UX Playbook for News and Content Sites

Collection of best practices to delight your users
News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel

After looking at several news sites, we realized that there were certain universal UX elements that helped create a frictionless shopping experience. This list aims to expand on the 25 Mobile UX Principles and provide a checklist for improving your mobile site experience across 6 key site areas:
# News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home / Landing page</th>
<th>Menu &amp; Navigation</th>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Category Pages</th>
<th>News Article Pages</th>
<th>Sign Up/ In &amp; Subscribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feature a single top story</td>
<td>Show consolidated menu</td>
<td>Include search</td>
<td>Display clear category title at the top</td>
<td>Add social share options</td>
<td>Enable social login</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include a selection of up-to-date news</td>
<td>Organize expanded menu by sections or categories</td>
<td>Make search visible &amp; prominent</td>
<td>Highlight top story related to the category</td>
<td>Link to related content</td>
<td>Consider One Tap Sign Up &amp; Sign In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make news easily scannable</td>
<td>Login/ register easily accessible (follow conventions)</td>
<td>Make search useful</td>
<td>Ensure links are easily identifiable</td>
<td>Optimize forms</td>
<td>Reduce number of fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize news by section or category</td>
<td>Consider adding categories to the main menu</td>
<td>Enable auto-complete</td>
<td>Add estimated reading time</td>
<td>Add in-line real-time validation</td>
<td>Enable auto-fill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Display additional CTAs below the fold</td>
<td>Consider secondary menu for less important content</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display ads non-intrusively</td>
<td>Add key areas to homepage for quick access</td>
<td>Display number of search results</td>
<td>Consider AMP technology for faster loading</td>
<td>Allow guest checkout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add social share options</td>
<td>Implement spelling correction</td>
<td>Always return search results</td>
<td>Consider combining AMP &amp; PWA</td>
<td>Simplify payments with Google Pay</td>
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</table>
All recommendations should be A/B tested!
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key suggestion</strong></td>
<td>Feature a single top story and remove automatic carousels</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Bounce rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional CTAs below the fold</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>CVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Display ads non-intrusively</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Bounce Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make news easily scannable</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Time on site, Page views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize news by section</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Time on site, Page views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feature a top story or breaking news (remove carousels)
Why to avoid carousels & sliders

Pros for heavy content websites:

- Multiple pieces of content within less space

Cons:

- Users often scroll past carousels (if you’re using a carousel hoping that your users will see a variety of content, there’s a high chance they’ll only see the first frame)
- Not all content can be equally “important”

Research:

- Conversion XL
- ClickZ
- Widerfunnel
- NN Group
- Erik Runyon
Include a selection of up-to-date news

- CNN: Pentagon: China likely training pilots to target US
  - China is pursuing nuclear capability on its long-range bombers, report says
  - CIA official: China wants to replace US as superpower
  - China’s new destroyers: ‘Power, prestige and majesty’
  - Hear US Navy plane warned off by Chinese military
  - China says hypersonic aircraft test a success

- Huffington Post: Spate of spies speak out: Trump ‘stifling speech’

- The Blaze: Petraeus, Clapper, other top officials slam Trump action vs. Brennan
  - Rand Paul talks Brennan’s security clearance, Russia trip
  - Joke’s on Brennan for failing to find humor in Trump’s remark, `Dilbert’ cartoonist says
  - Trump accuses Boston Globe of ‘COLLUSION’ with other papers as hundreds run editorials against him
  - Retired US commander stands with Brennan: `Revoke my clearance’ too
The format and story selection matter most

According to a study conducted by MeasuringU, the biggest drivers of the online news experience are the format of the articles and having a good selection of stories on the homepage.

Research:
- MeasuringU

Source: MeasuringU. Key drivers of the news website experience explaining 77% of SUPR-Q scores.
Make news easily scannable (eg. list view)

huffpost.com

bbc.com/news

theblaze.com
Choose the appropriate layout for the type of content you’re displaying. Text-heavy content tends to perform better with list view.

- **List View:** Attention decreases from top to bottom - More relevant / recent news should come first
- **Grid View:** Attention spread more evenly - best suited for visual content

**Research:**
- Fact-finder
- Nielsen Norman Group
Organize news by section or category

abcnews.go.com

nbcnews.com

telegraph.co.uk

'The are less safe' under Trump, former CIA chief says

Treasury inspector general probing possible leak of Cohen financial records

Cohen promised health care company access to Trump White House, exec says

One year since dismissal, Comey continues to spar with Trump

Republicans draw conflicting lessons from early primaries: ANALYSIS

Education

Cambridge University students demand lower burden of proof for sex crimes

Pupils caught drinking from plastic bottles will be treated like smokers behind bike sheds, leading headmaster says

London ranked best city in world for students

Crime

Trump sends earthquake through the Middle East

Alex Rossi
Display additional CTA(s) below the fold
Display ads non-intrusively (don’t interrupt experience)

theguardian.com
on indigenous people
Malaysia / Comeback PM Mahathir says Anwar Ibrahim will be given royal pardon
Australia / Seven people killed in deadliest shooting for 20 years
Dog shoots man / Iowa pet pulls trigger on owner

thewashingtonpost.com
Editors' Picks
Sartre’s Essays Celebrate Literature, Film Classics and Dance
In “Near-Death Experiences ... and Others,” his new collection, the esteemed editor weighs in on romance novels, Hollywood movies and — a longstanding love — ballet.
Book Review · 1h ago

huffpost.com
W.H. OFFICIAL MOCKS MCCAIN: ‘HE’S DYING ANYWAY!'
7 Killed In What May Be Australia’s Worst Mass Shooting Since 1996
Menu & Navigation
# News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key suggestion</strong></td>
<td>Show consolidated menu</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Page views / depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Login / register easily accessible</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Sign-up rate, returning visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add categories to main menu</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Page views / depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add secondary hidden menu</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>CTR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add key areas to homepage for quick access</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Page views, CTR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize expanded menu by sections or categories</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Page views / depth</td>
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</table>
Show consolidated menu (less than ⅕ of page)
Organize expanded menu by sections or categories
Login/ register easily accessible (follow conventions)
Consider adding categories to the main menu
Consider secondary menu for less important content
Add key areas to homepage for quick access

huffpost.com

refinery29.com

nytimes.com
Search
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% traffic w/ searches, CVR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include search</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>% traffic w/ searches, search depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make search visible</td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>% traffic w/ searches, search depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable auto-complete (history-based search suggestions)</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add search suggestions</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display number of search results</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement spelling correction</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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</table>
Make search visible & prominent (preferably at the top)
If search is an important function on your mobile site, it should be displayed prominently. The more content you have, the more prominently you want to display your search feature.

When search is hidden behind menus or icons:
- Makes the search feature less noticeable.
- Increases the “cost” of interaction. Users need to take an extra action in order to access the search.
- Placing your search bar somewhere unexpected means your users will need extra effort to find it.

Research:
Users look first towards the upper-right corner for search. If they don’t find the search box there, they start scanning the top of the page (F-shaped pattern).
- [Dawn Shaikh and Keisi Lenz](#)
- [Nielsen Norman Group (F-Shaped pattern)](#)

Source: Dawn Shaikh and Keisi Lenz research
Make search useful: Enable auto-complete
Make search useful: Search suggestions

washingtonpost.com

search results for "test"
Search instead for: "trent"

Advanced Search

Sydney Trent

ch ar test 098172
wpost · Brand studio · May 30, 2018

Scholfield returning to Tennessee after testing NBA draft
chase championships with his teammates. The forward
tested his NBA draft status without hiring an agent,
leaving
Associated Press · Sports · May 29, 2018

2nd powered test flight for Virgin Galactic
spaceship
Galactic has conducted the second rocket-powered test

search results for: search
Sort by Relevance
Restrict by Date Range

Entrepreneur

The Case for Berlin’s Claim as Europe’s Startup Capital

The German capital’s low cost of living and gritty brand attract entrepreneurs from across Germany and beyond.

JUST ADDED

MAGAZINE
Should Statutes of Limitations for Rape Be Abolished?
Make search useful: Display number of results

nytimes.com

nytimes.com Section: Football
Breaking news and multimedia about professional football, including the NFL, the New York Giants and the New York Jets. Coverage includes NFL teams and players, the NFL playoffs and the Super Bowl.

nytimes.com

Cnn.com

Displaying results 1-10 out of 12631 for test

Refinery29.com

Search

fashion

Refinery29

Find the latest fashion news, trends, beauty stories, and more at Refinery29. Click here to learn more.
Make search useful: Spelling correction

washingtonpost.com

Search displaying results for "marketing" instead of "markating"

cnn.com

Search displaying results for "markating" instead of "marketing"

entrepreneur.com

Search displaying results for "marketing" instead of "markating"
Make search useful: Always return results
Category Pages
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<td>Key suggestion</td>
<td>Display clear category title at the top</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Time on site, Bounce rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highlight top story related to the category</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Time on site, Bounce rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow user to switch easily between sub-categories</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Page views, CTR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Display clear category title at the top

- cnn.com
- abcnews.go.com
- nytimes.com
Highlight top story related to the category

- 'What did we do?' Families struggle with anxiety over chemicals in tap water
  (cnn.com)
- 'Queen of Soul' Aretha Franklin has died at 76
  (abcnews.go.com)
- Regional accents 'suppressed by voice assistants'
  (news.sky.com)
Allow user to switch easily between sub-categories

cnn.com

variety.com
News / Article Pages
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<td><strong>Key suggestion</strong></td>
<td>Add social share options</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>CTR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link to related content</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>CTR, Page views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make links easily identifiable</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>CTR, Page views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement AMP technology</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Bounce rate, time on site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider AMP &amp; PWA</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Bounce rate, time on site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add estimated reading time</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Time on site / page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easily switch between articles</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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Add social share options

abcnews.go.com

entrepreneur.com

news.sky.com
Make links easily identifiable (underline, color, …)

- huffpost.com
- cnn.com
- telegraph.co.uk

The Queen has undergone eye surgery to remove a cataract, wearing sunglasses in public rather than cancel her long-planned engagements.

The 92-year-old monarch underwent the successful procedure in May. Buckingham Palace confirmed on Friday afternoon.

In recent weeks, the Queen has been seen wearing sunglasses at a number of events including the Royal Windsor Horse Show and Buckingham Palace garden parties.

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Interior Page Behavior

For interior pages, users usually spend more time in the content area than in areas that are used for navigation.

RESEARCH: Nielsen Norman Group

Source: "Prioritizing Web Usability", Jakob Nielsen
Add estimated reading time

medium.com

Applause from Medium Staff and 214 others

Climate Desk
A journalistic collaboration dedicated to exploring the impact—human...

Aug 7, 2015 2 min read

A Gorgeous, Animated Model of Global Weather Patterns

by John Metcalf,
Bay Area bureau chief, CityLab

NOAA’s weatherView animates real-time wind and even shows city lights at night.

fastcompany.com

07.11.18 | 7:00 AM

Target has a secret app for superfans, and it looks like Instagram

The invite-only app lets members collaborate with Target designers—and see their ideas in stores.

[Source Photo: Milkos/iStock]

BY MARK WILSON

4 MINUTE READ

I’m looking at an app, and I could swear it’s Instagram. I see large square photos in an endless feed. It’s starting to make sense.

entrepreneur.com

READY FOR ANYTHING

To Transform Your Meetings From Pitiful to Productive Always Have an Agenda

Shawn Doyle 1 min read

LATEST

MOST RECENT START A BUSINESS INSPIRAT
How estimated reading time can increase engagement

- The average adult in the United States spends 5 hours and 16 minutes with digital media, and only part of this will be spent reading your content.

- When someone sees an interesting headline, knowing in advance that it only takes a couple of minutes to read, they’re more likely to engage.

Research:
- eMarketer
- MarketingLand
- New Yorker
Encourage to continue reading (switch between articles)

entrepreneur.com

7 Ways to Get Better at Working With Others

Clarity and kindness go a long way.

first visit as president

Big Narstie: People will be surprised Ed Sheeran can rap so well

Donald Tusk in Twitter spat with Donald Trump ahead of NATO summit

Sky Views: Questions unanswered over Trump's UK visit

"These brave men and women will carry out their roles in Kabul with all the pride and professionalism we have come to expect, helping to bring the stability and security that the Afghan people deserve."

Earlier this month, a leaked letter revealed US defence secretary James Mattis has expressed concern that Britain's status as a leading military power "is at risk of erosion" without a boost to UK defence spending.

Posted in: DONALD TRUMP, NATO, THERESA MAY

Sponsored Links

Recommended by Outbrain

news.sky.com

Siriano’s efforts to be inclusive separate him from other couture designers, but as he told the executive director of the Council of Fashion Designers of America Fern Mallis at a recent panel at the 92nd St Y, his personal mission and love for every single kind of woman has proven to be great for his brand. To the tune of: Dressing plus-size women has tripled—yep, tripled—his business. (Now is a good time to add that the plus-size fashion market is worth $21 billion.)

glamour.com

1 MONTH AGO

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Consider AMP technology for faster loading
Publishers are seeing great results with AMP

**RETENTION**
- **terra**
  - 3x more time spent on AMP pages

**AUDIENCE GROWTH**
- **GIZMODO**
  - 80% of AMP traffic is new

**RETENTION**
- **The Washington Post**
  - +23%

**ENGAGEMENT**
- **TIME**
  - 13% increase in time spent on site
Consider combining technologies like AMP & PWA

1. **AMP** loads instantly, and silently installs Service Worker to “warm up” **PWA**

2. Once user navigates from AMP, content loads instantly
Advantages of PWA for Publishers

Add to Homescreen
Worthy of being on the home screen

Performance offline
Work reliably, no matter the network conditions

Push Notifications
Increased engagement, improved conversions
Sign Up / Sign In & Subscribe
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<td>High</td>
<td>CVR</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enable social login</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>CTR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce number of fields</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Form completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-line real time validation</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Form completion</td>
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<td>Enable auto-fill</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Form completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make premium option visible</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>CVR, CTR</td>
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Enable social login

abcnews.go.com

telegraph.co.uk

nytimes.com
One Tap Sign Up & Sign In

- Streamlined conversion UX - no typing
- Enable instant personalization on load
- Passwordless account security
- Supported on all major browsers
Optimize forms: Reduce number of fields

- nytimes.com
  - Create Your Account
  - Email Address
  - Create Password
  - By creating an account, you agree to the Terms of Service and acknowledge our Privacy Policy.
  - Sign Up

- telegraph.co.uk
  - The Telegraph Register
  - First name
  - Last name
  - I would like to receive by email offers, promotions and services from Telegraph Media Group Ltd and its group companies
  - Skip this for now or do it later in My Account
  - Complete

- vanityfair.com
  - CREATE AN ACCOUNT
  - E MAIL
  - PASSWORD
  - Sign Up
  - Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our User Agreement and Privacy Policy
Optimize forms: Inline real-time validation
Optimize forms: Enable auto-fill

- BBC: Email - okay
- ABC News: Password - okay
Subscribe: Make it clear if there's a premium option
Guest checkout (no account required)

washingtonpost.com

economist.com

theguardian.com
Simplify payments with Google Pay

Directly on product page

At guest checkout

At payment

Have a profile?
Sign in to enjoy faster easier checkout

Email address

Password

Forgot Your Password?
Don’t have an account? Create one

Checkout

No profile?

Checkout as a guest

Buy with Google Pay

FANCY
1 item in cart

Scamarker Air Digital Highlighter
$100
Sold by Fancy Merchant
Remove

Payment method

Buy with Google Pay

Express Checkout

Pay with Bitcoin

Subtotal $100.00

Buy with Google Pay
Simplify payments with Google Pay API

- Guest checkout
- Leverages autofill
- Eliminates forms
- One tap to check out

[Introducing the Payment Request API](#)
[Deep dive](#)
[UX Considerations](#)
Thank You