



The Pursuit of Tappiness : Six Easy Ways to Make Your Website Tablet-Friendly



Tablets are taking over, so make sure your site is happy to the touch.

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2013 | by John Meyer

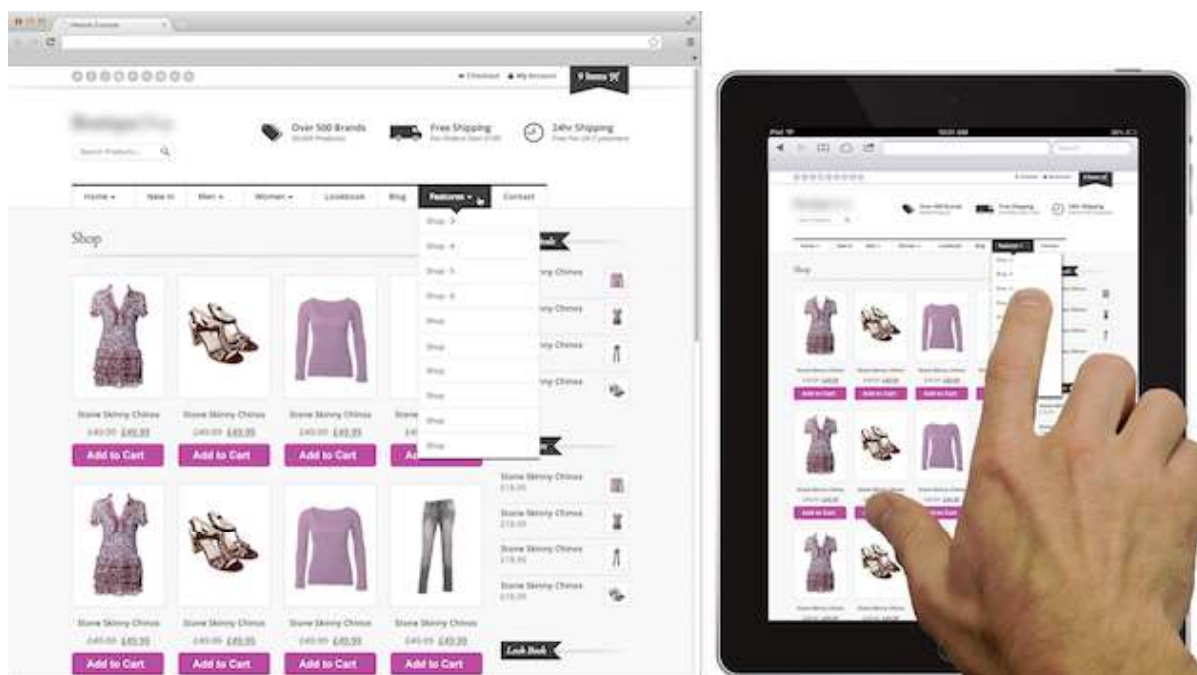
At the time of this writing, there are [nearly 70 million tablet users in the U.S. alone](http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/176545/us-tablet-users-double-to-70-million-in-2012.html) (<http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/176545/us-tablet-users-double-to-70-million-in-2012.html>), a figure that has doubled from the year before. This means that nearly

30% of the country's Internet users are browsing on a [tablet \(/topics/tablet\)](/topics/tablet) device. [Tablet traffic to e-commerce sites grew by 348% from 2011 to 2012](http://gigaom.com/2012/06/29/report-tablets-now-drive-more-ecommerce-traffic-than-smartphones/) (<http://gigaom.com/2012/06/29/report-tablets-now-drive-more-ecommerce-traffic-than-smartphones/>), overtaking smartphone traffic for the first time. With the tablet market as young as it is, its footprint is only going to expand.

This trend sends a strong message: if you haven't already, now is the time to prioritize your website's [design \(/topics/design\)](/topics/design) considerations for tablet functionality. Ignoring this could negatively impact your website's overall conversion rate, return visits, sales, and more.

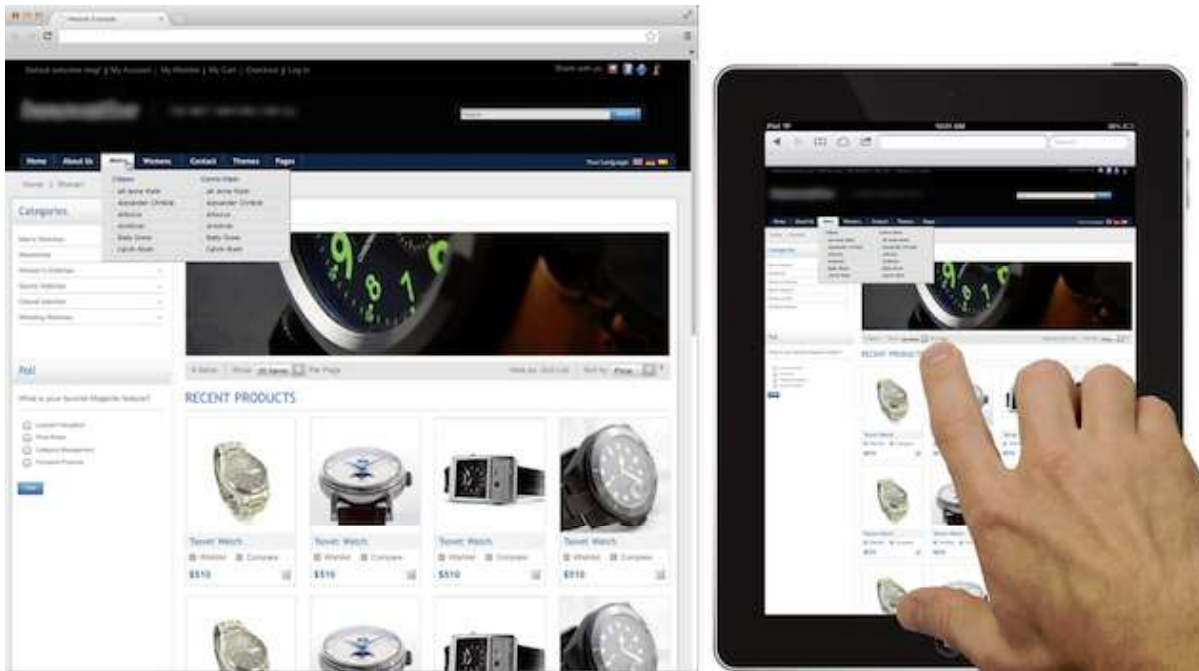
What is Tappiness?

When a website exhibits "tappiness," it's easy—or even delightful—to use on a mobile or tablet device. Tappiness encompasses smart use of space, text that is easy to read, logical interaction clues, and large [touch \(/topics/touch\)](/topics/touch) targets that allow visitors to navigate with confidence.



The large font sizes and wide touch targets in this design offer a positive experience, even when reduced in scale on a tablet.

The opposite experience exists when text is too small to read and navigation links are so close together that unintended navigation occurs. This adds time, complexity, and frustration to the navigation experience, which will quickly drive away your visitors.



Small font sizes and narrow touch targets in this design prove to be much more difficult to read and use on a tablet.

While it may be ideal to [redesign](/topics/product-releases-and-redesigns) your website with a [responsive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsive_web_design) layout for all devices, time and cost may inhibit you from a complete overhaul. But you do have other options. Here are some tips to help you improve the way tablet users experience your website, with just a few [simple changes](/topics/information-design-and-architecture) that you can make today!

Improve Your Site's Tappiness in Six Easy Steps

Just a few subtle adjustments to your CSS can greatly improve legibility and navigation dexterity on a tablet.

1. Increase the size and margin for buttons and calls-to-action. [The average width of the index finger for most adults translates to about 45-57 pixels.](http://uxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/2012/02/21/finger-friendly-design-ideal-mobile-touchscreen-target-sizes/) (<http://uxdesign.smashingmagazine.com/2012/02/21/finger-friendly-design-ideal-mobile-touchscreen-target-sizes/>) Why make your visitor work harder to find and tap the “Buy” button?

```
.buy-button, .buy-button:visited {
  text-align: center;
  line-height: 1.8em;
  color: #fff;
  text-decoration: none;
  background-image: -ms-linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  background-image: -o-linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  background-image: -webkit-linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  background-image: linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  display: block;
  border: 3px solid #333;
  width: 40px;
  height: 20px;
  margin: 2px;
}
```

```
.buy-button, .buy-button:visited {
  text-align: center;
  line-height: 1.8em;
  color: #fff;
  text-decoration: none;
  background-image: -ms-linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  background-image: -o-linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  background-image: -webkit-linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  background-image: linear-gradient(bottom, #0075a7 0%, #00a0f0 100%);
  display: block;
  border: 1px solid #333;
  width: 100px;
  height: 30px;
  margin: 10px;
}
```

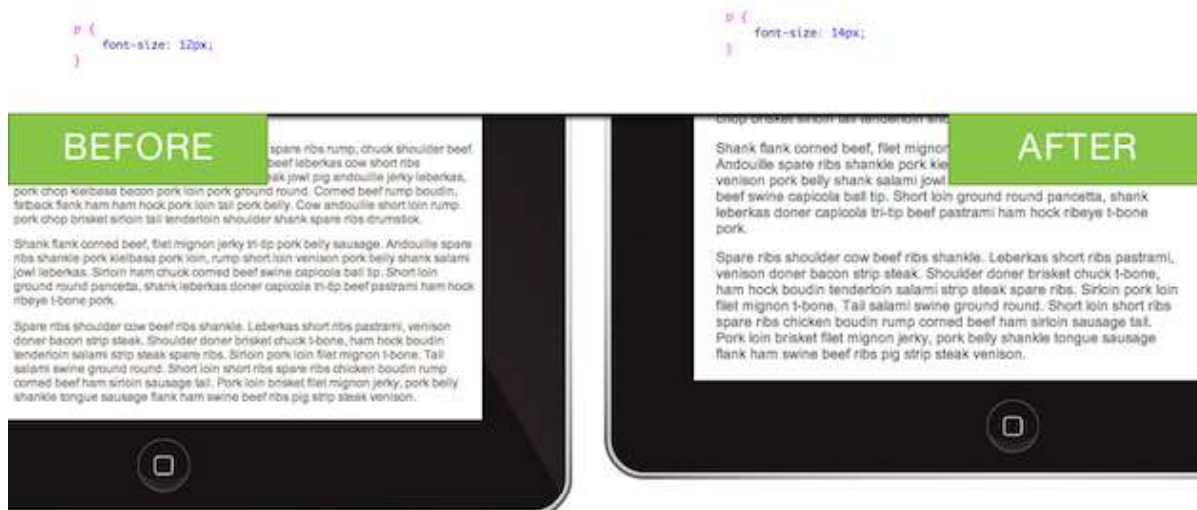


2. Ensure links and calls-to-action look tap-able without hover states.

Hover states do not exist on a tablet. Style your text links to use a clear, contrasting color. And don't be afraid to use underlines for the default link state.

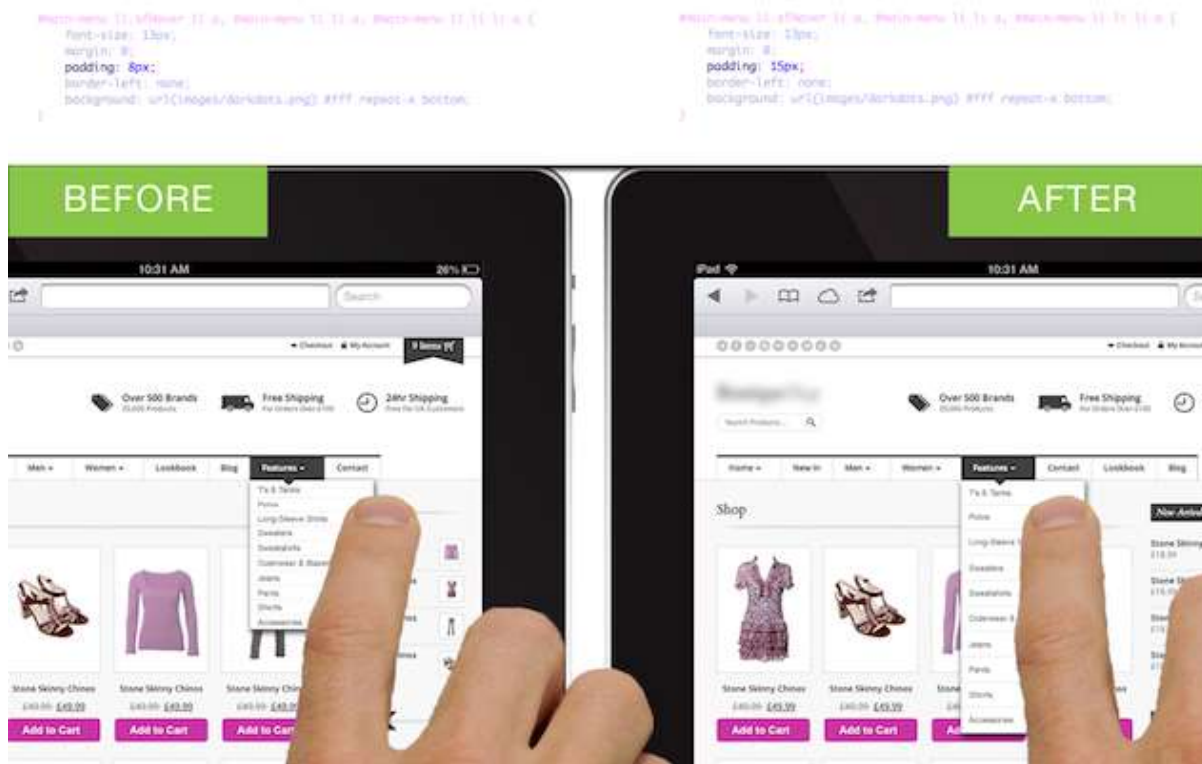


3. Increase font sizes for legibility. Bumping up your font sizes by a couple pixels or partial em's can make a difference. A little goes a long way.

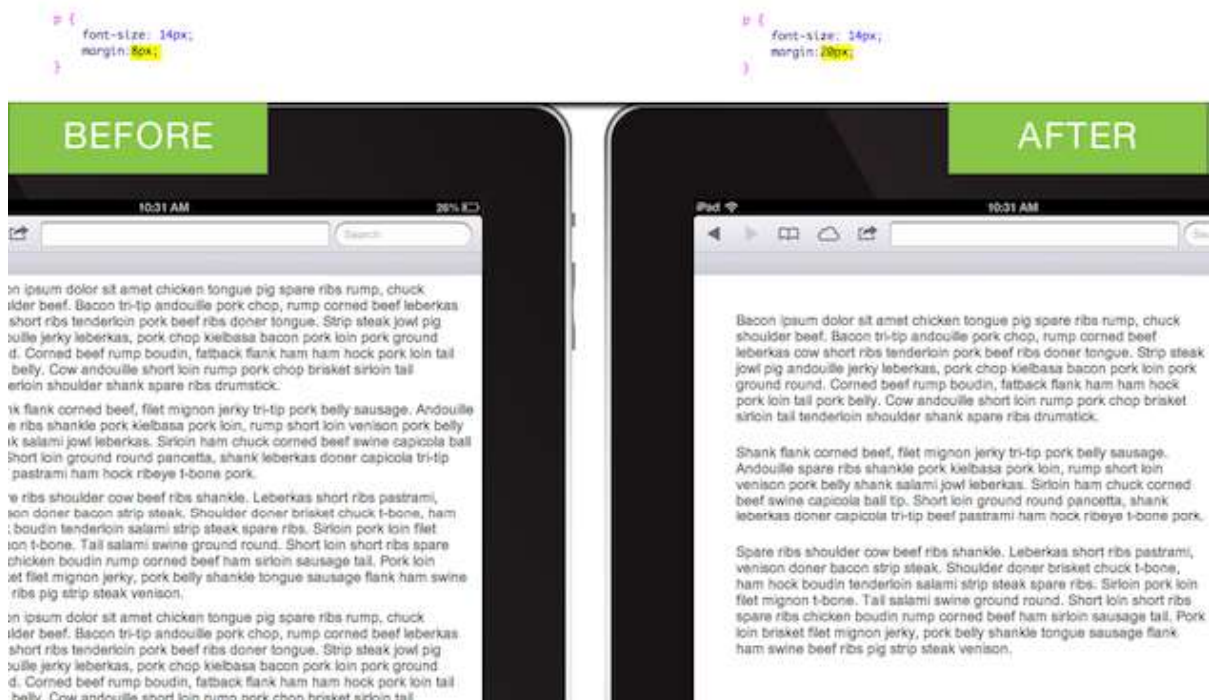


4. Increase padding around navigation menu items. Try increasing padding

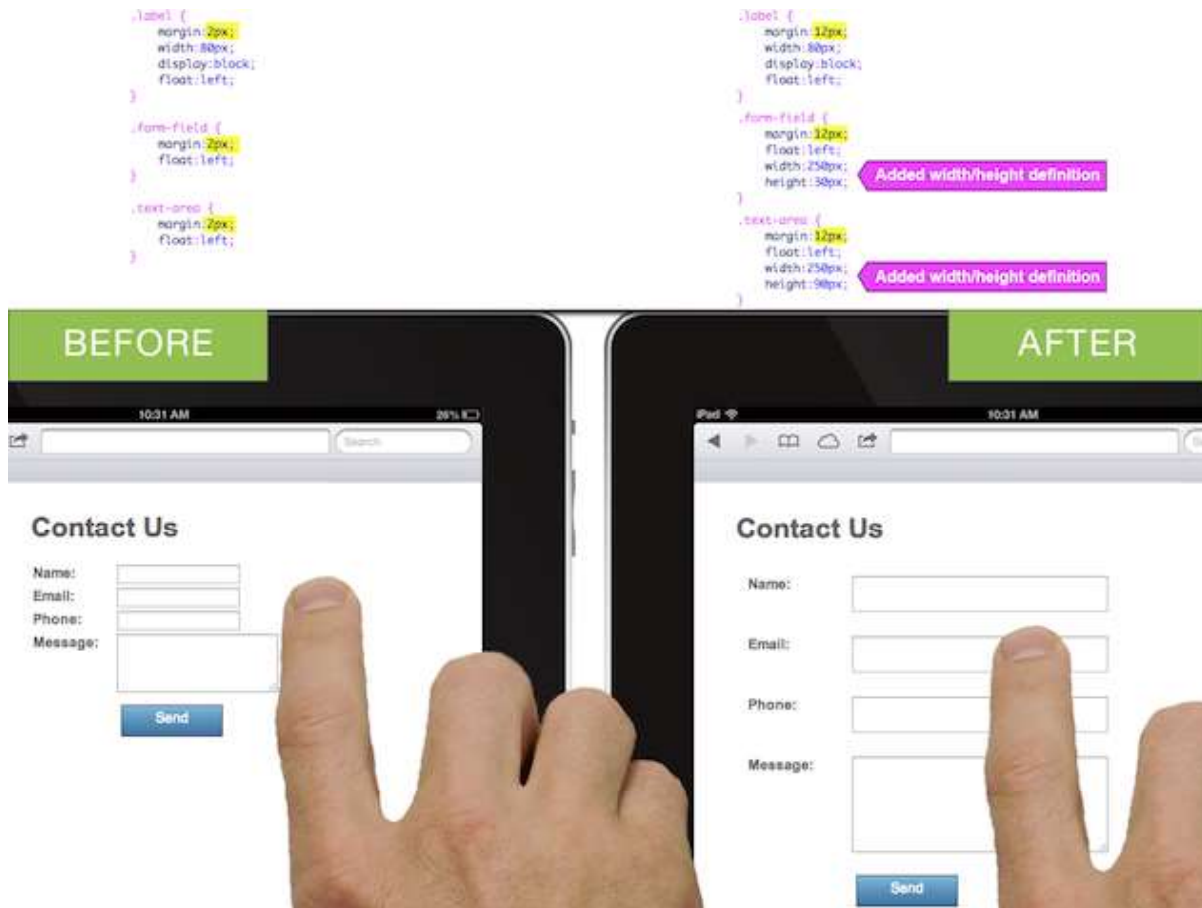
by 5-10 pixels to start—or more, if your design allows.



5. Increase margins on pages and content blocks. This improvement supports overall legibility and reduces visual complexity. Increased “white space” can result in the impression that your website’s content is easier to consume, as compared to a website with crowded content.



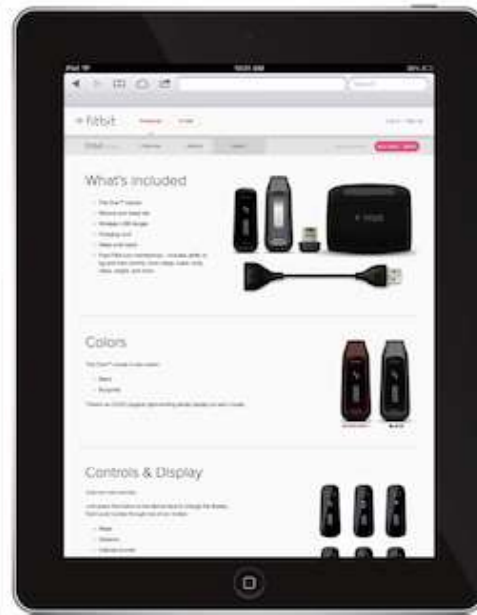
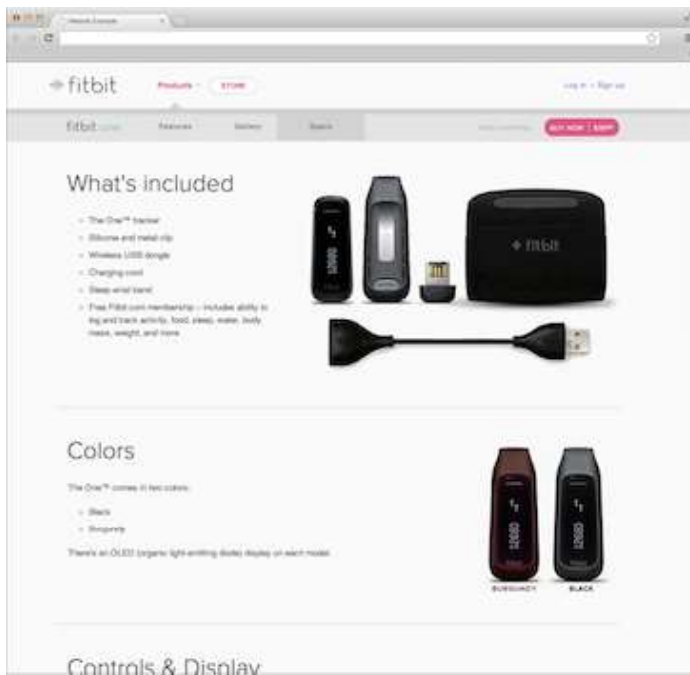
6. Increase form field size and spacing. Make it easier for your visitors to tap and enter information into form fields. Improvements to your [forms \(/topics/form-design/\)](/topics/form-design/) may make the greatest impact to your conversion rate.



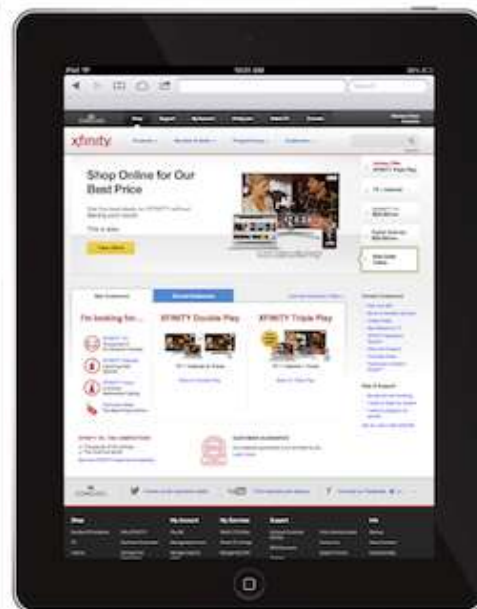
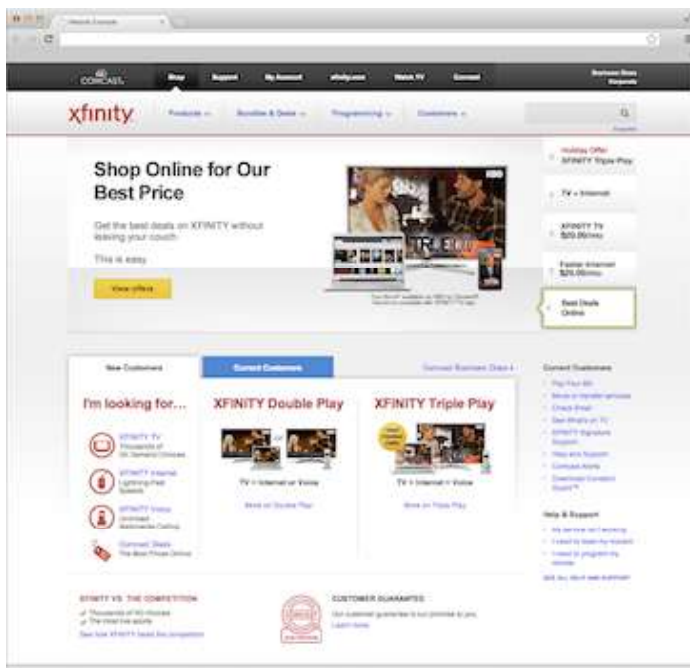
As an added bonus, these simple CSS changes will likely benefit your desktop visitors as well. But, as always, be sure to run QA on your changes for all platforms and browsers before committing to them.

Websites with Tappiness

Below are a few websites that exemplify tappiness. Try these out on your tablet as well as your desktop. Notice these sites don't employ separate layouts or versions for tablets. Yet the same site looks good and works well on both platforms.

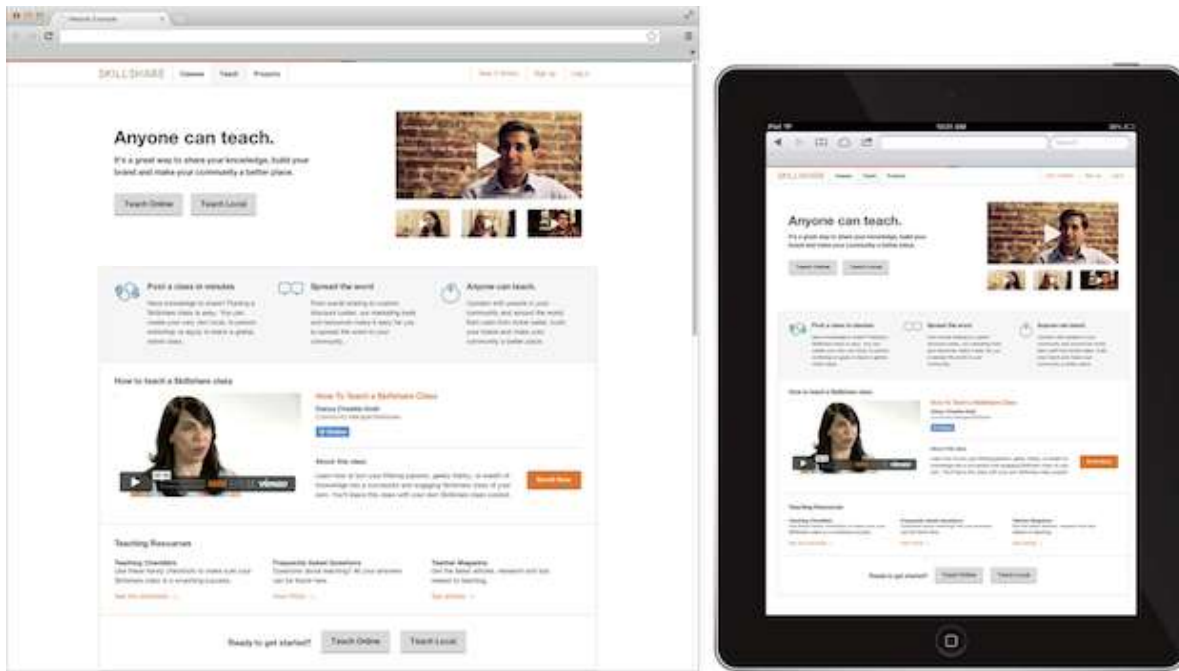


[Fitbit \(http://www.fitbit.com\)](http://www.fitbit.com) uses a healthy amount of white space coupled with large text and generously-sized touch targets.



[Comcast \(http://www.comcast.com\)](http://www.comcast.com)'s website offers large text and spacing. You'll also

notice clearly indicated links, well-spaced navigation and sub-navigation, and large, easy-to-use form fields.



While [Skillshare](http://www.skillshare.com) (<http://www.skillshare.com>) could bump up the size of their body text a bit more, they do offer large, easy-to-use buttons for navigation and calls-to-action. There is also plenty of space surrounding content blocks.



It's no surprise that [Apple \(http://www.apple.com\)](http://www.apple.com)'s website has tappiness (after all, they did pioneer the design for [hand-held touch screens \(/topics/ipad\)](/topics/ipad) .

Conclusion

Does your site provide tappiness? Check it out on a tablet device and see for yourself. Your website may be losing visitors, conversions, and money by creating an unpleasant experience for tablet users.

The good news: you don't need to spend a lot of time or money to make tiny, incremental changes that will vastly improve your user experience on tablet devices. For many of you, that means money in the bank.

Continue the conversation

Share a website that brings you tappiness! Have a question or comment regarding this topic? Please post a response.

Image of [woman tapping tablet](http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-97887893/stock-photo-happy-brunette-woman-holding-in-hand-a-tablet-touch-pad-computer-and-smiling-on-a-white-background.html) (<http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-97887893/stock-photo-happy-brunette-woman-holding-in-hand-a-tablet-touch-pad-computer-and-smiling-on-a-white-background.html>) courtesy Shutterstock.

About the Author(s)



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[\(/contributors/john-meyer\)](/contributors/john-meyer)

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For the past 15 years, [John Meyer](http://www.linkedin.com/in/meyerhaus) (<http://www.linkedin.com/in/meyerhaus>) has been designing and improving interactive experiences for businesses small and large, in fields from Electronic Design Automation to Healthcare. Today, John enjoys making the Internet a better place, as Senior User Experience Designer at [Closed Loop](http://www.closedloop.com) (<http://www.closedloop.com>), in Roseville, CA. You can follow him on Twitter @meyerhaus.

Key topics in this article

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[Apple \(/topics/apple\)](/topics/apple)

[Consumer products \(/topics/consumer-products\)](/topics/consumer-products)

[Content Strategy \(/topics/content-strategy\)](/topics/content-strategy)

[Design \(/topics/design\)](/topics/design)

[E-commerce \(/topics/e-commerce\)](/topics/e-commerce)

[Flow and Immersion \(/topics/flow-and-immersion\)](/topics/flow-and-immersion)

[Form design \(/topics/form-design\)](/topics/form-design)

[Information Design and Architecture \(/topics/information-design-and-architecture\)](/topics/information-design-and-architecture)

[iPad \(/topics/ipad\)](/topics/ipad)

[New and Emerging Technologies \(/topics/new-and-emerging-technologies\)](#)

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[Hiring the Right Designer \(/articles/hiring-the-right-designer\)](#)

[How Much UX have You Put into Your UX Portfolio? \(/articles/how-much-ux-have-you-put-into-your-ux-portfolio\)](#)

[How Mature is Your Organization when it Comes to UX? \(/articles/how-mature-is-your-organization-when-it-comes-to-ux\)](#)

[The UX Team Starting Lineup \(/articles/the-ux-team-starting-lineup\)](#)

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[Kingdom \(/uxjobs/consortia/ux-recruitment-consultant\)](/uxjobs/consortia/ux-recruitment-consultant)

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[Senior UX Designer - Bristol, United Kingdom \(/uxjobs/consortia/senior-ux-designer-4\)](/uxjobs/consortia/senior-ux-designer-4)

Consortia - March 29, 2016

[About UX \(/articles/seven-things-your-boss-needs-to-know-about-ux\)](/articles/seven-things-your-boss-needs-to-know-about-ux)

[Why UX Designers Need to Think like Architects \(/articles/why-ux-designers-need-to-think-like-architects\)](/articles/why-ux-designers-need-to-think-like-architects)

[Five Customer Experience Lessons Coffee Taught Me \(/articles/five-customer-experience-lessons-coffee-taught-me\)](/articles/five-customer-experience-lessons-coffee-taught-me)

[Four Things I Learned about UX at Universal Studios \(/articles/four-things-i-learned-about-ux-at-universal-studios\)](/articles/four-things-i-learned-about-ux-at-universal-studios)

[The \(Sometimes\) Giddy Experience of Learning Design \(/articles/the-sometimes-giddy-experience-of-learning-design\)](/articles/the-sometimes-giddy-experience-of-learning-design)



B *I* ☰ Paragraph

Path: p

[Switch to plain text editor](#)

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Comments



whiskeyjohn
May 17, 2013

hi~so thanks your article,so nice.can you tell me the first picture from which website? it 's so pretty website, so glad to accept your answer, thanks



Samara Watkiss
February 26, 2013

Awesome article. Always nice to have simple actionable tips as well as big concepts. Thanks.



How to make a website
February 13, 2013

With our professional and feature rich Website Software you'll have the most powerful system with photo galleries, streaming audio & video, contact forms, Facebook integration, etc... Everything will be at your disposal, and you'll be able to create and edit your own professional website in minutes!

How to make a website



[John Meyer \(/contributors/john-meyer\)](/contributors/john-meyer)

January 4, 2013

Thanks for your comments, Erik.

Agreed, CSS3 @media queries are a great way to layer on further refinement and control, after utilizing some basic principles from above first. I plan to address additional techniques like this in an upcoming post soon. In the mean-time, for those that want further background on media queries and responsive design in general, I recommend this article: <http://uxmag.com/articles/a-primer-on-responsive-design>



Erik F

January 4, 2013

This is a good start, but I would have liked to see some references as to how to implement the changes dynamically, like via user agent detection or viewport width. Something like the ipad mini (or the retina to be honest) has the effective size of 1024x768, but so can a desktop. So how do you know when to make your buttons/interactions larger for an ipad? Or do you just make them larger when it is at least 1023x767? In that case, user agent detection might be more appropriate, but that isn't always reliable. So both?

You also say that someone might not have the time to make a responsive design - which I totally agree. But setting up stylesheets with lots of @media queries to change the sizing of buttons, form fields, whatever - essentially you're making responsive design minus a maleable grid layout.

Anyways - I am all for more touch affordances on tap devices. I just don't want people going "Great idea! How do I do it?" And maybe the article presumes that a developer will handle all that wizardry, which is probably fine.



[John Meyer \(/contributors/john-meyer\)](/contributors/john-meyer)

January 3, 2013

Thanks, Warwick!

Great point about avoiding top level links where there is a dropdown menu below it. I would also recommend adding a down-arrow icon to any top menu item that contains a dropdown, for a helpful visual cue.



Warwick

January 3, 2013

Great post. I'd also like to add don't link top level menu items if there is a dropdown menu below it.

Websites this works great as you can have a hover menu but on touch devices you never see that menu. Actually I'd just say remove all hover flyouts all together.

Other than that great points!