

Label placement in forms

and other time-consuming forms controversies

Caroline Jarrett

User Experience Lisbon 2010

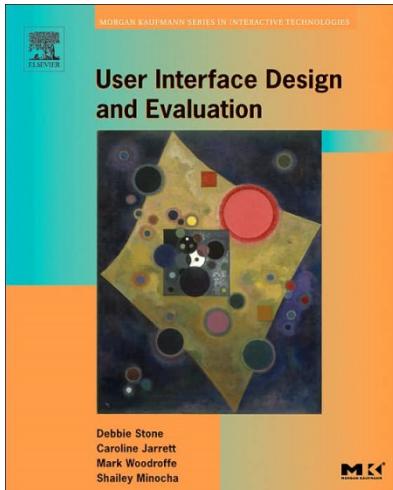
A bit about me: Caroline Jarrett

Consultancy: www.effortmark.co.uk

Training: www.usabilitythatworks.com

Forms advice: www.formsthatwork.com

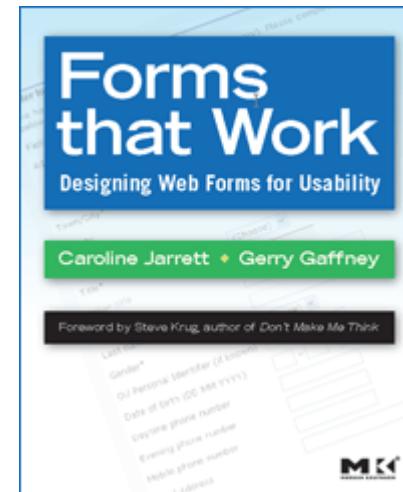
Editing tips: www.editingthatworks.com



Stone, Jarrett, Woodroffe
and Minocha (2005)

User interface
design and
evaluation

Morgan Kaufmann



Jarrett and Gaffney (2008)

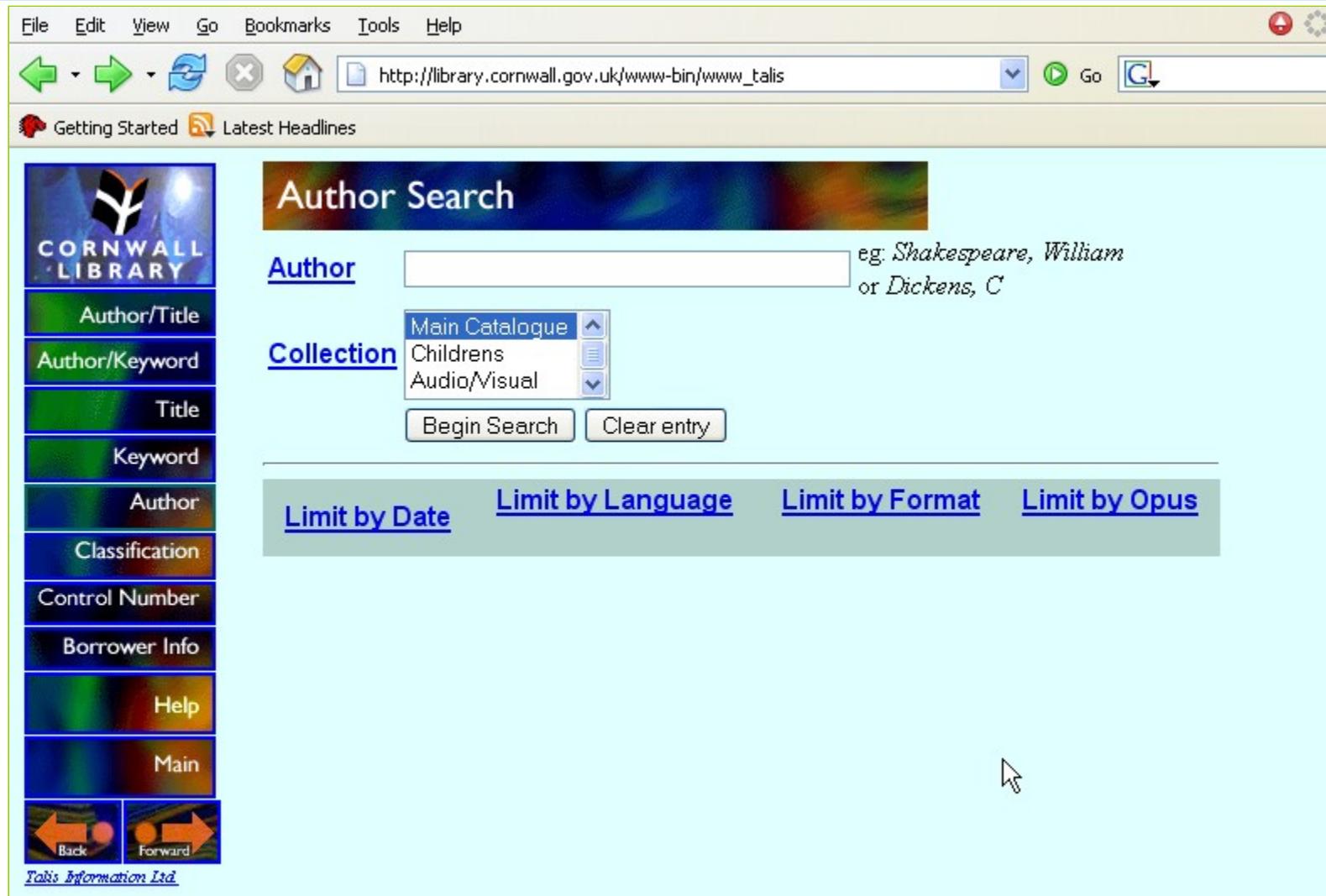
Forms that work:
Designing web forms
for usability

Morgan Kaufmann

Agenda

- Where people look on forms
- What that implies for placing labels
- Let's stress about unimportant details
- Three details that do affect users
- If it looks good, it's easy to use
- Final reminder: it's what you ask and why that really matters

Reading forms is different from using them



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following details:

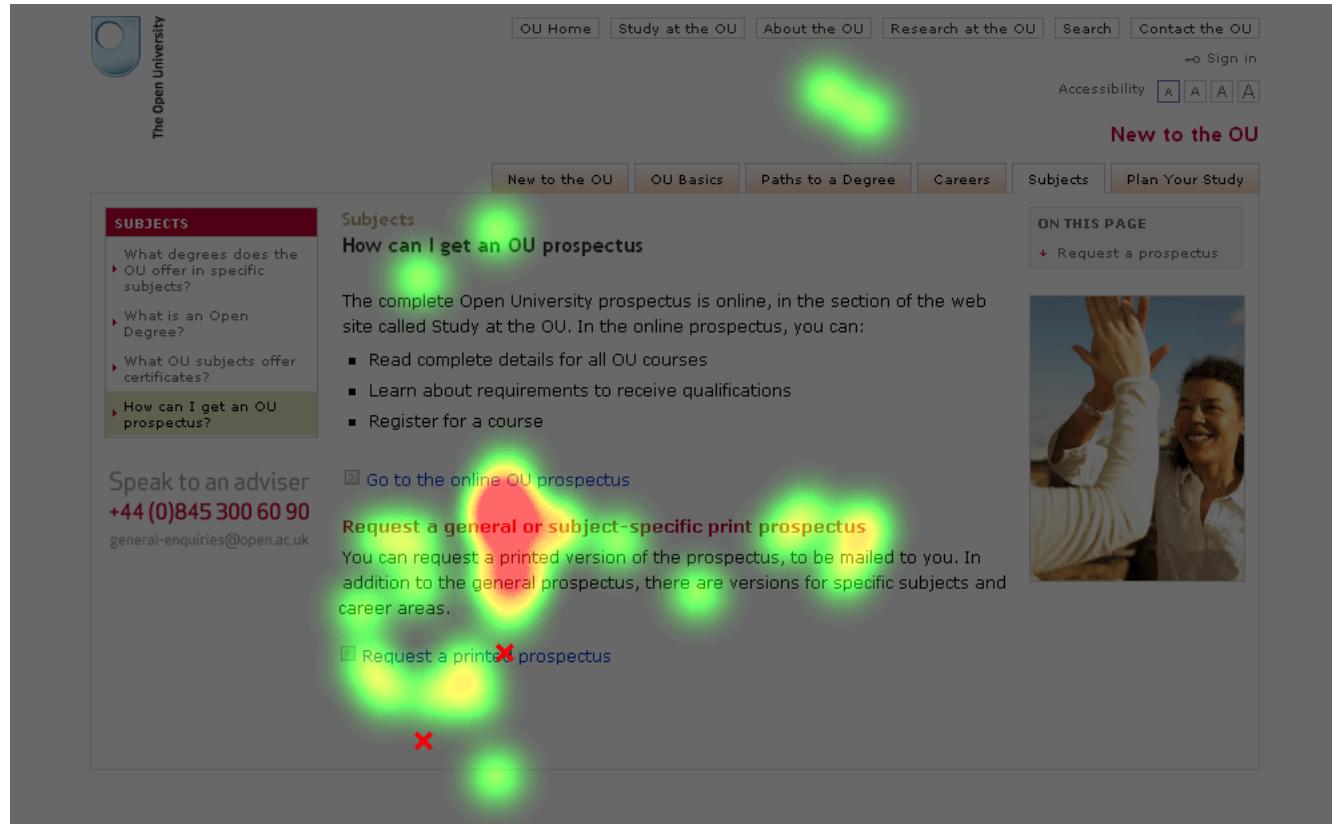
- Header:** File, Edit, View, Go, Bookmarks, Tools, Help.
- Address Bar:** http://library.cornwall.gov.uk/www-bin/www_talis
- Toolbar:** Back, Forward, Stop, Home, Refresh, Go button, and a search icon.
- Page Content:**
 - Cornwall Library Logo:** A stylized 'Y' logo with the text "CORNWALL LIBRARY" below it.
 - Section:** Author Search.
 - Form Fields:**
 - Author:** Text input field with placeholder text: "eg: Shakespeare, William or Dickens, C".
 - Collection:** A dropdown menu set to "Main Catalogue" with options: Main Catalogue (selected), Childrens, and Audio/Visual.
 - Buttons:** "Begin Search" and "Clear entry".
 - Limitation Options:** [Limit by Date](#), [Limit by Language](#), [Limit by Format](#), [Limit by Opus](#).
 - Navigation:** A vertical sidebar on the left with buttons: Author/TITLE, Author/Keyword, Title, Keyword, Author, Classification, Control Number, Borrower Info, Help, Main, Back, Forward.
 - Page Footer:** Talis Information Ltd.

Reading forms is different from using them

* Surname:	<input type="text"/>
* First name:	<input type="text"/>
Middle name:	<input type="text"/>
Title: (For example, Mr, Mrs)	<input type="text"/>
* Address line 1:	<input type="text"/>
Address line 2:	<input type="text"/>
Address line 3:	<input type="text"/>
Address line 4:	<input type="text"/>
Postcode:	<input type="text"/>
* National Insurance number: 	<input type="text"/>
(For example: AB123456C)	<input type="checkbox"/> Select box if National Insurance number not yet known

Are my observations confirmed by eye-tracking? A look at some heat maps

Examples thanks to permission from
Ian Roddis, Head of Online Services, The Open University



Ordering a prospectus

- User has chosen a prospectus
- Postcode lookup for the address

Prospectus Request

If you need HELP
please email [General-
Enquiries@open.ac.uk](mailto:General-Enquiries@open.ac.uk)
or call us on
+44 (0)845 300 6090

Order for myself

We have filled in your address (amend where necessary). Please complete the details below

Fields marked * must be filled in

Address*

Town/City*

County

Postcode

Title*

Other title

First name*

Last name*

Gender*

OU Personal Identifier (if known)

Date of birth (DD MM YYYY)

 - -

Daytime phone number

Evening phone number

Mobile phone number

Email Address

Which of these subject areas are you most interested in studying with the Open University?

Which of these best describes your reason for enquiring about study with the Open University?

When would you like to start studying with the Open University?

How did you find out about us?

Please tell us how you found out about our website

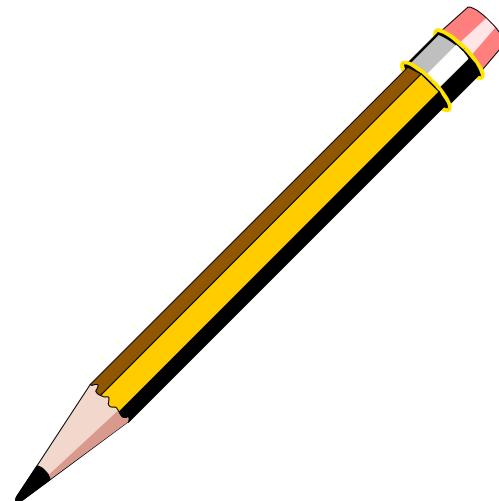
If the promotion you saw has a response code please enter it here (e.g. UGCXYZ)...

If you do not have the response code in which publication/website did you see our promotion?

proceed

Now try it for yourself

- Look at this printout of a forms page
- Circle the places where you think that users looked
- Put a cross on the places where users clicked



Prospectus Request



Order for myself

We have filled in your address (amend where necessary). Please complete the details below

Fields marked * must be filled in

If you need HELP
please email [General-
Enquiries@open.ac.uk](mailto:General-Enquiries@open.ac.uk)
or call us on
+44 (0)845 300 6090

Address*

Town/City*

County

Postcode

Title*

(Choose) 

Other title

First name*

Last name*

Gender*

(Choose) 

OU Personal Identifier (if known)

Date of birth (DD MM YYYY)

 - -

Daytime phone number

Evening phone number

Mobile phone number

Email Address

Which of these subject areas are you

(Choose) 

One person's heat map

- Small green dots show narrow focus on labels and left end of fields
- Red crosses show clicks

The Open University

Prospectus Request

Order for myself

We have filled in your address (amend where necessary). Please complete the details below

Fields marked * must be filled in

If you need HELP please email General-Enquiries@open.ac.uk or call us on +44 (0)845 300 6090

Address*

Town/City*

County

Postcode

Title*

Other title

First name*

Last name*

Gender*

OU Personal Identifier (if known)

Date of birth (DD MM YYYY)

Daytime phone number

Evening phone number

Mobile phone number

Email Address

Which of these subject areas are you most interested in studying with the Open University?

Which of these best describes your reason for enquiring about study with the Open University?

When would you like to start studying with the Open University?

How did you find out about us? Please tell us how you found out about our website

If the promotion you saw has a response code please enter it here (e.g. UGCKYZ)

If you do not have the response code in which publication/website did you see our promotion?

An aggregate

- Narrow focus on the easy questions at the top
- Gets messy further down: harder questions, more answers to consider

The Open University

Prospectus Request

If you need HELP please email General-Enquiries@open.ac.uk or call us on +44 (0)845 300 6090

Order for myself

We have filled in your address (amend where necessary). Please complete the details below

Fields marked * must be filled in

Address*

Town/City*

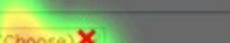
County

Postcode

Title* (Choose) 

Other title 

First name* 

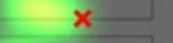
Last name* 

Gender* (Choose) 

OU Personal Identifier (if known) 

Date of birth (DD MM YYYY) 

Daytime phone number

Evening phone number 

Mobile phone number

Email Address 

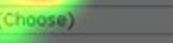
Which of these subject areas are you most interested in studying with the Open University? (Choose) 

Which of these best describes your reason for enquiring about study with the Open University? (Choose) 

When would you like to start studying with the Open University? (Choose) 

How did you find out about us? Please tell us how you found out about our website

If the promotion you saw has a response code please enter it here (e.g. USCKYZ2)... 

If you do not have the response code in which publication/website did you see our promotion? (Choose) 



The ‘narrow focus’ means big jumps for the users’ eyes.

A heatmap visualization of a user registration form. The form fields are listed on the left, and their corresponding input fields are on the right. Red 'X' marks are placed on the right side of the heatmap to indicate specific points of interest or error. The heatmap shows high concentration of user focus on the 'Choose' button for gender and the date input fields.

Field	Input Type	Value	Focus Mark
Postcode	Text		
Title*	Text	(Choose) <input type="button" value="X"/>	X
Other title	Text		
First name*	Text		XX
Last name*	Text		X
Gender*	Text	(Choose) <input type="button" value="X"/>	X
OU Personal Identifier (if known)	Text		
Date of birth (DD MM YYYY)	Text	<input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/>	XX X
Daytime phone number	Text		
Evening phone number	Text		X
Mobile phone number	Text		

Agenda

Where people look on forms

What that implies for placing labels

Let's stress about unimportant details

Three details that do affect users

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Final reminder: it's what you ask and
why that really matters

Where to put labels

1. Labels outside boxes
2. Hints inside boxes
3. Labels inside boxes

Mario Penzo's recommendation: “Place labels above or right-align them”

Form illustrating poor label placement:

- Labels are placed to the left of the input fields, often overlapping them.
- Labels include: "Your address", "Your city", "Company you work for", and "Number of colleagues".
- Input fields are represented by green rectangles.
- Form fields include: "value", "Submit", and a dropdown menu with options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

Form illustrating poor label placement:

- Labels are placed to the left of the input fields, often overlapping them.
- Labels include: "Your address", "Your city", "Company you work for", and "n° of colleagues".
- Input fields are represented by green rectangles.
- Form fields include: "Select a value", "Submit", and a dropdown menu with options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Form illustrating good label placement:

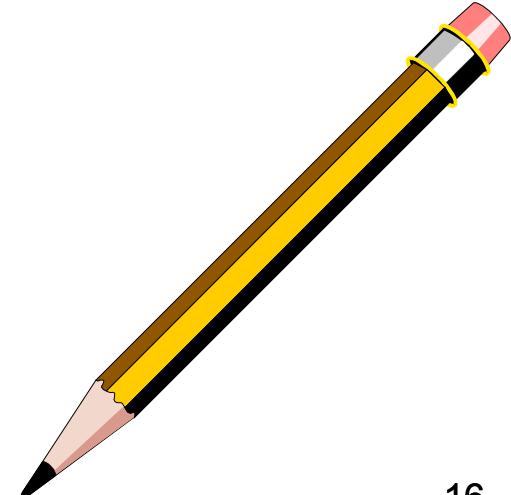
- Labels are placed above or to the right of the input fields, avoiding overlap.
- Labels include: "Name", "Surname", "Age", "City", and "Submit".
- Input fields are represented by green rectangles.
- Form fields include: "Select a value", and a dropdown menu with options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Are all these questions equivalent? Where do the answers come from?

- Your address
- Your city
- Company you work for
- Number of colleagues

- Your address
- Your city
- Company you work for
- n^o of colleagues

- Name
- Surname
- Age
- City



Easy questions and hard questions prompt different patterns of reading

- Users glance at populated answers
- Users look mostly at the left end of the answer space for easy questions
- Users read complex instructions quite carefully...
- ... provided they are on the way to their goal

The image shows a screenshot of a 'Prospectus Request' form from The Open University. The form is titled 'Order for myself' and includes a note: 'We have filled in your address (amend where necessary). Please complete below'. It specifies that fields marked with an asterisk (*) must be filled in. The form contains several text input fields for address, town/city, county, postcode, and various personal details like title, first name, last name, gender, date of birth, and phone numbers. There are also dropdown menus for 'OU Personal Identifier (if known)' and 'Email Address', and two multi-select dropdowns for 'Subject areas' and 'Reason for enquiring'. A question about finding out about the website is followed by a text input field for a response code. The entire form is overlaid with a heatmap showing user interaction patterns. The heatmap uses a color gradient from green to red, with darker shades indicating higher levels of user activity. The most intense red areas are concentrated on the left side of the form, particularly around the address and personal detail fields, suggesting users are primarily focused on these sections as they approach their goal of completing the form. The heatmap also shows a significant area of high activity in the bottom right corner, likely near the 'proceed' button.

Update:

Labels above the fields may be no faster than right aligned labels

- Das, McEwan and Douglas investigated label placement
- Chose a simple form with simple questions
- Found no difference between labels above the fields and right-aligned labels

Das, McEwan and Douglas (2008)

Using eye-tracking to evaluate label alignment in online forms,

NordiCHI '08: Proceedings of the 5th Nordic conference on Human-computer interaction: building bridges

A section of a form where I think left-aligned labels really are necessary

Did you receive any interest etc, for example, from UK* banks, UK building societies, UK unit trusts? ?	<input type="button" value="Yes"/>
Did you receive any dividends , for example, UK companies, authorised unit trusts, open-ended investment companies, foreign companies (up to £300)? ?	<input type="button" value="Yes"/>
Did you receive any UK pensions, annuities or state benefits , for example, state pension, occupational pension, retirement annuity, incapacity benefit? ?	<input type="button" value="No"/>
Did you receive any other UK income , for example, Employment lump sums, Share schemes, Life insurance gains, Any other income? ?	<input type="button" value="No"/>
Have you made any income tax losses in the year* 2007-08? ?	<input type="button" value="No"/>
Are you liable to pension savings tax charges or have you* received payments from overseas pension schemes? ?	<input type="button" value="No"/>

Users can survive a lot

Checkout

Step 1: Billing and Shipping Address

Step 1 2 3 4

*Indicates a required field

If you are a new customer complete this form.

Billing Address

Title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, etc.)

* First Name

* Last Name

Company

* Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

* City/Town

* Postal Code

 United Kingdom

*Country

* Daytime Phone Number

* E-mail Address (must be accurate for us to send your order confirmation)

Shipping Options

- Ship entire order to my billing address
- Ship entire order to ONE address (other than my billing address)
- Ship items in this order to MORE THAN ONE address

Catalogue Code

If you have a printed catalogue, please enter the catalogue code from the blue box on the back of the catalogue (See below).

CATALOG CODE

CUSTOMER CODE

WEB COUPON CODE

Catalogue Code

Coupon Code

If you have a printed coupon to apply to your order, enter the code here:

Coupon Code

Continue 20

Update: Roland Feichtinger finds that labels below the boxes may work better in Austria

Einzugsermächtigung



Kundennummer	Frau	Herr	Firma	andere:	Titel	Firmenbuchnr.
Name/Firmenname/Anschrift						
Kontoinhaber (Name/Firmenname)						
Kontonummer	BLZ	Name der Bank				
E-Mail-Adresse (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Ich bin widerruflich damit einverstanden, zu Werbezwecken per E-Mail, Post oder per Telefon kontaktiert zu werden.						

Hiermit ermächtige(n) ich/wir Konica Minolta Business Solutions Austria GmbH widerruflich, die von mir/uns zu entrichtenden Zahlungen bei Fälligkeit zu Lasten meines/unseres Kontos einzuziehen. Damit ist auch meine/unserre kontoführende Bank ermächtigt, die Lastschriften einzulösen, wobei für diese keine Verpflichtung zur Einlösung besteht, insbesondere dann nicht, wenn mein/unser Konto die erforderliche Deckung nicht aufweist. Ich/Wir habe(n) das Recht, innerhalb von 42 Kalendertagen ab Abbuchungstag ohne Angabe von Gründen die Rückbuchung bei meiner/unserer Bank zu veranlassen.

Datum _____ Unterschrift/firmenmäßige Zeichnung des Kontoinhabers _____

Bitte senden Sie diese Ermächtigung an Konica Minolta Business Solutions Austria GmbH, Amalienstr. 59-61, 1130 Wien, z.H.: Buchhaltung

Konica Minolta Business Solutions Austria GmbH, Amalienstraße 59-61, 1130 Wien, Tel: +43 (0)1 87882, Fax-DW: 112, Homepage: www.konicaminolta.at

Sitz: Wien, Gerichtsstand: Handelsgericht Wien • Bankverbindung: Bank Austria Creditanstalt AG, Kto.-Nr.: 245 109 272/00, BLZ 12000 • FB-Nr.: FN 1973647 • DVR-Nr.: 0556459, UID-Nr.: ATU49754500, ARA-Lizenz-Nr.: 1302

Method 1 (more effort, and may not work): Decide where to put your labels according to your users, their goals, and the questions

Your users and their goals	Your questions ...	Put the labels ...
Willing to reveal the answers; filling in the form helps them to achieve a goal	Simple, only a few of them	Above
	Simple but lots of them	Right-justified
	Complex	Left-justified
Unwilling to reveal answers or reluctant to fill in the form	Simple or complex	Left-justified (you'll need more explanation)



Submit a Complaint

AARP Elder Watch

A Program with the Colorado Attorney General and the AARP Foundation

 **Home**

Do you have a fraud or financial exploitation concern?
 Complete this complaint form or call us Monday - Friday 9am to 4 pm
 Toll Free in Colorado: **1-800-222-4444**
 Denver Metro: **303-222-4444**

If using this form, please note that labels in **bold with an asterisk (*)** are required

Your Information

*** First Name:**

*** Last Name:**

Phone Number: (nnn-nnn-nnnn)

Email:

Would you like to receive a status update?

Yes No

*** Relationship to Victim:**

*** Type of Complaint:**

*** Estimated Amount of Financial Loss:** (to the nearest \$)

*** Are you the Contact?** Yes No

Will you share your fraud experience with the public in order to help others? Yes No

How did you hear about us?

Contact Information

*** First Name:**

*** Last Name:**

*** Phone Number:** (nnn-nnn-nnnn)

Email:

Method 2 (easier, and guaranteed success): Choose anything harmonious then test and test

- Any reasonably harmonious arrangement of labels and boxes is likely to be OK
- The only guaranteed way of achieving a good form is:
 - Test YOUR form with YOUR users
 - Make changes based on what you find
 - Test again with (different) users
 - Make more changes
 - Repeat until the form works



Sign up

A variety of plans to fit everyone's needs. You can upgrade, downgrade, or cancel any time.
All pay accounts include a 30-day Free Trial.

— Create your administrator account —

This is the master log-in for your account. All fields are required. Once your account is set up you can add accounts for other people as well. Each person will have their own username and password.

First name Last name Email Username What you'll use to log in (or [use OpenID](#)).Password Password again

Confirm your password by entering it again.

Company/Group

Examples: Apple, UCLA, Red Cross

Time zone (GMT-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Which web browsers work with Basecamp?

Any of the following web browsers work with Basecamp: **IE 7 (PC)**, **Firefox 2 or later (Mac, PC, or Linux)**, **Safari 2 or later (Mac)**.

Can I upgrade, downgrade, or cancel later?

Absolutely. Basecamp is a month-to-month service so you can upgrade, downgrade, or cancel at any time.

Which forms of payment do you accept?

We accept Visa, Mastercard, and American Express. We do not accept POs, checks, or invoices to be paid at a later date. We do email a "PAID" invoice each time you are billed.



Screenshot best available

You're just 60 seconds away from your new Basecamp account.

Already use a 37signals product? Then [sign in](#) with your 37signals ID to save time.

1 Create your Basecamp account

First name

Last name

Email

Company

(Or non-profit, organization, group, school, etc.)

Time zone

— Now choose a username & password —

Username

This is what you'll use to sign in. (or use [OpenID](#))

Password

6 characters or longer with at least one number is safest.

Enter your password again for verification

2 Create your Basecamp site address

Every Basecamp site has its own web address. For example, if you want your Basecamp site to be at <http://acme.basecamphq.com> you'd enter acme in the field below. **Letters & numbers only.**

http:// .basecamphq.com

Thanks for choosing Basecamp!



You're in good company when you use 37signals products.

Over 3,000,000 users

Thousands sign up every week

Secure and reliable

Your data is backed up daily

Great customer service

Fast, accurate, and friendly help

Where to put labels

1. Labels outside boxes
2. Hints inside boxes
3. Labels inside boxes

Some terminology: my definitions of label, hint, and default

- **Label:** the text that stands for a question
 - May be just a word: “Phone”
 - May be a fully-formed request: “Please give us a contact phone number”
 - May be a fully-formed question: “What phone number may we call?”
- **Hint:** an extra piece of text that helps to explain the label
 - May be a formatting hint: “(XXX) XXXX - XXXX”
 - May explain what to put in the box: “your usual daytime number”
- **Default:** a value that is already entered for the user
 - May be a standard default that works for many users
 - May be a pre-populated value from data collected elsewhere

It's not always obvious. Which of these are label, hint, or default?

 **National Rail Enquiries**

Register now for instant access to your favourite journeys
Already registered? [Sign in now](#).

Let's go!

Home **Train times & tickets** **About your journey** **Changes to train times** **Hotels** **Search site** **Search** **YAHOO!**

Journey planner | Season tickets | Ticket types | Travel tools | Special offers | Tickets & fares

Plan your journey

From Station name / code to Station name / code Leaving Today at 20 : 30 Go

 [Add a return journey](#)  [Advanced search](#)

Chrome by Google
A fast, new browser.
Made for everyone

Cheapest fare finder
Slightly more flexible with your journey? Then you could be taking advantage of our cheapest fare finder search where we aim to find you the best possible price!

 [Find cheapest fares with our interactive fare finder](#)

Get travel alerts
Receive travel alerts directly to your mobile and avoid getting caught out by train delays or cancellations.

 [Find out more about text alerts](#) 

Users often interpret hints as defaults

STEP 4 - Submit your job

JOB TITLE:

YOUR EMAIL:

Be notified by email when the job is finished

- 98% of the scientific users of this form accepted the hint as a default
- 60% of expert users accepted the hint as a default

Do not put hints inside fields on web forms

- :(Moving the hint to one side on click doesn't work
 - The user doesn't click into the field because it is a default
- :(Reducing the visual impact of the hint doesn't work
 - Users don't understand why the hint is less legible
- :(Putting the hint outside the field should work
 - Provided the user sees the hint when it is needed

Where to put labels

1. Labels outside boxes
2. Hints inside boxes
3. Labels inside boxes

I'm seeing some labels inside the boxes

The screenshot shows the homepage of the RedBrick Health website. The header features a red navigation bar with the RedBrick Health logo and links for HOME, ABOUT US, OUR SOLUTION, NEWS, and CONTACT US. Below the header is a green background with a landscape illustration of hills, clouds, and a sailboat. A dark green callout box on the left contains the text: "Working with RedBrick Health has its rewards. Whether you're a curious consumer or an interested employer, we want to help you experience all the rewards of better health. Let's get started." On the right side, there is a "Member Sign In" box with fields for Username and Password, and buttons for SIGN IN and REGISTER. Below the sign-in box is a link for "Forgot your username or password?"

Interested Employer?

RedBrick's Health Earnings™ System delivers an integrated approach to wellness, financing and advocacy. Why does that matter? When people are healthier, they are more productive and less likely to develop costly health problems.

Curious Consumer?

Received something neat in the mail regarding your benefits? If you are an existing RedBrick Health member, sign in above. If you are not a RedBrick Health member, but just a curious consumer, you can learn more about how we can help you.

Which test won – A or B?

A

 Just-Rewards.co.uk
from Experian

A chance to win
£5000
with Just-Rewards



[Click here](#) if you are an existing user to login.

A chance to WIN £5000

Fill out our survey to be entered into the prize draw. Complete the survey now for your chance to win!

Terms and conditions apply. [View terms](#)

Please complete the Just-Rewards Primary / Registration survey before you see the many exciting individual mini-surveys where you have the chance to win some great prizes.

Please tell us about you

* Title:

* Forename:

* Surname:

* House/Flat No.:

* Postcode:

* What is your e-mail address?:

* And is this:

* What is your date of birth?

Month: Day: Year:

you provide to be used by Experian Ltd and some of the UK's major companies providing a range of valuable offers by mail, email and telephone. For full details please see our Privacy Statement link below.

Create a password:

* Password:

* Confirm password:

Continue

 Just-Rewards.com
from Experian

Are you an existing user? [Login here](#)

Enter Now

Complete this survey to enter our prize draw and you could win £5000! When you're done, complete additional mini-surveys for your chance to win more fantastic prizes!

* Title:

* First name:

* Surname:

* Postcode:

* House/Flat No.:

* Date of birth? Day: Month: Year:

* E-mail address:

* This email is: At home At work Other

I accept the terms & conditions as published on this site.

Continue



A chance to win
£5000
with Just-Rewards

<http://whichtestwon.com/archives/3442>

Don't put the labels inside the boxes

- No specific evidence for this
- Just seems like a silly idea
- Anyone willing to test it?

Agenda

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Let's stress
about
unimportant
details

Colons at the end of labels?
Sentence or title case?
Required field indicator?

Colons at the ends of labels are a matter of considerable debate

Where am I? telegraph.co.uk > My Telegraph > Register

Telegraph.co.uk

Telegraph Blogs my.Telegraph.co.uk in association with CISCO. SEARCH

Join the debate. Join My Telegraph

Already a member?

Please complete all fields

Screen name (only alphanumeric characters)

This is the name that will be displayed against all comments and posts that you make on the site.

First name

Last name

What is my.Telegraph

Join the debate with the Telegraph

- Read blogs from other Telegraph users
- Write your own blog
- Share your opinions with the rest of the Telegraph community
- Save all your comments in one place

Joining is free and takes only a few moments.

First name

Last name

The New York Times

Already a Member? [Log In](#)

Registering for NYTimes.com is free and easy!

Registration provides free and instant access to breaking news, reviews, online classifieds and more on NYTimes.com.

[Why Register?](#) | [What is TimesSelect?](#) | [Privacy Concerns](#) | [Cookies Information](#) | [FAQ's](#)

Create an Account (Required)

Choose a Member ID:

Choose a Password: (Five character minimum)

Re-enter your Password:

Secret Question: — Select One —

Secret Answer:

E-Mail Address: [Why do we need this?](#)

NYTimes.com will only use this address with your permission.

Remember my Member ID and password on this computer.

Choose a Member ID:

Choose a Password:

Re-enter your Password:

Pick one style. Stick with it. It's not worth arguing about.

<http://www.usabilitynews.com/news/article3200.asp> and
<http://www.usabilitynews.com/news/article3112.asp>

Sentence or title case?

Sentence case wins. (But only just).

- This is sentence case
- This is Title Case
- This Is Capitalisation Of Each Initial Letter
- ISO-9241 part 17 says
 - "Initial upper-case (capital) letter for field labels: To facilitate readability, the text field labels begin with an upper-case letter. The rest of the label should contain lower case (small) letters except for cases where the label is a logo, an acronym or language convention that requires each word in the label to begin with a capital letter."
- Sentence case is slightly more legible due to familiarity
- It's not worth changing a big suite of forms to fix this

Required field indicator?

There's a theme developing here

- Miriam Frost Jungwirth:
 - “I was once charged with testing that. Seriously. \$10,000 of manhours testing asterisk placement.
There was no difference in user performance. At all.“
- I’m a little more interested in this discussion:
 - Indicators placed to the right of the field are likely to be invisible
 - Put the text describing the indicator at the **top** of the **fields** (that is, not at the end of the form and not in the instructions)
 - Use the same indicator in both places (text and next to required field)
 - Use the alt-text ‘required’ (not ‘asterisk’)
 - Always indicate required; don’t switch to indicating optional
 - If you feel the urge to indicate optional, use the full word ‘optional’
 - Do not use colour on its own as an indicator

An example of required field indicators using colour alone

**WIN A VIP
HOLLYWOOD BOWL
EXPERIENCE!**

15 GRAND PRIZES

**WIN A PAIR OF TICKETS
TO ONE OF THE
FOLLOWING SHOWS**

- THE DECEMBERISTS (JULY 7)
- CAFÉ TACUBA (JULY 15)
- COOL BRITANNIA! WITH
JAMIE CULLUM (JULY 21)

**PLUS A BRISTOL FARMS
PICNIC BASKET VOUCHER**





Required fields are marked in pink.

First Name:

Last Name:

E-Mail: Confirm Email:

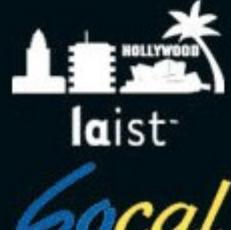
Address Line 1:

Country: Zip or Postal Code:

USA

Gender (m/f): Birthday:
Male or Female Month Day Year

Cell phone number: What kind of cell phone do you have?



An example of required field indicators at the wrong end of the field

 **Department of**
MDOT Transportation

 An Official State of Michigan Web Site

Michigan.gov Home | MDOT Home | Site Map | Contact MDOT | FAQ | State Web Sites

Search

doing business

- > Forms
- > **Contractor Services**
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
- Prequalification
- Bid Letting
- Payments & Awards

> Vendor/Consultant Services

> Local Agency Program

> Passenger Transportation

roads & travel

rail & public transit

bridges, borders & ferries

news & information

projects & programs

[Printer Friendly](#) [Text Version](#) [Email Page](#) [A-](#) [A+](#) [Text Size](#)

Order a Construction Prequalification Packet

To request a prequalification packet via email, fill in this form and click the Submit button below. *** REQUIRED INFORMATION**

Name: *

Email: *

Company: *

Address: *

Address 2:

City: *

State: ZIP *

* Required

Departments/Agencies

Online Services

Surveys

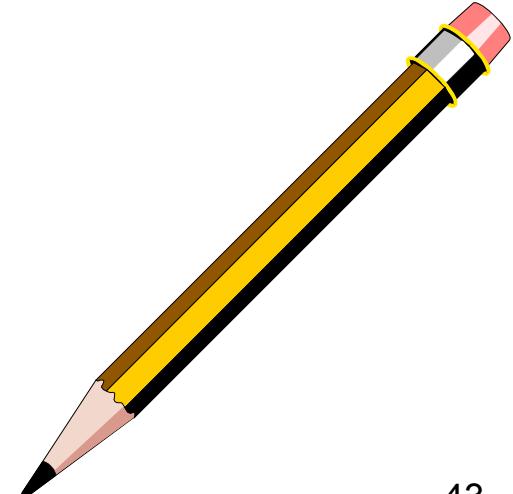
RSS Feeds

Related Content

- How to Become Construction Prequalified
- MDOT Prequalified Contractor Directories

Which is the most important problem

- Examine the Michigan Department of Transport form
- Find as many usability problems as you can
- Decide which ONE problem is the most important



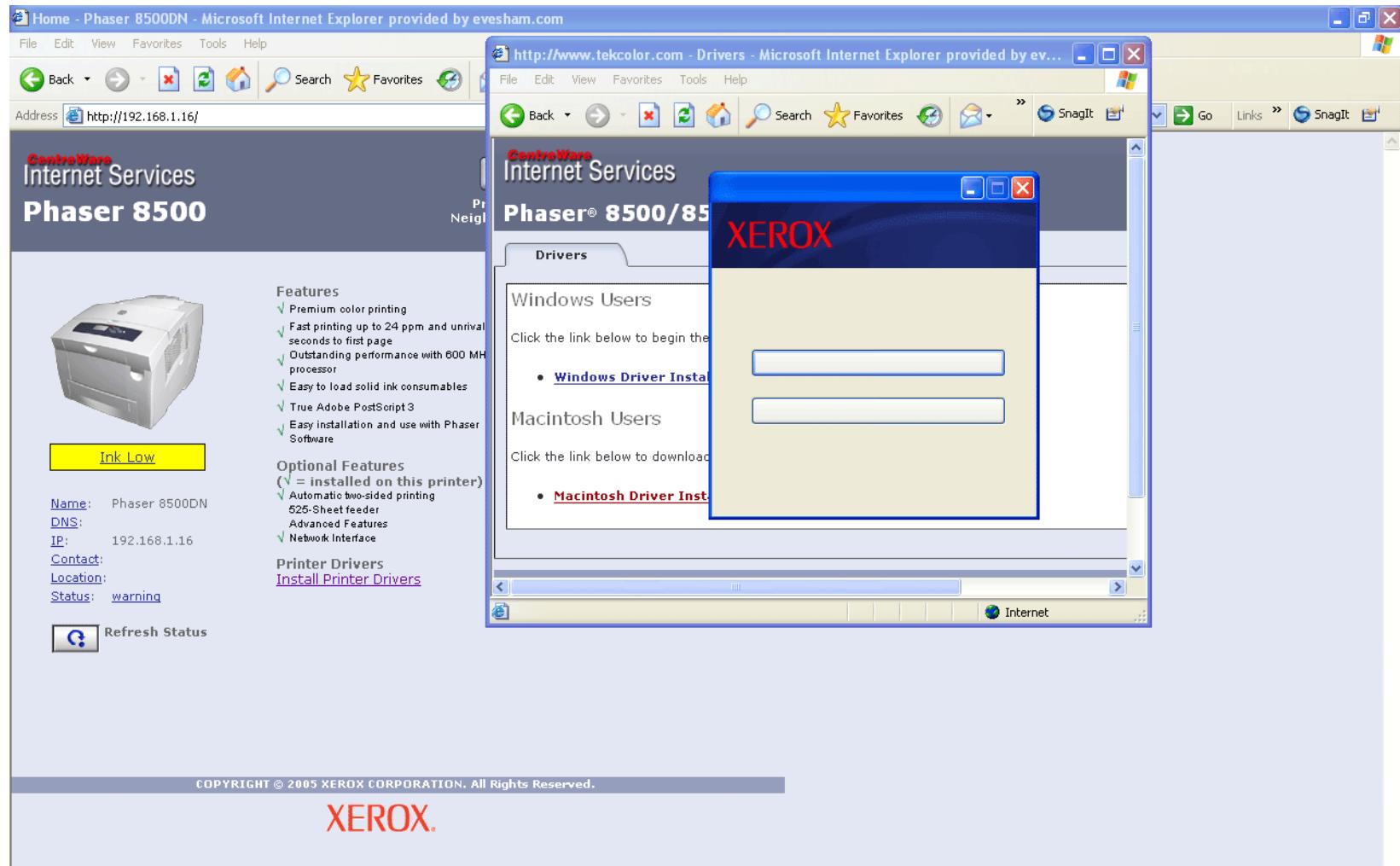
Agenda

- Where people look on forms
- What that implies for placing labels
- Let's stress about unimportant details
- Three details that do affect users
- If it looks good, it's easy to use
- Final reminder: it's what you ask and why that really matters

Three details that do affect users

1. It's not OK and I don't want to Cancel
2. Shorter preambles
3. 'False ends'

Buttons really do matter to users.



1. Label the button with what it does.
2. If the user doesn't want to do it, don't have a button for it.

- “OK” works – if it makes sense to say “OK” at that point
- “Reset” probably doesn’t work
 - Reset Button: INPUT TYPE=RESET

An INPUT element with 'TYPE=RESET' represents an input option, typically a button, that instructs the user agent to reset the form's fields to their initial states. The VALUE attribute, if present, indicates a label for the input (button).

When you are finished, you may submit this request: <input type=submit>

You may clear the form and start over at any time: <input type=reset>

When you are finished, you may submit this request:

You may clear the form and start over at any time:

LukeW writes about buttons

TYPICAL WEB FORM

Personal Information

First Name

Last Name

Contact Information

Address

City

County

-- Select County --

Post Code

Country

United Kingdom

Submit | [Cancel](#)

PRIMARY ACTION

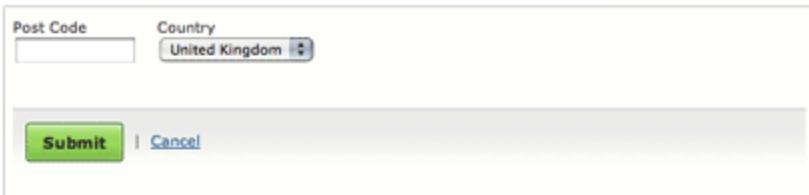
SECONDARY ACTION

LukeW and Etre tested a selection of different button placements and styles

A

Post Code Country

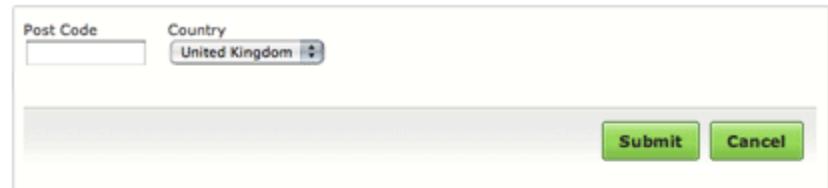
| [Cancel](#)



D

Post Code Country

[Submit](#)



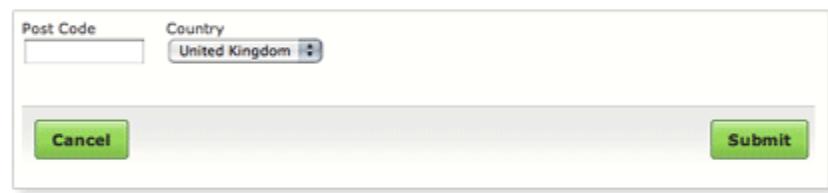
B

Post Code Country



E

Post Code Country



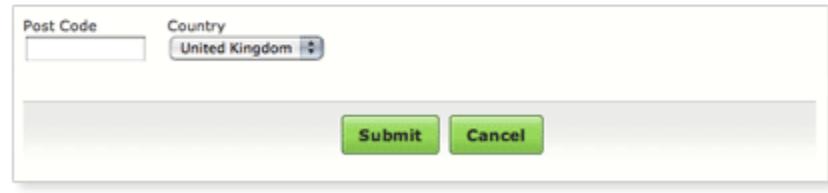
C

Post Code Country



F

Post Code Country



Which one do you prefer? Why? Is there a better option?

A

Post Code
Country

D

Post Code
Country

B

Post Code
Country

E

Post Code
Country

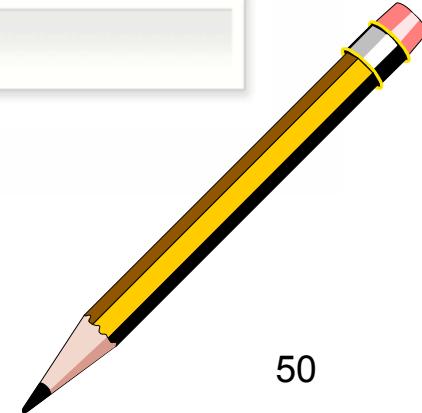
C

Post Code
Country

F

Post Code
Country

Only Option E performed
poorly during our testing



Which one do you prefer? Why? Is there a better option?

A

Post Code Country

| [Cancel](#)

B

Post Code Country

C

Post Code Country

D

Post Code Country

[Submit](#) [Cancel](#)

E

Post Code Country

F

Post Code Country

[Submit](#) [Cancel](#)

“Only Option E performed
poorly during our testing”

A new selection of options: get rid of E, add another one?

A

Post Code Country

B

Post Code Country

C

Post Code Country

D

Post Code Country

F

Post Code Country

G

Post Code Country

[Throw away my work.](#)

Method 2 (easier, and guaranteed success): Choose anything sensible then test and test

- Any arrangement of buttons that puts the SUBMIT (action) button where users expect to find it will probably be OK
- Make sure that the SUBMIT button cannot be confused with destructive buttons
- The only guaranteed way of achieving a good form is:
 - Test YOUR form with YOUR users
 - Make changes based on what you find
 - Test again with (different) users
 - Make more changes
 - Repeat until the form works

Three details that do affect users

1. It's not OK and I don't want to Cancel
2. Shorter preambles
3. 'False ends'

Request a Personalized Rate Quote

Tired of calling a list of mortgage providers only to be asked the same questions over and over again? Let our lenders and brokers come to you! By providing the following information, one or more companies in your area will provide a "personalized quote" on your borrowing request. Most will respond in less than 24 hours. Please complete this form as thoroughly as possible.

We respect your privacy. This is a confidential request and your personal information will only be sent to lenders and brokers in your area who are customers of CompareInterestRates.com For more information, see our [privacy statement](#).

Property State

Purpose of loan

Preferred mortgage product

(If you want quotes on multiple products please indicate additional products in the comment field below)

Approximate loan amount you wish to borrow \$

(please use whole numbers without any commas, decimals or dollar signs)

Purchase price of home or approximate value for a refinance \$

(please use whole numbers without any commas, decimals or dollar signs)

If purchasing a new home you have identified, when is the closing date?

Contact Information:

First Name

Last Name

Home Phone # -

Business Phone # -

Email Address

Please rate your credit

Are you willing to document your income throughout the loan process?

Have you ever had a bankruptcy?

Additional information, comments, and questions.

Do you wish to also receive quotes on home owner's insurance?

Do you wish to subscribe to our Daily Mortgage Rate Update email?

Please press submit button only once. Multiple submissions may transmit your request to more lenders than you requested.

A/B testing

Varied:

- photo
- background
- colours
- shading
- buttons
- preamble

55-625 Rate 55-625 Rate 55-625 Rate
COMPARE
 interest rates.com

Request a Personalized Rate Quote



This mortgage rate quote form will take approximately 30 seconds to complete. Here's how our service works:

- Complete our short form
- We will search hundreds of mortgage lenders and thousands of loan programs in our database
- You will then receive quotes from up to 4 competitive lenders in your state
- You choose the mortgage lender with the best rate and loan terms and save money

Property State

Purpose of loan

Preferred mortgage product

(If you want quotes on multiple products please indicate additional products in the comment field below)

Approximate loan amount you wish to borrow \$

(please use whole numbers without any commas, decimals or dollar signs)

Purchase price of home or approximate value for a refinance \$

(please use whole numbers without any commas, decimals or dollar signs)

If purchasing a new home you have identified, when is the closing date?

Contact Information:

First Name

Last Name

Home Phone # -

Business Phone # -

Email Address

Please rate your credit

Will you document your income? Yes No

Have you ever had a bankruptcy?

Additional information, comments, and questions.

Please press submit button only once. Multiple submissions may transmit your request to more lenders than you requested.

In our 2004 study, we found that only a better preamble made any real difference

- We tested a wide selection of visual variants of a form
- Variants improved conversion rates
- The only variation that achieved statistical significance was the improved preamble:
 - Shorter
 - Clearer
 - Better layout



Sign up

A variety of plans to fit everyone's needs. You can upgrade, downgrade, or cancel any time.
All pay accounts include a 30-day Free Trial.

— Create your administrator account —

This is the master log-in for your account. All fields are required. Once your account is set up you can add accounts for other people as well. Each person will have their own username and password.

First name

Last name

Email

Username

What you'll use to log in (or [use OpenID](#)).

Password

Password again

Confirm your password by entering it again.

Company/Group

Examples: Apple, UCLA, Red Cross

Time zone

(GMT-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Which web browsers work with Basecamp?

Any of the following web browsers work with Basecamp: **IE 7 (PC)**, **Firefox 2 or later (Mac, PC, or Linux)**, **Safari 2 or later (Mac)**.

Can I upgrade, downgrade, or cancel later?

Absolutely. Basecamp is a month-to-month service so you can upgrade, downgrade, or cancel at any time.

Which forms of payment do you accept?

We accept Visa, Mastercard, and American Express. We do not accept POs, checks, or invoices to be paid at a later date. We do email a "PAID" invoice each time you are billed.



66 words

You're just 60 seconds away from your new Basecamp account.

Already use a 37signals product? Then [sign in](#) with your 37signals ID to save time.

1 Create your Basecamp account

First name

Last name

Email

Company

(Or non-profit, organization, group, school, etc.)

Time zone

— Now choose a username & password —

Username

This is what you'll use to sign in. (or use [OpenID](#))

Password

6 characters or longer with at least one number is safest.

Enter your password again for verification

2 Create your Basecamp site address

Every Basecamp site has its own web address. For example, if you want your Basecamp site to be at <http://acme.basecamphq.com> you'd enter acme in the field below. **Letters & numbers only.**

http:// .basecamphq.com

Thanks for choosing Basecamp!



You're in good company when you use 37signals products.

Over 3,000,000 users

Thousands sign up every week

Secure and reliable

Your data is backed up daily

Great customer service

Fast, accurate, and friendly help

28 words

Jason Fried talks about the new signup form.

- *“The previous form … was dated and too long… we wanted the redesigned form to be markedly shorter than the one it was replacing”.*
- *“We spent a lot of time on the language, graphical elements in the sidebar, and overall information flow throughout the process”.*

Three details that do affect users

1. It's not OK and I don't want to Cancel
2. Shorter preambles
3. 'False ends'

‘False ends’: if it feels like the end of the conversation, users will stop

HM Revenue & Customs

contact us help ? logout

9 April 2007 EFFORTMARK LTD (Ref 362/E365) £

Tax Year 2006/2007

Employee Details

You must complete any fields marked *

home

- > Employee List
- > Works Number Update

Employer Annual Returns

- > P35 End of Year
- > P38A Supplementary
- > P11Db Expenses & Benefits
- > P9D Batch Submission
- > Employer Actions

Settings

- > Employer Details
- > Change Tax Year

> Feedback

* Why is this employee being added? ?

- New employee with a form P45(3) from a previous employer
- New employee without a form P45(3) and requires a form P46
- Existing employee previously paid below the PAYE threshold and requires a form P46
- Existing employee to add to Employee List

* Surname:

* First name:

Middle name:

Title: (For example, Mr, Mrs)

* Address line 1:

Address line 2:

Address line 3:

Address line 4:

Next →

‘False ends’: if it feels like the end of the conversation, users will stop

 HM Revenue & Customs

[contact us](#) [help ?](#) [logout](#)

21 March 2007 EFFORTMARK LTD (Ref 362/E365) £
Tax Year 2005/2006

P46 - Tax Code Calculation

[home](#) [Back](#)

Susan Roberts
AB631452C

Based on the information provided, the tax code to be used for this employee is shown below.

Tax code to be used: **503L**

Tax code operation basis: **week 1 or month 1**

[Do another P45, P46 >](#)
[Submit P45, P46 form\(s\) >](#)

Employer Annual Returns

- > P35 End of Year
- > P38A Supplementary
- > P11Db Expenses & Benefits
- > P9D Batch Submission
- > Employer Actions

Settings

- > Employer Details
- > Change Tax Year

P46 New Employee

- > Statements
- > **Tax Code Calculation**

> Feedback

Avoid screens in the middle of forms that have no fields for user entries

- Option 1: save a ‘false end’ screen for the true end of the conversation
- Option 2: include a question that guides users around the ‘false end’ screen

Agenda

- Where people look on forms
- What that implies for placing labels
- Let's stress about unimportant details
- Three details that do affect users
- If it looks good, it's easy to use
- Final reminder: it's what you ask and why that really matters

If it looks
good,
it's easy to
use

Keep the logo in proportion
Calm your creative impulses
Design to a grid

Some branding reinforces your form's credibility.



The screenshot shows the VisitCornwall website. The header features a large banner image of St. Michael's Mount at sunset. The logo 'VisitCornwall' and the text 'The official site of Cornwall Tourist Board' are in the top left. A navigation bar below has five items: 'Home' (dark blue), 'PLACES TO STAY' (purple, currently selected), 'PLACES TO GO' (grey), 'THINGS TO DO' (green), and 'EVENT' (light blue). A sidebar on the left lists categories like 'HOME', 'ACTIVE CORNWALL', 'ARTS AND CULTURE', etc. The main content area has a purple header for a competition: 'Competition - win a stay at a brand new luxury 5 star holiday village in Cornwall *'. Below it is a text block about the competition rules. At the bottom, there's a yellow box with a link to 'Gwel an Mor' and the 'enjoyEngland.com' logo.

VisitCornwall
The official site of Cornwall Tourist Board

Home PLACES TO STAY PLACES TO GO THINGS TO DO EVENT

HOME
ACTIVE CORNWALL
ARTS AND CULTURE
BROCHURE
CONFERENCES
CONTACT US
CYCLING
GARDENS
GETTING HERE
GREEN TOURISM
HERITAGE & HISTORY
MEMBERSHIP
NEWS
PRACTICAL INFO
RESEARCH

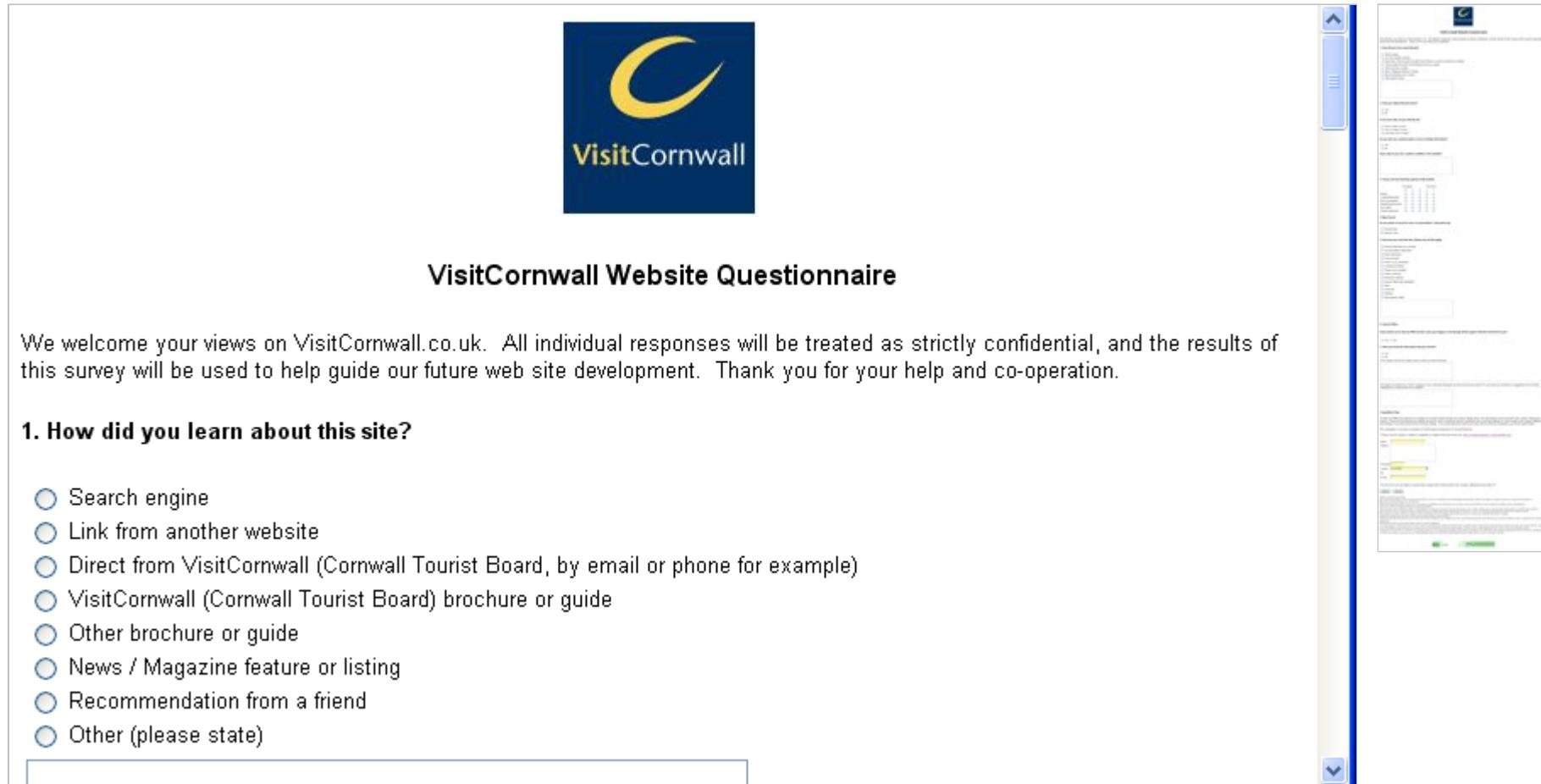
Competition - win a stay at a brand new luxury 5 star holiday village in Cornwall *

Tell us what you think of our website and [enter our prize draw](#) to win either a fabulous weekend or short break in one of Gwel an Mor's VIP lodges, equipped with private hot-tub on the sun deck, a wood burner and maid service. For your chance to win this prize draw, click [here](#) and complete our quick and easy website questionnaire and submit by **1st October 2007**. All completed questionnaires submitted will be entered into the prize draw. Good Luck!

Gwel an Mor offers superb self catering accommodation backed by extra-ordinary standards of service. Their 5 star rating was achieved within six

enjoyEngland.com

Is this enough?



The screenshot shows a survey page for VisitCornwall. At the top is the VisitCornwall logo, which consists of a yellow stylized 'C' shape above the text 'VisitCornwall' in white. Below the logo is the title 'VisitCornwall Website Questionnaire' in bold black text. A paragraph of text follows, stating: 'We welcome your views on VisitCornwall.co.uk. All individual responses will be treated as strictly confidential, and the results of this survey will be used to help guide our future web site development. Thank you for your help and co-operation.' The main section of the survey is titled '1. How did you learn about this site?' and contains a list of ten options for users to select from. The options are: 'Search engine', 'Link from another website', 'Direct from VisitCornwall (Cornwall Tourist Board, by email or phone for example)', 'VisitCornwall (Cornwall Tourist Board) brochure or guide', 'Other brochure or guide', 'News / Magazine feature or listing', 'Recommendation from a friend', and 'Other (please state)'. To the right of the survey page, a vertical scroll bar is visible, and the right edge of the page shows the edge of the computer monitor.

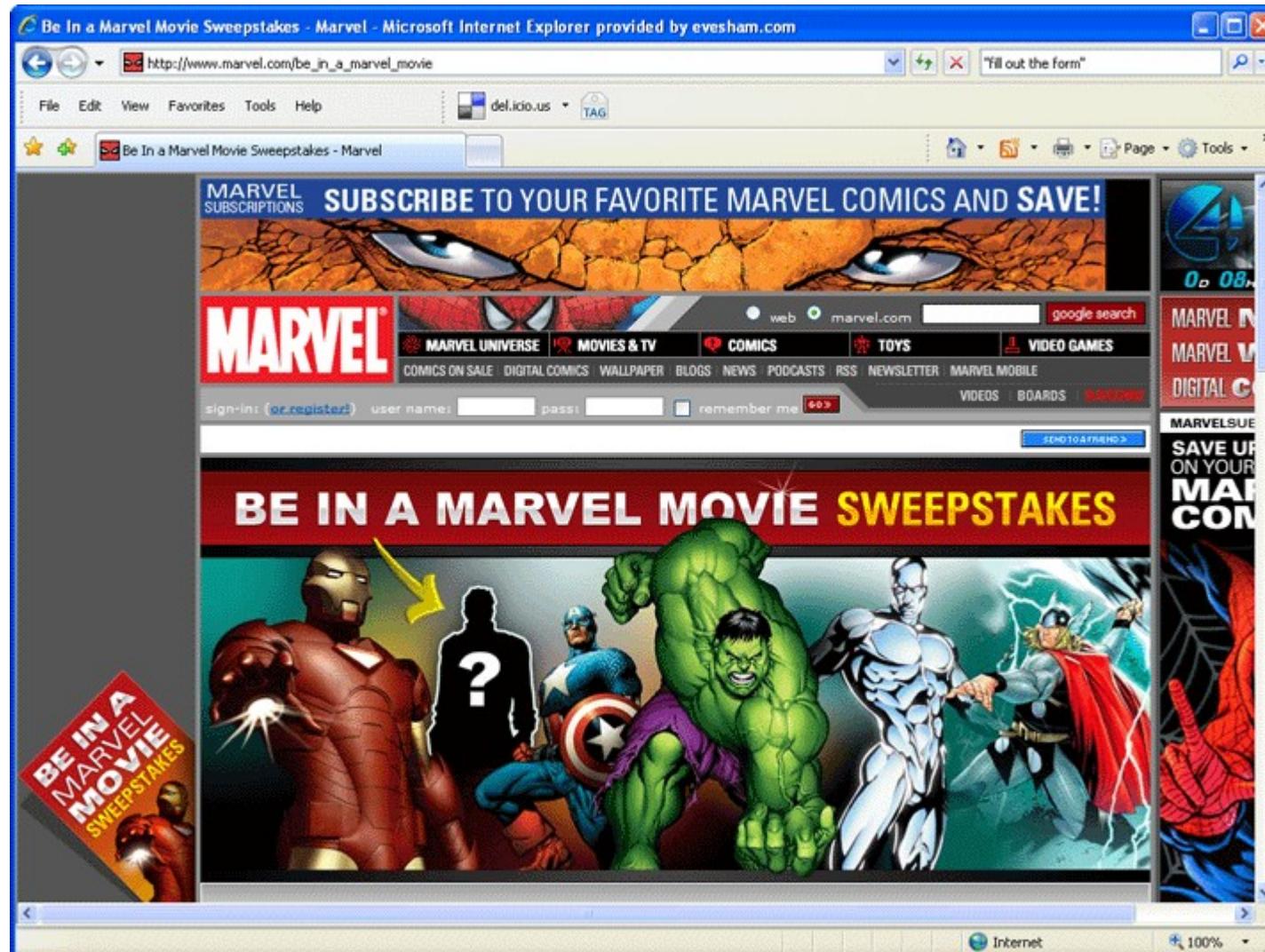
VisitCornwall Website Questionnaire

We welcome your views on VisitCornwall.co.uk. All individual responses will be treated as strictly confidential, and the results of this survey will be used to help guide our future web site development. Thank you for your help and co-operation.

1. How did you learn about this site?

- Search engine
- Link from another website
- Direct from VisitCornwall (Cornwall Tourist Board, by email or phone for example)
- VisitCornwall (Cornwall Tourist Board) brochure or guide
- Other brochure or guide
- News / Magazine feature or listing
- Recommendation from a friend
- Other (please state)

Where is the form? Too much branding



Another, more recent, look at the Marvel site

Marvel Movies Hub at Marvel.com - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help del.icio.us

Getting Started post to del.icio.us Google Accounts

Marvel | Web GOOGLE SEARCH ENTERTAINMENT CHARACTERS NEWS & INFO VIDEO SHOP KIDS MORE DIGITAL COMICS

MARVEL  Comics Catalog | Marvel Universe | Subscribe to Marvel Comics

SEARCH Sign in here. New User? Sign Up! Get Help!

Movies Home | Movie News | Marvel DVDs | Character Bios | Digital Comics | Comic Subscriptions

► Movies & TV 

COMING SOON

PUNISHER: WAR ZONE
COMING SEP 12, 2008
» MORE INFO

THE INCREDIBLE HULK
COMING JUN 13, 2008
» MORE INFO

IRON MAN
COMING MAY 2, 2008
» MORE INFO

ON TV

FANTASTIC FOUR: WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES
» MORE INFO

TRAILERS & CLIPS



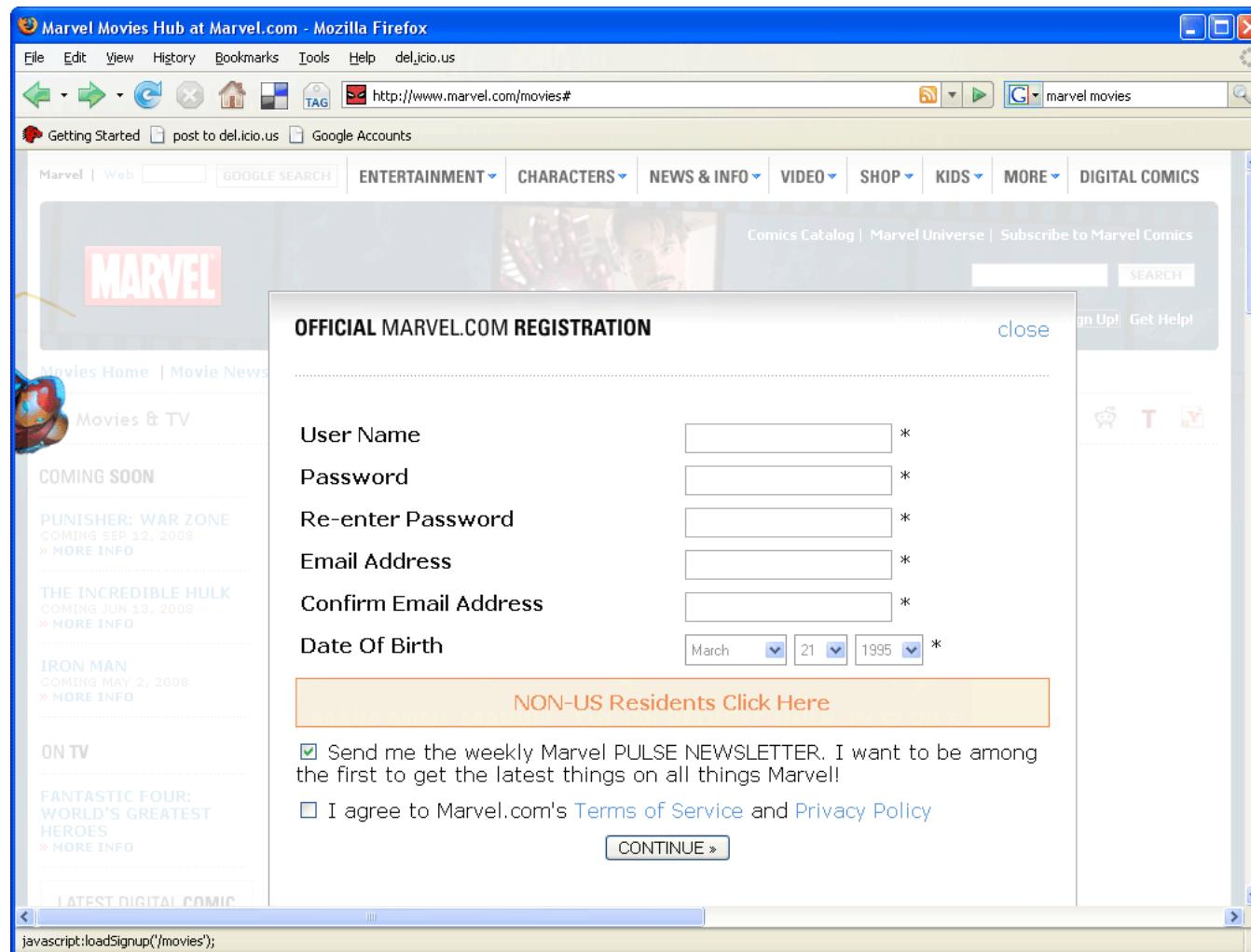
LATEST DIGITAL COMIC

Done

MADE MINE MARVEL: THE INCREDIBLE HULK TV SERIES
FULL STORY »

69

Another, more recent, look at the Marvel site



Marvel Movies Hub at Marvel.com - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help del.icio.us

Getting Started post to del.icio.us Google Accounts

Marvel | Web GOOGLE SEARCH ENTERTAINMENT CHARACTERS NEWS & INFO VIDEO SHOP KIDS MORE DIGITAL COMICS

MARVEL

Movies Home | Movie News

Movies & TV

COMING SOON

PUNISHER: WAR ZONE COMING SEP 12, 2008 [MORE INFO](#)

THE INCREDIBLE HULK COMING JUN 13, 2008 [MORE INFO](#)

IRON MAN COMING MAY 2, 2008 [MORE INFO](#)

ON TV

FANTASTIC FOUR: WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES [MORE INFO](#)

LATEST DIGITAL COMIC

http://www.marvel.com/movies# marvel movies

close Sign Up! Get Help!

SEARCH

OFFICIAL MARVEL.COM REGISTRATION

User Name *

Password *

Re-enter Password *

Email Address *

Confirm Email Address *

Date Of Birth March 21 1995 *

NON-US Residents Click Here

Send me the weekly Marvel PULSE NEWSLETTER. I want to be among the first to get the latest things on all things Marvel!

I agree to Marvel.com's [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

CONTINUE >

javascript:loadSignup('movies');

Is this just right?
Or too much?

**WIN A VIP
HOLLYWOOD BOWL
EXPERIENCE!**

15 GRAND PRIZES

**WIN A PAIR OF TICKETS
TO ONE OF THE
FOLLOWING SHOWS**

- THE DECEMBERISTS (JULY 7)
- CAFÉ TACUBA (JULY 15)
- COOL BRITANNIA! WITH
JAMIE CULLUM (JULY 21)

**PLUS A BRISTOL FARMS
PICNIC BASKET VOUCHER**





Required fields are marked in pink.

First Name:

Last Name:

E-Mail: Confirm Email:

Address Line 1:

Country: Zip or Postal Code:

USA

Gender (m/f): Birthday:

Male or Female Month Day Year

Cell phone number: What kind of cell phone do you have?



If it looks
good,
it's easy to
use

Keep the logo in proportion
Calm your creative impulses
Design to a grid

Calm your creative impulses.

 Montblanc

Mr. Mrs.

Name First Name

Address

ZIP Code City

Country Your Location Please specify

Email Subject

Message

.....
.....
.....

SEND RESET

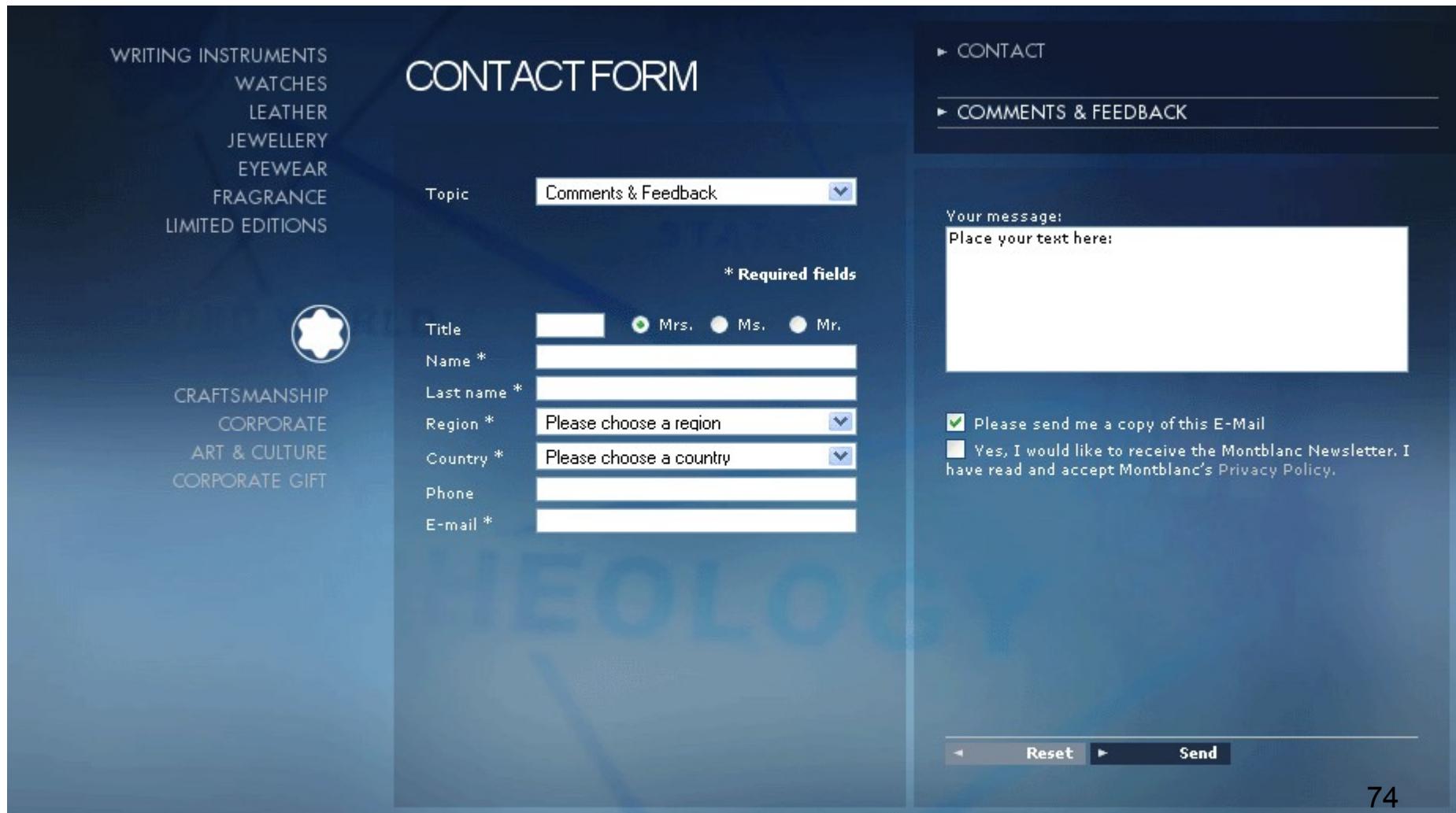


CONTACT

If you would like to contact Montblanc,
please complete the form.



More conventional: still offers opportunities for improvement



WRITING INSTRUMENTS
WATCHES
LEATHER
JEWELLERY
EYEWEAR
FRAGRANCE
LIMITED EDITIONS

CONTACT FORM

Topic:

*** Required fields**

Title:	<input type="text"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Mrs. <input type="radio"/> Ms. <input type="radio"/> Mr.
Name *	<input type="text"/>
Last name *	<input type="text"/>
Region *	<input type="button" value="Please choose a region"/>
Country *	<input type="button" value="Please choose a country"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
E-mail *	<input type="text"/>

Your message:
Place your text here:

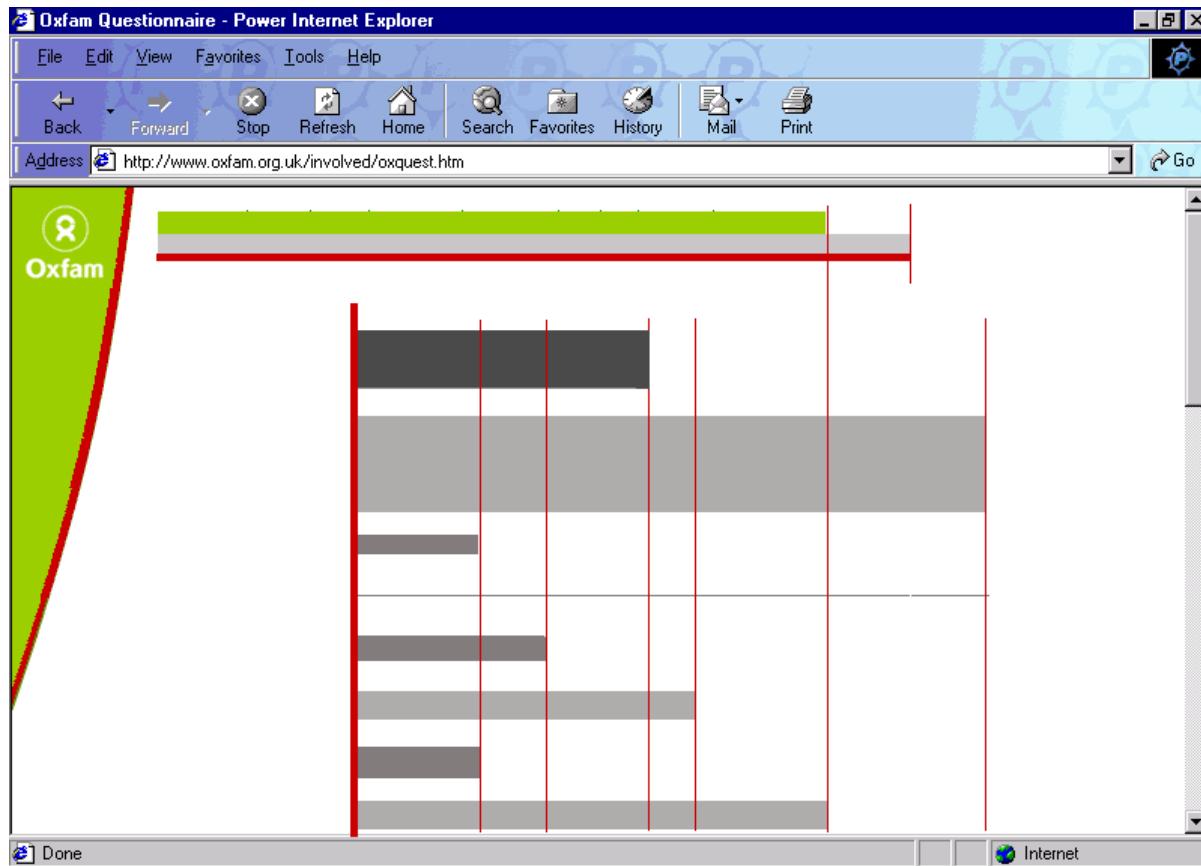
Please send me a copy of this E-Mail
 Yes, I would like to receive the Montblanc Newsletter. I have read and accept Montblanc's Privacy Policy.

◀

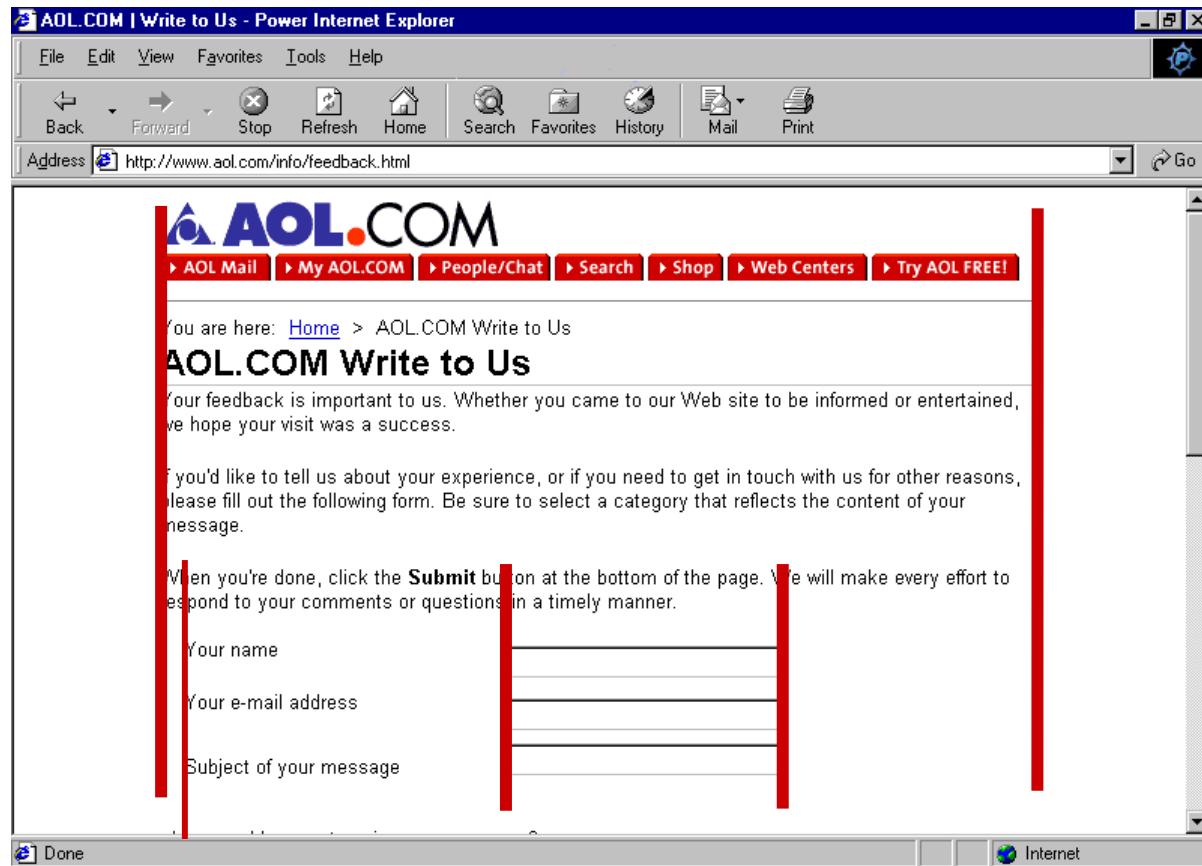
If it looks
good,
it's easy to
use

Keep the logo in proportion
Calm your creative impulses
Design to a grid

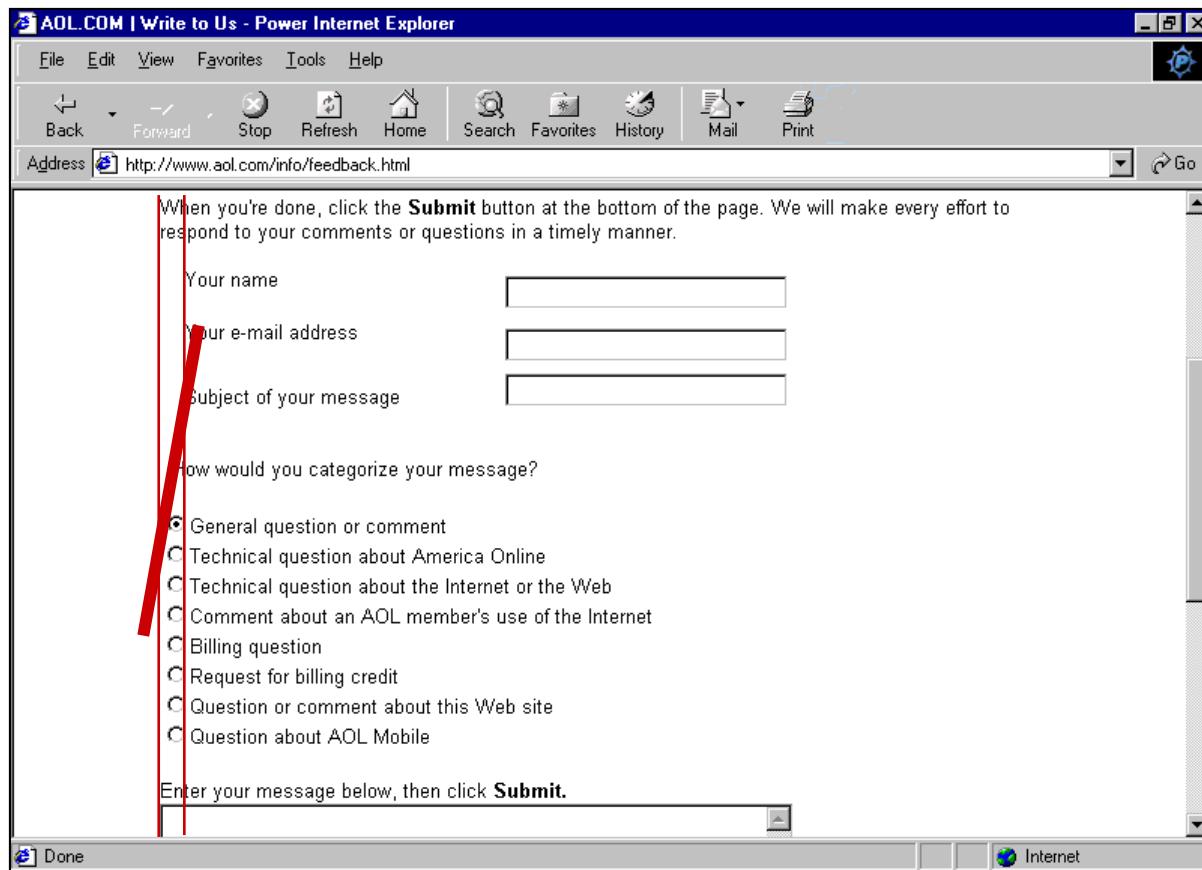
Design to a grid: work with the graphics in the shape of the page



Keeping to a grid: starts well



Example: chipping at the grid



AOL.COM | Write to Us - Power Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Refresh Home Search Favorites History Mail Print

Address: http://www.aol.com/info/feedback.html

When you're done, click the **Submit** button at the bottom of the page. We will make every effort to respond to your comments or questions in a timely manner.

Your name

Your e-mail address

Subject of your message

How would you categorize your message?

General question or comment
 Technical question about America Online
 Technical question about the Internet or the Web
 Comment about an AOL member's use of the Internet
 Billing question
 Request for billing credit
 Question or comment about this Web site
 Question about AOL Mobile

Enter your message below, then click **Submit**.

Done Internet

Design to a grid: if you give up entirely, it looks a bit inept

http://reservations.hamptonjitney.com - Hampton Jitney - Mozilla Firefox



Please fill in the following information to complete your reservation . . .

Ms First Name: Last Name:

Address: City:

State: Zip Code:

Phone Number: - Email Address:

Please Press the FINALIZE Button Only One Time. Processing your reservation takes a few moments. . .

Done

Design to a grid:
if you give up entirely, it looks a bit inept



Registration Form

Of course, all submitted information is kept in the strictest confidence.
You always retain control of your information with D.W. Simpson & Co.

Our services are always at no cost to you.

Name:

Address:

City: State/Province:

Zip Code:

Country:

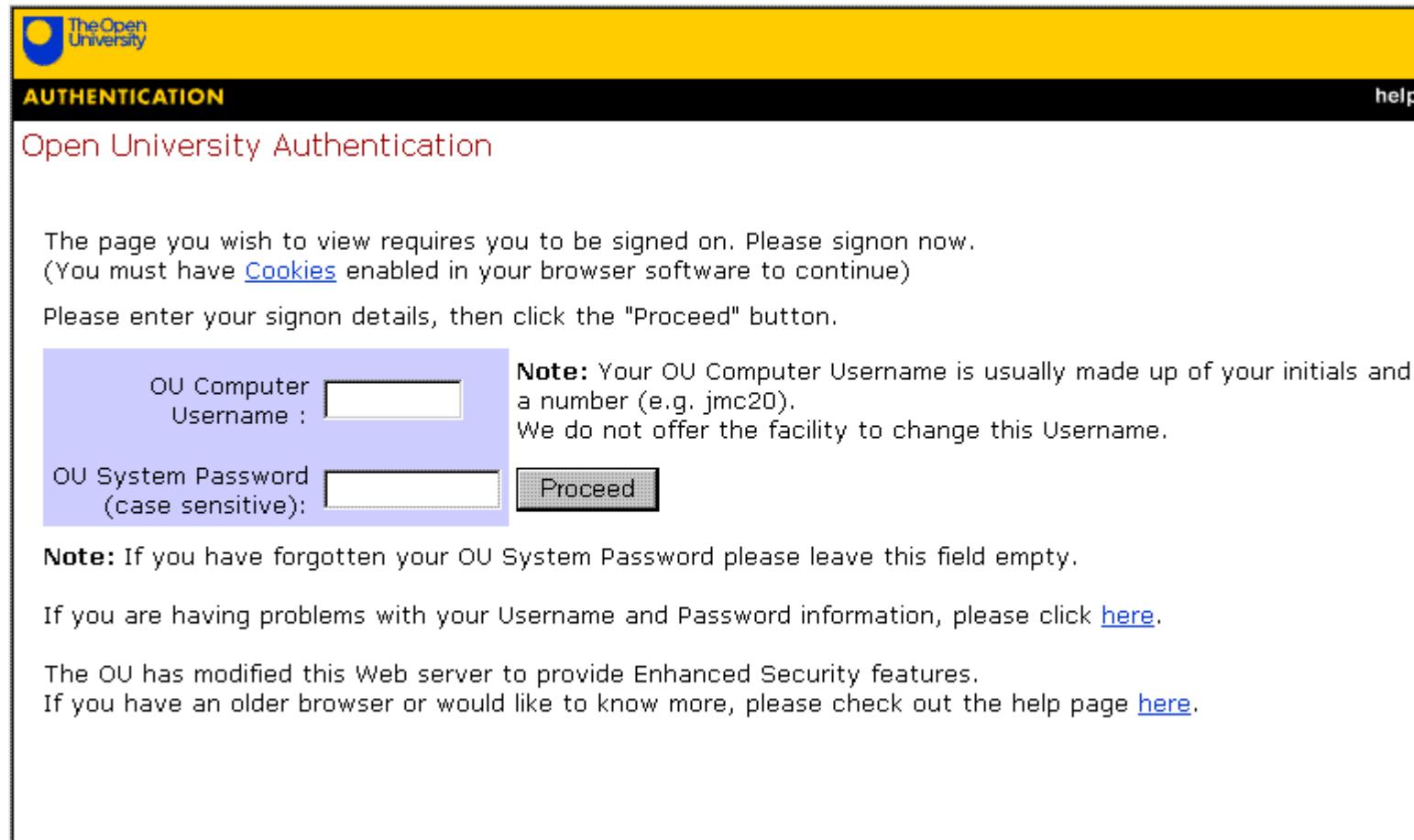
Phone: (H) Fax:

Phone: (W) (if able to speak freely)

Email:

A before- and after- example.

First of all, the old one. Plenty of grid problems.



The screenshot shows a web page for 'Open University Authentication'. The header includes the 'The Open University' logo, a 'help' link, and a 'AUTHENTICATION' section. The main content area has a yellow header bar. Below it, the text reads: 'The page you wish to view requires you to be signed on. Please signon now. (You must have [Cookies](#) enabled in your browser software to continue)'. It then instructs the user to 'Please enter your signon details, then click the "Proceed" button.' A light blue form box contains fields for 'OU Computer Username' (with a text input field) and 'OU System Password (case sensitive)' (with a text input field). To the right of these fields is a note: 'Note: Your OU Computer Username is usually made up of your initials and a number (e.g. jmc20). We do not offer the facility to change this Username.' A 'Proceed' button is located at the bottom of the form box. Below the form, a note says: 'Note: If you have forgotten your OU System Password please leave this field empty.' Another note at the bottom right provides information about enhanced security and links to help pages.

The page you wish to view requires you to be signed on. Please signon now.
(You must have [Cookies](#) enabled in your browser software to continue)

Please enter your signon details, then click the "Proceed" button.

OU Computer Username :

OU System Password (case sensitive):

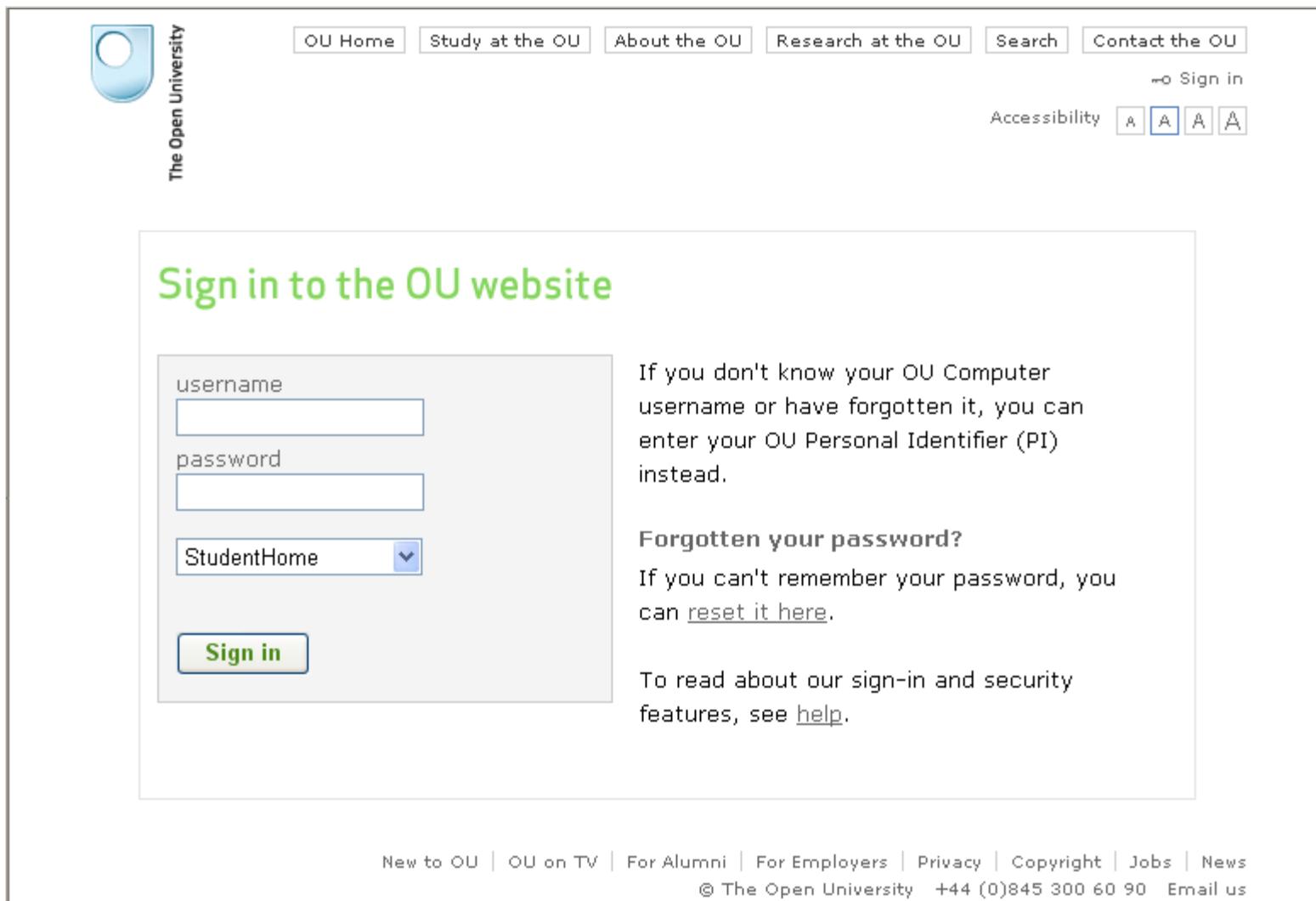
Note: Your OU Computer Username is usually made up of your initials and a number (e.g. jmc20).
We do not offer the facility to change this Username.

Note: If you have forgotten your OU System Password please leave this field empty.

If you are having problems with your Username and Password information, please click [here](#).

The OU has modified this Web server to provide Enhanced Security features.
If you have an older browser or would like to know more, please check out the help page [here](#).

Currently: tidied up, and with page furniture



The screenshot shows the sign-in page of The Open University website. The header includes the university logo, navigation links for OU Home, Study at the OU, About the OU, Research at the OU, Search, and Contact the OU, and links for Sign in and Accessibility. The main content area features a green header 'Sign in to the OU website' and a sign-in form with fields for username and password, and a dropdown menu set to 'StudentHome'. A 'Sign in' button is at the bottom of the form. To the right of the form is a text block explaining that users can enter their OU Personal Identifier (PI) if they don't know their OU Computer username. Below this is a link to 'Forgotten your password?' with a note about password reset. At the bottom is a link to 'help' for sign-in and security features. The footer contains links for New to OU, OU on TV, For Alumni, For Employers, Privacy, Copyright, Jobs, News, and contact information for The Open University.

OU Home | Study at the OU | About the OU | Research at the OU | Search | Contact the OU

→ Sign in

Accessibility A A A A

Sign in to the OU website

username

password

StudentHome

Sign in

If you don't know your OU Computer username or have forgotten it, you can enter your OU Personal Identifier (PI) instead.

Forgotten your password?

If you can't remember your password, you can [reset it here](#).

To read about our sign-in and security features, see [help](#).

New to OU | OU on TV | For Alumni | For Employers | Privacy | Copyright | Jobs | News
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Design to a grid: think about the whole page as well as the fields



ACT®

ACT Registration

Start your record below. After entering a password on the next page, your record will be available for 72 hours to complete and submit. If you need to exit the registration and access it again before 72 hours have passed, you will be asked to re-enter the same login information and password. Once submitted, your registration request cannot be cancelled or accessed again. If it is not completed and successfully submitted within 72 hours from the time it was created, it will expire.

First Name

Last Name

Date of Birth / / (mm/dd/yyyy)

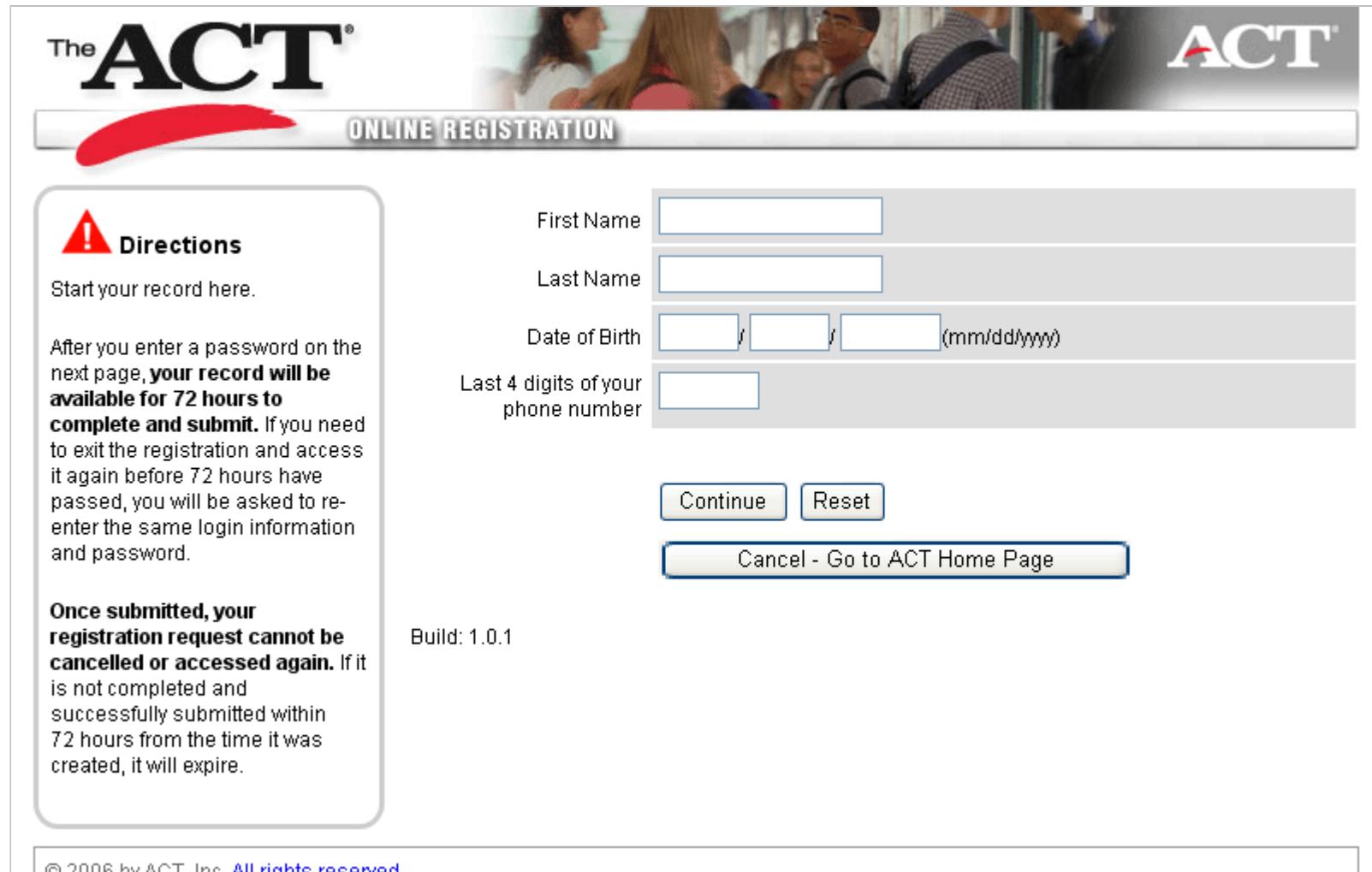
Last 4 digits of your phone number

Build: nt050812n

Done

aap.act.org

Design to a grid: has a grid – but also invisible instructions



The image shows the ACT Online Registration page. At the top, there is a banner with the ACT logo and a photo of people. Below the banner, the page title is "ONLINE REGISTRATION". On the left, there is a box titled "Directions" with the following text:

Start your record here.

After you enter a password on the next page, **your record will be available for 72 hours to complete and submit.** If you need to exit the registration and access it again before 72 hours have passed, you will be asked to re-enter the same login information and password.

Once submitted, your registration request cannot be cancelled or accessed again. If it is not completed and successfully submitted within 72 hours from the time it was created, it will expire.

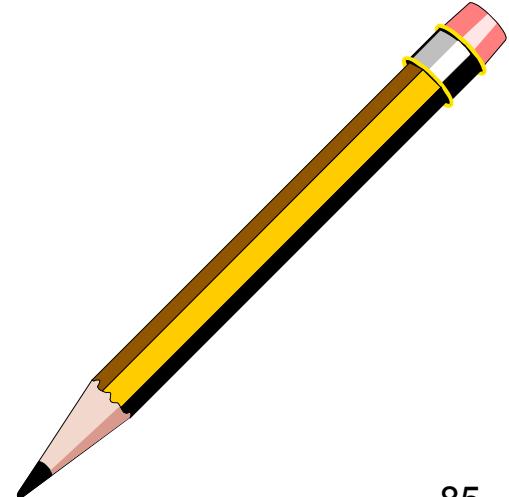
On the right, there are input fields for "First Name" and "Last Name". Below these are fields for "Date of Birth" (with a placeholder "(mm/dd/yyyy)") and "Last 4 digits of your phone number". At the bottom, there are "Continue" and "Reset" buttons, and a "Cancel - Go to ACT Home Page" button.

Build: 1.0.1

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Now try it for yourself

- Design a solution for ‘invisible instructions’ on the ACT form



Equivalent page May 2010



Create a New Account

Create Your Web Account

Fields marked with an asterisk * are required. [Information for Parents](#)

Please use the name you would like to have appear on your score reports to colleges.

* Student's First Name Middle Initial

* Last Name

* Date of Birth Month / Day /

Social Security No. [How is this number used?](#)

* Email Address

* Confirm Email Address

[How will your email be used?](#)

Continue

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ACT Student Site | [Contact Us](#)

Agenda

- Where people look on forms
- What that implies for placing labels
- Let's stress about unimportant details
- Three details that do affect users
- If it looks good, it's easy to use
- Final reminder: it's what you ask and why that really matters**

It's what you ask and why that really matters

- Users rarely abandon forms because of:
 - Label placement
 - Use of colons
 - Required field indicators
 - Sentence or title case
- Users often abandon forms or lie on them because of:
 - Questions that they don't understand
 - Questions that they have no answer for
 - Intrusive questions that are inappropriate to the task
 - Validations that refuse their preferred or correct answer

Question time

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I'm a consultant, hire me:

Consultancy: www.effortmark.co.uk

Training: www.usabilitythatworks.com

Free stuff:

Forms advice: www.formsthatwork.com

Editing: www.editingthatworks.com

Columns: www.usabilitynews.com

“Caroline’s Corner”

www.uxmatters.com

“Good Questions”