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Breadcrumbs In Web Design: Examples And Best Practices

By Jacob Gube, March 17th, 2009 in [Design Showcase](#) | [130 Comments](#) | [Forum](#)

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By Jacob Gube

On websites that have a lot of pages, **breadcrumb navigation** can greatly enhance the way users find their way around. In terms of usability, breadcrumbs reduce the number of actions a website visitor needs to take in order to get to a higher-level page, and they improve the **findability** of website sections and pages. They are also an effective visual aid that indicates the location of the user within the website's hierarchy, making it a great source of contextual information for landing pages.

What is a breadcrumb?

A "breadcrumb" (or "breadcrumb trail") is a type of **secondary navigation scheme** that reveals the user's location in a website or Web application. The term comes from the **Hansel and Gretel** fairy tale in which the two title children drop breadcrumbs to form a trail back to their home. Just like in the tale, breadcrumbs in real-world applications offer users a way to trace the path back to their original landing point.



Breadcrumbs on [Delicious.com](#)

You can usually find breadcrumbs in websites that have a large amount of content organized in a hierarchical manner. You also see them in Web applications that have more than one step, where they function similar to a progress bar. In their simplest form, breadcrumbs are horizontally arranged text links separated by the "greater than" symbol (>); the symbol indicates the level of that page relative to the page links beside it.

In this article, we'll explore the use of breadcrumbs on websites and discuss some best practices for applying breadcrumb trails to your own website.

When Should You Use Breadcrumbs?

Use breadcrumb navigation for large websites and websites that have hierarchically arranged pages. An excellent scenario is e-commerce websites, in which a large variety of products is grouped into logical categories.

You **shouldn't** use breadcrumbs for single-level websites that have no logical hierarchy or grouping. A great way to determine if a website would benefit from breadcrumb navigation is to construct a **site map** or a diagram representing the website's navigation architecture, and then analyze whether breadcrumbs would improve the user's ability to navigate within and between categories.

Breadcrumb navigation should be regarded as an extra feature and shouldn't replace effective primary navigation menus. It's a convenience feature; a **secondary navigation scheme** that allows users to establish where they are; and an alternative way to navigate around your website.

Types of Breadcrumbs

There are three main **types of breadcrumbs**.

Location-based

Location-based breadcrumbs show the user where they are in the website's hierarchy. They are

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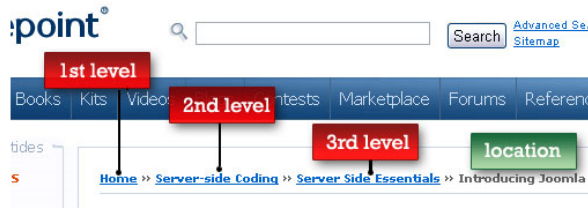
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typically used for navigation schemes that have multiple levels (usually more than two levels). In the example below (from [SitePoint](#)), each text link is for a page that is one level higher than the one on its right.



Attribute-based

Attribute-based breadcrumb trails display the attributes of a particular page. For example, in [Newegg](#), breadcrumb trails show the attributes of the items displayed on a particular page:



This page displays all computer cases that have the attributes of being manufactured by *Lian Li* and having a *MicroATX Mini Tower* form factor.

Path-based

Path-based breadcrumb trails show users the steps they've taken to arrive at a particular page. Path-based breadcrumbs are dynamic in that they display the pages the user has visited before arriving on the current page.

Benefits of Using Breadcrumbs

Here are just some of the benefits of using a breadcrumb trail.

Convenient for users

Breadcrumbs are used primarily to give users a secondary means of navigating a website. By offering a breadcrumb trail for all pages on a large multi-level website, users can navigate to higher-level categories more easily.

Reduces clicks or actions to return to higher-level pages

Instead of using the browser's "Back" button or the website's primary navigation to return to a higher-level page, users can now use the breadcrumbs with a fewer number of clicks.

Doesn't usually hog screen space

Because they're typically horizontally oriented and plainly styled, breadcrumb trails don't take up a lot of space on the page. The benefit is that they have little to no negative impact in terms of content overload, and they outweigh any negatives if used properly.

Reduces bounce rates

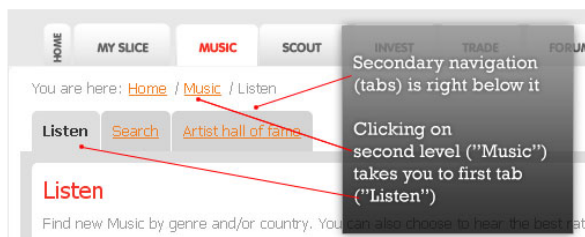
Breadcrumb trails can be a great way to entice first-time visitors to peruse a website after having viewed the landing page. For example, say a user arrives on a page through a Google search, seeing a breadcrumb trail may tempt that user to click to higher-level pages to view related topics of interests. This, in turn, reduces the overall [website bounce rate](#).

Mistakes in Breadcrumb Trail Implementation

Using breadcrumb trails is a fairly straightforward affair, and there are only a few guidelines to consider before deciding to implement them on a website. Let's take a look at some common mistakes to avoid.

Using breadcrumbs when you don't need to

A common mistake in implementing breadcrumbs is using them when there is no benefit.



In the above example, [Slicethepie](#) risks overwhelming users with too many navigation options. The (1) primary navigation, (2) breadcrumb trail and (3) secondary navigation are very close together. The breadcrumb trail in this application offers users no added convenience because the secondary navigation for lower-level pages sits right below it. Additionally, clicking on the second-level link in the breadcrumb trail ("Music") takes you back to the first tab ("Listen"), which mistakenly suggests that the first tab is on a higher level than the other two ("Search" and "Artist hall of fame").

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Using breadcrumb trails as primary navigation

As stated earlier, use breadcrumbs as an optional aid to navigation.

[Watch Video from Around the Web](#)

[Video](#) > [TV](#) > [Talk & Late Night](#) > [Late Night With Jimmy Fallon](#)



In the above example, [mefeedia](#) does not offer a primary navigation menu for viewing videos. Though there is text link navigation in the footer section, there's no navigation menu in the body of the pages, making it hard to navigate to other sections of the website.

[Home](#) > [Tv](#) > [Talk & Late Night](#) > [Late Night With Jimmy Fallon](#)

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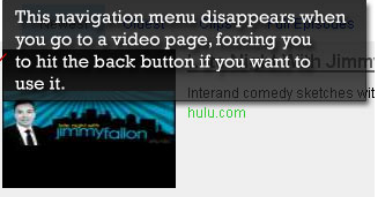
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Fri, Feb 27, 2009 (Clip)
Last official webisode! Jimmy sits c producer Lorne Michaels.



Thu, Feb 26, 2009 (Clip) (Cl
With just one webisode left to go, Ji webisode moments.

If you arrive on a video page directly — say, for example, through a Google search result — the only navigation option you may have is the breadcrumb trail. Or if you've already been browsing a website's pages and reach a page that does not display the primary navigation menu, you will have to hit the "Back" button in your browser to access the main menu.

Using breadcrumbs when pages have multiple categories

Breadcrumb trails have a linear structure, so using them will be difficult if your pages can't be classified into neat categories. Deciding whether to use breadcrumbs largely depends on how you've designed your website hierarchy. When a lower-level page is (or can be put) in more than one parent category, breadcrumb trails are ineffective, inaccurate and confusing to the user.

Breadcrumb Navigation Design Considerations

When designing a breadcrumb navigation scheme, keep several things in mind. Let's take a look at some questions that might arise when you're working with breadcrumbs.

What should be used to separate link items?

The commonly accepted and most recognizable symbol for separating hyperlinks in breadcrumb trails is the "greater than" symbol (>). Typically, the > sign is used to denote hierarchy, as in the format of *Parent category > Child category*.



Web Search Help

[Google](#) > [Google Help](#) > [Web Search Help](#) > [Google search basics](#) > Basic Search Help

Other symbols used are arrows pointing to the right, right angle quotation marks (») and slashes (/).



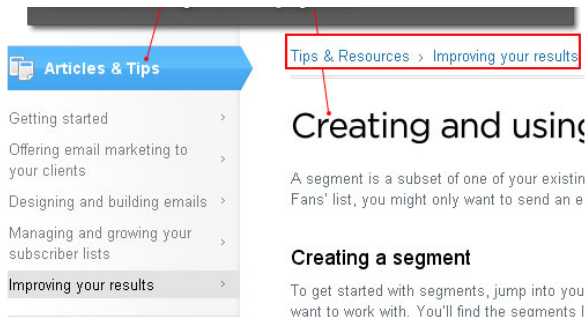
The choice depends on the aesthetics of the website and the type of breadcrumb used. For example, for path-based breadcrumbs in which the links do not necessarily have a hierarchical relationship to each other, using a "greater than" symbol may not convey their relationship accurately.

How big should it be?

You don't want your breadcrumbs to dominate the page. A breadcrumb trail functions merely as an aid to users (a convenience); its size should convey this to users and thus should at least be smaller, or less prominent, than the primary navigation menu.

breadcrumb doesn't dominate page, doesn't distract away from main navigation and page title

Forums
Fractals
Gadgets 1, 2, 3
Google AdSense
Google PageRank
Graffiti
Graphics Design
Grid-Based Design 1, 2
Grunge Design 1, 2
Hand-Drawing Style 1, 2
Handwriting and Lettering
Hotkeys
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Illustrator Tutorials 1, 2
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jQuery
Laptop Sleeves
Laptop Designs
Link Building
Links in New Windows?
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Mascots
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Music Videos
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Newspaper Designs
Online Converters
Online Generators
Packaging Design
Pagination
PDF Magazines
Photoshop Actions
Photoshop Tutorials 1, 2
Pixel Art
Podcasts
PNG Transparency
Portfolios
Pricing Tables
Product Designs
Rain Photography
RSS Best Design Practices
RSS Feed Icons
Screenrecasting
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Shopping Carts
Short Movies
Slideshows & Lightboxes
Smoke Photography
Source Code Editors
Splash Pages
Start Pages
Stock Icons
Space, Nebula wallpapers
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A good rule of thumb to follow when sizing your breadcrumb trail is that it **shouldn't** be the first item that grabs the user's attention when arriving on a page.

Where should breadcrumbs be located?

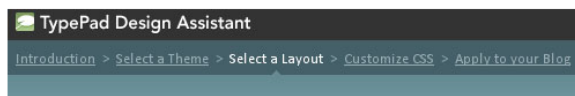
Breadcrumb trails are usually displayed in the top half of the page, below the primary navigation menu if a horizontal menu layout is used.

Breadcrumb Showcase

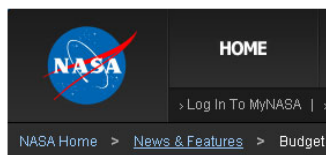
Now that we've discussed the who, what, when, where, why and hows of breadcrumb trails, we should take a look at some live examples. In the following section, you'll find a few examples of great websites that use breadcrumb trails.

1. Classic Text-Based Breadcrumbs

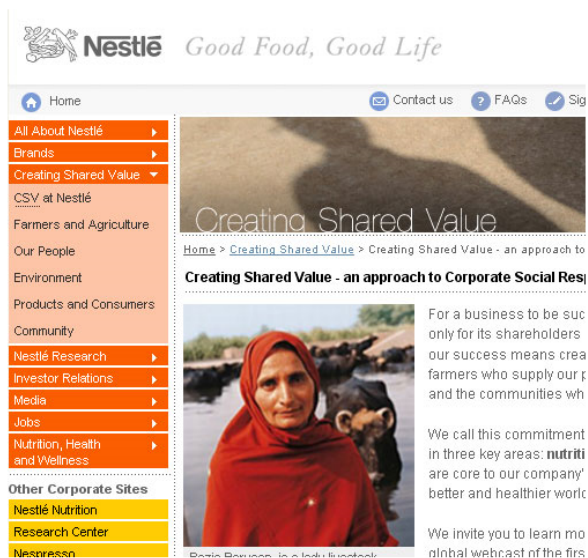
TypePad Design Assistant



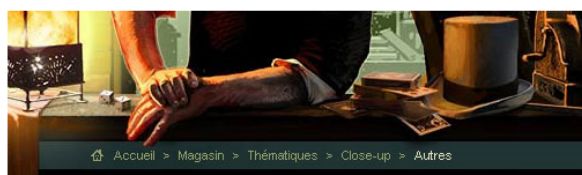
NASA



Nestle uses a breadcrumb trail whose text is significantly smaller than the text on the rest of the page, effectively making it unobtrusive.



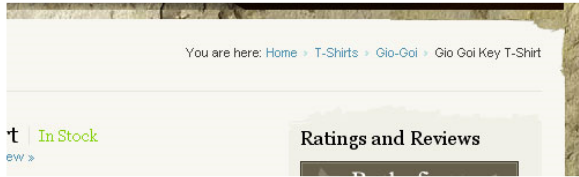
Marchand de Trucs



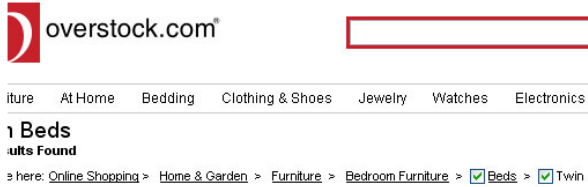
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Wordpress Themes 1, 2, 3, 4
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Bridge 55



[Overstock.com](#) uses the standard “greater than” symbol for its attribute-based breadcrumb trail. Checkboxes for product attributes are used so that users can uncheck them to filter them out.

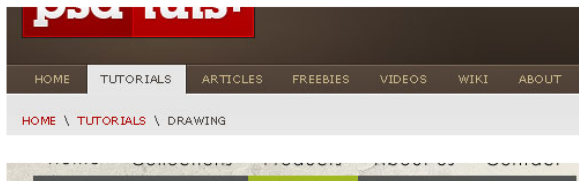


2. Replacing “>” with Other Symbols

[TechRadar UK](#) and [BP](#) use right-pointing triangles.



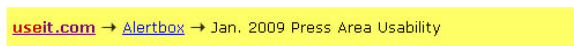
[PSDTUTS](#) and [Martique](#) use slashes.



[Mouse to Minx](#) uses a right-angled quotation mark to denote page hierarchy.



[Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox](#) uses right-pointing arrows.



[Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox](#), January 20, 2009:

[Target](#) uses semi-colons (;) for separators.



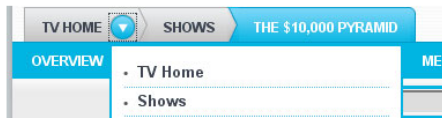
3. Beyond Simple Text Links

One current trend in breadcrumb design basically says, "Breadcrumbs don't have to be simple". In these designs, you'll see beautifully styled breadcrumbs that integrate well with the overall design.

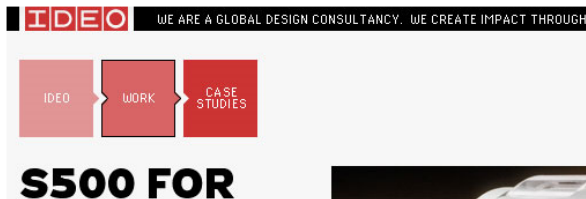
Grooveshark



Yahoo! TV



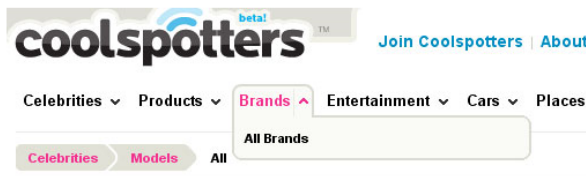
IDEO



Apple Store



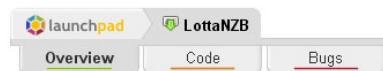
Coolspotters



Devlounge



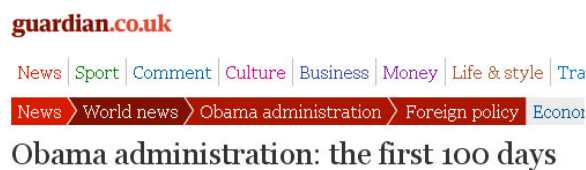
LottaNZB



Pixelpoodle



guardian.co.uk



4. Breadcrumbs for Multi-Step Processes

[Statement Tracker](#) uses a breadcrumb trail to indicate the steps involved in registering for an account, as well as a progress indicator.

Register for a new account

1 Register → 2 Select → 3 Confir

Enter private plan code:

[Flickr](#) uses a breadcrumb trail to indicate the number of sections in the Flickr tour.

flickr®

1 What is Flickr 2 Upload 3 Edit 4 Organize

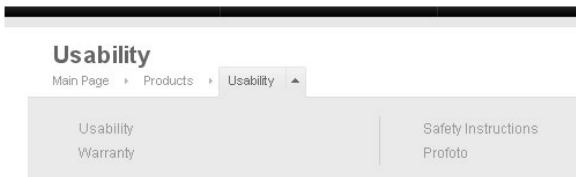
5. Breadcrumbs with Sub-Navigation

Here are some examples of breadcrumb trails whose links, when clicked on or hovered over, open a sub-navigation panel that lists additional attributes or locations.

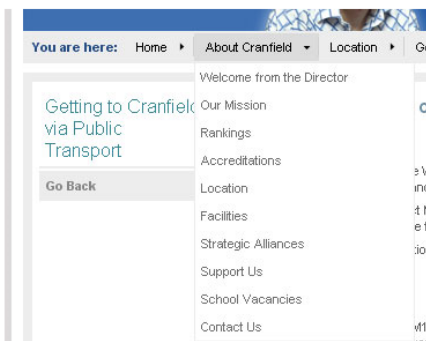
[MarketWatch](#) has a fly-out sub-navigation menu that appears when you hover over a breadcrumb link.



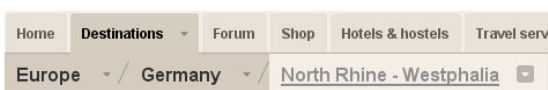
[Profoto](#) has a unique breadcrumb trail: clicking on a breadcrumb link opens an area below it that gives users additional attributes to select from.



[Cranfield University](#) has a similar fly-out breadcrumb scheme, which serves a dual function: as an location indicator for the user and as a robust and interactive secondary navigation scheme.

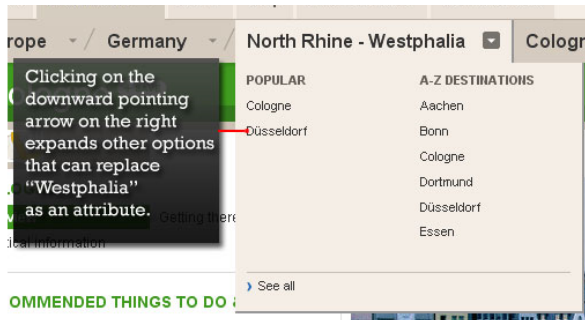


[Lonely Planet](#) also has a fly-out breadcrumb trail in which you can change attributes.

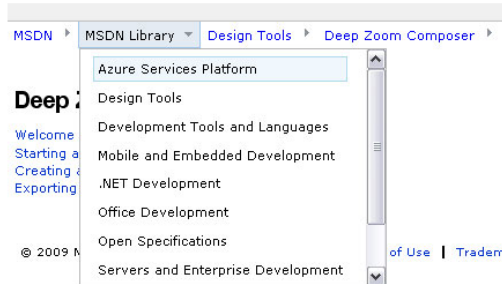


Clicking on a breadcrumb link takes you to that item's page, while clicking on the downward-pointing arrow opens additional options.

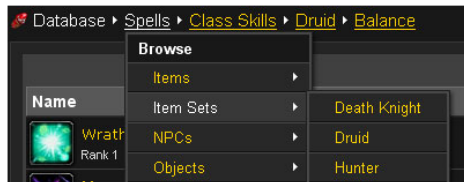




[MSDN](#) has a breadcrumb trail that opens a scrollable sub-navigation list when the user hovers over a link.



[Wowhead](#) has a multi-level sub-navigation scheme.



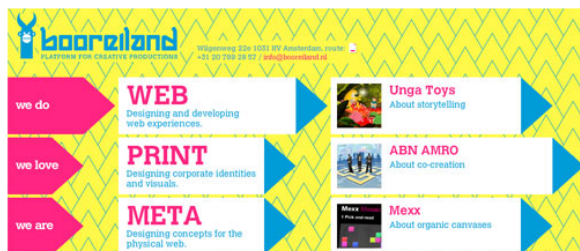
6. Interactive Breadcrumbs

[Delicious](#) lets you remove items in the breadcrumb trail of keyword tags to help you quickly find bookmarks.

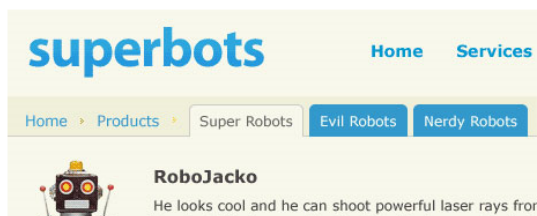


7. Experimental Examples

[Booreiland](#) uses a breadcrumb-style navigation scheme for its primary menu, allowing visitors to quickly understand what they're currently viewing.



User interface designer Aen Tan of [AEN UI](#) talks about a design pattern called "[Tabcrumbs](#)," a navigation scheme that combines [tabs](#) and breadcrumbs.



his chest. He has excellent battery life because he just

About the Author

Jacob Gube is a Web developer/designer and author of [Six Revisions](#), a blog on Web development and design. If you want to connect with the author, you can [follow him on Twitter](#).

(a)




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1.  Eddy Munn (March 17th, 2009, 1:01 pm)


I've only ever once had a client who wanted breadcrumbs, but they're a good think to know about, if someone does want it.
Good post.
2.  Marcy Kellar (March 17th, 2009, 1:07 pm)

Thank you for publishing this article! I found it interesting how creative folks are getting with them.
Of course designers should champion the importance of breadcrumbs in their designs. What I'd always stress to my clients though is that a breadcrumb does NOT replace a pagetitle.
Just because they are helpful, doesn't mean they solve every problem. (They are no Windex, you know).
3.  Kwa (March 17th, 2009, 1:07 pm)

great as always, thanks Smashing!
4.  Ethan (March 17th, 2009, 1:08 pm)

























I've started a lot of arguments over these. Breadcrumbs can often elicit as many if not more questions than they answer. Are these supposed to be where I am? Or how I got here? Glad to see this at least acknowledged here.
I find a lot of user bases have real trouble defining whether breadcrumbs are location, path or attribute based.
If you can justify them based on depth of content and audience need, then by all means. There's a lot of over-reliance on these IMHO. Reserve them for sites where you have to assume your users will get lost – but don't use it as an excuse for poor IA.
5.  Saro (March 17th, 2009, 1:34 pm)

Really usefull article, thanks.
6.  Simon Harlinghausen (March 17th, 2009, 1:35 pm)

And I thought breadcrumb is dead.
Surprise. Surprise.
7.  Matt (March 17th, 2009, 2:11 pm)



Guys,
Recently I used breadcrumbs below the title of the page (H1 tag).
This practice is wrong or can be accepted?

8.  Jane (March 17th, 2009, 2:38 pm)
- Hi – i'm a usability professional by training. In many many studies involving hundreds and hundreds of users we have hardly ever seen people using breadcrumbs on top ecommerce sites. Personally i think they are overhyped a bit. they are a must have for SEO (like sitemaps). curious if the usability pros here have DATA (not opinion) about what they've commonly observed in the lab and so on? please share your data.
9.  Jacob Gube (March 17th, 2009, 3:16 pm)
- @Ethan:** I agree with you in that you should justify the need before implementing breadcrumbs. I'm a minimalist, so for me, a site feature *must have* value for it to be incorporated in the design. Relying on breadcrumbs as a crucial method of navigation rather than an 'extra' site feature, usually, is an indication of a poor site design.
- @Matt:** Wrong in what sense? It's all about implementation and styling: structurally, it's valid.
- One thing to keep in mind is that it would be annoying for people who use screen readers. After they encounter the page title, they will always encounter your breadcrumb right after – when they're expecting either meta data (like date of publication, author, etc.) or the content of the page – there are ways that they can skip it – but they'll have to be familiar with your site's structure first. Can we see a live demo?
- @Jane:** Breadcrumbs are very helpful, but it shouldn't be something to be relied upon. For example, Newegg's attribute-based breadcrumbs can really help you find hardware that you're specifically looking for. I think that it's all about implementation, needs-analysis, and what your users want/need. Harping back on Newegg, their userbase is generally: tech-sawy, power user, computer enthusiast – so a robust navigation scheme with plenty of options is something that their users would appreciate.
10.  Enk. (March 17th, 2009, 3:47 pm) 
- Yup, Breadcrumbs are really usefull.
All I know is, they help spider read the structure easily ! :D
- Any good Wordpress Plugins for the Breadcrumbs ? The One I used didn't work at all ... :(
11.  whit (March 17th, 2009, 4:11 pm) 
- Great article and examples. One that I would have included as well would have been <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>
- They have a breadcrumb at the top of pages that is not clickable, just there to show you where you are at – but they also have another (functional) one at the bottom of the page, before the footer. I like the placement of this second one because it offers a way for users (who actually read the entire page) to navigate back up a level without having to use the footer's nav , scroll back up to the top navigation or use the back button.
12.  Brian Temecula (March 17th, 2009, 4:12 pm) 
- Nice article. Go SM!
16.  kesav (March 17th, 2009, 9:24 pm) 
- nice article
19.  Elisa (March 17th, 2009, 9:27 pm) 
- Thanks for the article that I just happened to fall upon. I thought I knew most of this but really enjoyed seeing your review of newer uses. The comments are provocative too to think of seo and actual user benefits. I use, especially in large sites, them but perhaps that's because I am familiar with them.
20.  soking (March 17th, 2009, 9:45 pm) 
- Thanks!
21.  Tommy Carlier (March 17th, 2009, 10:22 pm) 
- For one of our new websites, I combined a breadcrumb with a navigation list that looks like a tree-view (great for hierarchy). You can see an example on [this page](#) (tree-view on the left).

22.  Nidhi (March 17th, 2009, 11:05 pm) 
- @ Matt: It can be accepted depending on the design...
but I've normally noticed it above the page title..
23.  anjum121 (March 17th, 2009, 11:33 pm) 
- Thanks very good and informative. I always wanted to know that how that term comes
"Breadcrumb" now i got it. :)
24.  Ash (March 17th, 2009, 11:37 pm) 
- I usually make it on a classic way, this article is giving me some ideas for designing it in the future.
Thanx a lot.
25.  x-ray (March 18th, 2009, 12:25 am) 
- I miss the best best practices to built such breadcrumb navigations. What I had expected is the
recommendation to use list tags or put every think in structured div container?
26.  OverZero.it (March 18th, 2009, 12:35 am)  OZ
- Breadcrumbs are very useful for the user in large websites / portals.
I used them a couple of time in the past.
I think they could be considered also as a nice graphic element to place in pages, with creativity.
27.  spritzstuhl (March 18th, 2009, 1:16 am) 
- Like it! Keep it up!
28.  James Mann (March 18th, 2009, 1:20 am) 
- Why are they called Breadcrumbs? this is something that is nicely done on the apple.com web
site. I have not yet used 'breadcrumbs' on any of my sites yet, mainly because i have not build
large enough sites that need it, and also, i have not the foggiest idea how to implement one.
29.  burnz (March 18th, 2009, 1:27 am) 
- Very informative article...
30.  ush (March 18th, 2009, 1:39 am) 
- It would have been nice to talk a bit about the implementation of breadcrumbs in the different
platforms (like html, dreamweaver extensions, typo3, wordpress etc.)
But anyway great!!
Thanks
31.  Patrik Krupar (March 18th, 2009, 2:06 am) 
- Very usefull article! Thank you.
32.  Hoteluri (March 18th, 2009, 2:40 am) 
- soon search engines will consider this seo spam...
33.  Josh (March 18th, 2009, 2:57 am) 
- [According to some](#), breadcrumbs are a design cop-out for properly implemented easy to use site
navigation. Jared Spool is the author of that article, and it caused a bit of a debate – which
prompted [a follow up](#).
I would tend to agree with his opinion. Breadcrumbs are unnecessary if navigation is intuitive.



34.  Jacob G. (March 18th, 2009, 3:28 am) 
- @x-ray:** Unordered list (`ul`) would be a good option for breadcrumb trails. You can float each list item (`li`) and then even play around with the `list-style` CSS attribute for separating the links.
- @James Mann:** They're called breadcrumbs because of the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale that was discussed in the *What is a breadcrumb?* section.
- @ush:** Actually, you're right – I should've talked a little bit about a "how-to" implementation and then discuss practical implementation using HTML/CSS and then go to talk about your options for popular CMS's. I will keep that in mind in future articles.
35.  SocialTrending (March 18th, 2009, 3:41 am) 
- This is the best article I have seen on breadcrumb navigation. You cover why it is important, how to do it well, who's not doing it so well. Great article. It's information I will put into effect immediately and with all of our clients.
36.  Craig (March 18th, 2009, 3:55 am) 
- Thanks for the great article. I guess breadcrumbs aren't used as much anymore, but they still provide an effective and simple solution when appropriate.
37.  Parallax (March 18th, 2009, 4:16 am) 
- Interesting bit about the breadcrumbs with flyout option – we recently explored "super breadcrumbs" like that for a site we're building, but ultimately scrapped it as we did not feel the hybridization provided anything revolutionary; it simply made the user think.
38.  Matt (March 18th, 2009, 4:38 am) 
- @Jacob Gube and @Nidhi**
Thanks a lot for the info. :)
- Here is a little screenshot of the page:
<http://dl.getdropbox.com/u/568311/samples/bread.jpg>
- This is a Magento ecommerce template i've working about.
39.  Nqy_Nik (March 18th, 2009, 4:59 am) 
- Breadcrumbs are such a good navigational utility. Some classic examples and nice to see some creativity with something that is usually dull and often overlooked in design.
- Great Article, one for the favourites folder...
40.  Patrick (March 18th, 2009, 4:59 am) 
- I'm not convinced that using an unordered list is the best procedure for breadcrumbs. A breadcrumb trail is essentially hierarchical (in most cases) and ul is not. Semantically, wouldn't you want nested lists? But that would make fairly messy markup.
41.  Subbu (March 18th, 2009, 6:00 am) 
- Good Article as always. It would be great if we could have a follow up article on implementation methods for Breadcrumb.
42.  Harris (March 18th, 2009, 6:03 am) 
- I hate breadcrumbs that display the current page as well. Then you have the title in two places right next to each other. In breadcrumbs for [NBA Gauntlet](#), I removed the current page from displaying in the breadcrumbs.
43.  teddy (March 18th, 2009, 6:27 am) 
- Since I added breadcrumb navigation to my layouts, I've never looked back ever since – they help my visitors find their way around the website. However, I've read debates regarding using unordered lists (and then floating the `` tags later) over using `` instead. Some people claim that it's a violation of first normalcy to use unordered list because each subsequent item is actually a sibling

violation of web semantics to use unordered list because each subsequent item is actually a child of the previous one. Personally I have no qualms using unordered list for breadcrumbs, but since you've did an excellent writeup on this, what are you views?



44.  Sweetgrass (March 18th, 2009, 6:49 am) 

Good article, and nice to see one of our sites used for an example (techradar). This is all good on a visual level but im very interested in how breadcrumbs should be implemented from a coding perspective! There are many different ways of writing breadcrumbs, some better than others, from both a usability perspective and also from an SEO perspective. Perhaps this is out of scope for this article.

These days we tend to use nested unordered lists as it seemed the most sensible and semantic way of doing it.



45.  Sweetgrass (March 18th, 2009, 7:06 am) 

Teddy: Sorry, i didnt read your post!! I think that the nested ul approach makes sense as, as you say, each item is a child of the previous one.



46.  Rob Cottingham (March 18th, 2009, 7:30 am) 

Nifty – especially the more experimental uses. That'll take some cogitating.



Did you happen to see [Veerle Pieters' blog post about scalable CSS-based breadcrumbs?](#) (Disclosure: she invented them for our site relaunch.)

47.  PureDezigner (March 18th, 2009, 7:35 am) 



Great synopsis! The examples of when to implement them are a great resource to have to show clients when trying to persuade them either way. I agree with many other comments here, it would be great to have a best practices for breadcrumbs follow up article to this one. I would think ul and li tags would be best, but I have read many contradicting things on what are the best tags to use.

48.  Amer Aranki (March 18th, 2009, 7:35 am) 



Great!!!

49.  Luque (March 18th, 2009, 9:17 am) 

Very good!

50.  Navdeep (March 18th, 2009, 9:51 am) 

This is a very nice article...



51.  Virtualsalvation (March 18th, 2009, 11:46 am) 

Example #4 is really more of a progress meter than a breadcrumb in my opinion. I feel they are different because a breadcrumb is use primarily as a navigation tool while a progress meter is specific letting the user know where they are in a specific process. Progress meters are geared more toward multi-step processes as mentioned (such as a wizard) which is quite different than the intentions surrounding a breadcrumb.

Great article as usual though!

52.  Ottawa Web Designers (March 18th, 2009, 4:56 pm) 



Great resource. I haven't implemented breadcrumbs much on my websites, but I am now thinking about doing so.

53.  davelane (March 18th, 2009, 5:21 pm) 



Great article. I still can't seem to fully understand this concept of "filtering out" using checkmarks or X's.

I thought that the idea of breadcrumbs was to indicate where you were in a hierarchy. And so I suspect it might be confusing to most people to have an option to filter out an entire level of site structure. And the two examples listed above aren't the clearest (ex: overstock, when you filter out "beds" you still see a list of twin beds)



anyone have any good examples of this in practice?
cheers!

54.  Mithun Sreedharan (March 18th, 2009, 9:34 pm) 


Thank you!!

55.  Gerd Wippich (March 19th, 2009, 12:50 am) 



Another great article. Very useful, thanks a lot!

56.  Nicolas (March 19th, 2009, 1:13 am) 



Hi,
Is breadcrumb term the best word to qualify user's location?
Breadcrumb's term speaks about historic of user's navigation, don't it?

57.  Tom Bradshaw (March 19th, 2009, 5:50 am) 

Breadcrumbs are great for user's navigation, like bookmarks in a book. After reading this article they also provide a design challenge for the designer – I tend to stick to the normal style but will now aim to try different solutions in the future.

58.  Mark Taylor (March 19th, 2009, 8:50 am) 

Good article, I find breadcrumbs a great tool when designing and navigating sites, especially if there are more than two tiers of navigation. More designers should use them.

59.  Jakob Nielsen (March 19th, 2009, 10:00 am) 

Many usability studies show that some users benefit from breadcrumbs [usability studies show that some users benefit from breadcrumbs](#). Just as important, user research also finds that no users suffer problems because of breadcrumbs. (Some users do ignore the breadcrumbs, but they certainly don't use them wrong.)

The cost-benefit analysis for breadcrumbs is easy:


Decent (not big) benefits to some users
No downsides to other users
Low overhead in the UI, fast download times

60.  Tiago Sá (March 19th, 2009, 10:08 am) 

Come to think of it, how about applying breadcrumbs to browsers? No in the usual way like locationbar2 for Firefox does (awesome plugin btw), like with <http://www.site.com> » folder » second » file.html or something, but more like the sequence of pages you visit, and the way you follow links. Like Google » Search "hotels" » SuppahHotel.com » Rent a Room » Check Room 202 out

Huh? Wouldn't that be awesome?!

God, I sometimes have awesome ideas. Feel free to use them, I don't care. :D

61.  Jacob Gube (March 19th, 2009, 10:36 am) 

@Craig: check out Jakob Nielsen's [Breadcrumb Navigation Increasingly Useful](#) a little old (about two years ago), but it outlines the value of breadcrumbs.

@Matt: The prototype looks great to me. An additional value of that would be in SEO where the first thing spiders see is, in terms of unique content (not including primary nav and logo, etc.) is:

1. Page title
2. link to level 1 category
3. link to level 2 category
4. location
5. h2

If you name your categories well, you could potentially improve your site's indexability with a structure like that.

@Patrick: semantically/structurally, nested unordered lists would be the way that would represent the hierarchical relationship of the links. But taking this theory to practice in this manner would be, quite simply, unnecessary work. One other solution that would somewhat represent the hierarchy of the links is via ordered lists.

1. item 1 – First-level category

- 2. item 2 – Second-level category
- 3. item 3 – Third-level category

Hey, I'm all for semantics and structural accuracy, I've written about it in the past: [Structural Naming Convention in CSS](#) but I'm also a realist and a pragmatist – in that, in real-world scenarios, it just doesn't matter: there are real deadlines to be met, and maintainability to consider. I think a single-level unordered list is a good compromise in terms of structure vs. pragmatism. You said it yourself: nested list, thought structurally-accurate and representative of the links' relationship, is fairly messy. Now multiply that messiness to 50-60 categories in 3 or 4 levels, and you're looking at a large-scale site's nasty markup... for breadcrumbs? I pity the developer that gets the task of tacking on another site level or taking one away when the site decides to scale or restructure content.

My two cents.

@teddy: Read the above reply to **@Patrick**, that's my view on unordered list. I've had debates on things like this, like: whether I should use `text:` or `text ` :, in the end – the pragmatist and "[Getting Real](#)" in me just says, "it *just* doesn't matter"

@Subbu: and **@PureDezigner:** I'm thinking about it: a more pragmatic, less theoretical approach to discussing breadcrumbs. How to do it, instead of why/why not.

@Rob Cottingham: I checked it just now, looks great, very similar to Apple's breadcrumbs, visually.

@Virtualsalvation: You do not know how long it took me to decide whether to leave that example on or take it out, exactly because of your sentiments. I could have found a better example to use than the web form sign-up process. I do think breadcrumbs and that example accomplishes two things: it lets you know where you are, it lets you go back and forth from where you've been.

@davelane: the best example I can think of at this moment is Newegg, [check out this page](#). If you use the (x) on any attribute on the breadcrumb, you are presented with a new page that doesn't have that attribute.

Let me know if that makes it clearer, or if I should explain further.

@Nicolas: Not the best term, I agree, but it's stuck to that.

- 62.  Kat Thompson (March 19th, 2009, 2:56 pm) 

Excellent article thank you. We've used breadcrumbs on our sites but only where we and the client felt it was necessary, and I absolutely believe they're expected on a large tiered site. I'll be bookmarking this as reference. Thanks again and I look forward to reading the post about implementation.
Cheers.
- 63.  Jhon Doe (March 19th, 2009, 3:53 pm) 

thanks.
- 64.  冬 (March 19th, 2009, 5:01 pm) 

写得非常好, 学习了
- 65.  Josh (March 20th, 2009, 2:04 am) 









Breadcrumbs are a navigational cop out. The effort spent designing and implementing breadcrumbs should rather be spent implementing intuitive navigation, negating the need for them.
- 66.  Cristhian Bedon (March 20th, 2009, 6:58 am) 

Breadcrumbs have been getting more and more attention lately.
- 67.  Pradeep CD (March 20th, 2009, 6:58 am) 

Useful post
- 68.  femK (March 20th, 2009, 7:33 am) 

Thanks you for this article. Good to keep this in mind while I am designing my e-commerce site!
- 69.  faisal (March 22nd, 2009, 2:28 pm) 

Good Article, it is so nice

70.  A West (March 24th, 2009, 12:55 pm) 
- I'd like to use breadcrumbs but have an overwhelmed web team. Is there a plugin or script that will auto-create these?
71.  Josh Betz (April 11th, 2009, 4:50 pm) 
- Breadcrumbs can be very useful if they're used right.
- @A West:
There are all kinds of scripts. I usually use JavaScript to auto create my breadcrumbs. I think you'd be crazy to go into every html file and put the breadcrumbs in by hand, especially on a large project.
72.  StoreCrowd (May 23rd, 2009, 2:43 am) 
- This is a fantastic article, if you read Google's guidelines for SEO & best practices they also say that Breadcrumbs really helps them understand the structure of a site. They're also pretty good for SEO if you include keyword rich Anchor Text.
73.  Dave Merrick (July 28th, 2009, 8:14 pm) 
- I have this breadcrumb class but I am having difficulty implementing it. Is anyone able to help?
- ```
crumbs = $_SESSION['breadcrumb'];
}

}

/*
 * Add a crumb to the trail:
 * @param $label - The string to display
 * @param $url - The url underlying the label
 * @param $level - The level of this link.
 *
 */
function add($label, $url, $level){

 $crumb = array();
 $crumb['label'] = $label;
 $crumb['url'] = $url;

 if ($crumb['label'] != null && $crumb['url'] != null && isset($level)){

 while(count($this->crumbs) > $level){

 array_pop($this->crumbs); //prune until we reach the $level we've allocated to this page

 }

 if (!isset($this->crumbs[0]) && $level > 0){ //if there's no session data yet, assume a homepage link

 $this->crumbs[0]['url'] = "/index.php";
 $this->crumbs[0]['label'] = "Home";

 }

 $this->crumbs[$level] = $crumb;

 }

 $_SESSION['breadcrumb'] = $this->crumbs; //Persist the data
 $this->crumbs[$level]['url'] = null; //Ditch the underlying url for the current page.
}

/*
 * Output a semantic list of links. See above for sample CSS. Modify this to suit your design.
 */
function output(){

 echo "Click trail: ";

 foreach ($this->crumbs as $crumb){

 if ($crumb['url'] != null){

 echo " > \" . $crumb['label'] . \"";

 } else {

 echo " > \" . $crumb['label'] . \"";

 }

 }


 echo "";
}

?>
```



I take I need to use sessions?

74.

 richr (September 8th, 2009, 8:11 am)



A slightly different use of breadcrumbs:

After clicking on a specific search result, [AppExplorer](#) uses breadcrumbs to allow the user to navigate to other search results without going back to the results page.

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<code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <strike> <strong> <pre lang="" line=""  
escaped="">

**rel="nofollow" in use - no link dropping, no keywords or domains as names; do not spam,  
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