



## Web Form Design: Filling in the Blanks

*Luke Wroblewski , Bob Baxley (Contributor) , Aaron Gustafson (Contributor) , Jared Spool (Contributor) , Caroline Jarrett (Contributor) , Peter Wallack (Contributor) , James Reffell (Contributor) , Jack Moffett (Contributor) , more... Micah Alpern (Contributor) ...less*

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Forms make or break the most crucial online interactions: checkout (commerce), registration (community), data input (participation and sharing), and any task requiring information entry. In *Web Form Design*, Luke Wroblewski draws on original research, his considerable experience at Yahoo! and eBay, and the perspectives of many of the field's leading designers to show you everything you need to know about designing effective and engaging Web forms.

## Web Form Design: Filling in the Blanks Details

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**Download and Read Free Online Web Form Design: Filling in the Blanks** Luke Wroblewski , Bob Baxley (Contributor) , Aaron Gustafson (Contributor) , Jared Spool (Contributor) , Caroline Jarrett (Contributor) , Peter Wallack (Contributor) , James Reffell (Contributor) , Jack Moffett (Contributor) , more... Micah Alpern (Contributor) ...less

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# From Reader Review Web Form Design: Filling in the Blanks for online ebook

## Marty says

Good or bad, there aren't many books that I can use for my job that I go through quickly. There's just something about a limit to my absorption of information from these books that makes me take my time to get through them. However, that was *not* a problem with this book. Chock full of good information, Wroblewski manages to make it a quick, easy and yet informative read that only took me 2 days cover-to-cover.

For anyone that works on the web, forms are going to be something you deal with at one time or another. Usually, it's an experience in trying to get a form to do what YOU want it to do without regard to what the customer really wants or needs. However, I've been working on a bunch of projects recently where I really need to consider what the customer wants because one of our main goals is to get users to register, and I know how fickle they are when it comes to signing up for things. So, this book was not only interesting but very timely.

The best thing about the book is how well written it is. It's fairly simplistic in getting its point across, using a lot of illustrations to really drive home the points that the author is trying to get across. His tone and personality really mesh with how the book is presented, making it almost conversational as he explains some of the major concepts and then delves deeper into the best ways to develop and present forms.

In 14 chapters covering 226 pages, you get insights into:

### **FORM STRUCTURE**

- 1 - The Design of Forms
- 2 - Form Organization
- 3 - Path to Completion

### **Form Elements**

- 4 - Labels
- 5 - Input Fields
- 6 - Actions
- 7 - Help Text
- 8 - Errors and Success

### **Form Interaction**

- 9 - Inline Validation
- 10 - Unnecessary Inputs
- 11 - Additional Inputs
- 12 - Selection-Dependent Inputs
- 13 - Gradual Engagement
- 14 - What's Next?

Each chapter is relatively short (about 8 - 21 pages), but chock full of good advice. The succession will also help people trying to make their forms better work their way into more and more elaborate ways of creating 'bulletproof' forms. While you won't get as far in-depth as you might need on any given topic (I wanted to know more about error messaging, a personal anathema right now) or much about the coding of the pages, the principals and direction are dead on.

As I said, the language and personality Wroblewski - whose credentials include former Lead Usability

Designer at eBay, founding member of Interaction Design Association (IXDA) and current "Senior Principal of Product Ideation and Design" at Yahoo! - create a more approachable presentation than you might think from someone who is one of the leaders in usable design. Less teacher and expert-on-high and more friendly "have a beer and chat" usability guru, I found it easy to get sucked into one chapter and not look back until 3 chapters later.

The examples he uses are also top-notch. Granted, he has a great body of work to pull from, but he does a great job of using examples from a breadth of industries and user types -- everything from Fortune 500 banks to e-commerce to new Web 2.0 social networks are represented, showing that good form design isn't for any single audience. The illustrations are also well-placed in showing principles and comparisons between different methods, adding to the ease with which someone can learn how to build the better form.

His information comes from more than just his own experiences, though. Several key studies provide relevant data that give credence to the ideas presented here. He's not afraid to say, 'It depends' when it does or to say that while something might be a bad idea for the most part (and here's way), that you couldn't make it work in some limited situation. He offers what seems to be the *best* way to accomplish certain things within a form, without putting his own personal feelings into it (well, for the most part - and when he does, it's always in a humorous manner).

And this is a book that anyone can use - not overlay-laden with technical terms, it's instead a thorough but amazingly understandable set of observations, suggestions and instructions on how to make the forms you are creating eminently more usable for all those involved - but most especially for the customers or visitors of the sites we're building. I needed it to answer a couple specific questions I had, but it quickly opened up other paths and solutions for me I wasn't yet considering.

At this point, I have to say that this is probably one of the best UX books I've read. It might not be as thorough and ground-breaking as Saffer's "*Designing for Interaction*" or Zeldman's "*Designing with Web Standards*", but for the specificity of the topic, it really does a great job a covering all of the bases and giving real-world, actionable examples and guidance. A great buy - and I think that if you order it direct from Rosenfield, you also get a PDF version (great because it's searchable -- but don't quote me on the fact that they are still giving it away).

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### **Jay DiNitto says**

Excellent handbook for getting started on proper UX design for the dreaded online form. The good thing here is that Wroblewski points out which rules are hard-and-fast and which ones are variable, citing other experts and viewpoint in the field where appropriate. Some modern solutions that address form usability, like the float label pattern, are not covered here because of the book's vintage, but the expounded principals are still sound and endure as long as web forms are still in play.

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### **Joe says**

There's a pretty good chance that you will fill out a form today... and tomorrow... and the next day.

Forms are everywhere you look—we rely on them for nearly everything from searching for information to

ordering some goods to balancing your checkbook. As anybody who has encountered a poorly-designed form can attest, when forms are confusing or difficult to use they have the power to bring everything else down with them. A truly evil form can send your world spiraling out of control into a cycle of horror and dismay.

Obviously, good form design skills are critical—they could spell the difference between running your website like the RMS Queen Elizabeth II and running it like the Titanic. Until recently, there was no standard guide to help web designers through the treacherous swamps of form design. In May 2008, Luke Wroblewski let loose his *Web Form Design: Filling in the Blanks*, the book that might be just what we have been craving.

From cover to cover, *Web Form Design* is an easy read with ample pictures that clearly illustrate its concepts. Concrete examples are demonstrated that address many different aspects of form design. Additionally, this book isn't filled with pages upon pages of dry writing, each chapter is an ocean of knowledge that gets right down to business and thrusts the facts of research straight in front of your eyeballs. Throughout the book, Mr. Wroblewski presents the results of a solid foundation of usability testing so that your design decisions can be based on actual results instead of personal preference. Finally, each chapter ends with a summary overview of the main points—definitely a helpful feature that augments the learning process.

Most importantly, Wroblewski doesn't just stop at the layout of web forms, he touches on every aspect of web form design. He warns about unnecessary fields, gives pointers on constructing useful error and success messages, and provides ideas on dynamic form behavior and gradual engagement.

I highly recommend Luke Wroblewski's *Web Form Design* for anyone who is even thinking about designing a form for the web. Best of all, you can save a tree and have it right now by purchasing it in DRM-free PDF format. What more could you ask for?

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### **Vladislav Yakimov says**

Must-have for all designers which truly think web-form design leaves much to be desired.

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### **Phil Eaton says**

#### **Not a bad reference, not particularly earth-shattering**

It really is only about forms. It presents a number of case-studies from a few years ago that already look pretty dated. Most of the rules are common sense if you work in the field. However it's always nice to be able to cite an official source, so I'll keep this book in mind.

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### **Chris McDonnell says**

#### **Most memorable quote**

"Forms stand between user needs and business goals. People want to manage their information or create new artifacts. The businesses supplying these services are interested in growing and optimizing the amount of

data or customer activity they manage. The barrier for both sides is, of course, a form...forms enable commerce, communities, and productivity on the Web to thrive. It's no wonder that form design matters."

### **Tweet review**

*A must read for web execs and empathetic designers interested in grasping the financial impact and user experience of filling out forms*

### **Full review**

I expected this book to be really boring. It is after all, about forms, one of the least sexy topics in web design. I've worked on forms for major companies, so I had an understanding of the major impact tweaking and overhauling forms can have. However, I still found the book's thorough review of the topic, and numerous real life examples, to be immensely useful. I look forward to applying some of the new learning to improving the bottom line and user experience of the company I work for. I found this book to be more practical/useful than LukeW's Mobile First work (though I very much liked that one as well).

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### **Natalia Avdeeva says**

I found the book useful, especially chapters about labels / CTA alignment principles and optional / required fields mark up.

I found examples a bit outdated though and related to web only (not mobile).

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### **Lisa says**

Wroblewski provides an excellent overview of interface design best practices for Web-based forms. He also provides specific, real-life critiques of what works and what does not in various interface designs. In particular I liked the "Selection-Dependent Inputs" chapter where he subjects various design methods to usability testing and reports on the results. I also like his argument for avoiding forms altogether, at least until you have engaged the user.

Unfortunately, as of the time of this review, you will not be able to follow many of his best practices if your sites are required to be accessible, as he relies heavily on JavaScript and AJAX for his interface designs and does not discuss workarounds. He also makes a few recommendations that require persistent cookies, which U.S. Government sites can't use without a waiver.

He says that implementation discussions are out of scope for this book. Hopefully browsers will soon be compatible with the ARIA standard and we will be able to follow more of the approaches that he recommends in this text. This book is an easy read and I recommend it to all UI designers.

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### **Irene says**

Good book, covering the basics of online form design and providing plenty of evidence-based advice. I particularly liked the summary boxes at the end of every chapter, providing the key points to take-away.

Here are my take-aways from this book:

"When the questions that need to be answered before a Web form is complete are spread across multiple Web pages, you may want to include an overview of the number of Web pages involved (scope), an indication of what page you are on (position), and a way to save and return to your progress (status).

Though closely integrated, these three progress indicators perform different functions.

When you are trying to reduce completion times or if you need flexible label lengths for localization, consider top-aligned labels.

When you have similar goals but vertical screen real estate constraints, consider right-aligned labels.

When your form requires people to scan labels to learn what's required or to answer a few specific questions out of many, consider left-aligned labels.

The form should be a conversation. Sometimes, to achieve this we must write short sentences instead of single worded labels. Example: Issuing Bank = What bank provided this document?

In order to keep the conversation flowing smoothly, organize the questions you're asking people into meaningful groups. Depending on their size and context, these groups could then be presented across multiple Web pages or as sections of a single Web page.

If a form naturally breaks down into a few short topics, a single Web page is likely to be a good way to organize the form.

When a form contains a large number of questions that are only related by a few topics, multiple Web pages are probably a good way to organize the form.

When a form contains a large number of questions related to a single topic, one long Web page is generally a good way to organize the form.

Use the minimal amount of visual information necessary to distinguish content groups.

Use initial capital letters to make the titles of content groups easier to scan.

A well-designed scan line has just the right amount of visual spacing between questions to enable an even pace between each label/input pair (see Figure 3.5). In other words, it allows people to move comfortably through the form without missing any important information.

The right amount of spacing depends a lot on the style of your form, but generally about 50 to 75 % of the height of an input field between each question works best.

Ensure that the titles of your forms match people's expectations and succinctly explain what each form is for.

For forms requiring substantial time or information requiring look-up, use a start page to set people's expectations.

Make sure that you illuminate a clear path to completion through a form by using clear scan lines and

effective visual pacing that comfortably takes people from start to finish."

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### **Nadya Tsech says**

This book answered most of my questions about forms and helped define a solid solution we can test.

I recommend it to everyone who works on design systems, style guides, and products with forms. It's short and straight to the point.

I also recommend the video about forms <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPS7L...>

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### **Oz says**

Topic: Web Forms & Usability

Why Read It: Another short, fun and practical read. This book will make you a more effective designer who can help increase conversions through better form design. This is stuff that makes businesses money!

When to Read it: It's good knowledge to have upfront (now), but particularly useful whenever you have to deal with user input of any sort.

"Checkout forms are how ecommerce vendors close deals—they stand between people and the products or services they want and between companies and their profits." - Luke Wroblewski

I guarantee you that in almost any user-facing digital product you work on, you'll have to deal with forms. Signing up for something. Sending a message. Increasing the contribution amount on your 401k. Web forms on their surface sound boring, but Luke Wroblewski will change the way you look at them forever.

One of the tricks to learning something so broad like UX is to hone in a subtopic like web form design; the principles learned here will translate to other areas of UX.

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### **Justin says**

There were many things to learn here, but they didn't feel as sticky as I would like. My guess is I will forget most of what is in here.

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### **Laurian says**

I really liked this book.

I read a good handful of UX and design books... mostly because I'm curious how other people see my profession and also because I don't believe that I can stop learning. I'm driven to keep consuming books!



The problem I have with a lot of UX books is that they just reiterate the same principles over and over again: put your user first, get feedback, design before implement, etc. The authors just find different ways of saying the same thing but within the context of their knowledge. That isn't the to say that there isn't value in reading them, but I can get more than bored.

I like this book for a few reasons:

1. It had actual research to support the claims that were being made. It shows results of eye-tracking data and qualitative metrics of how users engaged with different forms. The question of whether or not to put labels above, left, or right of the field was responded to with actual data.
2. The book was succinct. Rather than make the book cover every possible application ever that has used a form, it kept to web forms and talked about specific examples with lots of pictures. This helped make the arguments direct and understandable.
3. The book was short. Even though it is about 200 pages, with all of the pictures and how the type was set you could get through the whole thing in a handful of hours. I took my time with it, reading a chapter or three a day. But, if I had to or wanted to, I could have gotten through it much faster. The shortness also helped with keeping the argument of the book to a point.
4. The end of each chapter had take-away points. When reading the book, this didn't help a lot. But, I know that this is one of those books I'll probably be returning to frequently. Having that kind of reference is going to help considerably in the future.

I would encourage all but a few staple UX tomes to be just like this book. Find a topic that has usability and user issues, write a book summarizing best practices and the research surrounding them, and then ship it off. I will buy them all.

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### **Lauren says**

Possibly one of the most influential books I have ever read.

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### **Mehran Jalali says**

A pretty insight-dense book built on research and case examples.

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