Harvard Web Publishing provides several common information architecture (IA) frameworks to help you organize your website content. The elements common to all of the frameworks are described below. Refer to the guides for specific kinds of sites (academic, administrative, project, and lab) for tips on how to organize your particular site.

Benefits

• **An orderly, inviting structure:** Usability research shows that a website’s primary navigation system should ideally contain no more than seven items, since large menus on a website can be overwhelming. HWP provides a structure that can be scanned and understood by a visitor instantly.

• **Clear labels:** The common IAs use direct, easy-to-understand words to help visitors find what they need. We avoid vague language such as “explore.”

• **Versatility:** The IA is designed to allow your site to grow over time. By using a label such as “events,” rather than “seminars,” you will always have a home for all of your future events (not just seminars), keeping your primary navigation streamlined.

• **Consistency:** When your site adopts a common IA, people visiting multiple Harvard sites will have a more consistent experience. For example, events can always be found under “events” on a Harvard website, rather than “calendar” on one site, “seminars” on another, and “talks” on another.

Components

Global Header: Links back to Harvard.edu and parent dept.

Action Nav: Easy access to common tasks that can be conveyed as action words.

Site Nav: The site’s primary navigation menu. See the following pages for recommended sections on various kinds of site.

Section Nav: The navigation for a given section; dependent upon the pages you create for the section.

Internal Nav: Popular departmental resources. This is also a helpful place to include links to intranet sites.

Social Nav: Your department’s social media channels

Global Footer: University-wide web polices.
While the structure within your site sections is up to you, HWP recommends following these guidelines to help organize your site’s content in a way that will be easy to navigate.

1. **Breadth**

Try to limit the breadth of your sections to no more than seven items (sub-pages), if possible. This quantity is easiest to browse, and will look orderly in a drop-down menu.

2. **Depth**

Try to limit the depth of the section to no more than three levels deep, so that content is not buried within the site.

3. **Consistency**

When possible, use parallel construction when naming pages within sections for consistency.

**Correct:**

- Academics
  - Undergraduate
  - Graduate
  - Postdoctoral

**Correct:**

- Academics
  - Undergraduate Program
  - Graduate Program
  - Postdoctoral Program

**Incorrect:**

- Academics
  - Undergraduate Study
  - Graduate
  - Postdoctoral Program