


## Navigating Web Pages

by Jane Daugherty

If you're using the internet on a regular basis, you've visited many, many different webpages.

(I'm going to use *webpages* and *websites* somewhat interchangeably here, but they are different animals: each individual website can be made up of a group of webpages that are all about the same topic or that are meant to inform each other. A good example is the library's website--[thomasbnortonlibrary.com](http://thomasbnortonlibrary.com), which is made up of different webpages to help you with specific tasks, like our resources page --[thomasbnortonlibrary.com/resources/](http://thomasbnortonlibrary.com/resources/).)

Like everything else on the internet, websites have evolved to have some similar features. A major facet to look for is the upside-down L structure (like this ). This has become one of the most commonly used formats across the web. Websites that use this format usually have navigation options across the top of the page and another menu or set of navigation options running down the left side of the page. Sometimes these options mirror one another, and sometimes they change depending on the particular webpage or part of the website you're visiting.

When we talk about *navigation options*, we're usually talking about hyperlinked words on individual webpages that are meant to help you better find the information you're looking for on a particular webpage. These can include an array of language, but they represent the broader categories of information that you would seek on any website. If you're looking for information about a business on the business's website, some of these options might include *Hours* or *Directions*. For a restaurant, one of these navigation options might be the *Menu*.

*Hyperlinked text* is text, or a word or words, that has a link to another webpage built into it. (*Link* is short for *hyperlink*.) Sometimes these words are a different color than the rest of the text on the page, or they're underlined. Sometimes this text is prominently displayed. Almost always, if you're trying to locate or use a link, when you move your mouse over the hyperlinked text, your pointer will transform-- most often into a little picture of a hand. This hand is an indicator that what you're pointing at is different from the surrounding information, and you might want to pay attention to it.

If you think that an area of a webpage should be a link, and you repeatedly click on it with no response, check to see if your pointer has transformed. Move the pointer around the area where the link is supposed to be. Sometimes websites add hyperlinks to pictures, or to little digital pictures that are meant to look like buttons. Most of the time the entire area that you indicate within one of these kinds of pictures is hyperlinked, but sometimes (like all technology) these don't work exactly the way they're supposed to. Pay attention to your pointer when using hyperlinks. Also, examine the webpage for more information about the link you're trying to use.

The best way to efficiently navigate websites is to learn where to look for important information and how to filter out less important information. Most often, the primary content of the page will be in the center, beneath and/or beside your menu options. It's often easy to get sidetracked by ads on webpages (which is what they're meant to do). If you practice finding those upside-down L shaped navigation menus and stick to the information in the middle of your screen, you'll be able to interpret nearly all websites successfully.