10 Ways to Improve Your Web Content

— Scott Dasse & Annie Laurie Sanchez

Terms we will not use today

~~Usability~~

~~Information Architecture~~

~~User Experience~~

~~Human Factors~~

~~Personas~~

~~Microcopy~~

~~WordPress~~

1 [Know your users](#)

① Know your users

- Why do people visit your pages?
- What are they hoping to *learn*? ← *information*
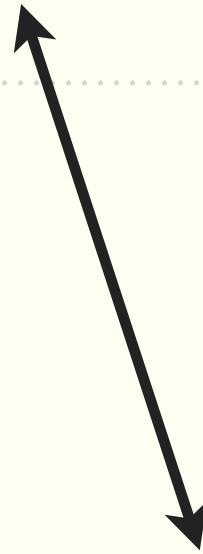- What are they hoping to *do*? ← *transactions*

Provide **useful** information based on your users' goals.

Provide **useful** information based on your users' needs.

2 [Be concise](#)

my attention span

What can I absorb in about **3 seconds**?

2 Be concise

- Make it skimmable
- Provide simple labels
- Avoid jargon
- Get to the point quickly
- Avoid filler and formality

2 # Be concise

Findings from Nielsen Norman Group's usability studies using eye tracking technology. From useit.com.

3 [Organize intuitively](#)

Group items together into logical categories.

Cherries

Apples

Eggs

Chicken Rice

Grapefruit

Nuts Tofu

Pasta

Bread

Bananas

3 Organize intuitively

Fruits

Apples

Bananas

Cherries

Grapefruit

Grains

Bread

Rice

Pasta

Protein

Chicken

Eggs

Tofu

Nuts

3 Organize intuitively

Backup & Restore

Directory Services

BU Linux

Wired Network

Wireless Network

Computer Labs

Purchasing

IT Help Center

Repair Services

VirusScan

BU Login

E-mail Accounts

Working Remotely

Using BU (802.1x)

BU Google Apps

(This list is hard.)

Prioritize content based on your audiences' goals.

primary content

related content

other
stuff
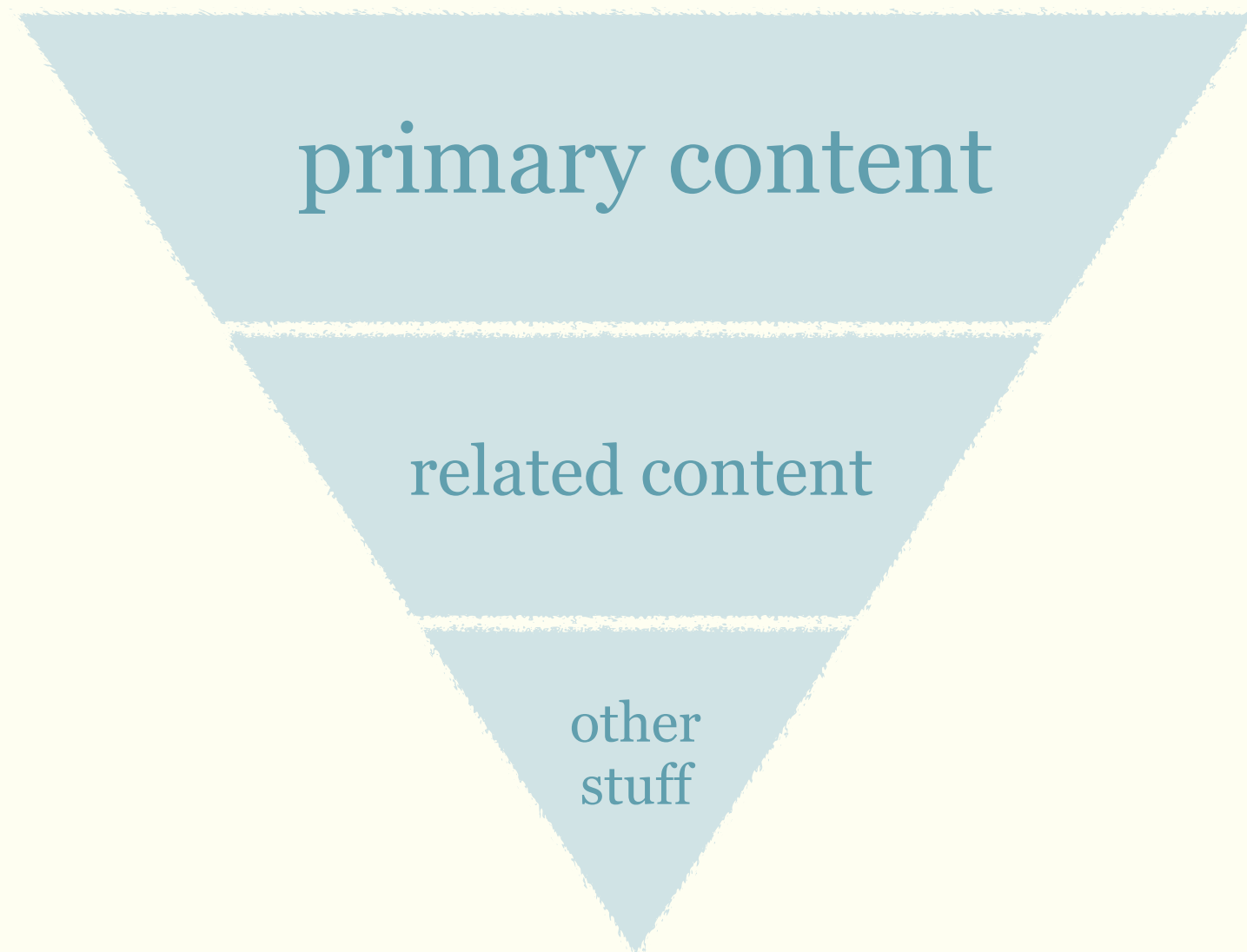
The content hierarchy

3 Organize intuitively
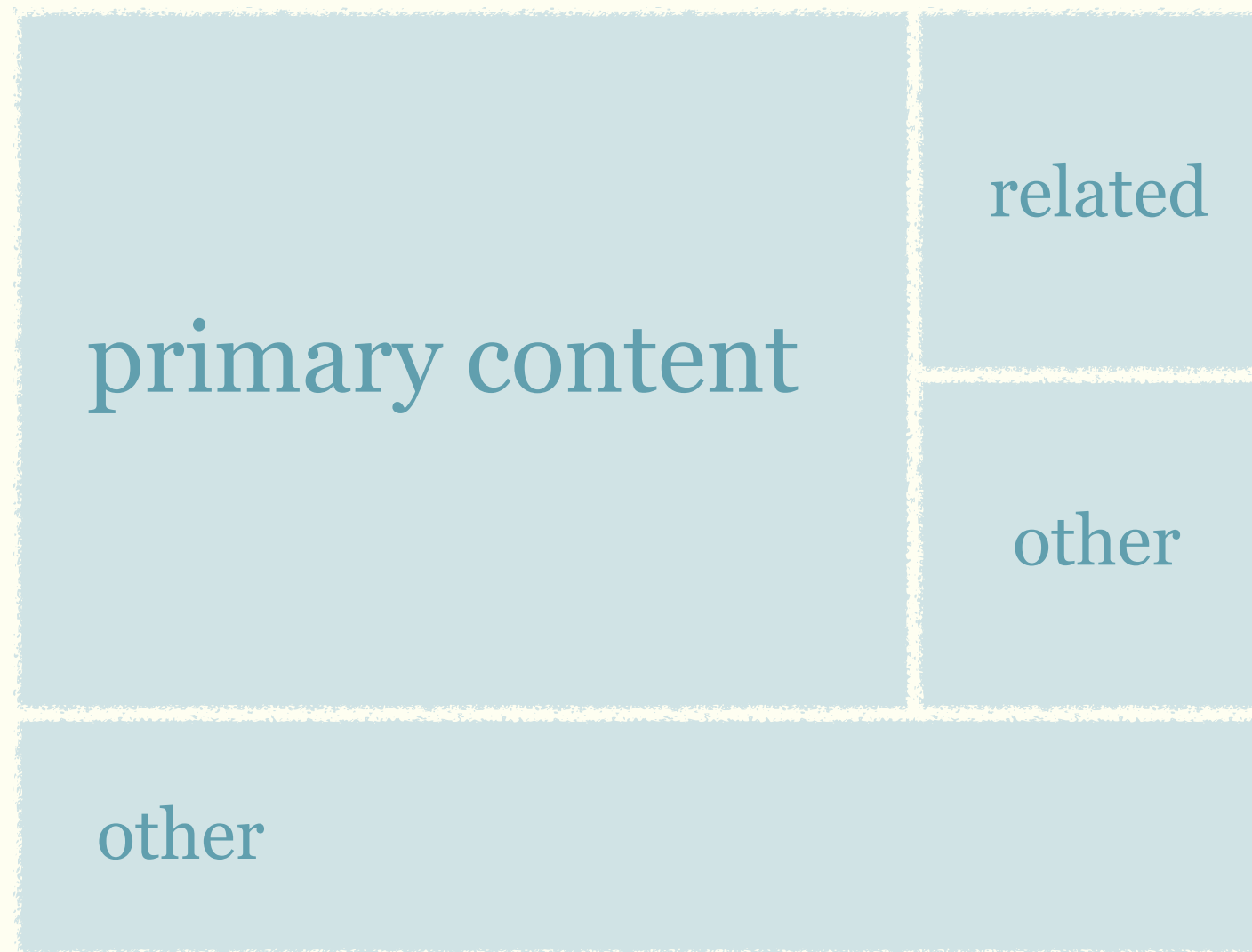
The content hierarchy on a web page

4 [Emphasize keywords](#)

not helpful

[Click here]() to win a million dollars.

Find out how to
[win a million dollars]().

4 Emphasize keywords

The Massachusetts State Lottery was established by the legislature in 1971 in response to the need for revenues for the 351 cities and towns of the commonwealth. Find out how to win a million dollars or more by playing one of the nation's largest lotteries.

5 [Format like a designer](#)

5 ## Format like a designer

- Use headings h1–h3 *adds structure*

- Use bulleted and numbered lists

- Apply tables (if appropriate)

- Allow for extra space *semantic*

6 [Build on substance](#)

Don't just say you're great. **Prove it.**

"The word *excellence* is like perfume."

— *Robert A. Brown*

7 [Write with style](#)

Write with style

- Be conversational *BU's brand voice*

- Use an active tone and actionable words

- Use the correct terminology

- Check BU's editorial style guide *www.bu.edu/brand*

8 [Use meaningful visuals](#)

Users pay close attention to **relevant** photos and images.

useful
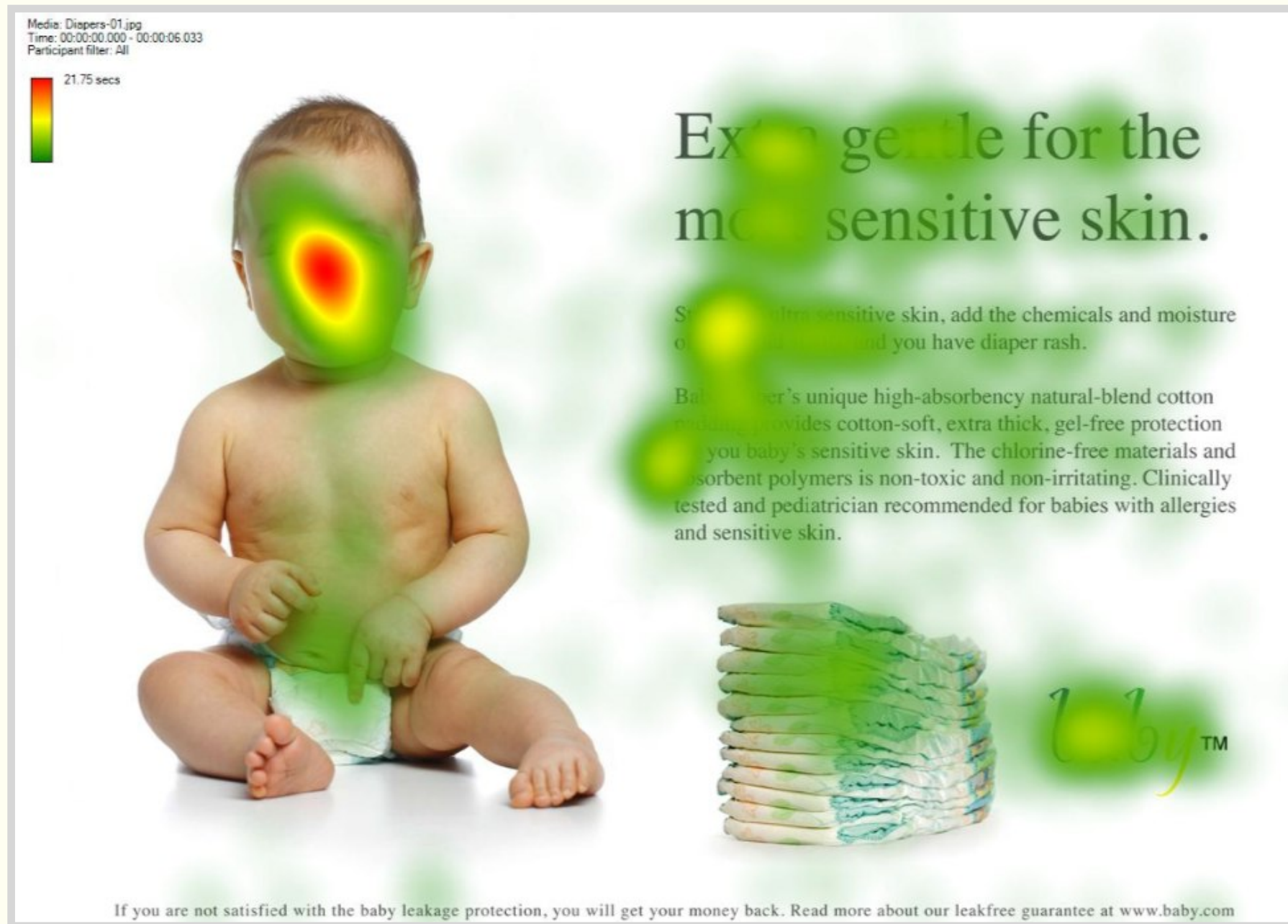
Eye-tracking heat map of a baby looking directly at us. From the UsableWorld study.

Users ignore photos merely included as decorative artwork.

Images must directly support textual content.

9 [Embrace scrolling](#)

9 Embrace scrolling

- The fold is dead (sort of)

- Combine short pages to make a longer, content rich page

9 Embrace scrolling

Without scrolling, I should see:

- Page title
- Navigation to main sections
- Search field
- Value proposition — what's here for me?

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value proposition

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Overview   Programs

10 [Keep it up](#)

Estimate how long it will take to develop your content. **(Then triple it.)**

10 Keep it up

- Don't let news or events feeds go stale

- Social media destinations should be active

- Avoid using language that will appear dated almost instantly

Keep it up

Evaluate, and re-evaluate.

- Is it useful information?

- Is it easy to skim?

- Is it pleasant to read?

1. Know your users
2. Be concise
3. Organize intuitively
4. Emphasize keywords
5. Format like a designer
6. Build on substance
7. Write with style
8. Use meaningful visuals
9. Embrace scrolling
10. Keep it up