

# Designing Websites for SKIMMERS, SWIMMERS & DIVERS

Many websites are bursting at the seams with valuable information and content. Serving up this content in a way that's informative and engaging (and not overwhelming) can be a major organizational and design challenge.

Each group is willing to go progressively deeper and spend more time on your site. They each have different needs and wants when it comes to their online experience. So how do you design your site to address all of them?

As you plan the organization and design of your site, think of your site visitors in three categories: **Skimmers, Swimmers and Divers.**

Start by understanding what each audience is looking for and think through opportunities to meet that need.



## SKIMMERS

*Glide along the surface*

Skimmers want to get in, get the information they need, and get out as quickly as possible. They read predominantly headlines, and use titles to guide themselves around your site toward the information they want.

*Tips to design for Skimmers*

*What Skimmers want:*  
**SPEED**  
**EASE**  
**CLARITY**  
**BREVITY**

Think about the information most visitors are looking for. This might include your hours, location, phone number, admission prices or menu. Make this information impossible to miss.

(It's always a good idea to check your website stats to verify exactly what pages and content are used most often. You may be surprised.)

1

Make headlines clear and concise. Use different levels of headlines and establish a clear hierarchy to make page structure easy to understand at a glance.

2

Include search functionality. If Skimmers can't locate the information they want at a glance, a website search acts as a fallback.

3



## SWIMMERS

*Splash around*

Willing to get a little deeper, Swimmers are interested, but have a limited amount of time and energy they will devote to your site. They are likely looking for specific information, but may stop and peruse if something catches their attention.

*Tips to design for Swimmers*

*What Swimmers want:*  
**OPTIONS**  
**SIMPLICITY**  
**EFFICIENCY**  
**POSSIBILITY**

Take a cue from magazines. Editors love to find the most dramatic or controversial quotes in stories and make them large and colorful so they jump off the page and grab your attention (A typographic technique called a "pull quote" or "call-out"). Use a similar approach of emphasizing your most compelling content to make your content irresistible to Swimmers.

1

Not everything can be front and center, but be sure not to bury content under too many layers of navigation. The most-used pages and information should be only one click away.

2

Feature related and relevant information "in context" — include similar content when visitors are most likely to be interested in it. For example, an informational page about your services could include reviews or testimonials, links to recommended companion products or deeper case study.

3



## DIVERS

*Jump in head first*

Divers want to go deep and get the full story. They will read most, if not all, of your copy and may come back often looking for new additions.

*Tips to design for Divers*

*What Divers want:*  
**DETAILS**  
**BACKGROUND**  
**INTERACTION**  
**CONNECTION**

Start with a logical site map that organizes information in an intuitive way. Divers may get frustrated if they can't make a mental map of your site as they are browsing.

1

Make a clear progression of content, so that Divers can easily find a stopping point and a place to resume later. Breadcrumbs (a trail of links to the pages you have visited) can be helpful here.

2

Enhance the experience for Divers, with multimedia (videos, imagery, audio) and interactive elements wherever possible.

3