

# Library Instruction On The Web: *Tips, Strategies & How To Get Started*

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Increasing numbers of libraries are using instructional web pages to assist their patrons in using library resources. Because the web is often the main (or only) method of accessing many library resources (including catalogs, article indexes, and electronic journals), web instruction provides a number of advantages over print handouts and other traditional forms of instruction. These advantages include: direct interaction with the resources being taught, ability to combine or isolate relevant resources, and 24-hour access to instructional materials. This poster outlines the advantages of web instruction, offers guidelines to use in creating effective instructional web pages, and provides a list of resources (both commercially available and free on the web) that you can use to develop instructional web pages that work for your library.

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### ***ADVANTAGES OF WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION:***

- Direct interaction with web-resources
- Ability to combine ( *and/or isolate* ) resources from different parts of your library's web page(s)
- On-demand learning environment, available 24 hours/day, to all library users (Dewald 1999a, Rhodes & Chelin 2000, Smith 2001)
- Can be used to focus library users on the most relevant resources
- Highly interactive, user-friendly, flexible (Rhodes & Chelin 2000)
- Meet increasing demands for instruction, expand teaching options, and conserve library resources (Dewald 1999a, Rhodes & Chelin 2000, Smith 2001)

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION:**

- Studies suggest web-based and face-to-face instruction can be equally effective (Smith 2001).
- Academic libraries using web-based instruction were found to train more students in information seeking skills than libraries that did not (Rhodes & Chelin 2000).
- Web-based instruction incorporates many characteristics of effective library instruction (Dewald 1999a).
  - Great method for developing course-related or assignment-related instruction
  - Incorporates active learning
  - Getting additional help is easy for library users when instruction pages include email links

## **TYPES OF WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION:** (Smith 2001)

- Assignment-specific tutorials
- Database- or software specific skills
- Discipline- or course-specific research skills (including Subject Guides)
- General research skills
- Online catalog skills
- General library orientations
- Internet skills
- Information literacy

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## **BEFORE YOU START BUILDING A PAGE:**

<b>STEPS:</b>	<b>EXAMPLE / TIPS:</b>
Identify the purpose and audience for your page	<i>Teach undergraduates how to find a journal article</i>

Evaluate what your intended audience knows about the task you are trying to teach	<p><i>Do undergrads know:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>what a journal article is?</i></li> <li>• <i>what a journal is?</i></li> <li>• <i>what an article database is?</i></li> </ul>
Develop clear, concise instructions to explain the task given your audience's prior knowledge	<i>Try out your page on volunteers, evaluate similar instructional pages already on the web</i>
Sketch or lay out your web page before you build it	

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## **RESOURCES FOR CREATING WEB SITES**

Web pages can be created using very basic text editors, or more complex and powerful text-based or graphics-based editors. Hundreds of web-authoring software packages exist; some of these are freeware or shareware, others are available for purchase. Your selection of a tool will depend on the resources available to you (computer support, user training, funds), as well as your level of technical expertise and personal preferences. A brief listing of some of the more popular web-authoring tools is given below. See Smith (2001) and Hague (2000) for an overview of text versus graphics editors.

### **BASIC TEXT EDITORS:**

*Retail Cost (5/04)*

*Platform(s)*

**NotePad / WordPad  
(Windows)**

Comes with Windows

Windows

Simple text editors such as NotePad or WordPad can be an efficient choice for creating web pages, but require knowledge of HTML coding (see "Sites for Learning HTML" below). Tip: while browsing with Internet Explorer, right click the mouse, then select "View Source": the HTML code for that page will open in a NotePad file which may be saved and edited – this can be a great way to start learning HTML.

[More information](#)

**SimpleText / TextEdit (Mac)**Comes with Apple  
Macintosh

Mac

SimpleText (Mac OS 8 and later) and TextEdit (Mac OS X) are the text editors for the Apple Operating System. Search the web for tutorials on using this editor to create web pages.

**TEXT EDITORS:**Retail Cost  
(5/04)Educational  
Cost (5/04)Platform(s)**Arachnophilia 5.2**

FREE

FREE

Windows  
and Mac

A free HTML text editor. Features include: form generator with customizable toolbar (allows creation of forms with: pulldown menus, radio buttons, or checkboxes), ability to create macros and tables, an instant view for previewing pages, and an analyze feature to check for errors (Hague 2000, PC World Downloads).

[More information](#)

**BareBones Software  
BBEdit 7.1**

\$ 179.00

\$ 119.00

Mac

A general-purpose text editor for the Macintosh Operating System. Latest version includes many features geared toward web developers and programmers.

[More information](#)

**CoffeeCup HTML 9.6**

\$ 49.00

10% off 5 or  
more  
licenses

Windows

Well-reviewed and popular shareware text editor. Features include: split-screen viewing of HTML code and web page being created, dialog boxes to assist with web form creation, FTP wizard, and Quick Post for news items. Comes with templates and an image gallery (Hague 2000, PC World Downloads).

[More information](#)

<b>GRAPHICS EDITORS:</b>	<u>Retail Cost (5/04)</u>	<u>Educational Cost (5/04)</u>	<u>Platform(s)</u>
<b>Adobe GoLive CS</b>	\$ 399.00	\$ 79.00 (may vary)	Windows and Mac

A popular and powerful commercially available HTML editor. Features include: support for Cascading Style Sheets, improved integration with Adobe's powerful Photoshop graphics software, split-window display and ability to create pages in either graphics-mode or by entering HTML code directly, cross-browser validation, and many more (Hague 2000).

[More information](#)

<b>Macromedia Dreamweaver MX 2004</b>	\$ 399.00	\$ 99.00 (may vary)	Windows and Mac
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One of the most popular and powerful commercially available HTML editors. Features include: support for Cascading Style Sheets, build-in graphics editor, split-window display and ability to create pages in either graphics-mode or by entering HTML code directly, cross-browser validation and many more (Hague 2000).

[More information](#)

<b>Microsoft FrontPage</b>	\$ 199.00	\$ 99.00 (may vary)	Windows
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A commercially available HTML editor from Microsoft, FrontPage is not as powerful (or pricey) as GoLive and Dreamweaver, yet offers many desirable features. Features include: support for Cascading Style Sheets, split-window display, ability to view HTML code, and ability to create template files (Hague 2000, Parker 2004).

[More information](#)

### ***TO FIND ADDITIONAL HTML EDITORS:***

- [Yahoo Web Editors HTML Editors](#)
- [PC World](#): Search on "Web Authoring Software"

## ***SITES FOR LEARNING HTML:***

- [W3 Schools](#)
- [WebMonkey](#)

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## ***GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION PAGES:***

### ***PAGE LAYOUT:***

- Facilitates scanning & provides structural clues though use of: grouping, indenting, sub-headings, & bulleted text (Jones and Farquhar 1997, Nielson 1999).
- Purpose of page is evident from title or concise statement at top of page
- Includes option(s) for getting additional help (e.g., include link to email or “Ask A Reference Question” form)
- Appears properly in popular browsers, downloads quickly, meets ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility guidelines (see: [Bobby](#) for help with ADA issues)

### ***BACKGROUND, TEXT, LINKS:***

- Background does not interfere with ability to read text
- Text is an appropriate size, underlining is used for links only
- Emphasis is used carefully; capitalization, bold, italics, colors, etc., are not overused
- Links are clearly identified, labeled appropriately, used consistently

## **GRAPHICS & NAVIGATION:**

- Graphics add visual interest & make page layout easier to understand
- Page download times are not excessively long due to large graphic files
- Blinking, animated and other bothersome graphics are not used
- Navigation options are included, apparent, consistent, and easy to use
- Consider including: table of contents or overview, internal page links (anchors), and “back to top” links to make navigation easier

## **MORE WEB USABILITY GUIDELINES:**

- [Sitepoint](#)
- [Useit](#)

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## **REFERENCES & SUGGESTED READINGS:**

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