



Global Navigation

Best Practice: How to Implement Global Navigation

Global navigation is a region of the graphical user interface reserved for buttons, links, search bars, or any other design element affording movement from one set of content to another. This region appears identically across all different pages so as to provide a consistent means of traveling to anywhere in the application or website. A site's global navigation acts as its central nervous system—at least, to the user's eye—and the main line from which users can see, at a glance, other places to visit. To implement global navigation, these are the steps to take:

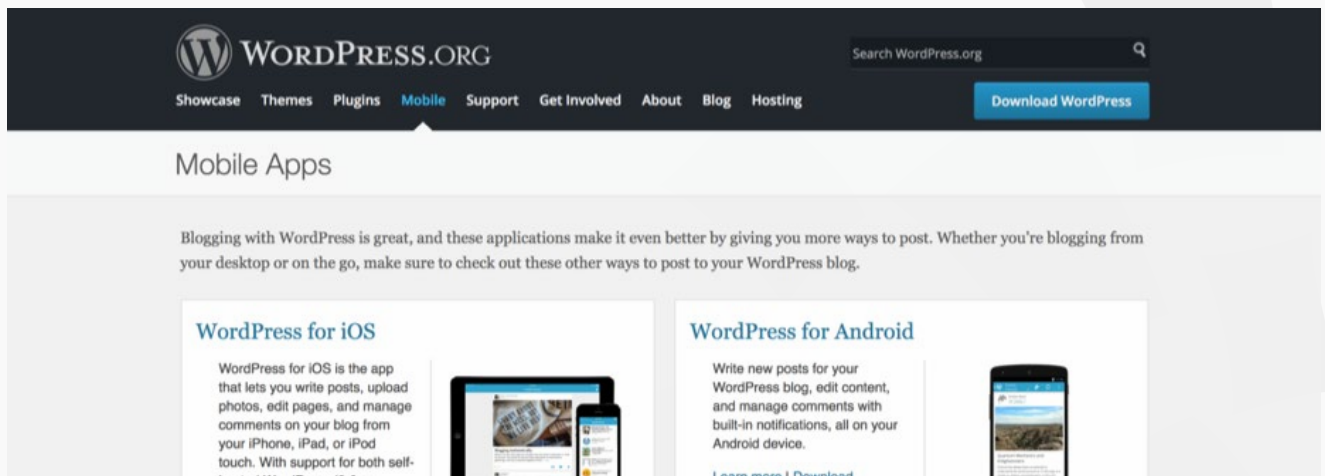
- 1** First, **establish your groups of content**; if the number of categories exceeds twelve, you might be better off combining global navigation with another user interface design pattern, such as a mega dropdown menu.
- 2** **Assign each of the groups of content a fitting title** (e.g., from the top-level navigation bar above: 'Your Amazon.com', 'Today's Deals', 'Gift Cards & Registry', 'Sell', and 'Help').
- 3** **Arrange these category titles in a logical order.** For each group of categories, there likely will be an appropriate order, but the first option is usually the homepage, as this represents the first tier in the whole user interface. When used in combination with tabs, top-level navigation bars serve as the second tier of the user interface. In these instances, the first tab should be used to take the user back to the homepage.

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- 4** | **Implement the same top-level navigation bar in all regions of the user interface.** Then, link each title to the appropriate contents, so when the users click it, they are navigated directly to the associated information.
- 5** | **Inform the users of their current position** by changing the appearance of the individual category label. In the WordPress example below, the color of the selected category label changes from light white to blue, while all other options remain the same color.



- 6** | When you're using a hyperlinked logo or name in your global navigation, it does not expressly state that it also operates as a homepage link. Therefore, you should **include a number of other small touches to help the user identify this functionality**. Firstly, you can use a simple tooltip to display the word 'homepage'. This is not commonly implemented, but it would help novice users determine that this facility is afforded. Secondly, changing the appearance of the cursor when users hover over the hyperlinked logo or name shows them they can click on it.