

# Sense and sensibility

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- ❖ is **intrinsic** to any **product**, from its **packaging** and **display** to **Content** detailed instructions on how to **use** it. However, while there is a tremendous **focus** in the industry on **user-centered design** for the **packaging, display** and most crucially, for the **interface** of products, it does not follow through for content. Traditionally technical **writers** approach writing for, or about, a product from the **technical** content which could be far removed from the user-centered design approach and so affect the **usability** of your content.

# Sample



Graphic design and brand identity for Swedish urban smoothie brand Froosh by Pearlfisher. Image and information source: The Dieline.com

The big, bold text is the graphic

Primary bio-degradable, disposal message is prominent, and right on the package



DuPont Awards for packaging innovation 2008. Image and information source; DuPont.com

# Sample

The image shows a screenshot of a photo printing website. The top navigation bar is highlighted with a red box and contains the following menu items: Home, Upload Photos, Manage Photos, Shop Products, Specials, Passport Photos, and My Projects. A red arrow points from this menu to the text "Menu labels identify primary user tasks".

Below the navigation bar, there is a large banner for "FREE Shipping to Any pharmacy Always" with a photo of a woman and a child. To the right of the banner is a "Sign In or Join Now" section with input fields for Email and Password, a checkbox for "Keep me signed in for 2 weeks", and buttons for "Sign In" and "Join Now". Below this is a "50 FREE Prints When You Join!" offer with a "Shop As Guest" link.

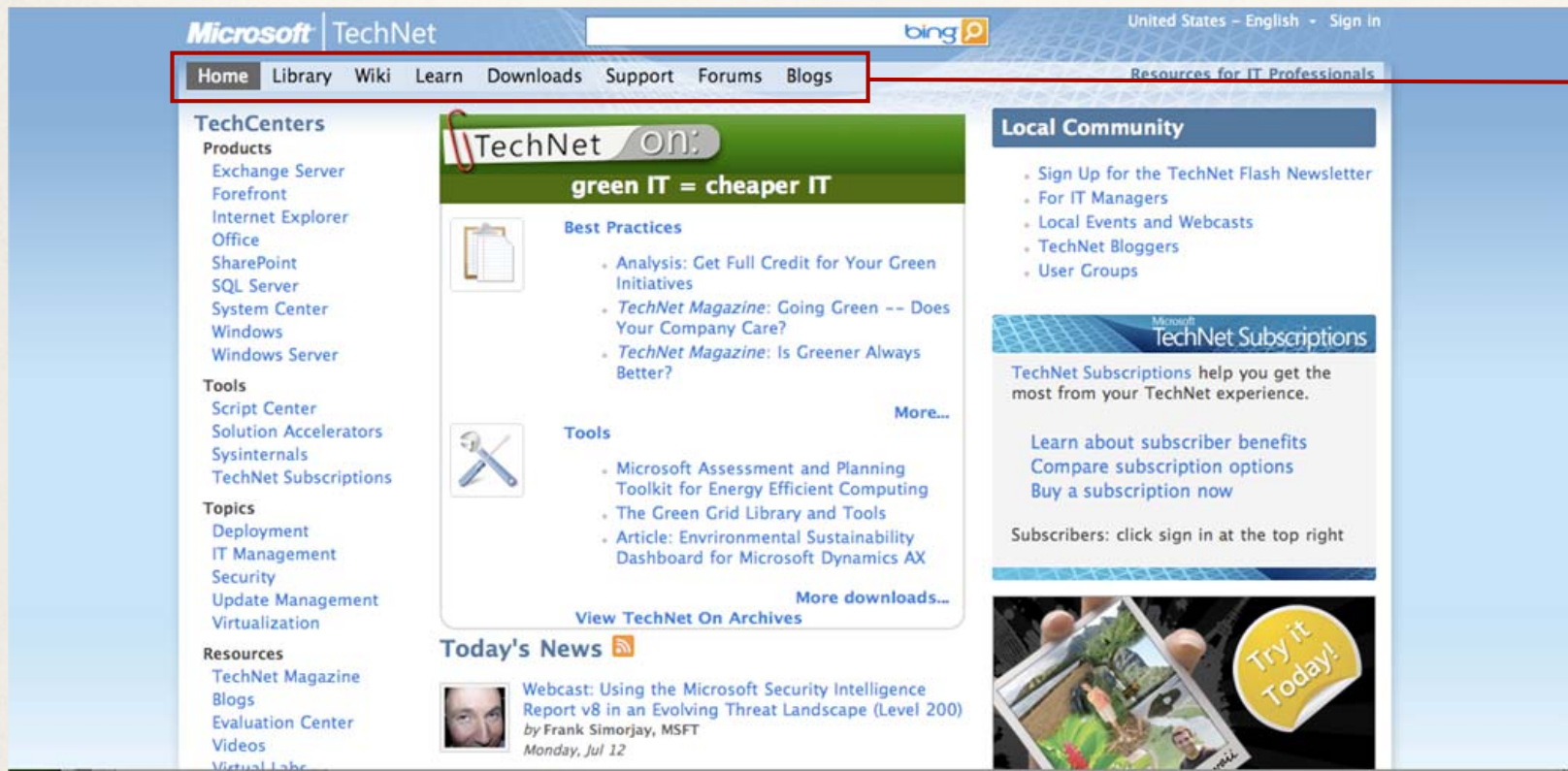
On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar with several sections:

- Seasonal**
  - Summer
- Bestsellers**
  - Calendars
  - Cards
  - Character Plates
  - Collage Products
  - Gifts Under \$20
  - Mugs
  - Photo Books
  - Posters
  - Prints
- Shop by Occasion**
  - Anniversary
  - Birthday
  - Wedding
- Shop by Recipient**
  - For Baby
  - For Child
  - For Her
  - For Him
  - For Pet Lover
- Shop by Category**
  - Apparel & Accessories
  - Calendars
  - Cards
  - Cartoon DVD
  - Character Plates
  - Collage Products
  - Fun & Games
  - Home & Office
  - Mugs
  - Photo Books

At the bottom of the page, there are several promotional banners: "FREE Shipping", "For Every 4x6 Print", "Passport Laws", and "Get 30% Off Photo Books". A red arrow points from the "Shop by Recipient" and "Shop by Category" sections to the text "Category labels reflect users' mental model of grouping".

# Sample

An award winning technical documentation site. Image and information source: Microsoft.com

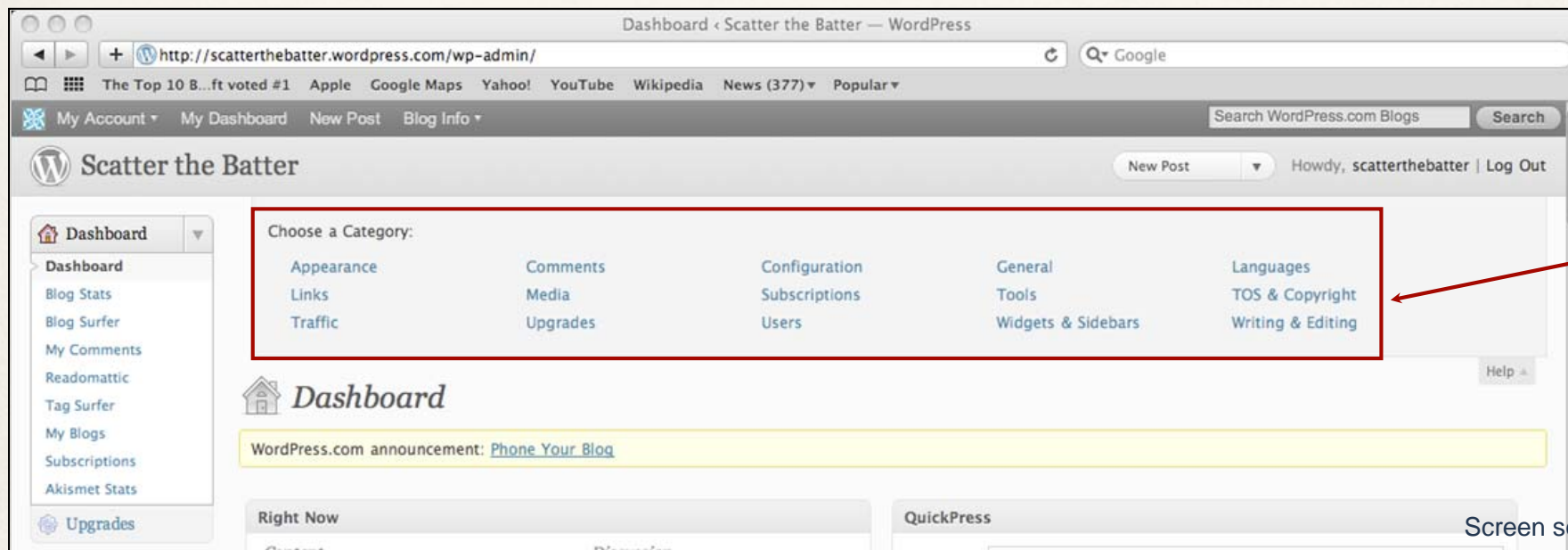


Sources users go to when looking for help

# Sample



On click,



expands to

# Two areas of interest

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DESIGN

User  
Research  
Sense

Design  
Principles  
Sensibility

# Information about users User research: What do writers need?

- ❖ user roles
- 
- ❖ work/play environment
  - ❖ user aptitude
  - ❖ knowledge levels
  - ❖ training
  - ❖ familiarity with product
  - ❖ access to media
  - ❖ user tasks
  - ❖ what devices users use
  - ❖ complexity of tasks
  - ❖ support

# Typical sources of our information

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Technical  
specification  
s

Product  
definition  
documents

Marketing  
Material

The product-  
finished,  
semi  
finished

High level  
and low  
level design  
documents

SMEs

If you're  
lucky, use  
cases

Closest to the "user", but these talk about how the product "should" work "after" it has been designed

# Now we know - why design for writers

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A large part of the work done in design is **User Research**. It provides

- ❖ Insights that have a direct bearing upon the content
- ❖ the type of help
- ❖ what content to focus on
- ❖ the tone
- ❖ language
- ❖ placement of and access to help

Insights into visual design

- ❖ aesthetics
- ❖ colours
- ❖ graphics

# What does user research yield?

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- ❖ user profiles
- ❖ user work flow
- ❖ wish lists
- ❖ pain points with the existing systems

# Gathering data

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- ❖ Access **people** with the data: UI designers, customer-interface groups, customer support groups
- ❖ Access **studies, reports**: Data may be already available (user studies, profiles, personas, surveys, customer support data, card sort data,
- ❖ Utopian to **join** the user research team

# Some methods, tools and resources

## ❖ Questionnaires

- 7) If your native language is not English, how well do you read English?
- Poorly, I have trouble reading documents in English
  - Adequately, I read well enough to get around
  - Fluently, I read almost as well as a native English speaker
  - I am a native English reader
- 8) How would you describe your general level of computer experience?
- None, I have never used any software applications
  - Low, I have used only one or two software applications
  - Moderately low, I have learned and used between three and ten different software applications
  - Moderately high, I have learned and used more than ten different software applications but have no programming skills
  - High, I have used many different software applications and have some programming skills
  - Other (please specify)

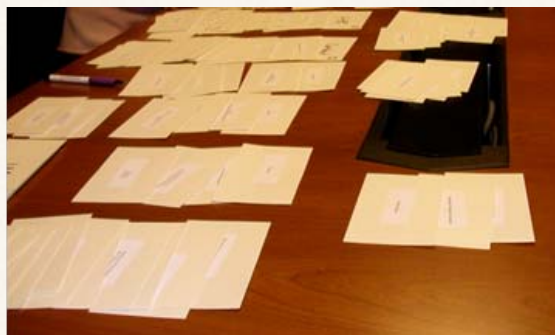
## ❖ User-task analysis

An example of Matrix 1:

Tasks	User in role of system administrator	User in role of personal computer user
Add new computer to system	sometimes	never
Add new users to system	frequent	never
Change users' privileges	frequent	never
Print reports on system usage	frequent	never
Send electronic mail	frequent	frequent
Print personal files and letters	never	frequent
Change personal preferences	never	sometimes

# Some methods, tools and resources

## ❖ Card sorting



## ❖ Heuristic evaluation

### Heuristic Evaluation Questionnaire by Donn DeBoard

#### Effective

(What is the completeness and accuracy of your work? What percent of your goals were reached successfully? How well was a task completed?)

1) Is it clear where on the screen to find the help system?

Very Unsatisfied \_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5 Very Satisfied  
Severity Ranking \_\_\_\_\_Low \_\_\_\_\_Moderate \_\_\_\_\_High Question is  
Not  
Applicable\_\_

2) Is it clear how to begin to use the help system? (Is it obvious how to invoke the help?)

Very Unsatisfied \_\_\_\_\_1 \_\_\_\_\_2 \_\_\_\_\_3 \_\_\_\_\_4 \_\_\_\_\_5 Very Satisfied  
Severity Ranking \_\_\_\_\_Low \_\_\_\_\_Moderate \_\_\_\_\_High Question is  
Not  
Applicable\_\_

# Some methods, tools and resources

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- ❖ Focus Groups
- ❖ Contextual Inquiry
- ❖ Interviews
- ❖ Simple observation of users

# Bridging the gap

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- ✦ correlate

- ✦ research findings into

- ✦ help design and authoring decisions

- ✦ and increase usability

# Correlate findings to decisions

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❖ When and where do users perform a task? What's the surrounding environment?

Not at their computers always  
- provide a printer friendly version?

Operate machinery in different locations  
- posters or job cards

Are there device constraints?

Break down topics into small, relevant chunks  
Extremely concise, brief content  
Minimal scrolling

Are there confidentiality needs?

Password protect content?

Is there assistance and training available?

Content design harmonious with the other material? Does it duplicate it?

# Correlate findings to decisions

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- ❖ How frequently does the user interact with the product? Is it regular, continuous, interrupted?  
How does the user search for information?

Enable users to dock the help content on their screen

Search functionality, an Index, or both, a link to the customer support documentation?

How quickly must the user act?

Brief instructions, prominently placed next to action buttons

What is the information involved? Is it complex or simple?

If complex - include workflows, graphics  
If simple, use tables, charts, text

# Correlate findings to decisions

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- ❖ What do users find appealing, memorable?

Colours, images, photos, graphic elements to use for warnings, notes, feedback, ask-a-question, chat windows

Users' lifestyle traits and motivations, personality characteristics, attitudes

Tone and voice - casual, formal, first person (almost always first person to keep users engaged)

# Design principles

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- ❖ Recognition over recall

- ❖ Visible status at all times

- ❖ Consistency

- ❖ Autonomy (user control)

- ❖ Efficiency

- ❖ Minimalist content

- ❖ Match between real world and product
- ❖ Use metaphors well
- ❖ Visible navigation
- ❖ Good old 'readability' principles
- ❖ Engage users

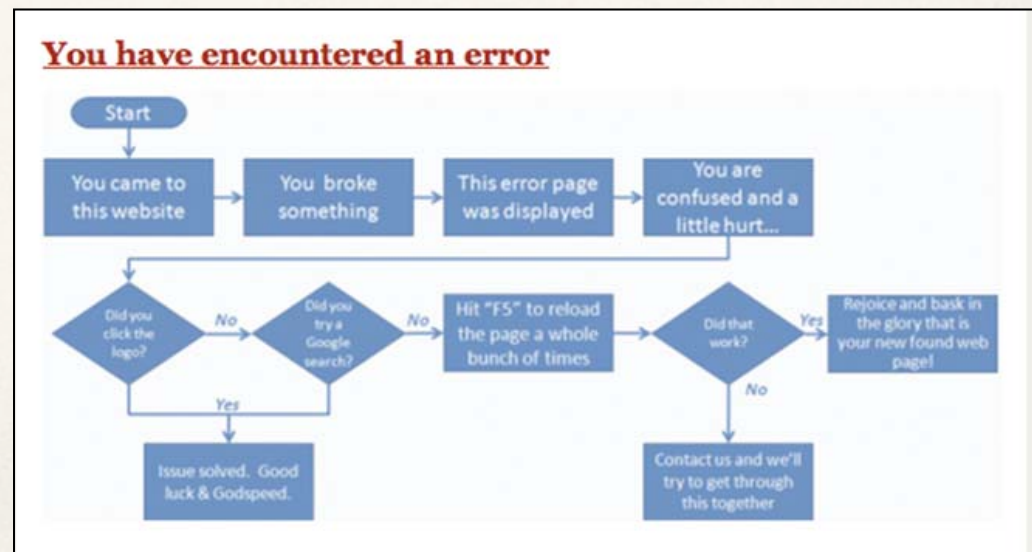
# Engage users...example

## ❖ Do it

The screenshot shows the Microsoft TechNet Support page. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, Library, Wiki, Learn, Downloads, Support (highlighted), Forums, and Blogs. Below this is the 'TechNet Support' header and a sub-header '1 Search for a Solution' with the instruction 'Find answers to a technical issue, look up a KB article or search by error code.' A red box highlights three search input fields: 'Search all sources:' with a placeholder 'Enter keywords', 'Lookup KB articles:' with a placeholder 'Enter KB #', and 'Lookup Events & Errors:' with a placeholder 'Enter ID or Code'. Each field has a magnifying glass icon to its right.

Draw in the user with brief, but clear and helpful instructions, instead of leaving the boxes blank

## Don't overdo it



# Visibility and navigation

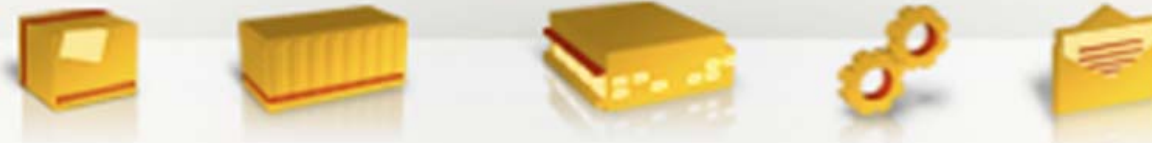
The screenshot shows the Gmail Help interface. At the top left is the Gmail logo. To its right is a search bar with the text "Search Help". Below the logo is the "Gmail Help" header. On the left side, there is a vertical navigation menu with links: "Help articles", "Your Account", "Your Messages", "Other ways to access Gmail", "Troubleshooting", "Help forum", and "What's New". A red box highlights this menu, with an arrow pointing to the text "Visible, relevant navigation". The main content area shows a breadcrumb trail: "Gmail > Help articles > Your Account > Signing in > Signing in with multiple Gmail addresses". A red box highlights this trail, with an arrow pointing to the text "Trail". Below the breadcrumb is the article title "Signing in with multiple Gmail addresses" and three icons: "Share", "Comment", and "Print". The article text includes instructions on switching Gmail addresses and a link to a troubleshooter. At the bottom, there is a feedback question "Was this information helpful?" with "Yes" and "No" radio buttons. The date "updated 8/19/2009" is visible in the bottom right corner.

Visible, relevant navigation

# System matches the real world

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**Find the right service for you:**



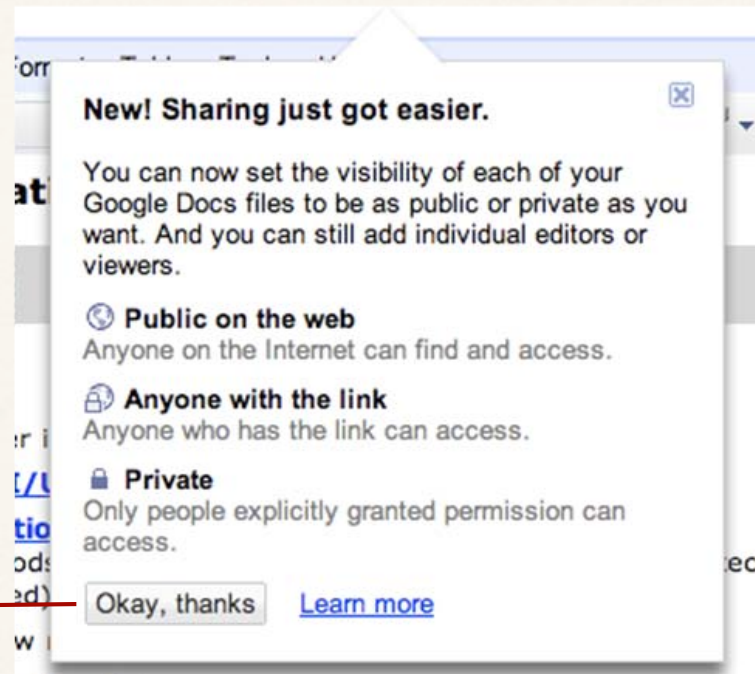
**All services at a glance >**

parcels, freight, warehousing, supply chain, mail

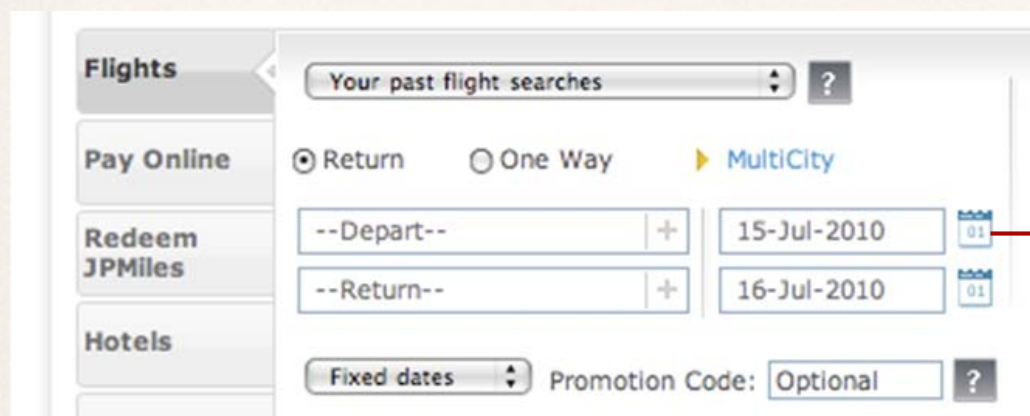
# Efficiency

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Instead of searching for a small close button, users can simply say no, thanks

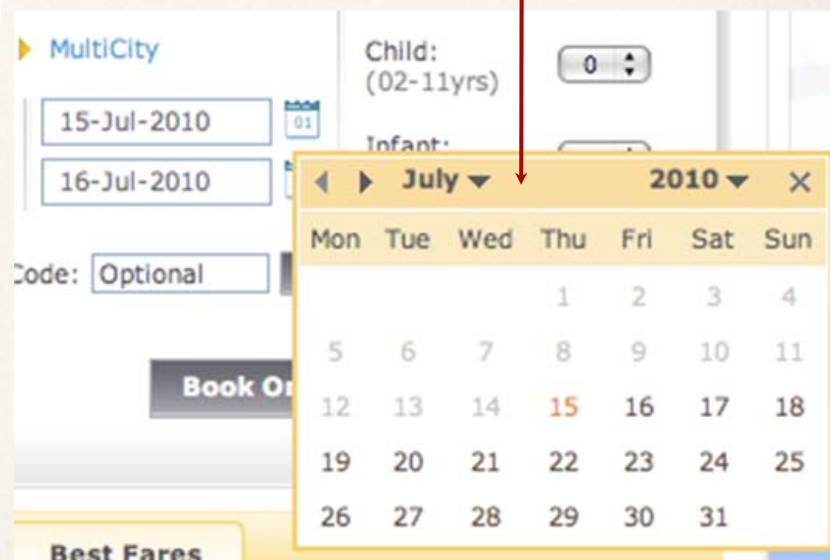


# Recognition over recall



The screenshot shows a flight booking interface with a sidebar on the left containing 'Flights', 'Pay Online', 'Redeem JPMiles', and 'Hotels'. The main area has a search bar 'Your past flight searches' with a help icon. Below it are radio buttons for 'Return' (selected), 'One Way', and 'MultiCity'. There are two date input fields: '--Depart--' with a '+' icon and '15-Jul-2010', and '--Return--' with a '+' icon and '16-Jul-2010'. At the bottom, there is a 'Fixed dates' dropdown and a 'Promotion Code: Optional' field with a help icon.

You know this icon will expand into this



The screenshot shows the expanded date selection calendar for July 2010. The calendar is a table with columns for days of the week and rows for dates. The date 15 is highlighted in red. The calendar is titled 'July 2010' and has a close button 'X'.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

# Resources

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## ❖ Websites

- [www.stcsig.org/usability/topics/index.html](http://www.stcsig.org/usability/topics/index.html)
- [www.stcsig.org/usability/index.html](http://www.stcsig.org/usability/index.html)
- [www.boxesandarrows.com](http://www.boxesandarrows.com)
- [www.usability.gov/](http://www.usability.gov/)
- [www.wqusability.com/](http://www.wqusability.com/)
- [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com)
- Books

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Thank you