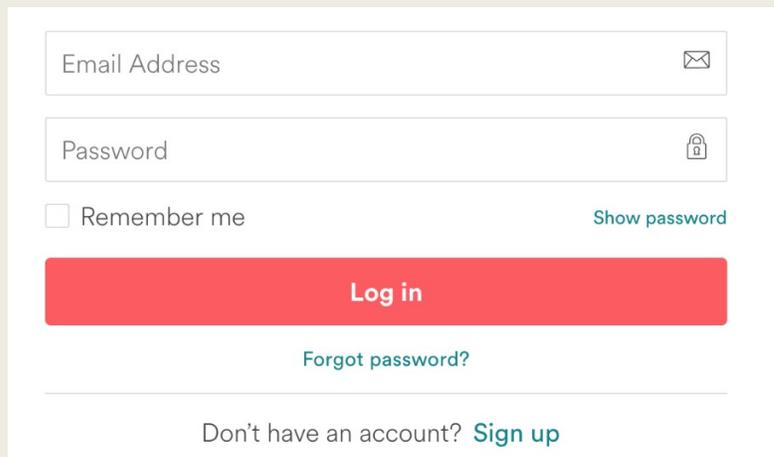


# Checklist: Online Form Design 101

I recently logged on to all of my online accounts to reset passwords, change user credentials and delete data (read my experience at [www.tekla-szymanski.com/resetting-passwords](http://www.tekla-szymanski.com/resetting-passwords)). What I came across were well-designed sites with user-friendly, streamlined logon forms (see image), to sites that trapped their visitors in a perpetual virtual maze, intended to deter them to take control of their data.



The log in, sign up or register forms are usually the first elements users see on your site—and the first impression they get from the organization, the service or the brand. The efficiency of your site’s navigation and the design of your online forms is what keeps users happily engaged—or make them flee to seek out your competition.

This Content + Design checklist of best online form practices will help you create functional, user-friendly, streamlined forms that provide a good user experience for your site visitors, follow good design principles and increase conversion rates.

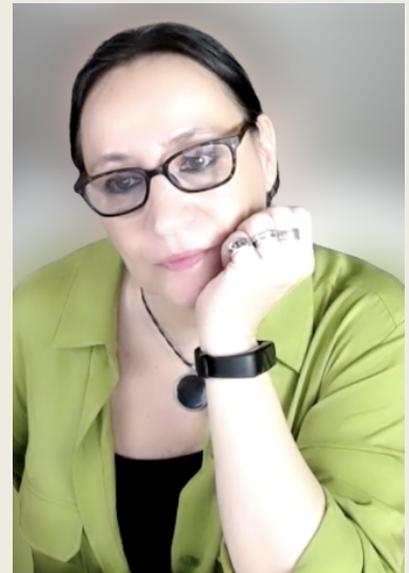
- Less design adds more functionality to your form. Your form should be intuitive and clean, with clear instructions and expectations how to proceed.**
- Every online form has to be mobile friendly.**
- Keep the steps a user has to take to the bare minimum.**
- Visually distinguish between sign up and login forms. Provide both—but not on the same page. Many password managers will attempt to fill out/submit both, which leads to errors, wasted time and duplicate data entries.**
- Provide ample white space between input fields, especially for your users who are on their phones or tablets.**
- Center or align your form field labels; place them above or within the fields—but whatever you choose, be consistent.**
- Label each field clearly and auto focus (highlight) the first field the user has to fill out, especially on longer forms.**

- Use “sticky” form fields, so when a user has to go back, s/he will not have to start again and prior inputs are kept.
  
- Clearly mark all fields that need to be filled. Don’t wait until the users hit submit to let them know what they’ve missed; and never use tiny letters on top of the page or whimsical colored clues to alert them about errors.
  
- Provide clearly defined error messages that help solve any problems with the submitted form.
  
- Only ask for the least information needed. Birth date, address, gender or title should only be an optional choice.
  
- Don’t use pop-up login forms that first ask for a username/email input and then, in a new popup form, for the password. Many password managers can’t handle those dual steps.
  
- Clearly indicate password requirements up front: a minimum of eight (even better 16) letters with no maximum length limit. Clearly specify your symbol/upper case/lower case/repeat letter rules.

- Always give the option to view/hide what the user types in the form fields, by providing a checkbox/toggle option to “show password”.**
  
- Alert the user if caps lock is on while typing the password.**
  
- Use an email as username. We remember our email address better than a user name. An email is unique and eliminates the link “forgot username?” on the form.**
  
- Place a link under the login form to reset the password. Use “forgot/reset your password” not “lost your password?” If the email is not in the database, let the users know, rather than having them check their inbox for the next hour.**
  
- Provide a prominent link under the login form “delete my account” and allow the user do so promptly.**
  
- Place the submit/next/OK button on the bottom right of the form and have it stand out. The cancel/back/previous button is placed to its left, in a lighter hue. We intuitively go/swap right when we want to advance (like reading a book). Placing the submit button to the left of the cancel button confuses your users.**

## ABOUT CONTENT + DESIGN LLC

Hi, I am Tekla Szymanski, founder of Content + Design LLC, your one-stop shop for content strategy and WordPress development for content-rich nonprofit and personal websites.



You have a small team and even less time. I hear you. And since your website deserves an editor, writer and web designer who understands how to leverage your unique content and then adapt the right design to it, I can help you.

If you have a story to tell, a mission to share or a service to offer, I can help you find the right platform and create a compact website that is built around your unique content needs to convert site visitors into loyal donors, paying clients or new members.

What sets me apart? Most web designers and developers don't come from a content-creating background. I do.

## DISCLAIMER

This checklist provides recommendations on how to improve the functionality and design of your online forms. These guidelines are by no means complete. How user-friendly and effective your online forms ultimately are depends on the time you devote to the suggestions I have shared with you as well as the design and developing tools that are at your disposal.

These factors vary. Success or outcomes cannot be guaranteed, nor can I be held responsible for the performance or conversion rate of your online forms.

**But what I can offer you is a helping hand if you need it.**

**Schedule a free consultation call: [bit.ly/AcuityContentDesign](https://bit.ly/AcuityContentDesign)**

**Email me: [editor@tekla-szymanski.com](mailto:editor@tekla-szymanski.com)**

**Visit my website for more: [www.tekla-szymanski.com](http://www.tekla-szymanski.com)**