Establishing an Online Presence

Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts &
Sciences *Teaching Center*

Where do today's students – and search committees – learn about you? On the web.

When students or fellow academics search for your name, what do they discover? A FaceBook page? A blog? Embarrassing references? Or nothing at all?

As the web has become the primary source of information for academics, it has become essential that you have an online presence that is polished and professional.

A well-designed, well-organized homepage serves as your professional face. It can convey your professional identity by describing your research, your teaching experience, your publications, and any honors you have received.

The Top 10 Mistakes in Designing an Academic Homepage

1. Legibility Problems
Overly dense text, insufficient contrast between the text and background, unreadable fonts and hopelessly small fonts will make your website seem unprofessional.

2. Content That's Not Written for the Web
Remember, readers pan and scan websites. Make sure the information is succinct and clearly organized.

3. Browser Incompatability
Not everyone uses Internet Explorer. Make sure your website looks okay with Chrome, Mozilla, and Safari.

4. Missing Information
Is your contact information readily available?

5. Sloppiness
Improperly scaled images, text too wide for the screen, excessive scrolling—all are signs that your site is sloppy.

6. Excessive Glitz
An academic website is very different from a commercial website. Your design needs to be simple, clear, and professional.

7. Anything that Looks Like Advertising
This will turn readers off.

8. Outdated Information
Update regularly. It's essential that you maintain your website.

Advancing teaching and learning

The Teaching Center is the go-to place for practical advice about teaching. We can help you:

▪ Successfully market your teaching

▪ Deal with anxiety, challenges to your authority, and other classroom issues

▪ Design innovative courses, deliver scintillating, substantive lectures, and lead stimulating discussions and labs.

▪ Respond appropriately to shy, withdrawn, or disruptive students.

▪ Use technology more effectively.

The Teaching Center offers:

▪ Weekly workshops
▪ Individual consultations
▪ Certification in pedagogy
▪ Observations on your teaching
▪ A library of teaching, job search, and publishing resources

A catalyst for innovation, *The Teaching Center*

▪ Promotes interdisciplinary

▪ Sponsors research in the science of learning

▪ Supports improvements in the assessment of learning outcomes

▪ Works collaboratively to improve public education through community and school partnerships

To arrange a one-on-one consultation, contact:

Steven Mintz
smintz@columbia.edu
212-854-1066

9. "Coming Soon"
Nothing says "amateurish" more loudly than a site in which whole sections on your website are left blank.

10. Failure to Update
It is very easy for information to become outdated. Make sure to update your site regularly.

Helpful Hints
Reading online differs from reading a printed text. Most readers do not read websites word by word: They scan.

The content must be easy to scan:

1. Keep your paragraphs short

2. Highlight key words

3. Use bulleted lists

4. Include subheadings

Do not bury useful information:

1. Make sure your contact information is readily available. Do not simply rely upon an "email me" link.

2. Make sure that navigation links appear on every page.

What to include:

• Contact information

• A brief bio, briefly describing your research and teaching

• Your publications

• Your c.v.

• A detailed description of your research

• Your teaching philosophy

• Your syllabi

• Links to course websites

• Links to useful online research resources