

Enhancing your ecommerce site:

# A step-by-step guide to conducting a UX audit, including a template and checklist

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## 1. Introduction to UX auditing

Welcome to UX Auditing, the comprehensive approach to unlocking the potential to significantly boost your site's effectiveness.

This guide is designed for those familiar with the concept of UX but seeking practical ways to implement it for business success.

### **Objective:**

I'll unveil the intricacies of conducting a UX audit specifically tailored for ecommerce sites. However, the principles can be used for any website. You'll gain an understanding of UX, revealing both the theory and practical insights to help enhance your site's functionality and user satisfaction, equipping you with knowledge beyond the basics.

### **Focus:**

Through this guide, you'll learn how to run a UX Audit and gain actionable insights to enhance user experience, thereby maximising conversions and driving business growth.

## What's a UX Audit?

- A UX (User Experience) Audit is a detailed examination of your website's interface, aimed at understanding how users interact with it.
- The process involves evaluating usability, accessibility, and overall user satisfaction.
- In the context of ecommerce, a UX audit goes hand-in-hand with Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO), focusing on turning visitors into customers by creating a seamless, engaging user experience.

## Why is it important for Ecommerce websites?

- **Leads to increased sales:** A meticulous UX audit not only enhances your website's user-friendliness but also optimises it for conversions, leading to higher user satisfaction and increased sales.
- **Competitive advantage:** Superior UX and effective CRO strategies can significantly differentiate your ecommerce site from competitors, attracting and retaining more customers.
- **Informed decision-making:** The insights gained from a UX audit provide valuable data that informs both UX improvements and CRO strategies, leading to more effective decision-making in website enhancements.

# Essential UX Principles for conducting an effective audit

You don't need analytics tools such as Google Analytics to run a UX Audit. With the advice and checklist in this guide, you can run a UX Audit using 3 key UX principles:

1. Value
2. Friction
3. Distraction

By integrating these UX and CRO principles, this approach to auditing ensures that every aspect of your website is scrutinised not just for user friendliness, but also for its potential to convert visitors into customers.

## 1. Value – Communicating and enhancing user benefits

- **Focus:** Emphasising the value your website offers to the users and how it drives conversions.
- **Goal:** Ensure users recognise the benefits and value of your products or services, which in turn motivates them to convert.
- **Key areas:** Clear messaging, content relevance, CTA clarity, and user motivation enhancement.

## 2. Friction – Enhancing user flow and reducing barriers

- **Focus:** Identifying elements that hinder the user journey and potentially impact conversion rates.
- **Goal:** Create a frictionless experience that facilitates the path to conversion.
- **Key areas:** Layout usability, button clarity, effective product filtering/sorting, usability assessment, error handling, and an 'emergency exit' strategy.

## 3. Distraction – Maintaining user focus

- **Focus:** Eliminating distractions that divert attention from key conversion points.
- **Goal:** Keep the user's focus on primary actions, such as product selection and purchase.
- **Key areas:** Removing irrelevant content, simplifying design, minimising interruptions, and optimising loading times.

## 2. Preparing for the UX Audit

- **Materials needed:** Gather the UX Audit Checklist, access to the website you're reviewing, and tools for note-taking. You can take screenshots and make notes, use powerpoint/Google Slides, or use a design tool like Figma to give you better editing capabilities.

**Tip:** When deciding on what to audit first, try a singular, important page like the product page or if it's not an ecommerce site, try the home page

- **Setting up:** Create a distraction-free environment. Multiple devices may be necessary to check website responsiveness.
- **Schedule:** Allocate specific time blocks for each audit section, ensuring thoroughness.

# 3. UX Audit Template & Checklist - conducting the audit

How to use the template / checklist:

- **Interactive Checklist:** As you navigate through each section, actively check off items using the provided checkboxes. This will not only track your progress but also ensure a thorough audit.
- **Detailed Observations:** For each principle, jot down your findings and potential improvements. Take a screenshot of the page you're reviewing and add comments to it. Use Powerpoint / Google Slides. It doesn't have to be pretty, just useful.
- **Actionable Insights:** This template serves as a roadmap, offering clear and actionable steps. By following and completing each section, you'll uncover valuable insights to boost your site's performance, particularly focusing on Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO).

Audit sections overview:

- **Value:** Assessing and amplifying user benefits  
Dive into evaluating how your website effectively communicates value to users. Ensure clarity in messaging, relevance of content, and motivation strategies to engage users.
- **Friction:** Improving user flow and minimising barriers  
Focus on enhancing the ease of navigation, evaluating elements like accordion and carousel usability, button clarity, and overall site usability.
- **Distraction:** Focusing user attention  
Examine your site's design elements to ensure they contribute positively to the user experience. This includes evaluating visual design, content strategy, and the use of pop-ups.

Remember, this template is a living document in your UX audit process. Its interactive nature is designed to make the audit not just a task, but a learning experience. Engage with each element, reflect on its impact, and pave the way for a more user-centric ecommerce website.

# 1. Value: Assessing and amplifying user benefits

**Objective:** Evaluate how well your website communicates its value to users.

- Clarity of messaging:** Look for headlines that clearly convey your offerings. Are they direct and persuasive? For example, a headline like "Elevate Your Style with Our Exclusive Handcrafted Jewellery" instantly informs visitors of what you offer and entices them to explore further.
- User motivation:** Evaluate if the website effectively leverages a range of motivations including necessity, pleasure, social acceptance, aspirations, fear mitigation, health benefits, impulse buying triggers, and financial incentives. Assess how these motivations are addressed through strategic use of discounts, freebies, compelling content, and personalised recommendations to enhance user engagement and conversions. For example: A website selling water filters might highlight the essential need for clean drinking water. The marketing message could emphasise the filter's effectiveness in removing impurities and ensuring the health and safety of the user's family, presenting the product not as a luxury but as a necessary item for maintaining good health.
- Visual hierarchy:** Evaluate if the visual design effectively guides users to the most important information or actions. An example is ensuring crucial content, like a CTA (call-to-action) for signing up or a special offer, is positioned above the fold rather than near the footer. Content placement significantly impacts visibility and user engagement.
- Trust signals:** Look for elements that build trust, such as displaying security badges or certifications prominently. Accept that potential customers don't trust you and work to gain as much trust as possible.
- User reviews:** Are customer reviews visible and used effectively on page to instil confidence in new users? Are they at the bottom or the top of the page? Placement is important, the higher up the page, the more likely it is that the user will see the reviews.
- Consistent branding:** Ensure your website's colour scheme and logo are consistently used across all pages for brand recognition. If there's a mixture of colours on different pages, then this can make for an incoherent experience.

## 2. Friction: Improving user flow and minimising barriers

**Objective:** Identify and address elements that might hinder user navigation and experience.

- Page speed:** Slow websites are a conversion killer. Evaluate page load time to ensure any page loads in under 3 seconds. To do this, you can use tools such as [Google Page Insights](#) or [GT Metrix](#).
- Mobile responsiveness:** Ensure your site is optimally viewable and functional across various mobile devices. 70-80% of users will be on mobile, so this is one of the most vital checks to do.
- Carousel consideration:** Does the site use rotating carousels? These can cause friction and have been proven to have lower click through rates the further through the carousel you go.
- Button and link clarity:** Ensure buttons are clearly labelled to guide users effortlessly through their buying journey. For instance, instead of a generic "Click Here," opt for descriptive labels like "Buy Now," "View Cart," or "Continue Shopping" to directly guide users towards their next step.
- Colour contrast check for usability:** Ensure text and interactive elements, such as buttons are easily readable by evaluating the contrast between text/background colours. High contrast helps users, especially those with visual impairments, navigate and understand your content more effectively. Use colour contrast tools such as [Colour Contrast](#) to test if your colour combinations meet accessibility standards.
- Error handling and guidance:** Review how your site communicates and assists users when they encounter errors. For example, if a user hits add to basket, but it doesn't work because they haven't chosen a product option such as which colour, what happens? Does an error message appear? Does it make it clear as to what to do?
- Emergency exit strategy:** Check if there are clear options to undo actions, or if the users are stuck, do they have clear navigation in the header and footer which will help them to move to another page?
- Navigation ease:** Assess the intuitiveness and organisation of your site's menu and category structure. Is it logical? Does it make sense? Come at this with a "beginners mindset" - pretend you don't know anything about your brand, product or service offering.

### 3. Distraction: Focusing user attention

**Objective:** Ensure your site's design and content are aligned to effectively capture and retain user attention.

- Eliminate unnecessary content:** To focus on what's important, streamline your site by removing content that doesn't add value, such as unnecessary sidebars or excessive animations.
- Simplified visual design:** Prioritise what's key by embracing a minimalistic design that keeps focus on critical content and functionality. Adopt a clean layout that emphasises the most crucial elements, ensuring users can easily find and engage with what matters most. For a practical example, consider a website that features a homepage with a single, prominent call-to-action (CTA) button, such as "Shop Now," set against a background of subdued colours. This design choice eliminates any competing messages or visuals, directing the user's attention immediately to the shopping experience.
- Minimise interruptions:** To reduce distractions and enhance user focus, it's crucial to limit the use of pop-ups to only the most essential interactions. This approach ensures that users are not bombarded with interruptions that could detract from their main goals on the site. By reserving pop-ups for critical communications or actions, such as subscription sign-ups or important announcements, you maintain a streamlined user experience that prioritises efficiency and relevance.
- Focused content strategy:** Zero in on the specific interests and necessities of your audience. Prioritise content that directly addresses their interests and needs. For example, if your target audience is fitness enthusiasts, prioritize content such as workout guides, nutritional advice tailored to exercise routines, and reviews of fitness gear. This approach ensures the content is directly relevant and valuable to your audience's specific interests in maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Consistent layouts:** Use a standard template for product pages. Maintain uniformity across your product pages by employing a standardised template. Structure the layout and content in a consistent manner throughout your website. By adhering to standard templates, you ensure that users can easily navigate, locate information, and engage with your products without encountering unexpected changes or inconsistencies.



- Adequate white space:** Adequate white space refers to the empty areas around elements on a webpage. It's essential for giving users' eyes and minds room to breathe and process information effectively.  
When text and elements are too crowded or tightly packed together, it can overwhelm users and make the site appear cluttered and difficult to read. By incorporating ample white space between elements such as text, images, buttons, and sections, you create visual balance and separation, allowing users to focus on individual elements more easily.  
This enhances readability, comprehension, and overall user experience, making it more pleasant and intuitive for users to navigate your website.
- Goal clarity on each page:** Evaluate if the page has a singular focus or multiple goals, aiming to reduce decision fatigue by limiting objectives and streamlining user decisions.
- Clear content hierarchy:** Assess the organisation of content to ensure there's a logical structure that guides users through information in a prioritised manner, enhancing comprehension and interaction.

## 4. Analysing results and planning improvements

- **Review findings:** Compile and analyse the audit results.
- **Prioritise changes:** Identify key areas for immediate improvement.
- **Action plan:** Develop a strategy to implement changes.

## 5. Implementing changes and re-evaluation

- **Apply improvements:** Make the necessary modifications to the website.
- **Monitoring and feedback:** Monitor the impact of changes and gather user feedback.
- **Continuous improvement:** Regularly revisit the audit process to ensure ongoing optimisation.

## 6. Conclusion

- **Reflect on the process:** Acknowledge the benefits of the UX audit in enhancing user experience.
- **Next steps:** Encourage routine audits and continuous user experience improvements.

This guide provides a structured approach to conducting a UX audit, ensuring a comprehensive review of the key elements that influence the user experience on an ecommerce website.

This guide was lovingly crafted by the team at Factory Pattern. If you need any help or assistance with your UX Audits, get in touch.

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