "Total cost of selections: \$" label and two buttons: "Clear" and "Submit". The bottom section is titled "a. Short documents" and contains two questions: "How do you prefer to use short documents? (Please check all that apply)" and "What file format(s) do you prefer? (P)". The first question has four options: View/read online, Download to view offline, Download to print, and Download to edit or manipula. The second question has five options: Hypertext markup language (, Plain ASCII text (.txt), Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), Compressed file (.zip), and Other (please specify). Below these options are "Clear" and "Submit" buttons. A callout box on the right points to the "Media Type:" section and contains the text: "Check boxes are most appropriately used in these examples because users may wish to order more than one product or to select more than one file format. Convention dictates that check boxes are used when more than one item in a list may be selected."

**Exemptions:** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Bailey, 1996; Fowler, 1998; Galitz, 2002; Johnsgard, et al., 1995; Marcus, Smilonich and Thompson, 1995.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

### Related Standards:

- [Use Radio Buttons for Exclusive Selections](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

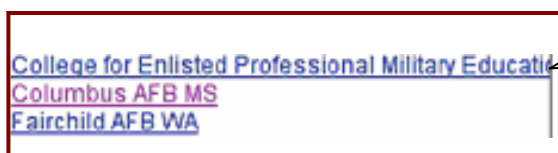
## Designate Visited and Unvisited Links

### Standard:

To designate unvisited links, HHS must use the default blue text link color (#0000FF, RGB (0,0, 255)); to designate visited links, HHS must use the default purple link color (#800080, RGB (128,0,128)). For links that point to the same target, all links should change color to the default purple once the target site has been visited.

### Rationale:

Link colors help users understand which parts of a Web site they have visited. Providing this feedback, according to several studies, helps improve users' speed in finding information. In addition, this color convention is considered a common experience for users on the Web. By following long understood conventions, we reduce users' confusion and improve their overall success rates.



This example shows the default blue and purple link colors to indicate unvisited and visited links.

### Exemptions:

Primary site navigation links that represent the major categories and topics of a site are exempt. This primary navigation is typically presented on the homepage and may be persistent across a Web site. Examples of primary navigation items include tabs and left, right, and middle panels (navigation bars). Graphic examples are provided below:



An example of a middle navigation panel that represents the major categories on a homepage.



An example of tab navigation that represents major categories on a homepage.

An example of a left navigation panel that represents major categories on a homepage.



## Designate Visited and Unvisited Links (Continued)

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Evans, 1998; Nielsen and Tahir, 2002; Nielsen, 1996a; Nielsen, 1996b; Nielsen, 1996c; Nielsen, 2003; Spool, et al., 2001; Tullis, 2001.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

### Related Standards:

- [Use Text for Links](#)
- [Presenting Links to Materials in Multiple Languages](#)

### Related Guidelines:

- [Provide Consistent Clickability Cues](#) (Source: HHS Research-Based Web Design and Usability Guidelines)

## Use Text for Links

### Standard:

HHS must not use images alone as links. Links must be text. If an image is clickable, a text description must be used in addition to the image (along with the required alt tag). In that case, both the image and text must be clickable. View the “Requirements” section below for format.

When providing a list of links, HHS should provide context descriptions with each unless the context description indicates, in one sentence or phrase, what the user will find at the linked page. View the “Requirements” section below for format.

### Rationale:

Text links are more easily recognized as clickable, usually download faster than images, are preferred by users, and change colors after being selected. In addition, it is easier to convey a link’s destination in text, rather than using an image. Another benefit to using text links is that users with text-only and deactivated graphical browsers can see the navigation options. In one study, users showed considerable confusion regarding whether or not certain images were clickable; this was true even for images that contained words. Users could not tell if the images were clickable without placing their cursor over them.

Adding brief context descriptions to a set of link titles can help users better understand the distinction between their options. Context descriptions should be brief and add value to the link title.

### Exemptions:

- Context descriptions are not required on the Home pages of HHS Web sites because they function as menus or quick links.
- Small thumbnail images that link to larger images (of the thumbnail) are exempt from this standard.
- An agency logo does not need text, but it still needs a text link if there is no text option.
- Graphics that are primarily text (e.g., tabs) are exempt.
- With tabbed navigation, the navigation bars are exempt.

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Farkas and Farkas, 2000; Koyani and Nall, 1999; Mobrand and Spyridakis, 2002; Nielsen, 2000; Spool, et al., 1997; Zimmerman, et al., 2002.

### Requirements (content & style):

When providing an image as a link, text must be provided in or alongside the link:

Style examples:



This tab (image) does not require a separate text element.

## Use Text for Links (Continued)

Style examples for presenting context descriptions:

[Impact Worksheets on Animal Health Events](#) (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service)

Find out how the affected country's production and trade in the livestock and livestock products is likely to be affected by the disease.

[FAS \(Foreign Agricultural Service\) Overseas Attache Reports](#) (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

Provides information on the impact of avian influenza on overseas trade.

### Related Standards:

- [Designate Visited and Unvisited Links](#)
- [Presenting Links to Materials in Multiple Languages](#)
- [Image Maps \(to be developed\)](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Distinguish Required Data Entry Fields

### Standard:

HHS must clearly and consistently distinguish required data entry fields from optional data entry fields. HHS must use ONE of the following approaches to distinguish required data entry fields:

- Provide an asterisk in front of the label for required fields. In addition, HHS must provide text stating: “A field with an asterisk (\*) before it is a required field.” This statement must precede the beginning of the data entry form.
- Provide the word “(Required)” in front of the label for required fields. In addition, HHS must provide text stating: “All required fields have the word (Required) in front of a label.” This statement must precede the beginning of the data entry form.
- Separate fields into required and optional when practical. These groupings must be clearly labeled “Required” and “Optional” and include the statement: “Fields are organized into required and optional groupings.”

### Rationale:

Users should be able to easily determine which data entry fields are required and which are optional. Many sites are currently using an asterisk in front of the label for required fields. Some sites cluster required and optional fields to assist the user.

To comply with Section 508, it is not sufficient to use color or bold to emphasize required fields. Colorblind users or those using screen readers will not get the information.

A field with an asterisk (\*) before it is a required field.

Prefix:

\*First Name:

\*Last Name:

\*Address:

\*City:

\*State:

\*Zip:

\*Email Address:

Phone Number:

This example shows required and non-required data entry fields.

The image shows a data entry form with a legend at the top stating "A field with an asterisk (\*) before it is a required field." Below the legend, there are several input fields. The fields for "First Name", "Last Name", "Address", "City", "State", "Zip", "Email Address", and "Phone Number" are all preceded by an asterisk, indicating they are required. The "Prefix" field is not preceded by an asterisk, indicating it is optional. A callout box points to the form with the text "This example shows required and non-required data entry fields."

## Distinguish Required Data Entry Fields (Continued)

**Exemptions:** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Bailey, 1996; Fowler, 1998; Morrell, et al., 2002; Tullis and Pons, 1997.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:**

- [Designing and Employing Check Boxes](#)
- [Use Radio Buttons for Exclusive Selections](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Use Radio Buttons for Exclusive Selections

### Standards:

HHS must provide radio buttons when users need to choose one, and only one, response from a list of mutually exclusive options. HHS must always use at least two radio buttons in connection with each other. A single radio button must not be used to present a lone item.

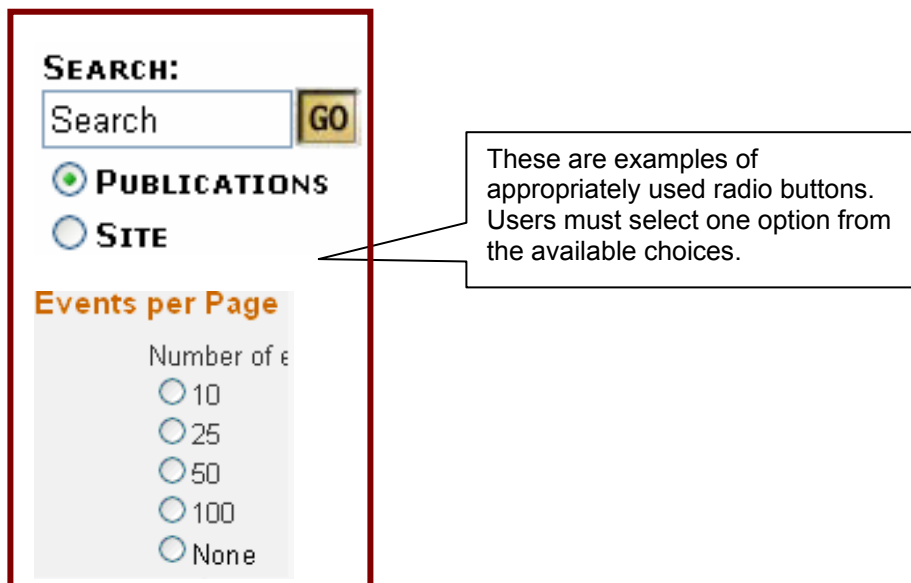
If users can choose not to activate any of the radio button choices, HHS must provide a selection labeled “None.” Designers and developers should assign one of the radio button choices as the default, when appropriate.

Since radio buttons require only one choice, make sure that the options are both comprehensive and clearly distinct.

In addition, users should be able to select an option by clicking on either the button itself or its label. By providing users with a larger click zone area that includes both the label and the button, users will be faster at making the selection. This is especially true for older adults.

### Rationale:

Radio buttons are a series of on-screen buttons that allow only one selection to be made from a group of options. By following the standards above, radio buttons can be used for optimal user performance.



### Exemptions:

- If a set of mutually-exclusive options are greater than five or more, a drop down box or list box may be used to save space.

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Bailey, 1983; Bailey, 1996; Fowler, 1998; Galitz, 2002; Johnsgaard et al., 1995; Marcus, Smilonich and Thompson, 1995; Tullis and Kodimer, 1992.

## Use Radio Buttons for Exclusive Selections (Continued)

Requirements (content & style): N/A

**Related Standards:**

- [Designing and Employing Check Boxes](#)
- [Using Drop-Downs \(to be developed\)](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

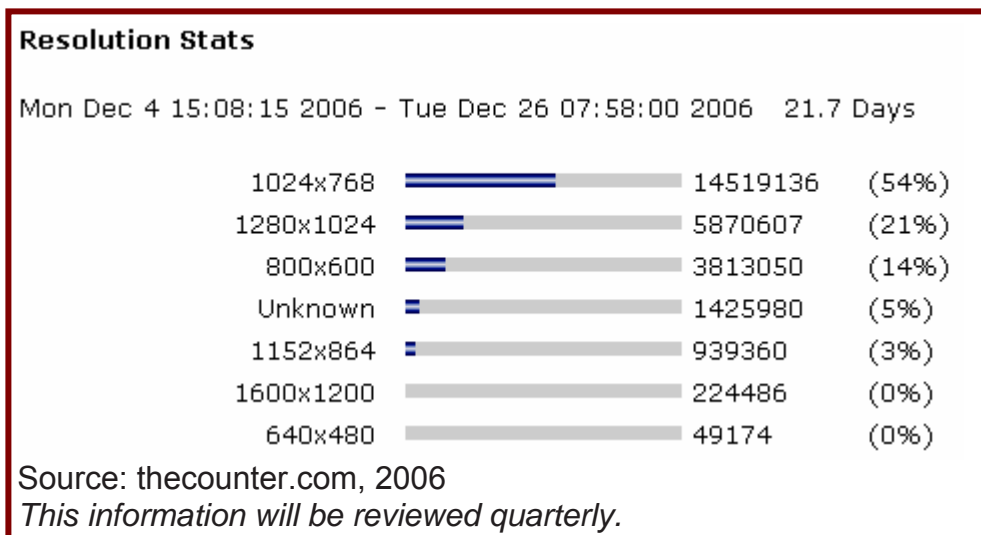
## Design for Dominant Screen Resolutions

### Standard:

HHS must design for monitors with the screen resolution set at 1024x768 pixels, but use a liquid layout that works well for any resolution, from 800x600 to 1280x1024.

### Rationale:

As of December 2006, fifty-four percent of users have their screen resolution set at 1024x768. By designing for screens set at 1024x768, designers will accommodate this most common resolution, while balancing tradeoffs for those using 800x600 and 1280x1024. Designers and coders should test Web pages in the most common screen displays to ensure good visibility, legibility, and aesthetics. Please note: As resolutions are increasing, some users are viewing Web sites in smaller browser windows.



**Exemption(s):** HHS STAFFDIVS should obtain approval through the HHS Web Communications Division. HHS OPDIVS should get approval through their Web Manager/Representative. [Note: A formal process for approving or denying exemptions will be created with HHS OPDIV Web Representatives.] You may get an exemption from this standard if:

- Your web site logs or other data collection efforts indicate that the majority of your users have set resolutions other than 1024x768.
- Pages, other than menu pages, may be exempt if there is a clear and present need for more tightly controlled dimensions to work with column widths, text boxes, images, or navigation widgets.

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

www.thecounter.com, 2006; Evans, 1998; Jupitermedia Corporation, 2003. Nielsen, 2006.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:** N/A



[NOTE: Establish a notification system in the Web Content Management System that reminds WCD staff to update this standard, if needed, on a quarterly basis.]

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Design Using Most Common Browsers and Operating Systems

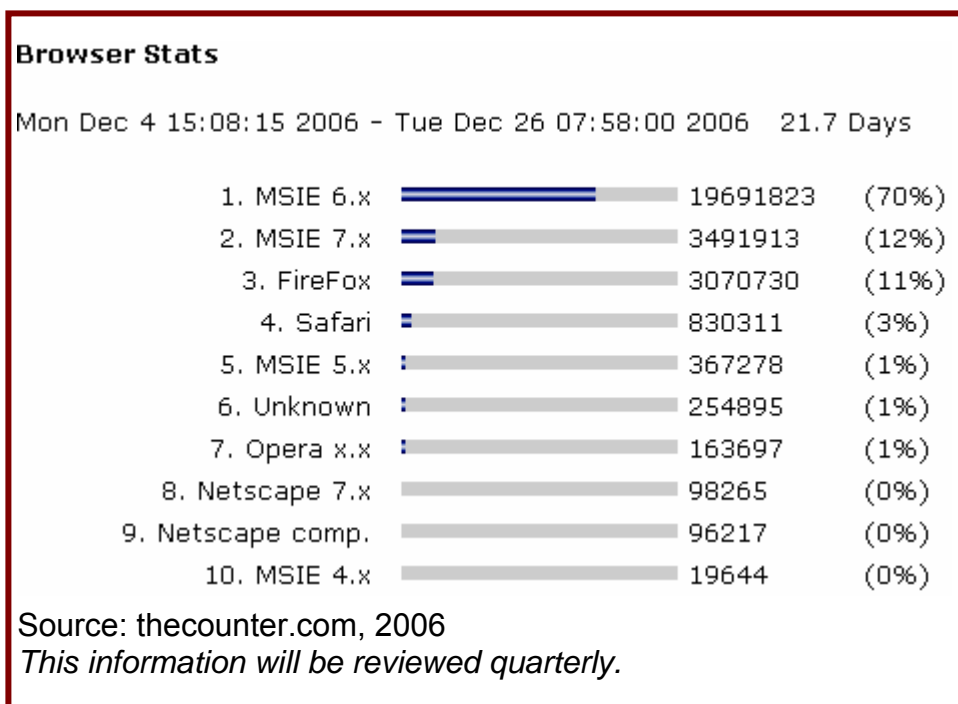
### Standard:

HHS should design, develop, and test for the most common browser (Internet Explorer release 6.x, as of December 2006) and Operating Systems (OS) (Windows XP, as of December 2006); however HHS must design websites that display without significant degradation for users using other browsers, such as Firefox, Safari, Netscape, Opera, and older versions of Internet Explorer (releases lower than 6.x) and other operating systems such as Windows 2000, Windows 98, and OS X.

### Rationale:

The goal is that users should be able to view Web content without having to use a particular browser. To ensure that Web browsers are displaying content without significant differences, designers and coders should view the Web pages in different Web browsers on different Operating Systems.

The preferred way to accomplish this is to design with browser and OS neutral code (HTML 4.x, XHTML 1.x, etc). This means avoiding IE-specific and XP-specific code and active X controls.



## Design Using Most Common Browsers and Operating Systems (Continued)

### OS Stats

Mon Dec 4 15:08:15 2006 - Tue Dec 26 08:58:00 2006 21.7 Days

1. Windows XP		23328460	(82%)
2. Win 2000		2029173	(7%)
3. Mac		1197183	(4%)
4. Win 98		927870	(3%)
5. Unknown		379081	(1%)
6. Linux		99240	(0%)
7. Win NT		82727	(0%)
8. Win 95		34136	(0%)
9. Win 3.x		32341	(0%)
10. WebTV		10692	(0%)

Source: thecounter.com, 2006

*This information will be reviewed quarterly.*

### Exception(s):

You may get an exemption from this standard:

- If your Web logs or other data collection efforts indicate that the majority of your users are accessing information in a browser/version other than MSIE 6.x and operating system other than Windows XP.
- If you currently employ Web applications that don't display or work well using the most common browsers and/or operating systems. These applications may be "grandfathered" in. [Note: more details on how this will be handled will be developed with the HHS OPDIV and STAFFDIV Web Representatives.] However, you must provide a prominent notice describing what browsers and/or operating systems work best with the application, as well as information on how to obtain said browsers.

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Evans, 1998; Jupitermedia Corporation, 2003; Morrell, et al., 2002; Nielsen, 1996, thecounter.com, 2006.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:** N/A

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

[NOTE: Establish a notification system in the WCMS that reminds WCD staff to update this standard, if needed, on a quarterly basis.]

## Presenting Links to Materials in Multiple Languages

### Standard:

When foreign language content is available, HHS must present links to this material on its menu pages (e.g., the homepage) and content pages. Furthermore, links to foreign language materials must be presented in their language (i.e., En Español, not In Spanish). However, if you need to accommodate both non-English and English speakers (e.g., those who need to find information for a non-English speaking patient or family member), then provide the non-English version in parenthesis. For example: Français (French). View the “Requirements” section below for format.

### Rationale:

Usability testing has found that users searching for information in multiple languages prefer to find all versions grouped together on a Web site. On document or content pages, users also expect to find what versions are available for themselves, colleagues, or patients and the public.

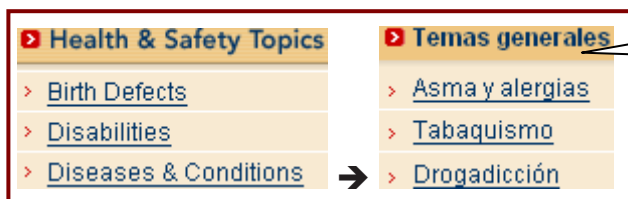
**Exception(s):** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

### Requirements (content & style):

Comment: Link text (title of document) should be in the language as the content of the document.

Another option is to have a clickable option En Español; when the person clicks on it, the web site is made available in Spanish.



This content in Spanish is tailored to the audience's specific needs. Note the differences in the topics, e.g., Birth Defects vs. Asthma and Allergies (Asma y alergias).



Example of links provided in the target language with English titles.

Example: [Healthy Heart](#)  
[Also available en Español, Français, Tiếng Việt](#)

## Presenting Links to Materials in Multiple Languages (Continued)

On menu pages—such as the homepage and second-tier pages—present both English and foreign language links together. Examples include:

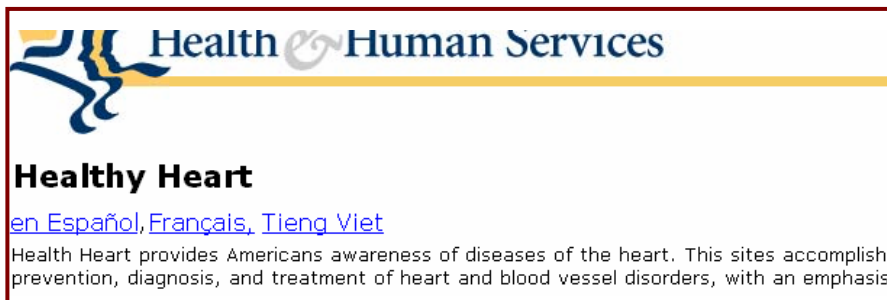
### Overviews

- [Nutrition for Seniors](#)  
Also available [En Español](#), [Français](#), [Tiếng Việt](#)

OR

- [Indiana Pandemic Influenza Plan \(PDF - 532 KB\)](#) ([PDF en Español – 234 KB](#))

On content/document pages, provide all available language versions under the document title or in a consistent location on a Web page. For example:



**Health & Human Services**

### Healthy Heart

[en Español](#), [Français](#), [Tieng Viet](#)

Health Heart provides Americans awareness of diseases of the heart. This sites accomplishes prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart and blood vessel disorders, with an emphasis

OR

### Corazón Saludable

[In English](#), [Français](#), [Tieng Viet](#)

El corazón saludable...

OR



<a href="#">Earthquakes</a>	<b>Languages</b>
<a href="#">Extreme Heat</a>	<a href="#">繁體中文</a> (Chinese)
<a href="#">Floods</a>	<a href="#">Français</a> (French)
<a href="#">Hurricanes</a>	<a href="#">Deutsch</a> (German)
<a href="#">Landslides &amp; Mudslides</a>	<a href="#">Kreyol</a> (Haitian Creole)
<a href="#">Power Outages</a>	<a href="#">Português</a> (Portuguese)
<a href="#">Tornadoes</a>	<a href="#">Español</a> (Spanish)
	<a href="#">Tieng Viet</a> (Vietnamese)

## Presenting Links to Materials in Multiple Languages (Continued)

### Related Standards:

- [Designate Visited and Unvisited Links](#)
- [Use Text for Links](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Use Appropriate List Style

### Standard:

HHS must use bulleted lists to present items of equal status or value, and numbered lists if a particular order to the items is warranted.

### Rationale:

Numbered lists imply rank, sequence, or order. Bulleted lists generally present items in a random order. Numbered lists are especially important when giving instructions.

#### Procedure

For each section of content that has the appearance of a list:

1. Check that content that has the visual appearance of a bulleted list is marked as an unordered list.
2. Check that content that has the visual appearance of a numbered list is marked as an ordered list.
3. Check that content is marked as a definition list when terms and their definitions are present.

This example shows an ordered list with items appearing in a certain sequence.

#### Usability Methods

- Card Sorting
- Personas
- Task Analysis
- Usability Testing

This example shows an unordered list (no preference to the order in which items appear).

#### 1.1. Planning Assumptions

- 1.1.1. Susceptibility to the pandemic influenza virus will be universal.
- 1.1.2. Efficient and sustained person-to-person transmission signals a pandemic.
- 1.1.3. The clinical disease attack rate will likely be 30% or higher in the community during the pandemic. Illness rates will be highest among school-aged children and decline with age. Among working adults, an average of 20% will be affected by a community outbreak.

This example shows an outline format.

**Exemptions:** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Coney and Steehouder, 2000; Detweiler and Omanson, 1996; Lorch and Chen, 1986; Narveson, 2001; Spyridakis, 2000.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

### Related Standards:

- [Designing and Employing Check Boxes](#)
- [Use Radio Buttons for Exclusive Selections](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Use Mixed Case with Prose Content

### Standard:

HHS must use mixed upper- and lower-case letters when displaying continuous prose text. This standard will apply to headlines, headers, and links, as well as the body of content.

If a phrase is intended to attract the user's attention, display the phrase in bold or italics. Only use these methods to emphasize one or two words, or a short phrase, because they slow reading performance when used for extended prose. They also cease being eye-catching.

### Rationale:

TEXT PRESENTED IN ALL CAPS IS DIFFICULT TO READ. Reading text is easier when capitalization is used conventionally to start sentences and to indicate proper nouns and acronyms.

**Acceptable:** Use mixed case with prose  
**Acceptable:** Use Mixed Case with Prose

**Unacceptable:** USE MIXED CASE WITH PROSE

The first two examples show acceptable uses of mixed case with prose on a Web page.

The third example shows improper use.

**Exemptions:** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Breland and Breland, 1944; Engel and Granda, 1975; Mills and Weldon, 1987; Moskel, Erno and Shneiderman, 1984; Poulton and Brown, 1968; Smith and Mosier, 1986; Spyridakis, 2000; Tinker and Paterson, 1928; Tinker, 1955; Tinker, 1963; Vartabedian, 1971; Wright, 1977.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:** N/A

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]



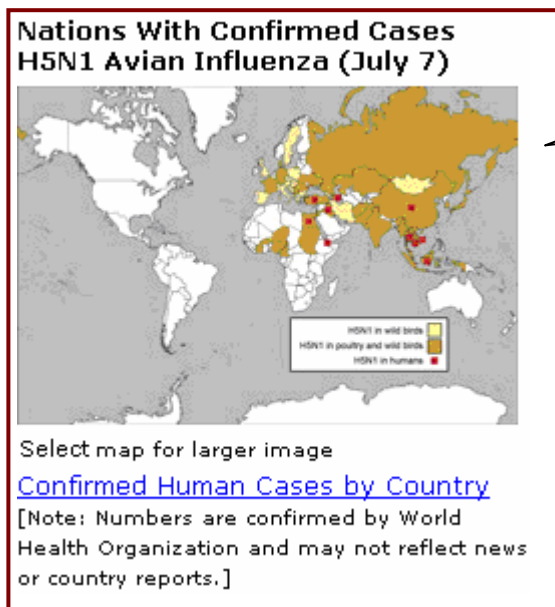
## Appropriate Use of Images on Web Pages

### Standard:

HHS should use images only when they communicate supplemental information or otherwise enhance understanding. Images must serve a specific informational purpose, i.e., provide support to the content, rather than simply serve as decoration.

### Rationale:

A Web site's graphics should add value and increase the clarity of the information on the site. Adding unnecessary graphics pushes important content down a page—thus improving the chance it will be missed—and reduces the space available to present other important information. In addition, users tend to be frustrated if they wait several seconds for a graphic to download and then find that the image does not add any value. Users also tend to have negative reactions to sites that display photos of agency staff or stock photography that offer no informational value to the content they are viewing.



This example shows an appropriate use of an image. It offers the user an additional way to view information on nations that have confirmed cases of H5N1 avian influenza.

### Exemptions:

The use of traditional agency graphics, logos, headers, and mastheads on a Web site is exempt. Additionally, you are exempt from this standard if:

- You can justify how an image fits within the mission of your Web site. For example, if your site is geared toward a specialized audience, such as children who may require visual content to learn, then strategic use of graphics is allowed.
- The purpose of your page is to provide press release photos or event photos.
- Logical images or icons are strategically used to call attention to a specific part of a page. Again, caution must be used as usability test findings indicate that users ignore images and icons that look like commercial ads.

## Appropriate Use of Images on Web Pages (Continued)

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Badre, 2002; Evans, 1998; Nielsen, 1997e; Nielsen, 1999b; Nielsen, 2000; Nielsen, 2003; Spool, et al., 1997; Wen and Beaton, 1996; Williams, 2000.

**Requirements (content & style):** N/A

**Related Standards:**

- [Use Text for Links](#)

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS' *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Present RSS and Podcast Links in a Consistent Format

### Standard:

When presenting RSS and Podcast features on a Web site, HHS must follow the standard format and terminology provided below. HHS must use the word RSS or Podcast to identify the technology, not XML or other terminology or icon. In addition, HHS must provide a “Help” link describing RSS and Podcasts. View requirements section below for format.

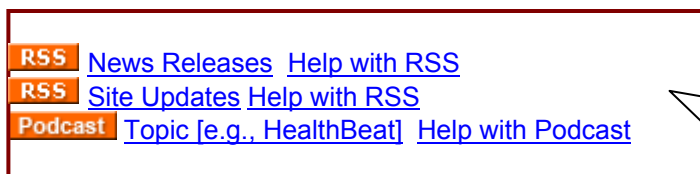
### Rationale:

RSS and Podcast are increasingly being used on HHS Web sites to communicate information. To help users understand and use these features, the terminology and layout used to present them should be consistent.

**Exemptions:** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.] N/A

### Requirements (content & style):



Use the following format when presenting RSS and Podcast features:

- Use an orange block to present a feature.
- Identify the technology being used in the orange block, i.e., RSS or Podcast.
- Describe what information the feature will provide. For example: [News Releases](#).
- Provide a “Help” link: “Help with RSS” or “Help with Podcast.”

Note: HHS provides an image library at <http://intranet.hhs.gov/web/#stand>. This library will continue to expand with new images.

**Related Standards:** N/A

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS’ *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]

## Provide File Type and Size with Downloadable Files

### Standard:

HHS must provide file format type and size information with all non-HTML file-types such as Adobe Acrobat (PDF), MS Word (DOC), and Adobe Flash (SWF) files.

When linking to a *single* file format that is not in HTML or another browser-friendly format, place the file format notice at the link level and use this format, [Subject/name of file \(file format – file size OR number of pages or minutes\)](#).

When linking to *multiple* file formats that are not in HTML or another browser-friendly format, place the file format notices at the link level and use this format, [Subject/name of the file \(file format#1 – file size OR number of pages or minutes\) \(file format#2 – file size OR number of pages or minutes\)](#). View the “Requirements” section below for format.

In addition, HHS must provide help instructions on how and where to access necessary plug-ins needed to view non-HTML files. These instructions must be available from a prominent location—such as a linked notice placed at the top of a Web page or in the footer location—and must be used on all relevant Web pages. View the “Requirements” section below for format.

### Rationale:

OMB guidance for public facing Web sites and HHS usability test findings indicate that users want to know the file type. Users with low bandwidth want to get a sense of the time required to view a resource. In addition, you should provide instructions for downloading viewers and/or players on all Web pages providing non-HTML files.

**Exemptions:** N/A

**Sources:** [Note: this field is a placeholder. It will provide detailed references and will be hidden from view in the online version.]

Badre, 2002; Evans, 1998; Nielsen, 1997e; Nielsen, 1999b; Nielsen, 2000; Nielsen, 2003; Spool, et al., 1997; Wen and Beaton, 1996; Williams, 2000.

## Provide File Type and Size with Downloadable Files (Continued)

### Requirements (content & style):

Style for presenting single and multiple file formats:

- Single File Format Example

[What Is a Heart Attack and What Are the Long-Term Effects? \(PDF – 230 KB\)](#) (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

[What Is a Heart Attack and What Are the Long-Term Effects? \(PDF – 5 pages\)](#) (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

[What Are the Long-Term Effects of a Heart Attack? \(Flash – 1:30 hr.\)](#) (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

[What Is a Heart Attack? \(Flash – 30 sec.\)](#) (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

- Multiple File Format Example

[Heart Attack \(PDF– 106 KB\)](#) ([Flash – 242 KB](#)) (National Library of Medicine)

[Heart Attack \(PDF– 2 pages\)](#) ([Flash – 1:25 min.](#)) (National Library of Medicine)

*(Note: The first item links to an HTML page.)*

[Heart Attack \(PDF – 106KB\)](#) ([Flash – 242 KB](#)) (National Library of Medicine)

[Heart Attack \(PDF – 2 pages\)](#) ([Flash – 1:25 min.](#)) (National Library of Medicine)

*(Note: The first item links to a PDF document.)*

Content and style for instructing users about how to access non-HTML file formats:

- If your page links only to PDFs, use this notice (or something similar):

**Note:** Documents in PDF format require the [Adobe Acrobat Reader®](#). If you experience problems with PDF documents, please [download the latest version of the Reader®](#).

- If your Web page links to multiple non-HTML files, use this notice (or something similar):

**Note:** If you need help accessing information in different file formats such as PDF, MS Word, MP3, see [Instructions for Downloading Viewers and Players](#).

[Note: See recommended format for the “Instructions for Downloading Viewers and Players” page at <http://intranet.hhs.gov/web/>.]

**Related Standards:** N/A

**Related Guidelines:** [Note: Related Web Guidelines from HHS’ *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* and other relevant sources will be added in this section.]