

# Designing Above the Fold

By Rich Baker

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The most value part of any web page is that part which is shown in your browser before the need to scroll. This is generally known as "above the fold."

Arguably, you have just 10 seconds to grab your visitors' attention. That doesn't seem long, but as the brain can absorb thousands and thousands bits of information per second...10 seconds is long enough to get your message across!

The "above the fold" part of a web page (especially of the home page) is the most valuable real estate you have on your web site.

The first fold of your web site needs to communicate the biggest benefit you have to offer your visitors. This is often referred to as your Unique Selling Point or "USP". However, 7 out of 10 web sites are poorly designed above the fold. Here are the 4 top pitfalls that drive visitor's away.

1. Flashing banners
2. Too many links
3. No clear USP
4. Time consuming flash animation

So what should you do to capture the attention of your visitor? Here are the things you should include above the fold.

## 1. Spell out your USP

Answer the visitor's biggest question, "what's in it for me?" Use a main headline and supplement it with a secondary headline. Communicate benefits, benefits and more benefits to the visitor. You should use a H1 or H2 tag for the main headline and H3 for the supplementary headline.

Is your USP to save the visitor money? Offer a guarantee? Make live easier? Help the visitor to earn an income? When you are working out your USP and benefits...remember the difference between "benefits" and "features." If you have a product that is reliable - that is a feature. The benefit would be peace of mind or lower maintenance cost.

## 2. Opt-in Email address or Bookmark

If you offer your visitor the chance to bookmark or opt-in to a newsletter or request more information then place the links into the "above the fold." You should do this for every page. You have worked so hard to build and promote your website and now you are attracting traffic, but if you can get an email address or allow your visitor to bookmark you, you will increase your chance to continue promoting to visitors after they have left your web site

## 3. Navigation

I am sure some smart alics will say your navigation should never be above the fold, forcing visitors to scroll down and read your copy.

I could not agree less.

You should have your navigation above the fold, giving your visitor full control. Ideally, place your navigation bar somewhere on the top or left hand-side of every page.

When visitors first arrive at your site, they should be able to find what they want quickly. Don't frustrate them with quirky and quacky titles either. Use titles that convey benefits like, "Special Offers" or "Savings" or that are generally understood.

## 4. Professional Design

Avoid banners and flashy animation. Not only does it consume real estate, but it will slow the page download...a cardinal sin. Keep it simple. Each page on your website should download in 15 seconds or less on a standard 56-bit modem.

Even if you are promoting affiliate programs banners have a generally poor conversion rate. It is 10 times better to sell in context with text or product links. Besides selling straight off the home page has little credibility.

## Conclusion

Remember the 10 second rule and design to communicate your USP and biggest benefits in headlines. Present the chance to opt-in or bookmark your page. Give your visitors the chance to navigate around your site and avoid flashy animation. Use the above the fold part of your web page shrewdly. Keep it simple and offer clean and effective web design. That is the way hold your visitors for longer.

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Rich Vicar has been providing search engine placement solutions since 1998. He is expert in submitting your web site in an ethical, efficient and effective manner.

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