The Top Ten Things Websites Do That Drive Me Crazy

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Now that the year is winding down, I thought I'd settle in for a bit of griping. :-) Here's my top ten list (in no particular order) of things that make me leave a webpage and (mostly) never come back.

1. **Audio/video that automatically starts playing on page load.**

    Please, please, PLEASE let me be the one to decide if and when I want to play audio and video. Sometimes I'm viewing pages while at locations where noise is unwelcome, like a library. Sometimes I'm viewing pages where streaming video is discouraged, like at work. Sometimes I load multiple pages, and having two or three of them start blaring out of my speakers simultaneously isn't enjoyable. Sometimes I'm watching TV or a movie on my PC, and surfing the web on the side, and don't appreciate webpage audio intruding on my show.

2. **Menus that expand on mouseover instead of when clicked.**

    "Mouseover" means that the action (in this case, a menu expanding) happens when the cursor moves over the menu selection.

    This happens to me a lot more than it should. I try to move the pointer over to click something on a page, but there's a menu bar between my cursor position and where I want it to be. So, when the pointer moves over the menu on the way to its destination, the menu pops down, or up, or over, and covers up the spot on the page I was heading for. Then I have to move the pointer somewhere else until the menu goes away and carefully move it back, making sure I don't move over anything else that's going to drop a menu down. Designers, if you're going to have menus expand on mouseover, make sure the menu doesn't cover up other clickable elements on the page.

3. **Popovers.**

    It used to be ads, but more and more it's surveys, subscription info, or "would you like to chat with a live agent?" And sometimes it's even "are you sure you want to leave our page?" In almost every instance, the popover takes my attention away from what I'm trying to do and puts it on what the folks behind the webpage want me to do. I've also been on pages where I go to click on something, but right before I do a popover appears and I wind up clicking in the popover instead of on what I wanted to click. When that happens, I immediately leave that site and try to remember to never return.

4. **Popunders.**

I'm visiting a website, and when I'm done I close the browser and...well look at that, the site slyly opened another instance of the browser under the one I was using. "Hi!" it says. "Bye forever," I reply.

5. **Option boxes that don't come close to giving me the option I want.**

These are usually popovers, but however they are presented, they give me one or more options to select before I can do anything else on the website. Most annoying are the ones that don't really give me any option at all, like "Enter your email address" with only a Continue button. If I don't want to give them my email address, my only choice is to leave their website -- so I do.

Not as evil but perhaps more annoying are the sites that give you multiple options, but not the option you want. There's a game I've played that will occasionally pop up a screen that advertises one of their other games with a question along the lines of "Do you want to try this game?" The options are "Yes" and "Maybe Later". It annoys me that there's not a "No, and don't ever bother me about this again" option, because that's my true response. Therefore, I think poorly of this company and their games, and don't recommend them to others.

6. **Designing for page clicks.**

The most infamous example of this is the slideshow, followed closely by breaking a single article into multiple pages. But I've also noticed that a local newspaper takes interviews and breaks them up into multiple separate "articles", with just one or two Q&As in each. And lately I've been seeing sites create new headlines to the same old content to get you to click to it again and again. When you see designs like this, you have confirmation that the people behind the webpage see you as nothing more than a click generator for them.

Aaaaaand...I just discovered another annoying web page design in this category -- sites that create "snippet" pages that you have to click through to get to the full content. What happens is that you use a search engine to find something you want to read, click the link, and instead of going to the actual article, you find yourself on a page that just has the first couple of sentences, and then you have to click again to get the whole thing.

7. **Stealth additions to the browsing history.**

Sometimes I'll visit a webpage, and I'll spend all my time on just that one page. Then I'll click the back button to return to the previous page I was on. Surprise! I don't go anywhere. That's when I check my browser history and see that the page I'm on is listed two, three -- up to a dozen times or more. Nice trick. I won't be back.

8. **Pages that keep resizing.**

So I go to a page and I'm reading content, then all of a sudden everything shifts down. Why? Because the webpage loaded an ad somewhere near the top of the page. Ok, fine, I readjust and keep reading. Then the page closes the ad and everything shifts back up. Now it's annoying. Then another ad loads, and everything shifts down again. Buh-bye.

9. **Sites that don't say up front what their password requirements are.**

Wow, I like your site, I like what you're providing, I want to sign up! So I enter my information, make up a password, re-enter the password, click OK, and..."Password must contain at least one number". Aargh. So I create a password that includes a number, click OK, and..."Password must contain a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters". Why in the name of all that's user friendly won't you tell me your password requirements BEFORE I try creating a password? In the span of one minute I've gone from "I like you" to "bite me".

10. **Functionality that doesn't work in whatever browser I'm using.**

As long as I keep my browsers up-to-date (and I currently use four different ones), it shouldn't matter which one I'm using when I visit a site (at least for the major browsers). But still, occasionally I'll come across a website where a form or some other bit of functionality won't work -- unless I use a specific browser. Congratulations, what an awesome way to alienate many visitors to your site.

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