

# Best Practices for Web Sites

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## 1. Separate Content (HTML), Presentation (CSS), and Behavior (javascript)

Benefits include: a) Faster downloads due to caching of CSS and javascript files. b) Changes to CSS and javascript files are seen across the entire site. c) Content is more accessible to alternative devices.

## 2. Validate Your Files

Validation involves checking your documents against a formal standard. Benefits include improved search engine ranking and appear free from errors in different browsers. The W3C provides a validation service.

## 3. Check Your Links

Use the W3C Link Checker to find broken links on your site. Broken links lower your search engine ranking and frustrate visitors to your site.

## 4. Provide Visitors With a Search Form

If your site is larger than a few pages, give visitors to your site the ability to search. Visitors will move to another site if they can not find the information on your site.

## 5. Customize Your 404 Error Page

Replace the site's default 404 error page with a customized page. This page should use the site's branding and provide information that helps visitors to the site. At a minimum, a search form, contact information, links to resources, and advice should be provided.

## 6. Use Care When Naming URIs

A Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) is used to reference a resource on your site. Good URIs should be easy to remember and hint at the content of the resource. Good URIs do not change.

## 7. If URIs Change, Use Standard Redirects

If you must change a URI, avoid using meta refresh methods to redirect visitors to the new URI. The use of refresh methods can sometimes prevent the visitor from effectively using the back button of their browser. Instead, use a "HTTP Redirect", which passes additional information to User Agents. For example, creating a Permanent Redirect (HTTP 301) on your server notifies search engines where the content now resides and this will be reflected in the search results.

## 8. Test Your Site With Multiple Browsers

When testing your site, you should use a variety of browsers and versions of those browsers. Not only will the use of multiple browsers indicate display differences between browsers, but also the functionality, usability, and accessibility of your site will be tested.

## 9. Create and Implement a Quality Assurance Plan For Your Site

A Quality Assurance plan will keep your team focused on the use of best practices and your visitors will have a better experience.