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From the Editor

You don't have to be a fancy web developer to take advantage of Flash animations in your PowerPoint presentation. We'll show you how it's done.

When something goes wrong with your Windows boot files, it can really wreak havoc with your system. We'll give you a few troubleshooting guidelines for both Windows XP and Windows Vista.

Finally, you'll want your website visitors to stick around and read the great information on your web page. But if the text isn't legible, they won't have the patience to stay. Use our typography tips to increase your site's appeal.

MICROSOFT OFFICE PRODUCTIVITY

Give your audience the action they crave with a Flash-y animation

In a world in which it's rare to see a static web page — yet common to see a boring slideshow — it's likely that your website designers have some Shockwave Flash File (SWF) animations that you can snag to add some zip to your PowerPoint presentations. We'll show you how to insert and take charge of them, as shown in **Figure A**, so they work perfectly and are at your disposal.

Related Courses

- PowerPoint 2007 - Level 2

Prepare PowerPoint to use SWF files

Before you can insert or control SWF files, you need to ensure that PowerPoint is set up to handle the format. If it isn't, you can easily download the controls you need.

To determine whether you can use SWF files:

1. Open PowerPoint to the slide on which you want to insert your Flash file.
2. Select View | Toolbars | Control Toolbox. (In 2007, go to the Developer tab's Controls group. If you don't see a Developer tab, click the Office button, click PowerPoint Options, and in the Popular section, select the Show Developer Tab In The Ribbon check box.)

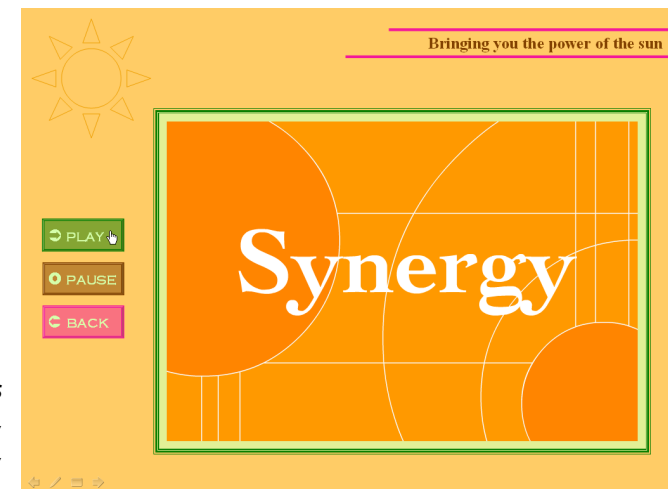
3. Click on the More Controls icon to expand the list of available items.
4. Scroll down and look for the Shockwave Flash Object, as shown in **Figure B**.
5. If it's listed, you can skip to the next section. If you don't see the control, visit www.adobe.com/products/flashplayer and download the free player.

You may have to close and reopen PowerPoint to activate

A

An animated SWF file adds impact to any presentation, especially when you can play, pause, or rewind it.

the control. If you've updated Shockwave from a previous version, you may have trouble getting a SWF movie to play. See the Adobe TechNote article at www.adobe.com/cfusion/knowledgebase/index.cfm?id=tn_12727 to fix the problem.



Plan your file's resting place

Now that PowerPoint is able to play SWF files, you must decide where to store the file permanently.

- If you plan to play your presentation at various locations, you can store it on the web and link to it there.
- On the other hand, if you want to use the presentation solely on your computer, simply place it in a folder and use that path.
- You can also embed the file, which increases the PowerPoint file's size, but avoids the need to keep track of multiple files.

Whichever method you choose, note the path to your SWF file.

Insert the Flash file

Inserting a Shockwave Flash Object is straightforward. Just navigate to the slide

on which you want the object to appear, and follow these steps:

1. Once again, click on the More Controls icon on the Control Toolbox toolbar and select Shockwave Flash Object, as shown in **Figure B**.
2. When the pointer changes to crosshairs, click and drag a rectangle to house your SWF movie. (You can resize it later.)
3. Right-click on the placeholder that appears, and select Properties. Click on the Alphabetic tab if necessary.
4. Note the text shown in the (Name) property text box — you'll need it later. For instance, ours is ShockwaveFlash1.
5. Set the Playing property to False by selecting it from the dropdown list.
6. Click in the Movie property field and enter the URL or pathname for

the SWF file you wish to insert, as shown in **Figure C**.

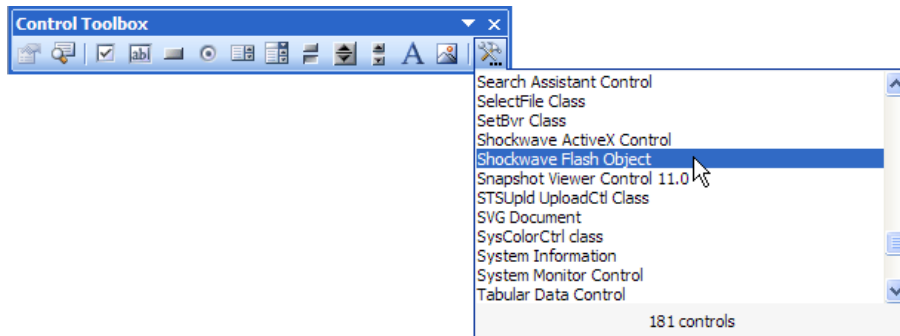
7. Close the Properties sheet and view your slideshow to ensure the movie plays correctly.

At this point, you may wish to embed your movie. To do so, simply reopen the Properties sheet, set the EmbedMovie property to True, and then close the Properties sheet.

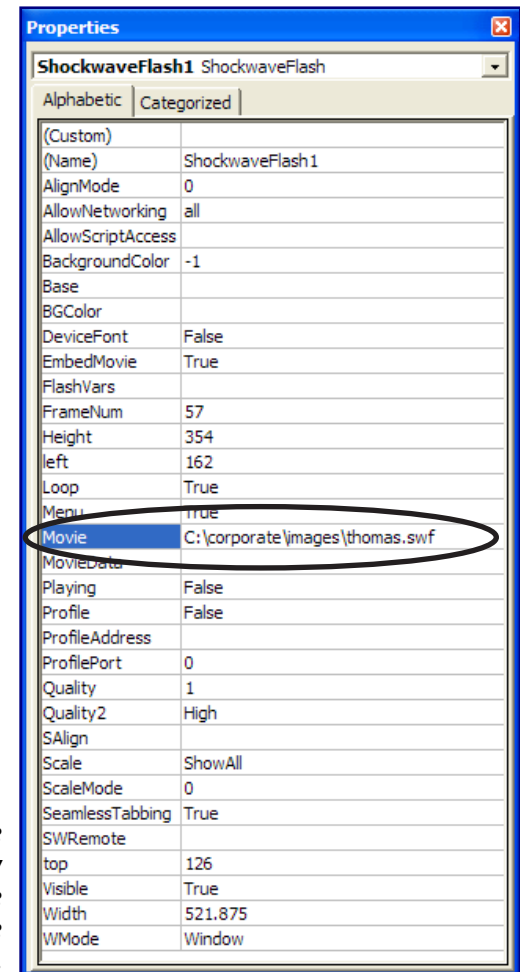
Take control of the SWF playback

Now that your movie is in place, you can allow it to play as soon as your slide displays by setting the Playing property to True. However, if you want more control over the movie, you can add a bit of Visual Basic script and a few colorful buttons that allow you to Play, Rewind, or Pause your movie. This can really come in handy when you need to address an audience question or replay the movie a second time.

I can't control my movie! Some versions of Flash allow developers to disable the play, pause, and rewind navigation commands. If you use a movie file secured in this manner, the action buttons described in this article won't work. If you know the Flash developer, however, you can request a navigable version of the file.



B If the Shockwave Flash Object item appears in the More Controls list, your version of PowerPoint is already set up to play SWF files.



C Tell PowerPoint where to find the SWF file by entering the pathname or URL in the Movie property text box.

Let VB code do all the work

To create seamless navigational controls for Flash movies in PowerPoint, you need to enter a few lines of VB code into the Visual Basic Editor (VBE).

1. Choose Tools | Macro | Visual Basic Editor (or press [Alt][F11]) to launch the editor. (In 2007, go to the Developer tab and click Visual Basic in the Code group or use the shortcut key.)
2. In the VBE, choose Insert | Module and type the code in **Listing A** into the new module.
3. Replace all instances of SlideX with the number of the slide on which you've inserted your movie (for instance, Slide2, in our sample presentation).
4. Replace all instances of ShockwaveFlashName with the name of your Shockwave Flash

Listing A:

Code to control a Flash movie in PowerPoint

```
Sub PlayShock( )
    SlideX.ShockwaveFlashName.Play
End Sub
Sub PauseShock( )
    SlideX.ShockwaveFlashName.StopPlay
End Sub
Sub RewindShock( )
    SlideX.ShockwaveFlashName.Rewind
End Sub
```

Object we noted earlier. (We used ShockwaveFlash1.)

5. After you enter the code, save your work and close the VBE.

Each Sub line creates and names a new macro that you'll use later to make your movie play, pause, or rewind on command. For instance, Sub PlayShock() created a macro named PlayShock that, when activated, plays your ShockwaveFlash1 movie.

Check your macro security settings:

The VB code creates macros that PowerPoint may block depending on your current security settings. To adjust them, select Tools | Macro | Security. (In 2007, go to the Developer tab, and in the Code group, click the Macro Security button.)

Create the control buttons

With the code in place, all that's left to do is to create the control buttons on our

slide and assign the appropriate code to each one.

1. On your movie slide, select Slide Show | Action Buttons.
2. Select Action Button: Custom button (the blank square).
3. Click and drag a rectangular button on your slide where you want the Play button to sit. When you release the mouse button, the Action Settings dialog box appears.
4. On the Mouse Click tab, select Run Macro, and then select PlayShock from the Run Macro dropdown list and click OK.
5. Right-click on the button you just created and select Add Text.
6. Enter Play and click away from the button.

Adapt for PowerPoint 2007: In 2007, you need to insert a shape for your action button first; just go to the Insert tab, click the Shapes button, select a shape you want to use, and then click and drag the shape onto your slide. Then you can select the shape and click the Action button in the Insert tab's Link group to open the Action Settings dialog box. From there, you can set up your macro to run just as you would in earlier versions.

Your button is ready to use, but you may wish to format it to match your slide. Right-click on it and use the Format AutoShape dialog box to change its appearance. Our finished button is shown in **Figure D**.

Repeat the process for the PauseShock and RewindShock macros. When you've finished, you should have three buttons on your slide, as shown in **Figure A**. Now, when you run your slideshow, you can use the buttons you just created to play, pause, and rewind your movie to your heart's content. 🌐



D Mimic the controls on a DVD player to give the audience a clear picture of each button's purpose.

Business skills for the new world of work

In business today, productivity is key to your success. Whether that means setting up projects for success, forecasting and analyzing trends, or managing critical business information, it is vital that you have the skills to work at peak performance. You already know how to use Microsoft® Office System applications. New Horizons offers Microsoft Business Skills Series Courses to teach you how to use those applications to more efficiently manage, work with, and prioritize information to make better decisions. Go to www.NewHorizons.com for information on courses that cover topics such as:

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Troubleshoot startup problems and program errors with an all-in-one configuration tool

It may — or may not — surprise you that a simple act like installing a new application on your computer can bring it to a screeching halt, or at minimum cause various programs errors. That's because Windows relies on files in the boot sequence to load properly, and if a program corrupts one of them, your system suffers from booting and program errors. Fortunately, you can tackle these problems by using the System Configuration Utility (Msconfig) to troubleshoot virtually any system configuration problems you may encounter.

Get started with the tool that offers so much

The System Configuration Utility lets you temporarily change the way Windows starts. For example, on x86-based computers, you can use this tool to disable 16-bit startup applications specified in the WIN.INI and SYSTEM.INI files. To get started with Msconfig:

1. Log on as an administrator.
2. Launch the System Configuration Utility by selecting Start | Run, then typing msconfig in the Open text box; press [Enter].

The System Configuration Utility provides several configuration tabs, which we'll examine individually.

Pick your start options

When you configure the General tab, you can start Windows in one of three startup modes: Normal, Diagnostic, or Selective.

Go about your Normal business

If you select Normal Startup, all device drivers and services are loaded. This is equivalent to selecting Start Windows Normally on the Windows Advanced Options Menu that appears when you press [F8] during startup.

Choose "Safe Mode" before you reboot

Select Diagnostic Startup when you want Windows to start in Safe Mode with only basic device drivers and services active. When you select this option, the System Configuration Utility disables most services and you may not be able to run certain Computer Management and Control Panel tools. Once you've selected this option and clicked Apply, Windows prompts you to restart your computer.

Benefit: After the computer restarts, the System Configuration

Utility launches automatically so you can selectively enable or disable options on the other configuration tabs.

Disable programs and services

If you choose Selective Startup, you can enable or disable programs and services listed in the SYSTEM.INI, WIN.INI, BOOT.INI, Startup, and Services tabs. Deselecting a check box under Selective Startup disables all entries in the corresponding tab. You can also enable or disable individual entries on each configuration tab.

As was the case with selecting Diagnostic Startup, choosing Selective Startup and clicking Apply prompts you to restart your computer. After the computer restarts, the System

Related Courses

- 2285 Installing, Configuring, and Administering Microsoft Windows XP Professional

Configuration Utility launches automatically so you can enable or disable options on the other configuration tabs.

Take a beeline to System Restore

Before you begin a troubleshooting session, you can use the System



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Configuration Utility to initiate a System Restore operation. To do this, click the General tab, and then click Launch System Restore. Then, follow the prompts to create a restore point.

Restore a CAB file

Finally, with the General configuration tab you can restore an individual file from a cabinet. This is very useful if you know a specific file is corrupt and you want to extract it from a cabinet file and restore it to your hard drive.

When you click Expand File, you can browse for the file you want to restore, the source location containing the cabinet, and the destination location for the file.

Configure the SYSTEM.INI and WIN.INI tabs in XP

On these two configuration tabs, you can enable or disable services and startup programs meant for earlier versions of Windows. Windows XP doesn't require either the SYSTEMROOT\SYSTEM.INI or the SYSTEMROOT\WIN.INI files. These files are maintained only for compatibility with older software. Windows uses the SYSTEM.INI file to configure system information for drivers and services. Windows uses the WIN.INI file similarly for applications.

Sometimes changing the order in which the items in the SYSTEM.INI and WIN.INI files load is enough to solve a

startup problem. To change the order, select the item from the list and click Move Up or Move Down, as appropriate.

Modify bootups with the BOOT.INI or Boot tab

The BOOT.INI configuration tab in XP lets you configure a number of boot options. When you enable a specific boot option, you add it to the boot path in the [operating systems] section of the BOOT.INI file.

In Vista, you can configure the same BOOT.INI tab options by using the Boot tab. However, Vista doesn't use the BOOT.INI file and the loading process treats your configurations differently. The following list describes the boot options you can apply and their function:

- **/SAFEBOOT.** Forces a start in safe mode by using one of the associated parameters.
- **/NOGUIBOOT.** Disables the bitmap that displays the progress bar during a Windows startup.
- **/BOOTLOG.** Enables boot logging to a file called SYSTEMROOT\NTBTLOG.TXT.
- **/BASEVIDEO.** Directs the operating system to use standard VGA mode for the installed video driver. If your new video driver fails to work properly, you can use this parameter to start the operating system. You can then remove, update, or roll back the problem video driver.

- **/SOS.** Displays the name of each device driver as it loads. When a normal startup fails, you can use this boot option to determine which driver is failing to load.

XP only: You can validate the integrity of any boot paths by clicking Check All Boot Paths.

Vista only: To make any of the standard or advanced changes permanent (we'll look at advanced settings next), select the Make All Boot Settings Permanent check box.

Troubleshoot with Advanced settings

Clicking Advanced Options lets you select any of the following:

- **/MAXMEM=.** Specifies the maximum amount of RAM that Windows XP can use. Use this parameter to confirm a faulty memory chip.
- **/NUMPROC=.** Allows you to force a multi-CPU system to use only the quantity of processors you specify.
- **/PCILOCK=.** Stops the operating system from dynamically assigning hardware input and output, and interrupt request resources to PCI devices. Allows the BIOS to configure the devices.
- **/DEBUG=.** Loads the Windows kernel debugger when you start Windows.

Eliminate problem-causing services

On the Services configuration tab, you can enable or disable specific services. If you select the Hide All Microsoft Services check box, you can isolate third-party services to see if they're causing a startup problem. Certain applications run as services. Problems with these applications might prevent you from starting Windows in normal mode. You can use System Configuration Utility to disable a service and verify that it's the problem.

Ditch the Startup programs

You may find that the culprit is a program that starts automatically. You can enable or disable startup programs on the Startup configuration tab. 🌐

Vista gives the boot to the .INI tabs

Windows Vista uses the Windows Boot Manager to boot up instead of the Boot.ini, System.ini, and Win.ini files. The Boot Manager chooses which boot application to use — the standard app is the Windows Boot Loader.

Windows Boot Loader in turn accesses the configuration files stored in the Boot Configuration Data (BCD) file called the BCD registry file. Because of this significant change with the way Vista boots, the .INI files you can configure in System Configuration in XP simply don't exist in Vista.

Don't let common typography mistakes render your website virtually unreadable

Because it's so easy to set fonts, background colors, and other formatting with CSS, some developers forget to choose this formatting carefully for legibility. Of course, it doesn't matter how pretty the text looks if the reader can't read it and leaves your site in disgust.

Related Courses

- [Web Development with Cascading Style Sheets \(Third Edition\)](#)

To make judging legibility even trickier, many developers don't see the full text that will appear on the site, since the server-side code may generate it automatically. While a few test words on the site may look okay, bad formatting can cause readers to struggle while attempting to read whole paragraphs. To avoid these kinds of mistakes, it pays to know a few readability principles.

Key rules for readability

Readability refers to the ability to read all the text added to a web page. It's much harder to read text onscreen than in print, so special considerations are required. For starters, consider the following guidelines:

- Don't size text too small or too large.
- When possible, avoid specifying absolute font sizes, since they may prevent readers from making the text larger through their browser

options. For example, `font-size:1.5em` is better than `font-size:15px`.

- Avoid overuse of type styles (e.g., bold, italic, all caps). A long paragraph in italics, for example, can be difficult to read.
- Don't contradict common web practice in your use of type styles. For instance, avoid using colored, underlined text for anything that's not a hyperlink.
- Be careful about placing text on a colored background.
- Choose common fonts that are easy to read on the web.

Choose appropriate fonts

Let's take a closer look at font choice. Two key rules apply here:

- Some fonts that are good when you print a document aren't so

- great online. Often, the difference comes from subtle character spacing issues. So once you find a font you like, try out several similar ones on the screen. You can use the CSS font-family property to specify your first, second, and third (etc.) choices.
- Sans serif fonts are usually easier to read than serif fonts, and they tend to look bigger. This is one good reason to specify some fonts in your style code, since browsers often default to serif fonts.

Tip: Avoid mixing serif and sans serif fonts; the transition between reading such different types of fonts can slow down a reader.

Not all sans serif fonts are created equal

Just because a font is sans serif doesn't guarantee legibility. And while the

fancier fonts may look great in titles, they can be hard to read in paragraphs.

Let's see what happens when we take even a great piece of text and put it onto a website with a poor font choice. We'll make a CSS declaration specifying the Impact font (or any sans-serif font if the client machine doesn't have Impact):

```
<style>
  .Impact {font-family: Impact,
    sans-serif;}
</style>
```

Even great words lose impact with the wrong font

We'll now apply this style to an excerpt from a famous speech Lincoln gave in October, 1854:

```
<p class="Impact">
  When we voted for the Wilmot Proviso
  ...
</p>
```

Apologizing to the great Lincoln in advance, we see that the results, as shown in **Figure A**, demonstrate that even the most cogent text in the world is virtually unreadable in the wrong font. Even if you find it not bad reading once you get into it, the mere appearance of such a font can intimidate readers from reading it at all.

More legible alternatives

Perhaps a better choice is to stick with a system font, such as Geneva (Mac) or Arial (Windows). These fonts aren't only easier to read onscreen, but are also more likely to be installed on the user's computer, thus reducing the risk of font substitution.

Be careful with colored backgrounds

Another area that's important to watch out for is the colored background. As with most things on the web, less is more. Simply put, it's hard to beat black text on a white background (or some shade of white) for legibility.

Certainly, depending on your site's theme and purpose, you can still get satisfying results with other color combinations, as long as the contrast is adequate. And, in some cases, a client may demand a particular color scheme.

The trick to text on color: Make it bigger

One of the problems with any colored background is that it tends to make the

text look smaller — especially if the text color is lighter than the background. For instance, suppose we apply the following style definitions to a page:

```
div {padding:1em;}
.withcolor {background-color:#880088;
color:#00FF00;}
.bigger {background-color:#880088;
color:#00FF00; font-size:1.3em;}
```

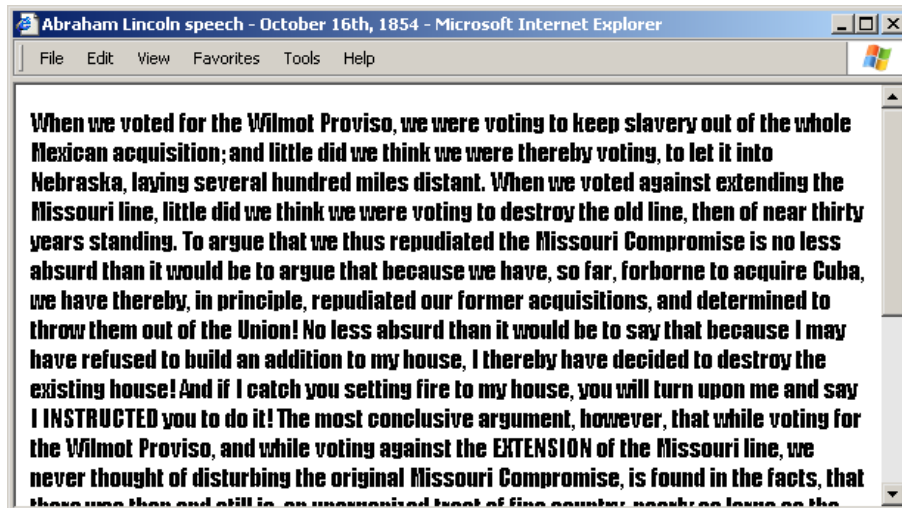
While the result in **Figure B** is okay in print, the second block of text is hard to read onscreen and looks surprisingly small — as if the text is dissolving into the color around it. The final block of text uses a larger font size to help overcome the readability problems caused by the background color.

Break up the text

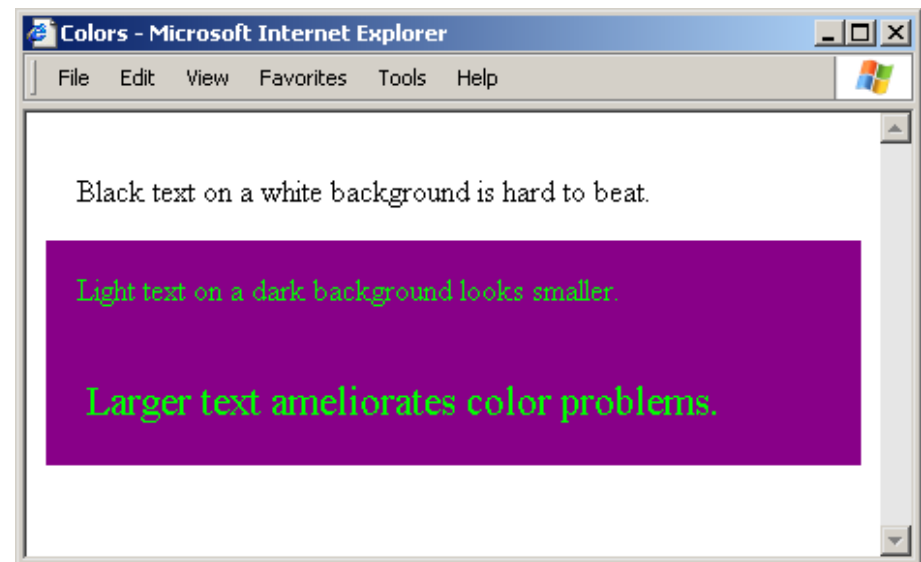
Choosing the right font and size with which to format text is just the beginning. Also consider the way in which you place text on a web page. As a rule, it's easier to read text that's in narrow columns, rather than long rows that span the entire width of the page.

Create a column effect without multiple columns

Of course, this rule creates a little of a dilemma: You certainly don't want readers to have to scroll up and down the website to read the sort of multiple column layout you'd see in the newspapers. That's probably why such



A Some highly stylized fonts are hard to read if there's a lot of text.



B If you have to place text on a dark background, make it bigger.

layouts aren't as popular as they were a few years ago.

However, you can still keep text from going all the way across. The one danger here is that this sort of formatting may not come out on a printer, which is why The New York Times offers a button to see a printer-friendly page.

Keep paragraph size small

A related issue is the size of the paragraphs. If you're involved in writing any of the actual text for the web page (e.g., instructions for a web application), favor short paragraphs over long ones that seemingly never end. Otherwise, readers may lose patience and not even read what you wrote.

Don't let your code get rid of all the white space either

Similarly, if your web application reports on data that users have entered, don't get rid of all the white space. Some applications trim every bit of white space out of a string of text, assuming that every line break or indent is wasteful. In some instances, developers fail to encode text entered as a line break as an HTML break (
). The result is large blocks of impenetrable text.

Design for legibility

Even using techniques to increase text readability doesn't guarantee the content will be entirely legible. Legibility has to do with the overall design of text on the page. The goal is to format and

position the text so it's easy for viewers to recognize the hierarchy of the content.

A matter of purpose

You'll probably notice that some sites deliberately seek to be disorderly, jarring,

or even annoying. Glitzy, flamboyant sites, may work as part of marketing strategy, or to appeal to specific audiences. But if your goal is to impart information, your best bet is usually to create an orderly page. 🌐

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