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

Sources:

1. "Web Sites Judged in a Blink," Editor & Publisher, Jan. 18, 2006
2. Bob Bailey, "Reading Onscreen: The Effects of Line Length on Performance," Usability Updates Newsletters, August 2006: <http://tinyurl.com/3drt2u>