



# Pagination

## Best Practice: How to Implement Pagination

Pagination is the process of splitting the contents of a website, or a section of contents from a website, into *discrete* pages. This user interface design pattern is what we designers use to save site visitors from being overwhelmed by a mass of data on one page – we take that ‘continental’ chunk and splinter it sensibly into ‘islands’, literally distinct pages which users will be able to devote their attention to without sighing in exasperation. The following steps will help you implement pagination successfully:

- 1** | Begin by **dividing the overall dataset into smaller groups of items**. Having an equal number of items on each of these individual pages is best. Decide upon an appropriate number of items to display on a page as a ‘default’, striking a good balance between content, legibility, and ease of navigation. (That said, some problems can arise, and we’ll cover these in full later on here.)
- 2** | **Determine how much control the user should have** over the way the items are grouped or ordered, or the number of items displayed on one page. As in the example below, web shops often let users choose if they want to sort the search results by date, price, popularity, or by recommendations. Sometimes, allowing *the user* to set the number of items on each page might be advantageous. For example, the default number might be 10, but what if the users wish to view more per page? These users do not want to have to keep switching between different sets of items. Therefore, a small dropdown menu of items per page—or controls that perform the same function—could be a useful addition to pagination.

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- 3** | **Add pagination controls** to allow the user to move forwards and backwards through the different pages, such as east- and west-facing arrows. Provide links or other controls that enable the user to skip *straight* to the beginning or end of the dataset, or to *specific* pages in the set. These are usually the first and last numbers or double greater and less than symbols (i.e., << and >>), such as are found on remote controls for rewind and fast forward. However, when your dataset fluctuates in size, you are better off *not* including a link to the last page. By allowing skipping to a specific page, you can provide either an option for the user to enter a page number manually—or select a page number—or you can add controls for skipping a given number of pages. As the user moves through the different pages, the numbers in the pagination pattern should change accordingly. For example, if the user is on the fiftieth page, then the succeeding page numbers (51, 52, 53...) should be available in the set of links in the pagination pattern.
- 4** | When the user has visited a page, and the page numbers of visited pages are visible, **the color of the link number should change**. Users can then immediately determine which pages they do not need to investigate, or to whittle down those they need to return to.

