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Judge Your Website

Readers judge your Website in 1/20th of a second, according to recent research. That's less than half the time it takes to blink.

Where do readers look first?

- Readers of broadsheets (such as The New York Times) look at headlines first more than half the time, according to The Poynter Institute's EyeTrack07 study.
- Readers of tabloids (such as the New York Daily News) look at photos first more than three-quarters of the time.
- Online readers look at directional devices, such as navigational bars and teasers, first nearly half the time.

Make Web columns readable

- Web visitors read faster if Web columns are up to 10 inches wide, according to Usability.gov's survey of research on online column widths.
- Column widths that are too narrow -- say, 2.5 inches -- slow reading speed online.
- But users tend to prefer column widths of about four inches.
- What's a Web designer to do? Go with four inches, or about 35 characters per line. Readers prefer that width, and it's not narrow enough to significantly slow reading speed.

How are you making your site visually appealing to avoid turning readers off?

Sources:

"Web Sites Judged in a Blink," Editor & Publisher, Jan. 18, 2006

Bob Bailey, "Reading Onscreen: The Effects of Line Length on Performance," Usability Updates Newsletters, August 2006: <http://tinyurl.com/3drt2u>