A user-friendly Web site allows all members of the intended audience to:

- Find relevant information quickly and easily.
- Understand the information.
- Understand the source of the information.
- Judge the reliability of the information.

**Can users easily find relevant information on your Web site?**

- Do you know who your users are? You probably have several types: consumers, clinicians, researchers, funders, and the general public.
- Consider what different users might be looking for, and select content to match their information needs.
- Organize content in sections that make sense to the users and help them find information. Some sites have separate sections for different types of users, but this isn’t necessary if you present information in logical sections so users can determine and locate which types of information they are most interested in.

**Can users navigate your Web site without getting frustrated or lost?**

- Help users figure out where they are within the site by providing consistent, clearly grouped navigation options.
  - List major sections of the site on a navigation bar on the top or left side of every page.
  - Place more important navigation options first in a group.
- Allow users to get back to the home page easily with a link on every page.
- Make it obvious what is a clickable link and which links have already been clicked.
- Match link names with titles of linked pages.
- Provide a site map or a search function if the site is large and complex.
- Names of page elements (headings, navigation, links, menu commands, page titles) should be specific, descriptive, and concise.
- Names of page elements should employ the users' language, which may differ from what you use internally in your organization.
Can users understand the information on your Web site?

Writing for the Web is not like writing for print. Users skim Web pages looking for relevant information, and if they can’t easily find or understand it, they quickly move on.

- Writing should be concise and objective. Omit unnecessary words and inessential information.
- Use language the user readily understands. Define necessary technical language; avoid academic jargon.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Use active (not passive) voice, and use action verbs.
- Make key ideas obvious at a glance by using headings, subheadings, and bulleted lists and avoiding long blocks of undifferentiated text.
- Make long reports easier to read by providing a clickable list of sections or contents at the top of the page.
- Include the primary theme of a paragraph in the first sentence.

Does layout and appearance help or hinder the user experience?

If your site is hard to read, disorganized or visually chaotic, users may become frustrated and leave your site.

- Use familiar font styles sized at a minimum of 12 points. Familiar fonts include Times New Roman, Georgia, Arial, Helvetica or Verdana.
- Use dark text on plain, light-colored background for best contrast.
- Keep pages clean and uncluttered. Avoid crowding too many items on any one page.
- Use purposeful graphics only. Graphics that add no value to a user’s understanding of a site or its content distract and frustrate the user, especially if loading takes a long time.
- Eliminate horizontal scrolling. Set the width of your content section proportionally rather than fixed to eliminate the need for users to scroll horizontally.
- Place items on the page in a manner that reflects their relative importance, with more important items located at the top.

Does your Web site come across as professional and credible?

- Keep information current—outdated information and incorrect or nonworking internal links suggest carelessness and unreliability.
- Clearly identify who owns/operates the site.
- Provide contact information (email, phone and mailing address).
- Provide a helpful set of frequently asked questions (FAQ) with answers.
- Cite evidence whenever possible, either by providing references to relevant publications or by stating that information is based on professional judgment or best practice.
- Provide author names and credentials.