Navigation

Today's to-do list
Today we are going to look at site navigation. How to edit it, tools to manage it and what it means for UX and SEO.

Navigation is really important, firstly for our viewers to find their way around our sites and find the products and information they need and secondly for our SEO. We have touched on navigation a few times during your sessions but today we are going to look at it in more detail.

Learning objectives:
By the end of this session, you will
Learn how to create a user friendly site navigation
Understand the various options
Identify what changes can be made to help the SEO of our site.

Navigation for UX
Navigation is an essential factor in how easily visitors can find their way around our sites. Find the information they came looking for and find the products they want to buy. User Experience is key. If people struggle to find what they are looking for then they will leave and go off in search of it somewhere else. That of course doesn't just impact us in lost sales and enquiries, but Google will notice it and that bounce rate we mentioned in early sessions will be more significant.

There are multiple things to consider, as with all things in our website world. **What are people looking for and why, how do we want them to move around our site, how are they looking for information, do they know what they want or are they browsing? If you have a large catalogue of products do people need to search? How does your navigation work on mobile as well as a desktop view?**

We don't want to run the risk of viewers getting completely lost on our site. We might want to direct viewers around in a particular journey. We can make sure they visit pages in a chosen order, fill out certain pieces of information and do the things we want them to do.

Think about how the navigation looks to the viewer, is it obvious how to move around and find the links? We have got used to a certain structure with websites. Navigation is normally along the top, a secondary navigation in the footer and the 'burger bar' for the side navigation on mobile. We don't want to try anything too complicated and deviate too much from what people are used to. Don't over think it.

If we plan, we can be clever with how we move people around. We don't have to show everyone everything all the time. We can use core sections/pages to send people to landing pages with their own navigation. It keeps your pages simple, reduces your load time and only shows people the stuff they actually need to see.

People search for information in different ways. Especially on e-commerce sites, viewers can be coming from multiple different angles.

The 'Ready to Buy' – **they know exactly what they want and need to get to it easily** without drilling down through several pages.

The 'Just Browsing' – **they have fallen on you by search or from an ad** and are happy to just wander through your store like they would in a high street shop. You want to show them everything and how to get to it.

The 'Just Curious' – they know of you, but not a lot about you. They know what you sell but not a lot about the individual products so their search might be based on product lines rather than design collections.

We need to make sure that who ever we are attracting, they can all fond what they need when they need it. That's why most websites, especially shops will have multiple navigation styles available to the user. It could be a standard navigation and a search or a standard navigation a set of landing pages.

Navigation types
There are common forms that most websites use and that our visitors recognise. There are more ways to navigate around a website than you might think.

Horizontal navigation.
This is a navigation that sits at the top of our website. As the name of this navigation link style suggests, these links are listed horizontally. It's probably one of the most common types of navigation and the style we recognise the most. It's clean and efficient but it doesn't always work if you have an excessive number of links to include.

Vertical navigation.
Not as common anymore but is quite often seen on e-commerce as an additional product menu. **The navigation sits on the left-hand side of the screen and is generally fixed so that the menu stays in position as the page scrolls.**

Sidebar navigation.
An alternative option is the sidebar navigation, where **users can find links listed vertically on the side of a website. This is often the kind of navigation you will see in articles and blogs.** Used as an additional form of menu and will be specific to the content in that page or section.

Hamburger menu navigation.
Recognised as the standard mobile navigation these days, the classic "hamburger menu" has three horizontal lines in place of the normal menu. When users click on the hamburger icon, they can expand a navigation menu that presents them with all the navigation links they need. It's a compact way to include more navigation links than would otherwise fit, it also allows for a separate mobile menu.

Footer navigation.
A really useful tool for navigation. **The footer navigation can be either an extended copy of your main navigation or a secondary menu so you can list all your site pages without having to worry about those links obstructing the average user experience when viewing your homepage.** Often used in e-commerce sites where you want the main navigation to be the products or services without it being diluted with other pages. The footer menu would then provide links to policies, delivery information and other useful stuff that your viewers need but not necessarily in the main menu.

Dropdown menu navigation.
Perfect when you have dozens of links to include but you want to keep the top-level menu simple. This is where our sub-pages and categories come in. It's another way to make your navigation more compact without sacrificing the number of navigation links you want to include.

Mega Menu
If you have a huge amount of content on your site or a large amount of products then a Mega Menu could be more appropriate. On the surface, the navigation will show a simple row of basic pages or

categories. When the user hovers over the link instead of being sent away to a page they are given all the options in one large dropdown menu. Mega Menus also allow you to add additional elements. The Mega Menu can be created for individual sections and not the navigation as a whole. They are far more flexible than the default navigation.

Table of Contents.

A favourite in blogs and longer articles where you want your reader to be able to scroll backwards and forwards through the text, maybe navigate directly to a particular section of text. Good for UX because viewers can find the content they want quickly, and good for SEO because it helps increase dwell time. Viewers are encouraged to move around the page by using the anchor links which in turn is classed as an event by Google so reducing your bounce rate. Content structure is easier to understand and index for crawlers.

Visual navigations

Not a formal classification so much as a useful tool. We have looked at signposting when we created our contact pages. A visual navigation can help direct people around your site in a less formal way. A menu is great when people know what they are looking for, if they don't, they might need a little more assistance. Show them examples, and illustrate what they might be looking for.
You can also create dynamic menus that are driven by the users choices. Depending on the page they are on that mini navigation will be different and only appropriate to that content that they are reading at that moment.

Text Anchors

Text Anchors are used a lot on pages with a lot of content. **If you have a single page site, you still need viewers to be able to move around the page and go directly to sections to see the content without having to scroll up and down the page.** The Anchor tag is set in the element on the page. The tag is added to the menu as a custom link so when the viewer clicks on it, the page will scroll to the selected location on the page, rather than redirect away to a different page in the site.

Breadcrumbs

We mentioned these in earlier sessions. **A Breadcrumb navigation is a line of text links that show the user the path to the page that they are currently viewing. Named after the children's story Hansel and Gretel, it's all about being able to retrace your steps.** They show the context of the page compared to other more important pages in the website's hierarchy. Great for large sites full of information and e-commerce sites with a lot of categories. Also great for SEO, Google bots love a good breadcrumb! They help search engines understand the structure of the site and the context of the pages.

A word on Mobile Menus

Nearly all website themes are responsive these days so it removes the need for a mobile site and a desktop site. **When we are doing our site testing it is always an essential to test the navigation works on mobile devices.** Your theme will dictate how the mobile menu works, occasionally you get a theme that doesn't show the mobile navigation how you would like or you want extra goodies and functions that the responsive menu doesn't offer. **If you want more flexibility to your mobile menu then plugins like WP Mobile Menu and Responsive Menu are great choices.** It's worth remembering, especially on e-commerce sites a large number of your viewers will be looking at your site on a mobile device. You need to make sure that the elements are not too small that they become unreadable or hard to click on. A site with a poor mobile menu will have a higher bounce rate and a higher frustration level than once where the mobile view has been planned well and not just an afterthought.

Activity one - Let's tidy up those navigations.

By default, your navigation is set to add every page to your menu so there may be stuff in there you don't want, need to rename or you might want to add in posts and product categories. Let's log in together and take a look at how to manage the default menu.

[demo the navigation, how to show elements, add posts and custom links etc.]

45 mins

Navigation for SEO

A good navigation, the right use of page titles and useful elements like breadcrumbs can make our website easier to crawl and understand, not just for our viewers but for search engine bots. Search engines use your website navigation to discover and index new pages. The links in your navigation help search engines understand the content and context of our page, as well as the relationships between them.

If we are looking for information in a book, we would use the table of contents or the index to find what we want. If you go to the supermarket the aisles are labelled with general section categories and more subcategories are listed on the shelves themselves.

We can use similar ideas in our pages to offer viewers and bots an efficient way to navigate through a lot of content. We can use hierarchies to simplify the process of locating that content. When a massive amount of content exists, it can be broken down into a few broad categories with subcategories. This helps make sense of the page structure in a way that makes sense to the bot's crawling it. When we use this structure we can tell our viewers and the bots which pages are the most important - our main categories and which pages work with them - our subcategories.

Like this example, the most important links in our top-level navigation are our main pages. Underneath them are our additional pages, they are still about the same topic but they are supporting pages, galleries or products. Without proper structure, Google may treat every page of your website as having equal importance, which probably isn't the case.

When we think about our navigation and how it's going to affect our SEO we need to think about titles. How you name your pages and navigation links can also influence your SEO results. This is an opportunity to include target keywords for the pages. Remember our H Tags? H1 is the most important and by default, our page titles are our H1. Our page titles form the basis of the navigation links so we need to consider them with care.

We don't want something that is epically long, it's not going to fit in the menu space properly. We want something short, sweet and to the point.

Landing pages as a visual navigation can be very helpful for SEO. Mainly used in e-commerce, they allow you to create a dedicated page for a product type or brand. Like this page from Bambers. We looked at it in our WooCommerce session. It's all about their Bernina sewing machines. The landing page is a multi-purpose page. It navigates users to sections and products that they might not know much about, it lends context to our page order and it offers us the chance to add keywords just for the Bernina brand as a whole that we don't have in the product pages.

Activity two

Let's create a visual navigation with a landing page. Think about the pages and posts in your site and how they break down into categories. Create a page in your site and using whichever builder you prefer, create a visual navigation that directs the viewer to the particular sections. Think about the wording and how you will describe the pages to your viewers so they know what to expect. Remember this kind of page is there not just for SEO purposes but to help the viewer understand the pages/products/services on your site.

60 minutes

Navigation for e-commerce
We have already seen examples of good navigation for e-commerce sites. Using multiple navigation types to find our way around the products and categories. Using landing pages for extra information and SEO. **Sidebar menus and filters are also a good way of helping our customers narrow down the products they want to see.** Think about Amazon and eBay with those huge vertical navigations. They have filters to allow you to select brands, prices and colours.

By adding additional navigation elements into category sidebars you can be specific to each range and list elements that are appropriate to just those products. Sidebars can be set individually and don't have to be site-wide so you can add other functions like links to blogs, FAQs, text and offers.

Most e-commerce themes allow you to include filters so your customers can narrow down the products shown on the page to just the choices that interest them.

Activity three
Let's add one more type of navigation to our site. Depending on the theme you are running some options might not be available to you. But think about the options you do have, you can add Anchor links to content pages, a footer menu for your privacy policy page and your contact us page. You might want to experiment with the widgets in your sidebar and create category or subject-based navigations.
30-40 mins

Coming up soon to extend these skills
Next week you will be starting on SEO and the knowledge you have gained today will help optimise your pages better.

Don't forget
Make sure you complete today's task. Links to download a copy of today's notes and slides are at the bottom of today's session page.

Today's session page in your learner dashboard has a useful links document that will cover all the tools, resources and articles we have discussed in the session and some useful guides and articles to take you further.

Make sure you revisit your FABs and set yourself some goals specific to today's session.

Extra help
If you need any help with anything from today's session feel free to message me in the WhatsApp group. If you have any other issues or problems related to the course or the tools speak to Andrew and Irfana, they are here to help you.

Up next
See you tomorrow for content creation.