

PREVENTING ERRORS



msn. Ho	tmail®	Passport Help
Registration		
Profile Informati	ion	
First Name		Your full name will be sent with all outbound mail messages.
Language	English 🔻	
Country/Region	United States	V
State	Alabama in <i>United States</i>	
Zip Code		
Time Zone	GMT (Universal Time) - 08:47 AM GMT 💌	
Gender		
Birthday	Month Day	(e.g. 1978)
Occupation	[Select One]	V
Account Information		
Sign-In Name	@hotmail.com	Begin with a letter, and use only letters (a-z), numbers (0-9), the underscore (_), and no spaces .
Password		Must be at least eight (8) characters long, may contain numbers (0-9) and upper and lowercase letters
Re-enter Password		(A-Z, a-z), but no spaces . Make sure it is difficult for others to guess!
Secret Question		Choose a question only you know the answer to and that has nothing to do with your password. If you forget your
Answer to Secret Question		password, we'll verify your identity by asking you this question. Writing an effective secret question
Services	✓ Hotmail Member Directory ✓ Internet White Pages	Use the checkboxes to indicate whether you wish to be listed in these Internet directories. More information about Directories.

(www.hotmail.com, August 27, 2001)

MSN Hotmail makes it clear what kinds of information and formatting are required for creating a new account.

****** BACKGROUND

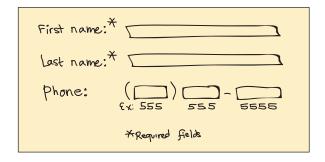
Web sites need to be engineered for errors, minimizing the number that can occur and providing MEANINGFUL ERROR MESSAGES (K13) when they inevitably happen. This pattern focuses on minimizing the errors for a common source of errors: online forms.

PROBLEM

Customers will make errors and generate erroneous data when faced with online forms that have little structure, include no formatting directions, and are not designed to account for errors from the start.

SOLUTION

Provide hints about what kind of text input you expect from your customers. You can do this by providing fields showing formatting, by providing sample values in the fields, or by providing explanatory text. Whenever it is simple to do so, allow flexible formatting and have the computer determine the correct format. Also make clear which fields are required and which are optional so that customers will not have to guess.



Prevent errors by providing sample formatting and differentiating between required fields and optional fields.

X CONSIDER THESE OTHER PATTERNS

No matter how well a site is designed to prevent errors, some errors will still occur. In these situations, present MEANINGFUL ERROR MESSAGES (K13) to help people recover. Preventing errors is especially important for PROCESS FUNNELS (H1), such as SIGN-IN/NEW ACCOUNT (H2) and QUICK-FLOW CHECKOUT (F1).









See entire pattern including detailed design considerations and examples in The Design of Sites (ISBN 020172149X). Buy it. © 2003 Douglas K. van Duyne, James A. Landay, Jason I. Hong. This pattern card reprinted with permission of Addison-Wesley.